

### CONTENTS

<b>EDITORIAL</b>	34
<hr/>	
<b>DON SAMUEL RUIZ — BILAN DES TRENTE DERNIÈRES ANNÉES AU SERVICE DE LA PAIX</b> Andrés Aubry	35
<hr/>	
<b>THE ROOTS OF MUSLIM ANGER AND ITS CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIANS</b> Fr Thomas Michel, SJ	40
<hr/>	
<b>JESUS' APPROACH TO MISSION</b> Sean P. Kealy, CSSp	45
<hr/>	
<b>CE QUE L'ESPRIT DIT AUX ÉGLISES: "ORIENTATIONS PASTORALES ET THÉOLOGIQUES DE LA FÉDÉRATION DES CONFÉRENCES ÉPISCOPALES D'ASIE"</b> FABC	50
<hr/>	
<b>TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT</b> Cirilo Santamaria, OCD	57
<hr/>	
<b>AGAINST COMPROMISING THE LOCALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH</b> Fr Laurenti Magesa	60
<hr/>	
<b>COMING EVENTS</b>	64

## Editorial

*The first article of our February issue is dedicated to Mgr. SAMUEL RUIZ, who after 40 years of pastoral service in Chiapas hands over his Diocese. ANDRÉS AUBRY outlines the admirable work of this well-known Latin-American pastor who, through his radical option for the poor, the constant defence of human rights and his service as peace mediator, has written an impressive page in the history of the Latin-American Church, always keeping in mind the example of his great predecessor, defender of the indigenous Indians' rights, Bartolomé de Las Casas. —*

*Fr THOMAS MICHEL, SJ, the Ecumenical Secretary of FABC-OEIA, in his very interesting article explains the reasons behind the Muslim reformers' aggressive attitude to modern Western culture. Muslim revivalists see Western secular humanism as a dangerous post-religious ideology which runs counter to their own theocentric value system. The author thinks that this strong criticism of modern secularism is a challenge for Christians but that it is precisely on the issue of modernity that Christians and Muslims must engage in dialogue. —*

*Fr SEAN P. KEALY, CSSp, for many years professor of religious studies at the Kenyatta University, Nairobi, reflects on the very special way Jesus lived his mission. He concludes that we, too, have to learn anew the methodology of Jesus, which is opposed to much that is popular in modern society which lets the strongest win. The hardest lesson for the Church to learn, he thinks, is how to become once again what she was always supposed to be, a Church without privileges. —*

*Taken from "Eglises d'Asie", we are able to offer you a very concise synthesis of the pastoral and theological orientations of the FABC in the last decades. This study shows how ably the FABC accompanied the pastoral work of the local Churches with deep theological reflections, guidelines for evangelization, dialogue with other religions and socio-political discernment. —*

*In our contribution from Latin America, Fr CIRILO SANTAMARIA, OCD, highlights the role of solidarity and justice as a fundamental dimension of integral human development. Against the unrealistic dream of unlimited economic growth, only a new awareness of ecology and the dignity of the earth can promise a viable future. —*

*We conclude this issue with some critical reflections on the missionary Church in Africa after the Second Vatican Council by Fr LAURENTI MAGESA, a theologian and parish priest from Tanzania. What happened, he asks, to the wise awareness of the post-Vatican years? The structures built up in the local Churches of Africa, should make them autonomous, give them a soul and maintain them in function. —*



## Books

Duraisingh, Christopher,  
*Called to One Hope.*  
*The Gospel in Diverse Cultures.*  
WCC Publications, Geneva, 1998.

García, García, Vicente,  
*Una Ética de Liberación para África.*  
Editorial PS., Madrid, 1999.

Haxton, E./Olsson, C. Fyris-Tryck,  
*Focus on the WTO.*  
Uppsala, Sweden, 1999.

Kässmann, Margot,  
*Overcoming Violence.*  
WCC Publications, Geneva, 1988.

Mbuy-Beya, Bernadette,  
*Woman, Who are You?*  
*(A Challenge)*  
Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi,  
1998.

Sesana, Renato, Kizito,  
*Occhi per l'África.*  
Emi, Bologna, 1999.

Shorter, Aylward,  
*African Culture.*  
Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi,  
1998.

UNDP,  
*Rapporto 1999 sullo sviluppo umano. 10,*  
*la globalizzazione.*  
Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino, 1999.

• **FOR MORE ON MISSION**

**Visit our Home Page**

**Articles in 3 languages**

**<http://www.sedos.org>**

—————  
**Please note**

**Our new e-mail address:**

**[sedos@pcn.net](mailto:sedos@pcn.net)**

Andrés Aubry

## Don Samuel Ruiz — Bilan des Trente Dernières Années au Service de la Paix

Don Samuel Ruiz, évêque de San Cristóbal de Las Casas pendant ces quarante dernières années, a présenté sa démission conformément aux dispositions du Droit canon pour les évêques atteignant l'âge de 75 ans. Il est incontestablement une des très grandes figures de l'épiscopat latino-américain. Fervent promoteur d'une inculturation de la foi chrétienne dans la culture indigène, réformateur audacieux mettant en place un réseau extrêmement développé de responsables laïcs indigènes pour animer les communautés chrétiennes du diocèse, défenseur infatigable des populations pauvres et méprisées du Chiapas face aux injustices dont elles n'ont cessé d'être victimes, il fut enfin médiateur officiel entre l'Armée zapatiste de libération nationale (EZLN) et le gouvernement fédéral jusqu'au jour où il démissionna de ce poste pour interpeller une fois de plus le pouvoir en place et dénoncer l'inefficacité à laquelle la commission était vouée. Dans le texte original ci-dessous, Andrés Aubry, directeur de l'INAREMAC (San Cristóbal de Las Casas), présente les orientations et le travail effectué par Don Samuel au cours des trente dernières années.

### Dans les années 70 naît une Église populaire : l'Église des pauvres

**A**vant sa séparation d'avec Tuxtla, l'immense diocèse de Don Samuel, à l'arrivée de celui-ci en 1960, devait se contenter d'une douzaine de prêtres. Grâce à l'appui du nonce Raimundi, il reçoit des équipes entières d'agents pastoraux: des jésuites (suite à un engagement de son prédécesseur), des dominicains, des maristes, des religieuses de différentes congrégations, qui ne tarderont pas à attirer de nouveaux volontaires du pays et de l'étranger. Il les mobilise tous pour la formation de cadres dont le fruit en sera les milliers de catéchistes d'aujourd'hui et, dès 1975, les diacres (tu'nel).

Don Samuel avait compris que la Forêt était le nouveau Chiapas. En la parcourant, il observait le peuplement récent de ce qui était le "désert" ou la "solitude" des Lacandons (peuplement commencé dans les années 50, avant son arrivée). Il comprenait que disparaissait progressivement dans les grandes propriétés le vieux système tyrannique du recrutement forcé qui était la règle et le fléau de la vie paysanne. Il comprenait que la Forêt devenait un espace de construction sociale, que l'éloignement et l'isolement - ainsi que l'exode héroïque de pionniers - étaient le prix provisoire de la liberté, qu'en réalité les nouvelles colonies étaient en train de former une société paysanne alternative. Il y réfléchit avec ses catéchistes, il leur délègue des pouvoirs, il les suit régulièrement par des visites pastorales, et en 1969, il commence l'élaboration collective de la catéchèse appelée "Exode" dont

l'impact marquera les années 70, catéchèse que l'illustration polémique parue dans *Lettres Libres* présente comme le petit livre rouge du diocèse.

En 1970, alors qu'il était président du Centre épiscopal national de pastorale indigène (CENAPI), il organise la singulière Rencontre de Xicotepec, à la jonction des États de Veracruz, Hidalgo et Puebla. Non pour enseigner les 19 indigènes qui y assistèrent (tarasques, tzeltales, tojolabales, otomis et totonaques), mais pour écouter aussi bien leur analyse "des personnes, des institutions et des structures qui les affectent", que celle sur eux-mêmes. L'intitulé du compte-rendu de ce séminaire est significatif : Indigènes en polémique sur l'Église. Ensuite, Don Samuel donnera à des agents de la pastorale des facilités pour aller étudier à Mexico avec d'éminents anthropologues (Fábregas, Warman, Palerm, Paoli) et apprendre à manier les outils du dialogue interculturel.

En 1974, le 150ème anniversaire de l'incorporation du Chiapas au Mexique fut marqué par des célébrations civiles, coïncidant avec le 500ème anniversaire présumé de la naissance de Las Casas. Originaire de la ville qui porte ce nom, le gouverneur, Manuel Velasco Suárez, convoqua à San Cristóbal de brillantes réunions académiques, avec d'éminents spécialistes de l'Université nationale autonome de Mexico (UNAM), du Centre d'études d'histoire de l'Église latinoaméricaine (CEHILA), et aussi de l'étranger, dont Hanke, O'Gorman, León Portilla, Dussel. Don Samuel, consulté en tant que successeur de Bartolomé de Las Casas<sup>1</sup>, déclara que la correspondance entre la réalité sociale du Chiapas et Fray Bartolomé invitait

à associer les indigènes à la grande célébration prévue. Le gouverneur accepta, encore fallait-il trouver de quelle manière ils se réuniraient et s'exprimeraient, car ils ne pouvaient être à leur aise dans un contexte académique.

### **Un congrès indigène, novateur et décisif**

De la discussion surgit la suggestion, adoptée, d'un Congrès indigène qui prendrait le nom de Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, auquel s'associerait l'organisme d'État chargé des indigènes, le Programme gouvernemental de développement économique et social de Los Altos du Chiapas (PRODESCH), pour souligner l'initiative gouvernementale. Mais l'État, estimant ne pas avoir les contacts nécessaires pour l'organiser avec succès, demanda à l'évêque que le diocèse se charge de sa préparation.

Cette préparation dura neuf mois, avec de longues sessions régionales: tzeltal, tzotzil, tojolabal et chol. Pour garantir la liberté d'expression et favoriser toutes les nuances de la pensée indigène, on décida qu'en dehors des conférences de presse, la langue ne serait pas l'espagnol, mais celles des quatre ethnies. Plusieurs militants expérimentés comme Rigoberta Menchú disent maintenant que c'est alors que naquit leur conscience et qu'ils devinrent ce qu'ils sont. Le linguiste Antonio García de León donna une formation professionnelle à des groupes parlant ces langues pour qu'ils servent d'interprètes d'une langue indigène à une autre. On nomma une direction collégiale indigène, qui se signalait par ses bâtons de commandement<sup>2</sup> si bien que le gouverneur, d'invitant se convertit en invité "pour écouter". Ainsi, de même que Xicotepec avait donné la parole aux indigènes dans l'Église, les indigènes du Congrès la prirent dans la société, dans le même esprit "polémique", libre et critique ; parole structurée dans chaque session thématique par des dénonciations rigoureusement documentées et rendues publiques dans des conférences de presse, mais aussi par des propositions publiques. On fixa quatre thèmes : terre, commerce, éducation et santé (qui portent en germe presque tous les fameux dix points zapatistes). Une fête mémorable, espèce de happening sui generis avec bolonchón<sup>3</sup>, autres danses et musique avec des carapaces de tortue, ferma le Congrès.

Celui-ci eut le succès que l'on sait. Et aussi un impact social : devant autant d'indigènes enthousiasmés, les coletos<sup>4</sup>, commerçants de vieille souche, fermèrent marché et boutiques au cas où... La presse nationale couvrit largement l'événement. Le Président Echeverría<sup>5</sup> s'empressa d'organiser au pied levé une réplique nationale au Congrès du Chiapas, suivi d'un autre dans l'île de Janitzio. Et ensuite, les mouvements

populaires du pays, officiellement ou clandestinement, essayèrent de s'infiltrer au Chiapas avec le laissez-passer du Congrès<sup>6</sup>. Sans lui et malgré des divisions ultérieures, il n'y aurait aujourd'hui au Chiapas, ni Unión de Uniones de Ejidos<sup>7</sup>, ni Association rurale d'intérêt collectif (ARIC), ni Confédération indépendante des ouvriers agricoles et paysans (CIOAC), ni Coordination nationale "Plan de Ayala" (CNPA), ni beaucoup d'autres organisations sociales indépendantes. Encycliques, concile, voyages et forums dans les points effervescents du monde qui ont donné une identité aux souffrances et aux conquêtes du siècle, expériences latino-américaines et autres rencontres, - reflets du processus créé par la personnalité pastorale de Don Samuel - une fois réapproprié par la base, fécondé dans leur terre, à l'épreuve du terrain, de la culture et des langues indigènes, tout cela acquérait une force sociale et commençait à opérer au Chiapas "les profondes transformations auxquelles notre Amérique latine est appelée" selon ce que proclame Medellín. Comme l'exprimèrent aussi 22 ans plus tard les accords officiels de San Andrés, "les indigènes seront ceux qui, dans le cadre constitutionnel et dans le plein exercice de leurs droits, décideront des moyens et des formes dans lesquels ils devront conduire leur propre processus de transformation."

### **Les années 80 : avec les victimes de la violence**

La décennie suivante est encadrée par deux dates: en 1980, est assassiné sur l'autel Mgr Oscar Arnulfo Romero à San Salvador, et en 1989, Don Samuel crée le Centre des droits humains Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. Comme dans la décennie antérieure, les organisations de base diocésaines et avec elles d'autres organisations sociales, s'approprièrent ces événements et leurs leçons.

Avec la mort de Mgr Romero, Medellín avait son premier martyr ; Don Samuel était à l'enterrement. Ainsi, de même que le Verbe se fit chair, la parole du Conseil épiscopal latino-américain (CELAM) se fit lutte, forme locale de son incarnation. La victime de la "première violence", l'institutionnelle selon les termes de Medellín, rendait patente l'explication - mais non la justification - de la "seconde violence"<sup>8</sup>, et se convertissait ainsi en martyr de la paix. La parole créatrice, bien au-delà d'El Salvador, devint mobilisation populaire et solidarité internationale qui prit corps progressivement autour du Secrétariat international chrétien de solidarité avec l'Amérique latine "Oscar A. Romero" (SICSAL), présidé alors par Don Samuel. Lutte et paix étaient compatibles, parce que la justice allait de pair.

## La création du Centre de droits humains Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas

Ce processus, vécu collectivement sur le terrain, mûrissait au Chiapas jusqu'à ce que surgît, sur l'initiative de l'évêque, un instrument, facteur de justice et de paix : le nouveau Centre des droits humains. Il offrait l'avantage d'être une tradition du diocèse, car, pour la défense des indigènes, la devise de son premier titulaire Fray Bartolomé était "le droit des gens" : l'identité pastorale du diocèse est "comme une rivière", a l'habitude de dire Don Samuel, dont les eaux sont toujours nouvelles, même si elles proviennent de la même source. Plus qu'un centre avec tout le professionnalisme de son équipe centrale, c'est un réseau populaire qui étend ses mailles sur tout le territoire avec des paysans formés et des antennes villageoises comme celles de Chilón et d'Ocosingo ; deux membres de cette dernière paient aujourd'hui leur activisme en prison et, de leur cellule, engagent un travail de terrain inattendu. Ces centres paroissiaux et diocésains de droits de l'homme ne sont pas une affaire de spécialistes - même s'il y en a - mais un patrimoine populaire que l'on défend et pour lequel on lutte.

En juillet 1982, à Amparo Agua Tinta (sur la ligne frontière sud, aujourd'hui chef-lieu de la commune autonome Terre et Liberté), arrivèrent, quelques-uns à quatre pattes à cause de leurs blessures, les rares survivants du massacre de San Mateo au pied des montagnes couvertes de jungle des Cuchumatanes au Guatemala. Leurs hôtes, déjà expérimentés en médecine préventive, surent, sans médecins, extraire les balles des corps des fugitifs ; pour les divers besoins des réfugiés, ils prirent des terrains sur leurs terres communales, et firent même un cimetière. Des dizaines de milliers de réfugiés suivirent et se répartirent dans les communautés chrétiennes de la Forêt et des Vallées centrales.

Le travail du diocèse auprès de ces réfugiés a eu deux dimensions novatrices :

- \* la première a consisté à dépasser l'assistentialisme classique. Sans cesser de fournir vêtements, aliments et médicaments, le diocèse mit très vite en place des instruments de réadaptation psychologique, improvisa des écoles avec enseignement de l'histoire et de la géographie guatémaltèques, promut l'organisation sociale des camps de réfugiés, facilita la mise en place de programmes économiques pour réduire leur dépendance et fit éclater l'élémentaire charité chrétienne en solidarité avec des réseaux dans tout le diocèse et tout le pays ;

- \* la seconde, fruit imprévisible de la première, fut pour Don Samuel une préparation diplomatique qui préfigure sa fonction ultérieure de médiateur dans la décennie suivante. C'était alors l'époque de Contadora

et ensuite d'Esquipulas ; la guerre (et progressivement la négociation) se propageait dans toute l'Amérique centrale. Le Haut commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (ACNUR), étonné par la qualité de ce que faisait le diocèse dans les camps chiapanèques, en fit un modèle, le diffusa, et facilita les relations de l'évêque avec la Commission mexicaine d'aide aux réfugiés (COMAR) et la Commission d'aide aux réfugiés (CEAR) guatémaltèque dont les membres, recrutés à l'intérieur de la police migratoire ou gouvernementale, n'avaient pas toujours la formation nécessaire pour ces nouvelles tâches. Don Samuel, de cette manière, se trouva impliqué, bien que d'une manière marginale, dans la délicate politique internationale de cette aire de conflits.

En 1986, à l'apogée de la répression du gouverneur Absalón Castellano Domínguez, Don Samuel combina une visite surprise épiscopale en plein pénitencier : dans un voyage éclair à la prison Islas Mariás<sup>9</sup> en plein Pacifique, avec l'évêque de Tepic (de qui dépendait ce territoire), il rapatria les prisonniers du Chiapas. L'épisode signifie qu'un "non" à l'évêque du Chiapas était politiquement risqué.

## Les années 90 : de la politique à la diplomatie pour la paix

Le gouverneur Patrocinio González Garrido était de ces politiciens qui pensent que deux crocodiles ne peuvent pas vivre dans la même mare. En conséquence, en 1991, il décida de tenir Don Samuel en respect et il le défia par personne interposée, en arrêtant comme "prisonnier - suppléant"<sup>10</sup> le curé de Simojovel. Présumé coupable du vol de 4 poules, le Père Joel Padrón fut incarcéré dans une cellule de haute sécurité de Cerro Hueco. Don Samuel se trouvant sur un autre continent, son vicaire et le chancelier du diocèse essayèrent d'intervenir. Après des heures d'attente chez le gouverneur, celui-ci leur signifia que cette démarche était inutile parce qu'il voulait "parler avec le chef du cirque et non avec ses fauves". Ce qui arriva alors, c'est que des milliers de Chiapanèques s'estimèrent des fauves bien que d'un cirque lointain ; ils organisèrent des rassemblements devant la prison ; ils bloquaient la circulation sur des kilomètres de routes nationales avec des processions de saints sur des brancards, des sit-in de jeûnes, des prières massives de rosaires commentés, des harangues avec Bible à la main. Dans la foule il y avait des catéchistes et des fidèles de tout le diocèse, des évangélistes de diverses confessions, des militants du Parti de la révolution démocratique (PRD) et des membres d'une multitude d'organisations sociales indépendantes dont l'unique dénominateur commun était leur foi associée à la lutte pour la justice. Un nouveau mouvement populaire était

né qui, une fois obtenue la libération du Père Joel, exigea du diocèse d'être enregistré sous le nom de "Peuple croyant" pour se perpétuer et continuer à être écouté dans les affaires qu'il estimait de sa compétence.

Don Patrocinio prétendait faire échec au tout nouveau Centre des droits humains Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. Mais les avocats de celui-ci, "dans une Pentecôte" hors du temps - exactement 49 jours entre octobre et novembre - obtinrent une remise en liberté sans aucune charge, et déclenchèrent dans la presse un mouvement d'opinion qui faisait du gouverneur le point de mire du pays et du centre de Don Samuel une célébrité nationale.

La bataille politique contre Don Samuel était perdue au Chiapas, mais elle rebondit au niveau national par le nouveau canal des relations diplomatiques récemment instaurées entre Mexico et le Vatican. En mai 1993 à Mérida, l'évêque remettait au Pape sa dernière lettre pastorale *Dans ce temps de grâce*, (en fait une oeuvre collective avec ses agents de pastorale), laquelle en même temps récapitulait le processus diocésain et formulait un très sévère diagnostic de la réalité socio-politique du Chiapas. L'acteur de la nouvelle bataille fut Mgr Prigione qui inaugurait sa nouvelle nonciature officielle : il exigea la démission de l'évêque, mais le conflit du Chiapas qui le promouvait comme médiateur, l'empêcha de l'obtenir. Avant que l'affaire n'éclate, "Peuple croyant" démontra de nouveau sa force populaire lorsque par toutes les entrées de la ville pénétrèrent des caravanes interminables que la Croix Rouge, stupéfaite, évalua à 18 000 personnes. Au milieu de la tourmente, Don Samuel, dans une homélie de novembre 1993, donna sa propre interprétation : "La mesure ne vise pas ma personne ni mon activité pastorale, mais la réalité du Chiapas parce que maintenant la démocratie passe par le Chiapas." Ces derniers mots soulignés, sans qu'il le sût, furent repris par le Comisionado<sup>11</sup> Manuel Camacho Solís, en concluant le Dialogue de la cathédrale le 2 mars 1994.

### Une année tourmentée

1994, année tourmentée, mit en relief le poids politique et démocratique de Don Samuel.

1 - Devant la frayeur provoquée par les événements du 1er janvier, il contacte entre autres les évêques du Chiapas, lesquels, le 2 janvier, proposent publiquement de chercher une solution au conflit. Dans ces jours-là, des fonctionnaires du gouvernement fédéral demandent la médiation de Don Samuel, qui l'accepte, ainsi que l'Armée zapatiste de libération nationale (EZLN).

2 - En octobre 1994, il décide de partager cette

médiation et formule le projet collégial de la Commission nationale de médiation (CONAI), suggérant les noms d'autorités morales, populaires et intellectuelles du Chiapas et de tout le pays, demandant à chacune une réponse rapide pour la rendre publique. Toutes furent affirmatives. Le 13, la toute récente CONAI présentait une nouvelle initiative pour la paix, consolidant Don Samuel dans sa position de médiateur reconnu.

3 - En mars 1995, après deux échecs du dialogue de paix, (celui de la cathédrale en février 1994 et celui de la Forêt le 15 janvier 1995), le pouvoir législatif décida de ne pas laisser le conflit entre les seules mains de l'exécutif et vota la Loi du dialogue du 11 mars qui faisait allusion à une médiation sans l'identifier. Devant l'hésitation de l'exécutif et la reconnaissance de la nouvelle loi par l'EZLN - qui demandait cependant que la communication et l'échange de documents continuent à circuler par le canal de la CONAI - la Commission de la concorde et de la pacification (COCOPA) la ratifia sans ambiguïté comme médiation officielle. Ainsi, l'épiscopat, les rebelles, le gouvernement, les législateurs et les personnalités de la société civile lançaient Don Samuel dans l'arène.

Il ne cessa de manifester par sa parole et ses actes comment il comprenait la médiation. Reprenant les propres termes de notre dernière rencontre de Medellín, il insistait sur les points suivants : la paix ne se réduit pas à la fin de la guerre parce qu'elle est le fruit de la justice : c'est un processus. Ce processus implique tous les acteurs sociaux qui construisent une nouvelle société et un nouveau pays. C'est l'issue politique du conflit. Ainsi la voix de la CONAI sera l'expression de la société civile. Sans rester jamais indifférente devant l'injustice, en toute indépendance vis-à-vis des parties en conflit, la "neutralité active" de la CONAI se mesure aux avancées du processus de paix, c'est-à-dire aux résultats du dialogue qui incluait la société civile aux "tables de négociations" de San Andrés grâce à une initiative que la médiation avait gagnée de haute lutte. Ces présupposés irritèrent le Président Zedillo qui somma la CONAI "de sortir le programme politique qu'elle avait dans sa manche". Une négociatrice du gouvernement dans le dialogue de la cathédrale, Alejandra Moreno Toscano, expliqua pourquoi : "une tradition autoritaire ne tolère pas qu'une force, un bloc social ou une coalition politique assume des responsabilités nationales qui, comme chacun sait, relèvent de la seule compétence du gouvernement - et du Président." Quand la CONAI se rendit compte de la situation, elle décida le 7 juin 1998 de se retirer de la médiation. Don Samuel déclara : "ce n'est pas une démission ; c'est une dénonciation."

L'autre versant de la médiation de Don Samuel a été son habituelle implication à la base. Dans le dia-

logue de la Cathédrale et dans celui de San Andrés, déjà depuis San Miguel (9 avril 1995), toutes les sessions, (17 en 17 mois, plus les 3 appelées “tripartites” d’octobre - décembre 1996) se déroulèrent sous le contrôle méritoire, presque héroïque, aussi continu qu’austère, de milliers de représentants de la société civile qui se relayaient : paysans, indigènes, organisations sociales, syndicats indépendants du pays, et un flux constant de personnalités mondiales et d’organismes de solidarité internationale.

Les bureaux de la CONAI se sont reconvertis en Service et assessorat pour la paix (SERAPAZ) pour chercher par d’autres moyens les chemins du processus de paix, ouvrant une nouvelle étape du travail de Don Samuel qui ne sera pas sans intérêt alors qu’il ne sera plus évêque de San Cristóbal. On peut prédire que, hormis accident - pourvu qu’il ne soit pas dramatique ! - la “rivière” continuera à couler, que de nouvelles initiatives alerteront l’opinion publique, et que ce ne seront pas seulement des prises de positions purement personnelles mais la suite logique d’actions collectives qui continueront à se réapproprier, à encourager et à dynamiser un processus qui est né en dehors du Chiapas à des endroits et à des moments particulièrement féconds du siècle mais qui a pris consistance ici par ses forces populaires et qui le dépassera. Le diocèse commencera le nouveau millénaire sans Don Samuel. Son coadjuteur avec droit de succession s’est engagé à la continuité. Beaucoup de forces populaires nées du processus ont conquis leur autonomie et ont aussi de fortes motivations qui ne reposent pas sur une personne, parce que ce sont des mouvements collectifs. S’il est vrai que le futur est imprévisible parce qu’il se nourrit des surprises de l’histoire et des initiatives de la liberté humaine, c’est-à-dire de nouveaux acteurs, la mémoire créatrice du processus - la source de la rivière - possède ses propres énergies. Le Chiapas est déjà autre, et si la lutte pour la démocratie passe par le Chiapas comme l’ont répété Don Samuel et bien d’autres, c’est à la fois un horizon difficile à effacer et un puissant aimant.

## NOTES

1. Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas a été le premier évêque du Chiapas et de la ville qui portera ensuite son nom : San Cristóbal de Las Casas (NdT).

2. Dans les communautés indigènes, les autorités traditionnelles reçoivent un bâton, symbole de leur charge (NdT).

3. Bolonchón : danse des Indiens de Chamula qui évoque le jaguar en tant qu’animal sacré (NdT).

4. Coletos : surnom donné aux Blancs (puis à tous les gens) originaires de San Cristóbal qui, autrefois, avaient derrière la tête une touffe de cheveux en

forme de petite queue de cheval à la manière des toreros. Il s’agit ici des gens, en général de la classe moyenne (banquiers, hôteliers, gros commerçants) opposés à la Pastorale du Diocèse, et tout spécialement à Don Samuel (NdT).

5. Le Président Echeverría, avec son gouvernement, ainsi que le gouverneur du Chiapas ne virent pas d’un bon oeil la célébration du Congrès indigène organisé par le diocèse de San Cristóbal (NdT).

6. Le gouvernement mexicain reprocha aux néozapatistes et à des groupes extrémistes du centre et du nord du pays de s’infiltrer au Chiapas en utilisant les réseaux de communautés de bases établis par Don Samuel pendant trente ans de travail pastoral.

7. Ejidos : terres communautaires (NdT).

8. La “première violence”, ou violence institutionnelle est celle des gouvernements. La “seconde violence” est celle des guérillas.

9. Le pénitencier de Las Islas Marias est considéré comme une prison de haute sécurité. Il se trouve en pleine mer et est entouré de requins (NdT).

10. Le gouverneur ne peut pas jeter Don Samuel en prison ; “à sa place”, il arrête le Père Joel (NdT).

11. Le rôle de Manuel Camacho Solís, en tant que “comisionado”, c’est-à-dire, “représentant ou chargé d’affaires” du gouvernement, était de rétablir la paix et la réconciliation au Chiapas (NdT).

Le P. Michel Chanteau (expulsé du Chiapas par le gouvernement fédéral mexicain) a collaboré au travail de traduction effectué pour DIAL par Mme J. Blanchy ainsi qu’à la rédaction de certaines notes. Qu’ils en soient tous deux vivement remerciés.

Ref.: *DIAL*, n. 2339, 15-31 décembre, 1999.

## The Roots of Muslim Anger and Its Challenge for Christians

### Religious fundamentalism in our times

The rise of religious fundamentalism is a serious concern for people in Asia today. Christian fundamentalists, in their evangelical and pentecostal writs, who represent probably the fastest growing religious movement in the world today, often engage in aggressive proselytizing among Christians and among followers of other religions. Jewish fundamentalists in Israel put constant pressure on their government to take a hard line against Palestinian struggles for justice and dignity, and their extremist fringe has been responsible for murders and massacres, including the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Perhaps the most violent movement of religious fundamentalism in the world at the present time is found among Hindus, a community traditionally known for its reputation for tolerance and non-violence. I don't need to recount the long list of violent deeds by Hindu extremists in northern India, against Christians, Muslims, outcaste Hindus and tribals.

In this paper, however, my topic is that of Muslim fundamentalism. Christians — and many Muslims as well — are concerned by those Muslim preachers and politicians who aggressively defend Pakistan's blasphemy law. They are worried by the mob violence in Indonesia which has resulted in the cumulative total of over 300 churches burned in recent years. It is clear to Christian minorities that they face and are sometimes victims of considerable reserves of anger on the part of Muslims. Where does this anger come from, they ask, and why is it directed at us? The fact that in the post-Suharto authority vacuum in Indonesia Christians have also resorted to burning mosques and harassing Muslims, and the widely accepted suspicion that the interreligious violence is not spontaneous but carefully planned and organized by powerful if shadowy figures does not answer the question, "Why so much anger?"

In this paper, I want to offer some of the geopolitical as well as philosophical factors behind the growth of Islamic revival and to reflect on its impact on Christian-Muslim relations. As in all human disputes, if any sort of reconciliation and harmonious living is to be sought, a good place to start is to try to understand why the other is angry.

### Distant roots of Islamic revival

The Islamic revival finds its distant roots in a religious response to the loss of independence and sovereignty. When Muslims looked around the world in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, they were forced to ask, "What went wrong?" In previous centuries, Muslims had lived in the world's most powerful, advanced, and prosperous States in the Ottoman, Safavid and Moghul Empires, which, were also among the world's most religiously pluralist and tolerant. But by 1800, Muslims had succumbed in almost every region to the rule of others.

In South and Southeast Asia it was Christian European powers — first the Portuguese, then Dutch, British, Spanish, Russian, and American — who came to dominate Muslim regions. In the same period, Chinese, Thai, and Burmese Buddhists incorporated Muslim regions into their domains. Only Afghanistan was able to remain independent, due to its geographical isolation and skillful playing off of Russian designs against those of England. In the Middle East and North Africa, the British and French were locked in a power struggle over Muslim regions. Iran and Turkey remained independent but had to accept humiliating capitulations which gave European powers rights to intervene, interfere, and impose their will.

How did the Muslim world fall so far so quickly? A radical response was provided by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab in Arabia, who held that Muslim peoples were reduced to their low state because they had deviated from the true Islamic path. When Muslims abandoned Islam in its original purity, God left them to suffer the evil consequences. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab felt that only a return to pure, original Islam would permit Muslims to regain their past dynamism and initiative. In his analysis, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab did not create a new theory, but drew upon a minority strain of thought that had been present in the Islamic community from the beginning as a protest against secularizing tendencies.

Those who took up his views were called "Wahhabis". They wanted not only to purify Islam of all accretions and novelties that had been accepted as Islamic in the course of time, but they held that the Sufi preoccupation with Islam as a personal, spiritual path to God was in itself a distortion of the original



intent of the religion. They claimed that Islam was meant to be a programme for building a human society whose every aspect was to be lived in accord with the will of God. Many hajj pilgrims to Mecca encountered Wahhabi ideas in Arabia and brought these views back with them to their homelands in Asia.

### **Political agenda of the Wahhabi movement**

The Wahhabi analysis had political implications. If God intended the purification of the Islamic community in order to construct societies formed in all social, economic, and political aspects according to God's will, this could only be accomplished, they reasoned, if Muslims themselves were in control of the political systems. Their political theory held that the State existed to permit Muslims to promote the Islamization of society and to forbid deviations and punish wrongdoing. They felt that the Sufis, in their efforts to draw up interior spiritual paths aimed at mystical union with God, ignored political realities and held Muslims back from the building of more just and humane societies.

The Wahhabi programme thus linked religious and political concerns. In order to pursue their societal ends, they sought to create a State that would favour and implement these goals. The first objective, therefore, was to achieve liberation from non-Muslim rule. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wahhabi-inspired revolutionary movements worked to overthrow colonial regimes in order to create Islamic States that would work for the Islamization of society. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic currents worked alongside those of nationalists and socialists to oust the colonial powers.

### **Proximate roots of Islamic revival**

As one Muslim nation after another achieved independence in the years after World War II, the revivalists hoped that Islamic States would be set up. What actually happened was quite different. Rule by Muslims replaced the colonial regimes, but the ideals of the Islamic State were far from being implemented. The new ruling class throughout the Muslim world, who had usually been educated in colonial or missionary schools, generally created nation States on a European nationalist model. Legal codes were based on those of Western nations and were usually mere revisions of colonial law. On the grounds that it was more egalitarian and would prevent the abuses of uncontrolled capitalism, socialist policies of a one-party State, State ownership of industries, and centrally planned economies were adopted. Cultural mores as well as development concepts were borrowed uncritically from the West.

Muslim organizations arose which criticized the new *status quo*. In Egypt and other Arab countries, the Muslim Brotherhood criticized nationalist concepts, which they saw as having been imposed by the Western powers to split the Islamic community into multiple nation States that kept Muslims weak and internally divided. In South Asia, the Jamiati Islami held that Islam offered the world an Islamic solution to every modern problem. There already existed an Islamic science, economics, politics, legal system, and pedagogy. Muslims had to search their own early tradition to rediscover the ingredients necessary to develop Islamic alternatives to these secular fields.

In the first years after World War II, many Muslims were enthusiastic about the creation of *Pakistan*, which they considered a model for the modern Islamic democracy. When it gradually became clear that Pakistan's Islamic identity did not enable the country to overcome ethnic clashes, economic mismanagement, corruption, and military takeovers, achieve an equitable distribution of wealth, and avoid eventual dismemberment with the creation of Bangladesh, many Muslims felt that the Pakistan model was a failed experiment. A truly Islamic State would have to undergo a more revolutionary societal restructuring.

The emergence of the State of Israel in 1949 had great influence on the thinking of militant Muslims. Israel was seen as a State created in the Arab heartland by European powers to provide a home for another group of Europeans to assuage their guilt for Europe's treatment of its Jews. In expelling and oppressing the Palestinians, successive Israeli Governments produced the powerful symbolic imagery of oppressed Muslims seeking liberation through armed rebellion. The *Palestinian cause* engendered a conviction that the West, despite its professions of concern for the development of Muslim peoples, was in fact opposed to Islam and that Arabs and Muslims generally were victims of injustice perpetrated by inimical or hypocritical Western powers.

The disastrous 1967 war was a watershed in modern Muslim thought. Egypt, the cultural capital of the Arab world, led by the charismatic Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, sustained by alliances and financial backing from other Arab countries, went down to a quick and humiliating defeat by tiny Israel. As a famous Lebanese poet noted, "Lower than this we cannot go". Not only were Nasser and the secular ideology of pan-Arab nationalism discredited, but also the military. Ineffective in its stated role of defending the nation, the military was seen as a costly expenditure which existed mainly to preserve the internal *status quo* and enable the ruling *élite* to govern by force, regardless of the will of the people.

Lingering hopes that the Western powers would

provide the assistance needed in Muslim regions were dashed when those States supported Israel both financially and in international diplomatic fora such as the United Nations. In response to these reversals, many began to question the efficacy of nationalist thought and turned to Islam to provide a more adequate platform for governing Muslim peoples. The nationalist model had failed, they said. Let's return to our roots. Only Islam can form a sound basis for more just, effective societies. But the Islamic State existed only in theory.

The 1979 *Iranian revolution* gave concrete shape to these grievances. The world was amazed when religious solidarity enabled Iranian Muslims to overthrow with apparent ease a wealthy and unpopular Muslim regime, one which had been assumed to be of unassailable stability. The fact that the Shah's regime was a strong proponent of secularization and closely allied to the West was not lost on Muslims. The Islamic Republic of Iran replaced, in the thoughts of many, the failed Pakistan as the model of an Islamic State. All observers, whether sympathetic or not, agreed that the government of Ayatollah Khomeini was truly revolutionary in rethinking and reorganizing every aspect of social life according to the principles of Islam.

Later events in the Muslim world encouraged the growth and spread of revivalist ideals. The 1991 *Gulf War* and the continuing blockade against Iraq, along with economic and diplomatic measures taken against other outspoken Muslim nations, confirmed for many that the West, particularly the USA, intended to subdue and isolate Muslim countries. The psychological effect on Muslims of sitting in their living-rooms watching their television screens as the world's most powerful military machine bombed Iraqi cities mercilessly taught Muslims lessons about the West that no amount of rhetoric could ever undo.

For many Muslim thinkers, Algeria offered a model presumably more acceptable to the West. The electoral victory of the Front Islamique du Salut (F.I.S.) in 1992 showed that a grass-roots Islamic political movement could succeed through democratic processes. The uncritical welcome given to the military *coup* and dictatorship in Algeria confirmed, for many Muslims, the hollowness of European rhetoric about democracy and the West's implacable enmity towards Islam. As the more moderate members of the F.I.S. coalition were either killed, arrested, or fled the country, the Algerian opposition was left in the hands of its most violent and extremist exponents.

### **Muslim reformist critique of modernity**

Many internal factors underlie the emergence of

militant Muslim movements. There is a criticism of Sufi elements in traditional Islam and the desire to replace the inner-directed thrust of Sufism with an activist programme of social reform. Both in the area of jurisprudential and theological studies, dynamism and creativity had long given way to formulaic answers and closed systems. In many countries, a revivalist approach to Islam was seen as an attractive alternative that promised to resolve the crises in existing institutions: the lack of effective and representative government, the wasteful yet ambiguous role of the military, corruption, economic mismanagement and the institutionalization of the officially recognised religious leaders which made them servants of their own interests and of governments rather than spokesmen for the people.

This internal critique is accompanied by a harsh critique of modernity. Muslim revivalists have no objection to technological advances and are quite ready to use the latest communications systems and organizational techniques to promote their cause. The focus of protest, rather, is a philosophical world-view summed up in the term "secularism", against which they propose the resacralization or Islamization of society.

They perceive in Western secular humanism a post-religious ideology that seeks to overturn a God-centred, community-based understanding of human life. They see modernity as an egoistic, individualist approach to life that relativizes religion, exalts the individual, and divides the world into masters and subjects, advanced and underdeveloped, winners and losers. Ethics is reduced to market expediency, while family values and moral choices are banished from the councils of power and consigned to the private decision of the individual. The natural world is not seen as the precious gift of the Creator God to be carefully protected and preserved, but simply as raw material to be economically exploited.

They claim that modern societies have abandoned God and regard a religious outlook as an outmoded relic of former times. In this secular age, the need for God has been superseded. Such arrogance leads the modern man to view himself as capable of all things, sufficient unto himself, the measure of good and bad, right and wrong. Domination, power, wealth, sex-appeal and conspicuous consumption are signs of success, evidence that someone is an achiever. Women are reduced to sex objects and advised to chase after, with the aid of highly marketable cosmetics and clothes, an eternal youthfulness and beauty in order to catch and hold on to a successful man.

In the highly individualistic modernist outlook, it is not society or the social group, not even the family, that counts. It is the individual person who makes his

or her own morality, autonomous in moral code and decision. Human rights are coextensive with the rights of the individual. To this, Muslim revivalists oppose the prior rights of God to determine proper societal relations. God's revealed Word gives precedence to the rights of society, to the overriding prerogatives of the collectivity over the desires of the individual.

It is here that anger enters in. Muslim anger is the harsh response of the outsider, of those who are excluded from the *élite* in-groups who both promote and profit from modernity. The Muslim reformers perceive that the liberal *élites* who occupy the seats of power — the great international bureaucracies at the UN, WHO, and IMF, government ministries in the West and in Muslim countries, the universities, schools and departments of education, thinktanks and consultancy boards, the owners, promoters and personalities of the communications media and the arts — that this liberal consensus has created an environment in which the only viewpoint to be taken seriously is their own, while other points of view are dismissed as unenlightened, backward, or fanatic. In the view of the revivalist Muslims, the liberal *élite* not only express public opinion, they create it and dictate it.

### A conflict of values

According to Muslim reformers, what is at stake is a fundamental conflict of values. On the one hand, in a secular value system, the individual person is conceived as the centre of the universe. Fulfilling to the utmost one's potential, capabilities, and legitimate desires is considered the highest human goal, and individuals must be free to achieve these aspirations. While secular liberalism does not deny the existence of God or reject religion as such, it is skeptical of the ability of any religious system to attain truth, and it is opposed to the role of religion in public life. Religion can be admitted as the personal choice of some individuals who feel they need some direction in their private and familial lives, but it has no place in public affairs. The marketplace, social interaction and, above all, government, are autonomous spheres that must exist and operate outside the influence of religious thought.

Against secular values, Muslim revivalists propose their own theocentric value system. For them, God has revealed a proper way for humans to live and has laid down the principles on which society is to be built. They take the moral will of God very seriously and view as enemies those who would propose incompatible ethical values. They are called upon to struggle (the root meaning of *jihad*) against secular, i.e., anti-God, anti-religion, antimorality forces, propagated first and foremost by American and European

opinion-makers.

### The direction of history

They hold that the modernist ideology, with its anti-religious component, scored its first successes in intellectual circles in Europe and was then taken up and spread throughout the world by America. Having got its start in predominantly Christian regions, the first victim to modernist philosophy was Christianity, which Muslim reformers are convinced is dead or dying in its mediaeval European homeland. Having reduced Christianity to at best innocuous acquiescence, the secular modernists have now turned their attention to Islam.

Muslim activists are convinced that the West is out to destroy Islam as the last bastion of the religious worldview, an onslaught they perceive to be carried out on many fronts. The campaign is *political* in the sense that the Western alliance intends to isolate Islamic countries much in the way that the communist bloc had been isolated before 1989. It is *military* in that tactics of war — blockades, frozen assets, air attacks, and other coercive actions — are more often directed against Muslim nations than against others. They see the Iraqi people, who never chose their government nor had any say in its decisions, being subjected to a genocidal boycott and repeated air attacks. Have not the peoples of Israel and Serbia, they ask, not violated more international accords, and are they not more responsible for the actions of their elected governments? Yet they are allowed to operate with impunity.

They see the anti-Islamic campaign as *economic* in that the former colonial domination has been replaced by economic globalization, markets manipulated from the outside, political leaders bought off by international industry, and the constant military threat to ensure control of resources. The attack is *religious* in the constant presentation of Islam — in films, global television networks, newsmagazines, and spy novels — as a fanatic, violent, xenophobic faith that is a danger to civilized life. The attack is *cultural* in that all things Western — education, clothing, law, manners, music, entertainment, house furnishing, relations between sexes — are presented as superior and to be admired and imitated.

If all this seems overstated and even somewhat paranoid, it reflects a widespread perception in the Muslim world. The conviction that Islamic faith and Muslim culture are under siege explains many of the reactions among Muslims, of political, intellectual, and religious leaders as well as of the man and woman in the street, to recent events such as the Gulf War, the Algerian military *coup*, and to the continuing dramas

in Palestine, Bosnia and, now, Kosovo.

Each of these tragedies is interpreted in the light of the preceding critique of modernity. The Gulf War was seen as a war for control of Muslim oil fields, waged by a Western-assembled and controlled coalition attacking a predominantly Muslim people by use of vastly superior technological weaponry. Israel is seen as the unilateral implantation of a Western people and ideology in the heart of the Islamic world. Bosnia and Kosovo are taken as evidence that the European nations will never defend a predominantly Muslim people or permit a Muslim-dominated nation to exist in Europe.

They regard the direction that history has taken in this century as the temporary triumph of the forces of evil. When Ayatollah Khomeini referred to the United States as the Great Satan, he was not simply engaging in invective, but making a theological statement. The course of current history, they feel, is a threat to morality and a God-centred life. They claim to be confident that they will be successful in withstanding and eventually overcoming anti-God forces, although it will require struggle, sacrifice, and suffering on their part if they are to fulfill the God-given task of Islam to save the world from a Western liberal hegemony.

### **Bases for dialogue**

The Muslim critique of modern secularism is a challenge to Christians. For both, it is God who is the centre of the universe, at the heart of human life and every human activity. Any way of life that reduces faith to private morality and ritual is unacceptable, an affront to God's majesty and holiness. But Muslims regard modern Christians' easy acceptance of secular society and humanist ethics as a compromise with the essence of religious faith. Muslims repeatedly affirm that they have no argument with true Christians, whom they regard as natural allies in the struggle against modern secularism, but they feel that Christians have too often sold their birthright in order to present themselves as modern and progressive.

It is tempting for Christians to feel complacently that we have successfully reconciled religious faith with the demands of modern life and sometimes even boast that we are modern while Muslims are backward. Yet Christians in Asia may not be conscious of the extent to which they have compromised their faith with incompatible elements of modern Western culture and unaware of the ways in which the Christian Churches have been wounded in the course of their encounter with liberal values.

Yet it is precisely on issues of modernity that Christians must engage in dialogue with Muslims. Modern

Christians accept the challenges posed by modern values, such as the liberal critique of religion as often being a factor of oppression, inequality, and patriarchy in human societies. They uphold a commitment to the legitimate human and civil rights of all, a commitment that does not entail a blind acceptance of everything that is claimed to be a human right. In dialogue, Christians must challenge Muslims to enter jointly into a constructive and critical encounter with modern liberal philosophy in order to disentangle its positive humane values, those which are confirmed by religious faith, from the destructive, divisive, and egoistic elements which are by-products of secular and modernist thinking and policy.

Muslims, for their part, have not convinced Christians that their vision of Islamic society offers a life of dignity and equality in responsible citizenship to non-Muslim minorities. Christian minorities in Muslim-dominated societies can offer too many concrete experiences of discrimination and oppression to support Islamization processes. Local Christians have too often found themselves the helpless victims of a transferral of anger properly directed at distant enemies. When U.S. airplanes bombed Basra in Iraq, Muslims in Pakistan burned the church in Rahimyar Khan. Where in the Islamic societal vision are the guarantees that local Christian communities will not be held hostage to events and reactions over which they have no control?

Clearly, Christians and Muslims have much to discuss concerning their lives together in modern societies.

Ref.: *Info on Human Development*, Vol. 25, nn. 4-6, April - June 1999.

## Jesus' Approach to Mission

Fr Sean P. Kealy, CSSp, belongs to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers and is based at Blackrock College, Dublin, Ireland. He was once a lecturer at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, in the department of Religions Studies.

One can summarize Jesus' approach to mission under three aspects: the basic principle of the Incarnation, his brief public ministry, and the education of his disciples.

### 1. The Basic Principle of the Incarnation

In the introduction to their influential book, *The Riddle of the New Testament*, Edward C. Hoskyns and F.N. Davey (1931, p. 10) give the following evaluation:

When the Catholic Christian kneels at the words '*incarnatus est*' ('was incarnate'), he marks with proper solemnity his recognition that the Christian Religion has its origin, neither in general religious experience, nor in some peculiar esoteric mysticism, nor in a dogma, and he declares his faith to rest upon a particular event in history. Nor is the Catholic Christian peculiar in this concentration of faith. This is Christian orthodoxy, both Catholic and Protestant. In consequence, the Christian religion is not merely open to historical investigation, but demands it, and its piety depends upon it. Inadequate or false reconstruction of the history of Jesus of Nazareth cuts at the heart of Christianity.

The key to the Incarnation is much more than the mere fact of God becoming man, it shows the depth of God's involvement. This lies in God's solidarity, in Jesus Christ's identification with the human condition, and with its problems, deepest longings, suffering, failure. Redemption began with creation and continued through all human history, and was accomplished through God's actual solidarity with us. The result is that the oppressed and despairing are no longer God-forsaken and alone, and thus have grounds for hope. God is in solidarity ('*hesed*') with them on the long road to freedom, a road that is going somewhere and has meaning. To one who believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Incarnation of God, Jesus' attitudes and responses to situations during his earthly life are of vital importance.

To say that Christianity is an historical religion is to say it is about things that actually happened. The alternative is a dangerous delusion. The Church has always condemned gnostics who, being so keen to

preserve God as Spirit, detached and remote from human history, cannot accept a real flesh and blood Incarnation.

Jesus was born a Jew in a small Asian country of the Roman Empire. A Paul would travel distances by land and sea, but in sharp contrast, the area in which Jesus carried out his mission was little bigger than an average English county. Jesus was not a citizen of the Roman Empire, and as far as we know, he spent most of his life quietly in the insignificant village of Nazareth, in the Jewish backwater of Galilee of the Gentiles, as it is called (Hengel, M., *Between Jesus and Paul*, SCM Press, London, 1983, p. 138; note that he insists that to speak of a semi-pagan or syncretistic Jewish Galilee is quite unjustified).

One thinks of the famous remarks of Goethe: that in order to understand the world it is necessary to select an *Eckchen*, a small quarter of it for contemplation. The curious thing is that the two largest towns in Galilee, namely, Sepphoris and Tiberias, are never mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels. Sepphoris, only four miles north of Nazareth, was destroyed by the Roman General Varius, 4 B.C., and its inhabitants sold into slavery, but was rebuilt by Herod Antipas.

Jesus was a country person, in contrast to the city person, Paul, who saw only wilderness outside the cities (2 Cor 11:26). In Nazareth Jesus was so completely involved with ordinary village life that the local people were amazed when he closed up his business to begin his public ministry. Therefore, like Paul, Jesus can be described, as one who really knew Judaism from the inside.

This point has much relevance for many missionaries, who spend so little time getting to know the real culture, customs and language of the people to whom they are sent.

### 2. Jesus Christ's brief public ministry

The public ministry of Jesus Christ was the explosion of humanity, as E. Schillebeeckx describes it. At his baptism, Jesus accepted his mission as God's Son and in the following temptation scene (and in the corresponding scene at Gethsemane, which introduces the climax of his mission on earth) in opposition to contemporary methods of mission, he witnessed to the new approach to be followed. Surprisingly, Jesus

Christ's followers had only about three years — what missionaries call a tour — in which to get to know him and to learn about his kingdom mission. This was a very brief period indeed, in contrast with other religious founders such as the 40 odd years of Moses over 40 years which Buddha lived after his great enlightenment in his 30s or the 22 years which Mohammed lived from his first revelations to his sudden death of an illness. It is surely significant for modern missionaries to note that Jesus himself devoted a considerable amount of his very brief ministry, as the Gospels testify, to the preparation of followers, particularly the leaders who would carry on his mission.

### 3. Jesus' education of his disciples

Jesus left behind a group of identifiable disciples, who were subject to persecution by at least some of the leaders of Judaism (Gal 1:13,23; 5:11; 6:12; 1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:6; Mt 10:23. See also Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader*, p. 80.). In particular, he chose and taught 12, and at the end, sent them forth with his Spirit to continue his mission.

Matthew devotes a major section to describing that training, probably beginning with the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-11). The Gospel according to John is, on the whole, an education of the disciples with the fullest revelation of Jesus' person and mission taking place at the Last Supper, on Mount Olivet and the final appearance at the lake. For Luke also, in contrast to Mark's sudden ending, the training of the disciples continued for a period after the Resurrection (Lk 24:25-53; Acts 1:1-11). Luke describes three stages in Jesus' relationship with his 12 disciples — a call after seeing Jesus in action (Lk 5:1-11) a choice of 12 from a larger group (Lk 6:13) and their mission (Lk 9:1-6; 10:1-20).

One can imagine among Jesus' followers a series of concentric circles: with an inner three, who receive special attention (Lk 8:51) then that of the 12 who are selected from the disciples or learners and the wider group of 70 (Lk 10:1-20) and then the crowds who are distinct from the disciples (Lk 6:17). There were also the women who accompanied the 12 (Lk 8:2). The 12 special companions of Jesus were rather unusual, in that they were chosen from among the ordinary people, without wealth, high social position or academic background. They were sent forth on a trial run before their full mission, as Jesus' authoritative representatives. The latter took place after his Resurrection when they could testify to his full life which they finally began to understand.

### The relevance of Jesus' mission

Ultimately a decision must be made about the relevant message of Jesus' mission for our times. The Gospels show that it had a different message, depending on a person's situation. Jesus' encounter with demonic forces differed from his meeting with a tax collector like Levi or with another rich man, Zacchaeus, or with a thief on the cross and with an executioner. The *Acts of the Apostles* also describe differing encounters with a Roman like Cornelius, an Ethiopian treasurer or a Saul, zealous defender of Judaism, on the way to Damascus. One must grant that the Gospel speaks different words to different times and even different words to different participants in the same times. This should not surprise one because:

it makes a difference if one hears the message about Jesus in times of peace and plenty, after a devastating war, during a famine, or in conjunction with personal loss. How one hears and sees is conditioned, then, by one's experience. One's experience includes (1) personal history, (whether one is young/old, male/female, slave/free); (2) cultural location (Jew/Greek/U.S.A.); and (3) national history (1<sup>st</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century) (Negrey, J.H., *Christ is Community*, Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1985, p. 8).

Quite probably, the most important lesson which Jesus has to teach, and not just to the missionary, is his acceptance of a life of insignificance and seeming failure. The Church needs to be purged of illusion (*an illusionectomy*) in every age. As Timothy Gorringer put it:

When Marx called religion 'opiate', he meant that it encouraged flight from reality. And a cursory glance at any hymnal or the contents of any religious bookshop reveals the extent to which he was correct, the extreme sentimentality of so many 'religious' productions marking the depth of their divorce from reality. Sentimentality, however, is not spawned by the Bible: rather it is a flight from the rigours of the realism of that tradition of witness, which knows no supermen and precious few happy endings. Repeated failure is written stark across its pages, not only moral failure, but failure even to attain the promised 'rest'. Paul speaks for the history of Israel as a whole and for so many of the individuals known to us from that history in his account of his brief period of missionary work: five times the 39 lashes, three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three times shipwrecked ([Author?], *Redeeming Time*, Darton, Longman and Todd,

London, 1986, p. 131).

Concluding his reflections on *A Vision for Mission*, David J. Bosch quotes the incisive remarks of Hendrik Kramer, spoken in 1959, that even then we stood at the definite end of a specific period or era of mission, and that we are called to a new 'pioneer task, which will be more demanding and less romantic than the heroic deeds of the past missionary era'. Bosch, who suggests that the contours of the new missionary paradigm are becoming clearer, but that, nevertheless, 'what mission should be during the coming decades is far from being a foregone conclusion', states:

As I see it, the hardest lesson the Church-in-mission will have to learn in the coming years is how to become again what it originally was, and always supposed to be: the Church without privileges, the Church of the catacombs, rather than of the halls of fame and power and wealth. In country after country in the Second and Third Worlds, the Church is, in fact, already learning this lesson. And the Church of the First World? Since Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312 A.D., the Church in the West has always been compromised to power and privilege in one form or another. To this day it has not yet been liberated from the guilt of privilege. It would, of course, be masochism for the Church in the West to pray to be persecuted, but it would be faithfulness to the Gospel to pray for it to take on ... in its mission, the form of a servant, and become truly solidary with its suffering and persecuted sisters and brothers elsewhere (Bosch, J.D., "Vision for Mission" in *International Review of Mission*, LXXVI (301), January (1987), p. 8).

Jesus' approach is a way of life, diametrically opposed to much that is popular in every society, which goes for the victory of the strongest, the talented, the beautiful and for the abandonment of the weak, with the perception that suffering and death are the equivalent of failure. In Jesus:

a helpless man is proclaimed ruler of the world, the sacrifice is proclaimed the priest, the condemned man is proclaimed the judge, and the outcast the focal point of society. What was rejected by death, as dysfunctional in the process of selection, here becomes the starting-point for a new development and the basis for unconditional motivation to live (Gerd Theissen, *Biblical Faith*, SCM Press, London, 1984, p. 119).

In the Synoptics, a key reflection on Jesus' mission is the parable of the sower. This reflection *on the*

*seeming insignificance of Jesus' mission and its widespread failure*, is for Mark the key parable of the mysterious ways of the Kingdom. A critical reading of the Jewish writer, Josephus, suggests that John the Baptist had a bigger influence in his day than Jesus! But, the apparent failure of Jesus was, above all, the failure of love. For he came to destroy a certain idea of God, as a hard, demanding and domineering God who was seen as impatiently using people for his own selfish purposes.

Jesus' view of God as an intimate, caring Father ('Abba') still seems somewhat foolish and incredible to us. The difference between the Old Testament view of God and the New Testament, is not that one portrays a God of justice, and the other a God of forgiving love. The Old Testament view of God's love, as a book like Hosea points out, is very profound.

But the New Testament shows in the life and suffering and death of Jesus the extent that this "all powerful Yahweh" was prepared to go to show his great love for people. Jesus' greatest parable, his most wonderful miracle was the Cross. There, he culminated the failures of all the prophets and revealed an incredibly revolutionary image of God's love in action, and thus, showed his Disciples the full meaning of serving the deepest needs of all people. His triumph through seeming failure put new depth into such Old Testament concepts as God, neighbour, love, justice, faith, hope, truth and mission. Through his seeming failure Jesus delivered people from sin, the devil, sickness and death; the basic dimensions of human failure described in the Old Testament. Thus, Jesus destroyed death (Heb 2:14) which had entered the world through human failure or sin (Rom 5:12) and thus accomplished the defeat of the devil (Jn 12:31).

In a world where so many demand instant and constant happiness, Christians too often try to portray the perfect successful image which modern culture seems to demand. Thus, they fail to reach the many others who are struggling with failure and meaninglessness in life.

Suffering and failure were at the heart of Jesus' message and mission, as a reflection on the Gospels shows, e.g. such texts as: 'Will you also go away?', 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem ...', 'Father if it be possible, let this chalice ...', 'When I return will there be any faith on earth?'. In blunt fact, Jesus failed to convert people, was rejected at Nazareth, wept over Jerusalem and had his life ended early in public disgrace by crucifixion; the most cruel symbol of a human being's hatred of another one and a sign to many of the seeming curse of God.

Even Jesus' Disciples failed to realise that suffering was the passage to resurrection, that the crucifixion was God's way of effectively communicating di-

vine love and forgiveness to humankind.

Mark, in particular, would have difficulty in convincing his own community that suffering and failure were the essential lot of the disciple and that the best way of healing and enlightening humankind was through the acceptance of suffering, failure and death, after the example and warnings of Jesus himself (Mk 13:13; Mt 10:22; 24:19; Lk 6:22ff; 21:17; 15:18). Paul gradually realised that mission meant identifying with the suffering Jesus, and that the triumphalist categories of the 'super apostles' should be rejected (2 Cor 2:17; 11:5; 12:11).

In Jesus' brief, but very controversial life, he taught and acted and confronted the leaders of his time in such a way that led to his dreadful death. Like John the Baptist, Jesus lived the life of a charismatic and eschatological prophet in a very tense, complicated situation in Palestine. The close-knit unity of his lifestyle, his beautiful teaching and compassionate miracles led almost inevitably to the Garden of Gethsemane; to Good Friday.

Therefore, the basic question to be kept in mind, especially for those who would continue Jesus' mission is: Why did the compassionate Jesus suffer and die? The crucifixion of Jesus, as a supposed messianic pretender is, after all, the great historical feat of his life about which we can be completely certain. Was it the outcome of a deliberate and radical challenge which he threw down to both the Jewish clerical and political establishment of his time and which he knew must lead to his death? Or was Jesus the sentimental and winsome teacher of goodness and love, so often imagined by his followers down through the years, and so beautifully portrayed by the French writer, Ernest Renan? (Renan, E., *The Life of Jesus*, Modern Library, New York, 1936). Such portrayal, popular among liberal Protestants, led to the famous comment of William Temple: "why any man should have troubled to crucify the Christ of Liberal Protestantism has always been a mystery" (Hunter, A.M., *Bible and Gospel*, SMC Press, London, 1920, p. 13).

Even Renan saw that his portrayal of a young Galilean rabbi, winning all hearts with a sweet theology of love, and offering forgiveness to all on condition of loving him, was a partial distortion. Renan concluded that, because Jesus' simple tender love was unable to convince the hard-hearted Jewish leaders, Jesus became a transcendent revolutionary. In fact, the story of Jesus is that of dramatic conflict between his mission, his lifestyle, his startling assertion, and rejection of the religious system of his time and: "all that the piety of the time prized, as the essentials of a revealed religion" (Dodd, C.H., *The Meaning of Paul Today*, London, 1920, p. 13).

This Jesus, who invited all to the wedding feast,

was a constant source of controversy to his contemporaries. He claimed to be the Servant of all, yet, he displayed an unprecedented authority over people, even over nature in his teaching. The Jewish religious authorities were shocked by his interpretations of religious customs, which had been 'sanctified' by centuries of tradition. Yet Jesus was a regular attender of the synagogue on the Sabbath, and of the temple for the feasts (Lk 4:16).

Jesus' free association with the disreputable, with sinners of all kinds, both moral and political, must have horrified the self-conscious, respectable people of his time, yet no one could convict him of sin (Jn 8:46).

In particular, the ordinary people must have found it very difficult to accept his lack of patriotism, his lack of interest in many of the burning issues of his day. Any adequate hypothesis about Jesus must first situate him, believably, in the Hebrew culture of his day, and secondly, explain why the movement initiated by him eventually separated from Judaism.

Explorations into Jesus can never be purely objective historical expeditions. They are a way in which one asks the deepest questions about God, men and women, life, values, death, fear, success and failure. Further, 'the veil is thick', as Barth once remarked, whenever we deal with the mystery of God and his activity, or with a very exceptional person like Jesus. One does not have to agree with Rudolf Bultmann's historical scepticism, to appreciate his insistence that Jesus' death and Resurrection was not a detective story, to be solved, but a mystery to be lived.

Nevertheless, an historical research to examine Jesus' mission against his background is essential, if only to avoid the danger of misunderstanding Jesus, of conforming him to our own prejudices and desires and hidden agenda. In this study, a comprehensive treatment is not attempted (Kealy, S.P., *Who is Jesus of Nazareth?* Dimension Books, New Jersey, 1978, gives a fuller treatment to the problems involved in seeking the historical Jesus). Rather, the writer's intention is to offer some indications and suggestions, which may lead to a deeper understanding of the mission of Jesus, and which may help towards a solution of the many problems, both cultural and theological, which have arisen among missionaries in recent years. While the available sources do not permit the reconstruction of a full biography of Jesus, that is, in the modern sense of the term, nevertheless, many recent scholars are convinced that a considerable amount of authentic material can be attained by using the historical, critical method. This would include: "the typical basic features and outlines of Jesus' proclamation, behaviour and fate" (Kung, H., *On Being a Christian*, Collins, Glasgow, 1978, p. 159).



Finally, one should mention that there is a growing realization that, as A.E.J. Rawlinson put it in his 1925 *Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark* (p. 11), the New Testament, broadly considered, is the literature of a missionary movement. The problem, too often, is that the situation, experience and preferences of exegetes have dominated the agenda of biblical studies for many years. Such domestic issues as ecumenism, Church structures, ministry, speculative problems in Christology, archaeology, linguistics, methodology, have been more interesting to exegetes:

‘Equally important’, says Don Senior, ‘perhaps more important for determining the nature and intent of early Christian literature, was the community’s developing conviction that it was called to be an agent of salvation for the world’ (Sanders, E.P., *Jesus and Judaism*, SCM Press, London, 1985, pp. 1ff).

Yet it should be remembered that all New Testament books were written for Christians, and none for immediate use as missionary propaganda. He quotes Elisabeth Fiorenza:

Exegetical inquiry often depends upon the theological and cultural presuppositions with which it approaches its texts. Historical scholarship, therefore, judges the past from the perspective of its own concepts and values since, for various reasons, religious propaganda, mission, and apologetics are not very fashionable topics in the contemporary theological scene, these issues have also been widely neglected in New Testament scholarship. Many exegetes do not presently perceive the history of early Christianity, as the history of a propagandistic-missionary endeavour. Instead, they consider the New Testament writings, primarily, as documents of an inner-Christian doctrinal struggle, and they understand early Christian history, mainly, as ‘confessional’ history, as a struggle between different Christian parties and theologies.

According to Senior, a re-assessment of the value of non-Christian religions, a radical shift in the Church’s self-understanding, and the change in the political atmosphere in the post-colonial period, have resulted in the base dropping out of the missionary effort of the mainline Churches. In his valuable study, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission (The Struggle to be Universal)*, C.B.Q., January 1984, p. 81), Senior rightly insists that Jesus and his mission are ultimately decisive for: “the character, the scope, the urgency, and the authority of the early Church’s Christian mission” (written with Carrol Stuhlmueller, SCM

Press, London, 1983). The aim of this paper has been to show that the same is true today.

The following quotation from a review article by David J. Bosch highlights a number of key issues, to be kept in mind in any study of biblical material:

Biblical scholars, on the whole, tend to emphasise the diversity of the biblical message and the historical conditioning of each text. This makes them very reticent to draw a direct connection between the biblical text and today’s missionary enterprise. The biblical text functions, at most, as a metaphor, model or paradigm for our own involvement, and there always remains a large range of alternative possibilities. We should, therefore, refrain from any single-option reductionism.

In addition, biblical scholars tend to point out that the books of the Bible were not written, as guides for Christian mission, (not even the Book of Acts), so they cannot become that 20 centuries later. The reticence of biblical scholars, thus, indeed helps us to come to a fuller understanding of the text in its original historical setting. At the same time, however, they frequently fail to show whether, and, if so, how the Bible can be of significance to the Church-in-mission, and how, if at all, a connection between the biblical evidence and the contemporary missionary scene can be made. The Church thus feels left in the lurch, at least to a degree.

Conversely, there are some missiologists, who advocate a narrow conception of the Scriptural message and those who base their pastoral practice upon it as the same author warns:

By contrast, *missiologists*, writing on the ‘biblical foundations for mission’, tend to err in the opposite direction. Even where they are sufficiently sophisticated, not to use the Bible, as a handy reference file of quotations to justify their own group’s action, they do have a tendency to operate with a very large brush. On the one hand, they are inclined to overlook the rich diversity of the biblical record, and therefore, to reduce the biblical motivation for mission to one single idea, or text (for instance, the great commission or, more recently in liberation theology circles, Jesus’ appeal to Isaiah in Luke 4). On the other hand, they tend, far too easily, to read back into the Bible, aspects of the missionary enterprise, in which they are involved today (Borges, A.R., “Structural Implications of the Missionary Heritage” in *International Review of Mission*, LXXIV (295), July, 1985, p. 532).

## Ce que l'Esprit dit aux Églises: "Orientations pastorales et théologiques de la Fédération des Conférences épiscopales d'Asie"

"Eglises d'Asie" fait souvent référence à la Fédération des conférences épiscopales d'Asie parce qu'elle joue un grand rôle parmi les Eglises de ce continent. L'idée d'une FABC est née de la rencontre informelle de plusieurs cardinaux et évêques asiatiques à l'occasion de la venue du pape Paul VI à Manille en 1970. La FABC est une communion collégiale formée de sept instances des réflexions ou "Bureaux", ayant chacun un évêque à sa tête : évangélisation, communication sociale, laïcité, développement, éducation, œcuménisme et théologie. Le comité central est formé de quatre évêques représentant chacun l'Asie orientale, le sud-est asiatique, l'Asie du sud et la région de Singapour. Un secrétariat central coordonne l'ensemble et publie les nombreux documents élaborés par les différentes instances. Dans un cahier de documents d'Eglise d'Asie de mars 1996 (1), Sergio Licini faisait le point sur l'état des travaux de la FABC. C'était avant le Synode pour les Eglises d'Asie qui devait se tenir à Rome en 1998. Le document que nous présentons aujourd'hui est, quant à lui, une synthèse des orientations pastorales et théologiques de la FABC telles qu'elles se sont clairement exprimées pendant le Synode. Le rôle de la FABC dans le déroulement du Synode pour les Eglises d'Asie a été, en effet, très important. On retrouve ses thèses, ses réflexions et ses perspectives missionnaires dans de nombreuses interventions des Pères du Synode. Ce document a été publié en anglais dans la revue trimestrielle "*Japan missionary journal*", été 1999. (Les chiffres romains renvoient aux assemblées plénières de la FABC.)

Ce bref exposé voudrait décrire les principales orientations pastorales et théologiques de la FABC durant les 27 années de son existence. Pour commencer, il est important de souligner le fait que, dans la pensée de la FABC, pastorale et théologie sont intimement liées. Les orientations théologiques ont pour contexte la réponse des évêques aux exigences de situations pastorales concrètes. C'est seulement dans cette perspective que l'on parviendra à une vraie compréhension des réflexions de la FABC. De plus, le recueil de ces réflexions s'est formé à partir d'une écoute continue des nombreuses voix qui se font entendre sur le continent asiatique et d'une lecture en profondeur des nombreux signes de notre temps.

Manifestement, la profondeur et la richesse de ces réflexions ne peuvent se transmettre en quelques pages. Cet exposé essaie seulement de faire ressortir les convictions fondamentales qui sous-tendent la pensée de la FABC et que l'on retrouve dans les très abondants documents relatifs à la vie et à la mission de l'Eglise dont elle est le reflet. Chacune des réflexions présentées ici devraient être développées à l'aide de citations tirées de l'ensemble très riches des documents de la FABC. Pourtant, par souci de brièveté et de concision, ce survol se limitera à quelques passages choisis. Le lecteur pourra consulter utilement les deux volumes des documents de la FABC publiés par les Publications clarétienne de Manille qui recouvrent la période 1970-1996. (2)

Cet exposé se divise en quatre parties:

- I. Une nouvelle manière d'être Eglise en Asie.
- II. Le défi de l'évangélisation.
- III. Dialogue avec les frères et les sœurs de foi différente.
- IV. Service et vie évangéliques.

Chacune de ces quatre parties est intimement liées aux autres et l'esprit de l'une anime l'autre. Une bonne perspective d'ensemble ne peut se faire qu'en connexion avec chacune de ces quatre parties prises dans leur totalité.

### I. Une nouvelle manière d'être Eglise en Asie

Indiscutablement le souci pastoral prédominant de la FABC l'a souvent amenée à aborder des thèmes et des problèmes d'ecclésiologie. Même quand elle a à traiter d'autres questions, celles-ci relèvent d'une même matrice, c'est à dire de l'intelligence qu'elle a de l'Eglise et de son rôle dans les conditions actuelles du continent asiatique. En d'autres termes, une nouvelle manière d'être Eglise en Asie est le principe qui doit nous guider pour comprendre l'orientation d'ensemble de la FABC. Ce qui en découle est exposé dans les paragraphes ci-dessous.

1. L'intelligence qu'a d'elle-même l'Eglise est celle d'être réellement une Eglise locale. C'est une Eglise incarnée dans un peuple, une Eglise autochtone et inculturée. Le mystère de l'incarnation de Jésus est la source et le principe fondamental pour comprendre

ce que signifie être une Eglise locale. C'est le Corps du Christ réalisé et incarné dans un peuple particulier, dans le temps et dans l'espace.

2. Le devenir de l'Eglise locale est façonné pour une grande part par ses relations avec le monde asiatique et la société qui l'entoure. En outre, le mode d'évangélisation est modelé par l'histoire, la tradition et la culture des peuples de ce très vieux continent. Tout ceci montre bien l'importance centrale que recèle le processus d'inculturation, lequel doit être lui-même compris de façon dynamique. Un des thèmes de *Thèses à propos de l'Eglise locale* éditées par le Bureau d'études des questions théologiques (anciennement Commission théologique consultative) est ainsi formulée : "une Eglise locale vit dans un processus historique continu d'inculturation du fait que l'Eglise est une communauté de foi en expansion et que la culture elle-même continue d'évoluer et de changer. Aujourd'hui, une Eglise locale se réalise elle-même en répondant efficacement aux défis des forces nouvelles qui donnent naissance au processus de modernisation et qui touchent tous les aspects et tous les domaines de la vie d'un peuple" (n° 6). En d'autres termes et de façon plus simple, c'est seulement en s'enracinant profondément dans la terre asiatique que l'Eglise d'Asie sera réellement servante de la mission auprès des peuples d'Asie.

3. Concrètement, les Eglises locales en tant que communautés de foi ont à devenir asiatiques dans leur façon de penser, de vivre et de partager leur propre expérience chrétienne avec les autres. La portée de cette affirmation ne peut être évaluée qu'à la lumière des 500 ans d'histoire de la mission dans chacune des régions de ce continent. Une telle identité asiatique suppose, dans son intégralité, le souci de l'Eglise pour les problèmes sociaux de l'ensemble des peuples d'Asie. C'est un appel à porter témoignage, à partager ce que l'on croit et vit et à recevoir ce que les religions d'Asie et ses cultures ont à nous offrir.

4. Etre une véritable Eglise locale évangélisatrice signifie que le dialogue devrait être sa façon concrète d'exister. La toute première Assemblée plénière de la FABC a indiqué trois directions à ce dialogue : dialogue avec les cultures, dialogue avec les autres religions et dialogue avec les pauvres.

5. L'Eglise est disciple de Jésus en Asie au service de la vie; elle est sacrement de la vie divine pour les peuples d'Asie, sacrement de Jésus et du Royaume du Dieu de la vie. Sa position est prophétique et sans ambiguïté en faveur de la vie dans sa manière d'être, son message, son témoignage et son action. Etre Eglise,

c'est partager la vie promise par le Christ venu pour "qu'ils aient la vie et qu'ils l'aient en abondance" (Jn 10/10). En Asie, l'Eglise est connue et vue comme celle qui nourrit, protège et valorise la vie. Autant d'appels en direction de l'Eglise pour qu'elle devienne Eglise des pauvres. C'est parmi eux que le don divin de la vie est le plus menacé. "Nous entendons nous-mêmes devenir une nouvelle manière d'être Eglise, immergés dans la vie des pauvres et luttant avec eux conformément à l'Evangile, donnant ainsi le pouvoir aux *anawim* d'Asie de devenir premiers serviteurs du Royaume de Dieu" (Colloque sur la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise dans le contexte de l'Asie, n° 7)

6. Quant à la vie concrète de l'Eglise, la FABC la voit comme une communion de communautés. Effectivement et en profondeur, l'Eglise est une communion (*koinonia*) enracinée dans la vie trinitaire et donc, dans son essence, un sacrement (*mysterium* et *sacrum*) de Dieu qui se communique dans l'amour et la réponse gracieuse de l'homme racheté dans la foi, l'espérance et la charité. Cette communion est vécue dans l'Eglise comme une communion de disciples convaincus, prêtres ou laïcs, au travail pour la libération de l'Asie.

La cinquième Assemblée plénière explique clairement ce que signifie une communion de communautés à propos des petites communautés. Les laïcs, les religieuses et les prêtres sont tous ensemble appelés par la Parole divine regardée comme une présence quasi sacramentelle du Seigneur ressuscité, et sont conduits à former de petites communautés chrétiennes (par exemple : groupes de quartiers, communautés ecclésiales de base et communautés de 'l'alliance'). Ils prient et partagent ensemble l'Evangile de Jésus, vivent leur vie quotidienne en se soutenant mutuellement et travaillent ensemble, unis comme s'ils n'étaient qu'un seul esprit et un seul cœur.

L'Eglise devient une communion participative quand tous les croyants, prêtres religieuses et laïcs, consacrent leurs charismes à l'édification de la communauté et à la réalisation de leur vocation évangélique. Pour cela, des structures participatives doivent être établies et continuellement réactivées. L'Eglise vit cette communion non seulement avec ceux qui vivent sa propre vie mais en lien avec les autres communautés et en collaboration avec les autres Eglises dans un témoignage évangélique et au service de notre peuple.

## II. Le défi de l'évangélisation

La seconde partie est le complément de ce que

nous avons dit précédemment. Nous ne comprenons l'Eglise d'Asie correctement qu'en la regardant par rapport au grand défi de l'évangélisation. Nous sommes dans une époque nouvelle où les Eglises d'Asie elles-mêmes ont à devenir sujets et porteuses d'évangélisation dans leurs sociétés en rapide évolution et toujours plus complexes. Par la mission, l'Eglise d'Asie se renouvelle elle-même et devient plus conforme à l'Evangile.

1. Depuis ses débuts, la FABC a conçu la mission de l'Eglise en Asie comme une évangélisation. Ce qu'elle a décrit comme la proclamation de la Bonne nouvelle de l'amour rédempteur de Jésus en réponse à la quête, en Asie, du sens et de la vie, de la liberté et de la prospérité, de la communion et de la paix. "Du Christ seul, nous croyons qu'il est pour tout homme 'le Chemin, la Vérité et la Vie' (Jn 14/6) qui éclaire tous ceux qui viennent en ce monde".

3. Le chemin de la mission, c'est le dialogue avec les réalités de l'Asie. Cette réalité se nomme pauvreté, fortes cultures et grandes religions. Le dialogue à travers les églises locales qui se développent en Asie est le nœud de l'évangélisation. La toute première Assemblée plénière le notait : En prêchant l'Evangile en Asie aujourd'hui, il nous faut faire en sorte que le message et la vie du Christ s'incarnent vraiment dans les esprits et dans la vie de nos peuples. Le point central de notre mission d'évangélisation en ce point précis de notre histoire est la construction d'une véritable Eglise locale. Il est important de noter combien l'évangélisation est pensée et vue comme située historiquement, liée à un contexte, et non présentée dans l'abstrait. Cette réalité concrète historique est exposée plus loin par la cinquième Assemblée plénière quand elle déclare: la mission étant une continuation dans l'Esprit de la mission du Christ, elle implique un 'être avec' le peuple, comme l'était Jésus. "Le Verbe s'est fait chair et a habité parmi nous" (Jn 1.4). Par conséquent, la mission suppose d'être avec les gens, de répondre à leurs besoins, d'être sensible à la présence de Dieu dans leurs cultures et leurs traditions religieuses et de témoigner des valeurs du Royaume de Dieu à travers présence, solidarité, partage et parole.

3. La FABC insiste fortement pour dire que l'évangélisation est la tâche de l'Eglise locale. Ce qui suivra corrobore la réalité historique concrète et le contexte relationnel de l'évangélisation. Le sujet actif de la mission est l'Eglise locale, vivant et agissant en communion avec l'Eglise universelle. Ce sont les Eglises locales et les communautés qui peuvent discerner et réaliser (en dialoguant avec chacun et toutes les per-

sonnes de bonne volonté) comment l'Evangile sera le mieux proclamé, l'Eglise bâtie, les valeurs du Royaume de Dieu réalisées à leur juste place et en temps voulu.

4. Les évêques ont déclaré sans ambiguïté qu'il existait une pratique asiatique caractéristique de la mission. Tout en situant la proclamation de Jésus comme centre et élément essentiel de l'évangélisation et tout en s'engageant personnellement dans une proclamation explicite de Jésus Sauveur, les évêques précisent qu'il s'agit là d'une pratique asiatique "caractéristique". Pour des chrétiens d'Asie, proclamer le Christ signifie avant tout vivre comme lui, au milieu de proches et de voisins qui n'ont pas la même foi et ne sont pas de la même confession ni conviction, et, par la force de sa grâce, faire ce qu'il a fait. Une proclamation par le dialogue et les actes - c'est là le premier appel lancé aux Eglises d'Asie. Sans que notre statut de groupe minoritaire nous décourage, nous devons être prêts à des actions prophétiques qui devraient aider au démantèlement des structures de péché oppressives de notre peuple.

5. Le but de l'évangélisation est le Royaume de Dieu. Le défi pour nous est cette proclamation de la Bonne Nouvelle : promouvoir justice, paix, charité, compassion, égalité et fraternité au sein des réalités asiatiques; en fait, il s'agit bien de faire du Royaume une réalité. Le défi auquel nous sommes affrontés est celui de savoir coopérer avec tous les hommes de bonne volonté en union avec l'action divine dans le monde au service de la justice et de la paix.

6. La FABC a également réfléchi aux motivations de la mission. Nous évangélisons appuyés sur un sentiment profond de gratitude envers Dieu le Père 'qui nous a béni de toutes bénédictions spirituelles dans le Christ' (Eph 1.3). Mais la mission est aussi un mandat. Nous évangélisons parce que nous sommes envoyés dans le monde pour, de toutes les nations, faire des disciples. Notre foi en Jésus nous pousse à devenir ses témoins. Notre incorporation à l'Eglise par le baptême est aussi un appel à la mission. Finalement, l'Evangile est un levain pour la libération et la transformation de la société.

7. L'évangélisation se poursuit, en Asie, au milieu de beaucoup de défis et d'espoirs. La sixième Assemblée plénière parle de forces de mort : tout ce qui réduit la vie et dévalue les êtres humains (la globalisation économique et ses victimes, les réfugiés et les marginalisés de partout, l'exploitation de la femme et de l'enfant, le terrorisme et la guerre, les courants religieux fondamentalistes, la destruction de

l'environnement). L'Assemblée soutient les forces pour la vie : les mouvements populaires, l'octroi aux pauvres de leurs droits, le désir grandissant d'une démocratie participative, la solidarité avec les opprimés comme les femmes et les enfants, la protection de l'environnement, l'utilisation des media pour le soutien des valeurs et des mouvements populaires.

8. La dimension contemplative de l'évangélisation est particulièrement propre à l'Asie. Elle provient d'une profonde expérience de la personne et du message de Jésus et nous conduit à une évangélisation effective. Prière et contemplation seront les supports solides de l'évangélisation. En Asie, une crise affecte toutes les religions, à savoir la sécularisation et l'érosion des vraies valeurs spirituelles. FABC II propose la prière comme un antidote et montre combien elle peut transformer les projets de développement et d'éducation et le déroulement de la vie quotidienne. Elle regrette que l'Eglise ne soit pas connue en Asie comme une communauté de prière et suggère quelques moyens pour qu'elle le devienne. Dans ce contexte, FABC II se réfère à ce que l'héritage spirituel de l'Asie pourrait offrir : une prière magnifiquement développée de toute la personne où sont unis le physique, le psychique et le spirituel, la contemplation d'une profonde intériorité et l'immanence, de vénérables livres et écritures sacrées, des traditions d'ascétisme et de renoncement, des techniques de contemplation issues des anciennes religions orientales, des formules de prières simplifiées et d'autres expressions de foi et de piété populaires accessibles aux gens simples dont les cœurs et les esprits se tournent ainsi aisément vers Dieu au cours de leur vie quotidienne.

Une part de cette dimension contemplative dans l'évangélisation est la pratique du renoncement à soi ou de la kenosis. L'Eglise n'a pas été envoyée pour observer mais pour servir, servir les peuples d'Asie dans leur quête de Dieu et d'une vie humaine meilleure, servir l'Asie sous la conduite de l'Esprit du Christ et à son exemple même, lui qui n'est pas venu pour être servi mais pour servir et donner sa vie en rançon pour tous (Mc10.45), percevoir dans un dialogue avec les peuples d'Asie et les réalités asiatiques quelles actions le Seigneur voudrait nous voir mener.

9. Si l'Eglise est une communauté de foi, l'évangélisation devrait passer par son témoignage. Elle est appelée à témoigner du sens et des valeurs qu'elle professe, à les incarner dans la vie de son propre peuple, les actualisant par sa présence dans le dialogue et l'action au sein de toutes les sphères de son activité, parce qu'elle est une Eglise présente dans l'histoire et le monde tel qu'il est et qui est le sien. Enfin, elle ne

cesse de progresser dans sa mission, accompagnatrice de toute l'humanité dans son pèlerinage vers le Royaume du Père.

### III. Dialogue avec les frères et sœurs des autres religions

Le dialogue interreligieux a été l'une des principales préoccupations de la FABC et un des thèmes courants de presque toutes ses délibérations ordinaires sur l'Eglise et sa présence sur le continent asiatique. L'insistance répétée que le dialogue interreligieux relève et est une part de la manière d'être des Eglises en Asie vient de la réalité concrète existentielle des sociétés multi-religieuses parmi lesquelles nous nous trouvons. C'est ce même dialogue qui a suscité ces réflexions théologiques sur les religions en Asie. La théologie des religions d'Asie, par conséquent, n'est pas le résultat de quelques déductions théologiques mais de la pratique concrète du dialogue. Et cela fait une grande différence. C'est en ce sens que la FABC a essayé d'extraire de son expérience ce qui pourrait être, si on voulait l'écouter, d'un certain intérêt pour les autres Eglises dans le monde qui, elles aussi, se trouvent de plus en plus affrontées à des situations de religions multiples.

Quoique, comme nous l'avons noté plus haut, les réflexions sur le dialogue et la théologie des religions de la FABC puissent être trouvées dans presque tous ses documents, deux sources importantes sont parvenues à une certaine maturation de réflexion : 1) La collection issue des rencontres des Instituts des évêques pour le dialogue interreligieux (BIRA). Le but de cette collection, fruit des rencontres épiscopales depuis 1979, était de comprendre et d'approfondir les implications théologiques du dialogue, de voir son importance pour l'Eglise en tant que telle en Asie et d'étudier les défis posés à la pastorale par le dialogue interreligieux. 2) Le document "Thèses sur le dialogue interreligieux" proposé par le Bureau pour les questions théologiques qui est la cristallisation des idées issues de la pratique du dialogue. Ce qui va suivre essaie de saisir l'esprit et les caractéristiques des orientations de la FABC sur ce thème

1. Le fondement principal de la théologie du dialogue et des religions c'est la certitude de l'universalité de la grâce de Dieu. Dieu qui se donne est quelque chose sur lequel nous, êtres humains, ne pouvons exercer aucun contrôle. Les chemins de la grâce divine sont mystérieux et nous connaissons mal les chemins de Dieu aux prises avec les hommes placés dans une large variété de situations, y compris religieuses. Mais nous savons que le Christ est le centre universel de

Dieu dans son dialogue avec l'humanité. C'est pourquoi nous devrions connaître ce que Dieu a dit et continue de dire de mille façons. Y consacrer toute notre attention est en définitive rendre hommage à la grâce divine.

2. Nous devrions également savoir que, pour les êtres humains, il y a mille façons de répondre à la grâce divine rencontrée dans les situations concrètes existentielles qui sont les leurs, y compris les religions auxquelles ils appartiennent. Dans un sens, les religions peuvent être considérées comme des réponses à la rencontre avec le mystère de Dieu ou l'ultime réalité.

3. Ce qui a été dit montre que les traditions religieuses de l'humanité ont une place dans l'économie divine du salut. Ce qui a été clairement exprimé dans cet exposé vraiment lapidaire de la première Assemblée de la FABC : nous les recevons comme autant d'éléments significatifs et positifs de l'économie du dessein salvifique de Dieu.

4. Les deux prises de conscience ci-dessus nous conduisent à respecter les traditions religieuses de nos amis et même à apprendre d'eux. Car l'expérience religieuse de nos amis relève des voies impénétrables du salut de Dieu et témoigne de l'esprit insondable des êtres humains qui lui répondent. D'où, quant à la pratique du dialogue, nous sommes en fait dans la droite ligne de ce que dit Jean Paul II du "dialogue du salut" : "Le dialogue interreligieux à son niveau le plus profond est toujours un dialogue de salut parce qu'il cherche à découvrir, clarifier et comprendre mieux les signes du long dialogue que Dieu poursuit avec l'humanité" (Discours au Conseil pontifical pour le dialogue interreligieux, n°2, 13 nov.1992).

5. Notre attitude de dialogue et l'expérience religieuse de nos amis s'approfondissent à travers la prise de conscience que l'Esprit de Dieu est au travail parmi eux et que ses actions vont au delà des frontières de l'Eglise. C'est une vérité incontournable que l'Esprit de Dieu est au travail dans toutes les religions traditionnelles. Dialoguer est alors un voyage en compagnie de l'Esprit pour découvrir d'où il vient et où va sa grâce. Ce qui explique pourquoi il s'agit d'un acte spirituel et qu'on ne peut accomplir ce voyage que si l'on est ouvert à l'Esprit et sensible à sa voix. Une dimension qui nous fait comprendre pourquoi le dialogue est quelque chose que Dieu désire.

6. Ce dialogue ne peut jamais être opposé à l'expérience que nous avons du mystère de Jésus Christ et à notre foi en la présence salvatrice de Dieu dans sa

vie, son enseignement, sa mort et sa résurrection. Cette expérience et cette foi, nous les partageons avec nos amis de foi différente. Le défi, pourtant, pour nous en Asie, est de proclamer Jésus Christ de telle façon que cela ne constitue pas une exclusion des expériences religieuses que nos amis ont vécues dans leurs religions traditionnelles. Ce qui nous amène au point suivant, les relations existantes entre dialogue et évangélisation.

7. Dialogue et évangélisation ne sont pas mutuellement exclusives, mais sont complémentaires. Pourtant, comme l'a souligné une consultation œcuménique commune de la FABC et de la CCA (Conférence chrétienne d'Asie) en 1987 sur cette question du dialogue, dialogue et évangélisation ne sont pas liés mais chacun possède "son intégrité et sa liberté" propres et ses caractères distincts. Mais un point important est ici à noter : pour que dialogue et proclamation soient efficaces, nous avons besoin en Asie de l'esprit de kenosis (renoncement) de Jésus. Pour un continent qui durant toute son histoire a donné une grande valeur au renoncement, triomphalisme, déploiement de fastes et de pouvoir ne témoignent pas en faveur de l'abnégation de Jésus en croix; c'est souvent à partir de notre faiblesse que l'amour divin se manifeste le plus clairement, comme une grâce vivifiante. En d'autres termes, la manière dont nous remplissons notre mandat évangélique en Asie ne peut pas s'en tenir au seul dialogue mais peut être influencé par sa pratique.

8. Notre dialogue avec nos amis de foi différente devrait se traduire dans un travail commun réalisé ensemble pour ce qui constituait la question centrale de Jésus dans son enseignement - le royaume de Dieu dans sa vision universaliste. Et c'est en agissant ensemble que les relations nouées dans le dialogue se renforceront. Le fait que dans nos différents pays nous partageons la même histoire et les mêmes situations sociales et politiques nous fait plus proches les uns des autres, au-delà des frontières et nous pousse à donner une réponse aux nombreux problèmes cruciaux qu'affrontent les gens.

9. Dans notre travail commun avec les autres peuples d'Asie, nous partageons avec eux le même et commun héritage asiatique : *karuna* ou compassion. Notre commune action se situe dans l'esprit d'harmonie qui est un idéal hautement prisé en Asie. Effectivement, l'Institut des évêques pour le dialogue interreligieux (BIRA) s'est consacré entièrement à l'approfondissement de ce concept d'harmonie; et le Bureau d'études des questions théologiques a publié un long document sur ce sujet. En Asie, l'harmonie semble désigner, en un certain sens, le cœur intellec-

tuel et affectif, religieux et artistique, personnel et sociale au niveau des personnes comme des institutions. D'où la nécessité d'une étude en profondeur de la théologie de l'harmonie dans le contexte asiatique, harmonie conduisant au dialogue interreligieux tel qu'il nous est clairement apparu. Le thème de l'harmonie, outre qu'il nous fournit une structure commune de participation pour la transformation des sociétés asiatiques, est devenu aujourd'hui un concept clé dans le dialogue et la coopération interreligieuse en Asie.

10. Finalement, une question importante de pastorale que pose la FABC touche aux moyens et aux institutions pouvant traduire dans la réalité son idée de dialogue. Avant tout, l'attention est donnée à la nécessité d'une formation adéquate au dialogue à tous les niveaux. Etant donné que l'Eglise administre un grand nombre d'écoles et autres institutions éducatives, ces dernières devraient être des centres importants de formation au dialogue. De plus, à moins que nos catéchistes ne prennent, eux aussi, le problème du dialogue interreligieux au sérieux, nous ne pourrions pas conduire nos fidèles à surmonter les vieux préjugés et les attitudes négatives envers les religions traditionnelles de leurs voisins, ni les aider à forger de nouvelles et bonnes relations. Les communautés de base et les communautés ecclésiales offrent de bonnes conditions pour la formation des fidèles à la pratique du dialogue. Les conférences épiscopales sont appelées à développer la formation des prêtres, des religieuses et des laïcs pour une éducation des personnes au dialogue et une sensibilisation aux autres confessions religieuses. Davantage encore, tout ceci appelle la création de nouvelles structures adéquates de formation au dialogue.

#### **IV. Evangile et implication socio-politique**

Dans ses efforts pastoraux, la FABC a essayé de lier foi et situations socio-politiques. Manifestement, dans les pays très avancés comme le Japon, les conditions sont assez différentes de celles d'une économie en croissance rapide comme celle de Corée, de Taiwan, de Malaisie et plus encore différentes de celles des pays toujours marqués par la pauvreté comme les Philippines et les pays d'Asie du sud. L'orientation sociale de la FABC ressort des différents comptes-rendus qu'on peut lire dans de nombreux documents. Cependant, on les trouvera plus facilement dans la série des documents de l'Institut des évêques pour l'action sociale (BISA) parue de 1974 à 1987 et dans la nouvelle série du Conseil pour l'action sociale à partir de 1993.

La première chose qu'il nous faut noter est la

méthodologie suivie. L'orientation sociale n'est pas le résultat de réflexions théoriques sur une situation concrète, mais souvent le résultat d'un contact direct avec des réalités sociales et des tentatives de la part des évêques de s'immerger eux-mêmes dans ces réalités. Cette sorte de méthodologie suivie par la BISA aide les évêques à bien connaître et à réfléchir avec une certaine perspicacité à quelques importants problèmes de société. De plus, grâce aux contacts directs et aux programmes d'immersion, il en est résulté une méthodologie de cycle pastoral.

Nous voudrions, ici, porter notre attention sur un certain nombre de traits saillants de l'orientation sociale de la FABC.

1. C'est une exigence de l'Evangile que nous soyons solidaires des peuples dans leurs luttes. Etre avec les gens est plus important que faire quelque chose pour eux. Par conséquent notre engagement social commence au niveau de l'être en solidarité avec les gens, spécialement avec les pauvres et les marginaux de nos sociétés d'Asie.

2. Ce qui nous guide dans cet engagement, c'est d'abord et avant tout l'exemple de Jésus lui-même. Dans cet 'être avec les gens' nous expérimentons le mystère de l'incarnation, la solidarité de Dieu avec les êtres souffrants. Secondement, la vision de Jésus quant au Royaume de Dieu nous aiguillonne à travailler à la création d'une société juste et égale pour tous. Il s'agit d'un nouvel ordre des choses selon le plan de Dieu. Nous devons travailler à ce plan en modelant l'histoire de nos sociétés dans la perspective de l'ultime vision du Royaume de Dieu. Troisièmement, nous rencontrons la présence de Dieu et son action dans les réalités sociales et profanes. De là, notre engagement dans la transformation des réalités socio-politiques n'est pas simplement une occupation profane mais quelque chose que nous tenons de notre expérience de la présence de Dieu dans les réalités socio-politiques de notre continent. Quatrièmement, notre participation dans le domaine du social et notre engagement envers les pauvres sont une part intégrante de notre travail d'évangélisation. L'enseignement du Synode de 1971 sur la justice dans le monde est très clair sur ce point.

3. Tout ce qui vient d'être écrit a des conséquences quant à la vie concrète et à l'exercice de la mission des Eglises d'Asie. Le plus important défi pour l'Eglise est de devenir réellement une Eglise des pauvres. Car, si l'Eglise est l'instrument du Royaume de Dieu et si ce Royaume est lui-même annoncé aux pauvres (Lc 4.18), alors les Eglises d'Asie, en tant que

communautés des disciples de Jésus en Asie, ne peuvent pas ne pas devenir vraiment des Eglises ayant opté pour les pauvres. Ce qui est aussi confirmé par ce que nous savons de la structure des Eglises locales d'Asie grâce à leur dialogue avec les pauvres. Les conséquences d'une telle option trouvent leur expression dans ce que dit le tout premier Institut des évêques pour l'action sociale : Ainsi opter pour les pauvres comprend des risques de conflits avec les droits acquis ou l'establishment, religieux, économique, social, politique. Il comprend également pour les responsables de l'Eglise tout particulièrement, une perte de sécurité et ce, non seulement matérielle mais spirituelle. Car cela signifie opter pour la recherche inhabituelle d'une certaine ligne directrice et non pour des méthodes théologiques et sociologiques toutes prêtes comme celles développées surtout en Occident, mais pour un discernement du processus historique issu du milieu même de notre peuple.

4. Etre capable aujourd'hui de prendre conscience de ce qu'était la solidarité de Jésus pour les pauvres et les peuples en lutte exige de nous d'entreprendre une profonde analyse des causes des situations présentes où se trouvent nos sociétés. Elle vient de situations telles que celles de l'histoire coloniale, des structures féodales et du modèle contemporain de développement importé en Asie et adopté par les asiatiques eux-mêmes. Il n'y a qu'une approche éclairée, creusant en profondeur ces causes, qui puisse nous aider à changer la situation présente. En fait, l'analyse de la situation devient un élément très important de la méthodologie de la FABC. L'analyse s'affine quand elle se penche sur des problèmes concrets comme les travailleurs migrants, la main d'œuvre industrielle, le tourisme exploiteur et les réfugiés (4).

5. Les documents de la FABC considèrent avec inquiétude la pénétration progressive de l'économie de marché libérale presque partout en Asie. Alors qu'ils ne nient pas le progrès économique dans de nombreuses parties du continent, les conséquences négatives et sérieuses du présent modèle de développement sont clairement désignées. Ce modèle actuel de développement encourage l'individualisme et l'esprit de compétition tout en causant la perte de la solidarité et de l'harmonie.

6. Dans l'actuel scénario socio-politique des sociétés asiatiques, un des instruments essentiels pour la défense des pauvres et des victimes se trouve dans le concept des droits de l'homme. C'est pourquoi l'Eglise devrait orienter son action en direction de la défense des pauvres et des maillons les plus faibles de la société. Cependant une certaine correction est né-

cessaire. Le concept des droits de l'homme tel qu'il s'exprime en Occident semble mettre l'accent principal sur les droits des individus. Dans le contexte asiatique, par contre, les droits de l'homme sont envisagés davantage dans un contexte collectif et communautaire. Le concept des droits de l'homme devrait être un instrument au service de la solidarité et de l'édification d'une communauté.

7. La nature et l'amplitude des problèmes socio-politiques en Asie sont telles que leur solution demande de plus en plus l'aide de ressources asiatiques. Nous avons la conviction que les grandes civilisations d'Asie avec leur histoire millénaire et leur force possèdent les ressources nécessaires pour surmonter la présente crise. Nous avons besoin seulement de les trouver et de les amener à s'impliquer dans la situation actuelle.

8. Le rôle social des Eglises d'Asie doit être vivifié par une vision spirituelle. La FABC parle de la dimension contemplative du développement humain. Il nous faut voir la présence de Jésus dans les missions d'Asie qui luttent et souffrent. Les membres de la BISA expriment leur perception spirituelle en disant que le Seigneur de l'histoire est au travail dans ce monde de pauvreté. Voyant le Seigneur parmi les pauvres, comprenant le sens de son action parmi eux, discernant la direction que prend son travail avec eux, nous sentons profondément à l'intérieur de nous quel défi plus spécifique nous avons à affronter. Nous pouvons aussi tirer des ressources spirituelles de l'Asie celles qui nous aident à découvrir la présence de Dieu dans toutes les réalités qui nous entourent, y compris les réalités socio-politiques. Notre spiritualité a besoin d'être reliée aux nombreux signes d'espérance que nous trouvons dans nos sociétés asiatiques. Un de ces signes, par exemple, est le réveil que l'on constate parmi les pauvres et les victimes de nos sociétés et leur détermination à transformer l'injuste ordre actuel des choses. Nous ne pouvons pas ne pas voir la présence et la force de Dieu dans ce mouvement. De plus, nous trouvons un intense désir parmi nos peuples de créer des communautés de paix et d'harmonie. Finalement, la coopération grandissante parmi les fidèles des différentes religions traditionnelles pour créer une société juste augure bien du futur de l'Asie.

(1) Voir EDA Dossiers et documents N°3/96

(2) "For all the peoples of Asia" I, II, Claretian publications, Diliman, Quezon City, 1101, Philippines, ou Orbis books, Maryknoll, New York, USA.

(3) Voir EDA 107

(4) Voir EDA 96



## Toward a Theology of Development

Cirilo Santamaria, OCD, presents a view of development today and where it has gone wrong. He argues that we must return to the original sense of creation, in which God created all things, including human beings, as equal. Only in this way will development be able truly to address the root causes of misery and inequality.

**D**evelopment is a complicated and difficult issue. There are many points of view that can be addressed, such as social, economic, human, environmental and religious aspects, that are both intertwined and separate at the same time. We propose reflecting on the issue from the Third World and, more specifically, from the peripheral areas of this region, which is difficult given the depressing dimension of underdevelopment.

A minimum dosage of realism would lead us to the natural conclusion of defeatism, helplessness and possibly conformity: “It is impossible to achieve certain levels of human development and dignity for the large masses of people”. The daily misery faced by the majority of people, the lack of all basic services in the majority of towns and hamlets, generalized illiteracy and deplorable health conditions, women abused and old before their time, rustic and antiquated agricultural practices, the progressive destruction of the environment and nature ... are statistics that jump out to convince even the most idealistic people that “there is no way out, there are no possibilities for development for the vast majority of the world’s population”. This is the reality of the so-called Third World.

In addition, while we are aware of the advances being made in technology, the spectacular opportunity for communication through the Internet, the globalized economy, and the frenetic need to possess and consume, the majority of villages do not have electricity, nutritional rates are insufficient, and children have to walk miles to the nearest, rundown school. How can we talk about development for all with these statistics in mind?

We have heard about integral development, human development, development through solidarity — “sustainable development” is the catch phrase of the day — and many qualifiers have been created to define the kind of development we are discussing. Nevertheless, while we have an abundance of qualifiers to define development, it is obvious that this kind of development has never occurred. It is nothing more than the discourse of the “developed” with those who some day hope to enjoy a basic level of life that is more dignified and human.

If we want to broaden the argument and discuss development from the perspective of God, what do we do about predominant religious fundamentalism that tells us that nothing will be gained through Chris-

tian revelation because everything is predetermined? Wouldn’t it be better to let history follow its course, leaving behind those who do not fit into determined economic, social and intellectual classes?

With this in mind, we want to address the issue with hope of finding traces of God’s way in the midst of such a contradictory world filled with so many discourses, seminars and words on this issue. We are not attempting to present new ways out or solutions. The issue is very complicated and calls for an interdisciplinary approach involving many sciences and visions, as well as new practices. We are not looking for fragmented proposals or initiatives, but concerted action, social, economic, ethical and religious proposals that will allow for a more human world for all people.

We will offer only a few principles, which are taken from the Church’s social teaching and a simple approach to Christian revelation.

### 1. Along the path of integral human development

The Church’s concern for the consolidation of “citizenship, social and international justice with special attention placed on measures in favour of underdeveloped peoples” (Pope Paul VI’s first Message to the world, 22 June 1963) appears in numerous documents, discourses and Encyclicals. Vatican II, which stemmed from an optimistic and lineal vision of progress, enshrined the term “human and integral” development as an answer to the dominant current that was based on an economic and utilitarian vision of the human person and caused inequalities and conflicts.

The guiding principle opens the third chapter of the document, “Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World” *Gaudium et Spes* (GS). It states that “man is the author, centre and end of all economic-social life”. From here we can state that from this principle Vatican II sang the song of technical and economic progress. They were the triumphant dreams of the 1960s that were being read in the First World. Nevertheless, in an effort to temper its discourse, it realistically presented growing inequality:

“While immense masses lack basic necessities, some people, even some people in the less developed nations, live in opulence without consideration. Luxury

abounds together with misery. And while some possess the power to make decisions, many lack all initiative and responsibility, frequently living and working in conditions unworthy of the human person” (cf. *ibid.* n. 63c).

It is an attempt to give development an ethical and Christian vision by taking as the starting-point human beings in an integral and total manner. The Christian concept of development offered here is part of an anthropological dynamic: The global vision of the human being, centre of creation, conceived as that vocation of God that invites all people to move forward toward their own progress (*Populorum progressio*, n. 15). It is an integral development of individuals and society, which implies personal development and the growth of society and all human-kind. Personal development and collective, societal growth are correlative dimensions.

*Populorum Progressio* explains some basic steps of this development, which we will lay out using the same words as the Encyclical. They are keys that are still valid today:

- “Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth” (n. 14);

- “To be authentic it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man. It must take into account all the dimensions of the person and not be limited to satisfying basic material needs, but the most profound aspirations of the person and all people” (n. 14);

- “The desire to possess more is creating a mass of excluded and marginalized peoples, while some swim in abundance” (cf. n. 19);

- “Authentic development ... is ... the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human” (n. 20).

In this way the dynamic and human character of development is highlighted.

A great deal has been written about the Third World and how “a few people possess a great deal, while many others have nothing”, and how “the luxury of some is an insult to the misery of the vast majorities”. We have talked about and repeated with insistence and pain “the growth of impoverishment and extreme misery”. These and many other expressions continue to be a challenge that humankind must resolve.

Revolutions and wars have erupted in the cardinal points of the planet with the aim of creating greater human development, life for all people. They have tried to break the evil cycle of misery and marginality, they have fought for profound reforms and transformations, they have raised the banners of a more dignified and human life for all. Pain and blood have watered the lands of the Third World ... and underde-

velopment and hunger, unspeakable misery and death continue to affect the vast majority of people. This has been the history of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and we are entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a major issue pending: development of humanity.

## 2. Toward development through solidarity

“The hungry masses, made up of children, women, the elderly, the unemployed, raise their cry of pain to us. They implore us, waiting to be heard” (Pope John Paul II, Lent, 1997).

A new term in society’s conscience, in political discourse and at the roots of Christian thinking is solidarity. Solidarity seems to be the “cry of the century” (Alfonso Alvarez Bolado) for survival, dignity and quality of life on the planet.

Vatican II presents solidarity, which is born in the radical communion of God with humanity through Jesus, as a sign of our times that must be lived and promoted by all Christians.

### 2.1 Solidarity and justice

Solidarity cannot remain only as the good will of people, groups or nations. It is a demand for justice that requires profound changes in individuals and peoples. On the one hand, as Vatican II stated 30 years ago, it is aimed at solidarity through assistance that rich nations should provide developing nations. It is also social justice, which means changing the unjust commercial relationship between strong and weak nations. At the same time it is a demand for universal charity, which means promoting a more just world for all where everyone must give and receive, and where progress of one person does not become an obstacle for others (GS, nn. 43-44). Solidarity, justice and charity are interrelated and essential dimensions of the human being, and without them there cannot be true development.

For Christians, talking about solidarity means thinking about our common roots as people, the living image of God. It means listening to the cry, “what have you done for your brothers and sisters?” It means professing the mystery of the Incarnation. It is a God who is passionate and moved by humanity, who is present in human history by assuming our mortal flesh through Jesus Christ to make us all brothers and sisters, to give us dignity as men and women. It is an option for life and faith that belongs to all who profess to be Christian.

The obligations called for by solidarity cannot remain only on the level of States and nations. It is effective through the conscience and personal commitment of people.

Personal responses are necessary, but they are insufficient when the relationships between people are unjust.

These proposals, made more than 30 years ago, continue to be valid today. The poor of this world and the underdeveloped nations will not be able to shake off their misery if privileged peoples, groups and nations are unable to contribute to the just development of everyone. Those who want to respond to the historic will of God will discover a new path, which means contributing to the good of all by making the path to solidarity a reality. It is a demand for justice, a call from God in today's world.

## 2.2 Solidarity and compassion

By relating solidarity to development we understand that it is more than just a superficial feeling for the evils suffered by so many people, or a spontaneous action in the face of natural catastrophes. This attitude responds only momentarily to needs, while the conditions of underdevelopment and misery persist and grow worse.

Pope John Paul II, aware of the intolerable conditions of underdevelopment and the abysmal inequalities between nations, defines solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all responsible for all” (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38). Authentic development cannot exist without solidarity between people and nations. The most important element of solidarity — the most provocative because of its contrast to the way we live in our world — is to feel a responsibility for all people. In this sense, development takes on universal dimensions and we all become responsible for the life and well-being of all people. Development cannot exist for the few while the vast majority remain in misery. Furthermore, we can state that this kind of development is the expression of a lack of solidarity and the injustice of a few who, interested in wealth and power, are the cause of the drama lived by the vast majority.

Solidarity as an inherent dimension of authentic development implies an attitude of compassion, of understanding and taking part in the suffering and problems that afflict others. It is not an ephemeral understanding, but an attitude that demands that we be aware of the misery suffered by so many, be touched by it, and extend a hand to help them struggle to break free of misery.

## 2.3 Solidarity and communion

Solidarity, an indispensable condition for a true

development of all people, is not only a moral and social attitude, but a Christian, faith-based demand.

Solidarity has profound consequences for the development of individuals and peoples. To open oneself to the reality of others and work for a change in the misery that affects the vast majority of peoples, it is necessary to shed individual interests, break with the desire for wealth at any cost, and commit oneself to the cause of justice. We are all responsible, partners in the common history of humanity. It is the path demanded by faith.

## 3. The myth of economic growth and the human being, master of creation

The accelerated and triumphant technical development that we have witnessed in the last half of this century has created in the hearts and minds of people the dream of unlimited and undefined growth. There is no limit to the possibilities of humankind's progress and technology drags people toward an unstoppable and limitless level of competition. Each year countries must show higher rates of production of goods and services. This is how developed, developing and underdeveloped countries are measured. It is the myth of progress and uninterrupted and limitless growth.

Nevertheless, the documents produced by the Church and international development institutions call attention to the risks of this spiral, placing attention instead on the human being.

The earth is sick and under threat. The most threatened being is the poor person, whose basic needs are not met. Other species face the same threats. In three long centuries, 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a species disappeared every 10 years. Today, one species disappears each day. The logic of the productive and super-technical machine is leading creation toward irreversible situations for nature and human life: desertification, deforestation, global warming, infant mortality, undernourishment, poverty, etc.

The dream of unlimited growth unleashes destructive and annihilating forces that produce mortal diseases for the earth and the species that inhabit it. New paradigms of development are necessary.

Until today human beings have been seen as the absolute master of creation — “dominate the earth and subject it” seems to be the unquestioned mandate. The earth has been handed over to be built and torn down, constructed and transformed at whim in the name of progress. The human being is the captain of this boat, which is creation, and has the absolute freedom to pilot it to any port he or she sees fit. There are no waves or calls for life that stop this or limits its self-sufficiency.

The time has come for complaints to be heard:

nature is resisting, quality of life is declining, human relationships are becoming more competitive and aggressive, the relationships between nations are tense and unequal. It seems necessary for us to open ourselves to other paradigms if we want development to be for all people. The environment is a framework of life for all people and for nature itself. All people and creation as a whole need to be seen through the perspective of respectful interdependence and as part of a relationship capable of creating the vital conditions and equilibrium necessary for life. Development today needs to revise its very concept of the human being and take the environment into account.

#### **4. Development and ecology**

“If what we want is to be rich, to accumulate power and dominate the earth then it is useless for us to ask indigenous peoples for their assistance. But if we want to be happy, to unite the human with the divine, to integrate life and death, insert nature into the human being, share work with rest, harmonize intergenerational relations, then we should listen to the indigenous peoples. They have wise lessons to teach us”, claim the Villas-Boas brothers, Brazilian indigenous experts, in a text prepared by Leonardo Boff.

In a context of crisis within the development paradigm — as seen from the Western categories of efficiency, growth and progress at all costs — indigenous peoples teach us that true development cannot occur if we destroy nature in the process. They provoke us to once more reread the Bible with new eyes and from the perspective of a totality of human being and nature.

##### **4.1 Rescuing the dignity of the earth**

Faith in creation leads us to affirm that the cosmos is stronger than chaos and that the earth is good, the home/place of all humanity. All things — plants, animals and human beings — are perfect because they “carry God’s registered trademark”, according to Leonardo Boff. That is why at the end of each day of creation, the biblical text repeats the phrase: “God saw that all he he had made was very good”.

The dignity of the earth, respect for it and rational use of it, are indispensable conditions for the advent of a true development that signifies a communion-alliance between the human being and the earth.

##### **4.2 God’s way of thinking: First the universe, then the human being**

God is the author of the cosmos and human beings have the responsibility of being the administra-

tors of it and not its master. Development should stem from the conviction of human beings as administrators of this project, which is greater than and predates them. Unity between human beings and the rest of creation is an important step in changing the idea that people were put on earth to dominate nature.

##### **4.3 The poor: the key to development**

Ecology, as an element of development, demands respect for the riches of the earth and its goods. The poor, on the other hand, demand attention to their basic needs, which, in many cases, cannot be satisfied without destroying nature.

The fruit of this logic has been the great human catastrophe of poor and excluded masses. Once more the cry of the poor rubs salt in the wound: Their marginalization and annihilation run parallel to the destruction of nature. Development should search for a great social justice that guarantees life and elemental dignity. From this basic level of social justice, of more equitable relationships between people and peoples, we should be able to achieve what Leonardo Boff calls ecological justice in relations between human beings and nature. In other words, we cannot provide a defense and protection of nature until the poor are able to satisfy their basic needs and have employment opportunities.

##### **4.4 Anthropocentrism or cosmocentrism**

The predominant idea in all development processes has been that of the human being as the centre of everything.

Today, however, there appears to be a change on the horizon. The cosmos, all of creation, has its own identity and meaning, which is found in God. Everything belongs to the earth and the universe, and human beings are part of this and belong to it. Earth does not belong to humankind, but just the opposite. The affirmation that the “human being is the measure of all things” violates the first law of the universe, which says that we are part of an immense cosmic and planetary community and that we must live in harmony and solidarity with others because we are interdependent, we have the same origin and the same ending.

When we are aware that we are part of all creation, that we live side-by-side and not above everything else, then development will we able to understand nature and its riches, which are for all people.

Ref.: *LADOC*, Vol. XXX, Sept./Oct. 1999.

## Against Compromising the Locality of the Local Church

### A View of Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Ted Ward is a well-known missiologist and is by no means a 'leftist radical'. In a recent article in the journal *International Bulletin* (Vol. 23, n. 4, October 1999) on the role of mission agencies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (pp. 146-153), he has words that the new breed of missionaries to Africa should seriously consider.

At one point Ward warns against "the ethos of colonialism" by missionaries imposing themselves over other people, and interpreting the slightest resistance by the latter as disrupting God's work. "When will it become clear", he wonders, "that resistance to outsiders and their agendas is an ordinary characteristic of a people's sense of dignity and humanity? Even Christians do it! Why do those who carry the Gospel message assume that they have a right to do to others what they would not allow others to do to them?"

At another point Ward speaks clearly against the human and cultural insensitivity of a certain type of missionary work: "Doing things that local people should be doing, doing things that really don't need to be done, and doing things in ways that are culturally inappropriate and even resented...". This, Ward says, is a consequence of "insidious colonial assumptions" about mission and, more practically, of "the bad habit" of mission agencies "of sending unprepared and inept people into situations that demand greater expertise, insight, and interpersonal sensitivity". It will not do in the century ahead, he asserts.

Further, Ward again notes that some "brick-and-mortar projects", however prestigious, may "hurt the Church in the long run, creating deeper dependency, saddling local Churches with embarrassments that they cannot afford to maintain, coming into conflict with government plans for education or health services, and actually inhibiting evangelization and the development of effective relationships between the Churches and their communities".

Against the "budgetary tyranny" that, in Ward's view, has now "become stronger than ever", he recommends transparency in the handling and use of resources, saying that "God is not honoured when control is a stronger value than trust". Difficult though it may be, he sees it as a mark of good mission work

"careful and graciously nonmanipulative ... agreements across cultural lines...":

As the world has polarized into geopolitical camps, the tendency toward secrecy, manipulative cleverness, and distrust has been deeply embedded into intercultural relations. In the interests of truth and trust, it is time for Christians to become more trusting of one another, regardless of ethnicity or nationality, and for Christian organizations, especially mission agencies, to minimize the sort of suspicious privacy and secrecy that causes far too many documents to be stamped FYEO (for your eyes only). This is a costly habit because far too many decisions are made without bringing the issues into the fresh air. Cooperation is enhanced by openness; overuse of confidentiality breeds distrust. Competitive secretiveness in the service of the Prince of Peace is out of place and unbecoming.

What Ted Ward is out against is frustrating true Christian mission by practices that compromise the locality of the local Church.

### Some Dioceses in Eastern Africa as a Case

The Second Vatican Council insisted on the missionary nature of the Church. But it may be that certain practices in the last 20 years or so in some Dioceses of Eastern Africa have undermined the true missionary nature of the Church by doing exactly what Ted Ward warns against. It is time to pick up again the spirit of the Council.

Shortly after the end of the Council, already in the very early 1970s, we in this region were educated about the practical requirements for a church to be truly local: it must be self-governing, self-reliant, and self-propagating. These three conditions are interrelated, and any one of them alone is meaningless — indeed, becomes ineffective in terms of true evangelization — without the others. They must all be seen as essential parts of a package, necessary components for the engine that is the local Church to operate smoothly and efficiently.

Unfortunately, however, some important aspects of these principles seem to be forgotten, ignored, or

deliberately flouted by some missionary agencies and Dioceses here. Perhaps we need to revisit them as thoroughly as possible in the course of the next few years so as to have a sense of where we, as a Church, need to go from here. Otherwise we risk undoing almost 30 years of painful, but hopefilled, work of church growth inspired by Vatican II, as well as making a mockery of some of the most solemn utterances of the African Synod.

In practical terms, a self-governing Church is one that enjoys its own indigenous leadership, especially at the level of Bishops and clergy. For Churches, like those in Eastern Africa, that have had a non-indigeneous leadership for a long time since initial evangelization, the quality of being indigenous has many faceted demands. It implies in leaders not only physical characteristics but also, and especially, mental and attitudinal ones.

Besides physical belonging, that is, sharing as much as possible the values of a given culture through birth and nurture, a leader in the African church must know and be proud of his or her identity as an African. Spiritually, such rooted leadership enables the construction of an authentic local Church by being seriously concerned about and engaged in the search for the presence of God (which is what “spirituality” in its true sense means) in the culture, customs, events, and physical realities of this continent.

What this means is simple: the practice of creating African Bishops over Dioceses here who, for all practical purposes, have intellectually, psychologically, and spiritually emigrated from the African physical and cultural reality makes a mockery of Vatican II’s call to the Church to find God in what is good and honourable in every culture of the world. It also ignores the African Synod’s overall theme of inculturation. It thereby compromises the locality of the African church and frustrates the mission of evangelization.

With reference to the aspect of self-reliance, attention must be paid to the economic environment now prevailing. The spirit and practices of economic liberalization and globalization now reigns the world over and, in the last decade or so has, not surprisingly, entered the church in Eastern Africa. There is a frantic effort — one could even say “rush” — in our various Dioceses to establish certain structures of “development”. These are physical and organizational structures some of which cannot possibly be sustained by local resources in the short and long run. Ted Ward characterizes them accurately as truly “embarrass-

ments” to the local Church.

We talked in Eastern Africa, already in the 1970s, about the possibility of external financial resources to sustain “inappropriate” church structures drying up. They are. The few that remain do not usually cover the needs and maintenance costs of these structures. It is a phenomenon known everywhere as “donor fatigue”. Moreover, the conditions attached to whatever donations remain do not usually lead to the independence and dignity of the local Church in Africa. Donations often imply begging, and begging is ultimately dehumanizing. How can the Dioceses of Eastern Africa encourage, praise, and reward this habit and still think they can have an inculturated Church?

It is quite true that that great missionary Saint Paul collected money for the Church of Jerusalem from Antioch (see Acts 11:29-30, also Rom 15:25-27), but these were emergencies and not habitual. That’s why, for himself, Paul preferred complete financial independence in his ministry (see 2 Cor 11:9 and Acts 18:3), even if he accepted gifts when offered. We in Eastern Africa discussed in the 1970s the relevance of Paul’s stand for our own priestly formation and ministry. We need to pick up the discussion again where we left off.

The practice of erecting structures which do not suit the context of Africa and the African church’s economic situation means, in a real sense, the “selling” of the African church’s soul to the forces of economic liberalization and globalization, with all their negative consequences. In many a Diocese in Eastern Africa, “white elephants” can be spotted which embarrass and humiliate the local Church by forcing it into a form of perpetual beggary, dependence, and lack of self-confidence, to say nothing about other abuses against human dignity. Where, in this situation, is the respect for God’s image in all human persons and communities? It is a situation which compromises the locality of the local Church.

The erection of inappropriate structures has, in some Dioceses, led to the “policy” — if it can be called that — of “importing” expatriate personnel with money as, among other things, means to keep the structures afloat and functioning for a while. But doing so merely postpones owning up to be problem of self-support for the church, creating, instead, crippling dependence.

But there is a more sinister problem which arises as a result of this. It involves the “carving out” from a single Diocese a kind of missionary area exclusive

for missionaries, amounting to creating a mission territory within what is already a mission territory. But many of the implications of being a mission territory are already bad enough. It should not be necessary to compound them.

At the dawn of the modern missionary period in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mistake was made in evangelisation which we now refer to as the “transplantation method”. It involved the planting in Africa of European cultural christianities, and this against the better judgement, and often explicit advice, of many of the founders of the missionary groups. It turned missionaries into, as someone joked, “mercenaries” not for Christ’s Gospel but for Euro-American culture. Otherwise, the challenge of inculturation we are now faced with in Africa would have taken quite a different route. It would have meant an effort to accent Gospel values in African culture, not a need to rehabilitate culture itself.

Can we, as in the early years of the century just ending, create enclaves of missionary dominance (Italian, American, French, Irish, Polish, Dutch, and so on) in one Diocese, each to implant their own home church’s spirituality and pastoral practices, paying scant attention to local spiritualities, and still claim to be building a local Church? Should we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Half a century of missiological reflection indicates otherwise. We must not ignore it but rather change direction. The missionary should first fit into the local religious environment before attempting to change it, thoughtfully and respectfully, as Paul, again, showed (see Acts 17:22-31).

Globalization — both economic and cultural — is now a fact of contemporary life. Yet we need to steer it into becoming an egalitarian exchange between and among people firm in and comfortable with their own particular identities, economic and cultural. Similarly, authentic universality of the Church, and true missionary work within it, means local Churches firm in and comfortable with their foundational identities — their own religious culture, spirituality, homegrown pastoral orientations. These have developed in our case in Africa for over a 100 years now. What reasonable reason might there be to stop this? On the contrary, it can be seen only in the context of compromising the locality of the local Church.

### **A Piece of Timeless Advice**

In 1659, the Propaganda Fide (the precursor of the present day Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith — CDF) advised three new French Vicars Ap-

ostolic in Tonkin and Cochin, China, to respect Chinese customs. Substitute China and Chinese by Africa and African and you have sound advice on how missionaries should behave in Africa.

Do not try to persuade the Chinese to change their rites, their customs, their ways, as long as these are not openly opposed to religion and good morals. What would be sillier than to import France, Spain, Italy, or any other country of Europe into China? Don’t import these, but the faith. The Faith does not reject or crush the rites and customs of any race, as long as these are not evil. Rather, it wants to preserve them.

Generally speaking, men prize and love their own ways, and especially their own nations, more than others. That is the way they are built. There is no more effective cause of hatred and estrangement than to change a country’s customs, especially those people have been used to from time immemorial. This is particularly true if, in place of the customs that have been suppressed, you substitute the practices of your own country. Do not disdain Chinese ways because they are different from European ways. Rather, do everything you can to get used to them.

Admire and praise what is deserving of praise. What is not praiseworthy need not be heralded with flattery. The prudent thing would be either to withhold judgement, or at least not to condemn hastily and rashly. What is evidently evil should be removed more by signs of disapproval than by words. Eliminate evils gradually, seizing the opportunity when minds are ready to receive the truth.

During the decade following the Council, missionaries and the Church in general had begun to heed this advice. But then something happened; a new breed of missionaries began to come into Africa acting contrary to it, often with the tacit consent and even open praise of some of the local ordinaries. Resistance against this about-turn, very confusing to a great majority of people, was interpreted as jealousy or worse, not as a normal reaction to foreign agendas. Today many an informed person fears that when missionaries learn to be sensitive to and respect the Church in Africa, many in the African Church will have learnt to resent.

SEDOS: From the author.

## COMING EVENTS

---

### SEDOS MISSIONARY CONGRESS FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR

Brothers of The Christian Schools,  
Via Aurelia 476,  
Rome — at 16.00 - 19.30hrs  
instead of the Annual Ariccia Seminar

Simultaneous translation in: fr-it-sp-eng

#### Six Afternoon sessions with six well-known theologians

ASIA (3 April)	Sr Kim Sung-Hae, SC, South Korea	<i>An East-Asian Understanding of Mission and the Future of the Christian Presence</i>
ASIA (4 April)	Fr M. Amaladoss, SJ, India	<i>Identity and Harmony: Challenges to Mission in South Asia</i>
AFRICA (5 April)	Ms Mercy Oduyoye, Ghana	<i>The Church and Islam in Africa — A Christ-Centred Mission and Women of Africa</i>
EUROPE (6 April)	Fr Peter Huenermann, Germany	<i>New Expression of Church and the Creative WORD Church in Modern European Society</i>
LATIN AMERICA (7 April)	Sr Maria de Freitas, FI, Brazil	<i>Misión y Fe carismática-pentecostal — Misión liberadora en un Mundo neoliberal</i>
NORTH AMERICA (8 April)	(Moderator) Fr R. Schreiter, CPPS, USA,	<i>Mission — Globalization — Reconciliation Is a New Catholicity Possible in Mission?</i>

Entrance Fee: L. 7.000 each day or L. 35.000 all week

#### WORKING GROUPS

<b>Thursday, 24 February</b>	World Debt Group	15:30 hrs at SEDOS
<b>Wednesday, 8 March</b>	China Group	15:00 hrs at SEDOS