

Editorial	208
Mission: From Expansion To Encounter <i>Abbé Jean Yves Baziou</i>	209
Du désert est née la fleur <i>Antonio Carlos de Meira, MSC</i>	213
Habiter le temps et l'espace <i>P. Hans Vöcking, M. Afr.</i>	219
'Religionism' in Tanzania <i>Frans Wijzen, SMA</i>	222
"Love Your Enemies": A Challenge to Ethnic Conflicts in Contemporary Africa <i>Toussaint Kafarhire Murhula, SJ</i>	230
Socio-Political Analysis of the Phenomenon of Fundamentalism <i>S. M. Michael, SVD</i>	235
So, Then, Where is the Kingdom? <i>Archbishop Hippolyte Simon</i>	244
Mission of Harmony and Complementarity <i>Jacob Kavunkal, SVD</i>	248
Coming Events	254

Editorial

The Fall season is beginning to make its presence felt all around Rome. It brings with it a feeling of serenity and reflection, as well as a sense of urgency, as we all eagerly expect the Birth of Our Lord: a time for PEACE. From this corner of Rome SEDOS sends a message of Peace and Joy to all our readers!

We begin by walking with l'Abbé **Jean Yves Baziou** into the paradigm of mission as encounter. "*Mission: From Expansion To Encounter*" dwells on the new dimension that the phenomenon of *globalisation* has brought into our Western Church. 'The encounter with others and the interaction between the present time and the Kingdom of God to come' challenges the Church.

Encounter is a joyful event that begets fruits of happiness and brotherly love. **Antonio Carlos de Meira**, MSC, presents to all our readers his pastoral experience in two communities of the Indian population of Ecuador. Reading through "*Du désert est née la fleur*" invites us to re-think and expand on our concept of values.

P. Hans Vöcking, M.Afr., reflects with us on the phenomenon of migration and encountering the other. "*Habiter le temps et l'espace*" reminds us that 'migration is an integral part of the history of Europe and a very important aspect of Europe today'. The mobility of people is challenging the Church in Europe to 'reconcile the human realities with the Word of Revelation that announces the universality and gratuity of the love of God'.

"*Religionism in Tanzania*" confronts us with the crude reality of violence in the name of religion. **Frans Wijzen**, SMA, explores the causes of, and the response of the World community to, the tragedy of the 'growing religious, political and ethnic conflict in Tanzania'. Religious 'revivalism, both in Christianity and in Islam' might be at the root of the suffering.

Toussaint Kafarhire Murhula, SJ, also writes about the reality of the sufferings that our African brothers and sisters are going through. In "*Love Your Enemies: A Challenge to Ethnic Conflicts in Contemporary Africa*", the tragedy of the Great Lakes Region is remembered. There were no winners and no losers but just suffering for all. The challenge to the Christian identity?... Living the deep conviction of our faith.

Continuing to deepen the subject of ethnic and religious conflict we present "*Socio-Political Analysis of the Phenomenon of Fundamentalism*" by **S. M. Michael**, SVD. This analysis throws some light into the understanding and warns of the pit-falls of casting a clear-cut judgement, as well as offering us some ways to meet the challenge.

We end up with a question from Archbishop **Hippolyte Simon**: "*So, Then, Where is the Kingdom?*". Is the Kingdom an utopia or a revolution? And yet, 'the Kingdom is already here, among us... but yet to come'. The author concludes that welcoming the Word is what gives us some understanding of it.

"*Mission of Harmony and Complementarity*" by **Jacob Kavunkal**, SVD, reminds us of the emphasis that the Apostolic Exhortations place on 'complementarity' and the respect for all human beings in our encounter with their different cultures and religious traditions. This too is one to the basic concerns of '*Ecclesia in Asia*' which reaffirms *harmony* as a keynote of God's Creation.

Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera
- SEDOS Executive Director -

Secretaries:

Publications:

Ms. Ilaria Iadeluca
(redactionседos@pcn.net)

Subscriptions and Accounting:

Mrs. Margarita Lofthouse
(accountingsедos@pcn.net)

Documentation Centre:

Mrs. Federica Pupilli
(documentationседos@pcn.net)

Proof-reader:

English and French: Ms. Philippa Wooldridge

Mission: From Expansion to Encounter

- Abbé Jean Yves Baziou -

Abbé Jean Yves Baziou of Quimper Diocese, lectures at the Catholic University of Lille. He has worked with Catholic Action Movements in the rural context as well as in chaplaincy in State education.

To question whether or not mission is fitting in certain contexts would be to return to the incongruous conception that limits Christianity to a geographical area. It exists in suspense between its insertion in a real, specific and therefore limited culture and above it, in an ideal sphere in that it seeks to be a multi-racial, pluri-ethnic gathering in continual expansion. Oddly enough, it is precisely now that the Christian Churches are present on all the continents that they are becoming aware of the inadequate definition of mission (or missions) in purely geographical terms. As regards the Catholic Church, we can go back to the Second Vatican Council to see how the emergence of a new context has led us to perceive mission no longer in terms of geographic expansion. The hypothesis put forward here is that we are gradually going from a spatial conception of mission to a symbolic one. This presents two aspects: the encounter with others and the interaction between the present time and the Kingdom of God to come. We shall try to suggest some lines of action in the framework of a secularized Europe.

A different world

The Second Vatican Council coincided with a new global awareness of the planet. If the word *globalisation* only serves to qualify a general condition of exchanges, the Second Vatican Council coincided with a prodigious change in mankind's overall view of the planet. For the first time since humanity began, it was possible to see our planet at a single glance. The Earth then began to be photographed from outer space by Russian and American astronauts. We became aware that we are all aboard the same space ship. And the representation of the Earth on a map that extends to infinity clearly shows our planet to be a limited and finite sphere. All peoples began to feel an objective interdependence on the one hand and of human

beings with their environment on the other. The Second Vatican Council perceived this as a positive and promising new factor. In the introduction to *Lumen Gentium* in addition to the Church's universal mission, one reads that, "the condition of the modern world lends greater urgency to this duty of the Church; for, while men of the present day are drawn ever more closely together by social, technical and cultural bonds, it still remains for them to achieve full unity in Christ" (n. 1). In this perspective, the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* seeks to sum up the different aspects of man's role in the universe and reflects on "the meaning of individual and collective endeavour" (n. 3). Therefore it was its awareness of the global aspects of cultural, ethnic, religious and economic exchanges that made the Second Vatican Council begin to reflect on an ecclesiastical identity that must take into account both its special status and its closeness to those who were once remote but have come near.

Since then the globalisation process has continued to accelerate and to shape new relationships between peoples and individuals. This process is marked by opposite trends. The homogenisation of cultures due to the pressure of the economic imperative and the free movement of people, goods, symbols, fundamental convictions, sometimes at the price of their relativisation and syncretism, is countered by each community's defence of, and return to, its local identity. The aim is to find a balance between the local and the global, between universality and single differences, between techno-scientific rationalism and the affirmation of cultural subjectivity, between the overall and the near.

Alternative vision of the Church

The perception of universal solidarity is flanked by a new degree of self-awareness the Catholic Church has of its position in the world. There are two aspects

to this. The first is the Church's passage from Westernization to universality: Catholicism can no longer be defined as uniquely Mediterranean and European. Actually the Church of the West must join the Churches of the other cultural spheres. With the Second Vatican Council, as K. Rahner explains, the Church began to act magisterially as the Universal Church. However this universality does not make a uniform *début*. less and less it is possible to speak of "one" Christian culture because the Church is entering an age of cultural polycentrism. Terms such as "Sister Churches", "Local Churches", "Church of Churches" in the theological vocabulary are proof of this.

The second aspect of the Catholic Church's new degree of self-awareness is the reverse of its universal dimension: the specificity of the Christian religion which can be noticed at different levels. First, on a global scale Christianity turns out to be localized and limited. The Church experiences its relativity and hence falls short of universality. Moreover, as regards each society it does not enjoy, or no longer enjoys, a spiritual monopoly, so it cannot seek to impose its scale of values, its morals or its methods on everyone. It is part of the competitive system as it can be compared to other forms of conviction, other types of humanism or other religions, of which some have a universal scope. Thus, once again, the question arises of how to combine the particularism of the Church with the mission to proclaim, and to witness to all, the Good News of salvation of Jesus?

The Second Vatican Council began to see that the Catholic Church was entering an age of irreversible pluralism. However to admit pluralism implied leaving behind a well-established perspective that may be qualified as monarchical in that it postulates Christianity, in the name of salvation through Christ's unique mediation, as the bearer of a superior truth that excludes others, and that it is by virtue of this that every man and woman must belong to the Church in order to be saved. Such an outlook would far prefer unity to religious plurality. Here is a possible opening for "the great Christian event" which embraces everybody, every age, and all cultures in the mystery of God's salvation. Of course this incorporation could be a positive sign of God's love which excludes no one, but it could become negative by making the Christian religion the only legitimate path to reach God. A religion which becomes an end in itself loses one of its just criteria, namely to be a "vehicle" or a way to reach transcendence or Truth that surpasses it.

Changing from a Geographic to a Symbolic dimension

To reconcile the singularity of the Church with its universal message, we shall gradually cease to

understand the Church in terms of territorial, spatial or numerical expansion. Once it was usual to speak in terms of territory to be conquered, or occupied, and in terms of peoples or individuals to be converted and baptized. The non-Christian was seen as alien, on the periphery of the Church, who it was necessary to bring from the exterior to the interior of our religion. Obsessed with frontiers, mission was perceived as pastoral work in pagan territory where the Church had yet to be established! The ideal was to achieve a simultaneous extension of the Church and of society to reproduce elsewhere a Christian situation where individual and collective life would be framed by a ritual vision of a world shaped by Christianity.

Meeting and appreciating the dignity of the other

The alternative to this spatial and numerical concept of the Church's mission is a symbolic conception. I shall qualify this: the symbol is at one and the same time a link and a difference. The symbolic concept has two forms. The first highlights reciprocal respect for any differences. The stranger does not only represent otherness to us, but each of us is a stranger to the other. The foreigner is no longer first and foremost the non-Christian who lives far away: but we are all equally foreign to each other. Thus each person is to be discovered in his/her individuality. This outlook leads one to recognise that Christianity represents one religious experience among many others in the world and in history: it is one of the forms that has taken up the human question about God. It also leads one to recognise the legitimacy and originality of the spiritual journey of the other person. Moreover, it leads one to discern God's deep commitment in our human differences. Such a vision is based on the Christian belief that God has given his grace and his Spirit to all flesh. He is present in the heart of each human being and of each people. The grace is that there is good and truth in each one, including in each religious tradition: "for such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which ... enlightens" and gives them life (*Redemptoris Missia*, n. 10). Therefore, mission work consists in "purifying", "raising" and "perfecting" "whatever good is found sown in the minds and hearts of men or in rites and customs of peoples" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 17).

In this perspective, mission no longer seeks to integrate everything but to relate whatever is best in a single or collective life to God. It is the explanation, the celebration, the recognition that God has drawn close in whatever in life is good, true, beautiful or positive among men. It is the Kingdom of God that is outlined and approaches. It is also the work of

promoting and developing human values lived in a given context. To achieve this it might be feasible to enter into partnership with other bodies that seek to emancipate people and societies. Mission would then become a form of alliance or pact, possibly temporary, with other groups of people, of other beliefs, other world views, to work out solutions to the problems that exist for everyone. In this perspective methods such as dialogue will prove useful to discern both what kind of relationships to build up, with mutual recognition of the characteristics to be respected, to bring about the humanisation of society to be carried out in an ever more refined and widespread way. The power and credibility of mission would always come partly from its ability to take the cause of mankind seriously. If God's last word be man (K. Barth) just missionary action is a humanism which carries out the work of salvation. It is often thanks to its practical charity that the Church has seen men and women come forward to help build it up. The Church starts equally from the strength of the Gospel lived in a given situation as from Baptism. It appears in social and cultural contacts: it is less a question of bringing, of proposing our Christianity to others, as of letting the faith trace its own route in a population that as come into contact with Christ.

In view of this, can one outline the basis for a type of mission working towards an encounter and partnership with others in our secularized Europe? I shall mention two. First, there is the individual. We could serve the quest of self which torments Westerners today: by sharing our conception of the person; by facilitating inter-personal meetings through our institutions; by encouraging the development of individual talents. We could also defend human rights against the temptation of collective institutions to absorb or to instrumentalise the individual. Then there is urban concentration which brings new life-styles and new methods of communication, but which also presents brutal and violent aspects. In this context mission would consist in serving as a link between various types of life and outlook, in providing areas/reference points for populations on the move, in providing meeting places conducive to retaining and cultivating one's identity as an immigrant, in founding associations to prepare people to enter high power circles in a responsible manner, to present the Church as a crossroads of communication between different sensitivities and institutions. This kind of mission promotes Christianity through communication by favouring encounter and bringing people together.

Signs of the Other approaching

The second symbolic conception of mission passes from a spatial representation to a temporal one.

So, mission consists in relating the present to the future: it is in the order of an eschatological sign. This is the new point of departure of the Second Vatican Council which understood the Church as a "prefiguration" of the People of God to come. The reference is to St John's Revelation: "Here is the dwelling of God among men: He will pitch his tent among them and they will be his people. God will be with them" (Rv 21:2-3). The future unity of mankind is plural, conceived in terms of an eschatological sign. The Church presents itself as journeying or on pilgrimage towards everyone's common goal: humanity pacified is considerate to the Other, leaves rooms for others. Thus, the present, visible Church does not represent the final destination. It is travelling with humanity towards the City to come. That is to say that the present Church is unfulfilled "the pilgrim Church, in its sacraments and institution, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 48). The Church is a sign in the present of a perspective or of a hope everyone can share: humanity gathered in peace. This reconciled humanity will be the People of God. The advantage of this type of approach is that it enables one to recognize and think of the Church's limited, indeed minority, situation while assuming the boundless extension of the People of God: "Hence that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may appear as a small flock, is, however, a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 9). The Second Vatican Council uses the expression, "instrument for the salvation of all" to explain the bounds of the geographical expansion of the Church and the interest for all of the utopia that it bears. It realizes in history a common human hope: reciprocal acknowledgement.

"All men are called to this catholic unity which prefigures and promotes universal peace" (n. 13)

Then mission may unfold in two ways: one could have a critical relationship with the present in the name of the Kingdom to come; the other to give or create favourable conditions to provide a foretaste of what is to come. It is thus the anticipation in time and space of the promise of peace and harmonious unity. The difficulty is to define the Church's difference and its solidarity. In effect, as a sign of a finality as yet not fully accomplished, the Church claims to be different in history: it is the vehicle through which the Kingdom takes shape (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 13). Nevertheless, this does not alter the fact that it shares the same history as we do. The double affirmation of the Church's

otherness and its solidarity with different cultures has often been repeated in the 20th century, mainly to avoid the danger of nationalism. In the 1955, for example, Pius XII declared that “the Church does not identify with any culture” and that it is “now ready for exchanges with all cultures”. *Ad Gentes* highlights these two points: on the one hand one must identify with culture (n. 11) and on the other maintain the specificity of the Gospel (n. 15).

The insistence on its specificity leads to a type of mission that appears to be “exceptional” in the present order of things. By “extra” I mean something that surpasses, in the sense that it crosses over a frontier. This excess can assume three aspects. First, critical vigilance because no social order is the Kingdom of God. In this perspective the Church represents or safeguards its difference in regard to the City of today: although it has its place in history, “it transcends at once all times and all racial boundaries” (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 9). It can represent a safe-haven/refuge, or even be a resistant counter-community against coercive powers, or again undertake a critical policy with non-political arguments to avoid the danger of all politics. Then social inventiveness: Christians are not reactionaries but take the side of present-day human renewal. The hope of redemption makes them reject fate and envisage a better future. The Church therefore represents regenerative yeast in society: “it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ” (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 40). This is one way in which the Church can perform its duty to the City. Criticism and innovation show the Church to be a sign of new growth in society. It is the special part of humanity which confesses God entered history through his Son and exists for the Kingdom to Come. Note the intersection of two currents: the movement of God towards us, and of mankind towards God. According to this logic of exceptional growth, to evangelize could mean a transformation or even a qualitative overturning, which matches a compatible vision of mission. This is what Paul VI maintained in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975: “... for the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation” (n. 19).

One might also think that to be a sign of a different and fuller future consists in giving a foretaste of it in the present time. Because for a Christian the Kingdom of God is not indefinitely postponed to an expected tomorrow: it has drawn near. How can this

be translated into the European way of life? One way could be to offer Christian time as exceptional moments able to give a heightened sense or a special experience, or again to situate one’s life in the long human journey. More particularly liturgical time represents the culminating event that marks a person’s, or a group’s, conscience and heart. The second path consists in proposing to those who have a very busy work schedule and life to take some time off from their hectic time-table for: great festivals, a pilgrimage, a spiritual pause as a change from work. They judge the aesthetic value of life from the utilitarian standpoint of a world fraught with worry. Human beings cannot be satisfied with the practical aspect alone: they need beauty and the sublime. This could mean celebrating a fine liturgy in a beautiful setting, or of studying the religious patrimony. Spending time in contemplating things, nature or creatures in silence and in peaceful moments of recollection is part of aesthetics. Isn’t making time for such intervals an essential part of living the present time Christians started more fully? Setting time aside for reflection, meditation, silence creates space for a person to become available and neutral. In line with this, special attention will be paid to rest and free-time as an opportunity to affirm the primacy of man and God over the pressures of economic and professional life (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 67).

Our purpose has been to draw attention to the concepts of relationship and otherness to understand mission in a different way from geographical and quantitative terms. There is no doubt that mission no longer implies an outward movement to distant lands. Nevertheless it is still a journey of discovery to plumb the riches and depths of the other, an irrepressible desire to communicate, a prophetic art to make known that something more can be aspired to and awaits us, a creativity able to produce in daily life moments of such high quality as to give us a glimpse of eternity. This style of mission is without reservations.

Ref.: Text given in French from the Author for SEDOS publication (April 2004). Translated in English on May 2004. (Just published in the SEDOS Homepage in French).

Du désert est née la fleur

- Antonio Carlos de Meira, M.S.C. -

Le P. Antonio Carlos de Meira, brésilien d'origine est Missionnaire du Sacré Coeur. Il travaille sur l'altiplano équatorien depuis plusieurs années. Ces années de pastorale ont fait grandir chez lui l'intérêt pour les questions touchant à la culture et la religion de la population indienne de l'Équateur.

Introduction

Nous ne prétendons pas, dans cet article, proposer une avancée sur des questions théologiques ou pastorales ayant rapport avec le monde indien. Nous voudrions plutôt rapporter quelques expériences et observations qu'il nous a été donné de faire. Nous prendrons comme point de départ une fête de la paroisse de Palmira (Chimborazo, Équateur), la fête de la Saint Michel, à cause de ses caractéristiques propres, mais aussi à cause de toutes les questions qu'elle soulève — tant sur le fond que sur la forme — autour de la manière de vivre la foi en lien avec un saint patron. Pour ceux qui y participent, c'est véritablement une fête, où se mêlent rites, religion incarnée et joie humaine.

Nous transcrivons un texte que nous avons trouvé dans le bureau de la paroisse de Tixán, dans lequel un visiteur apostolique des années 1950 donne des instructions au curé pour bien catéchiser les Indiens qui vivent dans "l'ignorance de la foi". Il est épouvanté de constater qu'ils ne savent même pas se signer. Il pourrait ne s'agir que d'une histoire d'autrefois, si celle-ci n'illustrait les soucis encore actuels d'enseigner les chemins du salut souvent au prix du sacrifice de nombreux éléments de la religion ou de la religiosité indienne. La problématique transversale est toujours celle de la manière d'implanter un modèle de religion étranger à la culture et à la vie, et celle des discordances entre le vécu et la signification dans toute pratique religieuse.

Lorsqu'il s'agit de la fête, d'un point de vue culturel, de nombreux niveaux se croisent et s'interpénètrent. C'est à partir de là que resurgit la problématique du respect de l'autre. Le drame du christianisme qui doit encore, 500 ans après son

implantation, apprendre à vivre avec les diverses réalités culturelles, continue toujours d'en effrayer plus d'un.

La fête et la rencontre

C'était un matin d'été, à la fin du mois de septembre. La Saint Michel ! Nous arrivons à la communauté¹ du même nom le matin. C'est un secteur semi-aride. L'alimentation en eau potable vient de très loin, une vingtaine de kilomètres. Mais la vie résiste à tous les climats. Ici, la communauté a grandi en même temps que les cactus qui poussent sur la terre sèche. Dans le désert, sont nées la fleur et la vie de tant de générations...

Beaucoup de diversités dans la vie des communautés indiennes aujourd'hui, tant dans la culture que dans la tradition religieuse : il y a des famines de confession évangélique, et d'autres de confession catholique ; ceux qui émigrent dans d'autres provinces pour trouver du travail, et qui finissent par devenir indifférents aux questions religieuses. Mais lorsqu'il est question de fête, ils forment tous un seul ensemble. Si le président de la communauté est évangélique, par exemple, sa présence à la fête est obligatoire, car c'est un moment prestigieux pour la communauté et pour ses dirigeants, à cause de la grande foule qui s'y retrouve ; en outre, ce type d'événement est quelque chose de très enraciné dans la structure culturelle des communautés.

Le vent nous fouettait, littéralement parlant, avec violence. Les rafales formaient des nuages de sable et de poussière. On pouvait à peine respirer normalement. Dans cette atmosphère hostile, arrivaient en permanence et de partout des charrettes, des camions, des bus... À un certain moment, par jeu, nous avons dénombré plus de cent charrettes

stationnées, sans compter celles qui allaient et venaient en transportant des visiteurs. Dans une salle, un des membres de la communauté reçoit les couvertures traditionnelles offertes à Saint Michel, ces mêmes couvertures qui servent lots des courses de taureaux, mais qui sont ici porteuses d'un sens différent. La chapelle, à cette époque, était encore trop petite pour ces moments de grand rassemblement. À l'intérieur, on ne pouvait pas bouger. Tous ceux qui arrivaient allaient vers le saint pour poser quelque chose à ses pieds : baies, pommes de terre, orge (des semences symbolisant l'espoir, dans une saison sèche, froide et venteuse), des peaux d'animaux... de l'argent sur la cape du saint... Toucher la cape de Saint Michel, qui a pourtant si peu l'air d'un ange, c'est une des choses les plus importantes pour ceux qui viennent ici. Et tous doivent poser leur chapeau sur la tête du saint pour demander sa bénédiction, avant de l'utiliser à nouveau comme d'habitude.

Malgré la quantité de gens qui poussait dans tour les sens, les femmes cherchaient un lieu pour s'installer par terre. Les bougies complétaient l'ensemble. Le sol était couvert de bougies allumées. On n'entendait pas une seine des prières qui sont habituelles lots des pèlerinages, telle que la récitation du chapelet, ou les chants religieux qui ont cours lors des rassemblements des populations métisses. On voyait les gens s'avancer vers la statue de Saint Michel et lui adresser leurs demandes, les yeux fixes, sur un ton mêlant la supplication, la prière et la plainte.

Le mouvement de la foule était ample. Tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de la chapelle, les groupes se formaient selon une forme concentrique ; toujours animés par un accordéoniste, les gens chantaient, dansaient ; d'autres tournaient en rond, à cheval, autour du centre du village.²

Animation et joie³

Lorsqu'on se promenait au dehors de la chapelle, autour des endroits les plus remplis de monde, on pouvait observer ce qui se passait pour les gens qui se trouvaient dans les lieux un peu plus éloignés. C'était un autre mouvement de foule, qui constituait un complément — au sens de la continuité — de tout ce qui se vivait autour du saint. De temps en temps, spontanément, un groupe de cavaliers partait en direction des champs, et aussitôt une procession suivait derrière. Bien que tout cela fût apparemment désorganisé, on pouvait identifier différents groupes, à partir d'un accordéon, d'une couverture de corrida, certains avec un coq aux pattes liées et accroché à un bâton. Ils avançaient en dansant en rythme avec les musiques. Un mélange de choses et de situations qui

occupaient un unique espace. Il y avait également d'autres groupes qui n'accompagnaient pas les chevaux ou la procession, mais qui restaient assis en cercle, silencieusement, dans les odeurs de nourriture et de boisson. Comme toujours, les bouteilles d'eau-de-vie abondent dans ces fêtes, et constituent un ingrédient fondamental de l'animation et de la fête.

Une fête, ce n'est pas ce qui se voit en surface, mais ce qui se vit dans un temps et un espace extraordinaires. C'est un mouvement collectif et chargé d'une spiritualité, où personne n'est seul. C'est un ensemble de choses et de situations quasiment indescriptible. C'est quelque chose que ne peuvent ressentir que ceux qui sont dedans, parce qu'alors ils sont les sujets de ce qui est vécu. La joie et la tristesse reflètent un style de vie, ou mieux, un vécu concret. Les célébrations festives réalisent toute une incarnation d'une croyance latente tout au long de l'existence. S'arrêter pour contempler tout ce mouvement, c'est la contemplation d'un moment sacré, tout mêlé de réalités profanes. Cela dépend un peu des critères de l'observateur.

Communiquer la vie⁴

Après un certain temps, la poussière finit par constituer un élément intégrant de l'atmosphère de la fête. On appela les gens pour la messe. Un groupe de chanteuses animait, accompagnées par un clavier électrique. Le secrétaire de la paroisse avait tout prévu pour la messe, de telle sorte que tout était parfaitement organisé pour cet acte. On sentait que l'Eucharistie était un moment important et constituait une partie de la fête.

La presque totalité de la liturgie de la Parole fut réalisée par des laïcs (hommes et femmes) qui accompagnaient la célébration : les uns lisaient, les autres chantaient, d'autres veillaient à l'organisation générale. Au moment de la communion, l'un des catéchistes invita ceux qui désiraient communier à s'avancer. Comme la majorité avait bu de l'alcool, c'est un tout petit nombre de femmes qui s'avança pour communier. Pendant la célébration, en silence, la majorité des gens était assise par terre, partageant entre eux la nourriture qu'ils avaient apportée de chez eux. Le moment sacré de l'Eucharistie était lié au partage de la nourriture entre eux. Et lorsque la messe fut finie, la fête reprit son rythme et sa dynamique.

De la même manière que lors d'une rencontre ou d'une assemblée, le partage des activités et des moments de prière contribue à construire la communauté. De même, le rôle du prêtre entre également dans la dynamique de constitution de la

communauté. C'est là un processus difficile à percevoir, car la fête est un moment où entrent en jeu les contrastes de la culture dans la célébration de la foi des gens, les conflits latents, et tout un syncrétisme qui s'est formé au long de l'histoire.

L'inculturation des célébrations dans les communautés indiennes se transforme en défi : très peu de gens participent à la procession de communion, mais la dynamique qu'on observe est une véritable communion de vie. Nous nous trouvons alors face à la question suivante : dans l'évangélisation inculturée, à quoi devons-nous nous attacher ? Aux moments de célébration culturelle, ou au vécu de partage, dont le sujet actif est la communauté elle-même ? Car le vécu du sacré est une expérience dynamique plus large que ce qui se vit à l'intérieur d'une chapelle.

Vécu, jeu et célébrations

À partir de la description de cette fête, nous pouvons percevoir quelques traits caractéristiques de la quasi-totalité des communautés dépendant des paroisses de Palmira et Tixán (province du Chimborazo) dans lesquelles nous travaillons :

Les Indiens ont dans leur manière de vivre le sacré, une spiritualité festive. Pour les fêtes du saint patron, comme pour les fêtes du baptême ou du mariage, on ne regarde pas aux dépenses engagées pour vivre pleinement ces moments. Il s'agit de les vivre dans la communion avec les autres : on chante, on danse, et l'amitié partagée est une réalité évidente. Tout semble être de l'ordre ludique dans la manière d'être des uns avec les autres. La rencontre produit de la joie.

Dans une communauté, les événements constituent un motif pour être ensemble. Même les décès peuvent se transformer en occasions de partage. Et il ne s'agit pas seulement de choses matérielles qui peuvent aider à dépasser la douleur. Récemment, une personne de la communauté me racontait que les gens venaient de passer la nuit de veille d'un défunt à parler, rire et jouer. La nuit suivante, après l'enterrement, ils retournèrent à la maison du défunt et restèrent jusqu'à l'aube à jouer avec les membres de la famille. Certains disaient : le mort aimait jouer, donc nous jouons !

Nous nous trouvons face à une religiosité ou une religion différente. Les expressions religieuses passent par d'autres voies, comme chanter, danser, offrir une offrande au saint ou sur le lieu du culte. On ne sait en général pas grand-chose sur l'histoire du saint, ou si sa statue est "vraie" ou non. La conception que l'on a du sacré ne correspond pas à notre mentalité (sans doute très occidentale). Pour autant, on vit le temps

propre à une célébration, et en un lieu propre à celle-ci. Au bout du compte, la religion se caractérise comme l'ensemble des manifestations qui meuvent les personnes à partir des dimensions de la foi. La logique des choses n'est pas la nôtre. C'est même le programme de ces événements qui est improvisé, et pourtant à la fin tout se réalise, tranquillement, dans un sentiment fort d'appartenance au monde symbolique qui est mis en jeu. Nous en concluons que vivre la foi avec "l'autre", dans son altérité, c'est accompagner les gens dans ce qu'ils ont construit comme signes de vie. Même lorsque ces signes sont une adaptation faite par eux-mêmes, une adaptation qui leur a coûté (et leur coûte toujours) bien des souffrances et des douleurs tout au long de l'invasion blanche.

Conflits

Une des caractéristiques de la fête, c'est le partage. Et ici, entre en scène une contradiction entre la manière de faire indienne et celle des blancs. Il est habituel, pour les agents de pastorale dans de nombreuses paroisses, de faire les comptes de ce qui a été dépensé par les gens lors de la fête du saint patron. Mais dans les communautés indiennes, les dépenses en nourriture ne se mesurent pas. On fait la cuisine jusqu'à ce que le dernier ait mangé. Pour le monde capitaliste, c'est une absurdité de vivre en "gaspillant" l'argent dans la fête, quand la logique fondamentale est d'accumuler. Ainsi, dans une autre communauté, à l'occasion de la fête du saint patron, une salle était remplie de viande pour recevoir les invités.

Lorsque nous prenons conscience de notre présence, il nous semble que nous vivons dans un monde à part. Face à la problématique du vécu de la foi, certains veulent revenir à la formation doctrinale, à la clarté de la foi, dans un monde qui a pourtant refusé dans l'histoire un modèle de présence dirigiste de l'Église.

Il nous revient de découvrir d'autres chemins, pour ne pas être une sorte de fonctionnaire de l'institution, spécialiste de l'implantation de modèles de foi prêts-à-porter. Cela a été le défi pour nous tous ces temps-ci : écouter ce monde qui nous entoure, ne pas nous fixer seulement sur l'enseignement de la doctrine, mais sur le vécu de l'Évangile. Une catéchèse au sens large, qui implique tous les âges ; suivre un processus qui est lent, qui se joue dans l'histoire, dont les protagonistes ont toujours vécu les changements sous le mode d'une imposition venant du dehors, par une institution qui n'a pas respecté ce qu'il y a dans l'âme du peuple indien. Évangéliser, c'est annoncer, c'est aller à la rencontre de Jésus de Nazareth, sur ses traces le long des rives du lac ou sur les sentiers des

montagnes, en nous identifiant à des personnes appartenant à une culture étrangère à la nôtre.

Évangéliser ou purifier ?

La fête du Carnaval a éveillé certaines interrogations dans la pastorale indienne : essentiellement autour de l'eau-de-vie, dans les relations avec les évangélistes. Comment éviter de donner aux autres confessions religieuses une image des catholiques qui ne soit pas synonyme de "pochards" ou de "fêtards" ? Il est vrai cependant, que les évangélistes vivent le même dilemme : comment contrôler les gens au moment de grandes fêtes comme le Carnaval ? Si tous boivent, comment maintenir l'identité évangéliste ? Une fois qu'un évangéliste a bu de l'eau-de-vie pendant la fête de la communauté, ces correligionnaires le traitent de catholique.

La nécessité de la messe et des sacrements a été insérée dans les moments de fête comme une sorte d'adaptation entre deux manières de vivre le sacré. Les expressions culturelles se mêlent aux expressions religieuses ; cela fait surgir la question de la purification de la foi. Le fond du problème réside dans le contrôle des "déviations culturelles" dans le cadre institutionnel. Et la question se pose depuis le moment où le premier blanc a posé le pied sur ces terres.

Quand les symboles et les expressions religieuses sont enracinés dans l'identité culturelle, on tombe dans un dualisme insoluble si l'on cherche à distinguer le bon du mauvais dans la dynamique culturelle. Les cultures dominées — indiennes dans notre cas — ont réussi à manœuvrer pour laisser vivre ce qui leur était propre. De certaines choses, on prend garde à ne pas trop parler, afro qu'il n'y ait pas des agents pastoraux — ou des pasteurs évangélistes — qui cherchent à contrôler ce qu'on fait. La censure, aujourd'hui encore, ne manque pas de zéloteurs. Nous connaissons certains lieux où les messes ont été interdites, ou bien sont présentées comme interdisant les courses de taureaux, les danses ou les feux d'artifice. Mais il y a aussi des "agents" qui font une pastorale plus ouverte. «La raison fondamentale de l'évangélisation inculturée, c'est la participation de tous au banquet de la vie. L'inculturation vise l'assomption des derniers comme premiers et des exclus comme prochains. Leur vie constitue le lieu préférentiel de l'épiphanie de Dieu...» (Suess 1997).

Le drame de l'évangélisation

Conclusion d'une visite pastorale

«Le registre des décès de San Francisco de Tixán

est à jour. Il est nécessaire de respecter la marge de registre, dont l'absence rend malaisée la recherche d'actes dans ce registre et dans les autres livres de Tixán.

C'est avec grande douleur pour notre cœur de Prêlat, quo nous avons pu noter, dans ce registre, la proportion énorme de gens morts sans les secours de la Sainte Religion. Pourquoi n'appellent-ils pas le curé ? Il est temps que Monsieur le Curé prenne toutes les mesures nécessaires afro de sauver de la perdition éternelle ces âmes, rachetées par le sang de Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ, et dont il aura à rendre compte à Dieu au jour du jugement. Nous faisons cette recommandation à Monsieur le Curé, Don Benjamin Bermeo, qui est à la tête de cette paroisse depuis peu de temps, et nous sommes certains, car nous le connaissons, qu'il se consacrera autant qu'il est nécessaire à remédier à un si grand mal, en pourvoyant à la catéchisation des Indiens, qui tous ignorent les rudiments les plus élémentaires de la foi, au point même de ne pas savoir se signer. Rester les bras croisés devant un si grand désastre et perdre en lamentations son temps et ses énergies sacerdotales est une chose absurde et répréhensible. Nous ordonnons que tous les dimanches avant la grand-messe, on récite la Doctrine Chrétienne en sa totalité, posément et clairement. De même, nous ordonnons que "oportune et inoportune",⁵ Monsieur le Curé exige et réclame, exhorte et supplie, afin que les Indiens assistent à la messe. Qu'il y enseigne le catéchisme de manière ordonnée et simple, et peut-être même une partie en quechua. Qu'il se soucie, même si cela exige des sacrifices et des tracas, d'organiser des cours de doctrine dans tous les foyers. Nous redisons la consolation que nous apporte la certitude que Monsieur le Curé actuellement en exercice travaillera avec un zèle véritable afro de résoudre un si grave et douloureux problème».

Fait à San Francisco de Tixán,
le 11 août 1955

+Manuel

Administrateur apostolique de Cuenca⁶

La question doctrinale est à la racine de tous les malentendus à l'intérieur du catholicisme comme de tous les courants du christianisme, et donc dans le travail d'évangélisation jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Au centre de tout cela, gît une confusion entre l'annonce de la "bonne nouvelle" du Royaume et la sacramentalisation. Tous les efforts missionnaires cherchent à implanter l'Église, et la conséquence doit en être les sacrements, conçus comme unique voie du salut. Nous avons une dette envers les peuples conquis, depuis la première évangélisation. Pendant des siècles, l'Église a eu pour souci la catéchèse

d'initiation. À cela se résumait toute l'évangélisation. Ce qui se passe dans la vie quotidienne de la communauté, les formes qu'a construites le peuple lui-même pour vivre sa foi, sont devenus objet de recherche pour l'anthropologie ou la sociologie qui sont entrées par d'autres portes dans la vie de la communauté.

Les baptêmes des nouveaux nés, sont enregistrés comme le baptême d'un tel, né avant hier, par exemple, sans mention de date. Autrefois, le mariage se célébrait dans une situation culturelle particulière. Mais l'institution ecclésiale se souciait de savoir si les sept sacrements étaient respectés ou non.

La conception de l'Église décrite ci-dessus fait de celle-ci un intermédiaire : une aide pour entrer dans la vie éternelle. Il n'apparaît aucun souci pour la vie concrète des Indiens. Elle est étrangère au quotidien des communautés. La question posée par l'évêque est intéressante : Pourquoi n'appellent ils pas le curé ? L'Église semble s'identifier au prêtre et à la doctrine.

«Nous ordonnons que tous les dimanches avant la grand-messe, on récite la Doctrine Chrétienne en sa totalité, posément et clairement». L'évangélisation n'existe pratiquement pas pour les Indiens de cette paroisse. L'absence de l'Évangile ne soulève pas de question. On ne s'interroge pas sur la structure communautaire ou familiale. Lorsqu'on voit aujourd'hui ces soucis qui sous-tendaient la présence de l'Église, ils apparaissent constituer une structure de contrôle. La communauté est obligée de passer par ce chemin. Il n'y a pas le souci de la mettre en rapport avec le Royaume de Dieu en partant de la réalité d'esclavage que vivent les Indiens à cette époque. Connaître le catéchisme, c'est connaître l'Église.

C'est la fameuse "ignorance des indiens" qui suscite l'attention. Ignorance de ne pas connaître la doctrine chrétienne. La langue quechua apparaît non pas comme ce qui permettrait de connaître plus profondément la vie des communautés, mais comme un outil de domination. Il est intéressant de noter, comme le racontent encore les plus anciens, que les contremaîtres dans les *haciendas* connaissaient toujours, et même maniaient bien, la langue quechua.

Ce n'est pas seulement un problème d'hier, c'est aussi un problème actuel. Dans les communautés que nous visitons et dans lesquelles nous célébrons, presque personne ne participe à la messe de style traditionnel. La consécration est l'affaire du prêtre, et l'on attend qu'il ait terminé pour que quelqu'un d'autre puisse participer avec une prière finale. Au moment de communier, il y a des agents de pastorale qui s'offusquent lorsque les Indiens amènent leurs enfants

recevoir les Saintes Espèces. Bien sûr, des Agents n'osent pas parler ou se comporter comme autrefois, en exigeant une catéchèse avant de commencer la messe, mais ils sont pourtant bien mal-à-l'aise et ils cherchent des moyens pour conscientiser (endoctriner) de manière plus moderne : traduire la doctrine en quechua, élaborer des catéchismes pour la première communion des enfants et des jeunes. L'évangélisation inculturée est encore une fois confondue avec une simple adaptation des formes. Nous courons toujours le risque d'entendre l'inculturation comme un maquillage pastoral.

Malgré tout, les semences du Royaume sont présentes dans les lieux les plus éloignés du centre pastoral, où l'influence de la culture occidentale chrétienne se fait peu sentir. Lors d'un rassemblement ou d'une fête, c'est toute la communauté qui se réunit en costumes de fête. L'importance de cet acte est plus large que quelques heures de célébration. Les gens se rassemblent pour célébrer ensemble l'union matrimoniale, le baptême, aussi bien que pour accompagner une personne qui meurt.

Lorsqu'on voit une communauté dans les hameaux les plus distants, le catéchiste est une des autorités de la communauté, mais pas la plus importante. La voix la plus respectée est celle du chef de la commune, qui bien souvent n'est même pas catholique, mais qui convoque toutes les célébrations.

Cela révèle une dynamique propre de la vie. Un noeud central en est le partage de la parole. Évangélistes et catholiques participent de la même manière à cette dynamique. Il se passe la même chose dans l'assemblée de la communauté, quand il y a des problèmes : la parole est répartie entre tous et toutes. On apprend à participer dès le plus jeune âge, dans une catéchèse qui va bien au-delà de l'apprentissage de la doctrine ; et c'est ainsi qu'on apprend à vivre en communauté. La différence fondamentale, c'est que là, ils sont sujets, acteurs dans la construction d'une vie et d'une culture qui se fait depuis l'intérieur.

Considérations finales

Sur cette question, il n'y a pas de conclusion qui tienne. Nous sommes sur un chemin d'apprentissage. Regardons ce que dit le décret *Ad Gentes* de Vatican II : «La semence qui est la parole de Dieu venant à germer dans une bonne terre, arrosée de la rosée divine, puise la sève (de cette terre)». Personne ne peut prévoir à partir de la semence comment sera un arbre. C'est seulement lorsqu'il pousse qu'on peut faire les adaptations nécessaires. Avoir un livre de recettes pour la pastorale peut sembler le moyen le plus facile, mais

cela ne donne pas toujours quelque chose. Dans les communautés de ce secteur, la terre n'est pas des meilleures, mais elle produit de quoi vivre. La conception que nous avons de la pastorale ou de l'évangélisation est fondamentale. Presque toujours, nous appréhendons la réalité comme une absence de Dieu, et c'est seulement quand nous imposons un programme que commencerait la présence de Dieu. Partir de l'autre, avec sa manière de vivre, cela a des conséquences que nous ne sommes pas toujours prêts à accepter.

Tout n'est pas bon, comme tout n'est pas mauvais. Au milieu des épis de blé, naît la mauvaise herbe. On peut dire la même chose pour les communautés : il y a de bonnes saisons et des moments plus lents. Mais pour les Indiens de cette région, nous avons constaté une chose : lorsqu'il y a un échec, celui-ci devient une aide pour réagir et se relever. C'est la dynamique de la terre, ou de la vie des personnes et des communautés. Tout d'un coup, arrive la pluie ou un nouveau souffle, et tout avance à sa manière.

La vie des communautés ne peut être mesurée seulement par la réunion au moment de la célébration. Il faut prendre en considération l'organisation sociale et l'organisation politique qui ont également des rythmes semblables. Les cultures sont dynamiques et sont en confrontation constante avec d'autres réalités. Ce sont les gens eux-mêmes qui font la synthèse, pour que la vie soit plus heureuse ou plus belle. Dans la rencontre, par le dialogue, les difficultés de la langue sont dépassées. C'est le défi de notre temps : faire advenir une nouvelle Pentecôte.⁷

Notes

¹ NDT : Comme on le verra dans la suite du texte, le mot *communauté* n'est pas à entendre au sens purement religieux, mais plutôt comme communauté villageoise.

² La religiosité indienne est essentiellement marquée par des symboles, très étendus et très complexes. Il ne faut pas nécessairement chercher d'explications pour chaque expression ou chaque geste. «Dans le symbole, le signifié et le signifiant (l'objet symbolique) sont infiniment ouverts, jusqu'à l'antinomie» (cf. Croatto, 2002, 95).

³ La fête est toujours un moment spécial pour la communauté. Toute fête représente un temps, un vécu, qui sont au-delà de toute tentative de définition par une idée. «La réactualisation périodique des actes créateurs réalisés par les êtres divins *in illo tempore* constitue le calendrier sacré, l'ensemble des fêtes... C'est justement la réintégration de ce temps original

et sacré qui différencie le comportement humain durant la fête, de celui du temps qui la précède et de celui qui lui succède» (cf. Eliade 1996, 76).

⁴ Le thème de la communion eucharistique dans les communautés est encore un défi, car il nous semble que la particule de pain, qui pour la doctrine catholique représente le Christ, représente peu de choses en réalité pour les chrétiens du monde indien. En de nombreux endroits, on se demande si, dans l'inculturation, on ne devrait pas proposer d'autres signes de la présence de Dieu, davantage significatifs pour la culture.

⁵ NDT. Expression latine : «à temps et à contretemps» (Tm 4:2).

⁶ Ce document trouvé dans les livres du bureau paroissial de Tixán me semble être important : il montre comment la question de «l'ignorance indienne» face aux sacrements a toujours été une constante dans l'Église. Aujourd'hui, les discours ont changé, mais il est habituel d'insister sur la catéchèse comme unique moyen d'évangélisation. Lorsqu'on oublie d'entrer dans la réalité des communautés et d'en découvrir les forces à partir de la vie et des signes du Royaume, on devient une institution qui répète l'histoire de la domination doctrinale.

⁷ Voir *Gaudium et spes* : «Les joies et les espoirs, les tristesses et les angoisses des hommes de ce temps, des pauvres surtout et de tous ceux qui souffrent, sont aussi les joies et les espoirs, les tristesses et les angoisses des disciples du Christ» (n. 1). Tant dans les fêtes que dans les échecs de la communauté, nous sommes appelés à être serviteurs et servantes du Royaume. Mon attention a été attirée par une affirmation de Roger Garaudy : «Il ne s'agit pas d'un problème archéologique ou d'érudition théologique, mais de l'orientation fondamentale de notre vie quotidienne. L'interprétation de l'Évangile n'est pas seulement une manière de le lire, mais également de le vivre» (s.a., 113).

Réf. : Publiée en *Spiritus*, n. 174, Mars 2004, pp. 21-34.

Habiter le temps et l'espace

Quelle chance représente l'arrivée des migrants pour l'Europe ? (du point de vue culturel, politique, social, ecclésial)

- P. Hans Vöcking, M. Afr. * -

1. Migrations et immigrés en Europe : un calendrier inachevé

Les migrations font partie intégrante de l'histoire de l'Europe et représentent un aspect important de sa réalité actuelle. Aucun État européen n'a échappé aux mouvements migratoires. Les Européens se sont de tous temps déplacés vers d'autres continents et à l'intérieur de l'Europe — et il continue d'en être ainsi — tandis que migrants et réfugiés d'autres parties du monde se sont installés en Europe pour y commencer une nouvelle vie.

L'Europe a toujours été un continent de la diversité. Cette diversité est une réalité de la vie courante, non seulement entre les États et les nations, mais également à l'intérieur des pays, régions et villes et au sein de leur population. La migration continue à nourrir cette diversité, tout en cultivant l'émergence apparemment contradictoire d'une culture mondiale et de l'affirmation de cultures territoriales et de groupes. Les moyens sophistiqués de communication et de transport ont élargi les possibilités d'échanges entre les hommes et les groupes. Les populations dans les pays européens chérissent leur identité, leur patrimoine, leurs valeurs, leurs traditions religieuses et leurs langues, lesquels sont le produit de siècles d'échanges humains et culturels.

Dans tous les pays européens, la communauté des migrants est très diversifiée et reflète la complexité des flux migratoires mondiaux. Elle compte des immigrés établis, des travailleurs de longue durée ou temporaires, des travailleurs frontaliers, des étudiants et des commerçants. On y trouve des travailleurs non qualifiés et des personnes diplômées. Nombre d'entre eux sont originaires d'anciennes colonies et d'anciennes républiques soviétiques non européennes. D'autres sont des réfugiés politiques ou des réfugiés de guerre.

Les migrants sont moins nombreux en Europe centrale et orientale que dans les pays membres de l'Union Européenne (UE), où des communautés d'immigrés sont établies depuis deux ou trois générations. Actuellement on estime le chiffre des

immigrés dans les 15 pays de l'Union européenne à environ 15 millions, à côté des millions d'hommes et de femmes naturalisés. Dans la plupart des pays européens le «jus solis» est plus ou moins en vigueur. Chacun né dans un de ces pays a la double nationalité, de l'État d'origine et de l'État d'accueil et, à l'âge de 18 ans, il doit choisir laquelle des deux nationalités il gardera.

2. Les défis de l'immigration ou de la mobilité

La mondialisation économique, politique et culturelle lance de nouveaux défis à la société européenne dans son ensemble. On peut les définir en termes de solidarité, de conduite avisée des affaires publiques et d'appartenances multiples.

Pour y répondre, la société devra apprendre à exploiter et à apprécier l'apport des communautés immigrées.

La solidarité au sein de la société doit s'étendre aux communautés immigrées. La solidarité entre États doit s'allier à la volonté de s'attaquer aux causes profondes de la migration. La bonne gestion des affaires publiques doit donner aux immigrés les moyens de résoudre leurs problèmes et tenir compte de ce qu'ils sont en mesure de faire pour relever les défis qui concernent l'ensemble de la société. Le fait d'appartenir à une communauté d'immigrés n'est jamais qu'une des multiples façons de définir l'identité d'une personne.

Les immigrés ont rarement des origines communes. Pour ces groupes qui conservent une sensibilité vis-à-vis de la culture et de la religion de leur pays d'origine, les questions culturelles et religieuses sont considérées comme des questions de politique générale plutôt que comme des prérogatives. Les immigrés recherchent une participation dans les institutions générales. Dans ce processus ils optent pour une autre politique que les minorités nationales qui, elles, cherchent une représentation politique spécifique se basant sur le statut de minorité nationale élaboré, par exemple, par le Conseil de l'Europe et

que la plupart des États ont adopté. Cependant, aujourd'hui on constate aussi que, parmi des immigrés musulmans, il y a une tendance à s'organiser en tant que minorité ethnique ou nationale pour avoir ce statut juridique qui leur donne une autonomie plus grande dans les domaines culturels et politiques.

3. L'immigration crée une Europe multi-religieuse

Sans le flux migratoire, les religions non-chrétiennes seraient restées en fait marginales, alors que maintenant c'est un fait populaire et social en cours d'implantation profonde dans l'espace européen. La société en Europe est véritablement devenue une société multi-religieuse et cela n'a été ni prévu ni voulu.

Les clés de compréhension du devenir des religions non-chrétiennes se trouvent dans l'analyse des processus migratoires. On ne peut pas renfermer ces religions dans les catégories d'une religion immigrée ou transplantée d'un ailleurs à un ici. Mais il convient de prendre en compte le fait du processus d'interpénétration progressive et réciproque entre les populations d'origine musulmane par exemple et celles de souche européenne.

Pour comprendre la situation actuelle des immigrés non-chrétiens en général et des musulmans en particulier ainsi que leur influence sur la société d'accueil, il faut prendre en compte le facteur «temps». La dimension temporelle est présente dans l'intégration subjective des migrants, qui modifient leurs projets et leur comportement au fur et à mesure de leur intégration. Mais elle est ressentie, également, par les chrétiens européens, qui découvrent progressivement la présence de groupes ou communautés ayant une vision religieuse et culturelle différente.

4. Les pouvoirs publics en tant que facilitateurs

Les organes exécutifs de l'État doivent faciliter la coopération entre les divers services et organismes gouvernementaux et les acteurs concernés. Les questions touchant aux immigrés relèvent habituellement de différents ministères. La coopération entre ces ministères permet d'éviter des incohérences dans la politique d'intégration et des incertitudes chez les immigrés.

1. - Égalité des religions dans le domaine public

Dans de nombreux États européens, la situation des nouvelles religions dans le domaine public n'est pas comparable à celle des religions depuis longtemps établies. Il importe qu'elles bénéficient d'une place équivalente et qu'on offre aux membres de ces

religions des possibilités de s'acquitter de leurs devoirs religieux prévus par l'ordre juridique établi. Il faut aussi que les autorités adoptent une attitude positive à l'égard des manifestations religieuses, par exemple la construction de mosquées et de pagodes ou la création de cimetières. Des contacts structurés entre les autorités et les organisations religieuses devraient contribuer à la résolution de ces problèmes. «Marseille espérance» peut être un modèle à imiter par d'autres villes. L'initiative du maire de la ville est le résultat d'une politique d'intégration et de la recherche de structures pour améliorer la cohabitation.

2. - Accorder plus d'attention à l'éducation civique, à la démocratie, aux droits de l'homme et à l'État de droit

Le maintien de la démocratie et de l'État de droit suppose que les citoyens soient formés aux principes nécessaires. Cela s'applique aussi aux nouveaux citoyens. L'éducation en principe devrait faire partie du cursus d'intégration et du programme d'études pour les cadres religieux.

3. - Aider la création de structures pour la formation des cadres

Il est nécessaire de créer des centres de formation pour les cadres (par exemple professeurs de religion, guides, imams) qui sont nécessaires pour l'organisation de la communauté et l'enseignement religieux. Ensemble avec les représentants des communautés religieuses, les instances concernées devraient chercher comment ouvrir des centres de formation — comparables à ceux du christianisme — avec un programme d'étude adapté à la société européenne.

4. - Atténuation de la dépendance à l'égard de gouvernements étrangers

Pour réduire l'influence des gouvernements des pays d'origines, il est nécessaire que les organisations religieuses immigrées en Europe soient rendues moins dépendantes à l'égard du financement étranger de leurs activités. Une manière de réduire cette dépendance consisterait à accorder à certaines activités caritatives ou de formation, des avantages fiscaux, comme cela se fait aussi pour des organisations appartenant aux religions établies. Une autre formule réside dans l'octroi d'allègements fiscaux particuliers aux organisations religieuses comme cela se pratique dans de nombreux États européens.

5. - Formation des agents de médias

Il est délicat pour un organe ou instance politiques

démocratiques d'aborder les problèmes des médias, cependant il importerait que ceux-ci prennent conscience des effets exercés sur la société par les informations qu'ils diffusent au sujet des religions. Il y aurait lieu d'améliorer la connaissance de la religion en général parmi les journalistes et les rédacteurs, au moyen de séminaires et de cours de formation. Cela favoriserait une information plus objective et exempte de stéréotypes. Le soutien financier de la production de programmes de qualité pourrait également jouer un rôle à cet égard. Dans ce domaine, les États devront mener une politique comparable à celle qui est mise en oeuvre par l'Union européenne dans le domaine de la lutte contre le racisme depuis quelques années.

6. - L'immigration et la mission de l'Église à l'égard des musulmans

Pendant longtemps l'Église et les chrétiens ont considéré les «immigrés musulmans» comme des «ouvriers immigrés». Aujourd'hui elle parle des «immigrés» et des «Musulmans» et plus personne ne conteste l'évidence. Dans un premier temps, les chrétiens et l'Église se sont préoccupés de la situation des musulmans dans le contexte socio-politique. Ils se sont engagés dans des oeuvres sociales, caritatives et politiques. Ils ont pris le rôle de l'avocat et ils ont défendu les droits des défavorisés qu'ils étaient au début de l'immigration.

Dans un deuxième temps, les travailleurs immigrés sont devenus les musulmans et ils sont apparus dans le travail pastoral : les enfants musulmans sont apparus dans les jardins d'enfants, dans les mouvements chrétiens de jeunes, à l'occasion de mariages, d'abord entre femmes chrétiennes et hommes musulmans, aujourd'hui aussi entre hommes chrétiens et femmes musulmanes ou encore à propos des conversions au christianisme des hommes et des femmes issus d'une famille musulmane ou des Européens à l'islam.

Dans ce nouvel environnement culturel, social et religieux, les chrétiens doivent répondre à la question : qu'est-ce que veut dire être une Église missionnaire et comment évangéliser une société européenne qui est devenue pas seulement sécularisée mais aussi multi-religieuse ?

Conclusion

La présence des étrangers dans notre société européenne, l'évolution démographique négative dans tous les pays européens qui demandent de plus en plus une immigration des travailleurs bien formés, la mobilité de plus en plus grande de nombreuses populations chassées de leur pays par la misère ou le mépris des droits humains, le nombre élevé des demandeurs d'asile, les brassages de population

suscités par la mondialisation changeront profondément la société en Europe. Il s'ensuit que la société européenne est de plus en plus marquée par l'inter-culturalité et qu'elle est devenue multi-religieuse. Ces facteurs invitent les chrétiens à élargir les dimensions de leur Foi. Celle-ci doit travailler leur conscience pour qu'elle détermine leur existence et leurs choix selon une double fidélité :

- prendre en compte ces réalités humaines, cette nouvelle confrontation à l'autre, et ces peurs qui surgissent dans certains secteurs de la société,
- mettre en rapport ces réalités humaines avec la Parole de la Révélation qui éveille à l'amour gratuit et universel de Dieu, tel qu'il s'est manifesté en Jésus Christ.

Littérature

Conseil de l'Europe, *La religion et l'intégration des immigrés*, Strasbourg, Conseil de l'Europe, 1999.

Évêques de France, *Rencontrer l'autre. L'immigration : au rendez-vous pour la foi*, Paris, 1997.

Huot-Pleuroux Paul (Éd), *Droit d'asile, devoir d'accueil*. VIII. Colloque organisé par la Fondation Jean Rodhain, 1994, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1995.

Les Églises avec les immigrés. Séminaire organisé par le CIEMI 1997. *Migrations Société*, n. 9 (1997) 53.

Islam en Europe. Législation relative aux Communautés Musulmanes, Bruxelles, COMECE, 2001.

P. Hans Vöcking est Missionnaire d'Afrique
Responsable du Département Migrations COMECE.

Réf. : Supplément du n. 144 de *Mission de l'Église*,
avril-juin 2004, pp. 32-36.

'Religionism' in Tanzania

- Frans Wijzen, SMA -

On 26 January 2001, 22 people were killed during demonstrations by the Civic United Front, the main opposition party on Zanzibar Island, a more or less independent administrative unit within the United Republic of Tanzania. The next day another seven people were shot in clashes between the police and rioters. These clashes have shattered Tanzania's image as a 'haven of peace' in a region that is otherwise troubled by civil war, ethnic conflict, drought and disease.

The Zanzibar riots are not the first manifestation of growing religious, political and ethnic conflict in Tanzania. In 1998 there were the Mwembechai riots (Njozi, 2000) and the bombing of the United States embassy in Dar-es-Salaam, which — together with the bombing of the United States embassy in Nairobi (Kenya) — later appeared to have been an omen of the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. Earlier, as far back as 1986, there had been public rallies, characterised by anti-Christian preaching and the occasional burning of Bibles and pork butcheries, churches and schools (Smith, 1990; Von Sicard, 1991).

As a root cause of these tensions and conflicts several scholars have pointed to religious revivalism, both in Christianity and in Islam (Ludwig, 1996; Gifford, 1996; Lodhi and Westerlund, 1999). In Tanzania this is a relatively new phenomenon, for which various terms are used. No single word in Swahili, the national language of Tanzania, expresses such a phenomenon adequately. People speak about *imani kali*, *msimamo mkali*, *siasa kali*, usually translated with such terms as 'religious extremism' and 'religious fundamentalism'. The terminology continues to grow and has become part of both the popular and academic vocabulary (Lacunza Balda, 1997, pp. 120-122).

Here we focus on the term *udini* (religionism) which is frequently used in newspapers (Nasaha, 2000) and on the Internet (www.youngafrican.com). It has been described as 'religious favouritism' and 'religious antagonism' (Jumbe, 1994, p. 121). But what is 'religionism'? To what phenomena does the term refer? By whom are these phenomena seen? And are there associations between these phenomena? So far most studies of present-day religious affairs in

Tanzania have been based on historical research or content analysis of newspapers and pamphlets. Our study is based mainly on fieldwork. Given the early stage of empirical research on this issue in Tanzania our study is exploratory in nature. Our aim in this article is not to test a hypothesis but to generate concepts and theories that could be useful for further research.

The article is structured as follows: 1) we clarify our method. 2) we describe our population and the general findings among this population. 3) we move to more specific findings, in particular by determining what phenomena are seen by whom, 4) and whether tensions are attributed to these phenomena. 5) We end with conclusions and a discussion.

1. Clarification of method

From our previous observations (Wijzen, 1997, 2002) and our review of the literature we know about public rallies and videos slandering religions, newspapers spreading rumours, debates on Islamic rights and religious discrimination. For our present purpose we have modified a questionnaire that was previously used for a small-scale survey in Dar-es-Salaam (Wijzen and Mfumbusa, 2002). This questionnaire comprised 28 questions about practices and opinions in order to explore further the religionism that exists in Tanzania today. Of the 28 questions, 25 were structured and three were open, asking for clarification.

The following practices and opinions were seen as expressions of religionism: witnessing religious tensions and thinking that there may be religious conflicts in the future; attending rallies that slander religions and thinking that these rallies exacerbate religious tensions; reading religious magazines and thinking that these magazines contribute to religious conflicts; watching videos that slander other religions and thinking that it would be good to ban these videos; thinking that people of any religion in Tanzania are oppressed; and thinking that the *sharia* can solve Muslims' problems.

From 5 to 9 February 2001 we conducted a small-

scale survey at St Augustine University of Tanzania at Nyegezi, a suburb of Mwanza, the second largest town of Tanzania with a population of approximately one million people. St Augustine University is a Catholic institute for higher learning, but it has a mixed student population of Christians, Muslims, Hindus and indigenous (also called 'traditional' or just 'African') believers.¹

The questionnaire was distributed to 250 people who were there at the time, 207 of whom returned the questionnaires. The total campus population consists of 300 people: 250 students and 50 staff members, of whom 26 are lecturers and 24 are non-academic staff. The campus population represents an urban spectrum, largely dominated by intellectuals and Christians. They are not representative of Tanzania as a whole, where roughly 35% of the population are Christian and another 35% Muslim (the remainder being indigenous believers, with a small Hindu minority group); where 15% live in urban areas (the vast majority of Tanzanians being peasant farmers in rural areas); and less than 5% of primary school leavers continue to secondary school. But these are the future leaders of Tanzania, so insight into their (religious) practices and opinions is relevant to policy makers in government and in the churches.

The collected data were analysed by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software, mainly data tabulation to find frequencies, cross-tabulation to discover differences within the population, and measures of association to discover correlations between independent and dependent variables as well as the strength of these correlations (Norusis, 1983).

Before we move on to a description of general and more specific findings we want to make two preliminary remarks. First, our description gives valid percentages only. The 'I don't know' response is considered to be a missing value, as are non-responses. For example, to the question whether there may be future religious conflicts, 77,6% (=118) answered 'yes' and 22,4% (=34) answered 'no'. If the answer 'I don't know' is considered valid (24,2% =50), 57,0% responded affirmatively and 16,4% responded negatively, while 2,4% failed to respond. Such a presentation of the data would give a different picture, in which more people are confused by the situation than those who have clear-cut opinions about it. As we give valid percentages only, the number of valid cases, which forms the basis for measuring percentages, may vary. For each value we add the frequencies in brackets.

A second remark concerns language. As said before, our questions were put in Swahili, the national language of Tanzania. On modern issues this language

is less developed than English. This makes translation and interpretation difficult. In the question, 'Have you ever witnessed a religious tension/religious tensions?', the Swahili word '*kushuhudia*' was used for 'to witness' and '*mgororo/migogoro*' for tension(s). Both words have broad meanings. *Kushuhudia* (derived from the Arabic '*shahada*') could mean 'to bear witness' or 'to be a witness' (e.g. in a law-court, at a wedding ceremony). The word '*mgororo*', here translated as 'tension', could also mean 'uprising' or 'riot'. The distinction between 'tension' and 'conflict' is difficult to make in Swahili. The word '*dhehebu*' was translated as 'denomination', but it is often equated with 'religion' ('*dini*' in Swahili) or 'sect'. The word '*mkristu*' was translated as 'Protestant' but it could also have a wider meaning, including Catholics.

2. Population and general findings

The population under investigation is relatively young. Of the respondents 73,3% (=143) are 30 years or younger, the largest age group (42,5% =83) being between 21 and 25 years. A large majority (72,7% =136) are students; 5,3% (=10) are lecturers and 22,0% (=41) have other occupations. Most respondents (66,3% =126) are studying for or have obtained a university degree or other certificates of higher learning; 5,5% (=10) have only primary education. The majority (44,4% =88) live on one of the campuses or in the neighbouring town of Mwanza (24,7% =49). Of the respondents 54,4% (=110) are men, 45,5% (=92) are women. Roman Catholics make up 48,0% (=95) of the respondents and Protestants ('Christians') 45,4% (=90). Eleven respondents are Muslims (5,6%). There is 1 Hindu and 1 respondent who classifies himself as *Mpagani (sina dini)*, meaning 'pagan, I have no religion' (both 0,5%).

The majority of the respondents (58,9% =119) have witnessed religious tensions in Tanzania. Of these, 43,3% (=81) have actually attended a rally that slandered a religion. To the question, 'Which religion was slandered?', 3,4% (=3) answered 'Islam', 87,5% (=77) answered 'Christianity' and 9,1% (=8) ticked both religions. Remember, there are only 11 Muslims in our population. The vast majority (90,4% =132) think that these rallies exacerbate the religious tensions. Note that there are more people who think that these rallies exacerbate tensions than there are people who have actually attended such rallies. To the question, 'Do you think that there may be religious conflicts in Tanzania in the future?', 77,6% (=118) answered affirmatively.

The vast majority (84,9% =163) of the respondents say that people of different religions have equal rights in Tanzania; 11,0% (=19) say that some of the religions in Tanzania are oppressed.

Q: People of which religion are oppressed?		
Per cent	no. of people	Answer
4%	= 10	Muslims
20%	= 5	Christians
28%	= 7	Indigen. believers
8%	= 2	All
0,5%	= 1	Christ. and Indig. believers

Q: Who oppress them?		
Per cent	no. of people	Answer
56,5%	= 13	The Government
30,4%	= 7	Muslims
8,7%	= 2	Christ. and Muslims
4,3%	= 1	Christians

Note that the number of people who answered the last two questions (25 and 23) is slightly higher than the number of people who gave an affirmative answer to the question whether they think that people of any religion are oppressed (19). In addition 89,2% (=181) of the respondents said that they have heard about 'Islamic extremists'; 35,2% (=70) said that they have heard about 'Christian extremists'. Only a small minority (6,7% =11) thought that Islamic extremists are oppressed by the government; 33,3% (=48) thought that the *sharia* can solve the problems of Muslims in Tanzania.

The majority (80,8% =160) of the respondents said that they have read one or more religious magazines. Under the question, 'Can you mentioned any religious magazine?', respondents were given three options. As a first option, 46,2% (=72) mentioned the (Catholic) *Kiongozi*, 17,9% (=28) mentioned the (Protestant) *Msema Kweli* and 15,4% (=24) mentioned the (Islamic) *An-nuur*. As a second option, 24,6% (=30) mentioned the (Catholic) *Kiongozi*, 23,0% (=28) mentioned the (Islamic) *An-nuur* and 22,1% (=27) mentioned the (Protestant) *Msema Kweli*. As a third option, 19,2% (=15) mentioned the (Islamic) *An-nuur*, 17,9% (=14) mentioned the (Protestant) *Msema Kweli* and 16,7% (=13) mentioned the (Catholic) *Kiongozi*. To the question, 'Do you think that religious magazines contribute to religious conflicts in our country?', 24,7% (=40) of the respondents answered affirmatively. Of the respondents, 24,5% (=50) have

seen a video that slanders another religion. To the question, 'What religion did this video slander?', 10,9% (=6) answered 'Islam', 80,0% (=44) answered 'Christianity', and 9,1% (=5) answered 'both religions'; 58,2% (=32) saw this video in a public place, 38,2% (=21) saw it at home. The majority (89,9% =107) thought that it would be a good thing to ban these videos. Note that the number of people who think that it would be good to ban videos slandering (other) religions (107) is much higher than the number of people who have actually seen such a video (50).

3. What phenomena are seen by whom?

A more interesting exercise is to investigate whether there are differences within our population. For this purpose we did cross-tabulations (Norusis, 1983, pp. 47-66), using (a) age, (b) education, (c) profession, (d) domicile, (e) denomination, and (f) sex as independent variables, and the ten expressions of religionism (practices and opinions) listed in the first section of this article as dependent variables. Only cells with a frequency of 5 or more are taken into account.

(a) Age: The group of respondents aged between 36 and 40 had the highest affirmative score on the question whether they have ever witnessed religious tensions (68,4% =13) and on the question whether they think that there may be religious conflicts in the future (100,0% =14). The 31 to 35 age group had the highest affirmative score on the question whether they have ever watched a video that slandered a religion (30,4% =7), but the youngest age group (<21) has the highest affirmative score on the question whether they think that religious videos should be banned (100,0% =6). They are also the age group with the highest affirmative score on the question whether they have ever attended a rally that slandered a religion (55,6% =5), whereas on the question whether they think that rallies exacerbate religious tension the 31 to 35 age group had the highest affirmative score (100,0% =17). On the question whether they have ever read religious magazines the highest affirmative score was that of older respondents: 89,5% (=17) for respondents between 36 and 40 and 90,0% (=9) for respondents aged 41 and older. But on the question whether they think that religious magazines contribute to religious conflicts the 21 to 25 age group had the highest score (26,9% =18).

(b) Education: Respondents with 'higher' education (form VI plus) had the highest affirmative score on the question whether they have witnessed religious tensions (65,2% =88), but not on the question whether they think that there may be religious conflicts in the future. On this question the

highest affirmative score is that of the least educated (100,0% =6), whereas the lowest affirmative score is that of the most highly educated group (75,0% =78). The more highly educated respondents had the highest affirmative scores on the questions whether they have attended a rally that slandered a religion (47,7% =61), whether they have ever watched a video that slandered a religion (28,3% =39) and whether they read religious magazines (85,7% =114). They are also the group that thinks, more than any other group, that religious magazines contribute to religious conflicts (28,4% =33) and that it would be a good thing to ban religious videos (93,9% =77). But on the question whether they think that rallies exacerbate religious tensions the group of respondents that have only completed form IV had the highest affirmative score (100,0% =10).²

(c) Profession: Lecturers have witnessed religious tensions (80,0% =8), read religious magazines (100,0% =10), watched videos that slander religions (50,0% =5) and think that religious rallies exacerbate religious tension (100,0% =6) more than any other professional group. But on the question whether they think that there may be religious conflicts in the future, non-academic workers had the highest affirmative score (96,4% =27), whereas students had the lowest affirmative score (72,3% =73). Students have the highest affirmative score on the question whether they have ever attended rallies that slandered another religion (41,9% =52) and whether they think that videos that slander religions should be banned (92,3% =72).

(d) Domicile: Respondents who live in Dar es Salaam have the highest affirmative score on the questions whether they have ever witnessed religious tensions (64,7% =11), watched religious videos (29,4% =5), read religious magazines (93,8% =15) and think that magazines contribute to religious conflicts (33,3% =5). But they do not attend religious rallies more than the other groups. Here the respondents who live on the campus have the highest score (49,4% =40). Respondents living in other parts of the country have the highest affirmative scores on the questions whether they think that there may be religious conflicts in the future (81,8% =27), that rallies exacerbate religious tensions (90,9% =10) and that videos that slander religions should be banned (95,5% =21).

(e) Denomination: Protestants have a higher affirmative score than Catholics on the question whether they have witnessed religious tensions (65,8% =50), attended rallies that slander religions (64,1% =35), read religious magazines (88,2% =67) and watched videos that slander religions (29,1% =23). Also more Protestants than Catholics think that rallies exacerbate

religious tension (98,3% =57) and that videos that slander religions should be banned (92,2% =47). On the question whether they think that there may be religious conflicts in the future, Protestants (78,7% =48) and Catholics (78,9% =56) have much the same affirmative score. The number of Muslims in our population is low, yet some of their scores seem relevant. On the question whether they have ever witnessed religious tensions their affirmative score is almost the same as that of Catholics (54,5% =6), but they have the lowest affirmative score on the question whether they think that there may be religious conflicts in the future (50,0% =4). Their affirmative score on the question whether they have read religious magazines (81,8% =9) and whether they think that these magazines contribute to religious conflicts (30,0% =7) is somewhere between those of Protestants (highest) and Catholics (lowest). They have the lowest affirmative score on the questions whether they have seen a video that slandered a religion (18,2% =2) and whether they think that it would be a good thing to ban these videos (75,0% =3). The same applies to the questions whether they have ever attended a rally that slandered a religion (30,0% =3) and whether they think these rallies exacerbate religious tensions (37,5% =3).

(f) Sex: More male than female respondents have witnessed tensions (61,5% =67), read religious magazines (83,3% =90), attended rallies (49,0% =48) and watched videos that slander religions (27,5% =30). Also more men than women think that religious magazines contribute to religious conflicts (31,3% =29). But women have a higher affirmative score than men on the questions whether they think that there may be religious conflicts in the future (80,3% =50), that religious rallies exacerbate religious tension (96,5% =55), and that it would be a good thing to ban videos that slander other religious (95,5% =42).

By means of cross-tabulations we explored differences within the population. In this way we discovered relationships between dependent and independent variables. But cross-tabulation does not allow for quantification of these relationships; it tells us that the association exists, but says nothing about its extent or nature. To gain more information about the strength of the relationships we had discovered we used Cramer's V as a measure of association. The values are given in brackets. They range between 1 and 0:1 means a perfect correlation, 0 means no correlation at all (Norusis, 1983, pp. 54-55).

We limit ourselves to the dependent and independent variables referred to above. For witnessing religious tensions the strongest associations (=V) were with age (.29) and education (.21). For

expectation of future religious conflict the strongest associations are with age (.29) and profession (.23). The highest value for reading religious magazines is associated with education (.22), and thinking that magazines contribute to religious conflict correlates most strongly with denomination (.20). The strongest association for watching videos that slander religions is with occupation (.21); for holding that it would be a good thing to ban these videos it is with denomination (.20) and profession (.19). For attending religious rallies the strongest association is with age (.16); for the opinion that these rallies exacerbate tensions it is with denomination (.50).

4. Attribution of tensions

As said before, religionism is often described in terms of antagonism between religions (Jumbe, 1994: 121). We therefore tried to determine whether tensions, particularly between adherents of different religions, are attributed to the phenomena that we identified as indicators. Answers to three related structured questions may shed some light on this issue. Respondents were asked whether people of any religion are oppressed and, if so, which religion is oppressed and by whom? The questions whether they have ever watched videos and attended a rally that slandered a religion may also shed some light on the issue, as well as the question whether they have ever heard about 'Islamic extremist' or 'Christian extremist'.

To start with the latter two questions, 90,9% (=10) of the Muslims have heard about Islamic extremists, whereas 92,3% (=72) of the Protestants and 84,0% (=79) of the Catholics have affirmative scores. Of the Muslims 36,4% (=4) have heard about Christian extremists, whereas 37,8% (=34) of the Catholics and 31,2% (=24) of the Protestants have heard about Christian extremists.

On the question regarding which religion's adherents are oppressed, 3 Muslims say that Muslims are oppressed, 2 Muslims say that indigenous believers are oppressed (n=5). None of the Muslims answers that Christians (Protestants and Catholics) are oppressed, whereas 5 Catholics say that Muslims are oppressed, 3 Catholics say that indigenous believers are oppressed and 2 Catholics say that all believers are oppressed (n=12). Of the Protestants, 1 says that Muslims are oppressed, 3 say that Christians are oppressed and 1 says that Christians and indigenous believers are oppressed (n=5). Note that the numbers are small, as the majority of the respondents answered that there is no religious oppression at all. To the question, 'who oppresses them?', 5 Muslims (100%) answer 'the government'. None of the Muslims answered that they are oppressed by Christians. Seven (63,6%) Catholics and 1 (20%) Protestant say that they are oppressed by the government, whereas 4 (80,0%) Protestants and 3

(27,3%) Catholics say that they are oppressed by Muslims.

To the question, 'Can you mention any religious magazine?', 7 Catholics (10,6%) and 7 Protestants (10,6%) mentioned the Islamic paper *An-nuur* as a first option, whereas 1 Muslim (11,1%) mentioned a Christian paper (*Msema Kwele*) as a first option. Five Muslims (71,5%) give a Christian magazine as their second option, 4 Muslims (80%) mentioned a Christian magazine as their third option. Seven Catholics (14,9%) and 16 Protestants (28,6%) mentioned the Islamic *An-nuur* as their second option; 4 Catholics (11,8%) and 11 Protestants (31,4%) mentioned the Islamic *An-Nuur* as third option.

One Muslim felt that the video which he saw slandered Muslims, whereas none of the Muslims felt that the video they saw slandered Christians (n=1). Twenty Catholics (76,9%) and 21 Protestants (84,0%) saw a video which they thought slandered Christianity, whereas 4 Catholics (15,4%) and 1 Protestant (4,0%) saw a video that they felt slandered Muslims. Thirty-one Catholics (83,8%) and 35 Protestants (92,1%) attended a rally that they felt slandered Christianity, 2 Catholics (5,4%) and none of the Protestants have attended a rally that in their view slandered Muslims. Two Muslims attended a rally that they felt slandered Christianity, 1 Muslim answered 'both Christianity and Islam', whereas none of the Muslims answered that they have ever attended a rally that slandered Islam (n=3).

So far we have analysed the answers to the structured questions. As the frequencies were low, we will now continue with a content analysis of the written comments on the open questions. Again we focus mainly on tensions between the religions. Three of the questions were open. Of the informants 114 volunteered to give comments, of whom 6 were Muslims and 1 person with no (world) religion ('pagan').

The answers to the question why they think that there will be (more) religious conflicts in the future can be classified in ten categories. The largest proportion (49 respondents) blamed religions or religious leaders *en bloc*, without mentioning any religion by name. These respondents say that religions tend to be exclusive ('because every religion sees itself as the true religion, and the others as false'; 'because one religion thinks that it is better than the other') and that religious leaders slander other religions for personal gain ('the leaders of the religions use religion for their private needs').

Another large proportion (29) blamed the government, (one of) the political parties or the multi-party system as such. 'The majority of CUF members are Muslims; they mix religion and politics', one informant said. Other informants said: 'because of the many parties', 'political opposition goes together with religious discrimination'; 'government leaders misuse religion for their own benefit', 'the government violates the constitution by ignoring the freedom to

worship God in the way believers like'.

Whereas none of the Muslims blamed Christians, some 22 Christians (in this section used in the broad sense of the word, comprising both Catholics and Protestants) blamed Muslims. Several Christians said that Muslims feel discriminated against 'because they do not trust themselves', 'because of their inferiority complex', 'because of their lack of education', 'because they think that the government favours Christians'. Other Christians said: 'Muslims believe that Muhammad is the real prophet', 'Muslim extremists bring confusion to our country', 'the majority of Muslims feel the need to go for the State House' (a Muslim presidency).

There is one person 'without religion' (pagan) who blamed Muslims:³ 'They are uneducated and thus conservative.' There is also one Muslim who blamed his fellow Muslims: 'There are Muslims who are prepared to burn Christian churches if they are paid a little bit in the mosque'.

Other reasons for future religious conflicts mentioned are the growth of 'Christian sects', 'various denominations', 'new religious groups' (mentioned by 5 informants); the 'state of the economy' or 'the poverty of the people' (2 informants); 'interference of foreign countries' and 'foreign aid' (2 informants); and 'egoism' (mentioned by 1 informant).

To the question why they think Muslim extremists are oppressed by the government, 20 respondents volunteered some written comments. Four of them referred to Islamic rights. Through its policy of 'not mixing religion and politics' the government violates the constitution, which guarantees religious freedom, and breaks the law. One Muslim said: 'There are no Muslim extremists; these are rumours to break the peace'. Another Muslim said: 'When Muslims follow their religion they are told that they destroy peace and insult other religions'. Some Catholic respondents said that the government discriminates against Muslim extremists 'by disturbing their religious gatherings', 'by breaking down their mosque', 'they do not have the freedom to do their own thing'.

5. Conclusions and discussion

We may conclude that a majority of the population under investigation have witnessed religious tensions (*migororo ya kidini*) in Tanzania (58,9% =119) and think that there will be religious conflicts (*fujo za kidini*) in the future (77,6% =118). However, the results are ambiguous. The majority think that believers of different religions have equal rights (84,9% =163) and only 11,0% (=19) of the respondents said that people of any religion are oppressed. One third (33,3%) think that the *sharia* can solve Muslims' problems, whereas 66,7% think that it cannot (n=144).

Practices and opinions that are seen as indicators of religionism are found more among older (>30) than among younger respondents (<30), more among the highly educated than among the less educated; more among lecturers than among other occupational groups; more among men than among women; and more among Protestants than among Catholics. The difference between inhabitants of the major cities (Dar-es-Salaam and Mwanza) and of other parts of the country was not that big. We did not discover any one dominant factor that influences opinions and practices. The main influences are age, educational level and occupation. But we cannot go so far as to say that these independent variables cause the dependent variables.

In some cases we found that the number of people expressing an opinion about a practice is higher than the number of people actually involved in this practice. Eighty-one people said that they have attended a rally that slandered another religion, yet 146 people answered the question whether they think that these rallies exacerbate tensions. Fifty people said that they have watched a video that slandered another religion, whereas 119 people answered the question whether they thought that it would be a good thing to ban these videos. A good deal of gossip is mixed with the popular debate mentioned in our introduction.

Concerning the attribution of tensions to the phenomena that we identified as indicators, we found that more Muslims than Christians, and more Protestants than Catholics, say that they are oppressed. Some Catholics mention 'indigenous believers' (pagans) as being oppressed. For Muslims the government more than Christianity is the main opponent. For Catholics, too, the government is the main opponent, whereas for Protestants the Muslims are the main opponents. More Christians than Muslims feel that they are slandered by the public media (magazines, videos, rallies).

In analysing the answers to the open questions two major views on the cause of the tensions emerged. The majority think that tensions between religions are caused by religion as such (without mentioning any particular religion), for instance their absolute and thus exclusive truth claims and the corruption of their leaders. Other respondents think that the tensions are not so much religious, but that religion is being exploited for political and economic gain.

From this second perspective the Zanzibar crisis, which we mentioned at the outset, should not be seen only as a manifestation of growing conflict between Muslims and Christians. The Zanzibar crisis is a complex issue with historical, cultural, economic and political dimensions: the tension between Zanzibar and the mainland, the conflict between the ruling party (CCM) and the main opposition party (CUF), the

economic domination of the mainland and the dependence of Zanzibar.

The word '*udini*' (religionism) is derived from *dini*, which is not a Bantu but an Arabic word. In fact, none of the African languages has a word for 'religion'. Thus it may seem strange that people in Tanzania speak about religionism. Yet the debate on 'religionism' in Tanzania is there. Our main aim in this article was to explore what it is all about, to generate concepts and theories that will be useful for further research. We found that *udini* is an umbrella term for a wide variety of phenomena. But its conceptualisation in terms of religious favouritism or religious antagonism (Jumbe, 1994, p. 121) is questionable. The main opposition is not between one particular religion and another particular religion, but between the various religions and government.

From a historical point of view this debate is both old and new. Shortly after Independence Tanzanian Government policy was dominated by nationalism, introducing one national language, a national school system and a national civil service. The *uja-maa* socialist ideology helped to relegate religion to mosques, churches and families, and the adage was: 'don't mix religion and politics'.

In religious matters roughly one third of the population was assumed to be Christian; the same proportions were thought to be Muslims and indigenous believers. After the 1967 census religious affiliation was never included in any census again and asking about a person's religious affiliation or ethnic origin was uncommon, if not impolite.

A striking feature in recent Tanzanian politics, however, is the revival of ethnicity and religiosity as identity markers. The two main opposition parties seem to concur in the rejection of the secular-nationalistic view of the ruling party, the Party of the Revolution (CCM). The United Democratic Party (UDP) has its basis in Shinyanga and Mwanza and is largely composed of the Sukuma ethnic group. The Civic United Front (CUF) is largely based in Pemba and Zanzibar and is influenced by Islam.

Thus, when people in Tanzania speak about 'religionism' it is contrasted mainly with nationalism. Present-day frictions reflect an old division between nationalism and pan-Islamism within the Muslim community. African Sunni Muslims constituted the power base of the Tanganyika National Union (TANU), the political party that took over the administration from the colonial Government in 1961. These Muslims favoured nationalism, in contrast to the more pan-Islamic outlook of Arab and Asian Muslims. This contrast led to the 'Islamic crisis' in 1968. In that year pro-TANU Muslims sidelined the anti-TANU Muslims within the East African Muslim Welfare Society (EAMWS). The pan-Islamic oriented EAMWS was banned by the Government, which then established firm control over

the pro-TANU *Baraza Kuu la Waislamu wa Tanzania* (BAKWATA) (Westerlund, 1980, p. 179).

Another comment concerns the tension between the constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion, and government policy, which does not allow political parties to be based on religiosity or ethnicity. Whereas separation of the secular and religious domains is widely accepted among Christians, among Muslims it is not. That is why some Muslims blame the government for violating the constitution. But, as we have seen, this is not a dominant view and most Muslims accept the secular State.

Rather than religious antagonism or religious favouritism we prefer to describe *udini* in terms of religious consciousness and concern. Nowadays, more than in the past, religion is an important identity marker. In this sense one may speak of religious revivalism (Ludwig, 1996). And when people say that religious rallies exacerbate tensions or that religious videos should be banned, they are expressing concern about the present situation. This is not to deny that religious favouritism and antagonism exist. But they must be seen in the proper perspective. Since the present President, Benjamin Mkapa, is a Catholic, the Government is seen as Christian-oriented by Muslims. Hence opposition to the government is also interpreted as opposition to Christianity. The same happened during the ten-year reign of a Muslim President, Ali Hassan Mwinyi (1985-1995), whose Government was seen as Muslim-dominated by Christians. It has been part of the power struggle in Tanzanian politics since Independence.

Ever since Sumner (1906) propounded his functional ethnocentrism theory it has been widely accepted, among others by social identity theorists (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), that a positive attitude towards one's own (religious) group goes hand in hand with a negative attitude towards other (religious) groups. We have shown that in our population the main opposition is not between the respective religious groups, but between religions and the secular-nationalistic government. In this respect, however, the Tanzanian example may be exceptional and more empirical research needs to be done on this point, distinguishing between various dimensions of religion (Scheepers, Gijssberts and Hello, 2002).

Bibliography

- Gifford, P., *Christian fundamentalism, State and Politics in Black Africa*, in: D. Westerlund (ed.), *Questioning the Secular State*, London 1996, pp. 198-216.
- Jumbe, Aboud, *The Partnership. Tanganyika Zanzibar Union: 30 Turbulent Years*, Dar-es-Salaam 1994.
- Lacunza Balda, J., *Translations of the Quran into Swahili, and Contemporary Islamic Revival in East Africa*,

in: E. Evers Rosander and D. Westerlund eds., *African Islam and Islam in Africa. Encounter Between Sufis and Islamists*, London 1997, 95-126.

- Lodhi, A., D. Westerlund, *Tanzania*, in: D. Westerlund and I. Svanberg (eds.), *Islam Outside the Arab World*, London 1999, 97-110.

- Ludwig, Fr., *After Ujamaa. Is religious Revivalism a Threat to Tanzania's Stability?*, in: D. Westerlund, *Questioning the Secular State*, London 1996, 216-236.

- Nasaha Na. 045, *Serikali iache udini, kuwagawa wananchi Sheikh Mbukuzi*. 26 April - 2 May, 2000.

- Nasaha Na. 052, *Kupiga vita udini zisiwe kauli za kuendeleze udini dhidi ya Waislam*. 14-20 Juni, 2000.

- Njozi, Hamza Mustafa, *The Mwembechai Killings and The Political Future of Tanzania*, Ottawa 2000.

- Norusis, M., *Introductory Statistics Guide*, Chicago 1983.

- Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili, Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu, Dar-es-Salaam – Nairobi 1981.

- Scheepers, P., M. Gijssberts, E. Hello, *The Church's Mission for a Just Society. Tolerance Against Ethnic Minorities Among Religious People*, in: J. Dreyer, J. van der Ven (eds.), *Divine Justice Human Justice*, Pretoria 2002, 235-261.

- Smith, P., *Christianity and Islam in Tanzania*, in: *Islamochristiana* 16(1990)171-182.

- Sumner, W., Folkways. *A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals*, New York 1906.

- Tajfel, H. and J. Turner, *The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior*, in: S. Worchel & W. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Chicago 1986, 7-24.

- Von Sicard, J., *Islam in Tanzania. Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations*, Birmingham 1991.

- Westerlund, D., *Ujamaa na Dini. A Study of Some Aspects of Society and Religion in Tanzania*. 1961 - 1977, Stockholm 1980.

- Wijzen, F., 'Strive in Competition for Good Deeds'. *Christians and Muslims in Tanzania*, in: *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 7(1997) 2, 158-176.

- Wijzen, F., 'When Two Elephants Fight the Grass Gets Hurt' *Muslim-Christian Relationships in Upcountry Tanzania*, in: F. Wijzen and P. Nissen (eds.), 'Mission is a Must'. *Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church*, Amsterdam - New York 2002, 235-248.

- Wijzen, F. and B. Mbumbusa, *Seeds of Conflict. Christian-Muslim Relationships in Tanzania*, in: J. Gort, H. Jansen and H. Vroom (eds.), *Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation. Multifaith Ideals and Realities*, Amsterdam - New York 2002, 316-326.

Arabia who founded small settlements on the East African coast around the year 975. Although there have been trade contacts between India and East Africa since the first century A.D., the present Hindu minority group dates back to the pro-Indian trade policy of Sayyid Said, Sultan of Oman (1804-1856), who moved his court from Muscat to Zanzibar Island in the 1830s. The Indian community, which comprised not only Hindus but also Muslims and Sikhs, grew during the British Protectorate period since 1919. Apart from a brief Christian presence in Tanzania under Portuguese rule in the early 16th century, Christianity was brought to Tanzania by Protestant and Catholic missionaries from Europe since the 1880s. Whereas the Arabs (Muslims) intermarried with the original Bantu inhabitants, the Indians did not. The rich Swahili language (and culture) originated from the lively interaction between Arabs and Bantu.

² Tanzania's educational system is loosely modelled on the British one. There are seven years of primary education (standards I to VII) which, at least theoretically, are compulsory, and four years of secondary education (forms I to IV), with an additional two years (forms V to VI) required for university entrance.

³ The word 'Mpagani' stems from a missionary vocabulary in which local beliefs were seen as idolatry. Strictly speaking, the rider 'sina dini' means: 'I have no world religion', as *dini* usually refers to institutional religions, that is Christianity or Islam. A *Mpagani* could also be referred to as a *mwamini wa kinyeji* (indigenous believer), or an adherent of *imani za jadi* (traditional beliefs), *dini ya asili* (traditional religion) or *dini ya kinyeji* (indigenous religion). In its dictionary the Institute for the Study of Swahili at the University of Dar-es-Salaam describes *Mpagani* as 'mtu asiyeamini Ukristo au Uislami' (a person who does not believe in Christianity or Islam) (Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili, 1981, p. 183).

Ref.: Text from the Author. Sent to SEDOS by e-mail.

Footnotes

¹ The Muslim population in Tanzania originates from religious and political refugees from Persia and

“Love your Enemies”: A Challenge to Ethnic Conflicts in Contemporary Africa

- Toussaint Kafarhire Murhula, SJ* -

Introduction

The best known facts about the Central African Region today mainly concern the climacteric 1994 Rwandan genocide. It is reported that nearly 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were massacred in the space of three months. However, it is easy to fall into romanticizing propaganda or ideologies when we are not familiar with the socio-political parameters of the African Great Lakes Region. When those telling the story are involved in the tragedy, there is always a big risk of distorting the message either to gain sympathy or to justify one's position in the conflict. Ten years later, as Rwanda commemorates the tragedy, the thesis about “shared responsibility” slowly starts to emerge. Recently, the French anti-terrorist attorney Jean Louis Bruguière released a Report implying President Kagame's responsibility in shooting down the plane in which the Rwandan and Burundian Hutu Presidents perished on 6 April, 1994.¹ The Report argues that this act was the major factor that triggered the genocide. This appalling analysis has soured the relations between France and Rwanda as each State put the blame on the other. While politicians are lost in sterile self-justifications, how could the Gospel appropriately transform these sufferings into a source of new life?

In the following lines, I will confine my topic to the troublesome situation of war and conflict in the Great Lakes Region. Since the cleavage between Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda has become paradigmatic of ethnic exclusion and cleansing, I will tackle the situation by rephrasing the question “who is my neighbour?”. The Christian call to discipleship assumes an analogical imagination and creative fidelity in appropriating the Gospel message. Jesus, with whom the Disciple identifies, came to fulfill the law which consists mainly of love of God and of neighbour. The Commandment to love God impels one to “go and do likewise” also with one's neighbour who sometimes might be an enemy. In other words, the Christian identity should

characterize a people's attitude to oppose even ethnic loyalties precisely because Christ has died so that all may be one.

The first part of this paper will deal with some historical data concerning the situation within the region. In the second part, I will apply the challenge of the Gospel message to love one's enemy to this situation. At the bottom of the African crisis lies the question of identity. Understanding who ‘I am’ in Africa emerged not from wonder before a world that exists *per se* (why is there something rather than nothing?), but instead, from the traumatic historical experience of the slave trade and colonization. Can the Gospel help Africans remake “their” order and create their identity, based on a sound use of the Scripture against historical determinism?

Historical Background

The situation as it stands today

The past and present socio-political experience of Africa is very marginal in the way depicted by the African Synod of Bishops in 1994. Indeed, many Synod Fathers compared contemporary Africa “to the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; he fell among robbers who stripped him, beat him and departed, leaving him half dead (cf. Lk 10:30-37). Africa is a continent where countless human beings – men and women, children and young people – are lying – as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned”.² Similarly, the Jesuits 34th General Congregation observed that the “new world order renders an entire continent paradigmatic of all the marginalized of the world. Thirty of the world's poorest countries are African. Two thirds of the world's refugees are African. Slavery, colonial and neocolonial subjugation, internal problems of ethnic rivalry and corruption have all created an ocean of misfortunes there”. Yet there is also much life and great courage in the African people as they struggle together to build a future for those who will come after them.

The Paradigm of exclusion

We are familiar with the saying: violence begets violence. And “[H]istory makes clear that a bad peace plants the seeds of future violence”.³ But what exactly is the stake of the Rwandan ethnic opposition about? Historically, Hutu and Tutsi expressed socio-economic relationships before they were transferred into the political realm during the colonial era. The concepts eventually were “racialized”, following the colonial policy. They became the stereotypes of socially legitimized and internalized cleavage of castes within Rwandan society.⁴ The colonial state not only justified ethnic competition; but actively created, maintained and fostered the patterns of inequality, the result of which became the cyclic ethnic conflicts whereby the fate of one ethnic group today will be the fate of the other one tomorrow.

The unintended consequences of the ethnic conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi have gone far beyond the sphere of Rwandan society, unsettling the entire Central African region. Victims of either ethnic group ran to find refuge in the neighbouring countries. Thus, the Kivu province in Eastern Congo welcomed more than 2,000,000 Hutu, between April and July 1994.⁵ Consequently, this flux of refugees drew the entire post-genocidal trauma across the borders. Noteworthy, is how the concentric, political upheavals in the region derive from the ethnic violence in Rwanda.

In search of food, wood, and a livelihood, the massive presence of refugees in Eastern Congo led to the destruction of the fragile environment while, because of lack of social infrastructures, it was impossible to maintain hygiene in the camps leading to the outbreak of diseases such as cholera. On the other hand, the numerous international agencies and humanitarian organizations operating to help the refugees impacted on the local economy, as they introduced the “dollar” against the local currency. Finally, insecurity increased due to the circulation of guns in the refugee camps, transforming the whole region into a militia field.

New contexts and old fears

Beside this socio-environmental degradation, the Hutu refugees triggered old fears among the different Rwandan groups living in Eastern Congo. Who are the Banyarwanda? This might not be the appropriate place to discuss the issue of citizenship regarding the Banyarwanda in the Congo. I will nevertheless touch briefly on some major factors about the presence of the Banyarwanda in the Congo without getting involved in details. First, it is said that in order to solve the overpopulation and the famine in tiny and

hilly Rwanda, colonizers transplanted a tremendous number of Banyarwanda into the Congo at different periods of history. Second, there was a need to provide a cheap, docile labour force for the exploitation of the land and the minerals of the Congo to which the Rwandan population offered a good deal.

Apart from the above reasons, the dawn of the independence of African States in the early 1960s raised other difficulties for the young inexperienced governments. In Rwanda, the first political revolution of 1959 occasioned the Hutu’s genocide against the Tutsi aristocratic domination. Scattered in the neighbourhood, some Tutsi added to those living in the Congo already thanks to the MIB (Mission de l’Implantation des Banyarwanda). Allegedly, this colonial policy transplanted thousands of Rwandan families into Congo.⁶ Another genocide occurred in Burundi in 1972, in which the Tutsi ruling class killed nearly 200,000 Hutu, throwing many others out of the country.⁷ The refugees who settled in the Congo⁸ were perceived either as a threat or with sympathy.

Old refugees willing to distance themselves from the bloodiest events in Rwanda and Burundi turned to the central Government of the Congo to seek protection. A presidential decree issued in 1972 granted them Zairian citizenship which the local population saw as an usurpation. However, the civic citizenship and political rights were not enough since in Africa, social and economic rights were granted through membership to an ethnic group which gives access to the use of the land as the main source of livelihood. The appellation “*Banyamulenge*”⁹ then came into force as a term distinguishing these Congolese Banyarwanda from the other Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda or in Burundi.

No winners and no losers: both sides mourn their loss

The war which started in the Congo in 1996 as a rebellion to overthrow Mobutu was in reality backed by the Tutsi’s will to dismantle the threat represented by the Hutu refugee camps across the Congolese borders. In an interview given to some French journalists, James Kabarebe, the Chief Commander of the Rwandan Army, could then boast to have succeeded where the United Nations had failed, namely, in dealing with the refugee issue.¹⁰ But what he failed to account for is the number of Hutu refugees killed in the process of forcing them back to Rwanda. About 200,000! That will never be called a genocide since words and meaning reflect the interests of the ones holding power.¹¹ And what about the 5,000 civilian Hutu massacred in Kibeho Camp in Rwanda in 1995 while waiting for social

reintegration in Rwanda? At least the *L'Osservatore Romano* (25 May 1999) states that both genocides should be recalled lest we fall into a kind of unilateral propaganda.

This brief historical survey shows how the relationship between the Tutsi and the Hutu is loaded with fear and rejection of one another to the point that it becomes almost impossible to construct a different discourse or community.¹² In such an unsettled context, how does the love of the enemy challenge contemporary Africa's ethnic ethics? Is Jesus' teaching to "love one's enemy" a realistic approach to ethics or merely an impossible ideal?

The challenge of the Gospel

Living the deep conviction of faith should be the challenge to the Christian identity in the times and context of turmoil such as the current ethnic conflicts in Africa. Of course, the Christian vocation to discipleship throughout history has always been a challenge in itself. But, through the centuries, the Church has participated in evil and oppressive political structures, supported the *status quo* and stood against change. Hays writes for instance about Serbian priests who blessed militias on their return from kill-and-plunder expeditions, or the Catholic military chaplain "who administered mass to the Catholic bomber pilot who dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki in 1945",¹³ to say the least. The Church in the African Great Lakes Region is confronted with critical moments or has to face the crisis of faith due to its ambiguous stand. Would this depict the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" dimension of the Kingdom of God in which Christians are called to witness to their identity through watchfulness, patience, and discernment, "lest in gathering the weeds, you root up the wheat along with them" (Mt 13:29).

Be love as your heavenly father is love (cf. I Jn 4:16; Mt 5:48)

Death, dire poverty, war, political and economic mismanagement, famine, ethnic conflicts, oppressive regimes, international exploitation, etc., may all range under the up-to-date concept of collateral damage, in the pursuit of a new world order. No matter how many people are killed, the reality shows how the ethics of globalized economics can stir up selfishness among people. I was once wondering about the hardening of the U.S. national security policy¹⁴ which allows preemptive wars whenever American interests are threatened. While the controversial Iraqi crisis illustrates this, the Human Rights question of equal

dignity and of the right to life – whichever State one might belong to – becomes a salient absurdity in the U.S. admitted "collateral damage" policy. What is the moral ground that justifies the priority to protect its own citizens at the expense of others?¹⁵ And we pretend astonishment when some hapless people react even more hopelessly with the language of terrorism bomb suicide, while injustices are the cause of such desperate situations! Seeing the 'other' fundamentally as a threat leads to a world of violence, if we fail to transform our fears into an ethical challenge,¹⁶ "for there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (I Jn 4:18).

From the above, I disagree with Hays who leaves love out of his triple focal images to ground the New Testament ethics. The reasons he provides are not convincing to my understanding of the Christian challenge of the love of the enemy. For, the Christian identity and vocation is not to love only those who are friendly if even the Gentiles can do so. Instead, the love of the enemy stands central if we agree that discipleship is about the process of conversion and *Imitatio Christi*. As Spohn observes, Christian conversion always has a political dimension in the sense that it appeals for a radical shift of loyalty once the disciple takes Jesus to be the Master. He argues that the moral life is not reducible to some disincarnate ideals, lifeless principles, or obligations to be fulfilled. Instead, it focuses on the priorities each Christian should choose according to his/her deep convictions.¹⁷

An Archbishop¹⁸ Martyr for love of Peace

We then understand why Archbishop Munzihirwa's assassination during the war in the Congo has become exemplary of authentic Christian commitment. In fact, fearlessly, he stood firm for his faith and voiced the evil of war, of ethnic exclusions, and the danger that violence never brings sustainable peace or a lasting solution. Inasmuch as his life experience was informed by the practice of the Christian faith, he is still able to challenge through his martyrdom, the conscience of the war mongers and the hatred they instill in people. His words now make a lot of sense after he was killed, as he affirmed that "le silence final est une parole d'une grande richesse pour celui qui sait écouter de l'intérieur"¹⁹ (the final silence – meaning death – is a word rich in meaning for whoever knows how to listen from within). With Spohn we can argue that the main components of moral perception are virtues of attentiveness, respect and empathy with an imagination shaped to understand others, and the self-knowledge that brings about humility.²⁰

Conclusion

I believe what Niebuhr understands to be an “impossible ethical ideal” of the love of the enemy becomes possible with God (Lk 1:37) when the Christian is formed and transformed by the practice of faith. In this way only, Christianity is not a “cheap” religion and can make a lot of sense in peoples’ daily life. On the other hand, the Christian call to love the enemy²¹ challenges the socio-political structures which tend to exploit the ethnic differences for selfish interests. Hays is right to observe that we are called to discipleship as a community and not only as individuals, the community being “a concrete social manifestation of the People of God”.²² The two other focal images that ground the New Testament ethics according to Hays, the Cross and the new creation, become more meaningful and address the concrete lives and situations such as the one I have described above, when the Commandment of love is clearly stated as an overarching ethical principle.

It is true, the State needs to be separated from religion and governed by civil laws. But my strong belief is that love alone can form the Christians’ character, who also happen to be the citizens whose lives affect and are affected by the political realm. Discipleship as a continuous struggle to transform one’s identity into an *alter Christus*, is a call to live out the challenge of the Gospel, not only in counting on what is naturally of the human resort but in relying on God’s grace when human efforts are not enough. To love one’s enemy is a hard task, but the witness to belong to Christ becomes more genuine when one analogically takes up the mindset that was Jesus’ to be his or hers against any exclusion or ethnic loyalties.

Footnotes

* Toussaint Kafarhire Murhula, S.J.
Arrupe House, Apt. 1C
2536 Virginia Street
Berkeley, CA 94709 — USA
Tel: 1-510-548 5517

¹ See the French Newspaper *Le Monde*, 10 March 2004, in which the Tutsi commando who took part in the assassination of the former Rwandan President allegedly accused Kagame of being responsible to some degree for the genocide. Stephen Smith, “Rwanda: Révélations d’un Expert de la Justice Internationale” in *Le Monde*, 6 May 2004.

² John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, n. 41, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1995, p. 32.

³ Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., “Intervention, Just War, and U.S. National Security” in *Theological Studies*, 65 (2004), p. 155.

⁴ Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 11, 13, 245.

⁵ Mahmood Mamdani, *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism and the genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 235.

⁶ Catherine Newbury whose research is prior to the current Great Lakes conflicts argues that due to immigration for work (1926-1937) and the MIB (Mission de Transplantation des Banyarwanda (1937-1957), a huge number of the Rwandan population overflowed into the Congo, and if for instance only 691 Banyarwanda were living in Masisi in 1937, the number reached 8,492 in 1942 and 24, 448 in 1945. From 1948 to 1969, the Rwandan population in Masisi had tripled and statistics show that between 1970 and 1983, the number of Rwandese living in Masisi has risen from 273,920 to 482,007. See Mahmood Mamdani, *op. cit.*, p. 240; Catherine Newbury, *op. cit.* pp. 143-144.

⁷ René Lemarchand, in *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* n. 167, 2002. Unlike the Rwandan 1994 genocide where the genociders were kicked out, in Burundi they continued to rule. This could possibly be the reason why silence has surrounded this event.

⁸ See UNDP CEA-SURF, Rwanda Country information <http://www.ceasurf.org/rwanda/index.htm>

⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *op.cit.*, p. 236. Autochthons saw a forgery in trying to identify with a location or a land and thus claim the social and economic rights which they did not enjoy as refugees.

¹⁰ See the Documentary film, “L’Afrique en morceaux, la tragédie des Grands Lacs” by Jihan El Tahri and Peter Chapell, Canal +/Capa, February 2001.

¹¹ Méléchior Mbonimpa, “*La Pax Americana*” en *Afrique de Grands Lacs*, Québec : Vents d’Ouest, 2000, p. 17.

¹² René Lemarchand, “Aux sources de la crise des Grands Lacs”, talk delivered in Montréal 5 August 2000. The author argues that there have been several genocides in the Region: 1972 and 1988 in Burundi; 1959, 1994 and 1995 in Rwanda; and starting from the 1996 revenge against the refugees in the Congo to the Congolese war which has claimed more than 4,7 million dead.

¹³ Richard Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to the New Testament Ethics*, San Francisco: Harper and Collins Publications, 1996, p. 318.

¹⁴ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, Washington: The White House, 2002 released on 17 September and *The National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Washington: White

House, 2002, released on 11 December. Both documents are available in PDF format on the White House website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/response/index.html>

¹⁵ A case has been made from the photographs revealing the torture and humiliation of the Iraqi detainees not only in Abu Ghraib prison, but in almost all the U.S.-run detention centers in Iraq. See Graith Abdul-Ahad, "Iraqi detainees allege torture in U.S.-run Jails", *Reuters*, 9 May 2004.

¹⁶ Both Emmanuel Levinas' and Hannah Arendt's philosophy advocate recognition of the priceless worth of the other. In the traffic of interaction, the "other" becomes an adjuvant more than an enemy as s/he appeals to my exodus outside of myself to acknowledge his/her presence as an infinity of moral obligation.

¹⁷ William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics*, New York: Continuum, 2000. (Specially pp. 108-120.)

¹⁸ Christophe Munzihirwa was Archbishop of Bukavu in 1996 when he was assassinated. He is more and more known in the Great Lakes Region of Africa as the "African Romero". Before the Rwandan genocide took place and while the whole world failed to show any interest in the danger of a humanitarian tragedy, he wrote to those in power to warn them of the danger and challenged African politicians to assume their responsibilities. He was killed because his outspokenness and his commitment to the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ disturbed them.

¹⁹ Mzee Munzihirwa, "Aux racines du développement, le rôle de la femme" in *Zaire-Afrique*, n. 197, 1985, p. 404.

²⁰ William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, p. 98.

²¹ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*, San Francisco: Harper and Collins Publisher, 1996, p. 216.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

Ref.: Text sent from the Author for the SEDOS Publication.

SEDOS
Christmas Party

Thursday, 16 December 2004
19:00 hrs



Socio-Political Analysis of the Phenomenon of Fundamentalism

- S. M. Michael, SVD -

1. Introduction

Religious life and mission, the core of Christian living, are under great strain today. This gives us the opportunity to discover what Christ means to modern man. We need to understand where the world is headed in order to discern the relevance of Christ. It will be shown very shortly that today's world is characterized by Postmodernism and Multi-culturalism on the one hand, and Globalization, Nationalism and Fundamentalism on the other. The Christian message is caught between these conflicting and contradictory forces of world history.

In order to respond to the new challenges, we need a clear understanding of the socio-political and ideological make-up of the contemporary world. This paper aims to provide this.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the historical development of the term 'Fundamentalism'. The second part analyzes the socio-political factors which have given rise to the phenomenon of fundamentalism. The third part suggests ways to meet the challenge of fundamentalism. Finally some concluding remarks are given on the importance of being firmly committed to the Christian faith in the changing and shifting socio-political situation of the post-modern world.

2. Towards an Understanding of: 'What is Fundamentalism'?

Fundamentalism is often employed in contemporary journalistic as well as scholarly writings as a trendy substitute for communalism, or simply as a term of abuse. This is regrettable because there is a fair degree of consensus on the meaning of communalism. Fundamentalism, however, remains a rather vaguely defined omnibus word. All the same, because of the happenings in the world today, in spite of its ambiguity, the concept of fundamentalism is being used worldwide today. Efforts are being made to sharpen the precision of the usage of this concept.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a certain distrust of scientism and rationalism was voiced in

certain quarters in England and the USA. The focus was on the implications of, first, certain trends in Biblical criticism and, second, materialistic philosophies and the social sciences. At the centre of the argument was the status of the Bible as Scripture and some modernist textual interpretations with the objective of overcoming an apparent conflict between Biblical teaching and scientific knowledge, represented most challengingly by the Darwinian theory of evolution. Orthodox Christians saw the Bible as infallible or inerrant and as transparent, that is, not in need of interpretation. In other words, the authority, inerrancy and transparency of the Bible were unquestionable.

A series of twelve pamphlets, entitled *The Fundamentals*, published between 1910 and 1915 gave expression to the above-mentioned concerns. What was under attack in these tracts was modernism rather than science, but the conception of science that the pamphleteers entertained was that of Baconian induction. Their principal concern was to oppose modernist criticism of the Bible. In their nine-point statement of faith, they stressed above all else the notion of the inerrancy of Scripture. A World Christian Fundamentals Association was formed and, by the mid-1920s, the term 'fundamentalist' was in use. Fundamentalists were now being asked to do 'battle royal for the Fundamentals', which were chiefly doctrinal and intended to ward off 'the havoc' that 'rationalism' had unleashed (see Marty 1986:237).

In the 1960s and 1970s fundamentalists began to assert themselves in the context of the U.S. Supreme Court banning prayer in public schools (1963), and permitting abortion on demand (1973). This also brought to light the clash of religious and secular values. Following the Second Vatican Council's efforts (1962-1965) at ecumenical reconciliation, and the perceived *compromise* of the Church with modernity, conservative Catholics also began to voice their concern about the fundamentals of the faith.

Similar attitudes developed among other major religions around the globe. For example, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-9 attained paradigmatic status as being fundamentalist in contemporary discussions.

The Iranian Revolution has its roots in the

modernization process in Iran under Reza Shah Muhammad Pahlavi's reign after World War II. This carried forward the beginnings made in the revolutionary changes that occurred in 1905-11. Secularization in Iran had been rapid and fairly wide-ranging, and yet it was partial. Most important, the civil code continued to be based on Islamic holy law (*sharia*), and Shia *ulama*, whose importance in Iranian public life dates back to the beginning of the 16th century, remained powerful. A reversal of modernization began to gain momentum around this time. It ultimately led Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to seize power and he sought to destroy the 'modern' Iran that the Shah and the urban, propertied, ruling class had tried to build. It was, first, a bloody reaction to the present and, only then, a return to the past or the fundamentals of Islam. The idea of an autonomous secular State was rejected. The book *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought* (1985), authored by Khomeini's protégé, Ayatollah Mutahhari served as a manifesto of the revolution.

Hindu fundamentalism has its roots in the 19th century Hindu revivalism and may be seen as an awareness of the Christian challenge to its culture and tradition (see Madan, 1997: 207). (For example, the Christian view of man as being created in the image of God endowed every human being with inherent dignity and helped to bring about reforms such as the abolition of Sati and child marriage). A striking feature of the revivalist movements was their concern with the identification of true scripture and with scriptural authority. These efforts reached their climax in the later writings of Dayanand Sarasvati. The Arya Samaj Movement (1875) sowed the seeds of Hindu fundamentalism (Anderson and Damle, 1987; Jefferlot, 1996). The outcome of this ideology is Hindutva (Hinness) (see Michael, 1996:294-310).

Thus, to the question 'what is fundamentalism' we may say that the concept of fundamentalism had its birth in the late 19th century West. What began as a laudatory term in the 1920s was pronounced a bad word by James Barr, a Biblical scholar, half a century later, suggestive of 'narrowness, bigotry, obscurantism, and sectarianism' (1978:2). Following the Iranian Revolution of 1978-9, and the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 in India, the terms 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Hindu fundamentalism' have attained paradigmatic status as being fundamentalist in contemporary discussions. It has a connotation of rigidity, intolerance, arrogance, hostility, divisiveness, prejudice and other negatives to describe narrowness, bigotry, obscurantism, and sectarianism (Barr, 1978:2). So when one talks about fundamentalism, one is actually talking about experiences or situations which are ripe for political, cultural and religious conflict and tension.

3. Socio-Political and Ideological Analysis of Fundamentalism

a) *Fundamentalism is a Reaction to Modernism and Secularization*

Modernism has its root in 17th century Enlightenment philosophy. The Enlightenment was a period of remarkable intellectual development and activities within the field of philosophy. A number of traditional ideas and beliefs were overthrown and replaced by modern ones. Overall the Enlightenment was characterized by rationalism, skepticism about traditional doctrines, and supporting the empirical method in science. The proponents of the Enlightenment were critical of traditional authorities and discarded the idea of Biblical revelation as superstitious. They had supreme confidence in man as a rational being and believed in a rational, scientific approach to religious, social, political, and economic issues. They promoted a secular view of the world and a general sense of progress and perfectibility.

With supreme faith in rational man, they sought to discover and to act upon universally valid principles governing humanity, nature and society. In the light of these developments anthropologists began to study the social laws by which human society and culture was developing. They were interested in studying the progress of human culture and detected a grand law, something similar to the Darwinian principle of biological evolution. Anthropologists came up with the hypothesis that human culture was progressing from simple beginnings to complex stages of cultural growth. Thus, the first stage in the development of anthropology as a so-called science was characterized by facile schemes of unilinear evolutionism such as, broadly speaking, sexual communism leading to matriarchal societies, then to patriarchal ones and finally to more or less monogamous, bilateral ones, or again, in the domain of religion, animism giving way to polytheism and lastly to monotheism.

Such ideas of degrees of civilization dominated the thinking of the intellectual world during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Science and technology were becoming increasingly powerful. The classical thinkers influenced by the Age of Reason or Enlightenment and the Darwinian theory, emphasized a more positivist and evolutionary approach to understand religion. They held that the absurd doctrines of religion had come into existence because of ignorance and superstition and with the advance of the scientific method, such irrationalism would vanish. Marxian and Freudian views also undermined the authority of religion. The conflict between religious faith and rationalism was formative in the emergence of the modern ideology of secularization. Secularization was accepted as the natural and inevitable

process in the development of human society. Influenced by this intellectual climate, many Biblical scholars began to interpret Biblical texts from a secular outlook. Certain hermeneutical principles of interpretations applied to the Bible led to trends in Biblical criticism which were not acceptable to orthodox Christians. As we pointed out earlier, at the centre of the argument was the status of the Bible as Scripture and the admissibility or otherwise of modernist textual interpretation with the objective of overcoming the apparent conflict between Biblical teaching and scientific knowledge.

Thus conflict between faith in the Bible and principles of rationalism was formative in the emergence and clarification of the fundamentals of Christianity in the West. Today, this trend has strengthened itself in the context of the apparent failures of science, technology and rationalism to deliver goods in solving human problems, especially the problem of '*meaning*' in human life.

Contemporary society has been experiencing both a crisis in religion as well as a global resurgence. This resurgence has taken place in all varieties of social systems – from the technologically most advanced to the traditional societies. The retreat from secularization and the revival of religion has taken place, according to social scientists, largely because science, technology and rationalism have failed to give meaning in both the personal and occupational lives of individuals and have failed to resolve some of the institutional problems of modern society. It has also failed to provide a guide to man's quest for ultimate meaning, accepting that man was by anthropological nature a religious animal. Individuals have been realizing the infinite fragmentation that modern developments have caused in their lives and are striving to put these fragments back together again into a meaningful whole (Wilson 1966, 1982, 1988; Beckford, 1986; Dawson, 1998; Giri, 1998).

b) Challenges of Postmodernism and Multiculturalism

With the failure of modernism and with the rise of nation-States in Asia and Africa after World War II, and the ever expanding communications system and the migration of people from one cultural area to another have created a new situation leading to Postmodern and Multicultural societies.

Postmodernists question all types of grand theories and generalizations. A coherent, general understanding across cultural boundaries is seen as virtually impossible (Bhargava, 1999). Key analytic categories may not be as universally applicable as we had once imagined in modernism. Paul Heelas explains this by saying, "The cultural becomes disorganized; less black and white. The distinction

between high and low fades away. The claim that one tradition should be adhered to because it, and it alone, is valid, is rendered invalid. And rather than authority and legitimacy resting with established orders of knowledge, authority comes to rest with the person" (1998:4-5). In the words of James Beckford, post-modernity consists in a "willingness to abandon the search for over-arching or triumphalist myths, narratives or frameworks of knowledge" (as quoted in Paul Heelas, "Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity", Oxford: Blackwell, 1998:4). The Postmodern critique of "grand theory" has been one more argument in favour of multiculturalism and value relativism.

Thus, Postmodernism seems to be a fluid, multi-dimensional, transitory phenomenon. At any rate, if we accept the historical periodisation of the pre-modern and the modern, then it follows that the post-modern comes after the modern and is in direct reaction to it. According to Bradbury, postmodernism is related to the concept of the post-industrial society. He notes, that it is a paradoxical term since it holds that modernism is over and done with, and yet the movements that have taken over are not only dependent on the modern but also in some degree in revolt against it. It is imbued with a sense of 'collapsed signification and challenged humanism', but is at one and the same time for and against humanism and for and against high technology: It is amorphous, eclectic, pluricultural, ideologically and aesthetically not clear-cut, and, therefore, appears to be more than anything else a complex map of late 20th century directions'.

A Pakistani anthropologist, Akbar S. Ahmed, condenses and codifies the postmodern condition into four basic elements as follows: **1) *Edectism*** or the selection from various sources and styles of what, perhaps, are considered the best aspects. **2) *Syncretism*** or the attempt at the reconciliation of different and even opposing principles and practices, and some would even say the attempt at reconciling the irreconcilable. **3) *Juxtaposition*** or the placing of various elements close together or side by side. **4) And *irony*** or the expression of a meaning that is often the direct opposite of the intended meaning (Ahmed, 1992).

Thus, Postmodernism seems to be a fluid, multi-dimensional or pluri-cultural and, therefore, transitory phenomenon. However, Jencks believes that it suggests that we have gone beyond modernism but does not specify *where we are going*. Postmodernism is navigation in chaos. But if it does not specify where we are going does it mean that we must remain rudderless and just drift along with the low tides and the high tides? Or, and this seems to be more appropriate and relevant, must we seek for a guiding compass? If a guiding compass is a reasonable requirement, then postmodernism will not do. For, as Gertrude Himmelfarb, speaking in relation to trends

in contemporary historiography, says, it derides the quest for truth and related values and underwrites nihilism.

So in what direction should we look and what truths and values shall we endeavour to pursue in keeping with our higher interests and purposes? Modernism was essentially a reaction against something, whereas Postmodernism seems to be more fatalistic and resigned to the *status quo*.

The breakdown of traditional value complexes, without its replacement by a 'secularized' ethos, leads to moral ambiguity and value confusion. New religious movements represent a quest for new structures of meaning and values. Fundamentalism thrives in this situation.

c) Challenges from Relativistic Orientations

Relativists stress the validity of all claims to truth and regard them as equal, since the world is moving in the direction of equality among men, cultures or nations, and also among genders. Therefore, to try and pursue a claim to any kind of unique truth is merely a cover for domination. The claim of Christianity as a unique and universal religion and its missionary efforts to convert the followers of other religions to its fold has led other religions to look into their claim for uniqueness. This has led to the emergence of Religious Fundamentalism as well as Religious Relativism.

Today every religion is claiming to be very special and has a universal message for humanity. They are increasingly becoming missionary. One of the best examples is from India, while Indian religious leaders will state that all religions are equally valid and they are different means to the same goal. All the same, today they believe that "Advaitha" is the most spiritual path and they would claim their mission to spiritualize the whole world with the spirituality of the "Advaitha". The claim of every religion to be equally and universally valid paths for salvation has given rise to relativistic thinking in today's world. The rise of fundamentalism is a reaction to this relativistic thinking.

d) Fundamentalism and the Clash of Civilizations

According to Robertson, the expansion of the world religions of Islam and Christianity had an important role in the rise of religious fundamentalism. Lately, Hinduism has also joined the fold.

The expansion of Islam took place with the expansion of the Arab and Ottoman Empires from the 12th to the 15th centuries. By the 18th century it had achieved a presence in diverse regions. Christianity had to wait for the military and colonial expansion

of Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries to acquire a global presence. Prior to this period the globalizing consequence was the incorporation of tribal peasants into large scale political systems. These two universalistic religions of Christianity and Islam, both derivatives of the Abrahamic faith, became universalizing religions and most effective globalizers because of their claims that the world was created by a single God and that humanity was a common force of existence in relation to that God. It led to the argument that humanity constituted a single community that disvalued geographical localities and political territories, that there was a single value-reference for every person in the world and that this God proposed a single set of legal and moral laws.

By the 16th century, a newer and far more important globalizing religious force had emerged — Protestantism. Catholicism had blurred the relationship between State and Church so that a series of conflicts emerged between Kings and Popes. The Reformation resolved the dispute between State and Church by either subordinating the Church to the State (as in England), or by secularizing the State (as in U.S.A. and France). The State could now rely for its legitimization on the political process of nationalism rather than on religious legitimations.

The Secularization of the West in contrast to other parts of the world, the rise and fall of Socialist economies and the unprecedented triumph of Capitalistic economy (at least for the time being), and the increasing influence of Western materialistic, consumerist, impersonal, pleasure-seeking, market oriented globalization have brought about a clash of civilizations. The culture this Capitalist economy through globalization creates, seems destructive, possibly because of the competitive spirit fostered by capitalism. Society is increasingly becoming alien to the concerns of the individual – society is no more in the mind of the individual. The personal has replaced the public and as a consequence, the problem of 'self' has become the most serious concern. The individual is more and more involved in seeking a solution to his own crisis so that he has become insensitive to the social good. This is in contrast to the Asian spirit and its culture.

The crisis of the individual is further deepened by the changes in the material life during the last few years. The character of the market has changed dramatically and globalization has opened up the possibility of unprecedented access to consumer goods. Transnational capital has created a new market and along with that a new culture which the individual imbibes not by his own choice; it is forced upon him. As in advanced capitalist societies, the market is becoming so irresistibly powerful that consumerism tends to be the ideology and the culture of the masses,

creating material aspirations not commensurate with their real situation.

The Asian cultures and religions which stress the importance of family, community, traditions and social values find it extremely difficult to cope with the new developments. There is also the fear that their religious values will be either undermined or destroyed by the forces of Westernization and globalization. Anxieties generated in such a soil may also tend to spawn excessive religiosity, communalism and fundamentalism.

e) Relationship between Nationalism and Fundamentalism

The last few centuries have been a very turbulent phase in the History of the World. On the one hand we have seen the power of colonialism and also the spirit of freedom in nationalistic movements which opened up much of Asia for nationalist and often communist revolution. In the 1940s there were several nationalist struggles which resulted in the formation of many nation States in Asia. To strengthen the identity of these nations, cultural, religious and ideological (communist) orientations are at work in Asia today.

An impression has been created that each country has its own religion and the Asian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are the religions of those countries in Asia where it is dominant. To strengthen the national identity and the dominance in the world, religion is made use of. Hence there is a connection between nationalism and fundamentalism. Religion is used as a political tool to strengthen the national identity.

In the 1990s, scholars sensitive to the phenomenon of the emergence of religious groups who took political action leading even to national revolutions, suggested a series of alternative terms to designate these conservative, neo-traditionalist and often militant religious groups. One such term favoured by writers such as Peter Van der Veer and Mark Juergensmeyer was 'religious nationalism'. Juergensmeyer explained that when a religious perspective was fused with a political and social destiny of a nation, it was referred to as religious nationalism (1994). Religious nationalists were not just religious fanatics. For the most part they were political activists who were seriously attempting to reformulate the 'modern' language of politics in order to provide a new basis for the nation-State. They were concerned not so much about the political structure of the nation-State as about the political ideology underlying it (Juergensmeyer 1994:xiii). Nikkie Keddie who questioned whether nationalism was always the main focus of such efforts proposed the term 'new religious politics'.

Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, in a famous Chicago study entitled 'Fundamentalisms Observed'

(1994), elaborately developed the characteristics of Fundamentalism. They explained Fundamentalism as a reaction against the invasive, intrusive and threatening features of modernity by the emerging nation-States of the non-Western world. For example, Islamic Fundamentalism represented a delayed reaction to the hegemony of European colonial rule after they became an independent nation-State. Religious identity was used as a protective shield against the onslaught of globalization, which was marked by the entry of integrated 'market systems' which came along with a variety of commodities, values, beliefs and styles of living. The fear of extinction and the threat to survival both as a people and as a culture and the loss of distinctiveness in the face of homogeneity, resulted in the introduction of a comprehensive social system based upon religious principles which embraced law, policy, society, economy and culture. Thus Fundamentalism tended to be totalitarian in its practice and encompassed all areas of private and public life. Religion was declared not just a faith but a way of life. Fundamentalism of this nature was not religious in the classical sense of the term, but was a variant of a secular faith couched in religious language.

They also observed that Fundamentalism was driven by the affinity-identity passions of ethnic communities and religious groups often thirsting for self-esteem and dignity. Fundamentalism as seen above was an effort to 'neutralize the other' and establish one's own identity. In other words, the question of 'cultural survival' was at the core of the issue of religious revivalism. This process could be observed in the East European countries that belonged to divergent cultural communities and ethnic groups after the demise of the Soviet Union. Their demand for economic autonomy and preservation of cultural identities resulted in the ethnic conflicts between majority Muslim and Christian minority Serbs in Bosnia, between minority Christian Serbs and majority Muslims of Albanian origin in the Kosovo Province of Yugoslavia. This process can also be observed in parts of Indonesia today. In India religious-cultural and ethnic clashes are being experienced in the efforts of those of the Hindutva ideology, the RSS or "Sangh Parivar", to create a communal divide between the Hindu majority and the Muslim and Christian minority communities in India.

Religious and nationalist movements, it was further observed, often invoked authenticity and 'authentic culture' as a weapon against what was foreign and alien. However this authenticity was questionable as it became difficult to prove what was authentic and what was not. The invoking of certain traditions and the denying of others required a reconstruction of history, if not its destruction.

Historians took pains to demonstrate that historically intercultural exchanges, trade and conquest had rendered any notion of authenticity highly problematic. Fundamentalist movements then relied a great deal on invented traditions (Marty and Appleby 1994: 814-837).

f) Globalization, Problem of Identity and Fundamentalism

Globalization is a complex phenomenon. It connotes the interconnectedness of the world with contacts and linkages that the world is becoming a smaller world day by day. It is a world where borders and boundaries have become increasingly porous, allowing more and more peoples and cultures to be cast into intense and immediate contact with each other.

The intensification of the communication network through satellite television, internet and e-mail bring images quickly from screen to screen, providing people with resources from which to fashion new ways of being in the world. Thus, there is an increasing global standardization of cultural goods, tastes and practices, from clothes, food and music to architecture, films, and television cutting across national boundaries (Hall, 1996:619). All these bring disruption in the traditional notions of society, religion and culture.

Globalization takes the whole world as a single economic unit and the market as its instrument. The economy in a globalized world is characterized by open, liberal, free market and free trade with less regulatory barriers. It is marked by international investment and instant capital flows. Due to this, multi-national companies move into different locations where the labour is cheap. People from different national boundaries shift their places of work and residence, thus exposing themselves to different cultural worlds. As a consequence, today we see peoples and cultures formerly located in different parts of the world now inhabiting the same physical area. All this creates a new global situation in which a fundamental restructuring of economic and political arrangements is taking place (see Michael and Jogdand, 2003).

Globalization, which promotes a secular and liberal culture, creates a troubled relationship between the native and the international. The claim of the emergence of a global culture is accompanied by cries of alarm that local values and nation-States are suffering a sense of threat to identity. This has given rise to ethnic revivals, struggles for indigenous rights, and religious fundamentalism as defensive reactions to globalization. They have arisen from a desire to defend and preserve valued ways of life against what are taken to be the pernicious effects of foreign and global influences. As a result fundamentalist religious movements tend to emerge in order to strengthen the identity of nation and culture.

4. How do we meet the Challenge?

a) To distinguish between 'The Fundamentals' (Foundation of Faith) and 'Fundamentalism' (Fanaticism – Religion based Extremism)

The rise of fundamentalism is related to the question of meaning, identity, power, dignity and self-esteem. It is religious politics. Fundamentalism is partly a reaction to the spread of the relativistic outlook and it asserts that faith must be taken seriously; if not, it ceases to grip the mind or to orient or guide the person. Hence, paying only lip-service to it is to defeat its potency and purpose. The fundamentalists, who today predominate in many parts of the world, accuse the relativists of diluting moral conviction and fervour and of thus weakening the moral fibre of man in his fundamental essence.

It is important to understand that the vast majority of those who lend their loyalty to a religious outlook are not fundamentalists, and this applies correspondingly to their moral orientation. This majority can be regarded as representing a methodological or philosophical point of view which is the very antithesis of the relativistic point of view. Hence, we need to distinguish between the 'fundamentals' of a religion and 'fundamentalism'. When religion is used narrowly for selfish power, and to oppress people due to socio-political and other reasons, it may be named 'fundamentalism' (Barr, James 1978:2). All the same, a deep commitment to faith in the 'fundamentals' of a religion cannot be called fundamentalism.

Hence, we need to distinguish between "faith foundation" i.e. the 'fundamentals' of a religion and "fundamentalism" which connotes rigidity, intolerance, arrogance, hostility, divisiveness, prejudice and other negative epithets to describe narrowness, bigotry, obscurantism, and sectarianism (Barr, 1978:2). So when one talks about fundamentalism, one is actually talking about experiences, situations, and an environment that does not promote harmony, tranquility and brotherhood but encourages a context of growing hostile, divisive, separatist tendencies.

Clarifying the foundation of one's faith in terms of religious life in the complex and ever-changing and challenging world scenario of today cannot be called fundamentalism. On the other hand, using religion for the sake of narrow and selfish power games and economic interests is 'fundamentalism'. Fundamentalism in the negative sense is an aberration of religion. It is linked to political and economic interests of certain vested parties to maintain influence, power, wealth and status. It is invoking God because of their inability to find a way out and to

lead the people to light. Fundamentalism is one of the more dangerous tools of interested parties because it uses, or rather abuses religious beliefs which have an intrinsic mass appeal.

Hence, we need to be very careful to distinguish between “the fundamentals” or Foundation of Faith in a religion and “fundamentalism”, which is a direct use of religion in politics for a narrow purpose leading to fanaticism.

b) Going Beyond Ethnocentrism and Relativism

Today, the Christian message is caught between two extreme ideological positions, namely ‘ethnocentrism’ and ‘relativism’. Evaluating other religions and cultures in the light of one’s own is known as ‘ethnocentrism’. This tends to foster claims of superiority *vis-à-vis* other religions. Because of this attitude most major world religions claim to be unique and universal. For example, the claim of Buddhism to be a universal religion made U Thakin Nu, the then Prime Minister of Burma, to build the World Peace Pagoda in Burma in 1952, and to proclaim that Buddhism has a message for the political woes of the world. The Conference of the World Federation of Buddhists in Cambodia in 1961 manifested a similar missionary zeal. The missionary claim of Islam is so well known that it does not require any elaboration. Today we see Hinduism, Jainism and other religions becoming highly missionary and engaged in conversion of the followers of other religions to their persuasion. For example, Vivekananda believed that India alone had a spiritual message whereas the West was steeped in sensuality. So he sounded the call, “Up, India, and conquer the world with your Vedanta” (Vivekananda, 1957:600). He founded the Ramakrishna Mission for this purpose.

The other important attitude towards religion is ‘relativism’. It is an intellectual position that holds that every religion is equally valid and we should not compare religions. The relativists stress the validity of all claims to truth and regard them as equal, since the world is moving in the direction of equality among men, cultures, nations, as well as genders. Therefore, to try and pursue a claim to any kind of unique truth is merely a cover for domination. It is the stand of the relativist that each religion has its own integrity, its own system of values. What is ‘good’, what is ‘right’ what is ‘beautiful’ do not exist by themselves. To hold that any religion is intrinsically better than another is felt to be somehow wrong, offensive, and narrow-minded. God is one, but manifests Himself in several forms and names. Hence every religion is good and salvific and missionaries should not disturb the belief patterns of people. Hence there should be no value judgement on religions.

The Christian message is caught between these two extreme positions. But, it is important to understand that we need to go beyond both the positions to grasp the Biblical message of Christ.

A blind belief in the superiority of one’s own culture or religion is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism leads to fundamentalism. Hence, we need to go beyond ethnocentrism. The relativistic worldview, on the other hand, making all cultural and religious values equally good is also impossible to hold. It is because this will justify some of the values such as human sacrifice (*sati*), female infanticide, headhunting, religious wars of aggression (*Jihad*), religious murders, religious castes (*varna-dharma*), untouchability, etc. present in certain religions. All these are justifiable according to a logic that stems from within the system itself. Relativism leaves us as separate islands of subjective being. The viewpoint of ‘ethical neutrality’ is an unrealistic one. Relativists fail to see that beliefs are effective precisely because they are believed and acknowledged to have absolute value. If a given value system is not accepted as objectively valid, it would soon lose its effectiveness as a motivation for conduct. The practical and effective alternatives are not ethnocentrism *versus* relativism, but rather rational norms with a potentiality for universal acceptance and realization. That means we must endorse some ultimate and absolute values. This presupposes a *normative* ethic.

The important point to be kept in mind is that relativism has its limitation. Although the term “god” is used by different religions, it seldom denotes the same phenomenon. For example, the concept of god in Advaitic Hinduism is different from the concept of god in Christianity. The moral and ethical implications of the concept of god in Brahmanic Hinduism and Christianity are not the same. The Christian concept of God implies a certain moral and ethical attitude which is basically different from Hindu ethical understanding. Untouchability and rebirth is justified in Brahmanic Hinduism on the basis of its philosophical ideas of “*karma*”, “*dharma*” and “*moksha*”. But such an understanding is unacceptable to Christians who believe that every human being is a unique person created in the image of the Biblical God.

In the final analysis it would seem that the relativist, in asking any religious community to relinquish any of its central doctrines (such as the Christian claim to the uniqueness of Christ) in the interest of dialogue, betrays a poor grasp of the nature and function of religious doctrine. The challenge of dialogue is two-fold: it is a challenge to openness, but also a challenge to orthodoxy, so that

we may engage in the dialogue as responsible Christians (Pererira, 1997:21).

Living in a relativistic world, as a Christian we need to ask ourselves: What difference does Jesus make, that we should cling to Him, rather than try out Buddha or Mohammed? On what basis — other than 'blind' faith in the divinity of Christ — are we justified in wanting to see Him loved and accepted by our other religious friends, when there is so much of beauty in their own religions?

Since time immemorial, mankind has been blest with wise men and even miracle workers of exceptional caliber. Jesus was one too, but he was more. It is due to His Resurrection that we recognize Him as unique or exceptional. The resurrection of Jesus is undoubtedly the decisive proof of His unique status. The very life of Christ, His teaching, His miracles, His crucifixion, the ascension, His sending of the Holy Spirit, and His return at the end of time, all this is authenticated because of His Resurrection. Summarizing the views of Hans Kueng on this matter, Dupuis writes:

"Jesus' Resurrection stamps his entire life with the absolute seal of divine approval. In spite of his ignominious death on the cross, Jesus' cause is revealed to be the very cause of God. To take a decision in his regard, then, is to decide for or against God. Jesus crucified and raised personifies God's final commitment to the world. He offers the last response to the ultimate questions of human life, including those of suffering and death" (see Pereira, 1997:24).

Christ's Resurrection is the hub and centre of the Gospel message. If Jesus is not risen from the dead, he will be merely like any other good teachers in the world. But His Resurrection is the proof of His divinity and all His teachings are validated through His Resurrection. This challenges human history, cultures and society to understand and realize what Jesus stood for. This goes beyond ethnocentrism and relativism. This is the basic fundamental of Christianity and this has a universal relevance.

c) Priority of the Dignity of the Human Person

In the context of religious fundamentalism and relativism, we need to place the priority of man over all other considerations. We need to safeguard the dignity of man over all other considerations.

Today, religious fundamentalism in India manifests itself in the form of Cultural Nationalism. In fighting religious fundamentalism today, we need to ask ourselves what does nationalism mean for the poor, oppressed and marginalized? Are they able to experience a sense of common humanity in the Indian

nationhood? Or is nationalism the luxury of the rich and the powerful? As Christians in India we need to be concerned about human dignity and the integration of all Indians. In the context of Hindutva and exclusive and narrow Hindu nationalism, we need to define nationalism in such a way that the poor and the downtrodden receive their due attention and care. As concerned citizens we need to ask what nationalism means for the poor; Dalits, tribals and other weaker sections. Behind the dreams and aspirations of these marginalized groups lingers the hope that a nation of fairness and justice will be realized, a nation, humane and inclusive.

Such a Christian, humanistic nationalism has to be pursued not by the Church alone but in active collaboration with lay people. Widespread support of the cause of suppressed groups and identities is in the direction of a more complete and integral understanding of nation. The lay Christians should be encouraged to get involved in the issues of justice, equality, fraternity and ecological questions. Christians must be active in the civil society. A healthy civil society marked by an active pluralism will ensure also an authentic and humanistic nationalism. Christian intellectuals should collaborate with secular humanist intellectuals in bringing to light the history and cultural traditions of tribals, Dalit and other marginalized people. This would be a constructive move in promoting a holistic and integral nationalism in India.

5. Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we may say that fundamentalism is related to the new emerging socio-political and cultural patterns. It is an outcome of cultural crisis and a sense of loss. It is related to the question of meaning, identity, power, the dignity and self-esteem of man. It is a revolt against cultural relativism. It is a response to a changing social order.

The wind of change due to globalization has gradually reached the whole world. The world has become small. Every aspect of human life is being affected by this process. Religion, culture and nation are challenged to reorient themselves to the newly emerging global order. Economic activities and power relationships are also adapting themselves to this process. Globalization is a double-edged sword. It has exciting possibilities but can also usher in unprecedented forms of misery. Globalization, which supports a secular and liberal culture also, creates a troubled relationship between the local and the international. The spread of a global culture is accompanied by cries of alarm that local values and nation-States will suffer a sense of threat to their identity. Fundamentalism feeds on this sense of a weakened

identity and need for re-orientation in a complex world.

As Christians we are under an obligation to be engaged in the reconstruction of the contemporary world on the solid foundations of life-giving values. This is our mission. Jesus came that we may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). Today discipleship demands sacrifice and taking risks. Christians of today need to be rooted in the Risen Lord and at the same time, be open to what is good, true and beautiful wherever it is found.

Instead, we often find that there is an unprecedented confusion as to what constitutes the Christian faith. Relativistic attitudes blur and confuse the outline of the Christian world-view. In order to counteract the spiritual disorientation and moral confusion of value relativism and religious and cultural pluralism the committed Christian will have to reflect daily on the essentials of his/her faith; otherwise he/she can no longer be the "salt of the earth" or provide a living alternative to the vague, syncretistic religious feelings of many who are influenced by the postmodern and multicultural ideas of the New Age, and who can no longer clearly distinguish between the just and the unjust, true and false, right and wrong, the beautiful and the ugly. The Christian community should be active in the midst of a multicultural world, often in search of direction, with charity, openness and hospitality. It should be an oasis of stable values, peace and joy made up of Christians firmly rooted in their faith, committed to Christ, yet open to other cultures and religions.

References

* Paper presented at the Catholic Federation, Fourth South Asian Workshop on "**Biblical Apostolate in the Context of Religious Fundamentalism**" at Sacred Heart Seminary, Chennai, from 1-3 December, 2003.

- Ahmed, Akbar S. 1992, *Postmodernism and Islam*. London.
- Anderson, W.K. and S.D. Damle 1987, *The Brotherhood in Saffron. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*. New Delhi: Vistaar.
- Barr, James 1978, *Fundamentalism*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Beckford, J.A. (ed.) 1986, *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*. UNESCO: Sage Publications.
- Bhargava, Rajeev (ed.) 1999, *Multiculturalism, Liberalism and Democracy*. Delhi: Oxford.
- Dawson, Christopher 1949, *Religion and Culture*. London: Sheed & Ward.
- Giri, A.K. 1988, *Global Transformations. Post-Modernity and Beyond*. Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Hall, Stuart 1996, *Question of Cultural Identity. In Modernity*

An Introduction to Modern Societies. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson, eds. pp. 595-634. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.

- Hawley, J.S. 1999, "Fundamentalism" in Courtney Howland (ed.), *Religious Fundamentalism and the Human Rights of Women*, pp. 3-8. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Jaffrelot, C. 1996, *Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Juergensmeyer, M. 1994, *Religious Nationalism Confronts Secular State*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Heelas, Paul 1998, *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Madan, T.N. 1997, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Marty, Martin E. 1986, *Modern American Religion. Vol.1. The irony of it all. 1893-1919*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marty, Martin E. 1988, Fundamentalism as a Social Phenomenon. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 42:15-29.
- Marty Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.) 1994, *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Michael, S.M. 1996, "The Cultural Context of the Rise of Hindutva and Dalit Forces", *Vidyajoti*, n. 5, pp. 294-310.
- Michael, S.M. and P.G. Jogdand, (eds) 2003, *Globalization and Social Movements: Struggle for a Humane Society*. Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Pereira, Kenneth Mario 1997, *Inter-Religious Dialogue Vis-à-vis The Absolute Claims of Christianity*. Rome: Gregorian Pontifical University (M.Th. Dissertation).
- Veer Van der P. 1996, *Religious Nationalism, Hindus and Muslims in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Vivekananda, Swami 1957, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama.
- Wilson, B. 1966, *Religion in a Secular Society*. England: Penguin Books.
- 1982 *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 1988 "Secularization: Religion in the Modern World", in S. Sutherland et. al. (ed.), *The World's Religions*, pp. 953-956. London: Routledge.

Ref.: Text from the Author. Sent to SEDOS for publication, May 2004.

So, Then, Where is the Kingdom?

- Archbishop Hippolyte Simon -

Archbishop Hippolyte Simon of Clermont, France, is the author of several works including: "Vers une France païenne ?" and "La liberté ou les idoles".

The question, I have been asked to treat here in a few pages, is without doubt one of the most difficult in Christian thought. Because it concerns many explicit and implicit representations of what the Kingdom can mean for us. We all know that nothing is more difficult to analyse than "invisible realities". How can one avoid actually projecting into the Kingdom, already present yet still to come, the whole content of our conscious and/or unconscious fancy? How can one avoid visualizing the Kingdom to come with the colours the great pagan mystics used to paint "paradise", as well as the stories and fables that delighted our childhood?

In short, how can one combine in one's mind the different comparisons Jesus of Nazareth used when speaking of the Kingdom he proclaimed? At times, he speaks of it in the present indicative: "But suppose I drive out demons by the finger of God; would not this mean that the Kingdom of God has come upon you?" (Lk 11:20). At times, in the future tense: and he told them a parable, "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. As soon as their leaves sprout, you know that summer is already near. In the same way, as soon as you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near" (Lk 21:29-31). Besides very often, when he needed to explain the Kingdom, Jesus employed parables like this example: "Jesus also said, 'What is the Kingdom of God like? To what shall we compare it? It is like a mustard seed which, when sown, is the smallest of all the seeds scattered upon the soil. But once sown, it grows up and becomes the largest of the plants in the garden and even grows branches so big that the birds of the sky can take shelter in its shade'" (Mk 4:30-33).

As these remarks intersect, we must keep in mind these three "affirmations":

- the Kingdom is already here, among us
- but, at the same time, it is yet to come
- it is not contained in a single description. It escapes any precise formulation.

This may lead us, like the Book of Proverbs, to add a fourth affirmation to the three first: this Kingdom is intimately linked to the person proclaiming it: Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Mk 12:34).

With these four points of reference, or if you prefer, with this compass-card, we can try to outline some of the main attitudes expected of us, both as a faith Community and as believers freely engaged in following Christ.

Revolution, Utopia, Kingdom

For my generation (I was born in 1944) the question of the Kingdom inevitably touched, in our experience, the question of a political utopia. We grew up, whether we wanted or not, whether we shared in it or not, in the fervour of great messianic expectations linked to the Revolution. After the nameless tragedy of the Second World War, centred around Nazi barbarity, the peoples of Western Europe aspired to a future full of promise. Therefore they accorded extraordinary importance to the future of history.

For some, the building of the European Community represented the value of exorcism because it was based on the reconciliation of hereditary enemies, Germany and France, while it opened the perspective of an unheard of cooperation between all the peoples of Western Europe. The forward march of Progress, dear to the political philosophy of the Enlightenment, seemed to have regained its course despite the inconceivable regression of Nazism and the threat posed by the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

For others, more or less assiduous readers of Marx, but above all of Lenin, the prospect of the Revolution nourished the greatest hopes. At the end of the Algerian War of Independence when the "baby-boom" generation had reached university age, France, like other countries, was swept away by a heady wave of enthusiasm for "revolutionary" commitment.

In 1968 and the following years a whole section of French youth was enflamed by Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Che Guevara, etc.

Be that as it may, whatever the debates and even internal divisions within this whole ideological current, nevertheless all the adherents had a common conviction, or at least a hope, that an imminent revolution would put a stop to Capitalist expansion for good. It is clear that the results of these militant engagements were not the same in the different countries of the World. What happened in Prague in 1968 had little to do with what happened in Paris. But with the passage of time one may question the meaning of this prospected Revolution.

For my part, I have always been amazed that students, among whom I spent those years, should have thought to place the future of the Proletariat in the category of the Revolution. In fact, in Karl Marx's own view revolution is the distinctive feature of ... the Middle Classes! "We see, therefore, how the modern *bourgeoisie* is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.... The *bourgeoisie*, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.... The *bourgeoisie* cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society ...".¹

To put it differently, if the Middle Classes are responsible for the Revolution, how can one avoid the snare of a *bourgeoisie* or capitalist recovery? History has amply shown the difficulty of getting out of this contradiction. Moreover, in the perspective that interests us here, how can one fail to see that in the end Revolution is inscribed in the same logic as the political philosophy it is fighting? And this political philosophy returns to affirm the primacy of the collective over the individual. In other words, it upholds that the survival of institutions is worth more than the people's health.

In this sense, it is useful to reread what young Marx wrote in 1844: "Now, it is easy to say to a particular individual what Aristotle said: You were begotten by your father and your mother, which means that in you the mating of two human beings, a human species-act, produced another human being. Clearly, then, man also owes his existence to man in a physical sense. Therefore, you should not only keep sight of the one aspect, the infinite progression which leads you on to the question: 'Who begot my father, his grandfather, etc.?' You should also keep in mind the circular movement sensuously perceptible in that progression whereby man reproduces himself in the act of begetting and thus always remains the subject".²

In reality, Marx, like many other authors, does no more than set down a banal theory, because he is playing on words. By affirming that man is always "subject" to history, he is simply substituting man in the singular – who faces death – with man in general. But evading the question of the death of each individual does not answer the individual human being's questions in the face of anguish and solitude. Even if consolation can be found in the thought that history will continue without one, it is nevertheless true, "that we feel bereft of a unique being and all is dispeopled", according to the poet's more appropriate thoughts.³

One sees that Revolution refers us to a political utopia of a humanity, at the end of a tumultuous history, ultimately becoming a pacified society, reconciled with itself. In the last analysis, the revolutionary perspective only implicitly returns to the vision of the indefinite progress of humanity in history, such as Hegel envisioned it. And this culminates in a sort of "absolutization" of the State, which one may judge to be idolatrous: "The State, which is the realized substantive will, having its reality in the particular self-consciousness raised to the plane of the universal, is absolutely rational. This substantive unity is its own motive and absolute end. In this end freedom attains its highest right. This end has the highest right over the individual, whose highest duty in turn is to be a member of the State".⁴

In any case, since it regards a political utopia, whether of a revolutionary stamp or an ideology of humanity's indefinite progress, it holds that the individual only finds his/her fulfilment in the survival of the species. He/she is a link in the chain. His/her existence has no sense unless he/she contributes to the development of humanity.

Such a vision of human history, at once grand and disabused, is however inadequate to answer all the questions to which an individual seeks answers. Is it enough to accept this detached vision of a reconciled humanity to reconcile oneself to oneself and the world we live in? Can such a vision adequately "justify" all the dramatic events and suffering that it may be our lot to experience?

Who promises eternal life?

Seeing the ease with which some thinkers of Humanity's victorious march, especially the light way some figures in world history seem to treat individuals on a level with "profit and loss" in the great human enterprise, makes me think it is salutary and urgent to ask the simple question: "who has the promises of eternal life?" (cf. Jn 6:68).

On this point the Christian perspective is in total disagreement with the “generic” or collectivist outlook. The human race has not been promised an indefinite development on our planet, or in our universe. Neither have the human institutions which have the vocation to follow indefinitely at the price of the sacrifice of all the generations in order to ensure the hypothetical happiness of survivors. In the Christian perspective, individual people have received the promise of life ever after: “Yet, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I shall not turn away. For I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the One who sent me.... This is the will of the Father, that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall live with eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day” (Jn 6:37, 40).

The sky and the earth will pass away (cf. Rv 21:1). But people are called to the salvation God offers us through his Son Jesus, the Christ.

There is no need to develop these statements here. All the readers of *Spiritus* have already meditated for a long time on the perspectives opened by the Jewish hope and by the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Neither is it necessary to dwell on the theme of the Communion of Saints here, since we meditate on it and can already experience it in the prayer of the Church. It is enough to note how the perspective of the first place of people on the indefinite continuity of the species and on the perennial nature of political and social institutions prevent us from thinking of the Kingdom to Come as being situated “at the end” of time on the horizon of history. The Kingdom is not a Utopia which only concerns the future generations, those who may, eventually, benefit from the progress of science and culture. It concerns every being who is open to the assurance of the nearness of Christ the Saviour.

The Kingdom “already here and yet to come”, the one in which Christ promises to welcome us is not of the same order as history. It is not to be viewed as the same thing. No more than air vies with the light, the Kingdom does not “compete” with human history, even though it is not separate from it. Because it is of a different order from history, it is not to be regarded as being the conclusion, the *apotheosis*, or the crowning of this. Human history evolves according to its own logic, or dialectic, if one wishes. One can try to probe its laws. It is not wrong to see in it a progress, despite terrible regressions. But the Kingdom is relatively independent of history’s development. Since the sky and the earth are destined to pass, history too, is temporary and bound to disappear.

But, while it acts in history, each human being acts in another history in a “holy history”, which is already at

work in our own time, but whose tenets and purpose will only be revealed at the end of time, when “the Son of man will come in his glory”. Because Jesus himself will reveal the meaning of the actions and words which will have made up the fabric of human history. Each will know the parable of the Last Judgement. But its meaning is also attested elsewhere by Jesus: “What does it profit you to gain the whole world while you destroy and lose yourself? If someone feels ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Glory and in the Glory of the Father with his holy angels” (Lk 9:25-26).

All that you have done for one of these little ones....(cf. Mt 25:40)

Where these two histories overlap, in the here and now of our existence, we are each called to be discerning and to commit oneself, because we must read the signs of the times. It is not so much a matter of making forecasts or foreseeing the course of events, but a much deeper question of perceiving the saving consequences of the present moment: “Jesus said to the crowds, ‘when you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once: ‘A shower is coming’. And so it happens. And when the wind blows from the south, you say: ‘It will be hot’; and so it is. You superficial people! You understand the appearance of the earth and the sky, but you do not understand the present times. And why do you not judge for yourselves what is it fit?’” (Lk 12:54-57).

It is not only a matter of deciphering the political meaning of events. It is rather perceiving how these events will affect the people experiencing them. These two interpretations of the same historical time do not exclude each other. But we must admit that that we all have a tendency to give the first more importance than the second. And the media commentaries encourage us to do so daily. It also seems natural to us that people are eclipsed by their actions. It also seems natural that people leave the public scene and complete their life, and that institutions and society as a whole continue their march forward. The death of the individual takes place while the future of society is the object of every interesting speculation. Here, Jesus of Nazareth invites us precisely to modify our outlook and our criteria of judgement.

Therefore, one must not consider the two points of view regarding the two histories as unlinked. It is by being part in the history of the visible world that each one of us works to make the Kingdom grow. The same actions, decisions, and commitments take on sense and value in one and the other reality at the risk of being assessed differently according to the criteria of the World or of the Kingdom. Some examples will be more enlightening here than an abstract analysis. The famous glass of water which is

treated in the parable of the Last Judgement is a good example: this thoughtful gesture is an ordinary everyday action, but it also does the person who offers it good. The same action is valid for the life of society and for the Kingdom. On the contrary the refusal of the rich young man, who can thus continue to be an influential person in the society of this time, appears — at least temporarily⁵ — to put him at variance with the Kingdom. One sees that it is the manner with which we welcome or not the relationship of alliance, or friendship which Christ wishes to open with us, through the mediation of those among whom we live, whether or not we can enter the Kingdom established by Jesus.

It is, therefore, by participating in the ordinary events of the world's forward march that, according to our vocation and our responsibility, we welcome or do not the Master of our lives. All the parables that call us to apply our abilities, like the parable of the "talents" or those of the faithful servants, tell us at the same time that nothing works automatically. Since we are only stewards, we must be careful:

– to develop the "talents" God has entrusted to us.

Not to do so would be an act of defiance to our Creator

– to watch over the brothers and sisters among whom God calls us to serve. To forego this service, or to take advantage of this responsibility to exercise a despotic power would be equivalent to betraying the mission received,

– to actively await the return of our Master.

Because it is this expectation that enables us to situate in a healthy and just manner the concrete engagements that we must assume in the society in which we live. It is precisely this permanent openness to Others, that protects us from any form of idolatry and from discouragement.

What is valid for each of Christ's disciples is also analogically valid for the Church. The latter has not received the mission to repeople the Nations or to substitute itself for them. It has received a mission of another order: "Then Jesus approached them and said, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples from all nations. Baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to fulfill all I have commanded you. I am with you always until the end of this world'" (Mt 28:18-20). But this mission is no to be exercised beside or separately from the general history of the world. The very same word John Paul II pronounced in the inaugural Address of his pontificate: "Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!" (Sunday, 22 October 1978) obtained a double echo, on the level of the history of human societies and that of the proclamation of the Good News.

Recently the French religious congregations have reviewed the period from 1900-2000. What was lived

as a real persecution, and was one, at the time the communities were obliged to disperse, from 1901, has turned out to be "providential" today in view of the development of the communities which went into exile. By contrast, an immediate "success" achieved by the Church in the course of its long history, may lead us to make an act of repentance today as Pope John Paul II has invited us to.

Therefore it is best to be modest when it comes to drawing up a "balance-sheet". Jesus himself invites us to make a wise discernment in these areas. "The Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God was to come. He answered, 'The Kingdom of God is not like something you can observe and say of it': 'Look, here it is! There it is!'. 'See, the Kingdom of God is among you'" (Lk 17:20-21).

Above all, one should always remember that the real question is not whether such and such a community, or country, or Local Church has been successful. Rather it is a question of knowing whether the people who make up these communities, countries or Churches: have succeeded in welcoming the Word and let it penetrate them like the yeast of holiness. And the holiness of people does not directly correspond to the development of human societies. Neither does this signify that it is in proportion to the indigence of these! Thus, "these [we] must practice, without neglecting the others" (cf. Mt 23:23). This means that while the Church must work simultaneously at the integral development of the person and of peoples, it must also remind each person and each people of the closeness of the Kingdom.

It is not an easy way out, rather the contrary, to conclude this essay on discernment by saying: Lord, give us eyes to see and ears to hear! Make us clear-sighted scribes because, "every teacher of the Law who becomes a disciple of the Kingdom is like a householder who can produce from his store things both new and old" (Mt 13:52).

Footnotes

¹ *Communist Manifesto* (1848). *Éditions Sociales*, *passim*.

² The "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" (1848). *Manuscrits de 1844*, 3^e *manuscrit*. *Éditions Sociales*, p. 98.

³ A poem by Lamartine, if I remember correctly.

⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 258.

⁵ NB: The Gospel tells us nothing more about this young man. We do not know what became of him. Whether he remained obdurate or became a follower later. Nothing is known. Therefore let us entrust him to God's mercy.

Ref.: Published in *Spiritus*, n. 173, December 2003, pp. 481-491.

Mission of Harmony and Complementarity

- Jacob Kavunkal, SVD -

*A teacher of Missiology at the Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune 411014, the author spells out the implications of the teaching of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* that Evangelization in Asia has to be in the framework of complementarity and harmony. This, he shows, presupposes a fresh attitude of the Church to the religions of Asia. With regard to the practice of mission in the spirit of complementarity, the church has to emphasize the radical dignity of the human person leading to interrelatedness and to the transformation of history as the anticipation of the end times hoped for.*

One of the basic concerns of the post-Asian Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA) is the church's mission in Asia. In fact the whole document is an examination of what service the Church can render in this vast and varied continent. In this search a most insightful statement occurs in the concluding part of number six. Having described the religious pluralism and the spiritual vibrancy of the peoples of Asia, and the value Asians attach to harmony, number six continues: "In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful both to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul". This statement has important presuppositions and implications for mission, which are not sufficiently explored and explicated. Hence in this paper I shall attempt to indicate briefly the presuppositions of the statement and then speak about their implications for mission in India/Asia.

Presuppositions

The context of the statement shows that it is an affirmation of the individuality and the right of other religions. The very language spells out the basic equality of religions as religions. "Asia is also the cradle of the world's major religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism". The placing of Christianity along with the other religions is indicative of the Church's distancing itself from the Barthian approach. Karl Barth, as most other Christians in the past did, considered Christianity radically different from other religions, since for him other religions at best were the human search for the divine while the Christian religion was revelation. Thus Christianity was the only God-intended and God-willed religion. Only Christianity possessed Truth and revelation, and hence

the assurance of leading its adherents to salvation, which others lacked.

The paragraph in which the above sentence occurs concludes by saying that the Church has the deepest respect for these traditions and expresses the sincere desire to enter into dialogue with them. True, there is the theological statement: "The religious values they teach await their fulfilment in Jesus Christ". But then we must remember that this fulfilment is something eschatological, which is true of all religions, including Christianity. Vatican II clearly states how the church is only the seed and the initial budding forth of the Kingdom on earth (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 5). The Kingdom itself is an eschatological reality to which the church strains forward along with others.

The whole tenor of *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 6 is brimming with understanding and respect. It says that the followers of the religions of Asia "take pride in their religious and cultural values", that they are very dear to them. Similarly it appreciates the spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence that had been part of the Asian religious world. It emphasizes that these religions have the "capacity for accommodation and a natural openness to the mutual enrichment of peoples in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures". It comments on their capacity for renewal. This is followed by an acknowledgement of "the innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul". Further, the document characterizes this as "the core around which the Asian identity is built". After all this we are told that "'being Asian' is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony". This in itself suggests the document's acknowledgement of past mistakes as well as openness to a new approach to mission in conformity

with the Asian religious world and psychology. This is capped by the all important statement, "In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel" (cf. n. 6).

This is the re-affirmation of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Statement at Calcutta: "Sustained and reflective dialogue with them in prayer ... will reveal to us what the Holy Spirit has taught others to express in a marvelous variety of ways".¹ This acknowledgement of mutuality is in continuity with the spirit of *Nostra Aetate* that affirmed our common origin and common destiny (n. 1) and called Christians to "acknowledge, preserve and promote the values of other religions" (cf. n. 2). The Asian Church must insert its mission in the context of the openness to enrichment and renewal that the religions of Asia manifest. This is best explained in terms of complementarity. The term implies also that the Church itself is open to learn from Asia's religions. The Church's service is no more to be seen one-sidedly as teaching, imparting, proclaiming, converting, etc. It is also a matter of listening, accepting, being enriched and converted.

Elsewhere in the document John Paul II describes the mission in terms of a gift-giving (Chapter II). The language of gift, once again, reminds us of mutuality. Giving implies receiving. There is no question of one party being superior or inferior to the other. The gift symbolizes the desire for the well-being of each other and establishes relationship or mutual bonding.

Implications for Mission

Mission in the mode of complementarity calls for restructuring not only the expression of mission but its very theology as well.

Source of Mission

The three major documents of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, *Dei Verbum* and *Ad Gentes*, all have the same pattern of approach to the source and origin of mission. They all begin with the Word originating from the Father. The Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father, as also do their missions. The three documents situate the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Church within this perspective. This in turn opens up a new vision. Creation itself is Trinitarian, the whole world stands bathed in the Word and Spirit. If so, all religions and cultures are something positive. God, as the "fountain-like love" (cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 2), is a missionary God. The Church's mission is a participation in God's mission to the

world. This makes the Church missionary by its very nature. Its missionary nature has become more radical on the one hand, and more precarious on the other.

Though the Church exists only for mission, this mission is to be exercised with great sensitivity. The church is sent into a world which is not just darkness, as it was thought to be, but a Word-permeated world. There is a continuity from Creation to the new creation. God has never abandoned the world, which is nothing but the first moment of the externalization of God's inner love. Nor has God ever distanced God's self from this world. God continues the manifestation of God's love in different ways. God calls a specific people to serve as a "light to the nations" (Is 42:6) with regard to God's love and justice. God sends prophets for the same purpose and ultimately God sent God's Son as the manifestation of God's love (Jn 12:45; 14:9).

In this perspective, the Church has certain affinity with other religions, though it has its own specific mission as well. The Church does not stand in radical discontinuity with other religions nor is it on a rescue mission with claims of exclusiveness or superiority. On the contrary, it is aware of how as a religion it is one with others, but as the community of the disciples of the incarnate and risen Lord is sent to witness to the Good News of God's love, made present in Jesus Christ. Its existence is not for its own sake, but exclusively for the sake of being at the service of God's mission to the world. Claims of exclusiveness and superiority come when the Church sees itself as the dispenser of a salvation derived from the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Though some of the Pauline writings may justify such a theology, this is not the only nor the common position of the Bible.

The Church's Service

Having pointed out how a mission of complementarity must view other religions and their role, now we turn our attention to the concrete expression of the Church's mission.

For this we have to turn to the Bible. The first thing that we notice is that the biblical revelation presents God and people together. You cannot have God without people. Already in the Old Testament we see that to draw closer to God is to come closer to people, especially the poor, the widows, the orphans, the strangers, etc. We come across this theme repeatedly in the prophets.

Jesus' Ministry of Bonding

When we come to God's Son, Jesus Christ, we

cannot understand his mission except in terms of God's concern for people, especially the poor (Lk 4:18ff; Mt 11:4ff.). Jesus and his mission can be understood only in the context of the life of the people of Palestine, with their social, cultural, political and religious forms of alienation. His life was spent in intimate relatedness to people, more so to the poor whom he described as the "little ones". He became God's presence to those who were oppressed by all sorts of burdens. He became a life-giving experience for them. Even when Jesus was with his God in prayer, he did not lose sight of the people. Their presence nurtured him and shaped his ministry. Jesus' radical relationship with people enabled them to experience themselves as children of God. Jesus radically changed human relationship by showing it as a relationship with God. In other words we encounter God by encountering human beings. Each time we transcend ourselves and reach out to another person, especially to a person in need, we encounter the transcendent God. This is the lesson of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The incarnation and the ministry of the Word who "was from the beginning", and who creates and enlightens every human being, manifests how the Divine Mystery embraces most intimately and profoundly the human world and the human condition. The incarnation is the affirmation of human history. It tells us that we reach the divine through the human. Jesus brought this home through the scene of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31ff.). Jesus' primary concern is not how much we love God but how much we love and are mindful of God's people. "God is that infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference nowhere", said a medieval monk describing the participation of all in the same God. In a similar manner we could also say that God is the sum of every power in the universe beginning with the simplest forms of power like the gentle movement of a blade of grass to the power that keeps the billions of stars and planets in their respective orbits, and yet transcends them all. Because God's power is not mechanical, but the expression of love. In other words, relationship is the characteristic of God. In Jesus Christ this relationship is manifested in the most personal form.

Jesus showed how the divine relationship operates when he relativized the Law, that was considered to be absolute, in terms of human relationships. This was the point of departure for Jesus' ministry which the religious leadership of the time could not tolerate, as they thought it would endanger the Jewish religion and destroy the nation. Coupled with this fear were his action in the temple and the fact that stand Jesus revealed the divine compassion by forgiving sins. All

this led to his arrest and crucifixion. This was interpreted to be a sacrificial death in atonement for human sin. While this interpretation has the merit of being supported by the Old Testament sacrificial and redemptive theology as well as some of the Pauline texts, it does not do full justice to the mission of Jesus which, as we said, was focused on the self-transcendence of each person, and on the actual meeting of the other person as a brother or sister.

Though Jesus' critics succeeded in getting rid of him by putting him to death and burying him, God raised him so that he would be with his followers to animate and empower them to continue his ministry till the final consummation (Acts 2:24,33).

It is interesting that Jesus' ministry was not, at least directly, a religious mission in the sense it was not connected with any religious activities that we would normally associate with a religion. He did not speak for any particular religion, nor did he outline the parameters for a religion. Jesus operated within the boundaries of the second temple Judaism, though critical of many of its current practices. As James Dunn rightly insists, "for all that Jesus spoke and acted with authority, *he still stood within the traditions of Jewish religiosity and inspiration*".² If Jesus was critical of Judaism, the earliest community of his disciples was even more uncomfortable with the prevailing Judaism. But they did not see themselves to be members of a new religion. The major difference they brought was that while the Jews looked forward to the promised Messiah, this community accepted the Risen Lord as the fulfilled Messiah. The Christian affirmation of Jesus as the Divine Word/Wisdom become flesh, Stephen's criticism of the Torah and circumcision, the community's acceptance of the Gentiles into its fold — all led to this community being cast out from its parental body. In fact it could even be said that the second temple Judaism gave way to two new forms: Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.

At its roots Christianity was a protest against any attempt to monopolize divine righteousness, to pigeonhole and institutionalize God's grace, to claim God as only one's own and not of the others, relegating others as being beyond the scope of God's saving grace. The Christian vision is the acceptance of the unexpectedness of the ways of divine grace. This is the spirit enshrined in the New Testament which must liberate the potential for a mission of complementarity.

The Church's Contribution

In the light of what we have been saying it is

clear that the time has come for the Church to assure the followers of other religions that its service is not directed against their religions. Probably Christians themselves are to be instructed that the Church's mission is not an enterprise focused on other religions. As John Paul II has emphatically pointed out, the Church's mission has only one purpose: to serve human beings by revealing to them the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 2). Manifesting this love of God with its consequent impact on human history is the contribution that the mission of the church must make to Asia. The Church is conscious that its mission stands in continuity with God's mission to the world, in which all people participate, though the church as the community of the disciples of Jesus has its specific service to offer. However the Church remains a co-pilgrim with others in the journey to the consummation of the divine reign.

God and the Neighbour

The Asian problem is not "the unknown God" but the "unknown neighbour". In spite of some secularization tendencies especially among the affluent, Asia still has a sense of the Divine/Transcendent. However this sense of the Divine is between "I and my God". What happens to others is not a primary concern in the Asian religious world-view. In fact, the lot of others is explained away in terms of their *karma* which only they themselves can alter.

It is here that the Church should exercise its mission. We spoke of how in Jesus Christ we see that the way to God is through the neighbour. God is encountered through our encountering the neighbour. Each time we transcend ourselves and go out to others we are in contact with God. God is not a static power to be plugged in, but a Lover to relate to through a relation to the neighbour in need.

The Asian world is a wounded world lying at the edge of the highways of modernization and globalization. Everywhere and in many forms we find an utter disregard for human dignity. A mindless violence everywhere even in the name of religion, an inhuman caste system that forces fellow humans to carry one's excreta, the beauty of gender relations debased by making women a commodity to satisfy the male pleasure needs, growing children deprived of childhood privileges and rights by cruel ill-treatment and hard labour, defenseless indigenous/tribal peoples dispossessed and displaced for the sake of the developmental projects in favour of the non-tribals, ill-treatment of job-seeking migrants and domestic servants, etc. — these are some of the expressions of the violation of human dignity. Lack

of authentic human relationship is the root of many forms of discrimination, exploitation and marginal and condemns many to beg for their daily food and for a dignified life.

This unjust and dehumanizing lot of the millions is the primary arena of the Church's involvement in Asia. The Church has to insert its presence among them so that they can experience true human dignity. Only then can they experience God as "Emmanuel" (God with us). And that is equally the Church's actual encounter with God! Even as Jesus had a preferential option for the poor, the Asian Church is called to an option for the subaltern groups. In solidarity with their reality we must ask how they can be enabled to experience the arrival of the Divine Reign. Their homelessness, their inability to pay for medical assistance, their acquiescence to the denial of human rights and basic needs, their constant fear, their harassment at the hands of the powers of society, etc., are some of the demons which bind them and from which they need to be liberated.

What we urgently need is not confessional formulas and correct doctrines, but genuine human relations, specially among the marginalized of society. For, as we have experienced Him in Jesus Christ, God is not an extra-terrestrial power or an abstract Truth, but a life-giving relation. The heart of the Christian theology of God is the relations of love and equality, articulated in terms of the Trinity. Accordingly, the Christian mission too is a service of relations leading to communion. Most of the problems of our society, such as the collapse of values, violence, power-search, corruption, etc., are due to the lack of authentic relationship among humans. Hence the Calcutta session of the FABC referred to the 'signs of the times' that "call us to shared responsibility for justice and brotherhood among peoples, to solidarity with the men and women of our time, especially when they are poor and voiceless, marginalized and oppressed, deprived of their rights and their human dignity" (*Statement*, n. 42).

Transformation of History

Our reflections have already suggested that this new relationship is not only a matter of a private attitude within one's heart, but must have a transforming impact on history. The God of the Bible is encountered in history, and this role of history is the second contribution that Christianity can make to Asia. Because of its mystical nature, the Asian world is in danger of taking history lightly, as something impermanent and therefore not really true. By contrast, the salvation that Jesus speaks about has to

do with the here and now, and is not a mere eschatological reality. This is explicit already in the Lucan manifesto (4:18-19) as well as throughout his ministry. Jesus speaks more about the earth than about heaven. This transformation of history as the anticipation of the divine reign is implied even in the prayer that he taught his disciples: "Give us already now the bread of the morrow (*epiousion*)" (cf. Lk 11:3).

A Christian encounters God not primarily in cult but by engagement in history, in the context of the neighbour. It is this engagement in history from the perspective of the neighbour that can lead to transformation. A history that marginalizes and enslaves the neighbour is intolerable to the Christian for the neighbour is a brother, a sister. Christians cannot sing God's praises as long as their brothers/sisters are condemned to lead a dehumanized life. The poor in history are God's challenge for our self-transcendence. Through this self-transcendence we reach out to the divine fullness. The Church has to become a universal invitation to this transcendence and thus help humanity in its growth towards wholeness. A Christian does not wait for God to recreate this world but acts in this world to make it conformed to God's reign. As Dominic Crossan has put it, the Christian faith manifests what the world would be like, if God were directly and immediately in charge.³ When the Church interacts with the followers of other religions, its concern is to make the divine reign accessible to all and in particular to the poor.

Through this the present becomes the anticipation of the things hoped for, the "new age," rooted in the past that the Christian has experienced in Jesus Christ. Thus the core of the Christian mission is the transformation of the present: "Today salvation has come to this house", said the Lord (cf. Lk 19:9). This involves a conversion in history, rectifying relationships. It is not a conversion from one religion to another, but from selfishness to other-centredness. Thus the Christian community has to become the salt, light and leaven in society (Mt 5:13-14), all of which are minority images. Pope Paul VI repeated this call in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the dimensions of human life and society and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (cf. n. 18).

Mission of Harmony

Complementarity does not mean that we are working towards a sort of super-religion containing elements from different religions. Nor is it a question of minimizing differences to arrive at a lowest

common denominator on which all can agree. Rather it is accepting the individuality of each other. Reality is pluralistic and our everyday life tells us how the divine plan for the universe is full of diversity and plurality. This diversity and variety that we find at every level of existence in the world tell us that there is no reason to reduce this diversity to oneness as far as religions are concerned. Pluralism of religions is a value to be celebrated, even as the pluralism in all other fields.

Stressing the Christian contribution to a mission of complementarity should not be construed to mean that the Christians have nothing to learn from others. If others stand permeated by the Mystery that in Christian tradition is identified as Jesus Christ, they also surely have values that Christians can be enriched with. Aloysius Pieris calls this a "mutual discipleship".⁴ Asian religious traditions are not simply objects of our evangelization, to be "domesticated to our way of belief",⁵ rather they are partners with whom we are to collaborate as they too are recipients of the Divine revelation. They may have elements and facts which may be absent in our way of reading the Good News.

An essential aspect of mission towards harmony is that all must refrain from any sense of arrogance. It has to be admitted that Christianity was not free from the common flaw of Western civilization in history, its arrogance. This is aptly represented in the writing of the U.S. Senator Albert J. Beveridge:

God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing. He has made us master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigned. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race he has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the redemption of the world.⁶

Probably most missionaries did not share such extreme views. Yet the Church suffered from a "teacher complex" with little readiness to learn from others. It can happen that in the name of religion and God we promote our own interests and ideas about God. In the process we may want to limit God's activity to our religion, forgetting how God is concerned about all peoples (Am 9:7).

In the mood of disharmony prevailing in Asia due to religio-political and socio-economic factors, God is inviting us to do everything possible to

promote harmony among peoples. Harmony among religions, as among individuals, can be achieved only through mutual recognition and acceptance. This should lead to Inter-Religious Dialogue, joint prayer, celebrations and common programmes and projects, and can pave the way for a harmony of hearts and relations. We may also have to make up for our past outlook on mission which caused fear, anxiety and hostility. This would make us prophets of hope for a better future.

True harmony presupposes justice. Though we can talk of the "coincidence of opposites" (Nicholas of Cusa), one cannot reasonably expect genuine harmony when one person or group tries to conquer, displace, exploit, marginalize or disenfranchise another person or group. "Justice and peace will kiss each other", sings the psalmist (Ps 85[84]:11). If so, our efforts to herald harmony will also involve commitment to justice.

Achieving harmony takes a long time. It is a pilgrimage. Setbacks and failures need not dishearten us. We must go after the ideal while realizing that perfect harmony is an eschatological gift. In the midst of tensions and conflicts, harmony must remain a common vision, the inspiration for collaborative action.

Harmony is the keynote of God's creation. In the context of religious pluralism it demands a commitment to dialogue and an awareness of the religion of the other as a channel of divine grace. A harmonious life will enable us to discover our rich and common heritage, both cultural and spiritual, and enhance our growth to the fullness of the Kingdom. In the process, the Good News to which we bear witness must become part of the world of our times by our common stand against unjust privileges, violence and any sort of exploitation and oppression. Then we can be bearers of hope specially to the hopeless and voiceless people and to all the periphery of society. Jesus' words, "the poor are evangelized", will become a reality in our midst.

Conclusion

Admittedly, *Ecclesia in Asia's* teaching on mission is not limited to number 6. Number 6 occurs in the section describing the background and presuppositions for the mission that is elaborated in the following chapters, where it is amply spelt out that mission includes the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. However number 6 gives the framework for this proclamation. It has to be done in the spirit of dialogue and sharing, where one listens and also speaks. In this paper I have argued that in the Asian context, such as is described in *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 6, the proclamation of Jesus Christ has to

take place primarily after the pattern of Jesus Christ in continuation with his ministry, with its two poles of human dignity and the transformation of human society. Then the mission will be in conformity with the Kingdom of God.

Notes

¹ G.G. Arevalo (ed.), *For All Peoples of Asia*, Vol. 1. Manila: IMC Publications, 1984, 61.

² James D.G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*. London: SCM, 1991, 176.

³ John Dominic Crossan, *Who is Jesus?*, Louisville/London: Westminster Knox Press, 1996, 44.

⁴ Aloysius Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*. Kelaniya: Tulna Research Centre, 1998, 79.

⁵ Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in a Time of Trial*. New York: Seabury, 1975, p. 83.

⁶ Paul J. Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001, 119.

Ref.: VIDYAJYOTI (*Journal of Theological Reflection*), Vol. 67, n. 11, November 2003, pp. 937-947.

Books Received at SEDOS

Oduyoye, Mercy Amba, *Beads and Strands (Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa)*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2004.

Pironio, Cardenal Eduardo F., *Un testigo de la esperanza (Actas del seminario internacional realizado en Buenos Aires del 5 al 7 de abril de 2002)*, Buenos Aires, Paulinas, 2002.

Schiavinato, Lucia, *Con tutto il mondo nel cuore (Lettere di Mamma Lucia)*, EMI (Editrice Missionaria Italiana), Bologna, 2004.

Smith-Christopher Daniel L., *La nonviolenza nelle religioni (dai testi sacri alle tradizioni storiche)*, EMI (Editrice Missionaria Italiana), Bologna, 2004.

Snyder, Arnold C., *Following in the Footsteps of Christ (The Anabaptist Tradition)*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2004.

Coming Events

- *SEDOS Conference* -

***“The Instruction Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi:
A Response of the Church
to the Migration Phenomenon Today”***

Cardinal Hamao Stephen Fumio

President
Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

**Tuesday, 7 December, 2004
16:30 hrs**

Brothers of the Christian Schools,
Via Aurelia, 476 - Rome

- *SEDOS Annual General Assembly* -

**Tuesday, 7 December, 2004
15:00 hrs**

- *For SEDOS Members only* -

SEDOS Christmas Party

Thursday, 16 December 2004

Working Group

Monday, 8 November, **Debt Group** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**
Friday, 19 November, **Bible and Mission Group** 15:30 at **SEDOS**