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Pour comprendre le développement survenu au sein de la théologie de la mission, depuis quelques décennies, il importe, nous dit le père Gianni Colzani, dans son article *Theology of Mission after Vatican II*, de considérer l'enseignement du concile comme point de référence. L'Église est de par sa nature missionnaire et la mission est devenue le levain du dynamisme des Églises.

La mission n'est pas d'abord une entreprise humaine, ou même un travail ecclésial mais plutôt l'action eschatologique de Dieu qui rassemble les peuples en vue du Royaume. L'auteur confronte diverses théologies issues de différentes Églises et s'intéresse à la mission qui implique le dialogue interreligieux.

Le père Michel Gourgues, *o.p.*, dans son article *Dès l'origine de la mission chrétienne* : Le courage de tout reprendre à neuf, fait une étude des Actes des Apôtres et constate comment l'évangélisation s'est faite progressivement, tant par rapport aux gens à qui on s'est successivement adressé que par rapport aux manières différentes de présenter l'essentiel du message chrétien, selon qu'ils étaient juifs de Jérusalem ou de la Palestine, de langue hébraïque ou de langue grecque, craignant Dieu ou païens. Prédications différentes au service du même Évangile. Pour la première fois l'Église, nous dira Michel Gourgues, fera l'expérience de l'ascèse des recommencements et de l'adaptation culturelle.

Dans son article, *Church's Dialogue with Cultures and Religions*, Jacob Parappally, se basant sur l'étude qu'il fait de certains textes officiels, nous dit que l'Église, pour être vraiment catholique, doit s'investir dans un dialogue avec les cultures et les religions d'Asie et être attentive à la puissance transformante de l'Esprit.

Dans son article *Asian Reflection on Violence*, P. Robert Guruswamy évoque les causes et les différents types de violence qui existent principalement en Asie et analyse les moyens engagés pour la contrer. Il examine également les responsabilités des diverses religions et le rôle qu'elles pourraient jouer.

Professor Venkatesh Seshamani, dans son article *A Hindu View of the Declaration of Zambia as a Christian Nation* analyse, à partir d'une perspective hindoue, la signification que peut revêtir la déclaration du président Chiluba faite en décembre 1991 et selon laquelle la Zambie se définit comme nation chrétienne.

Que signifie, pour l'Église en Afrique, être garant de l'espérance ?, se demande le père Jean-Claude Djereke, *s.j.* Au moment où dans plusieurs pays les guerres, les maladies, la mal-gouvernance et la misère font diminuer l'espérance de vie, quelle est l'espérance que peut apporter l'Église. L'auteur, inspiré par Ernst Bloch et Gustavo Gutierrez, réfléchit sur ce qu'est l'espérance chrétienne annoncée aux peuples d'Afrique, sur ce qu'est le rôle prophétique de l'Église.

Le groupe de réflexion de SEDOS sur la dette internationale propose aux lecteurs du SEDOS Bulletin une démarche à l'occasion de la rencontre du G8 à Genès du 22 au 24 juillet prochain.

Bonne lecture !

Bernard East, *o.p.*
Directeur exécutif de SEDOS

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Theology of Mission After Vatican II

In order to understand the development of the theology of mission in recent decades, it is useful to take the Council teaching as a point of reference. The Council, as the title of the decree on mission recalls, had dealt with *activitas missionalis Ecclesiae* and in this way had established a close link between mission and the Church including the former within the perspective of conciliar ecclesiology. As a gift, mission is explained on the basis of the story of love of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity. Instead as *munus ecclesiale*, mission is the task of a community that, nourishing itself on the word and on the Eucharist, opens to its apostolic tasks among men and women. Thus there is a profound mutual relationship between Church and mission: the Church is by her very nature missionary.

This result was the end of the long process, begun in the first decades of the century, which had tried to pass from a practice of mission to a theory of mission. Surpassing the limited approach that saw it only at the service of the missionary or understood it in fundamentally juridical terms aimed at exalting the missionary mandate — this theology had returned from the missionary mandate to the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church: mission was at their service. All these ideas meant that mission could be seen as a historical form, characteristic of the universal sacrament of salvation. Placing its activities within the perspective of the mystery context by which the Church lives, mission seems to be the event that — in the form of the community sent forth — gives reality its meaning and its fullness.

This perspective had biblical and patristic renewal behind it. It made use of Cougar's reflections on the Church and the world and on the role of the laity. It was situated within the concept of mission as the Church's self-fulfilment, characteristic of Rahner's *Handbuch*, but it did not even remotely represent the common perspective of the Christian world nor did it offer a sufficient picture for the historical action of Churches in that difficult situation. It was not by chance that there was a clear crisis in the post-conciliar period with regard to mission, its identity and its methods.

The fundamental element of the Protestant missionary theology of the time was perhaps the rediscovery of the importance of eschatology. Its use in the missionary field had meant that it was possible to separate entirely from everything that remained of that sociological approach that, looking at mission as an

aspect of the development of society, had come to indicate Christianity as a dimension of the expansion of Western society. Although missionaries had never deliberately interpreted mission in this way, this consciousness of a Western mission was fairly widespread in Asian and African countries. Against this background the eschatological turning-point in mission was precious. Before being a theological fact, it was almost a prophetic challenge for Churches too firm in their positions: mission had become the yeast of the dynamism of Churches.

Mission as “Representation” of Christ

To the extent that eschatology is not understood as the rediscovery of something but of someone, the figure of Christ becomes central. Christ is the “first missionary”; mission is the great work through which Christ carries out his mediation. Thus, in the strong sense, mission is *actio Dei*; it is God himself, it is the God of Jesus who carries out mission. This *missio Dei*, with Barthian ascendants, is the concept of G. F. Vicedom, W. Freytag and H. J. Margull. Its typical element is the ability to link its Trinitarian foundation to an ecclesial horizon through a strong theology of the apostolate. Understood in this way mission is not a human undertaking or an ecclesiastical work but it is the eschatological action of the God who gathers his people with a view to his kingdom. Mission depends on God and it belongs to him in every moment. If according to some Protestants such as H. Krämer and W. Holsten, the apostolate is centred on the obligation to proclaim the Word and on its capacity to interpellate people, according to some Catholics such as A. Rétif, J. Dournes and J. Massen the apostolate is linked — not only to the Word — but also to an ecclesial *diaconia* animated by the Spirit. Animated by the Word and by the Spirit of Christ, the Church addresses herself to the world in order to fulfil the plan of her *Kyrios*, that is, his sovereignty over the world. On the one hand the entry of salvation into history shakes the normal dynamics and on the other it takes it towards a deep, renewing and reconciling level, open to God's action as to the root that brings it to fullness.

It was J. C. Hoekendijk, a Dutch theologian for many years secretary for evangelization of the World Council of Churches, who radicalised this thought. The apostolate Hoekendijk speaks of is not the apostolate

of the Twelve or of the Church but, radically, that of Christ. Here the Protestant thesis that the apostles do not have successors is brought to its climax. The subject of mission is Jesus “the apostle and High Priest of our confession” (Heb 3:1). Its content is always Christ, since Christians must be steadfast, “always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58). Therefore there is a drastic reduction of the Church’s task; since she does not exist except *in actu Christi*, the Church is always *in actu apostoli*. Thus there was criticism of ecclesiocentrism: by virtue of mission, the Church is only the work of the Risen Lord. These theses will combine with the awareness that the purpose of Christianity involves abandoning any separation between the Church and the world; the whole world thus becomes the content of that apostolate that wants to achieve *shalom*, the sovereignty of that Risen Lord who embraces the Church and the world. Apostolate is the sum total of those activities that aim to establish the messianic *shalom*: *kerygma* presents it and proclaims it, *koinonia* lives it by participating in it and *diakonia* serves it.

Though by a different way — that of political theology, which reacts to the privatisation of faith and proclaims again its public character — also the Catholic L. Rütli, a disciple of Metz, will come to the same conclusions. Rütli will criticise both ecclesiocentrism and the dual natural and supernatural purpose that have so much characterised the Church’s activity. The critical prophetic tendency for “eschatological reserve”, which must always be nourished with regard to historical realities, impels us at one and the same time to recognise in history the signs of the presence of the kingdom. Since she is within history, and with it, travelling towards the future promise, the Church discovers she is entirely eccentric as regards the kingdom; therefore the mission agenda must be established starting from the world and not from the Church. Consequently the nature of mission can no longer be based on biblical and dogmatic facts. As responsibility for hope in the concrete historical situation of the world, mission seems to be marked by an accentuated experimentation that to all practical purposes omits the Church entirely. The Church, God’s tent in the midst of mankind, is almost annulled by this radical exodus towards the world. In herself she is of no interest. Here the eschatological assertion seems to have forgotten its Christological origin, its link with the historical Jesus; Metz himself will integrate better this theology of the world with the *memoria Christi*, a subversive and liberating memory.

Under the profile of the theology of mission, one cannot but disagree with this total lack of ecclesiology; here the criticism of ecclesiocentrism has destroyed all ecclesiology. Beyond this criticism of institutionalism,

is such a mission without the Church really concrete? M. Spindler and L. Newbigin tried to advance the Christological origin of this theory surpassing its non-subjective perspective through the work of the Spirit of Christ. Uniting believers to Christ’s mission, the Spirit precedes the Church and guarantees the Christological nature of her mission. In this way the bases were laid above all for an advancement of ecclesial charisms: a missionary Church cannot but be a ministerial Church. Furthermore this identification of the ecclesial Spirit with the Spirit of creation will be destined to give rise to other, subsequent problems.

Mission as the growth of the Church

The concept of *missio Dei* has undoubtedly clarified the reality of mission: on the one hand it has purified it from every sociological connection and on the other it has given it a first theological basis. However these positive results cannot hide the need to pass to a new level which, by using history to greater advantage, needs to formulate the relationship between the Church and the world more rigorously. Briefly, it can be said that an appreciation of history reveals almost a return from the *missio Dei* to the *missio Ecclesiae*. The reference is not so much to the *plantatio* formula, criticised of ecclesiocentrism, but to the *Church-growth movement* begun in 1961 in Pasadena with the foundation of the *Institute of Church Growth*. This group, on the basis of the fundamental works of D. A. McGravan — who would be joined later by A. F. Glasser, C. P. Wagner and A. Tippet — proposes to increase the number of Churches, which are seen as fundamental elements of God’s redemptive plan. Theologians and Churches would agree with these theses to the extent of portraying mission as *interchurch assistance* and as co-operation among Churches.

The notion of *Church-growth* differs from *plantatio ecclesiae* for the notion of Church to which it refers. The Catholic concept of visibility and hierarchy differs from the vitality and spontaneity of a Church that, growing for what it is and for the strength it has, cannot but legitimise mission and recognise its necessity. Briefly, the notion of *Church-growth* is a controversial notion: not only towards the Catholic conception of Church but also towards all other explanations of mission. Mission is based on the reality of Christian life; there is no need for any other foundation. Particularly widespread in the evangelical world, this perspective gained ground because it was feared there would be a fundamentalist use of Scriptures to explain better what is meant by mission: emphasis on a sending based on Christ, recourse to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19) and insistence on witness in conformity with Acts 1:8 are the main responses that have come from this current.

This attention to the Scriptures is important but it creates many problems. If, for example, W. Klaiber and J. Wallis insist on conversion, D. Bosch tries to find in Scripture the foundation of a new paradigm for mission that changes. Behind these diverse opinions there emerges the hermeneutic question: a single Bible but many different interpretative contexts that demand — each according to their own modalities — a clarification of mission. H. W. Gensichen, professor emeritus at Heidelberg, sees in this the basis for starting a long three-directional discourse: in relation to the Scriptures, to the historical situation and to witness or to the witness it offers. On the other hand it is obvious that different situations have a profound influence on the interpretation of the Scriptures: the study on the mysticism of the fourth Gospel in the light of Hindu Bhakti literature done by A. J. Appasamyh is not very different from the Latin-American one of J. Mesters which starts from the point of view of people. This unity in difference introduces a space of creativity and experimentation that must be regarded with sympathy as well as with discernment. In this direction a particular space must be acknowledged for the Word: it is not only a question of looking for indications for a missionary methodology, as D. Senior and C. Stuhlmüller did, but it is necessary rather — with D. Bosch — to look for the foundation of the way in which mission is understood. This is the meaning of the attempts made by E. Testa, L. Legrand, F. Hahn and the experts co-ordinated by Kertelge.

The theoretical problems underlying the relationship between cultures and inspired scriptures are studied in depth by several authors. Together with L. Sannech, it is worth remembering the group that gathered around E. A. Nida who, in the area of inculturation, stressed not only the translation of the Word but, more properly, the communication of faith. Secretary for translation in the *American Bible Society*, Nida would go back to linguistic and anthropological problems and encourage the birth of missionary magazines with these particular interests. This perspective is important, if for nothing else because — overcoming the theology of the presence of the theology of the apostolate recalled above — it recalls how mission can never do without a critical reflection on the work of inculturation of the faith.

Seeking a new paradigm for mission

With D. Bosch we are convinced that mission is a moment of profound change; beyond the way in which he rebuilds the paradigm that should be left behind, the certainty of travelling towards a different age is widespread and undisputed. The search for new paradigms, for new models able to interpret and orient the

missionary path, has advanced the historical-salvific aspect by theologically going beyond Barthism.

In this regard reflection on salvation, above all in its Christological foundation and in its ecclesiological dimension, has become fundamental. Already in 1972, J. Amstutz had introduced a distinction between explicit salvation and implicit salvation: summarising the former in God's relationship with Israel and in God's work with Churches and through them, he did however come to recognise an implicit form of salvation even outside the Church. On this perspective, which further developed the thesis of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation, both Protestant and Catholic theologians would converge for different reasons, from Hoekendijk to Rütli, from Rahner to Schlette, from Küng to Van Engelen, from Hick to Knitter.

One of these forms, perhaps the most important one, which accounts for this presence of salvation beyond the Church is the one that is centred on God's kingdom. Distinguishing between the kingdom and its values, also the Magisterium — *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 20, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, n. 35 — would acknowledge an “inchoate” presence of the kingdom beyond the Church but would be careful to maintain it in relation to the Church. Above all those who are deeply concerned with a new liberating presence of the Church in societies agree on these theses but so do others; Glasser of the *Church-growth movement*, for example, would maintain that the kingdom is the unifying principle of the whole missionary discourse. To develop these theses with a minimum of coherence, we must above all maintain a close relationship between Jesus and the kingdom: the Messianism of the kingdom is a Christological Messianism. But the Incarnation of Jesus Christ according to the classical patristic expression *quod non est assumptum non est sanatum*, is not placed at the centre, but rather preaching and practice. His pre-resurrection life thus becomes the guiding principle of mission; in this way the notion of the kingdom does not evoke a formal and symbolic scheme but a concrete and free way of being in history, that of pro-existence. The Gospel of the kingdom is not a sum total of good intentions but the power able to transform history. Certainly the impossibility of separating Jesus' work from his person means that only an adequate explanation of his person can give an unquestionable foundation to his work. For this reason every attempt to return to a theocentrism or a soteriocentrism, as in P. Knitter, is destined to fail. Linked to Jesus, the Gospel of the kingdom does not end its course when he, arisen, returns to the Father (Jn 16:28), on the contrary, it will be entrusted to his disciples until all things are brought together in Christ.

This Gospel of the kingdom lies before the world both as an alternative to its power and as an offering

of salvation for its expectations. Since the kingdom is but the fulfilment of the sovereignty of the divine king all over the world, one can understand missiology's interest in this subject. The proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom and the power of transformation that it possesses have represented an important missiological chapter. Thus one can understand better the role that missiologists such as M. Arias and E. Castro, C. L. Mitton and J. Scherer, and among ourselves, J. Dupuis, have attributed to it. As for the connection between the kingdom and the Church, recalled by *Redemptoris Missio*, it must be said that it would be seen in many different ways. What we must stress here is that the radiation of the saving force of the kingdom in the socio-historical context would give rise to different ways of perceiving mission. If M. Spindler would perceive mission as a fight for the salvation of the world and L. Newbigen as an expedition to the extreme ends of the earth, liberation theology would use other accents. Th. Sundermeier, who signs the headword *Mission* in *Lexikon Missions-Theologischer Grundbegriffe*, gathers these ideas around a convivial image: the Christ who welcomes the poor and the needy at the table of his kingdom is the real icon of mission. In short, mission proclaims and accomplishes in the world that divine justice that is not and cannot but be eschatological.

Mission as interreligious dialogue

Starting as an expression of attention to other cultures and of real solidarity with people who belong to that culture, the theme of dialogue has changed radically in the multireligious and multicultural pluralism of our time. J. Hick would define it as a kind of "theological Rubicon", which one must have the courage to cross. Here I do not intend to remember its beginnings, which in Catholicism, go back to the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, to the theological Symposium of Bombay (25-28 November 1964) in which the concept of *Heilswege* would be adopted for non-Christian religions and to the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate* (28.10.1965). Nor do I intend to present its different forms which, with a classification going back to J. Schineller but now common, are indicated as Christocentric exclusivism, Christocentric inclusivism and theocentric pluralism in its turn subdivided into various currents.

The theological crux of the question, whether it is indicated as the absoluteness of Christianity or as the uniqueness and universality of Christ the Saviour, is clear and it concerns the full and reciprocal coincidence between God's revelation and the story of Jesus. Where this coincidence is full and total, one should conclude that the missionary proclamation must include as fundamental and necessary at least a minimum of historical theses, those theses that link revelation to Jesus'

rejection by the Jewish people and to justification for the faith in his name. Where this is not necessary, different roads open to configuring the proclamation of the Gospel.

Since the debate is too vast to be reduced to a few ideas and a few names, I will confine myself to repeating that the uniqueness and singularity of the Jesus-event mean that there must be a serious distinction between the Lord, crucified and risen, and his Church. In particular the universality and finality of the Jesus-event do not coincide entirely with the Church's catholicity; they are, if anything, its root and foundation. It follows that the identity and activity of the Church is at the service of the work of her Lord. Likewise we should remember that, while *de facto* pluralism is necessary of itself, pluralism of principle cannot be supported by cultural reasons but only by theological reasons. In this way various attempts have been made to overcome the normativeness of Christ and his Church: J. Hick reduces Christology to a myth in the sense that Christological dogma not only must not be taken literally but it has its own value in mediating the religious experience of disciples. From this point of view, according to P. Knitter, Jesus' normativeness is resolved in a kind of emotional and enamoured language: it is to himself that the Christian speaks when he speaks of Christ as the only Saviour, as the Son of God. By this the Christian means that, for him, Christ is unique and that no one else has any value. Also for H. Küng the missionary proclamation implies serving the faith of others and it is on a programme of world ethics — *Weltethos* — that one must converge for the good of humanity. This same problem also exists among Catholics. Many authors, including J. Dupuis and M. Amaladoss, want to recognise a salvific role also for other religions, although each one follows its own path.

However what I feel is important is that we must recognise on the one hand that dialogue is a real form of evangelization and on the other that the challenge it poses is that we must think of salvation together, in the Lord Jesus, in the fullness of revelation. And we must consider the sacramental means that the Risen Lord has entrusted to the Church's ministry of reconciliation as well as his real saving presence already at work in the positive values of other religions. To do this through the distinction between the *Word asarkos* and the *Word ensarkos*, keeping for the former its capacity to "enlighten everyone" (Jn 1:9) with the light of divine truth or through the Spirit of the Risen Lord who is the same who works in creation and leads it along the way of life, of truth and holiness or by other means, is the task that still awaits us today.

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I am listing here the main works on the theology of mission

of the most important theologians cited and not cited. I felt it was better not to interrupt the discourse with bibliographical indications.

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*Dès l'origine de la mission chrétienne :
Le courage de tout reprendre à neuf*

Quand, au juste, des “vrais païens” furent-ils admis pour la première fois dans l’Église?

Selon les *Actes des Apôtres*, cette étape ne vint qu’après une série d’autres. Il y eut d’abord l’ouverture aux Juifs de Jérusalem, ceux de “langue hébraïque” puis ceux de langue grecque (Ac 2-7). Ensuite les Juifs de Palestine : Judée, Samarie et Galilée (Ac 8-9). Puis vint le tour de ceux que Luc désigne comme des “païens” mais qui, en réalité, étaient déjà à demi juifs : ces “craignant Dieu” qui comme Corneille et les siens, partageaient la foi d’Israël et observaient en bonne partie la Loi de Moïse (Ac 10). Ce n’est qu’ensuite que l’évangélisation se risqua du côté des “vrais païens” (Ac 11-14). Ou peut-être est-ce l’Esprit qui la projeta malgré elle vers ces gens qui n’avaient pas connu la Loi juive et dont il fallut encore quelques années pour accepter qu’ils pourraient être chrétiens sans avoir à s’y soumettre (Ac 15).

Si l’on tente de dater les choses, on est situé aux alentours de 45-50, donc 15-20 ans après la mort de Jésus et la première proclamation de la foi chrétienne. 15-20 ans : celle-ci avait donc eu le temps de s’adapter petit à petit à la culture juive, de développer des thèmes, un style et des stratégies aptes à rejoindre des mentalités façonnées par la foi, l’expérience religieuse et la tradition d’Israël. En s’ouvrant aux païens, il fallait en quelque sorte tout reprendre à neuf.

De la synagogue à l’Aréopage

On en a une idée en comparant deux des discours de Paul que Luc rapporte dans les Actes : le discours aux Juifs à la synagogue d’Antioche de Pisidie (Ac 13, 16-41) et le discours aux païens à l’Aréopage d’Athènes (Ac 17, 22-31). Peut-on imaginer deux prédications plus différentes au service du même Évangile ? Assurément, ces discours furent rédigés longtemps après les événements. Mais, à partir de ce que l’on sait par ailleurs, il y a tout lieu d’y voir des échantillons typiques de la prédication chrétienne en milieux juifs et en milieux païens.

Ainsi, on constate que le discours d’Athènes reflète ce que, dès sa première lettre, au début des années 50, Paul décrivait comme démarche caractéristique de païens venant à la foi :

On raconte là-bas comment vous vous êtes tournés vers Dieu

en vous détournant des idoles, pour servir le Dieu vivant et vrai et pour attendre des cieux son Fils, qu’il a ressuscité des morts, Jésus, qui nous délivre de la colère qui vient. (1 Th 1, 9-10).

Ce sont là, exactement, les thèmes du discours à l’Aréopage : l’opposition entre le vrai Dieu et les idoles païennes (Ac 17,24-29), le jugement (17, 30-31a) et la résurrection de Jésus (17, 31b).

Une perle, deux écrins

N’est-il pas étonnant que la proclamation de la résurrection vienne ainsi en dernier ? Pour des païens comme pour des Juifs, le mystère pascal ne constitue-t-il pas l’essentiel de la nouveauté chrétienne ? Assurément. Mais comment aurait-on pu proclamer cela en premier chez des “païens qui ne connaissent pas Dieu” ?

Il fallait commencer par le commencement. Dans une culture où pullulaient idoles et divinités, il fallait d’abord faire accepter la foi en un Dieu unique. Après seulement, on serait en mesure de proclamer que ce “Dieu vivant et vrai” avait ressuscité Jésus d’entre les morts, ouvrant ainsi à tous les portes de l’espérance.

Chez les païens comme chez les Juifs, c’est à cette bonne nouvelle qu’il s’agissait d’arriver. Mais ce ne pouvait être que par des chemins entièrement différents. Dans un cas, la nouveauté chrétienne était à situer en relation avec la foi, l’espérance et l’héritage d’Israël. À des gens qui croyaient en Dieu et aux merveilles qu’il avait déjà accomplies, il importait de faire voir dans l’Événement Jésus l’intervention décisive de Dieu, la réalisation tant attendue de son dessein et l’accomplissement des Écritures : “La promesse faite à nos pères, Dieu l’a accomplie en notre faveur à nous, leurs enfants, quand il a ressuscité Jésus” (Ac 13, 32). Chez les païens, par contre, on ne pouvait miser sur rien de cela.

Une option pastorale coûteuse

On comprend alors que l’évangélisation ait hésité un bon moment avant de s’ouvrir à eux. Sans doute les réserves étaient-elles fondées en bonne partie sur des motifs d’ordre théologique : est-il possible, pour des gens qui n’observent pas la Loi et qui ignorent les Écritures, d’avoir accès au salut de Dieu ? Mais peut-

être reculait-on aussi devant l'investissement énorme que cela représentait du point de vue pastoral. Après quinze ans d'efforts, d'échecs et de reprises, le message chrétien était parvenu à s'adapter à une culture donnée. On avait appris comment parler à des Juifs, on savait où les rejoindre, on avait sélectionné les références scripturaires, développé les thèmes théologiques, mis au point les arguments les plus susceptibles de convaincre. Faudrait-il donc renoncer à tout cet acquis et recommencer à neuf dans une culture complètement étrangère à cet héritage religieux ? Pour la première fois, l'Église se trouvait devant la dure épreuve quelle connaîtrait périodiquement au cours des âges : l'ascèse des recommencements et de l'adaptation culturelle.

Changer les outres

C'est ainsi que le discours d'Athènes, telle ou telle lettre de Paul, telle ou telle reformulation des paroles de Jésus par Marc ou Luc, s'avèrent éclairants. Au près d'esprits grecs, ignorants de la révélation biblique, la proclamation chrétienne doit s'adapter, sous peine de n'être pas comprise. Les gens ne connaissent pas Isaïe, ni Jérémie, ni les Psaumes ? Eh bien, citons-leur plutôt l'un de leurs poètes (Ac 17, 28) et plus tard, éventuellement, nous pourrions les introduire aux Écritures. Les gens ne pourraient guère comprendre l'expression biblique "image de Dieu" ? Empruntons l'une de leurs formules : "Nous sommes de sa race" (Ac 17, 28).

Autant le discours à la synagogue d'Antioche (Ac 13) est tout farci de références à l'Écriture, autant, quelques chapitres plus loin (Ac 17), celui d'Athènes en est totalement dépourvu. Et pourtant, la pensée qui s'y exprime est biblique d'un bout à l'autre. L'essentiel est que rien ne se perde dans le processus de transposition, de repensée et de reformulation de la foi auquel doit se soumettre l'évangélisation en passant d'une culture à l'autre.

Discernement et sens des priorités

Le discours d'Athènes témoigne encore d'une autre chose bien précieuse. Toute culture, quelles que soient les limites et les ambiguïtés qu'on puisse y déceler, comporte toujours quelque chose de positif. Ainsi Paul, à la vue de toutes les idoles encombrant Athènes, sent-il monter en lui l'indignation (Ac 17, 14). Mais, derrière cette prolifération, derrière des attitudes et des conceptions fausses qui matérialisent la divinité et fabriquent des dieux à mesure humaine, ne faut-il pas voir une sorte de pressentiment du divin, l'attente d'un plus, une soif d'absolu ? C'est de là qu'il faut partir, c'est sur ces valeurs dégagées de leur gangue qu'il faut miser : "Athéniens, vous êtes, je le constate, les plus religieux des hommes !" (Ac 17, 22).

Le discours d'Athènes parle encore de patience et du sens des priorités. Avant de parler de l'Église, des sacrements, de la morale, de Jésus Christ lui-même et de la résurrection, il importe, dans un certain type de culture, de faire retrouver d'abord le sens de la transcendance et du sérieux de Dieu. Peut-être sera-t-on tenté de brûler malgré tout des étapes, d'escamoter les longs préambules pour en arriver au plus vite à l'essentiel. On risque alors de tout compromettre : "Nous t'entendrons là-dessus une autre fois" (Ac 17, 32).

"À maintes reprises et de bien des manières" (He 1, 1) : si Dieu lui-même a procédé ainsi, pouvons-nous nous en tirer autrement ?

Réf. : Texte de l'auteur.

Church's Dialogue with Cultures and Religions

The Church's commitment to dialogue with the Asian Reality of the plurality of cultures and religions finds expression in the documents of both the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC). The statements of the CBCI and the FABC reveal the struggle of a Church come of age to liberate herself from the burden of her links with the colonial powers in the past, her claims about possessing the monopoly of truth, her imported theology and forms of worship, her eurocentrism, her cultural alienation and her desire to become authentic local Churches with an Asian face. The Church becomes truly catholic when she is transformed by entering into dialogue with the cultures and religions of Asia and transforms them with the power of the Spirit who makes everything new.

Introduction

Dialogue is the life and breath of the Church in Asia. Her inner dynamism consists in her dialogue with the *Kyrios*, her Lord and Master, guided by the Spirit for the unfolding of God's eternal plan for humanity. The Church has to dialogue with herself and with the context of her life in order to fulfil the ministry entrusted to her. It was the Church's readiness to dialogue with herself that led her to the Second Vatican Council. In the Council she was liberated from the self-defeating heresy of monologue and triumphalism. Authentic dialogue involves not only the human logos but the *Logos* and the *Pneuma* of God. Therefore, the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference gave a wider meaning even to interreligious dialogue to embrace all dimensions of human life, namely, 'economic, socio-political, cultural and religious'. It stated in unambiguous terms that it is imperative for the Church to enter into dialogue with the Asian realities of the abject poverty of the masses and the plurality of religions and cultures:

Such dialogue has become urgent in many Asian countries, where, amidst conditions of oppressive poverty and increasing social conflicts, there is a quest for an integral liberation. The pluralism of religions and cultures, while demanding collaboration among the peoples of various religions in the common task of community building, especially in the face of secularizing forces, has also become a source of increasing division and tension (Rosales & Arevalo 1992: 120).

So dialogue has been accepted as the way of life for the Church in Asia and her way of proclaiming the Gospel.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, the Church in India and Asia has become increasingly aware of her meaningful existence as a being in dialogue with her context of multiplicity of religions and cultures,

and massive poverty which we call the Asian Reality. In this article an attempt is made to highlight the Church's dialogue with one of the aspects of the Asian Reality, namely, the plurality of religions and cultures as expressed in the documents of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) and the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC). No claim is made that it is an exhaustive treatment of the subject of dialogue with this aspect of the Asian reality as articulated in the above documents. I have culled out the main points that emerged in the discussions and the deliberations of the Bishops' Conferences on the Church's response to the plurality of religions and cultures. Undoubtedly these documents reveal to us the bold attempts of the Church in Asia to initiate a process to discover her own identity in the Asian context and her eagerness to communicate the mission entrusted to her in dialogue with the cultures and religions of Asia. The process that has been initiated by the leaders of the Church must inspire further reflections and praxis.

Part I

Church's Dialogue with the Cultures of Asia

Asia could not respond to the Gospel adequately as it was presented in symbols alien to the rich cultural and religious traditions of Asia. Christianity originated in Asia like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Unlike Buddhism which is not considered a foreign religion though it has entered many Asian countries from outside, Christianity is considered foreign by the majority of the Asian people. Felix Wilfred observes that it is not because of Christianity's particular faith that it is considered foreign but because the local Churches in Asia, by and large, keep themselves aloof from the mainstream of peoples' life, history and struggles (Wilfred 1992: 120). Their failure to identify themselves with the people and their cultures did disservice to the

proclamation of the Gospel. After the Second Vatican Council, concerted efforts were made by the Church to dialogue with the cultures so that the message of Christ could incarnate in the various cultures of Asia. Both the CBCI and the FABC documents reveal the effort of the Church to dialogue with the cultural context of her mission.

The Indian Church's Attempt to Dialogue with Her Cultures

The Indian Church had made various attempts in the past to dialogue with the Indian Culture at various levels. A dialogue of life at the cultural level was already existing in some parts of the country, especially in the tribal areas, much before the talk of dialogue and inculturation gained currency after the Second Vatican Council. Terms like inculturation, adaptation, indianization, etc., presuppose the alien cultural character of the Indian Church. In recent times, therefore, the discussion goes on as to whether the Church should make patchwork adaptation of Indian cultural symbols for her life and worship or whether an attempt should be made to decolonize the Indian Church, divesting her of her colonial structure and lifestyle. Whatever that may be, to proclaim Christ and his message meaningfully the Church has to enter into dialogue with the Indian culture to allow herself to be transformed by everything good and noble and perfect in the culture, and to challenge everything dehumanizing in it, with prophetic courage and conviction.

At the General Meeting of the CBCI in 1960, Cardinal Gracius of Bombay pointed out the need to dialogue with the Indian cultural tradition for the removal of the prejudices against the Church and also for the effectiveness of her apostolate. He said:

Truth to be known and to be loved must be presented in a way adapted to the mentality of those to whom it is preached. The direct method presupposes a personal respect and a sincere esteem for Indian and Hindu traditions, languages and ways of thought. Adaptation is based on theology and is essential to the Catholicity of the Church. In brief, therefore, three conditions are necessary for a fruitful apostolate: a) a solid knowledge of the language; b) a sincere love and esteem for the Indian culture and society; c) a firm conviction that the Church has nothing to lose, and much to gain from a deeper integration into the Indian social fabric (CBCI 1960: 56-57).

It may appear that our dialogue with cultures and religious traditions was for pragmatic reasons. Though Cardinal Gracius insists that it is based on theology and is essential to the catholicity of the Church, there was much confusion and suspicion about the nature and extent of the so-called adaptation. But there was a

change in this attitude when the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship issued directives in the light of the liturgical renewal initiated by the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy. The CBCI constituted a Commission for Liturgy in 1966 and established the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre at Bangalore to promote inculturation in the area of Christian worship.

In 1967-68 a pioneering attempt was made by a team of staff and students from Dharmaram College, Bangalore to shape an 'Indian form of worship'. After the CBCI meeting, held in Dharmaram in 1968, Cardinal Parecatil, a strong advocate of the inculturation of Liturgy, entrusted Dharmaram College with the task of preparing an Indian Anaphora. Dharmaram College prepared a new liturgy incorporating important Indian elements of worship, Indian music and a new Anaphora taking into consideration Indian thought patterns. This liturgy was celebrated for some time for a selected group of people (Maliekal 1988: 288-290).

The NBCLC coordinated the work of experts who were entrusted with the task of preparing an inculturated liturgy. Their twelve proposals for the adaptation of liturgy in the Indian context and the suggestion to prepare an Indian Anaphora was submitted to Rome. The twelve points proposed, included the posture during the mass (squatting on the floor), *panchanga pranam*, simple liturgical dress, oil lamps, triple *arati*, etc. Rome welcomed the proposals. The guidelines issued by the CBCI for the preparation of an Indian Anaphora insisted that in continuity with the essential elements of the Judeo-Christian liturgical tradition, the Anaphora must express the Christian thanksgiving in forms and thought patterns harmonious with the Indian culture (CBCI 1972: 39). Following the guidelines a text for the eucharistic prayer was prepared. The Indian Anaphora included inspiring verses from Indian scriptures too.

At the CBCI General Meeting in Madras in 1972, sixty Bishops voted for the acceptance of the text of eucharistic prayer and twenty voted against it. But to the surprise and dismay of everyone involved in the preparation of a text for an Indian Anaphora, the same Sacred Congregation which encouraged the inculturation of the liturgy asked the CBCI to put an end to it. It asked the Conference to take concrete steps to prevent the circulation of the texts of non-biblical readings for liturgical purposes and the use of the new order of mass with the Indian Anaphora. It further ordered that any future attempts at inculturation should be first agreed upon by the Congregation of Divine Worship. At this juncture the CBCI did not make any attempt to clarify the misgivings of the Sacred Congregation or to ask the Congregation for an explanation for the rejection of the Indian Anaphora and the denial of freedom to take initiatives in dialoguing with

culture in the field of liturgy.

The General Meeting of the CBCI at Mangalore in 1978 gave some guidelines for adaptation. The Latin group of the CBCI agreed 'to initiate studies on elements of indigenization, submit concrete proposals to the Holy See and with the latter's approval, to set up experimentation centres' (1979:77). However, when the Liturgical Commission conducted a survey among the Bishops for this purpose, only 4 per cent answered the questionnaire sent to them. It revealed a lack of interest among the Bishops with regard to the inculturation of liturgy. Thus an enthusiastic dialogue of the Church with the culture in the field of liturgy lost its momentum though the relics of such attempts expressed themselves in some liturgical celebrations.

The Church in India is aware that dialogue with culture cannot be limited to the inculturation of her liturgy. There are various other dimensions of the culture both positive and negative which either help human beings to improve their quality of life or dehumanize them. The Meeting of the CBCI at Calcutta in 1974 was clear about this when it stated, "In both modern and traditional aspects there are elements which degrade and other elements which uplift. The evangelical task of the Church is therefore to promote the latter elements for the sake of integral development of the human person and human society" (1974: 126). While discussing the ways of the Church's integration with the culture the same meeting pointed out that there is a need to fight against blind Westernization and cultural alienation (1974: 124). It identified the negative aspects of the Indian culture such as caste, dietary and marriage prohibitions, joint family system, restrictions on women, corruption, ethnic, linguistic and communal arrogance which need to be healed. Further, the Church's dialogue with culture implied that the Church develop an indigenous theology. The CBCI, in its communication to the Synod of Rome (1974) expressed its commitment to this task. "The Church will realize her Indian identity; by adjusting herself to conditions prevailing in the country and developing an indigenous theology. Such a theology will be one of the primary tasks of the local Church, for it reflects on the implications of, and response to, the Word of God, within a particular, religio-cultural tradition" (1974: 124). This commitment of the Indian Church to an indigenous theology has initiated a process of developing a relevant theology in the Indian context.

The inculturation of the liturgy suffered a serious setback when the experiments in indigenization were stopped by the Vatican and it was demanded that future attempts receive its prior official approval. The Church's dialogue with culture seems to face a serious problem when the Bishops who are responsible for the promotion of Christian life and proclamation in

the local Church are not permitted to decide what is the right type of inculturation in their own context. If the role of the national Bishops' conferences in promoting inculturation which is not prejudicial to the faith of the universal Church be not recognized, it can create not only serious ecclesiological problems but also prevent the effective and meaningful proclamation itself.

The Church's dialogue with culture must also include other aspects of the Church like organization and administration, theological reflection, role of laymen and women in the Church, formation of Church leaders, etc. In Asia where cultures and religious traditions melt into each other, inculturation without religious overtones is unthinkable. In the Indian Church's dialogue with culture, besides the setback it suffered due to the intervention of Rome, it also suffered the lack of wholehearted support from all the Bishops of India. In spite of such setbacks the dialogue with culture continues in art, music, architecture and theological reflection, thanks to the guidance of the Spirit.

The Orientations of the FABC for a Dialogue with the Asian Cultures

At the first meeting of the Asian Bishops in Manila in 1970, in the presence of Pope Paul VI, the Asian Bishops resolved to respond to the many faces of Asia to make the Church more effective in her service to all the people of Asia who form almost two-thirds of humankind. One of the many faces of Asia, identified by the Bishops for the Church's response is its ancient and diverse cultures, religions, histories and traditions. The Bishops admitted with regret: "... we have not incarnated the Christian life and enfolded the Church in ways and patterns of our respective cultures and thus kept it alien in our lands". So they resolved to take concrete steps to correct this failure. They stated emphatically:

In the inculturation of the life and message of the Gospel in Asia, there have been hesitations and mistakes in the past, but we are more than ever convinced that the dialogue with our fellow Asians whose commitment is to other faiths is increasingly important. We also urge on all a deep respect for the culture and traditions of our peoples, and express the hope that the catholicity of the Church, may serve to help Asians remain truly Asian, and yet become fully part of the modern world and the one family of mankind (Gaudencio & Arevalo 1970: 6).

According to the Asian Bishops the dialogue with cultures is already presupposed in the formation of a local Church.

The Asian Bishops affirmed that the local Church is a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous

and inculturated:

And this means concretely a Church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, cultures, the religions — in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meanings and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts, and its language, its songs, and its artistry. Even frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed (Gaudencio & Arevalo 1970: 14).

The Church's dialogue with cultures is in imitation of the incarnation of the Son of God who assumed the totality of the human condition except sin to redeem it through his Paschal Mystery. The Bishops resolved that since God became one of us to make us his own, his Church in Asia must be Asian. Therefore, indigenization is an imperative to make the local Church be truly present within the life and cultures of the people.

Freed from its limited historical embodiments and discovered anew, the Word becomes incarnate in the cultures of the people and it becomes relevant to the life of the community. The Bishops asserted that by inculturation the Christian community finds its new identity: "The community discovers a new identity, losing nothing of its cultural riches, but integrating them in a new whole and becoming the sacrament of God's liberating love active among men" (Gaudencio & Arevalo 1970: 138). The Bishops were clear that inculturation is not a mere adaptation of a ready-made Christianity into a given situation but a creative embodiment of the Word in a local Church. It is the discovery of the seeds of the Word in the cultures and living traditions. It involves an experience of death and resurrection. Both the Church, as the messenger of the Gospel, and the cultures and traditions must be purified, healed and transformed by the saving power of the Gospel.

Inculturation as one of the tasks of the missions is a difficult and delicate task. The attitudes required for a dialogue with cultures are clear to the FABC. Certain attitudes thwart the process of this dialogue like the superiority complex which thinks that inculturation is unnecessary because other cultures are incompatible with Christianity or that Christianity is self-sufficient. Inculturation is considered by some as dangerous as it may introduce pluralism in the Church affecting its unity and the content of revelation. Such attitudes are not in consonance with the true meaning of evangelization. Over-eagerness to see results, irresponsible experimentation and undue imposition without sufficient preparation of the people are also obstacles to inculturation. Proper dialogue with cultures that foster evangelization requires docility to the Spirit

for guidance, willingness to take risks, readiness to learn from mistakes, openness to correction and ability to dialogue with sincere openness. Dialogue with culture requires openness to accept pluralism as a positive value, recognizing that the richness of the Good News has to be explored and expressed in a variety of forms because Gospel values are 'pan-cultural' and 'transcultural' in nature and are 'eminently inculturable'. "Properly speaking, it is not this or that culture that must be infused with the Gospel and its values but the people themselves, bearers of a culture" (Bulatao: 32). Without the ongoing discernment of the People of God, conversion of individuals and structures, assimilation of the Gospel values like the assimilation of food by the body, inculturation will not be successful. In the process of inculturation prophetic boldness and apostolic zeal must go hand in hand with the prudence of the Spirit of God who makes everything new.

The Bishops recommended that Christian communities develop a positive appreciation, love and acceptance of their own cultures. This would manifest itself in the creation of indigenous spirituality, liturgy, art, theological reflection and a style of life in harmony with one's own cultural heritage. Certain confusions may result from inculturation and innovative methods in evangelization. Therefore, the FABC recommends that Bishops and others who are responsible for evangelization should animate their communities towards responsible experimentation by stages subject to periodic evaluation. The Bishops observed that 'the alternation of experience and reflection will mark the process of authentic inculturation' (Gaudencio & Arevalo 1970:140). Centres of research need to be established to promote a deeper understanding of one's own culture. The dialogue with the culture should foster the better use of the Bible, and the catechesis leading to the development of a spirituality beyond the cultic level, theologizing taking the context of the people, a fostering of the contemplative dimension of the Christian faith through the study of the holy writings of Asian cultures, the encouragement of indigenous forms of prayer and asceticism and the Christian interpretation of seasonal and community celebrations. In this way Christian life becomes part and parcel of the Asian cultural life. Thus the recommendations of the FABC for a fruitful dialogue with the Asian Culture is inspired by the urgency and the commitment to proclaim the Gospel by transforming the cultural values into the values of the Gospel.

Part II Church's Dialogue with Religions

The Church's dialogue with the living religious traditions is one of those essential aspects of her mission

to incarnate herself in a particular people. The Church accepts the significant and positive elements in other religions as they belong to the economy of salvation. The FABC has repeatedly affirmed that the Church recognizes and respects the spiritual and ethical meaning and values of other religions. The religious traditions have been and continue to be the authentic expression of the noblest longings of people, and of their contemplation and prayer. They have shaped their history and cultures (Gaudencio & Arevalo 1970: 14). Therefore, it is imperative that the Church enter into dialogue with these traditions with respect and reverence and fulfil the mission entrusted to her. Both the CBCI and the FABC, aware of the importance and necessity of the Church's dialogue with the religious traditions, give theological basis, orientation, and recommendation for a meaningful dialogue with the context of religious pluralism.

Dialogue with Religions: Orientations of the CBCI

In the Indian context of a plurality of religions, the self-understanding of the Church and the relevance of her mission require constant dialogue with the people of other faiths. More than a dialogue, what often takes place is a trilogy — the Church's own dialogue with her faith tradition and the Church's dialogue with other religious traditions. The Christian partners of interreligious dialogue are aware that as Indian Christians they are inheritors of two traditions. They are heirs of a culture and tradition which sought God relentlessly and they share a faith tradition which gives them the assurance that the 'Indian search is not an unaided groping towards our Final Destiny. Rather it is sustained by the active presence of God's Spirit' (CBCI 1989: 19). Authentic dialogue with openness to share and receive will not leave the partners unaffected and unchanged after the encounter with each other.

A living faith cannot but be a faith in dialogue with its life-situation. A dialogue of life as well as systematic dialogue with the religion of the majority community had been taking place in India since many centuries. However, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially, the *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate*, and the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* gave a new impetus to the Church's commitment to dialogue with religions. The Second Vatican Council has a positive approach to other religions. It exhorted the faithful 'prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and in collaboration with other religions, and in witness to the Christian faith and life, to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral good, as well as the socio-cultural values, found in them' (NA, n.2) (CBCI 1989: 9). The CBCI Com-

mission for Dialogue and Ecumenism articulated the Church's understanding of the meaning of dialogue and its necessity as a 'serious part of apostolic ministry' to give 'pastoral and practical orientations' through its document 'Guidelines for Interreligious Dialogue'.

The cautious approach of the 1950s to a more courageous call to dialogue with religions issued by the All India Seminar in Bangalore in 1969, was preceded by a series of discussions on dialogue at various diocesan and regional seminars. The Church's dialogue with religions was further discussed and elaborated in 1971 at the International Theological Conference on Evangelization, Dialogue and Development at Nagpur and in 1973 at the All India Consultation on Evangelization at Patna. The Meeting of the CBCI in Calcutta in 1974 in its communication to the Synod of 1974, stated very clearly the need for dialogue with religions in the Indian context. It stated:

In view of the fact that India has nurtured several of the world's great religions, the Church in India is called upon to be an earnest pioneer of interreligious dialogue. It is the response of the Christian faith to God's saving presence in other religious traditions and the expression of the firm hope of their fulfilment in Christ. Done in a spirit of fraternal love, dialogue is a mutual communication and a sharing of religious experience, of spiritual and moral values enriching both the partners in a communion that seeks to foster unity among people and promotes the good things found among them (CBCI 1974: 140).

The dialogue with religions raised the question of the use of non-biblical texts in the Christian worship; and there was a discussion in the National Seminar on the same theme in 1974. A Seminar on the Sharing Worship was conducted in 1988. For the Church in India interreligious dialogue has become her way of proclaiming the Gospel in the multi-religious society in which the Church finds herself. The number of *Asbrams* and centres for interreligious dialogue that are opened in various parts of the country is the best example for this commitment to dialogue.

The document of the CBCI, *Guidelines for Interreligious Dialogue*, clarifies what the Church means by interreligious dialogue and provides the theological basis for this dialogue. Interreligious dialogue, according to this document, 'is both an attitude and an activity of committed followers of various religions who agree to meet and accept one another and work together for common ideals in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust' (CBCI 1989: 34). Quoting from the Nagpur Conference the document says, "Religious dialogue, therefore, does not mean that two persons speak about their religious experience, but rather that they speak as religiously committed persons with their ultimate commitments and religious outlook, on subjects of com-

mon interest” (CBCI 1989: 35). This common interest is to build up a just and human society and the ultimate commitment is to travel together as pilgrims to our Ultimate destiny helping one another to overcome the limitations in this journey.

The theological foundation for dialogue is both Pneumatological and Christological. The all-pervading presence of the Spirit of God invites all to be open to the Spirit’s presence in everything genuinely human. Jesus’ attitude of openness to accept the people of other faiths without any discrimination and to recognize in them ‘a faith greater than that of Israel’ inspires us to enter into dialogue with total openness to other religious traditions. The fruits of dialogue can be mutually enriching for its partners. A Christian can learn from her/his Hindu partner of dialogue, a deeper awareness of the Absolute Reality of God and the ways to enter into union with him; from the Muslim a Christian can learn the courage to profess her/his faith in public and his/her reverence for the will and majesty of God; and from the Buddhists s/he can learn the radical meaning of spiritual liberation.

The CBCI document makes it clear that interreligious dialogue is not intended to make conversion from one religion to another:

When it is rightly said that dialogue does not aim at ‘making converts’ the meaning is that the intention of Christians or Hindus or any other participants in a dialogue activity is not to convince the others of their own beliefs or to bring them over to their communities, but rather in sincerity and disinterested love to give witness to their own faith and to be enriched by the religious values found in others (1989: 38).

Then what is the relationship between dialogue and evangelization? Evangelization can be understood in a broad or in a narrow sense. In the broad sense it can mean any activity undertaken to promote and strengthen the ideal of the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached. According to the third Synod of the Bishops, evangelization is ‘action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world’: In the broad sense of evangelization dialogue is understood as an activity that brings about greater understanding and union of hearts. For some there is no conflict between evangelization and dialogue because they see evangelization in a broad sense and find that sharing and witnessing to one’s own faith itself is evangelization. Some others further claim that dialogue is the only form of evangelization as both partners listen to the Word of God and give witness to it.

There is tension within the Church and within individual Christians between the broad and narrow approaches to evangelization and therefore there is a difference in their understanding of the purpose of

interreligious dialogue. The CBCI document on Dialogue tries to show that this tension needs to be accepted as part of life and as the expression of the various charisms and vocations in the Church. It shows the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ situation of the Church. The ‘already’ dimension of the Church impels her to proclaim to others to accept and experience by their conversion the eschatological Kingdom in anticipation as mandated by the risen Lord. The ‘not yet’ situation prompts the Church to dialogue with the members of other religions and groups as it is the duty of everyone ‘to seek from within the human community an understanding and accomplishment of God’s design for humanity’ (CBCI 1989: 40-41). Does it mean that some have the charism to enter into dialogue with other religions, share their faith experience and learn from others and work for the common good of humanity and that others have the charism to call others to conversion to accept Christ and his Church? The document says, “In whatever way one articulates one’s understanding of dialogue and proclamation, the perspective should always be that of the Kingdom of God. We are all pilgrims towards that state where God will fully reign over all humanity” (CBCI 1989: 41).

All the participants in dialogue need inner conversion to reach the ideals proclaimed by their own religious tradition. This inner conversion should be complemented by some visible expressions. When and in what form this takes place is left to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and to the discernment of the community of believers. The clarity of understanding the tension between dialogue and proclamation or the broad and narrow understanding of evangelization and of recognizing them as charisms seems to fade when the document on Dialogue further says:

Dialogue cannot be an escape from and substitute for the task of proclaiming Christ. As far as Christians are concerned, a sincere dialogue with deep faith in Christ involves a witnessing to him, since it is a sincere sharing of one’s faith characterised by all forms of truth. On the other hand, all evangelisation is just an offer made in a spirit of dialogue. The Good News cannot be imposed or imparted by any form of deceit or fraud. It can be shared by partners ready to receive it with joy. Any form of evangelisation which forgets this dialogical spirit is a betrayal of Jesus Christ who came to fulfil and not to abolish (CBCI 1989: 42).

The struggle of the document to accommodate various missiological positions is clear from the above statement. However, the document gives clear pastoral suggestions for a fruitful dialogue with religions. It admits that dialogue with other religions presupposes ecumenical relationship among the various Christian denominations. In fact, dialogue with other religions is an expression of the Church’s commitment to a ‘wider

ecumenism'. Such dialogue requires from the Christian partner a prayerful attitude, a deep commitment to faith which is lived within a perspective of search for the Beyond, a great sense of honesty and truthfulness, humility to listen, sensitivity to the feelings of others, a deep love of God and for the partners of dialogue and an awareness that though we are graced by the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ we do not have the monopoly of truth. Dialogue with religions calls for openness to the world-views of the partners in dialogue, knowledge of the basic religious ideas and thought patterns of each other. It must be conducted in an atmosphere of reconciliation for the sins the religions committed against one another and at the same time courageously facing the questions of justice and the oppression of the poor and marginalized in the name of religions.

The Christian partner in interreligious dialogue must avoid the danger of interpreting and categorizing others while pretending to listen. Authentic dialogue can take place only when there is openness to others and their differences and respect for them. Therefore, syncretism of false levelling of religions on the one hand and a polemical or an apologetic spirit on the other hand must be avoided.

The document speaks of two types of interreligious dialogue. One is 'interior dialogue' (CBCI 1989: 52), which includes the preparation of Christians through proper catechesis about other religious traditions at all levels of Christian life as well as philosophical and theological formation especially in seminaries and religious houses. The interior dialogue also includes integrating into our prayer life the spiritual treasures of other religions. The document on dialogue suggests the use of the religious texts like Bhagavad Gita, the Quran, the Upanishads, the Adi Granth, the hymns of Sufi poets, Gitanjali, etc. for prayer (CBCI 1989:56). The second type of interreligious dialogue is 'exterior dialogue' (CBCI 1989: 56) which involves dialogues of action, study and reflection, prayer, living together and association. Religions can enter into a deeper dialogue when they come together and work together for the upliftment of the poor and the marginalized. The document gives many practical ways of entering into 'exterior dialogue'.

It is an integral part of our commitment to interreligious dialogue that we have respect for the sacred places and sacred times of other religions. Visits to such sacred places and participation in sacred festivals must be with reverence and must be seen as occasions for raising our minds and hearts to God who cannot be limited to any place. However, a false syncretism of an active participation which is specific and exclusive to other religions must be avoided (CBCI 1989: 81). The Church encourages the liturgical cel-

ebrations of the festivals of other religions. Our educational institutions should provide opportunities for the students of other religions to deepen their religious faith through the study of their scriptures and prayers. The Church encourages private and public dialogue with persons of other faiths and also with atheists and non-believers.

The guidelines given by the CBCI for an effective dialogue with religions reveal the desire of the Church in India to respond meaningfully to the situation of religious pluralism. The pluralism of religions is seen by the Church as a gift of God rather than as a burden. Encounter with great religious traditions liberates the Church from its triumphalism and exclusivism. Though one may still find a lack of clarity with regard to the dichotomy between dialogue and proclamation and the definitive position of the Church about conversion, the document on interreligious dialogue is a major achievement of the CBCI in promoting an effective dialogue with religions.

The FABC's Understanding of Dialogue with Religions

In the Statement of the First Plenary Assembly of the FABC in 1974 we find the basic orientation of the Asian Bishops' Conference for a dialogue with the religions of Asia. The issues specific to a dialogue with Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism were taken up in the assemblies of the Bishops' Institute for Religious Affairs (BIRA) I, II and III, respectively. The International Congress on Mission held in Manila, in 1979 underlined the urgency of interreligious dialogue for the local Churches in Asia.

The First Plenary Assembly Statement affirmed that the Church accepts other religions as significant and positive elements in God's plan of salvation. The other religions are seen by the Church as the treasury of religious experiences, the source of light and strength for the contemporaries and the authentic expression of the noblest longings of hearts. The Church respects them for their spiritual and ethical values and meanings. If God has drawn people to himself through these religions, we can discover the seeds of the Word in them. Dialogue with religions will enable Christians to find authentic ways of living and expressing their Christian faith. Our faith in Christ can help us to discern what we can receive from other religions and what we can give them.

The Statement of the BIRA I (1979), while dealing with the Church's dialogue with Buddhism, spelt out clearly the motivations of dialogue as well as its nature, characteristics and forms. It gave also certain pastoral orientation for dialogue. The statement admitted certain obstacles for dialogue and listed them: the con-

nection of the Church with colonialism of the past, inadequate inculturation, 'foreignness' attributed to Christianity, mutual attitudes of cultural and religious superiority, negative and insufficient motives for dialogue, etc. However there is the desire for dialogue among people to create a more just and human society, to return to the cultural roots, to incarnate the Church in its worship, theology, lifestyle, structures by being truly the local Church. The motivation for dialogue is to manifest the salvific will of God, "As there is no salvation except through the saving grace of God, all salvation attained by men is the fruit of the gift of Christ" (Rosales & Aravelo 1992: 110).

In dialogue the incarnate Word that is spoken into history receives full meaning in history. Therefore, dialogue is intrinsic to the life of the Church and the essential mode of all evangelization, "Although endowed with ways proper to it, its import excludes it as a tactic in proselytism". Dialogue by nature is a process of talking and listening, of giving and receiving, of searching and studying, for the deepening and enriching of one another's faith and understanding. The BIRA I identified three forms of dialogue: the dialogue which promotes mutual understanding and harmony; the dialogue of life where people come together to promote unity, love, truth, justice and peace; and the dialogue of prayer and religious experience. The BIRA I made many recommendations to the Bishops to foster interreligious dialogue. These include setting up of national and regional centres for dialogue, collaborating with the leaders of other religions to respond to specific issues, giving formation for dialogue, promoting cooperation among institutions both religious and secular in areas of social welfare, educational, business, legal and medical professions, using mass media for promoting dialogue, encouraging dialogue as a component of parish life, etc. The BIRA I, thus, laid a good foundation for the Church's dialogue with other religions.

The BIRA II (1979) had the specific purpose of deepening the Church's understanding of and commitment to dialogue with Muslims. Both Christians and Muslims share an eagerness to serve one God, await his judgement, and hope in his eternal reward. However, certain fears, prejudices and ignorance of one another's religion, and the triumphalistic attitudes of both religions hinder dialogue between them. In spite of these obstacles there is a growing awareness among Christians to dialogue with Muslims. In its pastoral orientation, BIRA II identified different forms of dialogue at various levels of encounter between Christians and Muslims, "In dialogue, therefore, a Christian hopes that both he and his Muslim brother will turn anew to God's Kingdom, their own faiths richer by their mutual interchange, their mission to the world more fruitful by their shared insights and commit-

ments" (Rosales & Aravelo 1992: 115).

The Statement of BIRA III (1982) affirmed that dialogue and proclamation are complementary and clarified the objective of dialogue, "Sincere and authentic dialogue does not have for its objective the conversion of the other. For conversion depends solely on God's internal call and the person's free decision" (Rosales & Aravelo 1992: 120). Further it stated that interreligious dialogue cannot be confined to the religious sphere alone but must embrace all aspects of human life as the Church and other religions are at the service of the world. The quest for God, which is characteristic of the peoples of Asia, provides the context for dialogue among the religions.

For the promotion of dialogue among Hindus and Christians BIRA III recommended the preparation of people at all levels for this purpose through instruction and training. Common celebration of certain festivals like *Divali* (festival of lights) and *Pongal* (harvest festival), prayer, common reading of the Scriptures, sharing of spiritual experiences, reflections, discussions, live-ins, etc., are some of the activities for promoting dialogue. Dialogue can be furthered by common action for the promotion of values like freedom, justice, equality for integral human liberation and for the eradication of social evils like caste, communalism, corruption and the exploitation of the weak. The task of inculturation must be taken up earnestly as it is inseparably related to dialogue in life, spirituality and worship. Dialogue with Hindus will be more effective if it is an ecumenical venture giving common witness to the Gospel.

The FABC documents reveal the earnestness of the Church to fulfil the mission entrusted to her by the Lord in a relevant and meaningful way in dialogue with the other religions. The exclusivism and triumphalism in the attitude of the Church towards other religions in the past had hindered her mission of proclaiming the Gospel effectively in Asia. The new self-understanding of the Church emerged at the Second Vatican Council and her understanding of God's presence and action in other religions changed her attitude to other religions. The Church in Asia carried forward this vision of the Church with clarity, conviction and courage. All the documents of the FABC on interreligious dialogue have given the theological foundation, the motives and the practical orientations for fruitful dialogue with other religions. They continue to have impact on the local Churches of the various countries of Asia.

Conclusion

The Church can fulfil her mission of sharing in God's plan of integral liberation of humans only by

dialoguing with her context of mission. The Asian context of the Church is rich in having a variety of cultures and religions. Therefore, the Church in Asia realizes that she has to enter into dialogue with cultures and religions with clarity, conviction and courage. Since 1970 the Bishops in the Asian countries, through their national conferences and the Federation of the Asian Bishops, have been attempting to evolve ways and means to dialogue with the complex Asian reality. The statements of the CBCI and the FABC reveal the struggle of a Church come of age to liberate herself from the burden of her links with the colonial powers in the past; her claims about possessing the monopoly of truth, her imported theology and forms of worship; her eurocentrism, her cultural alienation and her desire to become truly incarnate as a local Church with an Asian face. The message of the eternal Word that became incarnate once and for all in history can bring about the integral liberation of humans only if he is discovered and experienced within the cultures, religions and history of the Asian people.

The local Churches in Asian countries, sharing in the life and mission of the whole Church, must continue to promote dialogue with the reality of poverty and injustice, plurality of cultures and religious traditions at all levels of their life. The leadership of the Church in Asia must see the urgency to continue this dialogue with a deeper conviction and a renewed commitment in the context of neocolonialism and religious fundamentalism. The Church in Asia must reveal to her partners in dialogue the motives of her initiatives in entering into dialogue with them. There is a lot of confusion about the narrow and the broad understanding of evangelization, social work for development and social action for liberation, dialogue for inner conversion and the common good or for the purpose of conversion as generally understood. This issue needs to be clarified once and for all for the effective proclamation of the Gospel. It might remain a cross for the Church that her motives for dialogue may always be misinterpreted by some. But the Church should state in unambiguous terms the implications of her vocation to proclaim the Good News of liberation brought by Jesus her Lord, and guided by his Spirit for the glory of God and for the integral liberation of humans.

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P. Robert Guruswamy

Asian Reflection on Violence

P. Robert Guruswamy is the director of the Institute for Development Education, Chennai, India. He read this paper at ACISCA's (Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia) Directors' Conference, in Bangkok, Thailand, held from 15-20 October 2000.

Introduction

Violence is not new in the long history of human kind. For centuries upon centuries, there have been sporadic cases of violence here and there. But in recent times, there has been a culture of violence, mostly initiated and strengthened by groups of people, governments (dictatorial, military and even the democratic), hijackers, terrorist organizations, at almost every level — local, national and international. It is spreading like wildfire threatening the very survival of humanity.

This paper tries to analyse the causes and types of violence, and of the steps being taken to solve the problem, from the point of view of the NGOs; that too from the religious perspective.

Sources of violence

Conflict is the starting point towards violence. What is the content of 'conflict'? It may be a serious disagreement or a struggle or a fight. If the conflict is not settled, it develops into violence — a physical force, causing hurt or even death to the people. If violence is not contained, terrorism creeps in. It is like a flood that sweeps away the people including those who are innocent or have no direct involvement e.g., a bomb that explodes in public places like a railway station, market, worship centre or while travelling on a bus, train or plane that may injure or kill people at random.

Among the causes for violence, the following are common in Asia:

Violence arising from human rights violations

The affirmation of the sacredness, dignity and worth of all human beings who are created free and equal is at the root of all human rights i.e., the right to be human. This was incorporated into the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. It declares in Article 1: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood'.

Again Article 3 proclaims: 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person'. Article 21 affirms: 'No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedures established by law'.

In spite of the above provisions in the Constitutions of Asian countries, there are deliberate and constant violations, imposing different types of violence on the people by the anti-social elements, the dictatorial and corrupt governments, the law enforcing authorities and even by the government, police, army, political leaders and parties, etc. Some of the common acts of violence are:

- Dehumanizing the already marginalized and oppressed people like dalits, aboriginals, tribals, etc.
- Deliberate or subtle domineering of the majority community over the minority community — religious, linguistic, ethnic, nationality, regional, sub-regional within the country.
- Atrocities to women — rape, wife-battering, flesh trade, dowry, death, etc.
- Attacks by one religious community against another religious community — damaging the places of worship and destroying the Scriptures, beating and killing priests and other religious leaders.
- Child abuse in the form of child labour and child prostitution.
- Poverty, unemployment, bonded labour, economic disparities, oppressive social structure, illiteracy, ignorance and such like are breeding grounds for violence.

Manufacturing and marketing of arms and weapons

Some of the developed countries have large industries that manufacture and sell arms and weapons, both light and heavy. In the name of the 'basic right of citizens', the people of these countries possess and use light arms and weapons for self defence or for pleasure in hunting animals and birds. But these are being more and more misused by youths, especially those addicted to drugs and alcoholic drinks.

The situation is worse in Asia when these indus-

tries market their goods with a view to earning huge profits. The availability of arms and weapons among the people of Asian countries causes social, political and ethnic conflicts and violence, denying people the tradition of settling problems by non-violent methods, and disturbing peace in the community. Apart from heavy human casualties, illicit trading of these materials encourages anti-social elements and criminal activities, money-laundering, trafficking of drugs, various black-market commodities and other illegal activities.

It is evident that these industries, with the support of some corrupt politicians, sell arms and weapons to dictatorial and military governments. In certain cases such industries supply to both the ruling and opposition (political) parties or to the two groups fighting against each other.

Consequently, the Asian countries spend a large percentage of the national budget on the acquisition and use of these items. Asia is becoming increasingly a continent of violence. It is gratifying to note that there are NGOs dealing with this problem through awareness activities, organising public opinion against it and bringing pressure upon the governments to fight against the culture of violence.

Inter-communal conflict

Conflict implies a state of incompatibility between the values and goals of different groups and committees. This state includes also the means of achieving them. Conflict promotes social process in turmoil by bringing in new values and goals which consequently cause internal dynamics. The oppressed and marginalized groups gain awareness of their lowly status and gather the courage to turn their dreams into reality. The dynamism of the conflict results in the overthrow of the old *élites* — the high caste, the rich, the people with vested interests — political, social, economic, cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic — who experience shock as they lose their power, social status and all such possessions. The dynamics of conflict cause suffering and even death. But it also takes the old society out of its rut and enables to initiate a new course in the hope of achieving social justice and economic equality. Conflict leads to violence wherever societies are more rigidly stratified, and people from the lower strata are not allowed to move up, as with the caste system in India. As long as the upper class or the ruling class, as in the case of almost every country in South Asia, is powerful — politically, socio-culturally, there may be communal or class conflict.

Positive response to violence

Efforts are being made to deal with the problem of violence.

Prophetic faith and institutional faith support harmony and conflict

The prophetic vision of a new society is based on justice, equality and liberty, challenging the established stratified society. It calls for the dismantling of the old social structures, and supports revolt against the vested interests of the upper classes. It encourages the oppressed and the marginalized to unite and demand social justice, economic equality and political power, whereas the institutionalized religion goes to the defence of the *status quo* in the name of tradition, discipline and order in the society. Thus religion is itself the source of conflict.

It is also evident that the institutionalized faith, especially the fundamentalists in each religion, also causes the conflict. This happens when each religion insists that it is the only true faith and salvation is only through that faith. This has created and continues to create violence, terrorism and death on a mass scale. It is equally true that the prophetic faith supports violence to get rid of the dictatorial leadership for e.g., the then direct support of the World Council of Churches to the South African people against the racist government.

Religion as a promoter of communal harmony as well as conflict

Religion contains both divine and human elements. The divine element functions through the prophetic faith to usher in social justice, equality and liberty, whereas the human element institutionalizes the faith as a social institution with its inherent characteristics of endorsing the *status quo* and identifying itself with the ruling and upper classes. But underneath, the unrest of the lower groups will simmer and wait for an opportunity to strike at the roots of exploitation. Whenever the social stratification is flexible as in the case of some developed countries, people from the lower stratum are allowed to enter the upper stratum. Also the upper stratum shares power and advantages with those who remain in the lower stratum. Such a situation is observed in some countries of South Asia, especially between the middle and lower groups — caste and class.

Since the people in Asia are basically religious, the solution of any problem — social, economic, political — will have to be through the united action of the religions. Inter-faith understanding and action is an instrument to promote such united actions. Inter-faith dialogue, as an aspect of that instrument, aims at promoting national/Asian integration and human solidarity irrespective of political and economic factors. It implies that religion, on the one hand, is a powerful uniting force between fellow believers, more than any

other emotional bond. But on the other hand, it works as a divisive power polarizing its own believers of other religions. The challenging task of inter-faith dialogue is to bring about a united emotional force which will not only unite its own followers but also unite the followers of different faiths which are culturally as well as theologically far different or even opposed to each other. This is indeed a difficult task but it is worth undertaking, not only for human solidarity but for human survival itself.

Basic assumptions for human solidarity

Certain basic assumptions are imperative for practicing and experiencing human solidarity. These are:

Human diversity

All religions are not the same, nor do they have the same objectives. They are different and are based upon a different understanding of God, human person, nature and the purpose of creation, depending upon the religious and cultural background of the people and their personal interests.

Religion means different things to different people, and the need for religion must be fulfilled at different levels for different people. Since people are different, their emotional and psychological needs are different. Each individual member seeks satisfaction of his or her own needs, which may be found in a religion other than the one in which the person is raised.

Respect for other religions

While believing in one's own religion of his/her choice, it is also important to have respect for other religious faiths, to understand their special features and appreciate something new that faith may have in strengthening his/her own beliefs. It is important that we accept the validity of each other's personal religious experience. Mahatma Gandhi says: 'My religion is Hinduism, which for me, is religion of humanity and includes the best of all religious known to me !'¹

Freedom of choice of religion

Every person should be free to adopt the religious faith that he or she likes most, and that the choice must be honoured. It should be regarded as a matter of conviction, not a matter of birth or the dictates of an institution.

Solution to human problems

In the defence of human rights and in the service

of people's needs, all religions find areas of mutual understanding and collaboration. Religions are together engaged in their common struggle against materialistic and atheistic attitudes to life. In an Asia filled with poverty, disease, ignorance and suffering, genuine spirituality as an aspect of human solidarity could change the mind of man/woman, and change the whole of Asia/the world for the better. True spirituality is deeply concerned with bringing relief to all those who are suffering or in want.

Human solidarity is an inner attitude of mind and heart with emphasis on the inner-person and inward transformation of the human life. Human solidarity is thus the fruit of union between people and union of people with God.

Conclusion

Hope of arresting the trends of violence

There is a sign of hope with concrete efforts being taken to tackle the problem of violence at the local, national, regional and global levels. The fact that the United Nations realized that 'World Peace' is feasible not just with globalisation and liberalisation through the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the World Trade Organization, but also in mobilizing the religious and spiritual resources of the people in the world — is a right step in this direction. A new and dramatic action in the new millennium was that the United Nations conducted the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, the first of its kind, at the United Nations, New York, USA, 28-31 August 2000. This summit strengthens the efforts made by the centenary celebration of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in the year 1997, in initiating a global ethical code for human living with justice and peace. The statement issued by the Summit in August 2000 entitled 'Commitment to Global Peace' is an effective source of healing humanity from the cancer of violence.

May ACISCA pledge itself to arrest the trends of violence, and to eliminate it from Asia.

Notes:

¹ M.K. Gandhi, reply to S. Radhakrishnan in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, eds. S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936, p. 21.

Prof. Venkatesh Seshamani

A Hindu View of the Declaration of Zambia as a Christian Nation

In this article, Professor Venkatesh Seshamani of the University of Zambia explores the implications of Zambia's Declaration as a Christian nation from a Hindu perspective.

In December 1991, President Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian Nation. The Declaration was subsequently accorded constitutional status after it was included in the Preamble in 1996. Before I try to provide a Hindu perspective on this Declaration, it is necessary for me to state some of the distinct features of Hinduism which inform the Hindu psyche in general.

Hinduism: An Explanation

Hinduism does not have any distinct origin in history like most other formal religions. It cannot be traced to any one personality like Jesus in the case of Christianity, Mohammed in the case of Islam, Zoroaster in the case of Zoroastrianism, Buddha in the case of Buddhism, Mahavira in the case of Jainism, Nanak in the case of Sikhism, Lao Tse in the case of Taoism, and so on.

Neither is there any one distinct spiritual text in Hinduism that has the status of the Bible, the Koran, the Zendavesta, the Granth Sahib and the like. The Bhagavad Gita or simply the Gita is often cited as the Hindu Holy Book. In a sense it contains the Word of God, so to speak. But the Gita is only a part of a long epic called the Mahabharata which narrates the story of two rival royal families that stake their claim to the throne.

The story of the Mahabharata is narrated in some 24,000 stanzas and the Gita covers only some 400 of these stanzas.

In sum, one might even say that *there is no such religion called Hinduism*. It was only a name given to describe the way of life of the inhabitants of India (called Hindus since they resided along the river Sindhu or Indus) practiced since times immemorial.

This way of life was based on *Sanatana Dharma*, an expression in Sanskrit which can be broadly translated as eternal and immutable principles of righteous conduct. An underlying premise of *Sanatana Dharma* is the acceptance of the unity of humankind.

In the North of India, the motto in Sanskrit was:

“This is mine and that is yours is the reckoning of little minds; to the broadminded the whole universe is one family”. In South India, the Tamils professed an equivalent motto that “every country is my country and every person my tribesman”.

The belief in the oneness of humankind is linked to the belief in the common lordship of one God. There is again a gross misconception among a lot of people that Hinduism is polytheistic. To the contrary, Hinduism is as monotheistic as Islam or Christianity. But a fundamental differentiating characteristic of Hinduism is a sort of pantheistic liberalism: the freedom to worship the one God in any form that a person wishes to.

Krishna, the divine preceptor of the Gita, says: “In whatever form a devotee wishes to worship me, I shall render steadfast his devotion to me in that very form”. A Hindu can worship God as Rama, Krishna, Shiva, or in any of the countless forms that exist in the pantheon of gods.

But a Hindu can worship even Jesus or Allah if that is what he likes best to do and still be a Hindu. This is what subscribers to other formal religions do not often understand. But this is a key feature of Hinduism that has promoted the spirit of tolerance towards all religions.

A Hindu does not really look at other religions as something different. To him they are only variations of Hinduism itself. That is why when Mahatma Gandhi was once asked to what religious denomination he belonged, he replied: “I am a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian and a Jew; for, either I am all of these or I am none of these”.

Perhaps this eclecticism can be illustrated by one of my own experiences. Some years ago I went to attend a conference with a Zambian Christian colleague in one of the cities of Europe which is famous for its beautiful churches.

On a Sunday, we were passing by one of these churches and I told my colleague that we should go inside and pray. I then began to walk into the church but suddenly found my colleague standing at the door.

I went back and asked him why he did not come in. He told me that it was a Catholic church but that he was not a Catholic. He then told me that I could go and pray and that he would wait for me!

So there was a Hindu who wanted to go and pray inside a church and there was a non-Catholic Christian who did not even want to enter the Catholic church! My point in narrating this incident is not to berate my colleague but to illustrate how a Hindu mind works.

The Declaration

With this preamble, I now come to the Declaration contained in the Constitutional Preamble, namely, that Zambia is a Christian Nation. As long as this Declaration is made with an eclectic import, a Hindu would find no problem with it. In fact, it would be as good as declaring Zambia a Hindu Nation!

This is not a dramatic statement. Hinduism is not a proselytizing religion. In fact you can't even have a Hindu proselyte from another religion. A Hindu could formally convert to Christianity, or Islam but the other way round is not possible.

A couple of years ago, when I delivered a lecture on Hinduism, one of the students asked me what he should do if he wanted to become a Hindu. I replied that if he was trying to live his life according to the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount, he was already a Hindu! For the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount are only reaffirmations of the age-old *Sanatana Dharma*.

From the way President Chiluba has rationalized his Declaration, it undoubtedly sounds eclectic. Had he declared, for instance, that Zambia is a born-again Christian State, there could have been room for misgivings regarding its eclectic character.

But as it now stands, it seems only to purport to remind Zambians of the primacy of man as a moral being and hence the imperative for him to try his best to follow the path prescribed by Jesus. It would indeed be a great achievement for Zambia if this happened.

Moral capital formation is as vital to a country's development as physical and human capital formation. But here we must remind ourselves that Jesus was

emphatic that to follow his path was not just to accept him but to act according to his teachings.

To enter the kingdom of God, it is not enough to say "Lord, Lord", but to abide by the will of the Lord.

Any such declaration has obviously to be made in a language that the people would understand. Over 72 per cent of the Zambian population is Christian at least in the nominal sense. So when the President says: "every inch of this land belongs to Jesus Christ", it would readily strike a chord in most people's hearts.

If he were equivalently to declare that every inch of Zambia belonged to Vshnu or Ahura Mazda, how many could understand or appreciate him? There is therefore no harm in declaring Zambia a Christian Nation if its intention is to exhort people to conduct themselves according to the righteous principles of the word of God.

Pitfalls of Declaration

Having said this, I must however, also point out what I consider to be the pitfalls in making such a Declaration — and the pitfalls are many.

The understanding of the one who makes such a Declaration need not be the same as that of those who receive such a Declaration. While the one making this Declaration may be eclectic in his views, others need not be so.

By virtue of their religion being uniquely accorded constitutional status, a feeling of religious superiority can develop among Christians that suggests:

- If it is Christian it must be good and if it is good it must be Christian.

- If it is not Christian, it cannot be good and if it is not good it is because it is not Christian.

This assignment of a one-to-one correspondence between Christianity and goodness could lead to discriminatory practices — a tacit system of *apartheid* based on religion.

The greater danger would be if this feeling of religious superiority degenerates into bigotry that prompts one to look at all non-Christians as lost souls that need to be saved. Some time back I was watching a programme on CNN involving a discussion between Jewish and Christian Church leaders in the United States.

The Jewish leader contended that no matter what

one believed, as long as one was leading an honest life, God would still be pleased. One of the Christian leaders did not accept this and contended that salvation depended on whether one accepted Jesus Christ as one's personal saviour or not. The Jewish leader then asked if Mahatma Gandhi must be in hell because he was not a Christian and by the same token whether Hitler could have gone to heaven had he confessed to his holocaust sins.

The Christian leader hinted that such was indeed the case. Stunned, the Jewish leader exclaimed that he could not believe that he was hearing this!

But such rigid attitudes need not be ruled out even here in Zambia. One can recollect the attempt, very soon after Chiluba made his Declaration, to ban Islamic programmes from television and radio. Besides one cannot forget the Livingstone episode a few years ago in which the Hindu temple and the Islamic mosque were destroyed.

These events may not be directly linked to the Declaration and may have been caused by other motives. But the danger that all non-Christian religious or spiritual practices may be branded as dangerous or as satanic cults cannot be ruled out.

From this perspective that suggests the possibility of the development of religious superiority, religious *apart-heid* and bigotry, the statement in the Preamble to the Constitution is an oxymoron. It declares Zambia a Christian nation while upholding the right of every person to enjoy that person's freedom of conscience or religion. But how secure can religious minorities feel in a State that does not profess to be secular even if the constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and worship?

There are several Islamic States in the world wherein there are Christians and Hindus and also Christian churches and Hindu temples. It is questionable if these Christians and Hindus are freely practicing their respective religions.

In the Islamic State of Saudi Arabia, for instance, I understand it is a crime even to display the Bible in public. Of course, there is presently no such problem for the Hindus in Zambia. No material change has occurred for the Hindu community so far since and as a result of the Declaration.

But what assurance is there that this will be the case in the future as well? Especially when the present leaders are no longer there?

Constitutional Status

The Constitutional status of Christianity also raises

the issue of equality of opportunity to people of all religions to contest political offices, especially the Presidency. Could a non-Christian, if elected President, truly owe allegiance to the Constitution that declares Zambia a Christian Nation?

But in the first place, would a Christian vote for a non-Christian as President when he knows that such a person, if elected, would have to take an oath to uphold the Constitution that accords this special status to Christianity? These are the kind of inconvenient questions that come to mind.

In 1996, Zambians voted for Mr Dipak Patel, a Hindu, in the Parliamentary elections even when he stood as an Independent against the MMD Christian candidate. It was a testimony not only to Mr Patel's political calibre but also to the maturity of the Zambian voters in his constituency who obviously did not let religious considerations influence their voting decisions.

By his work in his constituency Mr Patel was known and judged. But with the passage of time and with the growing amount of print and electronic media being devoted to the propagation of Christianity that is not always confined to the interpretation of the Gospel, could one expect such maturity to continue?

I do not regularly watch the Christian programmes on television. But I remember in one such programme that I did watch, the televangelist clearly suggested that non-Christians cannot reach God. Then, in a reference to Mahatma Gandhi, he said: "He led his people to independence but he did not lead them to God".

Such statements which, in my own opinion, constitute a gross prevarication from truth, and when made by people skilled in the art of rhetorical claptrap, if broadcast repeatedly, can serve as a powerful medium of indoctrination and eventually transform the minds of indiscriminating viewers and listeners to make them hard-core bigots. *This is the potential danger we must avoid.*

Ref.: JCTR (Jesuit Centre for Theological reflection), n. 46, Fourth Quarter 2000.

Père Jean-Claude Djereke, SJ

Que signifie, pour l'Église en Afrique, être garant de l'espérance ?

Introduction

Où ou non, les hommes d'Église sont-ils en mesure d'être garants de la vie dans une Afrique où le non-respect des droits humains est encore monnaie courante ? Au moment où les guerres, les maladies, la mal-gouvernance et la misère font diminuer l'espérance de vie dans certains pays, comment l'Église peut-elle être l'espérance des peuples africains ? Le présent article voudrait essayer de répondre à cette double interrogation. On dira, auparavant, ce qu'on entend par "espérance chrétienne" et ce qui est attendu des hommes d'Église dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui.

Qu'est-ce que l'espérance chrétienne ?

Ici, je m'inspire particulièrement de *Le principe espérance*, ouvrage dans lequel Ernst Bloch montre que l'espérance chrétienne n'est pas une espérance qui accepterait le *statu quo* mais une espérance active, voire subversive de l'ordre établi. Celui qui est habité par une telle espérance est nécessairement un anti-conformiste, c'est-à-dire quelqu'un qui refuse de se conformer à un monde d'anti-valeurs telles que l'injustice, le mensonge, l'exploitation, le refus d'être soi-même parce qu'on a peur de perdre avantages et privilèges matériels, etc. Sa manière de respecter l'ordre est justement de remettre en cause cet ordre fait d'injustice, de mensonge, d'exploitation et d'infidélité à soi-même. C'est cette thèse que développe Gustavo Gutierrez dans son œuvre maîtresse *Théologie de la libération*. Pour le théologien péruvien, en effet, espérer consiste à accueillir le futur comme un don de Dieu non pas passivement mais "dans le refus de l'injustice, dans la protestation contre les droits de l'homme foulés aux pieds et dans la lutte pour la paix et la fraternité".¹

Les attentes

Il importe d'avoir présente à l'esprit cette conception de l'espérance pour comprendre les enjeux de la conférence prononcée en 1996 par Mgr Laurent Monsengwo à l'Institut catholique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Abidjan). Dans cette conférence, l'archevêque de Kisangani faisait remarquer que, si certains pays africains ont fait appel à des hommes d'Église pour les aider à sortir de leur crise au début des années 90, cela ne signifie pas seulement que ces pays faisaient plus confiance à l'Église qu'à la classe politique jugée

responsable de l'effondrement de nos économies. Cela veut dire aussi, d'après lui, que les populations attendent désormais beaucoup des hommes d'Église. Plus précisément, on attend que l'Église soit à tout moment l'espérance du peuple, qu'elle soit "la garante de la vie et de la survie du peuple". Et Monsengwo de conclure que l'Église renoncerait à cette mission qu'elle perdrait sa raison d'être.²

De fait, même si toutes les conférences nationales présidées par des hommes d'Église n'ont pas connu la même réussite qu'au Bénin, le fait est là que les populations font confiance à l'Église et qu'elles attendent d'elle non seulement qu'elle les aide à gérer leurs inévitables conflits mais aussi qu'elle joue un rôle prophétique qu'elle tient, du reste, de son Maître et Seigneur. Cela signifie que prêtres et évêques ne devront plus se taire quand des citoyens seront arrêtés, emprisonnés ou assassinés à cause de leurs idées, quand un petit groupe de personnes fera main basse sur les richesses nationales, quand des chefs d'État utiliseront les maigres ressources de leur pays pour financer des sectes criminelles en Europe³, quand des hommes et des femmes compétents seront forcés à travailler sous les ordres de personnes notoirement incompétentes et corrompues.

Comment être l'espérance des peuples ?

1. Refuser la division

Mais prêtres et évêques ne pourront redonner espoir et confiance autour d'eux que s'ils refusent de se laisser diviser par ceux qui n'ont pas compris que la politique est service des intérêts de tout le monde. Je ne dis pas que les évêques et les prêtres devraient être d'accord sur tout. Je ne dis pas non plus qu'ils ont une mission messianique à assumer comme si, sans eux, rien ne pouvait se faire. Ce que je veux souligner, c'est que la hiérarchie catholique ne peut se montrer indifférente aujourd'hui à tout ce qui blesse et détruit l'humain en Afrique. On ne peut pas interpréter autrement la prière eucharistique B qui nous fait demander à Dieu de nous donner "le courage du geste fraternel quand nos frères sont démunis ou opprimés" et de faire de son Église "un lieu de vérité et de liberté, de justice et de paix afin que tout homme puisse y trouver une raison d'espérer encore". Le cardinal

Bernard Yago en était tellement convaincu qu'il aimait à dire qu' "il est important, voire impérieux, qu'au cœur des sociétés humaines il existe des Institutions, des hommes qui soient crédibles afin que, forts de leur autorité morale certaine, ils puissent servir de force d'apaisement et de médiation". Et, pour l'ancien archevêque d'Abidjan, il ne faisait aucun doute que "les prêtres, les évêques, l'Église sont de ces hommes et de ces Institutions-là".⁴ Quel dommage donc si, après s'être adressés à l'Église en 1990 pour les aider à asseoir de nouvelles règles du jeu pour un meilleur vivre-ensemble, les peuples africains étaient amenés à dire aujourd'hui : "même l'Église nous a laissés tomber ! Même les prêtres et les évêques se sont laissés acheter par des politiciens sans scrupule !" L'Église pourrait-elle ne pas décevoir l'espérance du petit peuple ? Telle est la question qui se pose aujourd'hui aux hommes d'Église en Afrique. Je pense que l'Église peut continuer à inspirer confiance dans un continent où, pendant les élections, "de ponctuelles distributions généreuses de largesses monnayées ou de produits de première nécessité tiennent lieu d'argument électoral décisif, à défaut d'un débat libre sur les différents projets de société, sur un bilan du règne"⁵. Les hommes d'Église peuvent aider le petit peuple à ne pas baisser les bras à condition qu'ils ne permettent pas qu'on les monte les uns contre les autres, à condition qu'ils restent soudés malgré les opinions divergentes qu'ils peuvent avoir sur telle ou telle question. Le cardinal Jozef Tomko le rappelait le 25 août 1999 aux évêques ivoiriens lors de leur visite *ad limina apostolorum* à Rome quand il déclarait : "le poids de vos engagements, nourris de l'esprit de famille, doit renforcer vos liens et éviter ce qui crée le doute et la suspicion, en votre sein et dans l'opinion. Vous ne pouvez réussir et conduire une action féconde que tous ensemble. En Église, pour vous, la seule raison qui vaille est celle qui rassemble dans la communion pour le bien du Peuple de Dieu... Comme Pasteurs, vous devez être instruments d'unité et de charité en inspirant confiance et fierté au clergé et aux fidèles".⁶

On ne peut pas évoquer les conséquences de la division de la hiérarchie catholique africaine sans signaler le fait que l'Afrique aurait certainement fait de grands bonds en avant dans son combat contre la dictature, l'injustice, la misère, l'exploitation éhontée des paysans, etc. si le clergé catholique avait transcendé ses querelles de leadership (une grande rivalité, dit-on, opposait Mgr Anselme Sanon et feu le cardinal Paul Zoungana au Burkina Faso, feu Mgr Jean Zoa et feu Mgr Albert Ndongmo, le cardinal Christian Tumi et feu Mgr Jean Zoa au Cameroun, Mgr Raphaël Ndingi et le cardinal Maurice Otunga au Kenya) et, surtout, s'il avait refusé de se laisser diviser par l'argent des politiciens.

2. Parler haut et fort

Prêtres et évêques ne seront gardiens de l'espérance

en Afrique que s'ils sont capables de dénoncer le mal et de mettre de temps en temps les pieds dans le plat. Pourquoi ? Feu Mgr Emmanuel Kataliko en donne les raisons dans son appel lors de la XIIème Assemblée plénière du Symposium des conférences épiscopales d'Afrique et de Madagascar à Rocca di Papa du 30 septembre au 9 octobre 2000 : "les évêques d'Afrique doivent parler car le peuple souffre. Nous devons parler aux chefs d'État ; il faut parler aux dirigeants".⁷ S'il y a un évêque qui n'a pas eu peur de parler haut et fort, ces derniers mois, c'est bien Mgr Paul Siméon Ahouanan. Pendant la messe qu'il célébrait le 7 août 2000 pour la commémoration des 40 ans d'indépendance de la Côte d'Ivoire, l'évêque de Yamoussoukro se permit d'alerter Robert Gueï en ces termes : "Mon Général, il y a beaucoup d'agitation autour de vous. Beaucoup d'hommes et de femmes s'agitent autour de vous mais j'espère que vous savez pourquoi. Ils s'agitent non pas pour votre intérêt, pour votre bien, non pas pour l'intérêt de la nation. Ils s'agitent pour eux-mêmes". En parlant des hommes et femmes qui s'agitaient autour du général, l'évêque de Yamoussoukro pensait à ceux qui voulaient que R. Gueï se porte candidat à l'élection présidentielle alors que l'intéressé lui-même avait promis, fin décembre 1999, qu'il était venu balayer la maison et, donc, qu'il ne s'éterniserait pas au pouvoir. Il faut ajouter que la confiance de l'évêque était une manière polie de dire au général qu'il devait renoncer à se présenter à l'élection présidentielle. Aujourd'hui, non seulement on salue le courage de Mgr Ahouanan. On dit aussi qu'il avait vu juste en invitant le général, d'une manière indirecte, à se tenir à l'écart du scrutin présidentiel.

Un autre souhait des peuples africains est que les hommes d'Église puissent manifester pacifiquement pour protester contre les violations des droits humains, s'impliquer d'une manière ou d'une autre dans l'organisation d'élections transparentes et justes comme le fit en 1994 l'Église catholique en Afrique du Sud.

Telles sont, *grosso modo*, les attentes des gens dans les villages, dans les quartiers pauvres et dans les bidonvilles d'Afrique ; telle est leur espérance profonde. Pour que cette espérance ne soit pas déçue, l'Église du troisième millénaire doit s'affranchir de la peur d'être mal perçue par les riches et puissants qui n'ont pas intérêt à ce que les choses changent, s'affranchir des petites combines et de la recherche de profits et d'avantages matériels pour devenir la voix des sans-voix. Oui, il nous faut des Amos et des Jérémie pour plaider la cause des laissés-pour-compte, pour faire entendre le cri des écrasés. Il nous faut arrêter de soutenir inconditionnellement des présidents et ministres incompetents et arrogants, corrompus et impopulaires, uniquement parce qu'ils viendraient prier dans nos églises, parce qu'ils nous donneraient les miettes de ce qu'ils ont volé au petit peuple ou bien parce qu'ils seraient de la même ethnie que nous.

Mandela est bien un ami de Desmond Tutu. Mais nous savons que l'amitié qui lie les deux hommes n'empêcha pas le second de dire au premier qu'il était scandaleux que ses ministres perçoivent des salaires exorbitants alors que la majorité des Sud-Africains croupissaient dans la misère. Il nous faut redécouvrir l'intuition de Basile de Césarée dont le rôle ne fut pas négligeable dans la naissance et le développement des hôpitaux, la part prise par l'Église du Moyen-Âge dans le développement de l'éducation en Europe, le travail des missionnaires du XVI^{ème} et du XIX^{ème} siècles pour la création d'écoles et de dispensaires. Peut-être ne s'agit-il pas, pour nous, de faire exactement ce que ces hommes et femmes firent pour leur temps. L'important est de comprendre que l'Église "n'a jamais annoncé un Évangile exclusivement spirituel qui se désintéresserait des besoins les plus urgents et des détresses les plus graves"⁸. Je ne dis pas que l'Église devrait dorénavant fermer ses écoles et dispensaires, là où l'État a lamentablement échoué dans nos pays. Ce que je veux mettre en relief, c'est qu'il y a tout un travail à faire en amont, un travail auprès des décideurs. Pourquoi, par exemple, l'Église d'Afrique n'enverrait-elle pas des prêtres ou des évêques dans des instances comme l'OUA, la CEDEAO, la CEMAC, etc. pour y faire entendre sa voix et y donner son point de vue lors de la prise des décisions concernant l'avenir des populations africaines ? Le Saint-Siège n'est-il pas représenté par des prêtres, des évêques ou des cardinaux au BIT, à l'UNESCO, à l'ONU, au HCR, etc. ? Le Vatican délégua en 1995 des personnes à la conférence du Caire sur la population comme il l'avait fait pour la conférence sur les femmes à Beijing (Chine); il était encore présent à la rencontre de Seattle (États-Unis) sur le commerce. Ne pourrait-on pas faire de même chez nous ? Devons-nous continuer à désertier les lieux où des hommes et des femmes cherchent des solutions aux problèmes et défis de notre continent ?

3. Ne pas s'enfermer dans la sacristie

De même que la présence de l'Église est nécessaire là où se prennent les grandes décisions concernant l'avenir des peuples africains, de la même manière il est bon que certaines questions soient prises à bras le corps et que leur soit accordée l'attention qu'elles méritent. C'est le cas, par exemple, de la mondialisation, sujet de plus en plus débattu en ce moment. Qu'est-ce qui se cache derrière ce concept ? Quels en sont les enjeux ? La mondialisation a-t-elle du bon ? Si oui, qui pourrait en profiter ? Uniquement la minorité des élites ? Le petit peuple n'a-t-il rien à en tirer ? Ou bien faut-il souscrire au constat pessimiste d'un auteur comme Ignacio Ramonet quand il affirme que les régimes totalitaires ont été remplacés par des "régimes globalitaires qui subordonnent les droits sociaux du

citoyen à la raison compétitive et abandonnent aux marchés financiers la direction totale des activités de la société dominée⁹ ?" Même si les antennes paraboliques permettent, de nos jours, à tout un chacun de suivre, à partir de l'endroit où il se trouve, ce qui advient ailleurs (événements heureux et malheureux) et même si l'Internet permet d'obtenir rapidement toute sorte d'informations, peut-on ignorer que la mondialisation ouvre la porte à une culture dans laquelle l'homme est tenté de "se vouloir soi-même, par soi-même et pour soi-même"¹⁰, une culture qui "décourage l'altruisme au nom de l'efficacité commerciale et comptable" et dans laquelle "il ne peut exister de sentiment fraternel, de volonté générale, d'acte bénévole, de mutualité, d'identité humaine, de relations ou de devoirs désintéressés, d'empathie sociale, d'amour, de foi ou d'engagement qui ne soient pas de nature privée"¹¹ ? Les Africains pourraient-ils embrasser une mondialisation qui serait une sorte de "salmigondis", c'est-à-dire une culture mondiale supprimant toutes les différences ?¹² Il est important que des hommes d'Église s'intéressent à ce genre de questions et, surtout, qu'ils soient présents là où on en discute. Car il n'est plus suffisant de trouver un abri aux réfugiés. Les hommes d'Église doivent, en outre, participer aux réunions organisées sur le continent pour aider à la résolution des conflits et guerres qui jettent chaque année des milliers d'hommes et de femmes sur les routes d'Afrique. On le voit, sans abandonner ce que nous avons fait jusqu'ici, ce à quoi nous devons nous intéresser davantage, ce que nous devons privilégier aujourd'hui, c'est la lutte en faveur des droits de l'homme, les questions de justice et de paix. En ce sens, il est heureux que, un peu partout dans les diocèses, des commissions "justice et paix" aient été mises en place pour enquêter sur les violations des droits de l'homme, pour protester contre les situations d'injustice et de violence. Il est aussi réjouissant que des hommes d'Église acceptent de participer à des rencontres pour aider à trouver des solutions aux problèmes qui se posent dans leurs milieux. C'est le cas de l'évêque de Kindu (République démocratique du Congo) avec qui j'eus à voyager le 27 janvier 2000. Cet évêque avait embarqué à Nairobi et se rendait à Kinshasa pour prendre part à une réunion sur l'occupation, depuis août 1998, de la partie orientale de son pays par les forces rwandaises et ougandaises. Ces forces étrangères sont accusées de piller les richesses minières du pays et d'avoir enterré, il y a quelques mois, quinze femmes vivantes dans la région de Bukavu. Être témoin de l'espérance, c'est aussi cela : se joindre à tous ceux qui veulent construire un monde de paix et de justice.

4. Refuser la résignation

Mgr Isidore de Souza, quelques jours avant sa mort,

a donné une conférence à des étudiants africains de Rabat. Il y parlait essentiellement d'espérance. Je rappelle cette conférence parce que la tentation est grande, à l'heure actuelle, de baisser les bras face au marasme dans lequel nos pays sont plongés depuis plusieurs années. Il n'est pas rare, en effet, d'entendre ici ou là que l'Afrique ne changera pas, que les puissants et les riches continueront à régner et à dominer et que les pauvres ne sortiront jamais de la misère. Ce qui s'est passé à Noël 1999 en Côte d'Ivoire est là pour attester cependant que nous devons garder espoir pour l'Afrique. Car qui pouvait prédire que le PDCI (qui dirigea la Côte d'Ivoire pendant quatre décennies) serait chassé un jour du pouvoir ? Qui aurait cru que Konan Bédié serait renversé aussi facilement par des militaires ivoiriens quand on sait qu'une base militaire française fortement armée se trouve dans la capitale économique ivoirienne ? Et, surtout, qui pouvait imaginer la victoire de Laurent Gbagbo lors du scrutin présidentiel d'octobre 2000 face à un Robert Gueï qui avait et les armes et l'argent ?¹³ Qui pouvait prédire que, dix ans après son départ de N'Djamena, Hisssein Habré serait rattrapé par son passé d'assassin et de pillier des caisses de l'État tchadien ? Qui pouvait penser qu'il serait placé un jour en résidence surveillée à Dakar et que le gouvernement tchadien demanderait son extradition afin qu'il réponde des nombreux crimes dont il s'est rendu coupable ?¹⁴ Qui pouvait croire, avant le 19 mars 2000, qu'Abdou Diouf perdrait les élections, qu'il accepterait sa défaite et qu'il téléphonerait à son adversaire Abdoulaye Wade pour le féliciter avant même la fin du dépouillement des résultats ? Et qui n'a pas été ému par les deux gestes posés par le nouveau président sénégalais quelques jours après son élection : son voyage à Louga pour saluer Mame Coumba Dème, la mère de Diouf et lorsqu'il demanda que son prédécesseur puisse participer, à sa place, au sommet de l'Union européenne et de l'OUA au Caire les 3 et 4 avril 2000 ? Même si d'autres présidents avant Diouf avaient salué la victoire de leur tombeur (qu'on pense aux félicitations d'Aristides Pereira à Antonio Monteiro au Cap-Vert en 1991, de Manuel Pinto da Costa à Miguel Trovoada à Sao Tomé la même année, de Frederik De Klerk à Nelson Mandela en Afrique du Sud en 1994)¹⁵, il convient de reconnaître que le Sénégal a donné au monde entier une grande leçon de démocratie, une démocratie dans laquelle le vaincu accepte sportivement sa défaite et dans laquelle celui qui a gagné n'humilie pas mais respecte celui qui a perdu. Assisterons-nous à de semblables alternances ailleurs sur le continent ? J'ose le croire car, comme l'affirmait Isidore De Souza, "il n'y a pas de situation figée". Et le premier exemple pris par l'ancien archevêque de Cotonou pour illustrer son affirmation ne pouvait être que le Bénin. Celui-ci, disait-il aux étudiants africains de Rabat, était voué à la mort. Sa situation était tellement

catastrophique que les Béninois ayant fui le pays avaient honte de se présenter comme tels. Puis est arrivée en 1990 la conférence des forces vives qui permit à la nation de passer "de la dictature à un processus de démocratisation sans qu'une seule goutte de sang ne soit versée". Le deuxième exemple donné par l'ancien archevêque de Cotonou est l'Afrique du Sud dirigée depuis 1994 par des Noirs qui pendant longtemps n'étaient pas autorisés à voter. Mgr de Souza s'appuie sur ces deux événements historiques pour nous inviter à l'espérance. Je me permets de reprendre ses propres mots : "C'est un événement stimulant... Cela doit constituer un mobile qui conserve en nous la flamme afin que, quelles que soient les difficultés, nous poursuivions en disant : 'cela peut changer... Cela va changer'. Il ne suffit pas de dire : 'Dieu est bon, Dieu est amour, Dieu est miséricordieux' et de se tourner les pouces. Dieu nous veut responsables, nous sommes co-responsables avec Dieu... Notre avenir est entre nos mains, pas dans celles des autres. Si Dieu met à notre disposition son amour, sa miséricorde, sa paternité, son sacrifice, il attend de nous que nous les mettions, nous aussi, au service de l'humanité".¹⁶ Nous devons, en conséquence, éviter de sombrer dans ce que Kā Mana appelle un christianisme émotionnel qui pousse bon nombre de femmes et d'hommes en Afrique en ce moment à se contenter d'égrener le chapelet ou à lever les mains au ciel devant ce qui les fait souffrir au lieu de retrousser les manches pour essayer de faire bouger les choses. Nous n'avons pas d'autre choix que de congédier sans ménagement ce christianisme paresseux et désincarné, de rompre sans tarder avec ce christianisme devenu sourd aux cris des persécutés et silencieux devant les injustices et les oppressions. Faute d'une telle rupture, ceux et celles qui sont aux prises avec la faim, l'injustice et l'oppression ne tarderont pas à faire le procès de Dieu, à injurier ou à maudire le Créateur. J'ai encore en mémoire, à ce sujet, les graves interrogations de l'écrivain sénégalais Cheikh Hamidou Kane dans *L'Aventure ambiguë* : "Longtemps les adorateurs de Dieu ont gouverné le monde. L'ont-ils fait selon la Loi ? Je ne sais pas. J'ai appris qu'au pays des Blancs, la révolte contre la misère ne se distingue pas de la révolte contre Dieu. L'on dit que le mouvement s'étend et que, bientôt dans le monde, le même grand cri contre la misère couvrira partout la voix des muezzins. Quelle n'a pas dû être la faute de ceux qui croient en Dieu si, au terme de leur règne sur le monde, le nom de Dieu suscite le ressentiment des affamés !" On le voit, nous devons comprendre, aujourd'hui, que le ciel et la terre sont intimement liés. Il en résulte qu'une foi crédible ne peut faire l'économie d'un engagement contre ce qui, sur terre, déshumanise l'humain. C'est tout le sens de l'affirmation de Vincent Cosmao : "quand Dieu se révèle, Il change le monde. Pour ceux qui l'entendent, il ne peut, en effet, être question

de prendre leur parti d'une organisation des rapports entre les hommes, les groupes et les peuples, dont l'effet nécessaire est le sous-développement, l'injustice et la misère qui condamnent la majorité de l'humanité à végéter ou à mourir sans horizon et sans espoir".¹⁷ La vraie foi et la vraie espérance poussent, en effet, à la conviction que tous les changements sont possibles lorsque le désir de se mettre debout est puissant, lorsque les hommes et les peuples sont capables d'indignation et de colère contre ce qui les humilie, lorsque l'espérance contre toute espérance est vive. Cela est vrai de l'aveugle Bartimée. Ce dernier qui était assis au bord du chemin, c'est désormais sur le chemin qu'il suivra le Christ. Mendiant et, donc, marginalisé au début, il est à la fin dans la grande foule qui accompagne Jésus. Entre ces deux moments, on notera la volonté d'un homme de quitter sa condition d'aveugle mendiant. Cette volonté farouche, c'est ce qu'on pourrait appeler la foi, la foi qui sauve, la foi qui déplace les montagnes, la foi qui fait triompher la justice et la liberté, la foi qui fait hurler les muets, entendre les sourds et bondir les boiteux (Mc 10, 46-52). C'est cette foi que nous avons vue et admirée les 24 et 25 octobre 2000 lorsque des milliers d'Ivoiriennes et d'Ivoiriens ont, à leurs risques et périls, investi la rue pour imposer le verdict des urnes à Robert Gueï qui, la veille, s'était proclamé vainqueur de l'élection présidentielle. Une telle foi, reconnaissons-le, était impensable il y a quelques années en Côte d'Ivoire. L'épisode de l'aveugle de Jéricho nous enseigne ainsi qu'il n'y a pas de situation bloquée, qu'il n'existe pas de peuples qui soient à jamais résignés et fatalistes. De la même façon, on ne trouve pas de régime qui éternellement terrorise, opprime, pille ou tue. Il en découle que prêtres et évêques doivent aider les populations africaines à espérer ou à retrouver l'espérance. Non seulement en les arrachant à la résignation mais aussi en s'engageant contre les structures injustes et oppressives, en s'impliquant dans la recherche des voies et moyens pour sortir nos pays de l'impasse, en prenant leur courage à deux mains pour dénoncer le mensonge comme l'a fait Mgr Emmanuel Kataliko dont le dernier message de Noël constitue un précieux éclairage sur la situation qui prévaut dans la ville dont il était l'archevêque.¹⁸ C'est une lettre courageuse et on aurait aimé en voir de semblables ailleurs sur le continent. Je ne reprendrai pas tout ce qui est dit dans cette lettre sur les pillages, destructions de biens et massacres auxquels les Rwandais se livrent quotidiennement dans la ville de Bukavu. Ce que je retiens le plus, c'est la détermination de l'évêque à ne pas trahir l'espérance apportée par le Christ, à continuer la mission du Galiléen, c'est-à-dire à ne pas cautionner le mal, à combattre tout ce qui bafoue la dignité humaine. La lettre se termine par ces mots d'une fermeté et d'une assurance incroyables : "nous nous engageons avec courage, avec un esprit ferme, avec une foi inébranlable, à être du côté

de tous les opprimés et, si nécessaire, jusqu'au sang, comme l'ont déjà fait Mgr Munzihirwa, l'Abbé Claude Buhendwa, l'Abbé et les soeurs de Kasika, l'Abbé Georges Kakuja et tant d'autres chrétiens".¹⁹

Conclusion

Telle était l'espérance de Mgr Emmanuel Kataliko, l'archevêque qui aura laissé, dans toute l'Afrique et pas seulement à Bukavu, le souvenir d'un pasteur voué à la cause de la paix, laquelle paix ne s'obtient véritablement et durablement que si la justice est honorée. Cette espérance, pour lui, n'était pas fuite du réel dans ce qu'il peut avoir parfois de tragique mais attention aux cris et aux larmes de la terre ; elle n'était pas refuge dans une spiritualité d'hommes repus et égoïstes mais participation aux efforts menés ici ou là pour rendre la société dans laquelle nous vivons plus juste, plus fraternelle et plus humaine.

Il reste, à ceux qui ont apprécié et aimé l'homme et le pasteur, à marcher dans ses traces en refusant la résignation, en se montrant à la hauteur de l'espérance chrétienne dont nous avons vu qu'elle n'exile pas le chrétien des lieux de combat mais l'appelle à être présent là où des hommes et des femmes s'attèlent à redonner, contre vents et marées, sens et espoir à notre monde. Le pourront-ils ?

Notes :

1 *Op. cit.*, Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 1974, p. 220.

2 Mgr Laurent Monsengwo, "L'Église en politique" in *Revue de l'Institut catholique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (Abidjan), n. 13, 1996, p. 55.

3 On lira avec intérêt, sur cette question, le quotidien français *Le Monde* qui révélait, le 24 décembre 1999, que Paul Biya, le président camerounais, aurait versé 7 milliards de F. CFA au Temple solaire en France et qu'il ne serait pas le seul chef d'État africain dans ce cas.

4 F. Grah Mel, *Bernard Yago, le cardinal inattendu*, Presses des Universités de Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan, 1998, pp. 325-326.

5 Jean-Norbert Vignondé, "L'intellectuel et le pouvoir" in *Notre Librairie*, n. 126, avril-juin 1996, p. 77.

6 Cardinal Jozef Tomko, "Discours aux évêques de Côte d'Ivoire", p. 2.

7 Voir *La Documentation catholique*, n. 2238 du 17 décembre 2000, p. 1092.

8 Bernard Sesboüé, *Jésus-Christ, l'unique médiateur. Les récits du salut*, Desclée, Paris, 1991, p. 331.

9 I. Ramonet, "Régimes globalitaires" in *Le Monde diplomatique*, n. 514, janvier 1997, p. 1.

10 Bernard Sesboüé, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

11 Benjamin R. Barber, *Démocratie forte*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1997, p. 87.

12 "Choisir la mondialisation. Entretien avec Daniel

Maquart” in *Croire aujourd’hui*, n. 84, 15 janvier 2000, p. 15.

13 Outre qu’il s’est toujours gardé de céder aux sirènes de l’argent et des portefeuilles ministériels, Laurent Gbagbo est connu et respecté pour avoir souffert car rien ne fut épargné à cet homme qui a toujours cru dur comme fer à ses convictions : le fameux camp militaire de Séguéla (au Nord de la Côte d’Ivoire) où il fut incorporé de force en 1971, l’exil en France de 1982 à 1988, la prison en 1992 quand Alassane Ouattara était premier ministre, les humiliations, les souffrances physiques et morales, etc. Il est l’un des rares hommes politiques africains à avoir compris que la prise du pouvoir passe par une connaissance du terrain. Laurent Gbagbo n’a cessé, en effet, de sillonner tout le pays pour expliquer son projet de société : assurance-maladie pour tous, décentralisation, scolarité gratuite jusqu’en classe de 3ème, construction d’écoles et de puits dans les villages, etc. C’est lui qui disait, lors de son procès en 1992, qu’on peut quitter la prison pour la présidence de la République et *vice-versa*. L’Histoire semble lui avoir donné aujourd’hui raison. Reste à sou-

haïter que le pouvoir ne transforme pas M. Laurent Gbagbo et que celui-ci gouverne la Côte d’Ivoire autrement que ceux qui l’ont précédé à la magistrature suprême.

14 La justice sénégalaise, devant laquelle l’ancien dictateur tchadien se présenta le 3 février 2000, refusa de l’extraire du Sénégal.

15 Francis Kpatindé, “De l’ego des Sénégalais” in *Jeune Afrique - L’intelligent*, n. 2046, du 28 mars au 3 avril 2000, p. 122.

16 I. de Souza, “Espérer en Afrique” in *Spiritus*, n. 155, pp. 211-212.

17 Voir V. Cosmao, *Changer le monde, une tâche pour l’Église*, Cerf, Paris, 1985, p.175.

18 Mgr Kataliko est décédé à Rome le 4 octobre 2000. Assigné à résidence à Butembo, son village natal, par les rebelles du Rassemblement congolais pour la Démocratie (mouvement soutenu par les Rwandais), il ne retrouva son diocèse que le 14 septembre 2000.

19 Lettre citée par *Espérances des peuples* (Bruxelles), n. 388, janvier 2000, p. 15.

Réf. : Texte de l’auteur.

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*SEDOS Working Group on the Debt**G8 Meeting in Genoa, Italy,
22–24 July 2001*

Last year 65 religious congregations with generalates in Rome formed the Catholic Religious for Debt Cancellation in preparation for the meeting of the G8 summit in Okinawa. The Catholic Church, especially through Pope John Paul II and also through the voices of religious congregations of women and men, has been and continues to be a strong advocate for 100 per cent debt cancellation of the world's poorest countries.

G8 countries (Italy, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Russia) have taken some steps in favour of debt relief, but the steps are small in comparison with what still needs to be done.

The next important event in the debt cancellation history will be in Genoa, Italy in July of 2001, when the heads of State of the G8 countries meet.

The SEDOS Working Group on the Debt and the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Promoters group of the USIG/USG are planning to participate in the activities in Genoa in July. The objectives are:

- To advocate for debt cancellation through the distribution of the Interreligious Manifesto to the G8. We are asking religious congregations to endorse it and send a signed copy of the Manifesto to the heads of State of the G8 countries;

- To participate in a public fast during the G8 Summit and ask members of religious congregations throughout the world to join us wherever they may be.

Through the Catholic Religious for Debt Cancellation Coalition we hope to involve thousands of sisters, brothers, priests and laity in these two actions.

*Interreligious Manifesto
to the G8****Economic justice for
impoverished countries*****We call for Debt Cancellation**

As religious believers of numerous traditions, we assert:

- that the world and its resources are for the sustenance of all;
- that the ownership of property does not override the right of others to nourishment, housing, health-care, and the opportunity to participate in society on

an equitable basis;

- that those who own and administer the world's goods have a primary responsibility to ensure the well-being, freedom, and participation of all;
- that a fair distribution of the world's goods is a prerequisite for peace, mutual harmony and understanding, among the world's peoples, and a necessary requirement for the health of the planet.

We recognize the destruction that the international debt and the structural adjustment programmes have wrought — destruction to economies, health and education systems, development programmes, and to the earth's ecosystems and resources.

We call on the G8 leaders who will assemble at Genoa to:

1. Cancel the whole debt of impoverished countries, including debt to the World Bank and the IMF.
2. End structural adjustment programmes.
3. Establish procedures, which include the participation of civil society to identify illegitimate debt.
4. Establish neutral, independent and transparent arbitration mechanisms and processes to deal with debt crises and illegitimate debt with fair and equitable representation of creditors, governments of indebted countries, and civil society.
5. Establish a code of conduct for lenders to sovereign borrowers that ensures transparency and fair apportioning of accountability, and places controls on the process of lending so as to avoid debt crises. The code of conduct should be worked out with the participation of both private and public creditors, representatives of governments, academics and other specialists, and representatives of civil society.
6. Make trade and other international agreements benefit impoverished and vulnerable countries and enable them to escape from debt and participate equitably in the world economy.

The present economic system has escalated the gap between rich and poor and concentrated control over the world's resources in the hands of a few. It has also destroyed much of the natural environment.

Our times call for bold and courageous initiatives to create a new, just and equitable economy, which respects the dignity of every human being and of the natural world.

Ref.: Text from the Author.

Coming Events

Ariccia Annual Residential Seminar for SEDOS Members 15-19 May 2001

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With the collaboration of:

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(from Canada)

Michel de Verteuil, CSSp, our theological companion
(from Trinidad)

Please register at SEDOS, to reserve your place, **before 30 April 2001**

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Working Group

Thursday, 26th April **China Group** 15:00 hrs at **SEDOS**

Friday, 27th April **Debt Group** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**

Next SEDOS Conference

Democracy, Development, Debt and Disease in a Globalising Africa.

What is Our Future?

by Peter J. Henriot, S.J.

Thursday, 28 June 2001,

The Brothers of the Christian Schools,
Via Aurelia, 476, Rome.

The Conference starts at 16:00 hrs.
And question time ends at 18:30 hrs.
The Conference will be in English.
Translation in Italian.

Entrance Fee £ 7,000.