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## Editorial

*In our first contribution of the present issue, Fr MANOLO MAQUEIRA, SJ, describes the difficult situation young people are facing in Guatemala City's poor. He describes some of the reasons for the violence and struggle and goes on to ask, what a 'jubilee pastoral' would look like in such a demanding social context? —*

*At the COMLA VI — CAM 1, held last autumn in Paraná, Argentina, one of the key conferences was held by Cardinal FRANCIS GEORGE from Chicago. In his important contribution to the missionary congress he elaborated on some of the fundamental characteristics of globalization and presented the main challenges the Catholic Church in mission will have to take up, if she wants to see globalization not only as a danger but also as a possibility for mission. —*

*In his contribution from Pakistani, Fr CHRYS McVEY, OP, underlines the importance of a dialectical relationship between culture and faith. Such a relationship, he insists, must include a critical analysis of the existing power structures and the values which are legitimizing it. —*

*Sr TERESA OKURE, SHCJ, is a well known Biblical scholar from Nigeria. She insists that her few pages on the role and importance of women in the Bible can only be considered an introduction to such a rich and complex issue. But she intends to "invite the reader to identify, read and re-read the stories of women in the Bible with new eyes, ears and heart". —*

*Fr ANTHONY LAM, from the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hongkong, reflects on the continued complicated relationship between the Chinese Government and the Catholic Church. He thinks that over the last few years, the relation has sometimes shown some positive signs of development and limited flexibility. —*

*We conclude this issue with an article by Rev. JACQUES MATTHEY, the General Editor of WCC International Review of Mission (IRW). He comments on the fourth chapter of Luke and underlines the crucial importance of the role of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus and in mission today. —*

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Manolo Maqueira, SJ

## Marginalized youth in need of Jubilee

*The following reflection is offered by the Fr Manolo Maqueira, SJ, on the conditions faced by young men and women living in the poor neighbourhoods of Guatemala City.*

### Powerlessness instead of rebellion

When I first attempted to get close to young people in the most marginalized areas I did so with many preconceived notions. I thought that I would be dealing with young people who disagreed with what was happening in society, who rejected a series of social modes and who were interested in their gangs and drugs. I thought that I would come across young people with a strong dose of rebellious attitudes. As I began to immerse myself among this population, I was surprised to discover that just the opposite was true. I do not know if this is a localized experience, but I discovered that a sense of powerlessness was the fundamental characteristic. There is a powerlessness to participate in a society such as this one, which others may reject, but which is seen as an unreachable utopia for these young people. Utopia is defined by others as a place that does not exist, but which motivates one to advance toward it as a goal. For these young people, however, utopia is a place that does exist, but the path to it is blocked. There are no paths in their lives leading to this utopia. There are no paths to reach this world that is real, “the other world”, that they see on television and perceive everyday in their own country. They move in a different world in which rebellion is absent. There is violence and aggression, but there is no struggle to leave it behind or change it.

This leads to low self-esteem. What shocked me most when we went to talk to these young people was that they repeated two things: “we are bad” and the desire to “be normal”. These were two phrases that were repeated often by everyone. They also repeated phrases like: “my family tells me what is good, but I chose what is bad”; “The more bad things I did, the less people loved me”; “I make my family suffer”; “In the group we learn how to be bad. In the group we only learn to do evil things. We like to kill. We only think about killing, about revenge, about violence. We are only concerned about ourselves, we do not care about anyone else”. These are phrases that reflect a sense of powerlessness.

The terrible thing for me about these young people is that they are like a mirror reflecting all the frustrations they have experienced since childhood with

their parents, stepparents, older siblings, etc. They seem to accumulate the failures of those who went before them. In most of the cases their parents have failed. Their parents are generally people from the interior or the highlands who came here (Guatemala City) ready to work. They believed that they would find work and progress, but they did not progress. Their lives since childhood are full of frustrations and powerlessness, of believing that they can do nothing in life. Their lives are like mirrors in which you can see the reflection of many young who do not have jobs. They may not belong to a gang, but they have nothing to do. There is a large number of alcoholics who can be seen in any of our marginal areas.

### Women struggle more than men

There is a difference in the situation faced by men and women. I think that women do not give up as easily as men. Women seem to be more resistant with more love. I do not know how to explain it, but they seem to be more responsible. Women, faced with the situation in which their children live, tend to fight. Men, on the other hand, can leave. They feel that they are not capable of caring for their wives. I met a young indigenous couple, he was 17 and she was 15, and they had a newborn babe when they arrived here. They did not know anyone and lived in one room. I was called because the child had died. I was called to take care of them and say the mass. The neighbours called me. They had gone to the doctor the day before. The child was four months old and they took him to the hospital. They did not have the money to pay the hospital fee for the test, so they went home and watched their child die that night. Two or three months later the young man was an alcoholic and the young girl had returned alone to her parents in El Quiché. The girl would not have gone home if they had had more children. The man would have left, as he was incapable of caring for his wife and child. Life was greater than him, he could not win the battle in this society. He lost.

The woman stays with the children and fights. She struggles washing floors, washing clothes, doing whatever is necessary. She never stops struggling. This reality creates a kind of woman that has influence on

the children. I think this is a topic that needs to be researched: the influence of a marginalized mother in a marginalized culture. A mother who has to face a tough life, a mother who is aggressive toward the man who left her, who probably abused her, a mother who, sensing aggression in her surroundings, tends to insulate the family around a closed nucleus. The child learns very early that the house is good and the outside is bad, but the child also lives on the outside and is educated in the streets about what is bad. Outside the home he or she learns what is bad, that what his/her mother does is good and the world itself is bad.

This said, however, I do not think that women have a higher self-esteem. Women struggle more, but this does not create self-esteem. When I interview young women who belong to gangs and ask why they join, they say they “want to be like the boys”. Joining the gang means being like one of the boys. Even if it means being like marginal boys, it is better than being a girl. By joining a gang they adopt the attitude young men have toward life. There is obviously some degree of self-esteem in each of them. For young women, curiously, their principal aspiration is being able to live on their own away from their family.

Something that comes up often and piques my curiosity is the issue of the *maquiladoras* (assembly factories). In our view we often see the *maquiladora* as an exploitation, but for many young women it is a source of liberation. This is even more important on the internal level, because it allows them a degree of freedom from the husband. It gives them the freedom to search for what they want because they earn a salary.

### **Fear of adulthood**

I think this conclusion is drawn from the same sense of powerlessness. When I ask them, “What does it mean to be an adult”, they respond that an adult is someone who has responsibilities, someone who takes life seriously. One of their responses is: “We still have time to have fun in life”. Adults have to think about things. Young people, on the other hand, feel a sense of powerlessness, because they do not know if they can be responsible. They prefer to see life as a joke, because they are afraid. Joining a gang is a way of prolonging their youth, of avoiding responsibility. When they do take on responsibilities, they often feel incapable to meeting their commitments. One of the saddest things I see around my house is young women at the age of 21 or 22 with two or three children living with their mothers. The young men also live in the same neighbourhood, but separate with their families. Many of them tried to form a family. They were together for a year or maybe a bit longer. They had two children. They got together again and had a third child,

but they do not feel capable of forming a family. They return to their group of friends, because they do not feel capable of accepting responsibility. They are moving backwards. The gang frees them once more of their responsibilities.

### **Violence**

Violence is a fatality. It is like a destiny from which one cannot free oneself. First, the young people here are born into violence. Their homes are tremendously violent. As children even their mothers, their good mothers who would even kill to protect them, are violent. Life itself is violent here, it hits people hard. I am impressed by the figure of the mother, who is adored. The image of the mother is the strongest thing they have. I find it interesting to hear a young man, who might have killed five or six other young men, say “Mom, don’t hit me” or see his mother give him a beating in front of his friends.

They are born into violence. When one grows up amid abuse and humiliation, one tends to become insensitive to these horrors and repeat the pattern of abuse to resolve problems. They learn from childhood that problems are solved with violence, because that is how their parents solved their problems. Any problem, any discussion, is solved with violence. Children learn that in life you either learn how to hit or are hit. There are not many options.

The absence of a father, which produces insecurity and a sense of abandonment, is violent. The fact that children have to work when they are as young as 10 and 11 is a form of violence. At first, children think that work is like playing, and they like to play and have access to some money. A child that starts working at 10, however, tries to escape from work by the time he or she is 15. They might be unable to work for the rest of their lives. Lack of affection is another form of violence. They live in a world where it is prohibited to show affection. This is a violation of their personality, because they are not allowed to express affection. It is world in which they experience pain from childhood. Every time there is a corpse in the street there is a group of children watching and laughing. They go from one funeral to the next. Violent death is something normal to them. They are also treated violently because they live in a marginalized world. When the police arrive, they arrive swinging clubs. They are beaten if they are brought to jail. When they are detained there is no justice, no law, nothing. When they are arrested they know that they will not be released until they pay a bribe, regardless of whether or not they committed a crime. Violence is exercised against them and they have no recourse but to react violently. One of the young men I interviewed, who is

now dead, said: "The existence of violent groups forces you to join a violent group". This is a dramatic sequence for me.

Last night I spoke to four mothers who are concerned because their sons have been threatened by other groups and can no longer go to school. The boys are in the sixth grade and they do not belong to any group. These boys have to stop going to school for safety reasons.

The violence unleashed by young men is like exercising a kind of local power. It is a mechanism for denying that they are powerless. Humiliating or causing someone harm is a way of retaliating for the abuses that they themselves suffer.

At other times violence is like an explosion, not of rebellion but self-marginalization. Because I do not want to be marginalized I will brake the rules and marginalize myself because that is what I want. By marginalizing myself, by choosing to be bad, I blame myself.

Finally, violence can be a form of self-punishment, a form of suicide. This is when I do not direct my violence at "others" but at people like me, those who belong to my world, who are bad like me.

What would a "Jubilee Pastoral" look like in this context?

The reason for many consequences, among them violence, is the lack of self-esteem. Any kind of pastoral work has to reinforce self-esteem, this is key. The first pastoral step is to accompany young people. This accompaniment at times means sharing their sense of powerlessness. How do we get close to them? The fact that people from the Church are close to them makes them feel that they are important at least to someone. This is the first discovery. Many of these young people feel as though they have no meaning for anyone else in the world. When you interview them they speak with pride, because it is probably the first time that anyone from outside their world has listened to them. It makes them feel good because they feel as though they are important to someone.

Another key for this kind of pastoral work is affection. These young people have never felt affection in their lives. The only kind of affection, of feeling loved, comes from the mother. In many cases, however, the mother spends the entire day out of the house because she has to support the family. And in order to support the family, mothers also become slaves to the violence. They mix love with violent authoritarianism, because this is how they were taught to love. When someone breaks this cycle and shows tenderness, shows them they are the object of tenderness and caring, they are working profoundly to increase self-esteem.

There is a Christian community in our neighbour-

hood, but it has also been beaten down. All of the members of our Church council, for example, have children who are in trouble: daughters who are living on their own, sons in prison, children living on the street, etc., so the Christian community also has difficulty in getting its message across. The central problem of our religious message is that we are working within a situation in which we cannot tell the people to do something. We cannot tell them that they need to change society. It is even difficult for us to form groups in our community ... because they are embarrassed to be from here. When we ask them where they are from they mention somewhere else. The only people proud to be from our community are the gangs, because they accept their marginality.

Young people do not want to be from our community, but to be young people from somewhere else. This is their goal in life. Their identity is their lack of identity. How do you break through this difficult situation? It is possible through the formation of very small groups that are well aware of what is going on around them. How do you offer identity where marginality is the key? You do this by separating geographic marginality from personal marginality, accepting the first but rejecting the second. In other words, admit that I am marginalized geographically, economically and socially, but I am not marginal as a human being. This is what our pastoral work must aim at, which is difficult. The easiest thing for them is what is offered by the evangelical churches. These churches offer the people even more reasons to remain marginalized. First, there is the evangelical fanaticism: "I have converted and am good. I am one of the good, and the rest of you are evil". The next step is reinforcing what was learned during childhood, that everything is evil. The only thing that can save you is God. You do not have to fight for salvation, salvation comes through God. On the other hand, in the Catholic Church we complain and tell you "you have to struggle so that young people can be different". Our message is much slower. It is closer to the people, it is about them accepting their own reality. I think it is the most effective message in the long run. It encourages people to accept that they are marginalized, but not in spirit. They are not marginalized God.

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## L'Église dans le monde

### L'Église catholique unie pour relever les défis de la mondialisation

**D**iscours du cardinal Francis George au Ier Congrès missionnaire américain

**Le 30 septembre 1999, lors d'une allocution au Ier Congrès américain de la mission qui s'est tenu à Parana en Argentine, le cardinal Francis George, archevêque de Chicago (États-Unis), a examiné les défis lancés à l'Église par la mondialisation. Quelques 2900 délégués participaient à ce Congrès. Selon le cardinal, il est de la mission de l'Église de travailler à une mondialisation respectueuse de la personne humaine. Plus consciente que jamais de l'interdépendance des peuples de la terre, l'Église catholique doit rester unie, favoriser le dialogue interconfessionnel, pour créer de la solidarité, mieux effacer les divisions et faire en sorte que la mondialisation soit une chance pour l'homme, la justice et la paix. Voici le texte du cardinal George (Texte original anglais dans Origins du 16 décembre 1999. Titre et traduction de la DC) :**

Au moment de clore cette décennie et ce siècle, il est de plus en plus clair qu'un nouvel ordre mondial prend forme. Au début de cette décennie, nous avons vu s'effondrer le communisme en Europe de l'Est et donc se terminer la Guerre Froide. Cet événement a mis fin à la division bipolaire du monde sur le plan politique et, en l'occurrence, à son partage entre économies capitalistes et socialistes.

Ce qui a remplacé l'ordre mondial de la Guerre Froide, qui a duré pendant plus de quarante ans, c'est ce que l'on nomme, aujourd'hui, la mondialisation. Alors que celle-ci ne fait qu'émerger en tant que nouvel ordre mondial, les contours qu'elle redonne au monde et les directions qu'elle semble prendre nous paraissent progressivement plus clairs. Étant donné les effets de cet ordre mondial sur les personnes concrètes, il revient à l'Église - qui a été chargée par le Christ de se soucier de tout - de s'y engager comme elle le fait dans toutes les cultures : à la fois pour affirmer ce qui est bon et noble dans celui-ci, et pour confronter ses carences et ses défauts à la lumière et à la puissance de la Bible.

Au cours de cet exposé, je souhaite explorer les défis que la mondialisation lance aujourd'hui à la mission de l'Église. Vaste tâche, bien sûr, qui ne peut être entièrement accomplie dans un tel exposé. Je vais donc essayer de définir à la fois les principaux défis lancés

par la mondialisation et les ressources proposées par l'Église pour relever ces défis, dans la présentation de son message de Jésus-Christ. Je commencerai par une courte description de la mondialisation telle qu'elle se révèle au monde aujourd'hui puis continuerai par une brève évaluation de ses aspects positifs et négatifs. Nous devons ensuite prêter attention à la manière dont l'Église, dans sa mission d'évangélisation, devrait et peut répondre à ces défis. Je conclurai cet exposé par quelques réflexions sur la mondialisation à la lumière de la nouvelle évangélisation et du grand Jubilé.

#### Qu'est-ce que la mondialisation ?

Beaucoup d'efforts sont faits, aujourd'hui, pour tenter d'expliquer ce qu'est la mondialisation. Il s'agit d'un phénomène tellement vaste, qu'essayer de le comprendre de manière exhaustive peut mener à l'échec. Laissez-moi commencer par une image qui peut nous aider à comprendre la mondialisation au niveau technique comme au niveau spirituel. En juillet, a été célébré le 30e anniversaire de l'un des événements les plus remarquables du XXe siècle : le jour où un habitant de la terre a mis, pour la première fois, le pied sur une autre corps planétaire, la lune. Ce fut pour nous un événement porteur de multiples significations. Mais l'une des images les plus puissantes émergeant des aventures du voyage spatial, fut celle de notre propre planète terre que nous pouvions, pour la première fois, contempler à partir de l'espace. C'est aujourd'hui une image qui nous est, à tous, devenue familière. Vue du vaisseau spatial Appolo 8, la terre est apparue telle un orbe de saphir, illuminé contre les ténèbres de l'espace. Si l'on regarde cette gemme, on ne peut voir les lignes de partage politique, ni les autres délimitations ou barrières qui marquent et parfois divisent la communauté humaine. Au contraire, il se dégage une profonde unité de l'image que nous percevons à partir de l'espace.

Je pense que la mondialisation, dans son sens le plus positif, c'est cette aspiration, ici sur terre, vers l'harmonie et l'unité telle qu'elle est perçue à partir de l'espace. Elle contient l'espoir et la promesse d'une famille humaine vraiment unie, alliée dans une profonde communion. Elle émane d'une telle image et recèle un tel espoir que nous devrions sans tarder nous

inspirer d'un processus qui a le potentiel de relier toute l'humanité d'une façon sans précédent. L'image de la terre vue du vaisseau Appolo 8 offre la base d'une spiritualité qui peut nous amener à relever les défis missionnaires que nous lance la mondialisation, une spiritualité plus adaptée à la vision que nous donne une vraie foi catholique.

Qu'est-ce donc que la mondialisation ? D'une manière simple, on peut dire que la mondialisation est comme une extension et une compression simultanées du temps et de l'espace. D'un côté, la mondialisation a relié des gens et des lieux du monde entier, d'une manière jusqu'ici inconnue de l'humanité. D'un autre côté, ces mêmes connexions ont créé une densité de relations pouvant devenir envahissantes et même opprimantes pour la communauté humaine. L'ordinateur fournit une image de cette extension et de cette compression : Internet et la toile mondiale (*Web*) représentent cet état d'interconnexion étendue du monde ; la puce informatique, où l'information est comprimée dans un tout petit espace, nous donne une image de ce que le monde est devenu.

Les forces ambivalentes de l'expansion et de la compression créent une puissante dynamique et révèlent les profondes contradictions internes à la mondialisation, sur lesquelles je reviendrai dans un moment. Afin d'essayer de comprendre comment opère la mondialisation dans notre univers actuel, je parlerai brièvement de la manière dont elle implique quatre dimensions de notre vie : les dimensions technologique, économique, politique et culturelle.

### **La dimension technologique**

Ce sont les avancées rapides en matière de technologie de la communication qui ont permis la mondialisation. Le succès de l'ordinateur personnel dans les années 80 et la possibilité d'interconnexions offertes par la toile mondiale et Internet dans les années 90, ont créé une forme de communication pouvant transporter de grandes quantités d'information de façon extrêmement rapide. Cela a étendu le champ et réduit le temps de communication de façon spectaculaire. C'est cette possibilité de mettre en relation tant de gens et d'institutions, et de rendre cette interaction rapide et relativement aisée, qui est à la base de la mondialisation telle que nous la vivons. Le flot d'information que permet cette nouvelle technologie des communications en est la preuve. L'information est plus accessible et plus abondante pour un nombre toujours plus grand de personnes.

Par ailleurs, la facilité de se transporter sur de longues distances a entraîné à la fois la migration de populations désireuses d'améliorer leur sort économique et politique, et le mouvement rapide des

capitaux et des biens de consommation. Bien sûr, ces migrations et mouvements ne sont pas nouveaux. Mais ils interviennent à une échelle inconnue jusqu'ici.

### **La dimension économique**

C'est sur le plan économique de la vie humaine que la mondialisation s'est fait particulièrement ressentir. Le transfert rapide d'information et de capitaux permet d'accélérer et d'intensifier les transactions commerciales. L'ordre économique émergent de cette possibilité est un capitalisme de marché mondial souvent appelé capitalisme néolibéral parce qu'il ressemble beaucoup au capitalisme libéral de la fin du XIXe siècle. C'est une forme de capitalisme de moins en moins contrôlé ou réglementé par des instances culturelles ou gouvernementales. Celui-ci a lié entre eux plus de pays que cela n'avait été possible auparavant. Il constitue cependant l'un des profonds paradoxes de la mondialisation. Malgré sa capacité à améliorer la vie de tous, il a - au moins jusqu'ici - élargi le fossé entre quelques groupes et individus immensément riches et un nombre toujours plus grand de gens emprisonnés dans les difficultés économiques ou même la misère. Le rapport 1999 du programme de développement des Nations Unies indique que l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres se creuse de plus en plus au lieu de se resserrer. Je reviendrai sur ce point. De même, malgré son aptitude à relier les gens dans cette nouvelle organisation économique, il a surtout mis en relation les plus privilégiés d'entre eux, que ce soit dans les pays riches ou dans les pays pauvres.

### **La dimension politique**

La conséquence politique des technologies de communication et de transport, les forces puissantes du capitalisme mondial et les images culturelles envahissantes qui s'insinuent dans la vie quotidienne est un état-nation affaibli. Les communications sautent par dessus les frontières nationales. Une économie de marché mondialisée limite le contrôle du gouvernement, réduisant l'importance et le pouvoir de l'état-nation. Par ailleurs, les accords économiques entre les nations ont créé des blocs qui restreignent la souveraineté nationale : l'Union Européenne, l'ALENA, et le Mercosur sont toutes des organisations bien connues. Enfin, l'effondrement du monde bipolaire de la Guerre Froide s'est accompagné d'un accroissement des conflits de petite échelle, qui, la plupart du temps, aujourd'hui, se déroulent à l'intérieur des États-nations et non plus entre eux. À cause de ces guerres, on assiste à un déferlement de personnes déplacées et de réfugiés sans équivalent

depuis la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale.

Alors que le pouvoir politique se déplace, l'État-nation ne disparaîtra pas tout de suite, mais ses pouvoirs et ses rôles sont en train de changer. Nous sommes également témoins de l'importance grandissante des organisations transnationales non contrôlées par l'état telles que les organisations non-gouvernementales dans la sphère politique. Celles accréditées par les Nations Unies ont une influence toute particulière.

### La dimension culturelle

De ce réseau d'interconnexions développé grâce aux technologies de la communication, est né une sorte de culture mondiale. Cette culture est surtout marquée par des signes de consommation : nourriture, habillement et loisirs. Beaucoup de ces signes de consommation ont pour origine - au moins au début - les États-Unis : les hamburgers de McDonald, le coca-cola, les tee-shirts, les chaussures de sport, la musique rock, les films vidéo et le cinéma. Parce qu'il s'agit de sociétés privées, elles appartiennent à des investisseurs répartis dans tout l'hémisphère et dans le monde entier. Bien que ces signes culturels soient reçus et interprétés différemment dans le monde, selon les cultures, elles créent un langage culturel commun, en particulier chez les jeunes. Alors que la gamme des produits culturels et des modes de vie est plus vaste, une sorte de scepticisme à l'égard de la capacité de l'intelligence humaine à saisir la vérité a surgi. L'esprit post-moderne déconstruit la synthèse intellectuelle mais lui résiste.

Paradoxalement, la diversité post-moderne semble entraîner l'uniformisation de la culture. Les pouvoirs uniformisants des formes économiques de la mondialisation donnent l'impression qu'il n'y a pas d'alternative au capitalisme néolibéral. Cette économie de marché, décrite par le Pape Jean-Paul II dans *Centesimus annus* (cf. DC 1991, n. 2029, p. 518-532. NDLR) - fondée sur la propriété privée, le marché libre et l'initiative économique individuelle mais conçue de sorte que l'économie soit au service de la personne et non pas que la personne soit au service de l'économie - pourra-t-elle émerger de ce nouvel ordre économique mondial ? Les pouvoirs uniformisants de la mondialisation culturelle semblent venir à bout de formes d'art, de la musique et même de la langue de cultures locales. Bien que l'espagnol reste la langue la plus parlée dans l'Église catholique, l'anglais est devenu la langue de la mondialisation.

Ces forces qui poussent à l'uniformisation sont profondément ressenties. Vu leur ampleur, bien des gens se sentent incapables de les contrôler. Parallèlement, certains signes continuent d'indiquer

que leur pouvoir englobant pourrait être moindre qu'il n'y paraît aujourd'hui. Le Programme de développement des Nations Unies appelle à une plus grande réglementation de la mondialisation économique, ce qui montre une prise de conscience du problème mais n'apporte pas de solutions. Des études indiquent également que des signes de culture mondialisée peuvent s'insinuer dans une culture, sans pour cela en éradiquer les expressions culturelles locales ; parfois même, ils les intensifient. Il est, en fait, de plus en plus admis que pour comprendre la mondialisation, il ne faut pas se contenter de regarder ses aspects uniformisants. Il faut plutôt rigoureusement fixer notre regard sur le point d'intersection entre ce qui est mondial et ce qui est local. Très peu de gens, à l'exception d'une petite élite dirigeante et culturelle, vivent exclusivement à l'échelle de la mondialisation. La plupart des gens en ressentent l'effet quand celle-ci entre en interaction avec leur environnement local.

L'une des attitudes les plus répandues relatives à la mondialisation, est la résistance par la réaffirmation de l'identité locale. C'est là l'une des causes de l'accroissement du nombre des conflits dans le monde aujourd'hui. Parfois, l'identité religieuse a été utilisée afin de rendre encore plus claire cette identité et cette différence locale vis-à-vis des voisins, ce qui a souvent entraîné la violence. En d'autres endroits, cela a aussi contribué au renouveau de langues et de coutumes. Dans les deux cas, ce qui est local est vécu plus intensément puisque contrarié par l'incursion de ce qui est mondial.

Cette interaction entre ce qui est mondial et ce qui est local s'est combinée à la migration des peuples (à la fois volontaire et forcée) pour créer des interactions inégalées au niveau de leur intensité et de leur étendue. De nombreux pays d'Amérique sont depuis longtemps multiculturels. Ce qui est nouveau, c'est l'intensité de l'interaction entre les cultures. Les États-Unis et le Canada sont maintenant les deuxième et troisième pays les plus multiculturels dans le monde (après l'Australie). Les États-Unis sont également le cinquième plus grand pays de langue espagnole au monde.

Le fait que les cultures se frottent les unes aux autres a entraîné une fragmentation culturelle et l'émergence de nouvelles formes de culture. Rappelons que les cultures ont toujours emprunté les unes aux autres. Mais ce que nous voyons aujourd'hui, c'est une fragmentation culturelle, surtout en milieu urbain. La conjonction de sentiments d'impuissance face à la mondialisation, de résistance à ses empiétements et de peur de voir se fragmenter les valeurs culturelles de base font que, dans le monde, des groupes répliquent par ce l'on appelle parfois l'intégrisme. L'intégrisme



est une réaffirmation de l'identité et de l'autonomie par la sélection de certains aspects anti-modernistes et anti-mondialistes de l'identité locale (et surtout religieuse) pour en faire à la fois les piliers sur lesquels est bâtie l'identité et la limite contre toute usurpation mondialiste supplémentaire. Si la mondialisation est responsable d'une uniformisation inacceptable, le monde post-moderne pourrait bien utiliser des phénomènes pré-modernes pour protéger ce qui est local. La liberté humaine pourrait ainsi se retrouver déconnectée de la modernité et un ordre post-moderne authentiquement nouveau pourrait naître du dialogue entre une culture pré-moderne telle que l'islam et la culture post-moderne de la chrétienté sécularisée.

### **Mondialisation : une évaluation**

Après avoir dit tout cela sur la mondialisation, comment devons nous l'évaluer ? Il y a une tendance, surtout dans les cercles religieux, à se focaliser sur les aspects négatifs. Une grande partie de cette évaluation est justifiée. Mais le fait de se focaliser exclusivement sur les aspects négatifs de la mondialisation empêche de percevoir deux choses importantes. Premièrement, la mondialisation comporte des aspects positifs devant être reconnus. Deuxièmement, on ne peut pas simplement condamner en bloc la mondialisation étant donné que tous les phénomènes culturels sont ambigus du point de vue de l'Évangile, et qu'aucune alternative n'est en vue. On ne peut ni passer sous silence la mondialisation, ni lui échapper facilement. Si l'Église veut s'engager dans le monde - comme il avait été clairement souligné qu'elle devait le faire au Concile Vatican II -, nous ne devons pas tout bonnement esquiver, ignorer ou même condamner une force si considérable dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. C'est pourquoi je souhaite examiner à la fois les résultats positifs et négatifs de la mondialisation.

### **Aspects positifs : la mondialisation en tant qu'opportunité**

Je souhaiterais ici insister sur deux aspects positifs de la mondialisation. Ils représentent à eux deux l'opportunité qu'offre la mondialisation. C'est tout d'abord la possibilité d'une plus grande interconnexion mondiale. Grâce aux technologies de communication et de transport dont nous bénéficions aujourd'hui, nous avons la chance de pouvoir vraiment devenir une famille humaine étroitement reliée. C'est primordial pour une Église qui se dit catholique. La possibilité qui s'offre à nous, c'est cette vision que l'on a de la terre à partir du vaisseau spatial Appolo 8. Comme nous le verrons, cela implique certaines choses qui

ont été à maintes reprises exprimées par le Pape Jean-Paul II dans son appel à une plus grande solidarité humaine.

Cela nous permet d'aborder un deuxième aspect positif de la mondialisation : l'accès à l'information et le resserrement des distances permettraient d'accroître les possibilités de développement humain. Les technologies de communication, dans cette nouvelle ère mondiale, ont permis de protéger les droits de l'homme de manière effective. Le mouvement contre l'utilisation des mines antipersonnelles, par exemple, a été entièrement mené sur Internet. Les reportages télévisés sur la famine et les souffrances provoquées par la guerre ont mobilisé l'opinion publique et forcé les gouvernements à réagir face à ces tragédies humaines. Sur le plan de la médecine, la mondialisation entraîne des campagnes d'éradication totale de certaines maladies. En d'autres termes, l'accès à l'information et le resserrement des distances peuvent améliorer la qualité de la vie humaine de manière significative.

### **Aspects négatifs : la mondialisation en tant qu'idéologie**

Trois domaines en particulier ont attiré l'attention des détracteurs de la mondialisation. Ce sont, en premier lieu, les valeurs qui ont souvent conduit à la mondialisation économique et culturelle : à savoir, la recherche du profit économique considéré comme l'objectif humain suprême et l'assimilation de l'être humain à un consommateur. Si le seul profit - et plus particulièrement le profit à court terme - est reconnu comme la valeur organisatrice d'un système économique, alors les êtres humains et les sociétés humaines sont condamnés à souffrir. De même, estimer la valeur des êtres humains essentiellement en fonction de ce qu'ils peuvent consommer, c'est réduire, de façon inacceptable, la dignité de la personne humaine. C'est faire affront au principe de base de l'anthropologie théologique, à savoir que nous sommes créés à l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu. Définir les gens sur la base de ce qu'ils peuvent acheter et consommer annihile notre sens de la personne qui révèle son être véritable à travers la générosité et le don de soi. Il reste vrai, bien sûr, que ces phénomènes négatifs ne sont pas uniquement liés à la mondialisation. Ils ont existé dans tous les systèmes économiques depuis la chute d'Adam et Ève, mais leur étendue les rend, de nos jours, plus puissants.

Le second aspect négatif de la mondialisation, c'est le fossé toujours plus large entre les riches et les pauvres. L'économie mondiale promet à ceux qui se soumettent à ses lois, de meilleures conditions de vie

économique. Mais ce que beaucoup expérimentent, c'est l'exclusion ou l'exploitation plutôt que la participation à cette richesse de plus en plus grande. En réponse, des voix toujours plus nombreuses appellent à une réglementation de cette économie afin que la richesse soit répartie plus équitablement. Le problème, bien sûr, c'est qu'il n'existe pas d'interlocuteur politique pour l'économie mondiale et qu'un gouvernement mondial n'est généralement pas souhaité non plus. En d'autres termes, les dynamiques économiques ne peuvent pas être dissociées des facteurs politiques et culturels. Regardez, par exemple, les différences entre les économies post-marxistes de la Pologne et de la Hongrie et celle de la Russie. Les deux premières bénéficiaient d'un contexte culturel permettant un revirement économique, ce qui n'était apparemment pas le cas de la Russie.

Le troisième aspect négatif a trait à la fracture des cultures et des modes de vie que les forces uniformisantes de la mondialisation entraînent dans leur sillage. Une partie de la dignité humaine réside dans le droit à la culture, qui est une manière authentique mais distinctive d'être un être humain. C'est un point sur lequel le Saint-Père a insisté sans relâche lors de ses voyages autour du monde. Priver les peuples de leur langue et de leur mode de vie, les obliger à s'insérer dans d'autres schémas de vie, c'est leur dérober l'une des dimensions de base de leur humanité. Par ailleurs, la réponse intégriste à la mondialisation culturelle s'accompagne souvent d'outrages envers les droits de l'homme et de conflits.

### **Les défis missionnaires de l'Église à l'âge de la mondialisation**

Que signifient alors les possibilités et les défis de la mondialisation pour la mission de l'Église aujourd'hui ?

Le Saint-Père a, pour la première fois, parlé de mondialisation à l'occasion de la Journée mondiale de la Paix en 1998. Dans son message, il reconnaissait la manière dont le monde changeait (cf. *DC* 1999, n. 2195, p. 1-6. NDLR). Au vu des changements politiques et surtout économiques, il a posé une série de questions sur l'intégration et la justice. Afin de créer une société plus équitable et de favoriser la paix dans le monde, il a avancé deux principes : premièrement, avoir un plus grand sens de la responsabilité du bien commun et, deuxièmement, ne jamais perdre de vue la personne humaine qui doit être au centre de tout projet social. En bref, il dit que relever le défi consiste à assurer une mondialisation de la solidarité, une mondialisation sans marginalisation. À la lumière de ces paroles du Saint-Père, je proposerais de nous concentrer sur deux tâches

qui pourraient définir la mission de l'Église à l'âge de la mondialisation et permettre d'identifier trois types de ressources que l'Église pourrait proposer pour mener à bien ces deux tâches.

### **Deux tâches**

#### *1. Proclamer et défendre la personne humaine*

À la base même d'une mondialisation juste et équitable, se trouve la dignité de la personne humaine, un thème sur lequel le Pape Jean-Paul II est revenu sans cesse depuis sa première Encyclique, *Redemptor hominis* (1). Sans ce point de convergence, tout projet de société est voué à s'égarer et à réduire à l'esclavage plutôt qu'à libérer. Nous devons faire de la proclamation de la vérité sur la personne humaine le centre de notre proclamation missionnaire dans un univers mondialisé. La Rédemption que nous avons reçue en Jésus-Christ témoigne de la manière dont Dieu perçoit et aime chaque être humain.

#### *2. Créer une culture de vie*

Notre attitude vis-à-vis de la dignité humaine étant profondément influencée par les valeurs contenues dans la culture de chacun, la seconde tâche majeure d'une église est la conversion de la culture. Selon les termes de l'Exhortation apostolique *Ecclesia in America*, les cultures touchées par la mondialisation doivent être guidées par une vision morale de « la dignité humaine, de la solidarité et de la subsidiarité » (2). Comme l'explique l'Exhortation apostolique, cette transformation pousse à la fois à inculquer ces valeurs positives dans chaque culture et en interaction entre les nations, ainsi qu'à réduire de façon concomitante les effets négatifs de la mondialisation sur les pauvres et les faibles. La conversion mondialisée de la culture implique également de soutenir les organisations internationales qui s'efforcent de créer et de soutenir une culture de vie.

Laissez-moi donner un exemple d'une réponse adéquate à un problème crucial dans les pays d'Amérique : leur dette extérieure massive. Pour traiter de ce problème central dans la vie des gens de nos pays, deux stratégies sont nécessaires. D'une part, nous devons atténuer les effets négatifs de la dette, qui draine les ressources d'un pays et nuit surtout aux pauvres. Des efforts concertés sont indispensables pour que les pays et les organismes créanciers réduisent la dette - ou même l'annulent entièrement dans certains cas. Alors que les institutions financières mondiales et que les pays les plus industrialisés se sont efforcés d'admettre ce problème, tous les efforts ont été jusqu'ici insuffisants. D'autre part, cependant, nous

devons promouvoir une culture interne à chaque nation débitrice qui puisse garantir que les prêtres et les investissements consentis sont utilisés pour le bien commun et dans le but d'une vraie promotion humaine. Ainsi, les éléments culturels qui encouragent le copinage, la corruption et la fraude doivent être éliminés à l'intérieur même du pays. En tant que chrétiens, nous sommes appelés à travailler à ces deux dimensions.

### Trois ressources

#### 1. La catholicité de l'Église à une époque de mondialisation

L'une des grandes ressources qu'apporte l'Église catholique à la mission de l'évangélisation à l'âge de la mondialisation, c'est sa catholicité. J'entends ici catholicité sous ses deux dimensions théologiques : son épanouissement dans le monde entier et la plénitude de vérité qu'elle apporte à la famille humaine. En tant qu'Église présente dans le monde entier, l'Église catholique est elle-même une institution transnationale qui apporte des ressources particulières à un univers mondialisé. À une époque où les institutions transnationales (telles que les ONG) peuvent rendre à l'humanité un service spécial que ne peut rendre aucune nation, l'Église dispose de réseaux de communication permettant de créer de la solidarité entre les nations et au sein de toute la communauté humaine. En tant qu'Église, nous avons un défi à relever : utiliser le réseau dont nous disposons déjà de façon encore plus efficace. Les instituts et les organisations missionnaires ont ici un rôle particulier à jouer. La communion entre les églises locales doit être le levain de la solidarité entre les peuples.

Le message de foi prêché par l'Église offre une vision morale et spirituelle pour une société juste et équitable à une époque de mondialisation. Les vérités qu'elle a reçues du Christ encouragent l'Église à proclamer la dignité de la personne humaine, le caractère central de la personne humaine pour tout projet social, l'appel à la solidarité parmi tous les membres de la famille humaine, la présence à la fois du bien et du mal dans chaque culture et la mission de réconciliation de Jésus-Christ pour rassembler toutes choses sur terre en une offrande à Dieu (cf. Ep 1, 10; Col 1, 20).

Laissez-moi esquisser pour vous la manière dont je vois la présentation de ces vérités. Une Église réellement catholique propose le message de salut à tout le monde, sans exception et sans distinction ; tous sont invités à la table du banquet du Royaume de Dieu. L'efficacité de cette proposition se fonde sur notre propre conversion permanente, sur un continué «

changement de mentalité » (*metanoia*), sur le fait de se détourner constamment de son moi radicalement autonome et isolé, un changement provoqué par la rencontre avec le Christ dans son corps, l'Église. Dans cette conversion et communion ecclésiale constantes, notre relation avec les autres dans le Christ est approfondie. L'inculturation de la foi - la conversion d'une société et d'une culture que permet le fait de prêcher qui est le Christ dans un langage compréhensible par le peuple - commence par l'identification des *semina Verbi* présentes dans toute culture puis continue par l'identification d'éléments démoniaques également présents dans toutes les cultures. Ce discernement apparaît dans la vie des évangélistes eux-mêmes, eux qui sont les témoins du pouvoir de la grâce de Dieu. De tels évangélistes catholiques doivent être en profonde conversation avec le Christ mais aussi avec ceux qu'il a placés sur leur chemin.

#### 2. L'appel à une nouvelle évangélisation

La nouvelle évangélisation à laquelle notre Saint-Père a appelé pour la première fois lors d'une visite à Haïti, prend en compte la manière dont le monde a changé et s'interroge sur la façon dont le message de salut de Jésus-Christ peut être entendu par ceux qui, ayant à un moment donné accepté la Bible, l'ont maintenant délibérément mise de côté. Ce rejet conscient de la foi n'est pas seulement présent dans ce nouvel Aréopage des mass media et de la science dont parle le Pape dans son Encyclique *Redemptoris missio* (3). Il l'est aussi dans le point de vue différent de nombreux hommes et femmes d'aujourd'hui, de groupes entiers qui vivent dans un ordre mondial où les anciens repères ne permettent plus de s'orienter. Si nous gardons à l'esprit les principes de la nouvelle évangélisation, notre mission sera plus efficace dans un univers mondialisé : elle est biblique ; universelle dans son service auprès de tous les peuples ; dialogale dans son respect de la liberté de conscience ; culturellement adaptée tout en transformant les sociétés, innovatrice dans son utilisation des nouveaux moyens de communication ; et elle relève de la responsabilité de tous les membres de l'Église.

La nouvelle évangélisation présuppose un dialogue à la fois oecuménique et interconfessionnel. Le Christ et son Église n'étant qu'un, la désunion ecclésiale est un scandale qui affaiblit la prédication de la Bible. Les économies, les sociétés, les cultures mondialisées ne répondront qu'à une Église réellement unifiée. Alors que, au cours du nouveau millénaire, les communautés de foi redeviendront les principaux façonneurs et levain de la culture, le dialogue interconfessionnel est d'autant plus impératif. Particulièrement crucial est

le dialogue entre le catholicisme et l'islam, tous deux en expansion. Les relations entre les catholiques et les musulmans détermineront la mondialisation plus profondément qu'aucun accord économique ou politique.

### 3. Célébration du grand Jubilé

La célébration du grand Jubilé est une troisième ressource pour la mission dans un contexte de mondialisation. Le Jubilé est porteur de messages essentiels pour la mission. Tout d'abord, il exprime le caractère gratuit de l'amour de Dieu qui a offert son Fils pour le salut de notre monde. Dans un monde où toute relation menace d'être commercialisée, où les actes généreux et gratuits sont considérés comme une perte éventuelle de profit, le message expliquant comment Dieu agit gratuitement pour sauver le monde nous conduit vers un nouveau monde plus authentique. En second lieu, dans la Bible, jubilé signifie remise de dette et renouveau. Si la vraie mondialisation est l'intégration et la participation, alors cette intégration et cette participation doivent être rendues possibles en permettant aux pauvres de prendre un nouveau départ. L'Église apporte ses ressources pour soutenir ce rêve de recommencement où la justice puis, la paix auront plus de chance de réussir parce que toutes deux s'enracinent dans l'amour.

### Conclusion

Afin de soutenir cette activité missionnaire, nous devons avoir une spiritualité missionnaire qui puisse nous soutenir, nous guider et nous nourrir dans notre appel. Je reviens ici à l'image de la terre vue de l'espace: notre monde est, après tout, très petit à l'échelle du cosmos. Il est fragile. Ses divisions et ses barrières sont bâties par la main de l'homme et nous, croyants, devons être ceux qui perçoivent d'où vient le monde et où il va.

Le monde, sous toutes ses dimensions, vient de Dieu. C'est la création de Dieu et elle porte l'empreinte de sa propre image. Il a donc une dignité, une bonté et une beauté indéniables, peu importe combien les péchés ont défigurés le visage du monde. Le monde est parti pour un voyage au-delà de ses ruptures et de ses divisions, vers une nouvelle harmonie et communion avec Dieu, un voyage que les Lettres de saint Paul aux Éphésiens et aux Colossiens appellent réconciliation. En pleine fracture que le monde ressent plus vivement à cause de la mondialisation, le message de réconciliation de toutes choses dans le Christ est une vérité que notre monde brûle d'entendre.

Quelques décennies avant qu'il ne devienne commun de parler de mondialisation, Jean XXIII a

appelé le Concile Vatican II à revitaliser la mission de l'Église dans le monde. Il a lancé cet appel pour que l'Église, en tant qu'assemblée globale, mondiale et universelle soit, de manière plus visible, le sacrement de l'unité de la race humaine après que les divisions nationales, culturelles et économiques nous ont entraînés dans des guerres et des carnages lors de la première partie de ce siècle. L'appel à une mission qui soit réellement catholique, c'est le véritable appel du Concile. Pour des raisons diverses, le Concile n'a pas encore été reçu comme un appel de l'Église à changer le monde. Beaucoup d'énergie a été dépensée pour changer l'Église selon divers schémas ; pas assez n'a été consacrée à nous changer, nous, avec l'aide de l'Église, afin que nous puissions changer le monde. Ce changement commence avec Jésus-Christ et termine en lui. Il est le Royaume de Dieu dans sa personne. Le plus grand défi adressé à la mission de l'Église dans un nouvel ordre mondial, reste ce qui a été le plus grand défi de ces 2000 dernières années : comment surmonter les obstacles qui nous empêchent d'être disciples et d'accepter le cœur joyeux la liberté que Jésus-Christ, Sauveur du monde, veut nous donner ? Dans n'importe quelle situation, les gens peuvent avoir peur d'espérer. En élargissant cette conférence à toute l'Amérique, vous donnez au monde une autre raison d'espérer et je vous en remercie.

<sup>1</sup> *Redemptor hominis* (DC 1979, n. 1761, p. 301-323)

<sup>2</sup> *Ecclesia in America* 55 (DC 1999, n. 2197, p. 128)

<sup>3</sup> *Redemptoris missio* (DC 1991, n.2022, p. 152-191)

Ref.: *La documentation catholique*, n.2220, 20/02/2000.

## Mission Theology in the Pakistani Context

*In a paper presented at 'Theologies in the Context of Pakistan', 25-28 November 1999, at the Theological Institute for Laity, in Sadhoke, the author addresses factors at work in the culture and shares his vision of tasks for mission.*

### Introduction

When asked to talk on Mission in Context, I said yes because I had no excuse not to. Then I began to realise what I had let myself in for because I did not know where to begin. The literature on the subject is vast, and while I have tried to keep up-to-date, I would have to read nothing else to do that. I have benefited from the recent colloquium in Multan on the Asian Church, and the report of the Columban seminar on mission. So, from these and my own experience, I offer these reflections, hoping they might resonate with your own experience and thinking.

### Some Definitions

When unsure where to begin, true to my Dominican training, I searched for a definition of terms because the dictionary often suggests avenues to follow. Thus *Mission* is defined as 'the sending of someone to do something on behalf of another'. The Pakistani mission to the UN, e.g., is sent by the government to represent Pakistan's interests. In Christian terminology it has a threefold meaning: 'Mission' refers first of all to the redemptive task of Jesus and the Church in the World; secondly, 'missionary' refers to individuals or congregations who carry the Good News beyond the boundaries of present membership; and finally, 'mission' can refer to an intensified period of preaching and pastoral activity among those already Church members.<sup>1</sup>

*Context*, (from *con* and *texo*: to weave), refers to the surrounding environment, circumstances, or facts which help give a total picture of something. Context can also mean the parts of a written or spoken communication which precede or follow a word, sentence, or passage, and affect its meaning: as distortion by quoting out of context.

A new word that has appeared in the social sciences is *contextuality*, which argues for supplementing a compositional approach (the relationships between structural categories like person, class, economy, politics and State) with a *contextual* approach, 'sensitive to the essentially contingent relationships binding together diverse structural categories in specific times and specific places' (Geography is the best example of a discipline

concerned with the ways in which all manner of natural and human phenomena interact to produce the unique character of a place).<sup>2</sup>

Allied with context is *culture*, normally understood as the total human behaviour patterns communicated from generation to generation, but whose root meaning, from the word itself [*colere*], means the action or practice of cultivating the soil. In this paper we concentrate on this particular cultural aspect of the Pakistani context, and that, for several reasons. The first is that other areas, like the economic and the socio-political, have already been addressed in this conference, and there have been and are people in the Church who have a long history of involvement, experience and analysis. These areas are part of the context — but the most important element in context because it is so strong here — is culture, and whereas other aspects have been analysed, this, from my experience, is a neglected area.

### General Remarks

I would like, first, to make some general remarks about 'Mission', about 'Theology', and about 'Context'. St Paul is a useful model of someone with a 'mission', who 'carried the good news beyond the boundaries', and who is quite conscious of the 'context'. 'There are doubtless many different languages in the world', Paul writes, 'and none is without meaning; but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me' (1 Cor 14:10-11). In general, mission is 'beyond the boundaries' and is an attempt to find 'meaning' in difference, in order to establish or maintain a relationship so we do not remain 'foreigners' one to the other. We can see this, initially, in Paul's approach to the Athenians in the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34).

### Theology in Context

To reflect, as we are doing, on 'Mission in Context' is to do a theology in context. This involves four elements — Gospel, tradition, culture and social change. Stephen Bevans writes of contextual theology as a theological imperative, and indicates two sets of factors that point to why 'theology today must take into more serious account the context in which it is articulated'.

### **External and Internal Factors**

The first set might be called external: historical events, intellectual currents, cultural shifts, and political forces. The external factors bring to light certain internal factors within Christian faith itself that point not only to the possibility but also to the necessity of doing theology in context. The internal factors are ultimately much more important than the external ones, since they point to a contextual imperative within Christianity itself. They are factors that have not always been recognised as important, but in our day, due in large part to the historical circumstances expressed in the external factors, they have emerged as essential to Christian faith and Christian theologizing'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Incarnational Nature**

He identifies some of these 'internal factors'. The first is the incarnational nature of Christianity itself. God became flesh, not generally, but particularly. God became a human being in the person of Jesus, a Jew, son of Mary, a male. God became flesh in a human person of such and such a height, with particular colour hair, with particular personality traits. Incarnation is a process of becoming particular, and in and through that particularity the divinity could become visible and in some way graspable and intelligible.

### **Consequence**

It follows that if the message is to continue to touch people through our agency, we have to continue the incarnation process. Christianity, if it is to be faithful to its deepest roots, must continue God's incarnation in Jesus by becoming contextual. Because of the very nature of the Gospel, we know this Gospel only as a message contextualised in culture.<sup>4</sup>

### **Sacramental Nature and our Changed Understanding of Revelation**

Another internal factor is the sacramental nature of reality. Encounters with God in Jesus continue to take place in our world through concrete things and moments. A final internal factor is the change in our understanding of Revelation. This is no longer conceived as 'propositional truth', organised and finalised as 'the Catholic Faith', but rather as the offer of God's very self to men and women by concrete actions and symbols in history and in individuals' daily lives.

### **Consequence**

Mission is always in context, but theological re-

flection on mission must also be con-textual. 'What matters', wrote Paul VI, 'is to evangelize man's culture and cultures ... always taking the person as one's starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God'.<sup>5</sup>

### **Relationship is Key**

It is these 'relationships of people among themselves and with God' that are key to understanding Mission: it is what the kingdom is all about. It is what Jesus taught and it is why so many of his actions and miracles were wrought: in order to bring people back into relationship (lepers, the woman with the issue of blood, the man with the withered hand — all were ritually impure, and cut off from normal association). It is also why he is so angry with those leaders who put their own traditions before people, and ensnared people's lives with endless prohibitions.

### **Other-centredness**

The Church has always been mission-minded but this has not led to 'other-centredness', and it is this that is at the core of mission. It is here where mission and culture intersect, for other-centredness implies a culture of otherness, of relatedness. And culture in this sense means something created, cultivated, worked at. It is the 'weaving' of many different strands that creates a culture, one of whose tasks is to give meaning, to make sense, to 'give a total picture of something'.

One aspect of mission as other-centred is found in Jesus' parables about the kingdom and how God works in the world. We have to take seriously these images of a mustard seed, of yeast (Mt 13:31-33). Seed dies, yeast is absorbed and works mysteriously — even the NT image of light is that of something useful to others. These are all images of littleness, of minority. Lest we miss the point, Jesus gives us the example of his own life: compassionate, powerless and vulnerable.<sup>6</sup> This emptying of himself can be seen in the way Jesus affirms various elements in culture and religion. He visited a wedding party and a mourning family; he prayed the psalms and quoted the commandment of love from the Scriptures. His awareness developed in the context of Jewish culture. But his specific relation to God also inspired criticism and confrontation against the existing culture and religious practices. Thus, Mt 5:21-24, in all those 'You have heard it said ... but I say to you ...' pronouncements, Jesus confronts religio-cultural practices which supported revenge. Our approach to the culture has to be similar: both affirmation and confrontation.<sup>7</sup> Culture is always ambivalent; it both liberates and

oppresses. Our approach is to affirm what is liberative and confront the oppressive.

### **Affirmation**

Last February, in Thailand, at a meeting sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Culture and FABC, Cardinal Poupard spoke of the relation between the Gospel and the Asian mosaic of cultures, using an intriguing image: 'In any mosaic, every piece, however small, is important to complete the whole picture. If one piece is missing we have an ugly gap. In Asia the mosaic is already there; what we need to do is illumine it with the light of the Gospel, so that its beauty shines forth with greater splendour'. He then employs the example of the restoration of Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel. 'This masterpiece...now stands out in all its radiant beauty. The restoration work that took years did not add to the genius of Michelangelo. It only took away what prevented and obstructed his genius from being seen more clearly ...'.

He compares the exposure of diverse cultures to the Gospel as a kind of 'restoration,' and ends by quoting Pope John Paul II, who deals with the encounter between the Gospel and culture, clearly stating that 'the proclamation of the Gospel in different cultures allows people to preserve their own cultural identity. This in no way creates division, because the community of the baptized is marked by a universality which can embrace every culture and help to foster whatever is implicit in them to the point where it will be fully explicit in the light of truth'.<sup>8</sup>

### **Confrontation**

Implicit in the above statement is also the element of confrontation. Today, as Bevens notes, a broader understanding of the cultural conditionedness of all theology has emerged more clearly, so that cultural identity seems to be a prime locus for the construction of truly contextual theologies. But he adds a caution. The importance of culture as a theological source is a valid way of doing theology but it has its drawbacks. One such drawback, he writes, is falling into a kind of cultural romanticism — basing theology not on culture as it is today but on what African theologian John Pobee calls a fossil culture, a culture that did exist before colonisation, but does not exist today except in some people's romantic fantasies. Cultures are not static but always in flux, always adapting, always changing. The mere fact that a traditional culture has come into contact with the West means that culture has been changed irrevocably. The culture is their own but it has been changed through con-

tact with the wider world.<sup>9</sup>

### **Culture is Possibilities**

The same point was made by Jennifer Jag Jivan at the recent colloquium in Multan. 'If culture is dynamic and not static, but described as life, expression, heritage, [then] culture may also be described as possibilities...possibilities of change, of transformation'.<sup>10</sup> The reality is that most people follow cultural norms without ever questioning the implications of cultural practices. These she describes as 'negative cultural practices', and cites 'honour killings', as one example. While acknowledging the value of stories and symbols to transfer values of brotherhood, these can at the same time be used exploitatively. One example given is the great stress placed on dress, e.g., the *dopatta*, or veil, as a symbol of respect. Women who do not observe the custom are suspect. There is, she concludes, 'a certain hypocrisy and double standard prevalent in society today', and symbols are used to perpetuate the *status quo* and enable a ruling *élite* to remain rulers. 'Our culture', she writes, 'is marked by a lack of the art of asking questions'.

### **Functionalities and Dysfunctionalities of Culture**

Earlier, John O'Brien, in a very important article in *Focus*, devoted one section to the 'functionalities and dysfunctionalities' of culture. He appreciates the strong kinship patterns in Pakistan which afford a great sense of identity and security as well as a support system, but notes that these same values 'make personal choice and a sense of personal responsibility somewhat problematic'. Like Jennifer, he is aware of the temptation of Church leadership to go along unquestioningly with some cultural presuppositions 'for they fit neatly into an authoritarian or paternalistic concept of authority and leadership. This is especially clear in relation to women and younger people'.

### **A Dialectical Process**

One of the tasks of mission is just this dialogue between culture and faith, but, as O'Brien writes, this 'is not always a straightforward business. It is neither a case of submitting the indigenous culture to some supposedly classic faith-based culture rooted in a different experience, nor is it a matter of allowing the local cultural imperatives to be the judge of what aspects of the faith may be considered to be acceptable and life-giving. The relationship is much more dialectical and must include, in the light of Gospel values, an analysis of the power structure in the local culture

and an openness to critique of the cultural values which legitimate it. This process', he writes, 'has scarcely begun. Not to begin it risks simply replicating this power structure in the organisation of the Church itself'.<sup>11</sup>

### Tasks for Mission in Context

I would like to return to the threefold understanding of Mission because this might well define our task

*Mission as referring to the redemptive task of Jesus and the Church in the World:* In general, this has to be fundamentally counter-cultural, especially where so many of the dominant values are restrictive and where so many are obsessed with power. For followers of the One who came to serve, who washed the feet of his disciples and kept the questionable company of tax-collectors and prostitutes, who died because he was seen as a threat to the powerful, it should be obvious what we are called to do. When Jesus calls us to the service of the Gospel, he provides us with two tools: a basin and a towel. But we are not alone: part of this task would be to search out elements in the culture that support this counter-cultural force, e.g., the anti-establishment, God-beyond-religion themes of the Punjabi Sufi poets.

I read of one dramatic model of just such a community in a restored monastery in Syria, which sees its mission, not in confronting or even competing with their Muslim neighbours, but in serving them, learning from them, and taking on sacrifices for them. They seek, as one visitor wrote, 'to realise both their spiritual and historical kinship with Muslims and to exemplify the Christian vocation of voluntary sacrifice, so as to find meaning and identity in the Islamic context'.<sup>12</sup>

*Mission as referring to those who carry the Good News beyond the boundaries:* We have the vision but we need to acquire the tools necessary for a critical cultural analysis in order to affirm what needs affirming and confront what needs confronting. I think this is something we are rather reluctant to do, and I am not aware of any such critical analysis being done, except perhaps by foreign anthropologists and, in a general way, by columnists in the Urdu and English dailies and monthlies. Over 20 years ago, during pastoral evaluations in the Karachi seminary, students did survey people's attitudes toward things like health, childbirth, marriage, death, etc, but we had to give it up after a few weeks because the underlying paranoia in people's reactions was too depressing.

*Mission referring to an intensified period of preaching and pastoral activity:* This is really mission *ad intra*, focusing on our own conversion and

that of the community. The task is to learn and teach the art of questioning. One noble attempt by Bishop Patras Yusaf and Fr Gondulf Hoerberichts, OFM, was commissioned by the Spirituality Commission of the Major Superiors over 15 years ago. It was a survey of how men and women looked at the Psalms, and the role these had in the lives of people. At the end of it they drew their own theological conclusions and suggested ways of proceeding further. Rereading it now, I realise it is dated. Perhaps one of our tasks is to review these past attempts (also two studies done on Punjabi marriage customs by Piet de Vreede and Gerry D'Souza in the late 60s and early 70s), revise the methodology and build on them.

As always, at the end of a paper, I start thinking of so many other things that need saying. Or rather, that need questioning. But, like many of you, I have not developed the art of asking questions — perhaps because I am acutely aware that this might be something you, and only you, as Pakistani, can do. But without this questioning, this affirming and confronting of the culture, our mission theology will remain defective.

*O God, thou art peace. From thee is peace and unto thee is peace. Let us live, our Lord, in peace and receive us in thy paradise, the abode of peace. Thine is the majesty and the praise. We hear and we obey. Grant us thy forgiveness. Lord, and unto thee be our becoming.*

*Prayer at the close of Salat (from Common Prayer)*

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Monika K. Hellwig, 'Mission,' in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, Collegeville MN: 1994, p. 576

<sup>2</sup> *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, eds Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass and Stephen Trombley. London: Fontana Press, 1989, p. 173

<sup>3</sup> *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Bevans, *loc cit*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 20, Washington DC: USCC, 1976.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. author's 'Being Christian among Muslims', *Al-Mushir*, Vol. 41, n. 3, 1999, pp. 109-110.

<sup>7</sup> J.B. Banawiratma SJ, and J. Muller, SJ, 'Contextual Social Theology, An Indonesian Model', *East Asian Pastoral Review*, Vol. 36, n. 1-2, pp. 162 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Fides et Ratio*, n. 71.

<sup>9</sup> *Op cit*, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> 'Pakistan's Particularity: A Cultural Overview,' *Focus*, Vol 18, No. 4, pp. 216-217.

<sup>11</sup> 'Pathways for the Church in Pakistan', *Focus*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 229-230.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Saiad Reynolds, 'Where Islam and Christianity Meet,' *Commonweal*, 12 March 1999.

Ref.: *Focus*, Vol. 19, Nos 1-2, New Realities.



Teresa Okure, SHCJ,

## Contemporary Perspectives on Women in the Bible

The standpoint from which we view an object or person determines largely what we see in the person or object. This could be the front view, side view, rear view or partial view. If we change our standpoint, or move the object around, we get a different view of the same person or object. The same applies to our knowledge of persons, even those whom we believe we know intimately. When we are personally involved or when it touches people dear to us, we perceive and judge reality and situations differently. One could demand that criminals be put to death or jailed for life. When the criminal in question happens to be oneself, a friend, a relative or one's child, then one would like to see the criminal pardoned or, at least, placed in a remand home. Where we stand and how we relate to persons, situations and events influence what we see and how we judge the persons, situations and events concerned.

These above observations are important for a discussion on women in the Bible. Where we stand and where we locate the issue greatly determines how we see, judge and respond to it. Often the question of women in the Bible is viewed as a female issue, by both men and women. Seen in its proper perspective, the women question today is a humanity issue. The issue concerns the nature, status and role of women in Church and society in relation to men, "the other half" of humanity. Genesis 1:26-27 reports that God created the human species "male and female" in the divine image and likeness. If they are equal in nature, what practical implications does this hold for both men and women in their self perception as a sex, their mutual relationship and in all fields of human endeavour?

### The Women Issue — A Humanity Issue

Put this way, the women question is for all humanity, not just for women. What is at stake is humanity's true self-understanding as intended by God who created them "male and female" conjointly in the divine image and likeness (Gn 1:26-27). This true self-understanding challenges humanity to review its beliefs about the male and female sexes and to grow into that wholeness intended by the Creator. What at the beginning was tagged the women's movement, is today best understood as a movement of human revolution. Human beings have carried out all kinds of revolutions: industrial, scientific, technological and so forth. They have studied nature and the animal and sea worlds. The women issue calls on humanity to focus on itself, not

individually psychologically, but as a species, created male and female. This human revolution permeates all aspects of human life where gender issues are concerned. While sex is a gift of God to each human being, gender roles are fixed by human beings. They are roles decided by society.

The issue of how humanity sees the female sex and the gender role it assigns accordingly to this sex is discussed today in many fields of study: anthropology, philosophy, sociology, science, politics, economics, religion, theology and the Bible. The Bible is a centre point for this discussion; as God's inspired Word, it contains the account of God's creation of humanity as male and female, and its contents have a divine authority behind them. The Bible is also God's Word expressed in human language by sinful and limited human beings. The divine and human standpoints permeate every biblical narrative, and need to be discerned. Women biblical scholars and theologians, in particular, hold that in our reading of the Bible we need to consider both the divine and the human viewpoints. They contend that in the heavily patriarchal Jewish culture within which the Bible was written, women were, at best, treated as second class citizens. Their primary reason for existence was allegedly to be in function of the man, particularly, the husband. A typical biblical example is Prv 31:10, traditionally captioned "the ideal woman". Here the woman, "a perfect wife", is evaluated and praised principally for her intrinsic usefulness to her husband. "She brings him good, not harm all the days of her life" (Prv 31:12). Women scholars contend that though the Bible is God's Word, the patriarchal, cultural viewpoint colours its entire portrayal of women in relation to men. The Old Testament reflects a culture where only the man had legal status, with corresponding rights and obligations.

This perception of women as existing in function of the man, and lacking legal status exists in many world cultures. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in this century has sought to tackle this problem. Though the picture of women in the Bible is predominantly negative, it is not comprehensively so. In the Old Testament, the High Priest Joakim calls Judith, "the highest honour of our race" (Jdt 15:9). Israel as a nation is portrayed as God's cherished bride. Similarly the Church, the new Israel, and each individual Christian are seen as Christ's bride (Eph 5:25-32), though focus on the wife's subjection to the husband in Ephesians often diverts attention from this great mystery. The new creation, comprising all the redeemed from every tribe,

language and nation, is the bride in whose midst God and the Lamb dwell forever in perfect love (Rv 21-22). Mary, the mother of Jesus, filled to the brim with God's grace is, more so than Judith, "the highest honour of our race". Beside Christ, God incarnate, she alone of all creatures and of all women was destined to be God's own mother.

The picture of women in the Bible is complex. Though woman is viewed positively in certain instances in the Bible, the negative image dominates. Earlier studies on women in the Bible showed that this negative view of woman originates from sinful humanity, not from God's created will. The effort to discern the human dimension was and, for many, still is a necessary process of clearing the ground for a more positive and balanced evaluation of women and men. Such clearing is necessary if we are to become aware of our own inborn prejudices, turn away from them and together grow towards the attainment of our full humanity as God intended it. This re-reading of the biblical stories about women invites one to discern with the help of the Holy Spirit between what is from God and what is from limited, even sinful human cultures.

### Approaches to the Problem

Scholars have identified ways in which women are treated negatively in the Bible. First, it is contended that the contributions of women in the Bible were either left out or played down. One hears often of "the God of our Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", but not of "our Mothers, Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel/Leah". Yet in Ruth 4:11, Rachel and Leah are called "the women who together built up the house of Israel". They were the mothers of the 12 tribes of Israel, Jacob's immediate sons or the ancestors of the Jewish nation. In Jewish thought and culture, a man (and consequently a nation) was what the wife (or the nation's women) made him or it, good or bad. The common saying among the Rabbis about whether a man was good or bad, was: "It all depends on the woman". This cultural belief helps to explain why in Genesis 3 Adam blames Eve for his having eaten the forbidden fruit and why the New Testament accuses Eve even more strongly and exonerates Adam (cf. 1 Cor 11:3-10; 2 Cor 11:13; 1 Tm 2:11-15). Yet viewed closely from God's perspective, the Genesis account gives greater blame and responsibility to the man. God personally gave Adam the command not to eat of the forbidden fruit even before the woman was created. After the fall, God looked for the man and asked him what he had done. True to his cultural instinct (the cultural instinct of the biblical author), Adam threw the blame on the woman and implicated God in the process: "The woman *you* [emphasis mine] put with me gave me the fruit and I ate" (compare Gn 2:16-17 and 3:9-12).

In the Bible itself and throughout the history of bib-

lical interpretation, Eve has been vilified as solely responsible for the current plight of humanity, the one who introduced sin into the world. Many women theologians today do not see her as a weak character, at least not weaker than Adam. She acted because she wanted knowledge. They ask why Adam, "who was with her" throughout the conversation with the serpent (Gn 3:7), ate without even recalling the command which God had personally given to him before Eve was created. Adam, the 'stronger sex', simply took and ate without even an objection. Moreover, only *after* he had eaten did the eyes of both open. When God came to judge the situation, he held Adam most responsible for the sin. Consequently, Adam's punishment affected not only himself but the earth: "accursed be the soil because of you" (Gn 3:17-18), whereas the woman's punishment was restricted to her personally: pain in childbirth and subjection to her husband. Adam's sin and punishment, not the woman's, brought travail to the entire earth. Men, today, especially husbands, cannot disclaim responsibility for their actions or for the fate of their families and nation. To blame women for men's failings is to dehumanise men.

Secondly it is observed that where women are remembered, they are for the most part treated in a pejorative light, as harlots or prostitutes (Rahab, Jos 2:1), temptresses (Potiphar's wife, Gn 39:7-20), or vicious characters (Jezebel, 1 Kgs 21:4-16). Women as harlots, prostitutes or unfaithful wives are also used to model unfaithful Israel (e.g., Hos 2) and ungodly or evil empires (e.g., Babylon, Rv 17; cf. Is 23:17; Jer 51:13; Ez 16:23). This stereotyping in the "Word of God" served to promote and consolidate the negative attitude towards women in the cultures concerned and in church and society generally; they have promoted the same throughout the centuries in the readers of the Bible, both men and women, and in Church and society. The influence of the Bible on attitude towards women is not limited to the Jewish, Christian and Moslem traditions, "the people of the book". It extends to all cultures, for as James states in the Council of Jerusalem, "Moses has always had his preachers in every town" (Acts 15:21). The Bible's influences on world cultures through art, songs, stories, novels and other forms of communication cannot be underestimated.

Thirdly, it is noted that even the positive roles played by women which compare favourably with those of men are often played down or not given their full significance. One may here compare the theophanies to Hagar (Gn 16:6-16; 21:8-20), for instance, with those to Abraham (12:1-7; 13:14-18; 15:1-21). Little effort is made to bring out the theological significance of the former, compared with the latter. In the New Testament, when the Greek word *diakonos* is used of men, it is translated "deacon", when used of women, it is translated "servant". Another key example is Martha's con-

fession in John 11:27, which in its own way parallels that of Peter in Matthew 16:17. While Peter's confession has been celebrated to his honour, and a promise attached to it, that of Martha is hardly ever noticed in the same way. Yet in John's Gospel, Martha is the mouthpiece of the faith on which the entire Gospel is based and for which sole purpose it is written, namely, to persuade the readers to "believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God" and so believing to find life in his name (compare Jn 20:30-31 and 11: 27). The anointing of Jesus by the unnamed woman in the house of Simon the Leper (Mt 26: 1-13; Mk 14:3-9) and by Mary of Bethany (Jn 12:1-8) a few days before the Passion is of great significance in the events of the Passion. Jesus declares the one should be celebrated "in memory of" the woman and interprets the other as a preparation of his body for burial. He himself is inspired by the anointing in Bethany to do the same to his disciples at the Last Supper, a few days later. Yet these events have not received the recognition they deserve. Mary of Bethany does not even have so much as a "Memorial" status in the Church's liturgical calendar, nor does the unnamed woman.

Patriarchally and culturally based interpretations of the Bible further contribute in downplaying the unique contributions of women in the Bible. Conversely, women's sins, real or imagined, are blown up, while those of men are glossed over. Mary Magdalene is stigmatised as a prostitute and has come down in history with this indelible stigma, though no Gospel evidence links her with prostitution. Luke alone reports that seven demons had gone out of her (Lk 8:2) but demon possession is not synonymous with prostitution. The Gerasenes demoniac (Mk 5:1-20) was possessed by a legion of unclean spirits, yet nobody thinks of him as a male prostitute. In the Gospels and culture of the time, she is named Mary of Magdala (after her place of origin) just as Joseph of Arimathea, for instance, is named after his place of origin, so too Jesus of Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus. In John 8:1-11, where a woman is caught in adultery, which implies that the man was also caught with her, only the woman is brought to Jesus for stoning. In Numbers 12 both Aaron and Miriam revolt against Moses, but Miriam alone is punished. The reader could find other examples of injustice or culturally conditioned and biased views against women in the Bible.

Fourthly, it is observed that women are not very visible in the Bible itself compared to men. Even when they are present, they are marginalised. Luke 8:1-3 reports that many women followed Jesus as he went through Galilee teaching in their towns and villages and then continued to Jerusalem. But though mention is made of the men disciples along the way to Jerusalem, nothing is said of the women till they are men-

tioned again at the end of Jesus' life journey (on Calvary and at the Resurrection), almost in passing, as the women who had come up with him from Galilee (Lk 23:49; 24:10; Mt; 27:55-56; Mk 15:40-41). These women emerge as the first witnesses of the Resurrection. They knew where to find the men disciples who were hiding behind locked doors, to give them the good news. The implication in all this is that they were present with Jesus throughout his public ministry right up to the events of the Passion and Resurrection. The belief that women were not present at the Last Supper needs to be reviewed in the light of this Gospel evidence.

The role of women in the life and ministry of Jesus is an area where God's viewpoint emerges as clearly different from the human viewpoint. Though culturally the testimony of women had no legal standing, since women were treated like minors along with children, Jesus acted counter-culturally when he made the women the first witnesses of his Resurrection (Mt 28:9-10; Lk 24:1-11) and designated Mary Magdalene as the bearer of his Resurrection message (Jn 21:17). Not only Mary Magdalene, but the women witnesses of the Resurrection can be called the "apostle of the apostles"; Jesus commissioned them as a group in Matthew 28:10. Even then the men disciples, still operating within the dictates of their patriarchal culture, did not believe them. Their refusal to believe the women's proclamation of the Resurrection was a cultural, not a Gospel response. Jesus reproached them for not believing those who had seen him (Mt 16:9-14). Though he appeared later to Peter, we are not told that Peter's report was doubted. Paul's account of the Resurrection appearances (1 Cor 15: 3-8) leaves out completely the appearances to the women, the first witnesses of the Resurrection.

Fifthly, it is noted that the treatment of woman in the Bible affects the treatment of the Trinitarian God. If God created humanity as male and female in the divine image and likeness, then something of woman must necessarily image God. By depriving woman of her likeness to God, humanity is impoverishing our understanding of God and the way God relates to us. A key image here is the motherhood of God which is very vivid in the Old Testament, in such passages as Hos 11:8-9 and Is 49:14-15. Wisdom herself is portrayed as God's consort, the one through whom the world was created (see Prv 8: 22-31; Wis 6:12-21; 7:22-30). In the New Testament this Wisdom is identified with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the principle of the new creation. Eve's name given to her by Adam after the fall means "mother of all the living" (Gn 3:20). It is in bearing, nurturing and preserving life and in showing mercy, and loving faithfully those who deserve no love (like abusive husbands and ungrateful children) that woman most resembles God. The Hebrew word for mercy derives from the same root as womb. God's womb is God's

mercy. We impoverish our knowledge of God by treating “him” only as Lord, mighty warrior and imperial monarch.

The above survey hardly does justice to the complex issue of women in the Bible. Scholars adopt many different approaches in redressing it. These approaches seek to raise awareness that patriarchy is the most comprehensive standpoint from which the Bible is written and interpreted over the centuries and from which both men and women are viewed. Whatever form these studies take, their aim is to restore a balanced view of men and women in the Bible and help humanity to arrive at the Christological truth which alone can set the whole of humanity free to remain in God’s house as God’s children (cf. Jn 8:31-36).

### Practical Exercises

The reader needs to participate personally in discovering the presence and contribution of women in the Bible if this discussion is to be of benefit to the individual person. One way of doing this is to compile one’s own list of women in the Bible (a kind of stock-taking), to watch what the women are doing and discern the influences at work in the way each is portrayed. There are, for instance, women disciples of Jesus, women prophets (Acts 21:10), Church workers (Rom 16 :1-16) women preachers of the word (Acts 18:1-4; 19:24-28; Phil 4:1-3), pastors in their house churches (Acts 12:12; 16:11-15, 40; Rom 16:3-5); women with special vocations (Acts 9:36-43) and a renowned woman Deacon (Rom 16:1-2). Such a compilation makes women visible in the Bible, at least for oneself. The exercise surprises one at the number of women mentioned in the Bible. This could be a project for group or individual study where the findings could be shared later in groups and with friends. How one classifies the women could serve as an index of one’s personal view of them. Members of the study group could act as one another’s mirror about whether one’s view of women in the Bible is from culture or from God. For this undertaking to be Christ-like, the reader may ask whether what is said about women in any one instance can be attributed to God or Jesus. If the answer is negative, that awareness should challenge one to revise his/her views of women.

Once the list has been compiled, the reader is invited to read each story critically in its own biblical context. This total context is crucial if one wishes to gain a fuller meaning of the stories. The reader should also listen to these stories in the light of her or his Christian faith. The Gospel is essentially a message of liberation of the poor and the oppressed from all dehumanising and death dealing forces. In this respect, Jesus himself is the Gospel *par excellence* and all four

Gospels do not exhaust the limits of his own person as God’s gospel. One needs then to identify where the good news lies in these stories of biblical women, or where God’s voice is to be distinguished from culturally conditioned human voices and viewpoints. This discernment is necessary, because as said earlier, the Bible is God’s Word expressed in limited human language and cultures in a given period of history. The reader thus becomes aware not only of the limited cultural dimensions of the Bible but of his or her own cultural conditionings.

### Resources for the Exercises

#### Old Testament

In compiling and critically reading the list of biblical women, the reader might concentrate on the chief periods in biblical history. Eve briefly treated above, belongs to pre-history. In the story of the patriarchs and matriarchs, God takes the women into confidence as much as, and perhaps more so than their husbands, on the future of their children; they respond accordingly. This is true of Sarah when she seeks to ensure the inheritance for Isaac over Ishmael, Abraham’s first born by Hagar, the Egyptian slave (Gn 21:1-20). We are not here condoning the injustice to Hagar and Ishmael in the story, but only looking at the events from Sarah’s perspective. Many mothers and fathers would probably do the same for their children today. In the story, God takes the part of Sarah without neglecting Hagar. Ironically in Galatians 4, Hagar becomes the symbol of Israel.

This is particularly true of Rebecca (Gn 27). Traditionally Rebecca has been portrayed as a woman of weak character, guilty of the “sin of deceitfulness”. Yet her “deceitfulness” is perhaps not different from that of Abraham who passed Sarah off as his sister in Egypt to save his life and became rich on her account, to the punishment of the innocent Egyptians (Gn 12:10-20). In this story God did not punish Abraham for this deceitfulness but the Egyptians who acted in ignorance of his true relationship with Sarah. Moreover in Rebecca’s case, before ever Jacob and Esau were born, God told her that there were two nations struggling in her womb and that the younger would rule over the older (Gn 25:19-26). When subsequently she took measures to ensure that Jacob received the paternal blessing, considered crucial in the culture of the time for a child’s future, she was cooperating with God in her own way to ensure that Isaac’s blessing fell to the son designated as leader by God before birth. In the cultural ethics of the time, it was a mark of astuteness to succeed in outwitting one’s neighbour to secure a blessing. We meet this in Jacob himself when he outwits

Laban, his father-in-law, on the issue of the spotted sheep (Gn 30:32-43). The name Jacob itself seems to mean deceiver or supplanter (cf. Gn 27:36; Hos 12:4). Often in the interpretations of these passages Rebecca's "deceitfulness" is emphasized, while the parallel deeds by the patriarchs are passed over.

Though Lot's wife was disobedient (Gn 19:17,23-26), some people today sympathize with her. They ask how she, a woman and mother, could have walked away without looking back while a whole town was burning to death. Her mother's heart and woman's instinct were too strong for that hardness of heart. Besides, it is not said that Lot and his family were lesser sinners than those who were destroyed. God spared them because of his concern for Abraham (Gn 19:29). By looking back and being turned into a pillar of salt, Lot's wife shared the fate of the people to the end. We are reminded today of foreign nationals who are quickly evacuated by their own people whenever there is a war, instead of staying on and helping the people in their crises. Lot and his family were foreigners in Sodom and Gomorrah. Besides, the God portrayed in this whole story cuts a poor image when compared with the God of Jesus Christ. This God would leave the 99 sheep in the desert to go in search of the lost sheep (Lk 15:4-7). As a prodigal father he throws a first class banquet to celebrate the return of a lost son whose sole reason for returning is to seek food (Lk 15:11-32).

In the Exodus, the Egyptian midwives, Moses's mother, sister and Pharaoh's daughter (Ex 1:15-2:10), and later Moses' wife (Ex 2:16-22; 4:24-26), play an indispensable role in preserving his life. Without the concerted effort and team work of these illustrious women, Moses would never have survived as a child, and later been spared by God. But because of them, he has become a great figure in Jewish history and the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, to whom God spoke "face to face", not through dreams and visions (Nm 12:6-8). Legally or by adoption, Moses was in every respect the son of Pharaoh's daughter; she gave him his name (Ex 2:10), which has remained a great name in biblical history. Indeed the Bible as a book owes its origin to his mission to liberate Israel from slavery in Egypt. Since Pharaoh's daughter was an African, Moses is legally (by adoption) the son of a notable African woman.

In the time of the Judges, Deborah (Jgs 4:4-10) emerges as a Judge in Israel when all hope of survival was about gone. She was a prophet (God's spokesperson) and a successful political leader, even leader warrior (4:10) in Israel. Women who aspire to take part in civilian politics may study her as a model and draw inspiration from her. Men who dislike women taking part in politics may also remember that, in a culture as heavily patriarchal as the Jewish biblical one, a woman

ruled Israel and was followed by men. In our days most women prime ministers ironically come from countries believed to be heavily patriarchal (Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto and Golda Meir).

Ruth is a faithful wife who refuses to allow death to separate her from the husband's family. More important still, she is an outstanding example of a faith and love which transcend all tribal, ethnic, religious and national barriers. By this faith and commitment to her mother-in-law, she merited to become an ancestress of Jesus, one of the few women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy (cf. Mt 1:5). These women give the Gentiles a place as ancestors of Jesus, when this ancestry is viewed through election, not creation. For while Luke traces Jesus' ancestry to Adam, Matthew limits it to the Chosen People whose protogenitors are Abraham and Sarah. Despite this limitation, by including the Gentile women, Matthew's genealogy also includes Gentiles through their presence and mediation.

In the monarchic period, Jezebel and Solomon's wives are foreign wives held responsible for the evil deeds of their husbands. One is familiar with the cultural rhetoric that Solomon's heart was turned away from God by his foreign wives. Yet he married them, not the reverse. How could he, of the stronger sex and race, allow himself to be led astray by "the weaker sex" and of "inferior race"? The perceptive reader will notice many inconsistencies in these narratives on the roles and capabilities of women and the tendency to exonerate men of responsibility for their actions and throw that responsibility on the women. Yet Scripture tells us that God shows no partiality in his judgments (cf. Rom 2:11; Ps 62:12).

In the period after the Exile, while Israel was struggling for national identity and survival Judith and Esther emerged. Judith, a widow, risked her life to save her nation when it was besieged and almost exterminated by the enemy. She went right into the enemy's camp and cut off the head of Holofernes, the captain of their army; then took it back in victory to her people and led them in triumphal procession to Jerusalem. Her story and that of Esther might inspire women on the need to take actions full of risk to liberate their nations "in distress". Esther's prayer is a good example of "prayer in action and action in prayer". Not only does she pray to God to save her people, she also asks God to arm her and use her as an instrument of this liberation of her people as she faces the king. God answered her prayers abundantly.

In this story, however, patriarchy is at work. Esther is given in marriage to a Gentile, though the law forbade such a union. She is in this way used against herself. Secondly she is used against Queen Vasthi, her predecessor. Vasthi refused to be put up for show by the king along with his golden vessels and treasures for the

entertainment of his nobles and was consequently deposed. The King's courtiers feared that her action might lead to the emancipation of women from domination by their husbands and took effective means to stamp it out by deposing her as queen. This fear recalls that of Pharaoh who sought to oppress the Hebrews lest they escape from the country.

Though Vasthi seems to have lost the case, she is justified today by history, not only because women biblical scholars have discovered her, but because the Universal Declaration of Human Rights forbids one human being to treat another as his property. The feared emancipation of women marches on and it is no longer possible to clamp down on it. Queen Vasthi respected her own dignity as a human being by refusing to be treated by her husband as a puppet for show. Today Vasthi would be regarded as a pioneer of women's liberation, ahead of her times. Women need to be aware of how they can be used against their own interests in God's name. Men and women may reflect on whether they give one another the respect that is their due as people made in God's image and likeness, and more beautifully recreated in Christ. Respect for human rights forbids that one human being treat another as his or her property. For in Christ we are all God's property (cf. 1 Cor 3:23; 6:15-20).

Job's wife (Jb 2:9-10) belongs to the period of wisdom literature. Her taunting her husband is to be interpreted against the background of the positions of Job's three men friends, and even of Job himself when he curses the day he was born and takes God to task for treating him unjustly. The main point of the story is that *all flesh* is inadequate to help us in our times of trial, whether such flesh be our relatives, friends or even our own human judgment of the situation. Only faith in God's infinite wisdom which moves us to submit humbly, while waiting confidently on God's unfailing goodness, can see us through the trials and temptations that come our way. Only faith in God can give us victory over all the trials of our lives. Job personally discovered this truth for himself at the end of his story (cf. Jb 42:1-6).

### New Testament

The New Testament narrates however minimally the good deeds of women. In the interpretation only the culturally conditioned sections which prohibit women from taking part in different aspects of the Church's life are most remembered and acted upon (cf. 1 Cor 11:3-16; 14:33b-36; 1 Tm 2:9-15; 5:3-16; Eph 5:22-24; 1 Pt 3:1-6; Ti 2:3-5). The women most remembered in the public life of Jesus are mostly the sinners, the woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:36-50), the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:1-11), and the Samaritan woman with her marital history (Jn 4:16-20).

The strength of "the woman who was a sinner" lies in her courage to repent. The Gospel does not report the repentance of the men with whom she led the "loose life". As a repentant sinner she showed she was a woman of strong character when she braved the contempt of Simon the Pharisee, and ignored cultural and human decency to approach Jesus publicly to seek his forgiveness. Jesus commended her as a woman who loved much because she was aware that her many sins had been forgiven her. To err is human, but to admit one's error, not to talk of sinfulness, is divine. One needs spiritual strength to repent. The woman showed the moral strength which can only come from God, but which many of us lack today, both men and women.

Prostitution operates because men and women form partners in it. If there were no men to pay for "the services", there would be no prostitutes. A man who goes from woman to woman, day after day, offering money for the so-called services, is as much a prostitute as is a woman who does the same, perhaps even to earn a living and feed her children. Jesus was very aware of this partnership in sin when in John 8:7, he asked the men leaders who caught the woman in adultery, to be the first to cast a stone at her if they themselves were without sin. The narrative records that they all "went away one by one beginning with the eldest". As Christians, we need to put on the mind and judgment of Christ in reading these stories. God shows no partiality (Rom 2:11). Furthermore, Jesus was put on trial through the woman. In a reverse case, the Church uses Susanna as a symbol of innocent Jesus condemned to death in the Passion week.

Women's partnership with God in giving and fostering life comes to the fore in the New Testament. In the greatest event of human history, the Incarnation, God chooses to take women, Mary of Nazareth and Elizabeth, into confidence and as partners in this event. The story of the annunciation is followed by the visitation. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the first to know of this event and to be its unique agent, then Elizabeth at the visitation. Mary did not simply bring up Jesus, as some would emphasize today. Surrogate mothers and nannies bring up children to whom they did not give birth. She was his biological "Mother of Jesus", by the power of the Holy Spirit. John's Gospel consistently emphasizes her physical motherhood by calling her "the mother of Jesus" (Jn 2:1-12; 19:25). Her greatness lies in her believing that she could become a mother without normal human intercourse. Elizabeth, another woman, was the first to recognize and praise her faith in the humanly impossible. By accepting to become the Mother of Jesus, Mary also accepted to share in the fate of this Son of God, a stone to be rejected so that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed (Lk 2:34-35).

Mary the Mother of Jesus was not only a woman of great faith. She was the first evangelist long before

the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:27-20, 39-43). She first brought the Good News of Jesus to her cousin Elizabeth. We read in Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of one who brings good news, who heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation ...". Mary's feet sped through the hilly country of Galilee to the hilly country of Judea, to bring the good news to her cousin Elizabeth, and her unborn child, John the Baptist. The child leaped in her womb for joy, showing that the news Mary brought, by her very presence as God-bearer, was truly Good News. Mary's example challenges us as Jesus' brothers and sisters and mother (Lk 19-21; cf. Mt 13:18-23; Mk 3:34-35) to live up to our Christian vocation as those who hear God's Word, put it into practice, and proclaim it to others.

This study has hardly introduced the rich, complex and very challenging issue of women in the Bible. Its main aim was to invite the reader to identify, read and re-read the stories of women in the Bible with new eyes, ears and heart. When done, one will have developed a genuine love and gratitude to God for the singular presence and contributions of women in the Bible. They are indeed God's co-workers. Without them there would not have been Moses, leader of the Chosen People in the Old Testament, or Jesus, the Son of God, Son of Mary and the Saviour of the World (Jn 4:42).

May the Holy Spirit who alone leads us into the complete truth, guide the reader to re-read the biblical stories about women with the mind of Christ. May he also inspire the reader to compile his or her own anthology based on a renewed or Spirit-filled understanding of the basic truth that, in Christ, there is no longer "male and female", the one seen as superior by nature the other inferior; but that we who have been baptized into Christ "are all one person in Christ" (Gal 3:28).

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Zitate Okure:

S.1 The women question today is a humanity issue

S.3 We have to become aware of our culturally determined prejudices and grow towards the attainment of our full humanity

S.4(3) A re-reading of biblical stories about women invites to discern between what is from God and what is from limited, even sinful human cultures

S.11 Women in the Bible are God's co-workers. Without them there would have been no Moses, leader of the Chosen People, and no Jesus, Saviour of the World.

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## Les Changement d'attitude du Gouvernement Chinois a l'égard de l'Eglise Catholique

Depuis le début de leur règne en 1949, une des principales erreurs commises par les dirigeants communistes à Pékin a consisté à maintenir une attitude d'hostilité à l'encontre des religions, tout particulièrement à l'encontre de l'Eglise catholique. Une telle attitude s'explique par une combinaison de philosophies politiques au sein même du pouvoir chinois. Premièrement, les dirigeants communistes étaient des marxistes athées. A leurs yeux, la vérité ne pouvait être que matérielle. Deuxièmement, ils étaient des nationalistes. Ils pensaient que la Chine n'avait rien d'inférieur comparée aux autres pays et que les Chinois non plus n'étaient pas inférieurs aux autres peuples, et surtout pas aux Occidentaux. De ce fait, il n'était pas très surprenant d'entendre Mao Zedong proclamer le 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 1949, place Tienanmen : *"Le peuple chinois s'est levé."* Troisièmement, ils étaient collectivistes. Ils pensaient que l'intérêt personnel ne pourrait être garanti que lorsque l'intérêt collectif du pays tout entier serait restauré. Selon eux, il était justifié de demander, et même de contraindre, les individus au sacrifice pour le pays, ou, comme ils le disaient, *"pour le peuple"*.

Du fait de cette pensée politique, le gouvernement chinois s'est montré très antagoniste à l'encontre des religions en Chine. Cependant, vers la fin des années 1970, il a finalement compris qu'il s'était fourvoyé et qu'il ne devait pas se montrer si hostile à l'encontre des religions. Une telle attitude était non seulement futile mais même contreproductive. Le fait de prendre conscience de cela n'a cependant pas entraîné le gouvernement chinois à un réel changement d'attitude, quand bien même les premières mesures de "la politique d'ouverture" ont été mises en œuvre à partir de 1979. Ce n'est pas avant les années 1990, et plus précisément à partir de la tournée de Deng Xiaoping dans le sud en 1992, que le gouvernement a pris conscience qu'il ne devait pas se mêler trop étroitement des questions religieuses. Le pouvoir a alors commencé à changer son attitude envers les religions. D'une manière générale, on peut dire que le gouvernement chinois aujourd'hui fait de son mieux pour éviter les conflits avec les religions.

(La campagne de répression qui s'est abattue sur le mouvement Falungong n'est tant due tant au phénomène religieux qui est attaché au mouvement

qu'au fait que de très nombreux cadres du parti y aient adhéré. Ainsi, soit dit en passant, si l'Eglise catholique souhaite éviter les problèmes, elle ne doit pas tenter d'attirer à elle des membres du parti, au moins pour le moment.)

### Quelques signes du retrait du gouvernement en matière religieuse

Durant les années 1990, le gouvernement a fait beaucoup afin de mettre en œuvre une politique de retrait vis-à-vis des religions. Ainsi :

1. Le gouvernement a tenté d'apurer les comptes avec les institutions religieuses. Il a fait en sorte de régler les conflits avec les institutions religieuses en matière foncière, qu'il s'agisse de terrains ou de propriétés bâties. Les autorités gouvernementales ont entrepris des recherches pour retrouver les titres de propriété désignant formellement le propriétaire de nombreux biens de l'Eglise. Des accords ont été passés avec l'Eglise, que ce soit pour organiser le retour de ces biens dans le giron de l'Eglise ou que ce soit pour l'indemniser. Il semble que le gouvernement a agi pour faire en sorte de ne plus rien devoir aux institutions religieuses.

2. Le gouvernement a réinstallé l'Association patriotique à l'intérieur des structures de l'Eglise. Bien que l'Association patriotique, au niveau national, joue toujours un rôle certain à Pékin, les branches locales de l'Association ne sont plus considérées que comme faisant partie de l'Eglise, sans lien direct avec la structure gouvernementale locale.

3. Le gouvernement ne salarie désormais plus de membres de l'Eglise. A l'exception de quelques rares exceptions au plus haut niveau à Pékin, la plupart des membres salariés des branches locales de l'Association patriotique ont perdu leurs postes au sein des gouvernements locaux. Ils ne sont plus salariés par le gouvernement.

4. Le gouvernement a cessé de subventionner l'Eglise. Les séminaires régionaux ne reçoivent plus d'argent du gouvernement depuis plusieurs années déjà. Et il est dit que même le séminaire national à Pékin, qui pourtant était autrefois entièrement financé par le gouvernement, n'a rien reçu ces deux dernières années.

5. Le gouvernement redéfinit ses relations avec les religions sur la base de la loi et des règlements et il



laisse de côté le débat idéologique. On peut prédire que, dans un proche avenir, de nouveaux règlements vont être publiés. Selon certains, ces règlements signifient que le gouvernement cherche à renforcer son contrôle sur les religions. Je ne le crois pas. Les autorités peuvent de toute façon faire ce qu'elles veulent, avec ou sans règlements. Les règlements publiés à propos des religions visent plutôt à redéfinir l'étendue du domaine dans lequel le gouvernement doit être impliqué, s'agissant de ses relations avec les religions.

### **Les oppositions internes au gouvernement**

Le retrait du gouvernement du champ religieux ne signifie pas pour autant que l'Eglise catholique à l'avenir ne va pas rencontrer de difficultés. Si le gouvernement dans son ensemble ne souhaite pas entrer en conflit avec les organes religieux, ce n'est pas le cas de certains de ses responsables. Des dirigeants que l'on peut qualifier de pragmatiques, comme le Premier ministre Zhu Rongji, souhaiteraient faciliter les relations que le gouvernement entretient avec les religions mais d'autres, plus idéologues, tels que Deng Liqun, voudraient mettre à l'épreuve ces relations. Fort heureusement, de tels idéologues "gauchistes" forment au sommet du pouvoir chinois une minorité.

Pourquoi y a-t-il un tel groupe d'idéologues conservateurs ? Il semble que ce qui est en jeu ici n'est pas un vrai problème idéologique mais plutôt une simple lutte de pouvoir. Les théoriciens gauchistes ne peuvent conserver leurs positions éminentes au sein du gouvernement qu'en soutenant des vues d'extrême-gauche. Aussi longtemps que le gouvernement chinois prétendra être un gouvernement marxiste communiste révolutionnaire, ces idéologues de gauche peuvent prétendre à un rôle important dans le gouvernement.

### **L'attitude du gouvernement à l'égard des dirigeants de l'Eglise "officielle" n'est guère différente de celle qu'il a adoptée à l'égard des dirigeants de l'Eglise "clandestine"**

Il est intéressant de noter que l'attitude du gouvernement à l'égard des dirigeants de l'Eglise "officielle" et celle qu'il a envers l'Eglise "clandestine" sont plus ou moins semblables. Le gouvernement ne se soucie pas trop de savoir si les dirigeants de l'Eglise sont clandestins ou pas, pourvu qu'ils acceptent de coopérer avec lui.

Permettez-moi de citer l'exemple de Mgr Han Jide, du diocèse de Pingliang, afin d'illustrer ce propos (1). Mgr Han a été secrètement consacré coadjuteur de ce diocèse par Mgr Philippe Ma Qi (Ma Ji), évêque de

Pingliang, en septembre 1996. Mgr Ma est décédé en février dernier. Plutôt que d'attendre qu'une élection soit organisée par le gouvernement, Mgr Han a lui-même publiquement annoncé sa qualité d'évêque de Pingliang. En échange de la reconnaissance de cet état de fait, le gouvernement lui a demandé de coopérer avec lui pour le futur. On peut rappeler que le nouvel évêque de Pingliang, Mgr Han, était autrefois prêtre de l'Eglise "clandestine" de la province du Shaanxi.

### **Une définition intéressante de l'Eglise "clandestine"**

Selon les termes de l'évêque "clandestin" du diocèse de Fengxiang, dans la province du Shaanxi, Mgr Lucas Li Jingfeng, la définition du gouvernement de l'Eglise "clandestine" est la suivante : *"L'Eglise clandestine est formée des catholiques placés sous l'autorité des prêtres ordonnés par des évêques nommés par le pape."*

Il semble que le gouvernement ne se soucie pas trop de savoir si les dirigeants de l'Eglise appartiennent ou non à l'Eglise "officielle". Dans certains cas, et l'Eglise "officielle" et l'Eglise "clandestine" sont enregistrées [auprès des autorités chinoises]. Par exemple, dans le Shaanxi, le Gansu, la Mongolie intérieure, le Hebei et le Nord-Est, la plupart des Eglises "clandestines" sont enregistrées. (Elles sont enregistrées auprès du Bureau local des affaires religieuses et le Bureau des affaires civiles et non auprès de l'Association patriotique.)

Le gouvernement a déjà connaissance du fait que la plupart des dirigeants de l'Eglise "clandestine" sont prêts à coopérer avec lui, pourvu qu'ils ne soient pas forcés de rejoindre l'Association patriotique. Seule une poignée de dirigeants de l'Eglise "clandestine" refuse tout contact avec le gouvernement. Parmi ceux-ci, on trouve certains évêques "clandestins" des provinces du Hebei, du Henan et du Heilongjiang.

En fait, non seulement les dirigeants de l'Eglise "clandestine" mais aussi certains dirigeants de l'Eglise "officielle" font leur possible pour se débarrasser de l'Association patriotique. En ce sens, les dirigeants de l'Eglise "clandestine" et ceux de l'Eglise "officielle" partagent le même combat contre un ennemi commun.

Si nous essayons d'analyser la situation, nous pouvons proposer les catégories suivantes :

#### Catégorie 1 :

"Clandestins" extrêmes : ils refusent de prendre part à quelque système que ce soit dès lors que celui-ci est approuvé par le gouvernement. On peut, par

exemple, placer le diocèse “clandestin” de Qiqihar du Heilongjiang dans cette catégorie.

Catégorie 2 :

“Clandestins” mais enregistrés auprès du gouvernement. Par exemple, le diocèse de Fengxiang dans la province du Shaanxi.

Catégorie 3 :

“Officiels” et enregistrés auprès du gouvernement. Par exemple, le diocèse de Liaoning.

Catégorie 4 :

“Officiels” et enregistrés auprès du gouvernement et de l'Association patriotique. Par exemple, l'Eglise à Pékin sous l'autorité de Michel Fu Tieshan.

### **Les interactions entre les dirigeants de l'Eglise “officielle” et de l'Eglise “clandestine”**

De fait, presque partout, les dirigeants de l'Eglise “officielle” et ceux de l'Eglise “clandestine” coopèrent ensemble. Pour la jeune génération, le conflit qui les sépare n'est pas si sévère. Parfois même, les conflits à l'intérieur de l'Eglise “officielle” sont plus importants. La plupart des jeunes prêtres peuvent parfaitement travailler avec leurs confrères de l'autre côté. Cette impression a été confirmée lors de mon dernier voyage dans le Nord-Est, en août dernier.

Ce sont les évêques qui, en fait, souvent créent des difficultés. Les problèmes surgissent lorsque deux détenteurs ou plus de l'autorité travaillent dans le même diocèse. Le diocèse de Wenzhou, dans la province du Zhejiang, est un de ceux-là. Cependant, à la lecture des statistiques, ces doublonnements de l'autorité à l'intérieur d'une même circonscription ecclésiastique ne sont pas si fréquents que cela dans l'Eglise de Chine. A la mi-99, 67 évêques appartenaient à l'Eglise “officielle” et 44 à l'Eglise “clandestine” ; ce qui fait un total de 111 évêques pour 115 diocèses recensés en Chine. Cela n'empêche pas que, dans les diocèses où il y a un évêque “officiel” et un évêque “clandestin”, les problèmes de rivalité et d'identité doivent être résolus.

A bien observer la situation présente de l'Eglise en Chine, on peut distinguer quatre modèles ou cas de figure afin d'aider l'Eglise “officielle” et l'Eglise “clandestine” à dépasser leur division.

Modèle 1 :

L'Eglise “officielle” et l'Eglise “clandestine” parviennent à un accord tacite selon lequel, à l'intérieur de leur propre territoire pastoral, les deux parties distinguent deux sous-territoires à l'intérieur desquels chacun est respectivement responsable des activités

pastorales. Ils y exercent leur autorité sans que l'une ou l'autre des parties soient subordonnées à l'autre. Par exemple, au début des années 1990, le diocèse de Xingtai dans le Hebei a compté trois évêques. Mgr Hou Jinde de l'Eglise “officielle” s'est occupé du district de Weixian, Mgr Xiao Liren, de l'Eglise “clandestine”, de la ville de Xingtai et Mgr Raimond Wang Chonlin, également de l'Eglise “clandestine”, du village de Biancun, dans le district de Ningjin. Chacun de ces trois évêques a fait en sorte de ne pas empiéter sur le travail pastoral des deux autres.

Modèle 2 :

Si l'évêque de l'Eglise “officielle” est légitime (au sens de l'Eglise universelle), il devient l'évêque officiel du diocèse. Les autres évêques “clandestins” peuvent travailler comme évêques titulaires. Bien entendu, il n'existe pas pour l'heure de tel titre d'évêque titulaire en Chine. Mais la situation de Mgr Li Chongjie à Hohhot ressemble à cela.

Modèle 3 :

Il existe aussi le cas de figure où l'évêque de l'Eglise “clandestine” ne parvient pas à s'entendre avec l'évêque de l'Eglise “officielle” et le Vatican n'est pas impliqué dans l'affaire. Les deux parties vont se disputer le pouvoir. Si l'évêque de l'Eglise “officielle” n'a pas été légitimé, alors l'évêque “clandestin” se trouve en meilleure position. Le conflit peut durer aussi longtemps qu'un terrain d'entente n'est pas trouvé. On trouve de tels cas dans le Fujian, le Hebei et le Henan.

Modèle 4 :

Le dernier cas de figure afin de résoudre les conflits est celui où les évêques des deux parties parviennent à créer une atmosphère de confiance mutuelle et travaillent ensemble pour prendre en charge les tâches pastorales à l'intérieur d'un même diocèse. L'évêque “clandestin” démissionne de sa fonction mais continue à remplir sa mission sans en avoir le titre. A Wuhan, dans le Hubei, ce modèle fonctionne.

Finalement, au-delà de leurs différences, l'Eglise “clandestine” et l'Eglise “officielle” appartiennent toutes deux à la même Eglise. Elles sont simplement les deux faces d'une même Eglise catholique. Pour l'heure, on doit admettre que peu de choses peuvent être entreprises. Prions pour l'Eglise en Chine et, avec la grâce de Dieu, on peut espérer qu'un jour l'unité de l'Eglise sera pleinement restaurée.

(1) Voir aussi EDA 298

Ref.: *Eglises d'Asie*, n.300, 1/2000

## Luke 4:16-30 — The Spirit's Mission Manifesto — Jesus' Hermeneutics — and Luke's Editorial

It might be appropriate to meditate once more on one of the most famous “editorials” in the New Testament, Luke 4:14-30.<sup>1</sup> There are several strata one can discern in this “ecumenical bestseller” among the Gospel texts. The interpretation one gives will depend on the balance made between various emphases appearing in this story about the Nazareth event,

Placed just after the Spirit's descent on Jesus — his empowering for mission and the temptation, which pictures the missionary methods and tasks Jesus refused to use and accomplish, this text, inserted between two editorial summaries (v. 14-15 and 31-32), has all the characteristics of a programmatic manifesto or policy document. It can first be read as the Spirit's mission manifesto, revealing the Spirit's priorities as formulated through a combination of texts taken from the prophet Isaiah. Second, Luke 4 reveals something of Jesus' own priorities, and shows how he understood his specific role within God's mission. Finally, the Nazareth incident can also be read as the personal editorial Luke puts at the beginning of his theological history of Christian origins in two volumes.

### Mission priorities of the Spirit

As in most parts of Luke's writings, it is the Spirit who has the initiative: Jesus is “drawn” by the Spirit to the desert for temptation; Jesus is “filled” with the Spirit and might even find Isaiah's text as a consequence of the Spirit's guidance.<sup>2</sup>

It is quite interesting that in Jesus' reading, the Isaiah quotation is socially “sharpened” by the omission of the phrase “to heal the brokenhearted” and the addition of “let the oppressed go free”, the sixth verse of chapter 58. There is a clear holistic liberation emphasis in the Spirit's mission programme: the aim is to radically change the spiritual, personal, social and economic conditions of all the victims, of all those who have been put aside by religious, social, political or economic developments in society. The categories are clear: the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed. The aim is clear also: good news, release, sight, freedom. There is no “priority” within this holistic vision.<sup>3</sup> Usually, the various exclusion processes reinforce each other anyhow.

The roots for understanding what the Spirit is all

about are to be found in the Hebrew tradition, in the specific laws and institutions which God's people had developed to express their understanding of, and faithfulness to, God's calling. Without such reference, the Spirit's emphasis and message may not be understood in its fullness and sharpness.<sup>4</sup> Whenever the presence and manifestation of the Spirit are unlinked from the specific criteria of interpretation, rooted in what we call the Old Testament, there is a risk to “spiritualize” the Spirit and to bypass his (or her) interventions in the concrete manifestations of human injustice and suffering. Such a spiritualizing tendency can already be discerned in the first inculturations of the Gospel in Hellenistic society, even in Luke's own writings.<sup>5</sup>

It is however correct to emphasize the proclamatory aspect in Isaiah's text and in the way Luke 4 is edited.<sup>6</sup> All verbs are missionary verbs: evangelize, proclaim (twice, with three objects), send in freedom. The emphasis on the proclamatory aspect is even highlighted by Jesus' personal comment, starting with: “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled *in your hearing*. (literally: in your ears)”.

Yet, one should not weaken the meaning of “proclamation”. Jesus' announcement of the year of the Lord's favour (which is not the year of the Jubilee as described in Lv 25) as such radically changes the situation by putting the traditional Jewish institutional and social systems out of order. The proclamation of a change of regime in a country basically modifies the overall conditions of life. One should thus not minimize what Jesus' proclamation implies; it really gives dignity to the poor, liberates the oppressed and opens up the eyes of those who do not understand, by declaring that the “old” social and religious rules of the game have been replaced by the kingdom of God (see Lk 7:18-23 and 11:20). Jesus' own activity indicates how fundamentally the situation has changed. The first to really understand what was going on were the demons (Lk 4:34). Given the powerful overall modification of the basic rules of life, it seems unfaithful to the text to distinguish between a spiritual priority and a holistic consequence.<sup>7</sup>

### Jesus' comments

Jesus' own sermon is centred around two main emphases. He first says, “Today” the scripture has been fulfilled. Like in a Pentecostal worship, Jesus ad-

dresses his listeners directly, promising them the immediate fulfillment of their most dear hopes and needs by identifying himself with the promised Messiah or messianic Servant. It is a direct powerful proclamation of God's presence, not a highly intellectual explanation of an obscure detail. No wonder that the public reacts positively to such a message. Whether they really understand what Jesus is about remains open.

The second essential aspect of Jesus' homily is his identification with the expected final bearer of the Spirit. This has of course important missionary consequences: the promises of Isaiah are fulfilled in relation to the communication event and encounter between Jesus and human beings. This is one of the "refrains" of all the Gospels: the central manifestation of the kingdom of God (or the Spirit's essential intervention in history) cannot be dissociated from the person of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is also the problem.

Indeed, the most striking factor of the whole text is not the formulation of the good news — as important as it is — but the mysterious change of mind of the whole group of people assembled in that synagogue. The text is carefully and dramatically written: "the eyes of all were fixed on him" (indicating a tension), "all spoke well of him" (cf. also the use of "all" in Lk 4:15) and then, suddenly, "all were filled with rage" (Lk 4:28).

### Luke's editorial

Told as it is, the story shows Luke's own insistence and priorities and can be read as an "editorial" to the whole of his double essay — Gospel and Acts. In the latter book, most of the preaching of the first missionaries is described, somewhat schematically, as starting in the synagogue to continue outside, after a change of mind of the public. There is the mystery of the rejection of Jesus by his own people in his own town. This question is hinted at in the other Gospels as well, and generalized in the first chapter of John's Gospel, which shows how the Word came to what was "his own" and was refused by his own people, i.e. humanity. The rejection is not unique to the inhabitants of Nazareth.

Luke shows how Jesus' own preaching unfolds an interpretation of the tradition which shocked people. Interpreting the tradition — the Bible — was and is the essential aspect of any "teaching" of Jesus and his followers (Lk 4:15 and 31). Jesus' activity is hermeneutical, which he is able to accomplish with authority because he is "filled" by the Spirit.

Some have argued that people would already have been shocked when Jesus stopped reading the Isaiah

text before mentioning the "day of vengeance" (Is 61:2). That might be. Yet, while present in Isaiah 61, the idea of vengeance over the enemies is not given as much emphasis as the "positive" proclamation of the "year of favour". Jesus' "mild" interpretation has some justification in Isaiah. In any case, one should take into consideration that the story is told in a way which indicates that people were not shocked at the moment of the reading, but by what Jesus then said.<sup>8</sup>

But it remains strange that in verse 23, Jesus seems to refer to an incident which happened in Nazareth according to the other Gospels (cf. Mk 6:1-6 par.), but which Luke does not tell. This gives to the story quite a provocative flavour. It looks as if Jesus intended to exasperate his fellow-citizens. And while presenting himself as prophet and healer, he appears not to be able to manifest his authority in his hometown (unlike what will happen in Capernaum, v. 33 ff). He preaches, but does not heal the sick nor expel evil spirits; the kingdom of God does not manifest itself in full power in Nazareth. This also shows that "proclamation" alone may not always manifest the fullness of the year of God's favour. The rushing in of the kingdom can fail to reach its aim. Whether that is due to the Lord's choice, the people's reactions, or both is left open by Luke's editorial. In mission, we should not fix what the Bible leaves unexplained.

### Renewed hermeneutics

Jesus' hermeneutical practice is indeed paradoxical and very interesting for our own mission. The two prophets he mentions were well known. Their life was mostly dedicated to reinforcing Israel against its enemies.<sup>9</sup> The two stories Jesus mentions represent a minority tradition in the life of those prophets. But for Jesus the significance of both events in Sidon and Syria is essential and more important than the other stories about Elijah or Elisha. For Jesus, this healing activity of God outside the boundaries of God's people has a fundamental meaning and is constitutive for his re-interpretation of the tradition. He thus applies a strange, scandalous but liberating hermeneutics.<sup>10</sup> Of course, this reflects a Christian interpretation of the biblical tradition which is specific and can differ from Jewish interpretation theories and practises. There is a justification for a selective Christian understanding of Old Testament stories.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus proclaims that God's liberating power and solidarity is not exclusively meant for the benefit of the physical descendants of the patriarchs, of the people of the exodus and the great prophets. God's mission has a universal scope — transcending any ethnic, cultural, social, racial or confessional barrier. God's preferential option for the poor is not for the

poor of Israel only, and may even give priority to others.

That message comes as a challenge to every human group and not only to the Jewish inhabitants of Nazareth. Their instinctive and fundamental refusal of such “universalism” is representative for all of us throughout the ages and continents. This universalism is also what prevents an interpretation of Luke 4 as meaning the establishment of a Jubilee year, which was clearly limited to the people of Israel and linked to their handling of the land issue in Palestine.<sup>12</sup>

### **Widening the perspective: towards a liberation principle**

There are actually three enlargements or widening of meaning in Jesus’ interpretation and actualization of the tradition which lies behind the remittance and jubilee years:

1) The Jubilee year was understandable specifically in a situation of economic and religious unity of the People of God forming *one nation and one legal system*. In that system, every 49 years, everyone who had not been able to regain his land was given it back. This was one of the “legal institutions” that allowed for everyone, at certain periods, to start their lives again, with equal chances. While never put into practice as such (most probably), that principle still remained a model for correcting growing economic and social injustice. Together with the Ten Commandments and the sabbatical and remission years, it was like a “legal incarnation” of the prophets’ message. In Jesus’ reinterpretation of the year of God’s favour, there is no more limitation to one specific people within specific boundaries. That is what scandalized the inhabitants of Nazareth. The Spirit “*de-nationalizes*” the jubilee and remittance principle.

2) In the tradition, there is a periodic remission of debts and recovery of one’s freedom or land as means to readjust society. The realm is *economic and social*, within a specific legislation based on God’s revelation. In Jesus’ message, the scope is widened. What was to happen in economics should and can now happen in all relations, between God and humans, among societies and individual persons, among families and ethnic clans: liberation, remission and forgiveness can and must be the mark of *any relation in any domain* of life. The sharpening of Isaiah’s quotation as well as the texts and stories transmitted in Luke’s specific tradition forbid the interpretation of it as if Jesus did away with the economic part of the jubilee and remission message to concentrate on the spiritual. He starts from the tradition and enlarges its principle. That is why the prayer he taught to his disciples includes the forgiveness of debts/trespasses in a language which

is the same as the one of the remittance year (Lk 11:4). It is not only financial — *all* debts are taken away. All that hinders reconciled relations with God has been put aside: relations are healed between God and all of humanity. The ancient jubilee year was linked to the day of forgiveness. That now has been generalized. All human and social relations now have a new quality. Forgiveness and freedom are granted.

3) The third limitation of the jubilee and remission tradition is its *periodicity*. Some rearrangements in the unjust social order were to take place every seven years, others every 49 years. No such limitation of time exists any more — at *every moment of life* the jubilee or liberation principle can and thus should mark all our activities and relations. The Nazareth proclamation proclaims a permanent year of favour.<sup>13</sup>

All limitations of the jubilee traditions are overcome. That is the sense of the phrase, it is accomplished “in your hearing”. Through Jesus’ proclamation, in the power of the Spirit, reality has been changed fundamentally, so that all human relations and societies can be arranged accordingly. Bursting from its roots in the legal tradition, the “jubilee” or “remission” has become an inspiring principle which today we have the freedom to apply and adapt to the many contexts in which we are living. It is the Churches’ mission to proclaim it to the world and live accordingly. But one must take care that the biblical principle includes criteria which cannot be bypassed: the link to the person of Jesus; the social aspect of that liberation; and the impossibility to limit it to any ethnic or racial or national boundary.

### **Open-ended story**

The end of the Nazareth drama, v. 28 ff., introduces the end of Jesus’ own life story. The description given of the town of Nazareth does not correspond to its geographical setting, but could allude to that of Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> If that is the case, then Luke’s editorial already shows how Jesus life will end, at the cross. But his time has not yet come. He passes through the mob, walking with authority, in a manner which reminds us of the Son as pictured in John’s Gospel.<sup>15</sup>

In mission, time is not chronological. Some consequences occur at certain times, yet not at others. This is also true for success or failure in the Churches’ witness. As it happened to our Lord, it can happen to us.

We have indeed, with the succession of the temptation and Nazareth stories, two clear indications of what inspiration by the Holy Spirit does not mean. It does not mean ruling the world with globalized power by following the Devil’s rules. It does not mean to

honour one culture more than another, even if it is considered a “divine” tradition. That is why liberation and jubilee, indeed, can be proclaimed to all peoples of the earth, a new situation in history which the second book of Luke’s work emphasizes.

At Pentecost the same Spirit, having been “concentrated” on Jesus during his earthly ministry, is given to his followers — Jews first, non-Jews in a second stage. There are two pentecosts in Acts: chapter 2 and chapter 10. The second was necessary, because even the best Christians — the Apostles and first witnesses — had not understood the breadth of the message and promise. One can be filled with the Spirit and yet not understand the Gospel fully!<sup>16</sup>

The outpouring of the Spirit provokes joy, including ecstatic and charismatic joy (Rom 14:17), enables intercultural communication, and empowers people for sharing. This is the jubilee or remission principle embodied in the first Church community as described in Acts 2 and 4. Through its “radiance”, that early Church is in “centripetal” mission, attracting people to the new life experienced in its midst. Later on, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the Church of Antioch will adopt another mission strategy, a more “centrifugal” one. It will also send out people to other parts of the world to communicate the message to those who otherwise could not know it, and to enable Churches to be formed and to grow in other cultural traditions (Acts 13:1ff).

But the programme remains the same. It is a permanent liberation and forgiveness principle,<sup>17</sup> valid for all peoples of the world, centred on the person of Jesus Christ, who rises out of the Jewish tradition but universalizes the Spirit’s priorities which that tradition had transmitted. That mission remains valid for the Middle East as well as for other parts of the world.

Last but not least, from the New Testament point of view, there is no reason to celebrate a specific millennium feast. The year of the Lord proclaimed at Nazareth is permanent — the importance of time has less to do with chronology than with the Spirit’s presence. We usually call Spirit-filled time “kairos”. It is not excluded that the year 2000 might let us experience such “kairos”. One could only hope that it might happen in the Middle East also. But that would have more to do with political and economic justice than with pilgrimages and Church declarations. What if the Nazareth mission manifesto was realized in Middle Eastern societies and Churches? Then again light would go out from that region to the whole world.

For all of us who are not from that region, we must remember that it is through the tradition of a specific Middle Eastern cultural ethos that the Spirit’s priorities were communicated once for all to the whole world. But we have access to them only be-

cause a man called the “Nazarean”, through his death, opened up the horizon of that tradition to allow it to illuminate any human, social, cultural, ethnic, national or religious tradition, for the salvation of humankind.

*PS: What can one say today about Christian presence and witness or mission in the Middle East at the beginning of the year 2000? More needs to be said by other Christians on how they perceive such a necessary presence and witness. That debate has significance for intercultural dialogues among Christians in general.*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> There is an incredibly large bibliography on Luke 4 and it is not possible to mention even the most important books and articles here. As a sample, let me just enumerate a few: the chapter “Luke-Acts: Practising forgiveness and solidarity with the poor” in Bosch, D.J., *Transforming Mission. Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1991, pp. 84-122; Larkins, W.J. Jr., “Mission in Luke”, in Larkins, W.J. Jr. and Williams, J.F. (eds), *Mission in the New Testament. An evangelical approach*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1998, p. 152-169; Larkins, W.J. Jr., “Mission in Acts” in *ibid.*, pp.179-186; Osborne, Th. P. and Stricher, J. *L’année jubilaire et la remise des dettes Repères bibliques*, Paris, Bayard, 1999, 126 pages; Ucko, H. (ed), *The Jubilee Challenge. Utopia or Possibility? Jewish and Christian Insights*, Geneva, WCC, 1997, 197 pp; Yoder, J.H, *The Politics of Jesus. Vicit Agnus Noster*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1972, 260 pp.

<sup>2</sup> There is no certainty as to the tradition in the synagogues. It is not possible to know whether Jesus was given the text of the day or whether he chose the passage. Luke’s readers generally did not know the details of the Jewish practise. Since Luke does not give any precise indication, he probably intends to mean that the text was found by inspiration.

<sup>3</sup> The structure of the text seems to show that “good news” and “the year of the Lord’s favour” are the overarching concepts, the others giving the content. At the structural center is the sentence “recovery of sight to the blind” which in Luke, as in the New Testament generally, has a literal as well as a symbolic meaning. Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind, but also to open the minds and hearts of all people (cf. Osborne and Stricher, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97).

<sup>4</sup> This comment is made with specific reference to a debate presented in this issue of IRM (cf. the articles by Mulder and Valkenberg).

<sup>5</sup> There is indeed a striking difference in emphasis in vocabulary between Lukes’ Gospel and Acts. In his Gospel, Luke, faithful to his specific tradition, most probably going back to Jesus himself, insists on the effect of the message on the relation between poor and rich. That emphasis practically disappears in Acts, if one accepts the description of the first community in Jerusalem (Acts

2 and 4, and the related stories), the first inter-Church aid programme (Acts 11:27-30) and Paul's final handover of responsibility to the Church's elders (Acts 20:33-35). One can explain that by the necessary new inculturation of the Gospel within Hellenistic urban milieus. (Luke-Acts is most probably written for wealthy people.) One can also refer to the specific emphasis Luke puts on the frontiers to be crossed during what he presents as the time of the first witnesses, a time ending with the Book of Acts (symbolically already in Acts 20:17-35). The same tendency shines through some of the Pauline writings and more in the epistles written after Paul. James shows something like a necessary reaction against the loss of the specific emphasis of texts like Luke 4:18 within early Christianity.

<sup>6</sup>This is well described in Larkin, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>7</sup>While I appreciate the detailed treatment of the text by Larkin, I have difficulty with his categorization of priority-consequence within the overall change brought by the rushing in of the kingdom (cf. p.160 and 169).

<sup>8</sup>The translation attempted by Jeremias and mentioned by Yoder (*op. cit.* p. 35 ff., note 11) and Bosch (*op. cit.* p. 110 ff.) is not convincing.

<sup>9</sup>Look at the way Elijah treated Baal's priests at the Carmel in I Kings 18.

<sup>10</sup>Today, Spirit-influenced hermeneutics could perhaps also take the same liberty. Some texts which may appear secondary in the New Testament could today receive more emphasis on the basis of an understanding of God's mission. Such an argument might be used with regard to a positive relation between the Gospel and other religious experiences, or between Christians and people of other faiths. There are some texts in the NT opening up the possibility for such a relation. Admittedly they are not numerous. Nevertheless, they could be essential to an understanding of mission "today". Interestingly enough, the same happens in the portrait made by Luke of Jesus himself. Unlike what happens in other Gospels, in Luke, Jesus does not often encounter people who are not members of Israel. Nevertheless, such encounters are essential in his theology — as shown in Acts.

<sup>11</sup>This also hints at the debate between the various contextual interpretations of Jesus as rooted in the Jewish tradition, cf. the articles by Mulder and Valkenberg.

<sup>12</sup>I agree with Osborne and Stricher, *op. cit.* and several other authors on this. Yet it must be said that the return from exile to the original land of Palestine had a "jubilee" effect, since one of the most striking elements of the jubilee year was the possibility to possess again the land originally owned. The whole tradition of remission of debt and freedom for slaves is somewhat included in the description of the promised change of condition: cf. the environment of the term "favour" in Is 49:8.

One may also refer to the way Nehemiah will treat social injustices. But even Nehemiah does not proclaim the beginning of a jubilee or remission year. He requests that people practice such principles even between the 7-year periods. In that, he is foreshadowing Jesus' own way of treating that tradition.

<sup>13</sup>cf. Matthey, J., "A propos de la dette du Tiers-

Monde. Une réflexion théologique et éthique" in Fédération Protestante de France (ed), *Le développement en question. Eléments de réflexion pour une approche chrétienne*, Paris, Bergers et Mages, Strasbourg, Oberlin, 1992, pp. 34-43.

<sup>14</sup>cf. Osborne and Stricher, *op. cit.* p. 100.

<sup>15</sup>Here, exceptionally, I disagree with Bosch (*op. cit.* p. 95). It seems evident to me that in Acts, the first Apostles did not grasp the breadth of Jesus' own ministry, of the Spirit's sending. For them, it remained limited to the renewal of Israel, which then would attract other people (hoping for the nation's future pilgrimage towards Zion). It needed repeated hints and some forceful convincing by the Spirit to force the Church of the origin to admit the fact that mission was not directed only towards people of Jewish origin. Acts is an interesting illustration of John 16:13, showing that the Spirit's interventions cannot be reduced to the anamnesis or remembrance of already known and understood messages. The Spirit, conducting us in full truth, can push us further to unknown theological territories, present in the message, but not yet developed.

<sup>16</sup>It could also be understood to mean that Jesus' walking among humans will not stop at Golgotha, but will be continued in the Spirit's descent. Again, a theme near to John's theology.

<sup>17</sup>The Greek word *aphesis* means liberation (concretely) in Is 61 and Luke 4, in line with the texts of the Christmas story. It is true, however, that in the rest of Luke's Gospel and in Acts, the term is specifically used in relation to the remittance of sins (cf. Larkin, *op. cit.* p. 162). This may be understood as a narrowing of the meaning, saying that Luke focuses on spiritual liberation. It may also be understood that this is the specific "added" value which Jesus brings or emphasizes again, stressing that the relation to God is the fundamental principle behind any individual and social life. That was already the message of the Old Testament, but its holistic meaning had at times been forgotten.

Ref.: *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIX, n. 352, 1/2000

**COMING EVENTS**

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**FOR YOUR AGENDA**

**SEDOS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000**

5 December 2000 — Morning  
Brothers of the Christian Schools  
Via Aurelia, 476,  
00165 Rome

**JOAN CHITTISTER, OSB, USA**

**A FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY FOR MEN AND WOMEN**

**TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE, OP, Superior General**

**A MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY FOR A NEW WORLD**

**WORKING GROUPS**

<b>Wednesday,</b>	<b>21 June</b>	Mission in Conflict	16:00 hrs at <b>SEDOS</b>
<b>Sunday,</b>	<b>25 June</b>	World Debt Group	16:00 hrs at <b>SEDOS</b>