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Editorial

The first issue of the Bulletin of the Jubilee Year opens with the Message of the SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR EUROPE OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS. All our congregations are conscious of the fact that Europe represents a very big and difficult challenge for the Church in mission. To Europe in a crisis of faith, the Bishops proclaim a "Gospel of Hope" with conviction, because they believe that among the signs of crisis, the European local Churches also show many signs of the visible presence of the ever-modern Christ.

A few weeks ago, John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in Asia" was published and presented to the Churches of Asia. Fr JAMES H. KROEGER, MM, after perusing the important new document gives us an introduction to the text which will facilitate its reading and understanding. —

The great contribution of Asia to the on-going theological reflection in the Church does not need to be stressed any more. In our third article, Fr JACOB KAVUNKAL, SVD, presents an interesting study on the impact two major Latin American conferences — Medellín and Puebla — and their theological and pastoral conclusions had on Asian Theology. —

Dr CHEN ZEMIN, takes a close look at the theological developments in the China of the last decades, where modernization, pluralism and dialogue have created a new situation. He believes that in order to respond to these changed conditions in China, the contextualization and inculturation of theology is necessary. —

In the last few years different Bishops from diverse parts of the Church have spoken out on authority in the Church. The topic has become of special importance in the Church after the Second Vatican Council. From that point of view, it is very illuminating to read the study of Bro. JEFF GROSS, FSC, on the different ways the neuralgic topic of authority is handled by the different Church organizations. —

We conclude with a contribution from a Lay missionary in Brazil. KATHLEEN BOND, MM, describes how the Black Movement in Brazil is engaged in a patient search for justice. —

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Message de la deuxième Assemblée spéciale pour l'Europe du Synode des évêques

Nous témoignons avec joie de l'«Évangile de l'espérance» en Europe

Le jeudi 21 octobre, les Pères Synodaux ont approuvé le Message de la deuxième Assemblée spéciale pour l'Europe du Synode des évêques. Le texte a été rendu public le lendemain, dernier jour de réunion en congrégation générale. Voici le texte de ce message (texte original italien dans l'Osservatore Romano du 23 octobre. Traduction du Secrétariat général du Synode.) :

Le Dieu de la vie, de l'espérance et de la joie soit avec vous tous !

Tels sont le salut et le souhait, qui se font prière, que nous, évêques réunis en Synode, nous vous adressons à vous, frères et soeurs croyants, et à tous les citoyens de notre Europe.

Tel est aussi le défi lancé à la vie de chacun d'entre nous.

L'espérance est possible

1. *L'homme ne peut pas vivre sans espérance* : sa vie serait vouée à l'insignifiance et deviendrait insupportable. Mais chaque jour, cette espérance se trouve affaiblie, remise en cause et détruite par tant de formes de souffrance, d'angoisse et de mort qui traversent le coeur de nombreux Européens et notre continent tout entier. Ce défi, nous ne pouvons pas ne pas l'assumer nous-mêmes. Que l'Esprit de Dieu, qui est victorieux de toute désespérance, nous donne de partager la compassion de Jésus envers la foule sans pasteur (cf. Mc 6, 34) : qu'il nous accompagne et nous soutienne dans notre effort pour prendre notre part, avec amour et sympathie, des difficultés et des drames de tant d'hommes et de femmes - personnes âgées, adultes, jeunes et enfants - privés de santé, d'instruction, de travail, de maison, de patrie, et méconnus et piétinés dans leur droits fondamentaux à la vie, à l'égalité, à la liberté, à la paix.

Oui, frères et soeurs, nous le pensons : l'homme ne peut pas vivre sans espérance. Mais cette espérance lui sera-t-elle possible et qui pourra la lui donner, quand de si nombreux espoirs, y compris ces derniers temps, ont connu une malheureuse désillusion?

Illuminés par la foi en Jésus-Christ, nous savons, d'une humble certitude, que nous ne vous trompons pas en disant que *l'espérance est possible aujourd'hui aussi* et qu'*elle est possible à tous*. Dieu, dans son amour paternel, ne prive personne de cette possibilité,

parce qu'il veut que chacun puisse être pleinement heureux.

Voilà pourquoi, avec la joie et l'autorité qui appartiennent à qui parle au nom du Christ Seigneur qui nous a envoyés, nous nous faisons pour l'Europe entière *ambassadeurs et témoins de l'«Évangile de l'espérance»*. La parole que saint Pierre adressait aux premiers chrétiens, nous vous la disons à vous aussi: «N'ayez aucune crainte (...), ne soyez pas troublés ; mais sanctifiez dans vos coeurs le Christ Seigneur, toujours prêts à rendre raison, à qui vous le demande, de l'espérance qui est en vous» (1 P 3, 14-15).

Nous croyons en Jésus-Christ, unique et vraie espérance de l'Homme et de l'Histoire

2. Nous vous disons cette parole d'espérance depuis Rome, où nous avons été convoqués par le Pape près des tombes des Apôtres, pour un Synode - le second dédié à l'Europe - durant lequel nous nous sommes adonnés à la prière, à la réflexion et à la discussion sur le thème « Jésus-Christ, vivant dans son Église, source d'espérance pour l'Europe ». Dans la communion entre nous évêques, avec le Saint-Père et avec tous ceux qui ont participé à cette rencontre synodale, nous avons vécu une profonde expérience de foi et de charité, dans laquelle nous avons perçu et goûté la présence de Jésus vivant et opérant au milieu de nous ; nous avons en quelque sorte répété l'aventure spirituelle des disciples en chemin vers Emmaüs (cf. Lc 24, 13-35).

À la veille du Grand Jubilé de l'An 2000, nous avons fixé les yeux de notre coeur sur Jésus et contemplé son visage, et nous avons été conduits, encore une fois et avec un enthousiasme renouvelé, à *confesser notre foi* avec Pierre : « Tu es le Christ, le

Fils du Dieu vivant » (cf. Mt 16, 16). Tu es le Verbe éternel du Père qui, à la plénitude du temps, s'est fait homme comme nous et pour nous (cf. Jn 1, 14), naissant de la Vierge Marie (cf. Ga 4, 4); tu es l'Époux qui aime son Église et se livre pour elle (cf. Ep 5, 25); tu es le révélateur du visage du Père (cf. Jn 1, 18), le Rédempteur de l'homme, l'unique Sauveur du monde. De cette confession de foi qui participe à la confession ininterrompue de l'Église de tous les temps et de toutes les latitudes et qui la prolonge, naît également en nous tous une joyeuse, irrésistible et réconfortante *confession d'espérance* : Toi, Seigneur ressuscité et vivant, tu es l'espérance toujours nouvelle de l'Église et de l'humanité ; tu es l'unique et vraie espérance de l'homme et de l'histoire ; tu es « parmi nous l'espérance de la gloire » (Col 1, 27), déjà en cette vie et aussi par-delà la mort. En toi et avec toi, nous pouvons accéder à la vérité, notre existence a un sens, la communion est possible, la diversité peut devenir richesse, la puissance du Règne est à l'oeuvre dans l'histoire et aide à l'édification de la cité de l'homme, la charité donne valeur durable aux efforts de l'humanité, la souffrance peut devenir salvifique, la vie vaincra la mort, la création participera à la gloire des fils de Dieu.

Tout cela, nous le confessons en communion avec vous, frères et soeurs, qui partagez avec nous la foi dans le Seigneur Jésus.

Et avec vous, à notre Europe - que nous habitons et aimons, et que nous voyons tellement assoiffée d'une espérance qui risque souvent de s'égarer -, nous répétons ce que nous a dit le Pape Jean-Paul II au début des travaux du Synode : « Avec l'autorité qui lui vient de son Seigneur, l'Église répète à l'homme d'aujourd'hui : "Europe du troisième millénaire, ne baisse pas les bras !" (So 3, 16) ; ne cède pas au découragement, ne te résigne pas à des modes de penser et de vivre qui n'ont pas d'avenir, parce qu'ils ne s'appuient pas sur la ferme certitude de la Parole de Dieu ! »

Nous rendons grâce à Dieu pour les signes d'espérance présents dans l'Église

3. En annonçant l'« Évangile de l'espérance », guidés par l'écoute de la Parole de Dieu et dociles à l'Esprit dans le discernement des « signes des temps », nous voulons vous assurer que l'espérance - dont le Seigneur Jésus est la source, ou plutôt que Jésus est lui-même - n'est ni un rêve ni une utopie. *L'espérance est une réalité*, parce que Jésus est l'Emmanuel, le Dieu-avec-nous ; il est le Ressuscité, vivant toujours actuellement dans son Église pour opérer le salut de l'homme et de la société. Notre espérance est certaine: les signes en sont concrets, expérimentables et de

quelque manière tangibles, parce que l'Esprit Créateur, que le Crucifié Ressuscité a laissé comme premier don fait aux croyants, est toujours présent : il est Seigneur et donne la vie ; aujourd'hui encore il est à l'oeuvre plus que nous et mieux que nous dans les Églises et dans la société européennes.

Précisément parce qu'elle est Corps et Épouse du Christ Jésus, « notre espérance » (1 Tm 1, 1), l'Église en son être même est *la communauté de l'espérance* : elle reçoit continuellement du Seigneur la grâce et l'énergie de communiquer l'espérance aussi à l'Europe d'aujourd'hui. Examinant la vie quotidienne de nos Églises, nous pouvons reconnaître les multiples «*signes d'espérance* », petits ou grands, que l'Esprit suscite ou alimente.

« Signe d'espérance » sont les si nombreux *martyrs* de toutes les confessions chrétiennes qui ont vécu en notre siècle, que ce soit dans les pays de l'Ouest ou dans les pays de l'Est, même de nos jours: leur espérance a été plus forte que la mort ! Nous ne pouvons ni ne voulons oublier leur témoignage : il est très précieux et absolument nécessaire pour nous tous parce qu'il nous rappelle que sans la Croix il n'y a pas de salut, et que sans participation à l'amour du Christ crucifié qui pardonne, il n'y a pas de vraie vie chrétienne.

« Signe d'espérance » est la *sainteté* de tant d'hommes et de femmes de notre temps, non seulement de tous ceux qui ont été officiellement proclamés par l'Église, mais aussi de ceux qui, avec simplicité et dans la quotidienneté de l'existence, ont vécu en dédiant généreusement leur fidélité à l'Évangile. « Signes d'espérance » sont encore:

- la *liberté retrouvée des Églises de l'Est européen*, rendue possible par la contribution prophétique et décisive du Saint-Père : cette liberté a ouvert de nouvelles possibilités pour l'action pastorale, elle a entraîné un réveil des vocations sacerdotales et religieuses et introduit de nouveaux défis pour un exercice plus mûr de la responsabilité;

- le fait que l'Église se concentre de plus en plus sur sa *mission spirituelle* et qu'elle s'emploie à vivre le primat de l'évangélisation aussi dans les rapports avec la réalité sociale et politique;

- la présence et la diffusion de *nouveaux mouvements et communautés*, à travers lesquels l'Esprit suscite une vie chrétienne plus marquée par le radicalisme évangélique et l'élan missionnaire;

- le fait que, suscités par le même Esprit, se déclenchent un engagement renouvelé pour l'Évangile et une généreuse disponibilité pour le service, dans des *réalités plus traditionnelles* de l'Église : dans les paroisses, parmi les personnes consacrées, dans les associations de laïcs, dans les groupes de prière et d'apostolat, en diverses communautés de jeunes;

- la prise de conscience accrue de la *coresponsabilité propre de tous les chrétiens*, dans la variété et la complémentarité des dons et des tâches, au sein de l'unique mission de l'Église;

- la *présence et l'action croissantes des femmes* dans les structures et les divers domaines de la vie de la communauté chrétienne.

Avec un vif sentiment de gratitude envers le Seigneur, nous reconnaissons comme « signe d'espérance », les pas accomplis sur le *chemin oecuménique*, et en dépit de nombreuses difficultés, sous le signe de la vérité, de la charité et de la réconciliation. En particulier, nous accueillons avec satisfaction la « Déclaration commune sur la Justification » qui sera signée, à Augsburg, le 31 octobre 1999, par les représentants de notre Église et de la Fédération Luthérienne Mondiale : après plus de quatre siècles, nous sommes parvenus à un consensus sur plusieurs vérités fondamentales concernant ce point central de notre foi. Nous rappelons en outre le bel accueil réservé au Saint-Père lors de sa visite en Roumanie.

Un autre « signe d'espérance » est l'« *échange des dons* » entre les Églises de l'Ouest et celles de l'Est et leur intensification en ces dernières années, avec l'enrichissement réciproque, spirituel et pastoral, qui en a résulté pour une Église appelée à respirer avec ses « deux poumons » et à vivre avec son unique coeur, rempli de l'amour du Christ et de son Esprit.

Laissons-nous convertir par le Seigneur et répondons à notre vocation

4. L'espérance chrétienne que nous vous annonçons et dont nous témoignons, très chers frères et soeurs - outre qu'elle est possible et qu'elle se présente comme une réalité concrète -, est *un don et une responsabilité* pour toutes nos Églises et communautés, et pour chacun de nous.

Animés d'une telle conscience, il nous faut faire tous ensemble un humble et courageux *examen de conscience* pour reconnaître nos peurs et nos erreurs, pour confesser avec sincérité nos lenteurs, omissions, infidélités et fautes.

Mais que notre coeur soit plein d'espérance, dans la certitude que le Père use toujours de miséricorde envers ceux qui confessent leur propre péché, et leur adresse un appel pressant à la conversion et au renouvellement de leur vie.

N'ayez pas peur ! La grave situation d'indifférence religieuse de tant d'Européens, le grand nombre de ceux qui, aussi sur notre continent, ne connaissent pas encore Jésus-Christ et son Église et qui ne sont pas encore baptisés, le sécularisme qui gagne une large frange de chrétiens qui pensent, décident et vivent de

manière habituelle comme si « le Christ n'existait pas », tout cela, loin d'éteindre notre espérance, la rend plus humble et plus capable de se fier à Dieu seul. De sa miséricorde, nous recevons *la grâce et l'engagement de la conversion*.

À vous tous, frères et soeurs aimés du Seigneur, qui constituez le peuple de Dieu pérégrinant dans l'Europe d'aujourd'hui et de demain, au nom du Christ, nous osons dire avec confiance : *laissez-vous convertir par le Seigneur et répondez avec une ardeur renouvelée à la vocation apostolique et missionnaire* que vous avez reçue avec le Baptême. Tous ensemble - évêques, prêtres, diacres, consacrés et fidèles laïcs, hommes et femmes -, et chacun selon son propre don et sa propre tâche, vouons notre coeur et notre vie à la grandiose et enthousiasmante entreprise qui consiste à collaborer avec le Christ au salut, à la liberté, au bonheur de tous les hommes, en particulier de nos frères et de nos soeurs d'Europe!

À vous, *prêtres* de nos Églises d'Europe, qui vivez avec un dévouement admirable le ministère qui vous a été confié, nous adressons notre parole avec gratitude et confiance : ne perdez pas coeur et ne vous laissez pas accabler par la fatigue ; en pleine communion avec nous évêques, en fraternité joyeuse avec les autres prêtres, en cordiale responsabilité avec les consacrés et tous les fidèles laïcs, continuez votre oeuvre unique et irremplaçable.

Tous ensemble, frères et soeurs dans le Seigneur, pour vivre avec plus de vérité et de crédibilité notre responsabilité, continuons avec grande confiance le chemin oecuménique, redécouvrons le lien qui nous unit à nos « frères aînés » juifs, ouvrons-nous au dialogue respectueux et responsable avec ceux qui appartiennent aux autres religions, intensifions notre élan missionnaire en allant dans le monde tout entier (cf. Mt 28, 19-20).

Appelés et envoyés pour annoncer, célébrer et servir l'« Évangile de l'espérance »

5. Pour vivre avec ardeur la vaste et urgente entreprise de la nouvelle évangélisation, à laquelle le Saint-Père nous invite de manière répétée, de telle sorte que l'Europe puisse réaliser *cette rencontre renouvelée avec le Christ* dont elle a besoin, ne nous laissons pas d'annoncer, célébrer et servir l'« *Évangile de l'espérance* ».

Annonçons l'« Évangile de l'espérance » ! Dans un monde assourdi par tant de paroles et souvent incapable de se fier à quelqu'un en qui il croirait, renouvelons la profession de foi de Pierre : « Seigneur, à qui irions-nous, tu as les paroles de la vie éternelle » (Jn 6, 68). Nous-mêmes les premiers, nous nous fions à cette parole, lue, méditée et priée dans les Saintes

Écritures. Dans nos Églises, employons-nous à donner une nouvelle impulsion à l'annonce par le témoignage de la vie, à la prédication, à la catéchèse, à la recherche théologique, à la culture religieuse, au dialogue entre science et foi. Accompagnons par des itinéraires de foi exigeants le chemin de tous ceux qui demandent le baptême ou sont déjà appelés à le vivre dans la vie de chaque jour. Entraînons-nous à accueillir avec docilité et en plein assentiment la doctrine de l'Église, pour que notre pensée et notre comportement soient cohérents avec l'Évangile de Jésus.

Célébrons l'« Évangile de l'espérance » ! Dans une société et une culture souvent fermées à la transcendance, étouffées par des comportements de pure consommation, asservies à des idolâtries anciennes et nouvelles, redécouvrons avec étonnement le sens du « mystère » ; renouvelons nos célébrations liturgiques pour qu'elles soient des signes plus éloquents de la présence du Christ Seigneur ; assurons de nouveaux espaces au silence, à la prière et à la contemplation ; retournons aux sacrements, spécialement à ceux de l'Eucharistie et de la Pénitence, ces sources de salut et de réconciliation, de liberté et de nouvelle espérance.

Servons l'« Évangile de l'espérance » ! Dans une Europe marquée par de nouvelles clôtures sur soi et par diverses formes d'égoïsmes, la charité qui agit est, de la part des personnes et des communautés, l'unique voie empruntable pour redonner espérance à qui est sans espérance. Décidons-nous donc à aimer!

Par une vie qui soit miroir et témoignage du Dieu charité, ouvrons notre cœur à l'accueil, à l'attention à chaque frère et chaque soeur qui se trouvent dans la souffrance ou dans la peur, à l'amour préférentiel pour les pauvres, au partage des biens dans une vie plus sobre. Ouvrons notre charité également à la protection et au développement de la création, don de Dieu pour nous et pour les générations futures, et à l'engagement généreux et compétent pour l'édification de la cité des hommes dans la vérité, dans la justice, dans la liberté et dans la solidarité, uniques et solides piliers d'une vie commune pacifique.

Nous reconnaissons les signes d'espérance présents aujourd'hui en Europe

6. Notre confession de l'espérance nous invite à porter un *regard particulier sur l'Europe*, cette réalité géographique complexe, mais avant tout historique et culturelle, dont l'histoire est étroitement liée à celle du christianisme. C'est de nouveau un regard de foi qui nous fait recueillir même dans les contradictions de l'histoire la présence de l'Esprit de Dieu qui renouvelle la face de la terre.

Nous nous trouvons tous ensemble face à des

situations dramatiques et inquiétantes qui manifestent l'oeuvre de l'esprit du mal et de tous ceux qui le suivent. Comment oublier toutes les formes de violation des droits fondamentaux des personnes, des minorités, et des peuples - en particulier la « purification ethnique » et l'interdiction faite aux fugitifs de revenir chez eux - avec l'énorme poids d'injustices, de violences et de mort qui écrase notre siècle désormais sur son déclin?

Et pourtant, dans cette même Europe qui est la nôtre, il nous est donné de relever des *phénomènes et des motifs qui ouvrent à l'espérance*.

Nous constatons avec joie *l'ouverture* croissante des peuples les uns envers les autres, la *réconciliation* entre nations longtemps hostiles et ennemies, *l'élargissement* progressif du processus d'unification aux pays de l'Est européen. Reconnaissances, *collaborations et échanges* de tous ordres sont en développement, de sorte que se créent peu à peu une culture et même une *conscience européenne*, dont nous espérons qu'elle puisse faire croître, spécialement près des jeunes, le sentiment de la fraternité et la volonté du partage.

Nous enregistrons comme positif le fait que tout ce processus se développe selon des *méthodes démocratiques*, sur un mode pacifique et dans un esprit de *liberté* qui respecte et valorise les légitimes diversités, en suscitant et soutenant le processus *d'unification de l'Europe*.

Nous saluons avec satisfaction ce qui a été fait pour préciser les conditions et les modalités du respect des droits humains.

Dans le contexte, enfin, de la légitime et nécessaire unité économique et politique en Europe, tandis que nous enregistrons les signes de l'espérance qu'offre la considération accordée *au droit et à la qualité de la vie*, nous souhaitons vivement que, dans une fidélité créatrice à la tradition humaniste et chrétienne de notre continent, soit garanti le primat des *valeurs éthiques et spirituelles*. Ce voeu qui est le nôtre naît de la ferme conviction qu'il n'y aura pas d'unité vraie et féconde pour l'Europe si elle n'est pas construite sur ses fondements spirituels!

Pour tout cela, nous rendons grâce à Dieu et nous reconnaissons le mérite de tous ceux qui sont engagés dans les diverses institutions européennes, ouverts également au dialogue et à la collaboration avec nos Églises.

Comme chrétiens, nous voulons être et invitons à être des *Européens convaincus*, prêts à apporter notre contribution à l'Europe d'aujourd'hui et de demain, en recueillant le précieux héritage qui nous a été laissé par les « pères fondateurs » de l'Europe unie.

L'amour sincère que, comme Pasteurs, nous portons à l'Europe, nous pousse à adresser avec

confiance quelques appels à tous ceux qui - surtout au niveau institutionnel, politique et culturel - ont une responsabilité spécifique concernant les destins futurs de notre continent :

- ne vous taisez pas mais élevez la voix quand sont violés les *droits humains* des individus, des minorités et des peuples, à commencer par le droit à la liberté religieuse ;

- réservez la plus grande attention à tout ce qui regarde la *vie humaine* de sa conception jusqu'à la mort naturelle, et la famille fondée sur le mariage : ce sont les bases sur lesquelles s'édifie la maison commune européenne ;

- poursuivez avec courage et selon ce qui est opportun, le processus de *l'intégration européenne* en élargissant le cercle des peuples membres de l'Union, en valorisant dans une sage harmonie les diversités historiques et culturelles des nations, en assurant la globalité et l'unité des valeurs qui qualifient l'Europe du point de vue humain et culturel ;

- affrontez selon la justice et l'équité, et avec un grand sens de la solidarité, le phénomène croissant des *migrations*, faisant en sorte qu'elles soient une nouvelle ressource pour l'avenir européen ;

- faites tous vos efforts pour qu'aux jeunes soit garanti un avenir vraiment humain, par le *travail*, la *culture*, l'*éducation* aux valeurs morales et spirituelles ;

- tenez l'Europe ouverte à *tous les pays du monde*, continuant à mettre en oeuvre, dans le contexte actuel de la globalisation, des formes de coopération non seulement économique mais également sociale et culturelle, et accueillez l'appel qu'avec le Saint-Père nous vous renouvelons à remettre ou au moins à réduire la *dette internationale* des pays en voie de développement comme cela a déjà été fait par tel ou tel pays.

Si ces responsabilités et d'autres encore sont assumées, les racines chrétiennes de notre Europe et sa riche tradition humaniste pourront trouver de nouvelles formes d'expression pour le vrai bien de la personne et de la société.

Nous prions ensemble pour l'Europe et pour le monde

7. Nous prenons congé de vous, qui nous lisez ou nous écoutez, *en adressant notre prière au Dieu de la vie, de l'espérance et de la joie.*

Priez vous aussi avec nous : « Mon âme exalte le Seigneur et mon esprit exulte en Dieu mon Sauveur » (Lc 1, 46-47).

Comme Marie, nous louons le Seigneur pour sa miséricorde qui, de génération en génération, rejoint les hommes et les femmes de notre temps. *Notre Dieu est fidèle !* Il n'oublie jamais la promesse

faite à Abraham et à sa descendance et, par la puissance miséricordieuse de son bras, il apporte toujours son secours à chaque peuple.

Il guide l'histoire humaine et la conduit d'époque en époque à l'accomplissement de son dessein d'amour.

Animés de ces certitudes, comme Pasteurs et frères, nous renouvelons notre appel confiant :

Église d'Europe, ne crains pas!

Vis tes responsabilités!

Le temps viendra - et déjà on en entrevoit les signes!

- dans lequel le bien triomphera sur le mal. Comme le disait Marie dans sa prière pleine de foi et d'espérance, les hommes et les peuples arrogants sont dispersés, les puissants sont renversés de leurs trônes et les riches sont renvoyés les mains vides, tandis que les affamés sont comblés de biens (cf. Lc 1, 51-53).

Église d'Europe, ne crains pas! Le Dieu de l'espérance ne t'abandonne pas. Crois en son amour qui sauve. Espère en sa miséricorde qui pardonne, renouvelle, et vivifie.

Espère en ton Seigneur et tu ne seras pas confondue éternellement !

Ref.: *La documentation catholique*, n. 2213du7/11/1999-Document- page955.

Asian Synod — Asian Pentecost Introducing “*Ecclesia in Asia*”

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Gratitude, celebration, and optimism characterize *Ecclesia in Asia*, the Apostolic Exhortation signed by Pope John Paul II during his Pastoral Visit to India (5-8 November 1999). The issuance of *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA) was the concluding moment of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, popularly known as the “Asian Synod.” This four-year project of Church reflection and renewal began with the publication of the *Lineamenta* (1996), continued with discussion on the *Instrumentum Laboris* (1998), reached its apex with the month-long Synod sessions in Rome (18 April - 14 May 1998), and culminated with the proclamation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (6 November 1999).

The Asian Synod was a multi-faceted event on many levels. As *Ecclesia in Asia* notes, “It was indeed a moment of special grace” (n. 3). It was also “a celebratory remembering of the Asian roots of Christianity” (n. 4). The Synod event became “an ardent affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour” (*ibid.*); and, as the local Churches of Asia gathered in Rome, “the Synod Fathers sought to discern the principal areas of mission for the Church in Asia as she crosses the threshold of the new millennium” (n. 18).

Ecclesia in Asia, a rich, lengthy document, becomes an important signpost of evangelization for the local Churches in Asia. An analysis of EA reveals three major sections or underlying thematics: (1) Asian Realities relevant to the Church and her Mission of Evangelization (nn. 5-9); (2) Theological-Doctrinal Aspects of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (nn. 10-23); (3) The Church’s Mission of Love and Service in Asia (nn. 24-49). The main body of EA is framed by an Introduction which captures the highlights of the Synod process (nn. 1-4) and a conclusion that expresses the Pope’s gratitude and encouraging words as well as a final prayer to Mary, “Mother of

Asia” (nn. 50-51). The entire document is focused on “seeking to discern the Spirit’s word to the Churches in Asia” (n. 50).

Asian Context

Ecclesia in Asia devotes its first chapter to an exploration of the concrete situation of contemporary Asia — her religious, cultural, economic, social, political, and historical realities (nn. 5-9). This inductive approach, characteristic of current Asian theological reflection, mirrors the method and experience of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC). The Asian Church accepts that “a critical awareness of the diverse and complex realities of Asia is essential if the People of God on the continent are to respond to God’s will for them in the new evangelization” (n. 5).

As EA notes, “Asia is the earth’s largest continent and is home to nearly two-thirds of the world’s population”; its variety of peoples are “heirs to ancient cultures, religions and traditions”. One is amazed “at the sheer size of Asia’s population and at the intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions” (n. 6).

Economically, socially, and politically, “situations on the Asian continent are very diverse, defying any simple classification” (n. 7). EA highlights various concrete pastoral concerns: rapid change, migration, nuclear power, tourism, population growth, poverty, women, and a host of additional challenges. In this complex situation, the Church’s one ambition is to continue Christ’s mission of service and love (cf. n. 50). Her approach is that of mutual exchange and enrichment; thus, EA confirms “the importance of dialogue as a characteristic mode of the Church’s life in Asia” (n. 3). Mother Teresa of Calcutta is proposed as “an icon of the service to life which the Church is

offering in Asia" (n. 7).

This "chosen" continent of Asia, with all its immensity, diversity, and complexity, holds special meaning for the Church. God "sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ the Saviour, who took flesh as an Asian" (n. 1); "Behold the Saviour of the World is born to us, born in Asia" (n. 2). Yes, Asia is unique as "the birthplace of Jesus and of the Church" (n. 5). This Church thanks God "for choosing Asia as the earthly dwelling-place of his incarnate Son" (n. 50; cf. nn. 2, 9, 20). This unique gift implies a task; the Church commits her energies to making Jesus, his Gospel of Life, and his Community the Church truly "at home" (inculturated) in Asia and her peoples (nn. 9, 20).

Theological Foundations

Three chapters of EA, focusing on Jesus and the Spirit, describe a type of "doctrinal" orientation to the Church's Asian mission. Yet, the manner of presentation is decidedly "pastoral" in style and focus; it blends theologies "from below" and "from above." It reads easily; the language flow is smooth. Some insights even enjoy poetic expression: "Contemplating Jesus in his human nature, the peoples of Asia find their deepest questions answered, their hopes fulfilled, their dignity uplifted and their despair conquered" (n. 14).

The thematic of "gift" is a creative optic frequently employed in these "theological" chapters. Jesus the Saviour is a gift to Asia; this faith-gift is to be both appropriated and proclaimed. "The Church's faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia" (n. 10). "Only if the People of God recognize the gift that is theirs in Christ will they be able to communicate that gift to others through proclamation and dialogue" (n. 31; cf. nn. 19-20).

Proclaiming the Christian faith-gift meets unique challenges, particularly in the "multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural situation of Asia" (n. 21). Asia has its indigenous religions, soteriologies, and saviour figures (cf. nn. 14, 19-20). This reality demands a humble, dialogical stance on the part of the Church; "proclamation is prompted not by sectarian impulse nor the spirit of proselytism nor any sense of superiority" (n. 20; cf. nn. 4, 31, 46). And yet, this genuine respect and reverence for the Church's dialogue partners "does not eliminate the need for the explicit proclamation of the Gospel in its fullness" (n. 20; cf. n. 31). By her very identity the Church is "a community aflame with missionary zeal to make Je-

sus known, loved and followed" (n. 19).

Affirming the relevance of Jesus for Asia (nn. 1, 9, 10, 18, 50) demands a particular approach to proclamation. The Church "needs to follow a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery". She should employ "narrative methods akin to Asian cultural forms" and follow "an evocative pedagogy, using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching". In a word, the Church must "evangelize in a way that appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples" (n. 20). Engaging Asian peoples, their cultures and religions (FABC's triple dialogue) demands genuine commitment to inculturation (nn. 20-23) and interreligious dialogue (nn. 29-31).

EA asserts that Christology is necessarily integrated with Pneumatology as well as Trinitarian faith. It is the "uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance" (n. 14); one cannot "separate the activity of the Holy Spirit from that of Jesus the Saviour" (cf. n. 16). The Holy Spirit, "the prime agent of evangelization" (n. 17), is "an absolutely vital part of the mystery of Jesus and of the salvation which he brings" (n. 15). Jesus and his Spirit are only adequately comprehended within the "Trinity's plan of salvation" (*ibid.*); there are no two parallel economies of salvation. There are real, complex missiological questions and the Asian Synod / EA attempted to face them.

A Missionary Community

The longest section of EA (nn. 24-49) focuses on the Church and her mission in the vast Asian continent. Four discernable themes emerge: Church as Communion for Mission (nn. 24-28), Dialogue (nn. 29-31), Human Promotion (nn. 32-41), and Agents of Evangelization (nn. 42-49). EA presents a vision as well as concrete approaches for mission; these emerge from a particular faith-stance: "the question is not whether the Church has something essential to say to the men and women of our time, but how she can say it clearly and convincingly" (n. 29). EA recognizes "the pressing need of the local Churches in Asia to present the mystery of Christ to their peoples according to their cultural patterns and ways of thinking" (n. 20).

"Communion Ecclesiology" finds strong expression in EA. The Church is a "privileged place of encounter" between God and people; her first purpose is "to be the sacrament of the inner union of the human person with God". She is also "the sacrament of

the unity of the human race". This means that "communion and mission are inseparably connected [and] they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other". Communion is "both the source and fruit of mission". In short, "Communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion" (n. 24).

The Church in Asia promotes internal communion and participation on many levels: with the Successor of Peter, among various sister local Churches, Dioceses, basic ecclesial communities ("a positive feature of the Church's evangelizing activity"), renewal movements, the Catholic Eastern Churches, other Christian Churches (cf. nn. 25-27). Internal communion emanates outward toward other groups throughout Asia: the variety of peoples, cultures and religions with whom the Church shares life (n. 25), Churches and peoples in Mainland China, North Korea, and the ex-Soviet territories of Asia (n. 28). Regional and continental associations of Bishops that foster communion (e.g. FABC) are recognized and praised (n. 26), but their profound insights are never directly quoted.

An inherent demand of "communion ecclesiology" is dialogue. This "desire for dialogue ... is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples; it is an essential part of the Church's mission ... a veritable vocation for the Church" (n. 29). A particularly helpful section is devoted to Interreligious Dialogue (n. 31), seen as "a part of the Church's evangelizing mission, an expression of the mission *ad gentes*".

The entire Chapter VI treats human promotion and Church social teaching. Striving to build a "civilization of love", the Church views all human development not only as a "technical or economic question; it is fundamentally a human and moral question" (n. 32). An integral, holistic approach to evangelization is employed, encompassing the areas of human dignity (n. 33), preferential love of the poor (n. 34), health care (n. 36), education (n. 37), peacemaking (n. 38) globalization (n. 39), foreign debt (n. 40), the environment (n. 41). In these diverse fields, the Church resists "the culture of death" in accord with her vision of "the Gospel of Life" (n. 35).

Agents of Evangelization

Chapter VII, entitled "Witness to the Gospel", focuses on the Church's missionary identity in Asia. The Church strives to be a credible witness, because "people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories"; in the Asian context "people

are more persuaded by holiness of life than by intellectual argument" (n. 42). EA asserts that it is a "genuinely religious person [who] readily wins respect and a following in Asia" (n. 23).

Gospel witness in Asia needs holy men and women who themselves are "on fire with the love of Christ and burning with zeal to make him known more widely, loved more deeply and followed more closely". Why? "A fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire"; Christian witnessing demands "a true missionary spirituality of prayer and contemplation" (n. 23). Asian peoples, especially the youth, manifest this "deep thirst for spiritual values" (n. 6). In a word, living Christian mission in Asia demands "contemplative action and active contemplation" (n. 23).

EA addresses a variety of Gospel witnesses: Pastors (n. 43), religious and missionaries (n. 44), laity (n. 45), families (n. 46), young people (n. 47), and those whose apostolate is social communications, "the areopagus of the modern age" (n. 48). Striking insights are often presented: "People in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers and institutional administrators but as men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit" (n. 43).

The Pope encourages and thanks missionaries (nn. 20, 42, 44, 50), urging "the Church in Asia to send forth missionaries, even though she herself needs labourers in the vineyard" (n. 44). Mission is to be central to each local Church; local "missionary societies of apostolic life, characterized by their special commitment to the mission *ad gentes*, *ad exteros* and *ad vitam*" are strongly encouraged (*ibid.*). EA calls upon "the great host of Asian martyrs, old and new ... to teach the Church in Asia what it means to bear witness" (n. 49).

Additional Emphases

The Asian Synod surfaced crucial questions facing local Churches in Asia; EA reflects several of these pastoral-missionary concerns. "Jesus is often perceived as foreign to Asia. It is paradoxical that most Asians tend to regard Jesus — born on Asian soil — as a Western rather than an Asian figure". To address and overcome this reality, the Church must open herself to "new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia" (n. 20). How can Jesus be effectively proclaimed — bearing an "Asian face"?

In various places in Asia "Christians are not allowed to practice their faith freely" (n. 8); "explicit

proclamation is forbidden and religious freedom is denied or systematically restricted” (n. 23). Christians are forced “to live their faith in the midst of restrictions or even the total denial of freedom” (n. 28). Governments are enjoined to “guarantee religious freedom for all their citizens” (*ibid.*), assure “immunity from coercion” (n. 23) in religious matters, and recognize “the right to freedom of conscience and religion and the other basic human rights” (n. 34).

Analysis and comparison between the content of EA and the decades of pastoral reflection by Asian Bishops (FABC) reveals many similarities. Since 1974 in its document “Evangelization in Modern Day Asia,” the FABC has promoted the local Church’s triple dialogue with Asia’s peoples, cultures, and religions; this vision is repeatedly found in EA (cf. nn. 1, 15, 18, 20, 21, 24). Again, the FABC pastoral priorities enunciated over the years, particularly the focus on the family, women and the girl-child, youth, ecology, and the displaced (cf. FABC VII: 15) are also highlighted by EA (nn. 34, 37, 41, 46, 47, etc.). FABC itself is mentioned (nn. 2, 3, 26, 31), though none of its fine work is directly quoted or even noted in the copious endnotes.

The Christian virtue of compassion repeatedly surfaces in EA (e.g. nn. 11, 12, 14, 20, 45, 51). The Apostolic Exhortation is correct in expressing the Church’s mission in terms of this appealing focus. Presenting Jesus as “the Compassionate Friend of the Poor” (n. 20) will find a resonance and reception among Asians. In the Church’s mission of love and service, women evangelizers contribute greatly “to bringing the compassionate Jesus, the healer and reconciler, to Asian people, especially the poor and marginalized” (n. 45). In Jesus, the God-Man who saves, “Divine compassion had never been so immediately accessible” (n. 11).

As the Church in Asia enters the new millennium, she faces some very demanding challenges; EA highlights some important apostolates: women (nn. 7, 34, 45), youth (nn. 6, 47), nuclear power (nn. 7, 38), peacemaking and reconciliation (n. 38), globalization (n. 39), foreign debt (n. 40), and the environment (n. 41). The authenticity of the Church’s “mission of service and love” (n. 50) will indeed be tested; will it produce “a great harvest of faith ... in this vast and vital continent” (n. 1) of Asia?

Conclusion

Ecclesia in Asia concludes as it began on a clear note of optimism and gratitude. “Blessed be God for the peoples of Asia, so rich in their diversity yet one in their yearning for peace and fullness of life” (n. 50). With committed faith, “the Church in Asia joyfully makes her pilgrim way into the Third Millennium” (*ibid.*). “Mary, model of all disciples and bright Star of Evangelization ... look tenderly upon the Church of your Son planted on Asian soil” (n. 51).

Contemplating God’s salvific deeds and wonders during the Easter Vigil liturgy, the Universal Church proclaims in the *Exsultet*: “Rejoice, O Mother Church”! In similar fashion, the local Churches in Asia acclaim God’s marvels in their midst; they joyfully affirm the Asian Synod event as a “celebratory remembering of the Asian roots of Christianity” (n. 4). They pray that the proclamation and subsequent internalization of *Ecclesia in Asia* will confirm the Church in her mission of service to bring Christ’s love and abundant life (Jn 10:10) to Asia and her peoples. **Rejoice, O Asia-Church!**

The Impact of Medellin and Puebla on Asian Theology

Asia, spread over a large area, is a continent with varied cultures and many dimensions. It has some of the finest specimens of historical, spiritual and cultural heritage. The cradle of many world religions and nurturing innumerable forms of primal religions, Asia proudly displays its splendid, majestic temples. Asia boasts of its first written prayers in the world as well as its ancient philosophical and mathematical achievements. Though Christianity reached the shores of Asia already in apostolic times, less than three per cent of Asians find their salvation through the Christian faith.

Notwithstanding all its ancient glory, Asia today is the home of more than two thirds of the poor of the world. What is specific to Asian poverty is that economic poverty is very much interpolated with what can be described as anthropological poverty, i.e., despoiling human beings not only of what they have but of everything that constitutes their very being and essence: their human identity and dignity. Aloysius Pieris has aptly summarized the Asian predicament as one of mass poverty and the religiosity of the masses.

With isolated exceptions, theology in Asia has been academic, focusing on Western concerns and using Western noetic models. Hardly any attempt was made to develop a theology in touch with the Asian reality. It was an alienated and alienating theology in so far as it had nothing to say to the Asian context and the concerns of the peoples of Asia. Most Asian theology was translations and adaptations of a supposedly “universal theology” developed in the West. Following the Western method, in Asia too theologizing was done in comfortable seminaries and theological centres far removed from the toils and tears of the Asian masses.

Beginnings of Liberation Theology:

Under the impact of many sources — theological, philosophical, economic and above all, Vatican II, divine Providence led the Latin American Church to the transforming event of Medellin in 1968. “The aim of the Medellin Conference” in the words of Penny Lernoux, “was to examine the situation in Latin America in light of the conclusions of Vatican II, a

situation greatly worsened since the start of the decade and the subject of intense theological and sociological debate”.¹

Medellin gave birth to the first local theology in modern times, christened as the theology of liberation. What gave a specific Latin American content to this theology was its methodology based on the reality of Latin America, the reality of poverty and oppression, an insistence on the integral liberation of human beings, both temporal and spiritual, and an approach to God through humanity. Medellin clearly and unambiguously asserted that the Church should exercise a “preferential option for the poor”, a thought that became not only the hall-mark of Liberation Theology, but also revolutionalized the Church’s evangelistic vocation in general.

Medellin’s prophetic commitment to the poor and the oppressed was reaffirmed by the Third Latin American Bishops’ Meeting at Puebla in 1979, which contains “the letter and spirit of the Medellin Conference”.² Medellin and Puebla together contributed to the growth of the Latin American Theology, which for the first time in the history of the subcontinent was incarnate in the situation of the persons and peoples of Latin America. The Latin American reality, subjected to an in-depth reflection in the light of faith by the theology of liberation, has furnished theologians with a reorientation and has rejuvenated the task of Christianity and the Church in Latin America.³ For the first time in history a theological creation of the third world acquired relevancy and meaning throughout the rest of the world including the first world. In the following pages we shall concentrate on its impact on Asian Theologizing.

Theology is Local:

To begin with, the liberating awareness arose on the Asian theological horizon that there is no such thing as a universal theology but that every theology is local.⁴ Asian theologians pointed out how the theology that was imposed on Asia as a perennial theology was nothing but a local theology developed in response to a particular historical and cultural con-

text. In so far as it was incapable of responding to the specific Asian concerns it remained largely irrelevant in Asia. What Asia needed was not so much a local theology imported from elsewhere, but a local theology of Asia, evolved from Asian concerns. The Latin American lead in mapping out a theology that was not just a translation or further elaboration of European theology fanned Asian interest in developing a theology for Asia.

In this process the greatest contribution of Latin American theology, I would say, is the method of theologizing that Latin America developed, a methodology based on the reality of Latin America, a reality of poverty and oppression. The Latin American starting point of theologizing, the analysis of the social reality, “the pastoral overview of the socio-cultural context” that Puebla spoke of, left an indelible mark on Asian theology.

Since 1970 Asian theology began to be more in touch with the Asian reality. Since Asia shares with Latin America in the “third-worldness”, the Asian reality is very much similar to its Latin American counterpart in its experience of the dehumanizing oppression that threatens the very existence of the people. This new perception of the experience of struggle for liberation is the point of departure for Asian Theology. “The concern of the Church is not Christians but the poor; its struggle is not for itself but for the liberation of all men and women who are held captive”, observes Samuel Rayan.⁵

The Historical Context:

The merit of Latin American theology is its emphasis on the role of history in theologizing. It pointed out the significance of the historical context of the theologizing community. Asian theology began to respond to the socio, economic, religious and political context of Asia. Latin American writings found resonance among Asian theologians. They began to listen to the groans and cries of the dispossessed tribals, of the caste-ridden poor subject to marginalization and untouchability, of the women discriminated against, of the children who have to pass their childhood working hard, of the minjung and “no-people” of Asia.

The Korean theologian Kim Chung-Choon compares the Christian theologian to the Korean Shaman whose role is to appease the

spirits of the dead. Similarly Christian theologians must identify themselves with suffering humanity. “The ministry of the Church must accent the appeasement of ‘Han’ so that all the rejected, despised, imprisoned, exploited, alienated and the poor may have joy and satisfaction”.⁶ The Korean notion of “Han” means the accumulation of grief and oppression. Those who are under the weight of Han are the minjung and this in turn has given rise to what is called the Minjung theology, arising from their struggles for basic human rights. The minjung are the have-nots. They are farmers, fishermen, labourers, unemployed, soldiers, policemen, small shop-keepers, small producers, etc. They suffer from political suppression, economic exploitation, social humiliation and cultural alienation. The Minjung theology, incorporating the Korean shamanic tradition and growing out of the grass-roots, the minjung, is a typical Asian theology which has sprung up under the impact of Liberation Theology.

New Biblical Hermeneutics:

Asian theologians became convinced that the Word of God is to be read in the context of their history — with its gaping wounds of untimely death caused by hunger, malnutrition, violence, lack of health care, etc. As opposed to the economic and political oppression from which the Latin American Church seeks liberation, Asian theology has the added burden of ushering in liberation from the vice of caste distinction.

Theologians began more and more to use the context of the poor and the marginalized as a source of interpreting the word of God. Biblical scholars like George Soares-Prabhu have commented how liberation theology sensitized exegetes to the social, economic, and political dimensions of the Bible and it has made them aware of the extent to which their scientific exegesis is inevitably

Asian theology became aware of the many poor and of the many religions of Asia. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these two questions resonate in most of the theological output in Asia since the 1970s. As Aloysius Pieris has argued we cannot adequately address the problem of Asian poverty unless we do it in the context of the dialogue with the Asian religions and at the same time there cannot be an authentic inter-religious encounter without the concern for the poor.

coloured by cultural and class prejudices.⁷ Soares-Prabhu, applying the same principles to the Indian context has affirmed that “the poor of the Bible are all those who are in any way, and not just economically, deprived of the means or the dignity they need to lead a fully human existence; or who are in a situation of powerlessness which exposes them to such deprivation. The poor of the Bible are thus the ‘wretched of the earth’, the marginalized, the exploited, all those who are actually or potentially oppressed”.⁸ Poverty in

the Bible is not a natural phenomenon, but it is always the result of the avoidable and undesirable consequences of injustice and exploitation.

The context-based hermeneutic of the biblical text, developed by Juan Luis Segundo, has raised quite a following in Asia.⁹ To quote Soares-Prabhu again, “an Indian-Christian reading will be a reading of the Bible by an interpreter sensitive to the Indian situation and true to the biblical text. It will be, that is, a true-to-the-text reading made with an Indian pre-understanding and responsive to Indian concerns”.¹⁰ Naturally it is not a slavish reproduction of the Latin American hermeneutics but it is an interpretation of the text responding to the social concerns of Asia with an Asian sensibility, i.e., respecting the cosmic orientation and inclusive attitude of the Asian mind. Thus biblical interpretation began to be an intersection of the Asian social reality and the Asian religious reality. While the former shares the features of the Latin American liberation theology, the later stresses the personal liberation from the psychological compulsions.

Context of Religious Pluralism:

Unlike Latin America, Christians in Asian countries — except the Philippines — are a small minority surrounded by persons inspired by other living traditions. Asian Christian theology has viewed the rich and multifaceted religious heritage of Asia in a new light. It is trying to integrate the religious wealth of its neighbours of faith through dialogue with them, a dialogue that looks for the liberating factors that these religious traditions contain and to discover new insights into its own biblical tradition that may come from the encounters with these age-old religions.

In Asia theologians reflect to further the humanization of the society most of which finds God outside the Christian revelation. This in no way discourages the Asian theologian as he/she is aware that Jesus was not a “Christian” and that strictly speaking he did not give rise to a new religion. Not only Jesus but also the community of his Disciples at its earliest stage was Jewish with its religion centred around the temple and the synagogue (Acts 3:1-3). The only thing that differentiated it from the rest of the Jews was that while the Jews still looked forward to the coming of the promised messiah, the new sect believed in Jesus as the

Messiah that has come already. According to the Gospels what Jesus wanted was the right living of any religion, in the light of the experience of God as the intimate and loving parent. Hence Asian theologians are increasingly advocating a ministry-centred, and an incarnational theology of mission rather than the atonement theology of the West. In this, Asian theologians are on the same wave length as their Latin American counterparts in so far as the latter advocate a shift from the mediator to the mediation that Jesus brought about through his ministry.

Asian theology became aware of the many poor and of the many religions of Asia. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these two questions resonate in most of the theological output in Asia since the 1970s. It is not that the Asian Church was not aware of these two realities earlier. In fact most of its mission was directed against the followers of other religions, to win them over to the Church and to save them! What is new is that the Asian Church has realized that these two realities should be combined, i.e., to see the poor as religious and the religious as the poor.

As Aloysius Pieris has argued we cannot adequately address the problem of Asian poverty unless we do it in the context of the dialogue with the Asian religions and at the same time there cannot be an authentic inter-religious encounter without the concern for the poor.¹¹ While the integral approach to spirituality, secular involvement and liturgy in the light of the historical Jesus and his humanity is a contribution of Latin American theology, the Asian theology of liberation takes shape from the Christian encounter with Asian religions. Elsewhere Aloysius Pieris emphasizes the need to include other religions in our theological purview. Thus a Christology of Asia is not one of Christ against religions, but a “Christ of religions” which unites all persons of all religions in a quest of liberation from all sorts of oppression: political, social, economic, racial, sexual, and spiritual.¹²

Another Sri Lankan theologian, Tissa Balasuriya wrote:

“As an Asian I cannot accept as divine and true any teaching that begins with the presupposition that all my ancestors for innumerable generations are eternally damned by God unless they had been baptized in or were related to one of the Christian institutional Churches”.¹³ In fact from the biblical concept of a liberator God Tissa advocates an ecumenism of all

Theologians began more and more to use the context of the poor and the marginalized as a source of interpreting the word of God. Biblical scholars like George Soares-Prabhu have commented how liberation theology sensitized exegetes to the social, economic, and political dimensions of the Bible and it has made them aware of the extent to which their scientific exegesis is inevitably coloured by cultural and class prejudices.

religions to combat all forms of injustice on a global basis. Similarly he spoke of a cosmic Christ whose message is one of “integral liberation — of the persons, of society, and of the world in truth, authenticity, social justice, and peace”.¹⁴

From what is said above it is implied that in contrast to Liberation theology in Latin America, the Church in Asia is aware that it has no exclusive claims for liberation, as Asian religions too advocated the liberation of humans, the Buddhist nirvana being a classic example, not to speak of the liberational elements of the Bhakti traditions in India. Hence Asian liberation theologians advocate collaboration with other Asian religions in effecting the liberation of the poor of Asia as a common mission.

Already at the beginning of the century the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore expressed Asia’s aspiration: “This is my prayer to thee, my Lord — strike at the root of penury in my heart: Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knee before insolent might”.¹⁵ Similarly Mahatma Gandhi derived inspiration from the *Bhagavadgita* for political action against the colonial rulers, as a religious deed. Active nonviolence for Gandhi was *Satyagraha* — the fight for truth. Gandhi advocated a return to the pristine past of Rama Rajya, the rule of a mythical hero, Rama, who symbolized justice, peace and equality. For this, on the one hand, he had to unite the Indians who were divided by the colonial policy of “divide and rule” and on the other had to dissipate the Indian masses’ fear of the State violence which in turn had reduced all Indians to submission. This he accomplished through the civil disobedience movement, with the inspiration of the *Bhagavadgita*.

Commitment to Transformation:

Latin American Liberation Theology is aimed at the transformation of society by getting rid of the oppressive structures that keep the masses in perpetual dependency and exploitation. Asian theologians too began to take up the burning issues of today. Theology was seen in its service to change the sinful situation in which we are. Many in Asia are realizing how our faith commitment must make an impact on the aspirations of the millions in Asia, the poor and the exploited, irrespective of their religion, sex, caste or class. Though, as Felix Wilfred has highlighted, the

Asian Church in general has, by and large, kept aloof from the ferment of liberation movements and clung to its traditional activities and services like education, medical care, relief works, etc., theologians are attracted and influenced by the Latin American experience.¹⁶ Though social injustice, exploitation and oppression of the poor have been present down through the history of the Asian Church, a prophetic stand and action on the part of the Church in Asia is more recent.

Writers emphasize the actualizing character of the teachings of Jesus Christ, especially, that of the Kingdom of God. It is not solely a matter of a personal decision, rather it stands for God’s definitive liberative intervention in human and cosmic history. It leads history to its fulfillment in the end-time community in which all alienation will be overcome and all

exploitation and oppression ended.¹⁷ The teachings of Jesus, according to Soares-Prabhu, “is a pedagogy of the oppressed, with a strong commitment to societal liberation”.¹⁸ This liberation, according to Asian Tradition, is not only socio-economic but an emancipation of the individual human being from his or her psychic conditioning. It is a liberation from the *kama* (passionate desire for pleasure), *krodh* (the aggressiveness that comes from frustrated ambition, and *lobha* (the compulsive urge to possess things), described as the gateways to hell in the *Bhagavadgita* (XVI:21). The liberated person is in a state of *sama*, i.e., equanimity to the pairs of opposites that qualify life. Ultimate liberation in the Asian tradition can only come about through the process of awareness (meditation) that leads to “seeing the Self in the self” (*Bhagavad-gita* VI:20). This awareness, both macrocosmic (conscientization) and microcosmic (meditation) will be basic to the Asian theology of liberation and, according to Soares-Prabhu, the teachings of Jesus lead us to this awareness.¹⁹

Needless to insist, due to the religiously pluralistic context of Asia, theology in Asia is not just a critical reflection on Christian practice in the light of the Word, but on the practice of the broader community comprising people of different religious persuasions. Asian theology cannot be done in isolation and aloofness but as Sebastian Kappen has rightly pointed out, it is rooted in the shared commitment to the humanization of society.²⁰ In recent times many priests and religious, in alliance with people of other faiths and ideologies, have taken to organizing slum dwellers,

In this process the greatest contribution of Latin American theology, I would say, is the method of theologizing that Latin America developed, a methodology based on the reality of Latin America, a reality of poverty and oppression. The Latin American starting point of theologizing, the analysis of the social reality, “the pastoral overview of the socio-cultural context” that Puebla spoke of, left an indelible mark on Asian theology.

the rural poor, the tribals, etc., to strengthen their causes.

Asian attempts to liberation have an added dimension of the social element ingrained in it. The Asian poor, as we mentioned earlier, suffer also from social marginalization. Almost 95 per cent of the poor in Asia belong to the social out-castes and tribal population. Their poverty is not just a question of economic deprivation, rather it flows from their social marginalization. Liberation in this context has more to do with the affirmation and acceptance of their human dignity and their right to participate in decision making. The table-fellowship of Jesus in his Kingdom-practice is a great challenge to Asian liberation. Liberation becomes social transformation.

Local Church of Asia:

Asian theologians strive to integrate their pluralistic experience with their faith and mission which differentiates Asian theology from the rest of the local theologies evolved in the context of one culture and one religion. Asian theology is the interface of religious and cultural pluralism with the Gospel. Any suggestion that Christian theologizing is valid only when it is done within a particular cultural framework is a sort of theological snobbery for Asian theologians. As opposed to the fear of “syncretism” and “horizontalism” that kept the Asian Church away from giving rise to an Asian theology that responds to the Asian context, since the 1970’s Asians are realizing that the plurality of expressions in theology points to the richness of the mystery on the one hand and the diversity of the contexts on the other. Thus the complex and diverse Indian situation has given rise to many new elements in the understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ.²¹

The Theology of liberation caused the Church in Asia to realize that the question of becoming a mature local Church is not only a matter of having an indigenous clergy and episcopate, but even more it is an issue of the Church’s involvement in the cultural history of Asia and of responding to this cultural history. The process has often been described in terms of inculturation in a restricted sense as it was mainly concerned with the traditionally handed on symbols and meaning systems. Under the impact of the contextual theologies the concept of culture has broadened to include any aspect that has to do with the way in which a particular group of people lives and dies. Its joys, hopes, aspirations, struggles, agonies, fears, etc., are all part of its culture. Only when the Church in Asia has assimilated these aspects of the Asian people, can it be described as the local Church of Asia. Only then can the Church in Asia claim to produce an

Asian theology, reflecting an Asian praxis of liberation.

Naturally this will imply that the Church in Asia takes into account the religiousness of the Asian poor and works for the liberation of this Asian poor through basic human communities which in the Asian context are genuine theological communities in so far as the members are poor and religious. As Aloysius Pieris has suggested such a practice will give birth to a true local Church of Asia.²² The Filipino theologian Carlos Abesamis, while advocating the need for Asian theologians to free themselves from the Western theological models stresses equally that they should be free also from the Asian middle-class model. They should learn from the theology drawn by the grass root Christians’ prayers, liturgy, dreams, songs, etc., as indicators of a new religious culture in the living journal of their peoples lives.²³

Another Asian theologian Albert Widjaja describes how Asia has grown from theological begging to develop at least a “beggarly theology”. A beggarly theology identifies itself with the poor and dispossessed. It demands that the claims of the Gospel be linked with the cries of the poor. A beggarly theology, as opposed to theological begging, depends on the Asian context and Asian realities.²⁴

Concluding Remarks:

The foregoing reflections enable us to conclude that while Medellin and Puebla cannot exclusively account for the theological developments in Asia, their impact on Asian theology is undeniable. Though the Asian Church has not come up with a typically Asian local theology parallel to the Latin American Liberation theology, several liberational theologies such as the Minjung theology of Korea, the Dalit theology of India, the theology of Struggle in the Philippines, the Homeland theology of Taiwan, the Pain of God theology of Japan, and the Feminist theologies of Asia, have given expression to an Asian theology. These theologies took their inspiration from Medellin and Puebla, in such areas as social transformation and the struggle for political change, the realization that the poor and the marginalized are more subjects of their own destiny than objects, finding God’s presence in the struggle and suffering of the people, and a new hermeneutics of the Bible in the context of the present.

The vitality and productivity of Asian theology can be gauged from the proliferation of new journals and publications in Asia. Indeed Asia has become a force creating unrest for the former exclusive centres of theology. The increasing list of Asian writers incurring Vatican censors in recent times shows that Asia

has come of age in its theological exercise. Some of the problems that Asian theologians face could be attributed to the lack of clarity in their writings or due to the lack of understanding and appreciation of the Asian context on the part of their European counterparts. Medellin and Puebla have shown that the days of a monocultural theology are over and they invite us to a synodal spirit of listening to each other respecting the context and problems of each one, and calling for different expressions of the Gospel response.

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18. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
20. Sebastian Kappen, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation", in *Leave the Temple*, *loc.cit.*, p. 151.
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Chine: Relations entre Christianisme et Intellectuels depuis la «Liberation» (1949)

Ce texte a été publié dans *China Talk* du mois d'avril 1999. C'est le résumé d'un discours du Dr Chen Zemin, vice-principal du Séminaire d'union théologique de Nankin et vice-président du Conseil chrétien de Chine (protestant).

Afin d'effacer la mauvaise réputation qu'il a gagnée tel «*un instrument d'agression culturel occidental*», le christianisme en Chine dans les années 50 a cherché à édifier une identité propre à travers le Mouvement patriotique des trois autonomies. A travers ce processus, le christianisme a commencé à atteindre la population et à se faire accepter.

Après le début des années 60, surtout durant la période de la Révolution culturelle, une vague de pensée gauchiste passa à l'attaque. Elle ne réussit pas seulement à presque balayer le christianisme (et d'autres religions), mais elle amena aussi à considérer les intellectuels comme «*la puante neuvième catégorie*» (avec les propriétaires terriens, les riches paysans, les contre-révolutionnaires, les mauvais éléments, les droitiers, les agents ennemis, les renégats et les compagnons de route capitalistes). Le christianisme dut faire face à une adversité qu'il n'avait jamais connue auparavant.

A cette époque, par conséquent, la question d'établir des rapports avec les intellectuels n'avait pas d'importance. Il existe un proverbe chinois : «*Ceux qui ont les mêmes malheurs sympathisent entre eux naturellement, il n'est pas nécessaire pour eux de se rencontrer pour faire connaissance*». A la fin des années 70, quand l'ordre fut restauré après le chaos, diverses politiques furent mises en application.

Les Eglises commencèrent à être restaurées et s'agrandirent rapidement. Cependant, le niveau d'éducation moyen des croyants était très bas, et ils eurent par conséquent tendance à être rétrogrades et conservateurs dans leur manière de voir. A ce moment là, un groupe d'intellectuels a émergé au sein des cercles religieux. Ce groupe et d'autres intellectuels appartenant à d'autres secteurs de la société cherchèrent à entrer en relations. Au début du processus, beaucoup de gens étaient influencés par la théorie marxiste de la religion,

opium du peuple, et pensaient ainsi que la religion était hors limites. Certains utilisèrent alors le concept «étudier la religion seulement pour critiquer la théologie», qui plaçait les cercles religieux en dehors du domaine de la recherche universitaire et de l'éducation.

Entre 1979 et 1986, il y avait même une prétendue «troisième guerre de l'opium» dans les cercles universitaires (comprenant des intellectuels faisant partie de groupes religieux). Ceci ouvrit un débat sur des questions fondamentales, à savoir si oui ou non, la signification inhérente et fixée de la religion était celle d'un simple opium, la question des relations entre la religion, l'éthique et la morale, mais aussi pour savoir si la religion et le socialisme pouvaient co-exister en harmonie. Un autre proverbe chinois dit : «*D'un échange de coups, l'amitié croît*», ou «*Pas de discorde, pas d'entente*».

A travers le débat et le dialogue, les cercles religieux et intellectuels développèrent un langage commun, se firent des amis les uns chez les autres. Ils se comprirent et se respectèrent.

Ce fut le début d'une nouvelle étape de bonnes relations entre le christianisme et les cercles intellectuels (voir note 1). Dans la dernière décennie ou à peu près, avec la situation générale d'ouverture et de réformes, les cercles intellectuels et universitaires ont ouvert leur esprit, et la recherche religieuse a fait des progrès considérables. Des départements distincts de religion ou des centres d'études religieuses ont été créés, tels que l'Institut de recherche sur les religions mondiales, à l'académie chinoise des sciences sociales, l'institut de recherche religieuse de l'académie de sciences sociales de Shanghai, le centre de recherches religieuses du Conseil d'Etat du bureau des Affaires religieuses, et des sections religieuses dans certains instituts d'études supérieures tels que l'université de Nankin, l'université du Sichuan, l'université Fudan (Shanghai), l'uni-

versité de Pékin et l'université de Hangzhou.

Certains d'entre eux publient divers journaux universitaires sur les recherches religieuses. Tout compte fait, il semble qu'il existe «*un engouement nouveau pour la recherche religieuse*». Un groupe de spécialistes de la religion, à l'esprit ouvert et très compétents est apparu. La vaste majorité d'entre eux ne sont pas croyants. Ils ont réussi à dépasser les limites anciennes du «*rester fidèle au texte*» et «*suivre la ligne directrice en matière de principes d'éducation*». A partir d'une perspective universitaire, ils analysent et conduisent la recherche religieuse tout à fait objectivement et scientifiquement d'un point de vue historique, social et culturel. Ils publient un grand nombre de travaux spécialisés sur la religion. Ceux-ci comportent à la fois des traductions et des travaux originaux. Plus de 1 000 différents travaux ont déjà été publiés, à ma connaissance. Parmi ces travaux sur la religion la vaste majorité sont des introductions à la recherche sur le christianisme.

La théorie religieuse de «L'opium du peuple» d'il y a 15 ans, et la tendance à critiquer la religion étrangère, sont maintenant presque éteintes et sont rarement évoquées. Un certain nombre d'intellectuels montrent même de la sympathie et de la compréhension vis-à-vis du christianisme. Cela a amené la publication de certaines introductions et explications théologiques de haut niveau (voir note 2). Une trentaine seulement de publications propres aux Eglises peuvent se comparer à ces publications en termes de qualité et de niveau universitaire. Ceci présente à l'Eglise en Chine non seulement un sérieux défi mais aussi une excellente opportunité, comme elle n'en a jamais connus dans son histoire.

Si nous regardons la situation à l'intérieur de l'Eglise, la religion n'est plus interdite depuis la révolution culturelle et le taux de développement du christianisme a de loin surpassé celui des autres religions. Le nombre de croyants chrétiens a déjà atteint plus de 10 millions, 10 fois plus qu'avant la libération en 1949. Il y a plus de 50 000 lieux de rencontre d'Eglise dispersés dans toutes les régions rurales. Le niveau d'enseignement des croyants est bas, avec une absence de direction pastorale, ces croyants sont facilement la proie d'influences corrosives hérétiques et non orthodoxes, mélangeant la foi avec les coutumes et pratiques populaires superstitieuses. L'influence malsaine qui en résulte pour la société, est méprisée par les cercles intellectuels.

Si nous considérons maintenant la situation dans les Eglises dites «normalisées» dans les petites et les grandes villes (Eglises qui sont en rapport avec le Con-

seil chrétien et le Mouvement patriotique des trois autonomies, ou qui ont été reconnues à travers le processus d'enregistrement), la plupart des croyants et des agents pastoraux dans ces Eglises sont tombés sous l'influence des idées «fondamentalistes» et «évangéliques». Leur foi est influencée par les conservateurs et leur perspective théologique est étroite. Ils mettent l'accent sur «l'orthodoxie» et «l'être dans l'Esprit» (ils ne se soucient que de l'expérience spirituelle de la personne et de savoir si la personne a été «sauvée» par la «renaissance»). Alternativement, beaucoup d'Eglises pratiquent aussi une forme «d'utilitarisme», transformant le christianisme en une sorte de «magie» à travers laquelle on demande des faveurs et on évite les malheurs. De tels croyants tendent à être déphasés par rapport à la réalité sociale, et ils demeurent profondément méfiants de choses comme les systèmes éthiques et moraux, le savoir universitaire, la modernisation et la sinisation. Beaucoup d'enseignements des Eglises s'adressent à cette forme de pensée arriérée et par conséquent n'ont que peu d'attrait pour les intellectuels. Certains intellectuels commencent occasionnellement par mettre les pieds dans l'église par curiosité, mais après une courte période de contact, ils s'esquivent à nouveau.

Le nombre d'intellectuels perdus par l'Eglise est de loin plus important que le nombre qu'elle a attiré à elle. Bref, le niveau moyen d'éducation des croyants de l'Eglise, bien qu'il se soit légèrement amélioré en l'espace des dix dernières années environ, est toujours à des années lumière de celui des intellectuels.

En conséquence des facteurs mentionnés ci-dessus, une certaine relation fragile a émergé entre l'Eglise et les cercles intellectuels en dehors de l'Eglise. D'une part, certains intellectuels ont développé un intérêt pour le christianisme, cherchent à le comprendre et expriment leur acceptation de celui-ci. Mais, en même temps, l'Eglise penche vers les conservateurs et les rétrogrades, vénérant le dépassé, préservant ce qui est usé et maintenant des relations tièdes avec les intellectuels.

Une chose à remarquer est l'émergence au cours de la dernière décennie d'un groupe de ce que l'on appelle des «chrétiens culturels» au sein de la société. Ils possèdent une compréhension plutôt profonde du christianisme grâce à leurs recherches et aux connaissances qu'ils ont acquises. Dans leur pensée et leurs sentiments, ils vont jusqu'à s'identifier ou même se convertir au christianisme. Quelques-uns reçoivent même le baptême. Cependant, ils ne sont pas intéressés par les activités des groupes internes de l'Eglise, ils se laissent marginaliser par rapport à l'Eglise mais se disent toujours personnellement chrétiens. Ils font beaucoup de recherche et ils font connaître la foi chrétienne, intensi-

fiant la progression et l'influence du christianisme dans les cercles intellectuels. En réalité, ils se sont chargés de la fonction d'établir un rapprochement entre le christianisme et les cercles intellectuels dans la société (voir note 3).

Apprendre à comprendre les cercles intellectuels en Chine aujourd'hui est une nouvelle tâche importante. Comme il a été mentionné par ailleurs, les religions bouddhiste, taoïste et islamique avaient des échanges réciproques avec le confucianisme, elles se sont associées à la culture traditionnelle chinoise. Ces religions sont ainsi devenues des religions réellement chinoises.

Bien qu'il vaille la peine d'en tirer des leçons, la situation du christianisme est différente. Aujourd'hui, la Chine se trouve dans une période de réforme et d'ouverture. La société subit des changements radicaux. Après les méthodes «purificatrices» du «Mouvement du 4 mai», puis du mouvement «Ecraser Confucius et Lao Tze» et enfin de la «critique de Lin Biao et Confucius», au moment de la Révolution culturelle, la pensée confucéenne a aujourd'hui perdu sa position centrale dans la société.

Quelles que soient les influences culturelles traditionnelles que les intellectuels ont subi, celles-ci se sont déjà peu à peu effacées avec le temps et sont peut-être presque imperceptibles à l'heure actuelle. Il existe un vaste marché dans les cercles intellectuels du continent, pour un prétendu «néo-confucianisme», et c'est aussi une grande controverse. Les cercles intellectuels, entraînés par le puissant mouvement de réforme et d'ouverture, sont de plus en plus influencés par les divers et changeants courants intellectuels d'Occident, qui ont beaucoup plus d'impact aujourd'hui que les théories anciennes de Confucius. Le grand nombre de publications spécialisées et d'essais concernant le christianisme, au cours de ces dix dernières années, témoigne de ce fait.

Réflexions sur la Théologie

(1) Changements dans les orientations théologiques

L'histoire de la théologie chrétienne a suivi deux voies différentes en prenant comme base soit l'expiation, soit la création. La première voie est assez limitée et mène à un exclusivisme étroit alors que la dernière est relativement ouverte et s'adapte facilement à toutes sortes de courants de pensée progressistes. Il y a un siècle environ, le christianisme chinois a été influencé par les missionnaires occidentaux qui se servaient de l'expiation comme base. Ils ont mis l'accent sur la chute de l'homme et sa nature pécheresse, en comprenant le

Christ comme «Seigneur Sauveur» et adhérant à la théorie de la rédemption du Christ «puni à notre place». On croyait aussi «qu'il n'y avait pas de salut en dehors de l'Eglise». La croyance et la non-croyance étaient utilisées comme une ligne de séparation pour faire la différence entre les «sauvés» et les «autres» (perdus). Il existait aussi une tendance à attendre impatiemment la «Seconde venue» (eschatologie) et il en résultait qu'on prêtait moins attention à ce qui concernait le monde, en ignorant à la fois le développement et en plaçant des restrictions aux rapports moraux, éthiques et aux comportements. «L'Evangile du Christ» était assimilé à la culture occidentale, tout ce qui était créé par d'autres peuples était rejeté comme appartenant aux «cultures profanes». Ceci a conduit l'Eglise à se renfermer sur elle-même, à se barricader derrière un sentiment étroit de supériorité, bien loin des cercles intellectuels.

Comme nous l'avons déjà dit, l'autre orientation théologique consiste à expliquer la signification du christianisme en prenant la Création comme centre. Ceci ne signifie nullement un éloignement des Ecritures ou l'adoption de quelque idée radicalement nouvelle, pour le plaisir de la nouveauté. Cette vision des choses est fondée elle aussi sur la révélation biblique et est tributaire du riche héritage de l'histoire biblique. Par exemple, cette vision prend l'amour comme qualité intrinsèque de Dieu. Dieu est Celui qui a décidé de créer le ciel et la terre et tout ce qui y est contenu. Dieu sanctifie le travail de la Création, celui de préservation et de rédemption. Ceci devient un processus continu et ininterrompu de développement jusqu'à son accomplissement à la fin. Le «Christ cosmique» joue son rôle dans l'ensemble du processus, en révélant l'amour de Dieu. Tout ce qui est vrai, bon et beau dans toutes les cultures du monde vient de Dieu et du Christ cosmique.

Le Saint-Esprit est le lien qui rassemble toutes choses créées avec la sagesse de Dieu le père, et de Christ le fils. Les hommes ont été créés à l'image de Dieu. Notre volonté libre, notre capacité d'accumuler de la connaissance, nous distinguent de toutes les autres créatures. Mais les hommes ne sont qu'à demi complets, parce qu'ils n'ont pas encore atteint la perfection. Nous travaillons ensemble avec Dieu dans toute la Création, en prenant part à son travail créateur, mais nous avons aussi nos faiblesses et nos limites. Aller contre la volonté de Dieu est «péché», et nous avons besoin de la rédemption et de la sanctification du Christ. Grâce à cela, nous devenons progressivement un peuple nouveau, pleins de la stature et de la sainte bonté du Christ. Cette manière de voir les choses dépasse les limitations de la conception «croyance contre incroyance». Elle place la «croyance» sous une lumière nouvelle. Tous ceux qui agissent selon la volonté de Dieu, pratiquent

la justice et la charité, sont considérés favorablement par Dieu. Ceci n'est qu'un résumé schématique et ne représente pas encore un système de pensée complet (Voir note 4). Cependant, cette direction est plus ouverte et plus capable d'assimiler les avancées et les éléments positifs provenant de diverses cultures. De plus, davantage de cercles intellectuels sont à même d'accepter cette direction.

(2) Modernisation, pluralisme et dialogue

La modernisation est une fatalité inévitable de l'histoire et toute la Chine est aujourd'hui dans un processus de modernisation. Les intellectuels se sont donné le rôle d'avant-garde dans ce processus. Inévitablement, la résistance à la modernisation est synonyme d'écrasement sous les roues de l'histoire. L'autre thème particulier de cet article est «christianisme et modernisation». J'ai déjà abordé ce sujet dans un autre essai (voir note 5), en indiquant qu'en ce qui concerne l'Eglise chrétienne chinoise, le temps n'est pas encore venu de papotages vains sur une contribution hypothétique du christianisme à la modernisation. Nous devrions plutôt apprendre à nous adapter aux temps (aggiornamento, voir note 6), ce qui était la question soulevée dans l'Eglise catholique romaine après le concile Vatican II. Le pluralisme est un fait indiscutable. Dans une perspective mondiale, le christianisme (incluant le catholicisme) est aujourd'hui la religion la plus importante, mais en Chine, le nombre des croyants ne dépasse pas les 2% de la population totale. Par conséquent, une importante question théologique à discuter est de savoir comment vivre au sein d'une large majorité de gens qui croient à une autre religion ou qui n'ont pas de religion du tout.

Aujourd'hui, la théologie de l'évangélisation est déjà entrée dans une nouvelle phase et change son mode opératoire, d'une approche où «l'Eglise est le centre» à une approche où «le Christ est le centre» ou «Dieu est le centre». L'Eglise est entrée en dialogue avec ceux qui sont à l'extérieur (voir note 7). Mais, au sein de l'Eglise, beaucoup de gens considèrent ce dialogue comme dangereux et hésitent à avancer parce qu'ils ont peur d'une dilution du message chrétien ou de la perte du caractère unique du christianisme. C'est une raison importante pour laquelle les cercles intellectuels et l'Eglise ont du mal à se rejoindre.

(3) L'indigénisation de la théologie et l'élaboration d'une théologie chinoise

L'indigénisation de la théologie (contextualisation ou inculturation) a été un sujet populaire de recherche théologique au cours de ces vingt dernières années. Il y

a plus de soixante-dix ans, il y avait déjà en Chine des intellectuels d'Eglise, comme Xie Honglai, Wang Zhixin, Xie Fuya, Zhao Zichen etc., qui avaient abordé le sujet de l'indigénisation et qui y travaillèrent dur avec de bons résultats. Aujourd'hui, les temps ont changé. Nous devons avoir une nouvelle vision pour prendre en compte les circonstances de la société chinoise en ce temps de réforme et d'ouverture. Nous devons aussi comprendre exactement ce qu'est la «culture chinoise» (la «haute» culture comme la culture «populaire»). Il y a des sujets qui exigent encore beaucoup de recherche de la part des intellectuels à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur de l'Eglise. Nous ne devrions pas être trop pressés à exiger trop rapidement la construction d'une théologie chinoise systématique et structurée.

(4) Construire le Corps de l'Eglise elle-même

Aujourd'hui, le christianisme chinois est entré dans une phase «post-dénominationnelle», et notre compréhension de ce qui constitue une Eglise est un point faible. Que ce soit du point de vue de la pratique ou de la théorie théologiques, ni un système épiscopal, ni un système d'anciens, ni le modèle des assemblées ne sont vraiment appropriés dans notre situation pour gérer l'Eglise. Le Conseil chrétien de Chine n'est pas encore une «Eglise» dans le sens traditionnel du terme. Pour préserver l'unité, un principe de respect mutuel a été adopté pour la foi, la liturgie et la gestion de l'Eglise. C'est une mesure pratique. Mais à mesure que l'Eglise se développe et croît, une voix dissidente se fait entendre graduellement parmi quelques «petites dénominations». Nous devons trouver une nouvelle manière et une nouvelle stratégie pour gérer cette situation. La question est de savoir si nous pouvons ou non libérer notre pensée, rejeter les modèles occidentaux traditionnels de ce qu'est une Eglise et comment elle devrait être structurée, en faisant des réformes audacieuses.

A l'heure qu'il est, même si les trois modèles d'Eglise mentionnés plus haut s'enracinent dans la Bible, aucun d'entre eux en fait ne descend directement du ciel. L'Eglise primitive a fourni un schéma mais l'influence de toutes sortes de systèmes sociaux à travers l'histoire a graduellement rempli ce schéma pour faire l'Eglise telle que nous la connaissons aujourd'hui. L'Eglise représente l'organisation de la masse des croyants dans une certaine forme. Sa fonction consiste à rassembler les tâches de maintien de la foi et de pratique de la vie religieuse, tout à la fois conservant la stabilité et en la transmettant aux générations à venir.

Les théories théologiques expliquant comment une telle Eglise devrait être structurée sont arrivées plus tard. Si nous envisageons l'Eglise comme contenant

«les élus» (ecclesia), alors il est facile de se séparer de ceux qui sont à l'extérieur de l'Eglise et de ne se préoccuper que de sa propre élévation morale sans penser aux autres. D'un autre côté, si nous envisageons l'Eglise comme une «alliance» (koinonia), une «communio des saints» (sanctorum communio) ou comme «le Corps du Christ», nous mettons l'accent sur un mélange harmonieux, la coopération et le soutien mutuel. Le Concile de Nicée a mis en avant l'idée d'une quadruple nature de l'Eglise (une, sainte, apostolique, catholique) qui est une idée souple et plutôt ouverte. Pour des affaires comme les responsabilités (hiérarchie de l'Eglise), les sacrements, et le culte liturgique, ces choses sont tombées sous l'influence et l'évolution de la culture historique, prenant un air de sacré et un aspect mystique, mais difficiles à saisir pour l'intellectuel moyen en dehors de l'Eglise.

L'Eglise doit sortir du schéma traditionnel occidental limité de ce qui constitue une Eglise. Elle doit plutôt développer une vision de l'Eglise qui corresponde à la situation actuelle en Chine et à l'Eglise chinoise. Aux XVI^{ème} et XVII^{ème} siècles, c'est exactement ce qu'ont fait les Eglises occidentales pour elles-mêmes. Il y a cinquante ans, quelqu'un a dit : «*Servez-vous d'un cœur d'amour pour établir la communauté*». Comme nous l'avons dit plus haut, si nous prenons la Création comme le contenu central de notre théologie, libérant ainsi notre vision et étendant notre domaine, si nous manifestons notre souci de l'Eglise et nous joignons à tous ceux qui dans le pays construisent une Chine nouvelle et un monde nouveau, alors nous arriverons sûrement à nous faire comprendre et respecter de la grande majorité des intellectuels.

(1) Voir «*Breakthrough in Religious Research in Recent Years*», par K.H. Ting et Wang Weifan, ainsi que «*Introduction to the Religious Question in the Age of Socialism*», par K. H. Ting, 1988, dans le «*Selected Writings of K.H. Ting*», Editions Xilin, Nankin, 1998.

(2) Exemples : la série «*Religions and the World*», publiée par les éditions populaires du Sichuan, qui ont déjà fait paraître dix titres, dont la majorité sont des traductions de textes occidentaux célèbres; le «*Commentary on Christian Culture*», publié par les éditions populaires de Guizhou, qui en est déjà à sa sixième édition; et le «*Chinese Journal of Theology*», publié par l'Institut chinois chrétien et culturel Tao Fong Shan, de Hongkong.

(3) Il y a un débat en cours concernant les chrétiens culturels. Quelques-uns sont intellectuellement sympathiques au christianisme, mais, bien qu'ils aient

publié beaucoup d'articles qui interprètent le christianisme de manière favorable, ils ne «confessent» pas leur foi publiquement. Ils ne sont pas prêts à se dire chrétiens. Il y a aussi quelques personnalités dans l'Eglise qui disent que ceux qui ne participent pas aux traditions, aux organisations et aux activités de l'Eglise, qu'ils confessent leur foi personnellement ou pas, ne peuvent pas compter parmi les chrétiens. Il y a deux ans, le débat dans les cercles religieux de Hongkong sur le «*Chinese Apollo*» indique que l'Eglise maintient encore une attitude de méfiance vis-à-vis des cercles intellectuels. Voir «*Culture Christians - phenomena and the debate*», publié par l'Institut chinois de recherche chrétienne et culturelle, Hongkong, 1998.

(4) Le «*Selected works of K.H. Ting*» (voir note 1) contient beaucoup d'essais sur le courant théologique qui cherche à mettre la Création au centre.

(5) Voir «*Modernization's Challenge to Chinese Christianity*», pp.149-155, in «*Collected Works from the Christianity and Modernization International Academy Symposium*», Institut chinois des sciences sociales, Pékin, 1995.

(6) Il y a beaucoup de choses sur ce sujet. Voir «*Catholicism After the Second World War*» de Huang Lingyu, pp. 24-44, in «*Religion and the World*», publié par le centre de recherche du bureau des Affaires religieuses du Conseil d'Etat (12^{ème} édition), 1997.

(7) Voir David Bosch, «*Transforming Mission*», Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1985, et Mojzes/Swidler, ed. «*Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue*», Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.

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Bonds of Communion: Authority — A Neuralgic Concern within the Churches

Authority is one of the more neuralgic concerns within the Churches today, and among them in their pilgrimage toward full communion in faith, sacramental life and common witness. The vision of Conciliar Communion, developed by the Churches together in the World Council of Churches, has clearly articulated the need for developing common ways of deciding and acting together, understanding how we are all accountable to the truth of the Gospel and to one another.¹

In this article we will provide a synthetic and programmatic overview of four important documents which serve as resources for moving the discussion on authority forward. It is done in light of these new publications and of the 2000-2003 programme of U.S. Faith and Order. The publication of the World Council's *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*,² *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*,³ the release of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission report *The Gift of Authority*,⁴ and the Anglican *Virginia Report* prepared for the Lambeth Conference of 1988,⁵ each in its own way contribute to a common understanding of Christ's authority in the Church and the role of the community in discerning that authority.

We will note the background for the questions addressed in World Council discussion, some of the work that has been done in the multilaterals and bilaterals, some of the confessional discussion within particular traditions and finally the themes selected for Faith and Order U.S., as they relate to these four texts. Of course, it will be important for the readers to read each of the documents on their own terms, and for others to provide more systematic analyses of each. In this overview, the conclusions will be highlighted leaving the biblical, historical and theological development to be read in more detail in the original texts.

Context of the Discussion

The Nairobi vision of Conciliar Communion envisions most clearly that "maintaining sustained and sustaining relationships with [the Churches'] Sister Churches, expressed in conciliar gatherings [under-

stood in the theological sense of Acts 15 and Nicea, not merely as a contemporary council of churches] whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling", is to be part of the goal of visible unity.⁶ However, there has been wisdom, in this multilateral setting, of taking up the concerns of Scripture and Tradition; Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry; the Church and World; and the Apostolic Faith before delving into this difficult and important issue. The Churches need to develop a reservoir of trust, a wider area of mutual recognition and the healing of painful memories before the delicate issue of ecclesial decision-making and discerning of authentic action of the Holy Spirit can be broached with hope of success.⁷

The two texts noted here, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* and *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, have different purposes. The former is a tool for the Churches, ecumenists and educators in helping to interpret ecumenical material; other Churches — their texts, symbols and practices; and Scripture and Christian tradition from appropriate perspectives informed by the ecumenical impulse. The latter is an early text sent by the Churches to test how much consensus we have on the nature of the Church, where convergences are emerging and what outstanding differences must be addressed. It is hoped that the Churches and theologians will react to this text so that an improved text may be developed and submitted to the Churches for official response, as happened with BEM in 1982.

The bilateral and Church union dialogues have been able to be more venturesome on the issue of authority because of their specificity and the quantity of convergence and even consensus they have amassed over the decades of research. For example, *The Gift of Authority* is able to cover "the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the exercise of teaching authority; collegiality, conciliarity, and the role of laity in decision-making; and the Petrine ministry",⁸ because of its earlier work on authority in the Final Report, and the internal ecumenical work of both communions in the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* and the *Virginia Report*.

The response process to *Baptism, Eucharist and*

Ministry, in particular, focused on three issues that have become of particular importance.⁹ First, the process of response disclosed the variety of modes of reception among the Christian Churches as well as the differences in processes of decision-making in each.¹⁰ This has made work on interpreting ecumenical texts important, hence *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. Secondly, it identified three issues of import for further study: Scripture and Tradition, Ecclesiology and Sacramentality, issues addressed in both of the new WCC publications, but also clarified in a variety of bilaterals. Thirdly, the Ministry section's use of the characteristics of authority as collegial, communal and personal, have become helpful in a variety of ecumenical studies, including the *Virginia Report* and the *Gift of Authority*.

As we will understand it here, "Authority is about how the Church teaches, acts and reaches doctrinal decisions in faithfulness to the Gospel, so real agreement about authority cannot be theoretical".¹¹ As the *Virginia Report* recalls, "At every level of Christian life, the call to graceful interdependence and unity in faith and doctrine challenge us", and "From an almost equally early date [Christians] have found consensus, even on apparently major matters, singularly difficult to achieve.... Nevertheless the controversies themselves were stages on the road towards greater consensus".¹² It is the common conviction of the Churches that "the Holy Spirit maintains the Churches of God in truth and guides all the faithful into unity with Jesus Christ (Jn 16:13), distributes the ministry of Christ to all believers and empowers them to participate in God's mission for the salvation of the world".¹³

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels is particularly helpful in broadening the discussion of interpretation, and therefore authority, beyond the texts of the Scriptures and the teaching offices of the Churches' as instruments of their traditions, to include "also symbols and rites, stories and practices",¹⁴ which carry their appropriate authority in all of the traditions, but are more important in some Churches than the texts themselves. Likewise, recognizing that consensus texts and even juridical action by the Churches "cannot obscure the fact that significant differences in interpreting the faith still remain" is particularly important. This is seen in the challenges that continue in united churches, the Latin and Eastern Churches within Catholicism, or with the Lutheran and Reformed churches in full com-

munion, for example.

Resources for Unity in Decision-Making

The World Council of Churches has made important contributions to the discussion of the nature of the Church, its authority and church order. These include the studies on Scripture and Tradition, conciliarity, *episcopé*, as well as the new studies on hermeneutics and on ecclesiology, which introduces primacy for the first time.¹⁵

The bilaterals have taken up the question in a variety of contexts.¹⁶ The most extensive may be the claimed consensus of the U.S. Lutheran Catholic *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church*¹⁷ and the convergence in *Differing Attitudes Toward Papal Primacy*.¹⁸ The Lutheran-Reformed *A Common Calling* and the subsequent action of the Churches develops, an approach to authority through "mutual affirmation and admonition" while the Churches "establish appropriate channels of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures".¹⁹ The challenges of reception of Christological agreements reached between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches, likewise focus the discussion of authority within these communions. On the international level, in addition to ARCIC I's *Final Report*, interesting proposals are made in *Facing Unity: Models, Forms, and Phases of Lutheran-Catholic Church Fellowship*, where "preliminary forms of a joint exercise of

The Orthodox, especially after the fall of Marxism in 1989 are seeing the urgency of forms of deciding and acting together, reflecting the synodical tradition of the Church. Since the 1930's there has been a Great and Holy Synod in preparation. One of the most dramatic appeals for reform came from Pope John Paul II himself, in his invitation to ecumenical colleagues to engage with him in a patient and fraternal dialogue as to how his office might better serve the unity of the Church.

episcopé" and "collegial exercise of *episcopé*" are described.²⁰

The new *Gift of Authority* possibly provides a clearly articulated resource among the Western Churches contributing to this discussion. Both Anglicans and Catholics, as will be noted below, have major internal discussions going on about how their own decision-making processes will evolve in response to the call of the Gospel. Both share the vision of a communion, a conciliar fellowship, with elements that resonate with those articulated together in the WCC texts.²¹ This ARCIC II text is divided into three sections, after the introduction: the nature of authority, its exercise and agreements that provide steps towards visible unity.²²

The framework is the "Yes" of God to us in Jesus Christ, and the "Amen" of the Church. The theological themes touched upon are local Church, tradition

and apostolicity, Scripture, reception and re-reception and catholicity. The exercise of authority covers mission and unity, synodality, teaching — understood as perseverance in the truth, collegiality and conciliarity, and freedom of conscience. It is the belief of the dialogue “that if this statement about the nature of authority and the manner of its exercise is accepted and acted upon, this issue will no longer be a cause for continued breach of communion between our two Churches”.²³ Furthermore, its conclusions are seen as both theological and practical: “We believe that in the dynamic and fluid situation in which they are posed, seeking to answer them must go together with developing further steps toward a shared exercise of authority”.²⁴

Building on the first ARCIC document on authority, contained in the *Final Report*, this text explicates further the contentious issue of *infallibility*.²⁵ In the context of conciliarity, the indefectibility of the Church, roles of laity and ordained ministry, synodality and agreement on *episcopé*, it is able to relate the primacy of the Bishop of Rome to this infallibility: “Every solemn definition pronounced from the chair of Peter in the church of Peter and Paul may, however, express only the faith of the Church.... When the faith is articulated in this way, the Bishop of Rome proclaims the faith of the local Churches. It is thus the wholly reliable teaching of the whole Church that is operative in the judgement of the universal primate.... The reception of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome entails the recognition of this specific ministry of the universal primate. We believe that this is a gift to be received by all of the Churches”.²⁶

This affirmation also implies that “loyal criticism and reforms are sometimes needed, following the example of Paul.... Those called to such a ministry must themselves submit to the discipline of Christ, observe the requirements of collegiality and the common good, and duly respect the consciences of those they are called to serve”.²⁷ Of course, for Anglicans and Catholics a common experience of primacy, even though quite different, provides an easier context for discussion on this theme: “The primacy of Canterbury and the international collegiality and conciliarity of Anglicanism are inextricably interrelated”.²⁸

Questions are addressed to both communions, such as the following: For Anglicans “Is the Communion also open to the acceptance of instruments of oversight which would allow decisions to be reached that, in certain circumstances, would bind the whole

Church?... Above all, how will Anglicans address the question of universal primacy as it is emerging from their life together and from ecumenical dialogue?” For Catholics: “Is there at all levels effective participation of clergy as well as lay people in emerging synodal bodies?... Has enough provision been made to ensure consultation between the Bishop of Rome and the local Churches prior to making important decisions affecting either a local Church or the whole Church?”²⁹

The principal enunciated for the practical recommendations is that “there is no turning back in our journey toward full ecclesial communion. In light of our agreement the Commission believes our two communions should make more visible the *koinonia*

we already have. Theological dialogue ... is not itself sufficient ... Anglicans and Roman Catholic Bishops should find ways of cooperating and developing relationships of mutual accountability in their exercise of oversight ... meeting regularly together at regional and local levels and participation of Bishops from one communion in the international meetings of Bishops of the other.... Wherever possible, Bishops should take the opportunity of reaching and acting together in matters of faith and morals”.³⁰

On the basis of this agreement, and in the context of the *Virginia Report* and *Ut Unum Sint* the Commission suggests that “a primacy could be offered and received even before our Churches are in full communion.... An experience of a universal primacy of this [renewed] kind would confirm two particular conclusions we have reached:

- that Anglicans be open to and desire a recovery and re-reception under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome;
- that Roman Catholics be open to and desire a re-reception of the exercise of primacy by the Bishop of Rome and the offering of such a ministry to the whole Church of God”.³¹

The Evolution of Decision-Making Styles within the Churches

These resources from the WCC, multilateral and bilateral dialogues provide a pool of theological agreement and practical wisdom from which the Churches together can draw in their pilgrimage toward visible unity. They can also find their own internal life, short of full communion, enriched by the discussions of

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Scripture and the Tradition which are now part of the common Christian heritage. In looking at the discussion of authority, it will be useful to note some of the study of authority that is going on within Churches in the ecumenical movement. Here we will note particularly the *Virginia Report*, but also take account of Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist studies, among others.

The Anglican *Virginia Report* was formulated in response to a 1988 request: "The 1988 [Lambeth] Conference recognized, that there was a need to describe how the Anglican Communion makes authoritative decisions while maintaining unity and interdependence in the light of the many theological issues that arise from its diversity".³² The 1998 Conference initiated "a decade of study", on the *Report* "in particular, 'whether effective communion, at all levels, does not require appropriate instruments, with due safeguards, not only for legislation, but also for oversight' as well as on the issue of a universal ministry in the service of Christian unity".³³

The report itself develops the theology of communion in its Trinitarian context, working itself out in bonds of interdependence — detailing here their Anglican expression, in levels of subsidiarity and interdependence. The text ends with suggestions about the instruments of communion, based on purposes and principles grounded in a theology of *koinonia*. "While this report necessarily dwells on the structures of ministry in the process of oversight, their interdependence and accountability, it does so in the conviction and hope that this reflection will open up the possibility of creative change which will strengthen the ministry and mission of the whole People of God.... Our hope is that this theological reflection may contribute not only to the Anglican Communion but to the ecumenical goal of full visible unity".³⁴

Its explication of the ministry of oversight is done in the context of personal, collegial and communal dimensions of authority. Within this understanding Anglican primacy is discussed, especially in its cultural contexts: "Collegiality and primacy are thus part of the Anglican experience at diocesan, Provincial and Communion-wide levels. Within the Communion, Provincial primacy, influenced by the different cultural contexts, varies in perception and practice".³⁵ Of course, primacy is seen in the context of the other instruments of unity: the Anglican Consultative Council, the *Books of Common Prayer* and the Lambeth Conferences.

Anglican provinces bear a juridical autonomy, with no decisions able to be taken at a communion-wide level. However, "autonomy has never been the sole criterion for understanding the relation of Provinces to one another.... The life of the Communion is held

together in the creative tension of Provincial autonomy and interdependence.... Questions are asked about whether we can go on as a world Communion with morally authoritative, but not juridically binding, decision-making structures at the international level".³⁶

The development of subsidiarity, as outlined in the *Report* in the context of interdependence and the need for global decision making mechanisms, is an important contribution to the ecumenical literature.³⁷ The fact that important theological and sacramental decisions 'need a Communion-wide mind if a life of interdependence is to be preserved' leads the authors of the *Report* to make some very concrete suggestions.³⁸ It is useful here to note the some of the questions provided for the Communion to address:

Are there mechanisms by which tasks may be shared within the fellowship of the Primates, without weakening the symbol of unity provided by one person?.... Does the role of the Archbishop mean that the Church of England must be more cautious in its decisions than other Provinces?....³⁹

What is the nature and authority of the [Lambeth] Conference? How binding are the resolutions of the Conference?.... If the Lambeth Conference is an effective instrument of unity of the Anglican Communion, what is its special vocation in relation to the movement for the visible unity of the Church?.... How might the Lambeth Conference encourage the development of shared oversight with other Christian traditions? How does the authority of the Lambeth Conference relate to the authority of other Churches, in particular to those Churches which claim to be *the Church*?⁴⁰

What is the nature of the responsibility and accountability of those elected to serve on the Anglican Consultative Council?⁴¹

How far should the task of the Primates' [of the autonomous provinces, or national Churches of the Communion] Meeting be that of responsibility for monitoring the progress of recommendations and resolutions which come from the Lambeth Conference in the interim between Conferences?⁴²

Should Primates be expected to make authoritative statements, or should the Primates' Meeting be encouraged to exercise a primarily pastoral role, both for their own numbers, but also for the Communion?⁴³

The recommendations finish with the importance of the interrelation among the instruments of communion as they provide for the interrelationship of

the Churches of the Communion.

Lutherans have also been called by history and by ecumenical discussion to reconsider their confessional unity through the Lutheran World Federation. Through the decades of the century they have moved gradually, but deliberately *From Federation to Communion*, as they entitle their volume of history.⁴⁴ Decisions in Dar-es-Salaam, 1977, to suspend South African Churches who practiced *apartheid* enabled the Federation to see itself moving into a *status confessionis* not envisioned at its founding. At Budapest in 1984 its churches recognized themselves as being in *pulpit and altar fellowship*, Lutheran language is now spoken of as full communion. It was also at this Assembly that a vision of visible unity was articulated that resonated with the WCC Conciliar Fellowship formulations of Nairobi (1975). This formulation became the basis of the ecumenical *Vision* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which came into existence in 1987.⁴⁵ Finally, at the 1990 Curitiba, Brazil Assembly, the Federation articulated its self understanding as a communion of churches. While the Lutheran Churches have not yet explicated what this means, in terms of their authority together, these ecclesiological developments have theological implications for these discussions.⁴⁶

Reformed and Methodist churches have had a strong sense of the authority and catholicity of the Church and of their churches as expression of the one true Church. However, they have developed a diversity of politics and of theological understandings of the authority of the Church and authority *in* the Church. In the current period, the United Methodist Church — and because of its size and influence, all Methodist churches that relate to it — is discussing the relationships of the local and global dimensions of the Church and its structures serving these dimensions.⁴⁷ Methodist connectionalism has a powerful resonance with the *koinonia* ecclesiology emerging in the ecumenical movement.⁴⁸

The Orthodox, especially after the fall of Marxism in 1989 are seeing the urgency of forms of deciding and acting together, reflecting the synodical tradition of the Church. Since the 1930's there has been a Great and Holy Synod in preparation. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has also been undergoing reforms of its structures of authority: parish and diocesan councils which incorporate laity, creating Episcopal Conferences and Roman Synods to embody collegiality, subsidiarity and

corresponsibility, and devising new processes of consultation.⁴⁹ One of the most dramatic appeals for reform came from Pope John Paul II himself, in his invitation to ecumenical colleagues to engage with him in a patient and fraternal dialogue as to how his office might better serve the unity of the Church.

All of these discussions and even challenges within the Churches are now related to the common pilgrimage toward visible unity and to the search for ways of deciding together, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Faith and Order in the United States

In the last number of years Faith and Order in the U.S. has contributed to the WCC discussions by producing studies related to *The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community, Toward the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today*, and the reception and study of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, in addition to Church unity concerns of particular urgency in the U.S.: Racism, Christian initiation, Pluralism, Pentecostal and Peace Church relations and the like. For the 2000-2003 quadrennium two major studies have been proposed, one on Authority, the other on Full Communion.

The Authority study will have two sections: *Authority in the Church* and the *Authority of the Church*. All of the work of the bilaterals and multilaterals re-

viewed here will be important contributions to these studies. "The personal and relational life of the Church is always prior to the structural. But without enabling structures the Church's life is weakened and the relational and personal life is unsupported".⁵⁰ Study of the *Authority of the Church* will undoubtedly entail issues of Scriptural interpretation,⁵¹ authority over the sacraments,⁵² inculturation,⁵³ preservation in the truth/infallibility,⁵⁴ and the role of the Church's authority in the world.⁵⁵

Authority *in* the Church will be more concerned with church order and polity. It may very well consider such themes as the criteriological questions,⁵⁶ the relationship between the global and local dimensions of Church,⁵⁷ subsidiarity/hierarchy/synodality,⁵⁸ the Church as community of moral formation,⁵⁹ diversity,⁶⁰ roles of the laity⁶¹ ARCIC II 28-30, and *episcopé/primacy*.⁶²

The study of *Full Communion* may look at the variety of usages of *koinonia* ecclesiology in various Church union proposals, including its promise and limitations,⁶³ the goal of the ecumenical movement;

The World Council of Churches has made important contributions to the discussion of the nature of the Church, its authority and church order. These include the studies on Scripture and Tradition, conciliarity, episcopé, as well as the new studies on hermeneutics and on ecclesiology, which introduces primacy for the first time.

biblical understandings of *pleroma* and their relations to ecclesiology; the eschatological character of ecclesial fullness and the penultimate character of our union with God and God's People in the Church on earth;⁶⁴ reception⁶⁵ and the WCC contribution to ecclesiology.

As the *Virginia Report* notes "An important function of life in communion is always to remain attentive to one another, particularly when conflict arises, so that the centre may never be forgotten. Seen in the framework of God's mission of love in Christ and the Spirit, the variety of gifts, which may appear to be potentially divisive, is seen to be necessary, mutually enriching, and a cause for thanks and praise to God".⁶⁶

Yet, "as an hermeneutical community, the Church is called to grow into full *koinonia* by Spirit-guided discernment of the living Tradition. The Church should not be imprisoned by holding on to inadequate answers from the past, nor should it silence the Word of God by endlessly putting off a clear recognition of the way this Word continues to impart meaning and orientation for human life. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in faithfulness to the living Tradition, and through genuine ecumenical forms of conciliar deliberation and reception the Church is called to 'interpret the signs of the times' (Mt 16:3) by looking to the One who is both in and beyond time, to the One 'who is the same, yesterday, today and for ever'" (Heb 13:8).⁶⁷ All of these studies have their appropriate contribution to make in our human response to the authority of God in history.

Notes

¹Gunther Gassmann, ed., *Documentary History of Faith and Order: 1963-1993*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993, [hereafter documents 93], 3-5, 20-21, 201-205, 209-217, 236-255, 269-288. Thomas Best, Gunther Gassmann, eds. *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993, 242, 251, 259, [hereafter Santiago].

²Faith and Order Commission, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Paper No. 182, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998, [hereafter hermeneutics].

³Faith and Order Commission, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Paper No. 181, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998, [hereafter church].

⁴Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission II, *The Gift of Authority*, New York, Church Publishing Incorporated, 1999, [hereafter

ARCIC II].

⁵"The Virginia Report", in *Being Anglican in the Third Millennium*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1997, pp. 211-276, [hereafter Virginia].

⁶Documents 93, p. 3.

⁷Hermeneutics 65.

⁸ARCIC II 3.

⁹*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Report 1982-1990*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990.

¹⁰"The process of officially responding to BEM has revealed many unexamined hermeneutical assumptions underlying not only the Churches' response but also the very question concerning the extent to which they can recognize in the BEM-text the faith of the Church through the ages". Hermeneutics 11.

¹¹ARCIC II, preface, (note: paragraph numbers rather than pages will be given, because the text exists in a variety of formats).

¹²Virginia 1.1,2.

¹³Hermeneutics 55.

¹⁴Hermeneutics 2.

¹⁵Santiago p. 242, church 98-110, hermeneutics 13-37, 46.

¹⁶Gunther Gassmann, "Ecumenical Dialogues and Authority", in G. Gassmann, ed., *International Bilateral Dialogues: 1965-1991, Fifth Forum*, Faith and Order Paper # 156, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1992, pp. 223-228.

¹⁷Jeffrey Gros and Joseph Burgess, ed., *Building Unity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp.161-216.

¹⁸*Ibid.* pp. 125-129.

¹⁹Keith Nickle, Timothy Lull, eds., *A Common Calling — the Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1993, p. 67. Cf. Gabriel Fackre, Michael Root, *Affirmations and Admonitions: Lutheran Decisions and Dialogue with Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

²⁰In William G. Rusch, Jeffrey Gros, eds., *Deepening Communion*, Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1998, 120-122, 127-131 146-149, [hereafter DC].

²¹Santiago p. 269, # 2.1; *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, Origins*, Vol. 23: No. 9, 13-17; Virginia 3.1-11.

²²Cf. William Henn, "A Commentary on *The Gift of Authority*", http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/p...c_12051999_gift-of-authority_en.html

²³ARCIC II, 51.

²⁴*Ibid.* 55.

²⁵*Ibid.* 42, cf. Virginia 5.23.

²⁶ARCIC II, 47.

²⁷*Ibid.* 48, 49.

²⁸Virginia 3.30.

²⁹ARCIC II, 56, 57.

³⁰*Ibid.* 58, 59.

³¹*Ibid.* 60, 62.

³²Virginia 1.5.

³³Resolution III.8, cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 96, Virginia 5.20.

³⁴Virginia 1.13, 14.

³⁵*Ibid.* 3.21-3.23.

³⁶*Ibid.* 3.28.

³⁷*Ibid.* 4.1 ff.

³⁸*Ibid.* 4.19.

³⁹*Ibid.* 6.6.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* 6.22.

⁴¹*Ibid.* 6.27

⁴²*Ibid.* 6.32.

⁴³*Ibid.* 6.33.

⁴⁴Jens Holger Schjørring, Prasanna Kumari, Norman Hjelm, eds., *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.

⁴⁵William G. Rusch, *The Ecumenical Vision of the ELCA: A Commentary*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1990.

⁴⁶Schjørring, *op.cit.*, pp. 216-247.

⁴⁷Thomas Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.

⁴⁸Russell Richey, et al., *Connectionalism: Ecclesiology, Mission and Identity*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997. Brian Beck, "‘Until we all attain...’ Eschatology and the Goal of Unity", in Colin Podmore, ed., *Community, Unity, Communion*, London: Church House Publishing, 1998, pp. 277-236. Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialogue*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

⁴⁹John Paul II, *The Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences*, in *Origins*, 28:9, July 30, 1998, pp. 152-158. Cf. Hervé Legrand, Julio Manzanares, Antonio García y García, eds., *The Nature and Future of Episcopal Conferences*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988.

⁵⁰Virginia 5.4, hermeneutics 13 and commentary, church 65-68.

⁵¹Hermeneutics 21-31, Ellen Flesseman-van Leer, ed., *The Bible: Its Authority and Interpretation in the Ecumenical Movement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 99, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980).

⁵²It has become quite clear, at least in the West, that the question of the ordination of women, for example, is neither an anthropological nor sacramental difference, but one of authority. It is in this context that it will need to continue to be discussed.

⁵³Hermeneutics 12.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* 54-62, ARCIC II 31-34.

⁵⁵*Ibid.* 32-33, 50, church 111-117.

⁵⁶Hermeneutics 12, 17.

⁵⁷Virginia 3.28, 4.1 ff, 4.25-26, Joint Working Group, WCC-Catholic Church, *The Church: Local and Universal* in DC, pp. 541-560.

⁵⁸Hermeneutics 12, Virginia 4.1 ff, 5.17-20, church 97-106.

⁵⁹Church 117, Joint Working Group, WCC - Catholic Church, *Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues* in DC, pp. 597-612, Thomas Best, Martin Robra, eds., *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Costly Commitment*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1995.

⁶⁰Church 61-64.

⁶¹The Roman Catholic — Presbyterian/Reformed Consultation, *Laity in the Church and the World: Resources for Ecumenical Dialogue*, Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1998.

⁶²*Ibid.* 89-97, 107-110, ARCIC II 39, 45-48, Virginia 3.21 ff, 4.4, hermeneutics 54-62, Faith and Order, *Episcopé and Episcopacy Within the Quest for Visible Unity*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1999.

⁶³*Ibid.* 5.1 ff, church 48-64, ARCIC II 1-6, 26-31, 53-55.

⁶⁴Hermeneutics 2.

⁶⁵*Ibid.* 63-66, Virginia 4.18, ARCIC II 24-25.

⁶⁶Virginia 2.25, "Discerning the mind of Christ for the Church is the task of the whole People of God, with those ordained for a ministry of oversight guiding and leading the community. Authority is relational. Some matters are properly determined at a local or regional level, others which touch the unity in faith need to be determined in the communion of all the Churches" (5.21).

⁶⁷Hermeneutics 68.

Text: from the author, also in *Ecumenical Trends*, Vol. 28, No. 8.

Black Movement Searches for Justice in Brazil

During the elections of 1997, Margarida Pereira da Silva was the leading candidate for mayor in Pombal in the interior of the state of Paraíba, Northeastern Brazil. Margarida, beloved for her community work with youth, decided to stand for office to offer an alternative to the corrupt, special interest politics that dominate the Northeastern region. With little money, she ran the campaign from her home. One week before Election Day, two strangers offered her a R\$100,000 (\$75,000) donation for her youth programme. There was just one condition — Margarida had to drop out of the race. She politely but firmly refused, “I’m running for my people not for money”.

Within days of the refused bribe, all of her posters were painted over with the words “Nega Feia”, Ugly Black Woman. Unable to discredit her honesty or merits, her opponents orchestrated a smear that focused solely on race. Long-time friends and even some relatives, most likely paid off, suddenly were working against her. Margarida lost by a landslide. When Margarida’s nephew caught his girlfriend tearing down Margarida’s posters, she responded, “I’m not going to waste my vote on that ugly, black thing”.

Margarida’s story of racial discrimination is not isolated to the rural areas of the Northeast. Every day millions of Afro-Brazilians experience racism. From the family living room, where darker skinned children are often discriminated against, to Church pews, barbershops, classrooms, and the Halls of Congress, racism gnaws at the fabric of Brazilian society. The South American giant is often considered by foreigners and Brazilians as a “racial democracy” because of the high number of interracial marriages and seemingly easy banter between the races in everyday life. Racial Democracy, coined by the Brazilian Sociologist Gilberto Freyre in early 20th century, is the theory that a history of extended miscegenation has created a cultural melange in which all races are equally valued. Nothing is farther from the truth in contemporary Brazil.

Race in Brazil is complex and distinct. Most Brazilians claim a mixed African, European, and indigenous ancestry. In practice, however, the weight of racism causes people continually to “whiten” themselves. For example, many “morenos” straighten their hair, people search for lighter-skinned marriage partners, and people identify themselves and each other with nicknames indicating a lighter skin tone, such as *moreninho* (brown), *café* (coffee), *mulato*, *bronzado* (tanned), and *escurinho* (darky) to name a few. Rarely will someone assume an identity such as Negro (black). Even those who call themselves black often have a hard time convincing other Brazilians not to identify them as “moreno” or “mulatto”. Calling someone black, for many, is still an insult.

Skin color profoundly influences life chances. According to a 1992 study by Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle Silva, Brazilian non-whites are three times more likely than Whites to be illiterate. The numbers deteriorate in the high echelons of academic study. Whites are FIVE times more likely than people of mixed ancestry and NINE times more likely than Blacks to obtain university degrees. This pattern repeats itself in the work force where according to govern-

ment statistics Whites have access to the highest-paying jobs, earning up to 75 per cent more than Blacks and 50 per cent more than people of mixed ancestry. (Blessed Anastácia Burdick, John Routledge, 1998). Brazil’s prisons and youth detention centers are bursting at the seams. The vast majority of detainees and victims of police brutality are non-white Brazilians. Not surprisingly, health statistics paint a similar picture. For example, non-white Brazilian infants are almost twice as likely to die as their white counterparts.

Not all of the consequences of racism can be neatly packaged into statistics and charts. Effects on self-esteem are not easily measured. At a recent reflection group of Afro-Brazilian Women in João Pessoa, Paraíba, Cida painfully recounted the termination of her relationship. For several years, she dated Chico, a lighter-skinned Black, and their colour difference never created difficulties. When they got engaged, Chico’s family exploded with his mother leading the attack, “This little blackie is going to pollute our blood. Go and find someone who will purify our blood”. Chico caved in and broke the engagement off within days. Two years later Cida painfully asked the group, “How can you tell me not to feel inferior because of my colour?”

Brazil’s Black movement struggles to address this question by introducing a positive Black identity and fighting racism at all levels of society. According to anthropologist John Burdick, the movement exploded in the 1970s, when a whole generation of non-white students was caught in the contradiction between the promise of upward mobility and the reality of labour and educational barriers. Blacks on the world scene, including revolutionaries in the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola and militants in the North American Black power movement offered encouraging symbols of power and self-confidence for the fledgling Afro-Brazilian movement.

Over the past 25 years, the Black movement in Brazil has developed various facets. Some groups exclusively dedicate their energy to judicial and legislative arenas, such as the enforcement of the 1989 Caó law that makes racism a crime. Other organizations focus on cultural programmes. The most famous example is the internationally acclaimed percussion band, Olodum. Various research institutes, primarily in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, focus on Black identity and tend to cater to the middle class. Segments of the Catholic Church, most notably the Agentes de Pastoral Negro (Black Pastoral Church Workers), offer educational courses for the economically disadvantaged.

The Black Movement here in the state of Paraíba is one example of this diversity. Participating organizations include: Caiana dos Crioulos, a Black community of descendants of runaway slaves; Banda Ylê Odara and other musical, martial arts and dance groups; Afro-Brazilian religious groups, including Candomblé and Umbanda centres; women’s reflection groups; coalition and organizing entities including the Agentes de Pastoral Negro; and education groups that focus on literacy programmes, training and school curriculum development. During the annual, state-wide Black Movement Conference in September 1999, more than 100 activists from these groups gathered for three days in the capital. With Bra-

zil approaching in April, 2000 the anniversary of the Portuguese colonization, this year's theme was "500 Years of Black Resistance".

In addition to gaining new insights on cultural, religious, and political resistance, coming together in solidarity is an important aspect of the annual conference. In the rural regions, Blacks are often isolated. They suffer intense discrimination, especially in the school system. Paulo Cesar, a 26-year-old community activist in Sousa, shared a story that echoed the childhood experiences of many of the participants. In his junior high school there were only three or four Black students in the class. When he was called "negão besta" (big, stupid Black), his teacher refused to intervene. His mother, lacking formal education and self-confidence, also failed to react when he came home from school crying. "That experience left a profound mark", stated Cesar. "My involvement with the Black Movement reinforces in me that being a Black is not horrible, it's being a human being like any other person". Cesar directs cultural groups, including capoeira (a combination of martial arts and dance that slaves practiced, training for escape). He also gives workshops about racism in local schools. "I come to these gatherings to learn", commented Cesar, "but perhaps more importantly I carry back with me a renewed pride and self-confidence in being Afro-Brazilian".

Other Black activists also work to the interior regions in the state. Tanzanian Maryknoll Sister Efu Nyaki and her Brazilian colleagues travel extensively throughout the drought-stricken, poor countryside to offer two-day formation courses focusing on identity, self-esteem, and empowerment. During the visits, Nyaki discovered an abysmally low educational level among most Blacks in the interior. "We've been to all-Black rural communities where only one or two people are literate, which has led us to seek funding to begin small literacy programmes", commented Nyaki. Lagoa Raça is one of those communities. Five years ago, when Nyaki's team first visited the community 10 hours from state capital, there was no school within walking distance and only one of the 200 residents could read and write. With help from outside, that man, Chagas, was trained to offer adult literacy courses. Over time, a school was built to serve the community. "There are Lagoa Raças all over the Northeast", lamented Nyaki. "The Government has simply abandoned these people".

Educational work is also occurring in the urban areas. Activists are giving workshops on racism and Afro-Brazilian identity in schools. Very few school children admit being Black when the question is posed at the beginning of the sessions. For most Brazilians, regardless of colour, being Black is not a positive thing. In the schools, the complete lack of educational material about Afro-Brazilian history and culture reinforces negative images. Nyaki's team is working with Black university professors to develop a primary school curriculum that includes the history and achievements of Black Brazilians.

Black Religious are coming together for reflection in various groups nationwide. GRENI (Group of Black and Indigenous Religious) in Paraíba is one such group. One of the goals of these small clusters of Catholic priests and sisters is to begin the process of reclaiming their identity as Blacks and Indigenous. Many participants find strength from the groups to face the racism in their own religious communi-

ties.

Catholics are not just talking to each other about race issues. Over the last decade some Catholics have attempted to dialogue with Afro-Brazilian religious members who have suffered intense discrimination, often condoned by the Catholic Church over the years. Until the 1950s, acts of destruction against Candomblé houses of worship by either the police or common citizens were never punished by law. Even after the practice of Afro-Brazilian religion was legalized in the early '70s, participants were required to request permission from local authorities on the day of worship until the end of the decade. Persecution continues even today when Afro-Brazilian religious symbols such as drums and colourful vestments are considered by some as "coisas do diabo" (things of the devil).

One of the first Catholics involved in this inter-religious effort was the late Comboni Fr Hector Frissoti, who began his ministry by simply attending the *terreiros* (the sacred Afro-Brazilian place of worship). After educating himself, Frissoti began to write and publish his reflections. He carried these experiences first to his own Comboni community in Brazil and later to the larger Brazilian Catholic Church. The issue reached the agenda of the Ninth Annual Inter-Ecclesial Base Community leaders meeting, a gathering of 8,000 people, including 67 Bishops, in 1997 in São Luiz, Maranhão. Frissoti and others involved in the effort have met resistance on both sides. The inclusion of Afro-Brazilian religions on the agenda caused conflict among the Bishops, who feared that including the Afro-Brazilian religions would tarnish the image of the Catholic Church. Others argued that inter-religious dialogue and celebrations would be more inclusive of the many Catholics who participate in *terreiros*.

There is resistance from the practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions as well. After suffering a century of persecution from the Catholic Church, many Afro-Brazilian religious leaders are cautious. Ana Rita Santiago, a Candomblé priestess from Salvador Bahia, expressed a common concern, "I am wary of a process that is limited to taking some of our symbols and simply incorporating them into the Catholic mass".

But Fr Frissoti's spirit of reconciliation continues to touch many in Brazil, including some in high places. The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) announced recently that it plans to ask publicly for forgiveness from Indigenous and Black peoples for not speaking of injustices committed against them as Brazil approaches 500 years of European presence. For Sr Nyaki, who has accompanied the emerging dialogue for the last six years, this is only the beginning. "Public statements from Church leaders is a step but, we also ask that Brazilian Catholics open their hearts and minds".

COMING EVENTS

SEDOS AFTERNOON CONFERENCE

Tuesday, 15 February 2000, Brothers of Christian Schools, Via Aurelia 476, 16.00h - 17.00h
Translations: FR/IT/SP

Fr Mick Seigel, SVD — SEDOS Debt Working Group

BEYOND MERE CANCELLATION OF DEBT — THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF A JUST SOCIETY

SEDOS MISSIONARY CONGRESS FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR

(3-8 April 2000) (To be held in Rome – instead of the Annual Ariccia Seminar)

6 Afternoon sessions with 6 well-known theologians

- ASIA (3.4) Sr Kim Sung-Hae, SCD, South Korea *Dialogue with Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism
Inculturated Christianity among World Religions*
- ASIA (4.4) Fr M. Amaladoss, SJ, India *Mission and the Local Church —
Point of View of Theology of Harmony*
- AFRICA (5.4) Ms Mercy Oduyoye, Ghana *The Church and Islam in Africa —
A Christ-centred Mission and Women of Africa*
- EUROPE (6.4) Fr Peter Huenermann, Germany *New Expression of Church and the Creative Word —
Church in Modern European Society*
- LATIN AMERICA (7.4) Sr Maria de Freitas, FI, Brazil *Misión y Fe carismática-pentecostal —
Misión liberadora en un Mundo neoliberal*
- NORTH AMERICA (8.4) Fr R. Schreiter, CPPS, USA, (Moderator) *Mission — Globalization — Reconciliation
Is a New Catholicity Possible in Mission?*

WORKING GROUPS

- Wednesday, 26 January** China Group 15:00 hrs at SEDOS
- Thursday, 2 February** Mission in Conflict Situation 15:30 hrs at SEDOS