

Editorial	256
Mission Institutes – Adapting to the New Reality <i>Hugh MacMahon</i>	257
The ‘missio ad gentes’ and Missionary Institutes <i>Piero Gheddo, P.I.M.E.</i>	260
Le défi missionnaire de la catholicité <i>Maurice Pivot</i>	263
Former – Se former aujourd’hui <i>Jean-Marie Bulumuna, O.M.I.</i>	265
Messianic Ecumenism: Missiological Reflections <i>Prof. Jan A. B. Jongeneel</i>	271
Violence and Christian Mission <i>Biju Kollakombil</i>	280
L’Église catholique et les peuples autochtones des Philippines <i>L’Églises d’Asie</i>	288
The Bodhi and the Cross: Icons of the Two Spirit-Odysseys <i>Leopold Ratnasekera, O.M.I.</i>	290
SEDOS Annual Report	296
Coming Events	302

Editorial

Buon Natale to all our readers! May the Lord pour out His blessings upon us all and bring us peace and love.

Some of our recent articles led to a little discussion among our readers, mainly the article by Michael Amalados, SJ, on “*The Mission Institutes in the New Millennium*”. It is not SEDOS policy to enter into discussions but this time we have published a response and comments from other sources.

Thus we begin with a short article: “*Mission Institutes – Adapting to the New Reality*” by **Hugh MacMahon, SSC**, emphasizing that although the new missionary situation is challenging it can be a wake-up call for mission Institutes rather than their death knell.

Piero Gheddo, PIME, adds some critique to M. Amalados in his work, “*The Mission ‘ad Gentes’ and Missionary Institutes*”. Fr Piero holds that the era of mission *ad Gentes* is not over yet and the situation is not as negative as depicted by Amalados, since bishops still ask for missionaries from all over and the Papal documents continue to call for the *Ad Gentes* spirit.

“*Le Défi Missionnaire de la Catholicité*” by **Maurice Pivot** presents the phenomenon of migration in all its breath. How are the host Christian Communities coping with the migrants from other cultures, from other faiths, even from the same Christian faith? How are the Christian communities adapting their catechesis to the needs of the new catechumens?

Jean Marie Bulumuna, OMI, shares his convictions on the attitude of Religious Institutes towards the challenge of formation of the young generation in: “*Former – se Former Aujourd’hui*”. Some feel doubtful about the formation of the young and are hesitant to turn over the responsibility to them, but this could show that the Institutes are not clear about their formation or community projects, giving rise to fear and confusion.

Facing a new era with new tools. Thus, Prof. **Jan A.B. Jongeneel** argues that to be able to answer the new challenges coming from religious radicalism we must put forward a new type of ecumenism. In his paper: “*Messianic Ecumenism: Missiological Reflections*” Jongeneel proposes a messianic ecumenism, a combined effort for a brighter future, rather than an Abrahamic ecumenism of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In “*Violence and Christian Mission*” **Biju Kollakombil** makes a short analysis of the causes and suggests ways to face violence in our communities. We are ‘called to proclaim the Good News to a world that is engulfed by violence ... and must even be ready to face persecution.

“*L’Église Catholique et les peuples Autochtones des Philippines*” offers a short interview with Fr. Benjamin Abadiano speaking of some other difficulties in our mission, mainly the resentment of the ‘paternalist’ way of doing mission among minorities.

We end this number by looking at the ‘Cross and the Bodhi as tao traditions two traditions rooted firmly in the soil and very much down to earth, thus being presented as a pedagogy of the sacred’. In “*The Bodhi and the Cross: Icons of the Two Spirit-Odysseys*” **Leopold Ratnasekera, OMI**, moves towards the spirituality of mission.

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Mission Institutes — Adapting to the New Reality?

- Hugh MacMahon -

Recent articles by Michael Amaladoss, SJ, on the future of Mission Institutes have given rise to helpful discussion. While some may dispute individual points he makes there is no doubt that he has surfaced many of the issues challenging missionaries today, especially those belonging to mission institutes *ad Gentes*.

As one who has spent forty years as a member of a mission institute in Asia, I would like to take up some of these issues and hope I can be as frank and thought-provoking as Fr Amaladoss.

1. Origins of missionary motivation

Did the European missionary movements of the 19th and 20th centuries stem from a colonial enthusiasm as Fr Amaladoss suggests? Whatever colonial instincts may have existed among missionaries in the 19th century they had lost their impact by the 20th. Ireland was not a colonial country and was in a rather anti-colonial mood when its missionary movement took off in the early 1900s. However, already Ireland and other Western Churches had a belief that Christianity was closely related with modern development. Missionaries were convinced they had social and economic benefits to bring to less developed countries which were non-Christian.

Until recent times combating famine, providing medical services and encouraging education in Third World countries were synonymous with mission. Yet the main impulse that moved the missionaries to leave their country and go to distant places was the conviction, embedded in the theology of that time, that the Church and its sacraments were the most valuable aid they could provide.

Today the theology of salvation is more open and the pressure to set up Local Churches has been removed from mission institutes. It is now accepted that missionary motivation comes from a personal appreciation of what the Christian message offers the individual. This gratitude leads to a desire to share it with those who, for historical or cultural reasons, are unable to benefit from what it has to give.

I would suggest therefore that the origins of the missionary thrust are to be found not in a colonizing

spirit but in a wish to share the “good news” whether it was seen (in earlier times) as essential for salvation and/or a help towards economic and social development or (in later times) as a starting point for spiritual awakening to a fuller life.

2. But Where?

Readers of Amaladoss’s articles might go on to ask, “But are those missionaries not needed just as much in the West today?”

I am sure the majority of Western missionaries would be the first to admit that their own countries are in need of evangelisation or re-evangelisation. Indeed evangelisation is an on-going and never ending task. However in the universal Church there is a division of responsibilities and, traditionally, the special task of going out to unreached peoples has been given to missionaries *ad Gentes*.

Fr Amaladoss raises two other possible objections to their going out.

The first is that the Church is already planted everywhere.

It is true that almost every country now has some form of Local Church. Yet a significant number of Local Churches are still too weak to tackle the challenges of evangelisation. China is but one example and today in China there are more people than there are Catholics in the whole world.

If the Local Church, for example in China, is unable to meet the challenges it faces it needs help. Foreign missionaries, in a witnessing and serving capacity, can reach sectors of society that the local Christians are unable to touch. Their influence can attract young people to study the Gospels and enquire about Christianity. An active Local Church is necessary to gather, form and guide the new Christians so helping to set up such a Church is a logical goal for the missionaries and one to which they are accustomed.

This brings up the second possible objection: foreign missionaries introduce the Graeco-Roman model of Church and so hold back the development of a genuinely Local Church which responds to the

Good News through the medium of the local culture.

It is true that the foreign missionaries brought a Western Church with them. Wherever Local Churches exist today they follow the Western model and in many cases are “more Roman than Rome itself”. There are reasons why they are happy to remain this way. As young or minority Churches they do not want to be seen as lacking in any aspect of orthodoxy – theologically, liturgically or ecclesiastically. They are encouraged by the universal Church to conform to the Graeco-Roman model and chided if they diverge from it.

The international missionary institutes have belatedly come to realise the consequences of this and to promote inculturation. However they are already on the periphery of the Local Churches and are no longer in a position to directly influence the manner in which those Churches develop. With their new cultural and theological sensitivity the institutes are likely to be more open to the need for inculturation than the majority of local Christians and freer to encourage and facilitate a drawing from “local wells”.

Few others have the focus, commitment or resources for this task and so, for the foreseeable future, the presence and support of the mission institutes for inculturation will be invaluable even in energetic young Churches.

3. Enrichment

Another reason why mission institutes are needed is because of the contribution they can make to their home Churches.

For many years lip-service has been given to the hope that the development of Asian and African Churches would enrich the Church in the West. So far this has not happened. Those most likely to stimulate the Western Church towards renewal are returned missionaries who have learnt from their experience in another religious tradition.

It is by seeing similarities and differences while travelling abroad that people become more aware of their own culture and even come to questioning some of its dearest assumptions. Similarly missionaries in a country with strong non-Christian religious traditions have the opportunity to see their faith in a new perspective. They will find themselves asking, “What is there in Christianity that is worth sharing with the people here?”. All religions have much in common so what is unique in Christianity? Going deeper, what in our present Church is particularly Christian and what was absorbed over the centuries from the universal heritage of religious beliefs, symbols and practices?

Returned missionaries are in the best position to raise these questions and they will find willing listeners among those seeking to renew their home Church.

From their experience in the non-Christian world they can help separate what is essential from what has been added and re-present from the original message what is fresh, inspiring and eternal.

4. A Future for Mission Institutes?

The need for mission institutes remains – to prepare and send personnel who can communicate across cultural barriers and also bring back to their home Churches a fresh appreciation of Christianity. Therefore if a question mark hangs over the future of some institutes it comes from within. Can they meet the new demands?

Most of the existing institutes have an aging membership and may not be keen to see major changes. They had to struggle to find their feet in the debates after Vatican II. Are they *ad Gentes* or *ad Extra*? Should they be involved in dialogue, development or conscientisation? Should they be on “six continents” or only among unreached peoples?

They had renewal and discernment processes without, however, reaching any consensus. As a result their members had to work out a personal response, find a role for themselves in the new situation and become used to working independently. Now they are called upon to give up some of this independence and accept a communal vision of their identity in order that their institute may play a part in meeting the new needs of mission.

The fact that their numbers will be smaller is less of a problem – as long as those few are strategically positioned where they can make the greatest impact. There they will need to see themselves as facilitators of others rather than as individual servants and witnesses. By themselves they will at most do the work of two or three but by enabling others to take on the task they will have hundreds doing the work.

Can they adapt or must new institutions emerge to take on the task?

5. Conclusion

A new image of mission as a specialized and demanding calling may not attract big numbers but the few who come will have the qualities and attitudes needed today.

Even if they come from a variety of cultures it will not matter as the clear focus and sense of purpose set before them will help them put their differences into perspective.

However, if an institute cannot adapt its future is not likely to be bright.

The myth that there are endless vocations in the Young Churches has been shown to be groundless and if candidates have a confused idea about the

goals of mission there will be problems coordinating them later on.

Neither are lay missionaries the future until there is a radical reappraisal of ministry in the Catholic Church and laity are given the recognition and financial support that will make long term mission involvement practical for them.

The new missionary situation is challenging but it can be a wake-up call for mission institutes rather than their death knell. However any revival should be motivated by more than just a desire to continue in existence. In a divided world where hope, concern for others and regard for the non-materialist is fading, the missionary has a special role and it is there that the *ad Gentes* mission institutes can show their worth.

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

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The Mission 'ad Gentes' and Missionary Institutes

- Piero Gheddo, P.I.M.E. -

I read with interest the article entitled: "The Mission Institutes in the New Millennium" (SEDOS Bulletin, n. 7/8, July/August 2004, pp. 205-211) in which Fr Michael Amaladoss, SJ, asks himself whether these Institutes are undergoing a crisis? He gives an affirmative answer. I think I may agree with him, (is not the whole Church in a state of crisis?), but not for the reasons he gives. His article is right on many points, but the general tone is unfortunate, it is too unilateral and negative about the "missio ad gentes" and the "Missionary Institutes". Amaladoss jumps from one topic to another, he is critical and judgemental without making any suggestions. Thus, he ends up being nearly only negative about the mission 'ad gentes' and the Missionary Institutes.

Two observations:

A) It is amazing that in seven full pages Amaladoss does not directly cite the word of God once, nor the Second Vatican Council, the Pope, the Synods or the Episcopal Conferences. He refers to several theologians who share his views, but is this a sufficient basis for such a radical and destructive criticism of the Missionary Institutes?

B) Another point, both strange and surprising, is the fact that Amaladoss, in treating the subject of the missions and Missionary Institutes, confines himself to saying: "The Good News of Jesus needs to be proclaimed everywhere" (p. 209). Of course, the missions exist above all to proclaim Christ, Saviour of Mankind (apart from the fact that in some areas of Asia one may not speak of Christ). Perhaps he has another purpose in mind: such as interreligious and intercultural dialogue, ethics, spirituality, inculturation, financial aid, peace-making, assistance for the poor, etc.? These are produced by the new life in Christ. They are not the result of human endeavour!

In the Constitutions of the Pontifical Foreign Missionary Institute (P.I.M.E.), the "Apostolic Spirit" to which we are conformed is defined thus in Chapter III: "The evangelizing Christ is the foundation and model of our apostolic life. By devoting ourselves completely to the work of evangelization, with Him and in Him, we shall always and only seek the glory

of God through the salvation of all" (n. 16). Does Fr Amaladoss subscribe to this in the new millennium or not? The following are some points to further the debate:

1) The Indian Theologian suggests that the mission era is over now, and been substituted by inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and the proclamation of the Kingdom. The proclamation of Christ and conversion are not excluded, but are no longer the principal purpose of mission. However, Jesus said: "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who refuses to believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:15). Many other passages in the New Testament confirm this. When Amaladoss writes: "There is a new theology of mission which sees it as a threefold dialogue of the Good News with the poor, the cultures and the religions", we may ask: up to what point is this a "new theology"? In fact, following the Council mention is made of "global" (or "wholistic") mission, which embraces all the factors Amaladoss refers to. However, the FABC Documents affirm that the proclamation (and the consequent free "conversion" to Christ) is the prime element (not necessarily in chronological order, but in the sense of value), that gives unity and consistence to the other elements. So, we ask ourselves: up to what point is this a "new theology"? Unless the proclamation of salvation through Christ is omitted. If this is the case, is this still Christian theology?

2) The Jesuit theologian states that missionaries and missionary institutes are things of the past: that they do not know how to adapt to new situations; are the product of the colonial period (like the "foreign missions") and that should they peter out today it would be not great loss: "If the Missionary Institutes do not change, reading the signs of the times, they will disappear. We need not feel sorry for them...".

In my opinion, in the year 2004 the accusation that missionaries are still in the colonial style is inappropriate, out-dated, as times have changed. The colonial period ended some 50-60 years ago. The Church and the Missionary Institutes have covered much new ground. At a given moment one must desist from certain comments that young people cannot

understand any more and which are only discrediting. In addition, almost everywhere, above all in Asia, at present and rightly, the missionaries no longer have an authoritative role, but one of service and cooperation.

Amaladoss is fixed on the old questions of colonial times. But history goes on and the Church renews itself. For example, so called "movements" have come into being, the symbol of a new Church, which accept members from all countries; who they move about without any difficulty. They make up the witnesses to the faith; they have a missionary outreach and are expert at dialogue, anchored firmly in the Christian identity they are nevertheless open to everyone. Amaladoss is stuck in the anti-colonial complex and fails to see that his argument has been superseded by history and the life of the Church.

Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, SDB, of Guwahati (Assam, India), has written an article on Christianity in Asia (in *Mondo e Missione*, April 2003, pp. 77-79) in which one reads: "The peoples of old Christian countries ... have been obliged to undergo severe self-criticism and 'a general loss of self-esteem' in their ideologies, their patterns of thought.... Some of this is also reflected in contemporary theological thought, whose echo reaches our present missionary field. Many ... regret this 'loss of self-esteem' which derives from a sense of guilt for the past and leads to a complex of uncertainty about the future. But, some forms of behaviour do not come from the Gospel. In fact only the Gospel can uplift those who have done wrong and those who suffered from it. The Gospel itself enables them to turn their backs on history and to go forward with confidence to grasp the future with their own hands".

3) "Mission is the responsibility of the Local Churches" according to Amaladoss. Since the Local Church is founded in non-Christian countries, it is responsible for mission, expatriate missionaries are no longer necessary. He puts emphasis on the Local Church, as though it were the sole depository of mission. The Missionary Institutes with the exclusive scope of the mission *ad gentes* were established to found the Local Church in the countries yet to be evangelized. There is thus a strong historical and affective bond between these Institutes and the Local Churches. Our P.I.M.E. Constitutions deal with this relationship.

Amaladoss speaks as though the Local Church were autonomous and that the Missionary Institutes were separate, on their own, with their own projects. This is not true, we are at the Service of, and integrated with, the Local Church, totally available to the Bishop. It is not true that the missionaries working in Asia, in the face of the difficulty or formalities in entering various countries, have taken refuge in Africa and Latin America. They have stayed in Asia (and I am referring mainly to P.I.M.E. which came into existence with a clear Asian calling) and will remain there as long as they are

allowed to, seeking to help the Churches they have founded as much as they can, even when they are expelled. For example, P.I.M.E. has worked in the Church of Myanmar since 1867 until today, and is still represented by two elderly missionaries. But for many years it has helped the Bishops in establishing diocesan seminaries and with other projects of theirs, in the foundation of a local missionary institute, using personnel with limited residence permits.

The Bishops ask for missionaries, not only in the poor countries, but also in the rich ones and those in full economic development. In the last two-three years P.I.M.E. has received requests for personnel from Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Burma, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Papua New Guinea (only to mention Asia). When Fr Amaladoss speaks of help to the Young Churches, he regards with suspicion and all but condemns the economic and material help offered. This is hard to understand: did not St Paul ask the Christian Communities to be ready to help the other poorer ones? Today, why would it be unspeakable for the Churches to ask for reciprocal help?

And then, the purpose of missionaries of the "Foreign Missions" is different: the education of the faithful and "Communion between the Churches". The memorable Archbishop Jean Zoa of Yaoundé, capital of Cameroon, once asked for numerous expatriate missionaries for his diocese. At a meeting of the diocesan clergy at the end of the 1970s, one of his priests enquired whether there was still a need for missionaries, given the good number of local priests. The Archbishop replied: "Yes, in theory we could do without them, but I hold them dear because they connect us to the Universal Church and the Christian Tradition, they pass on to us the sensibility to the Gospel that has matured over two thousand years in their Churches. We are a Young Church, many of us belong to non-Christian families. I am convinced that without them, in ten or twenty years, we would return to making animal sacrifices under the trees".

Amaladoss comes from an old Christian family of Kerala, which has been Christian for centuries. We do not realize that the majority of the young Christian Communities in Asia and Africa were born a century ago or even less. In quite a few countries or regions of Africa the Gospel was proclaimed after the Second World War. In Asia also we are still taking the first steps in mission. John Paul II wrote in "*Redemptoris Missio*": "Missionary activity is only beginning" (n. 30). "The mission '*ad gentes*' faces an enormous task, which is in no way disappearing" (n. 35). Mission in Asia has not failed in the least. This is proved by the existence of the Churches it has bought into being; and still plans a future in which all the Churches are called to cooperate. Again in "*Redemptoris Missio*" the Pope repeats three times that the *missio ad gentes* today is to be carried out above all in Asia

(cf. nn. 37,40, 86 with an implicit but clear reference to Asia).

4) Amaladoss does not agree with the internationalisation of the Missionary Institutes and speaks of founding local missionary institutes. This is right, but the same criterion can be applied to the religious. Since the Jesuits remain in India, couldn't they bring other local religious orders into being? We, P.I.M.E., have contributed to the establishment of local missionary institutes in the Churches of India, Thailand, the Philippines, Brazil and lately Burma. The exclusively missionary institutes for secular clergy (16 in all in the West) are open and available for this. But we have also opened our doors to the vocations of the people and countries we have evangelized, on formal request, and with the consent of the local Bishops.

The internationalisation of our Missionary Institutes has been a gradual and spontaneous step. I have experienced this in P.I.M.E., which for 140 years since it came into being (in 1850) defined itself solely as an Italian institute. But in the 1989 Chapter it became international after a long debate and following the requests of Bishops and young local people and with the approval of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. With globalization it no longer makes sense to be a solely Italian or solely French institute. Our Institutes also have the Holy Spirit. In 150 years of missionary work, P.I.M.E. has founded 12 dioceses in India, 3 in Bangladesh, 5 in Burma and some 10 in China, without a single local priest, by setting up seminaries for the Local Church. So, today, we engage local personnel and do everything in full agreement with the Bishops on the spot, in the countries we have evangelized.

5) According to Amaladoss the *missio ad gentes* is not only in the non-Christian countries but also in those that are Christian. Agreed, but the difference between a country with an old Christian tradition and one in which Christianity has yet to penetrate is immense in every field of human life. All the missionaries in the field who are in touch with non-Christian societies confirm this. In "*Redemptoris Missio*" (n. 32) (why does not Amaladoss ever quote it?), one reads: "Some are questioning whether it is still appropriate to speak of specific missionary activity or specifically "missionary" areas, or whether we should speak instead of a single missionary situation, with one single mission, the same everywhere... Care must be taken to avoid the risk of putting very different situations on the same level and of reducing, or even eliminating, the Church's mission and missionaries *ad gentes*. To say that the whole Church is missionary does not preclude the existence of a specific mission *ad gentes*, just as saying that all Catholics must be missionaries not only does not exclude, but actually requires that there be persons who have a specific vocation to be 'life-long missionaries *ad gentes*'".

6) Fr Amaladoss says that the countries in Asia

do not want any more missionaries. Which countries? Where there is complete freedom as in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea (and the Philippines, as well as elsewhere) missionaries have free entry. In the others the restrictions generally spring from nationalistic or closed religious views, that one cannot approve: and here India, where there is political freedom and freedom of thought, is an example by being closed to foreigners (not only to missionaries).

In February 2004 I went to Malaysia, whose Government is strongly in favour of Islam (60% of the population) and does not want expatriate missionaries, and does not even allow Catholic priests from the Malay peninsular to settle in Malay Borneo, where there are many conversions from animism to Christianity with very few priests. In 1970 there were 2,000 Catholics per priest; today there are 8,000 and every year the parishes have from 200 to 300 adult baptisms. In the five dioceses of Malay Borneo the Bishops would like to have missionaries, but the Government does not allow it. Is this an indication of the decadence of the "missionaries *ad gentes*" or a sign of the closure and intolerance that we condemn? The Bishop of Keningau (Sabah, Borneo) told me: "My diocese has 12 priests and 10 Seminarians for more than 90,000 baptized, each year the baptism of 1,500 adults takes place among the "*dayak*". The priests and Sisters are too few. We entrust many duties to lay people and to the basic Christian communities ... but when I go to visit the parishes and see many enthusiastic young people assembled, rows of youngsters singing, I thank the Lord. We have the great responsibility for educating them in the faith. How can we manage to do it without priests?"

There are many good, right ideas in this article by Amaladoss but they are suffocated by a quantity of hypotheses, accusations, judgements, stances that may seem "prophetic", but that in practice do not lead to precise proposals or to practical paths. Everything is uncertain and may even have the effect, unintentionally, of generating discouragement, demoralisation, suspicion, unease.... Clearly one can say that Amaladoss' article is nearly in antithesis to what the Church has been saying since the Second Vatican Council to the present, also in specific documents on this question: *Ad Gentes* of the Second Vatican Council (1965), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Paul VI (1975), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) and *Tertio Millennio Ineunte* (2001) by John Paul II. Are the Second Vatican Council and the two Popes mentioned, (not to refer to the Episcopal Synods) off the track? I know that the Popes and the Synods are the object of criticism, but how far can it go in order to be true and constructive?

Ref.: Translation from the Italian article by the same author (October 2004), also published on the SEDOS Homepage.

Le défi missionnaire de la catholicité

- Maurice Pivot -

Catholique, voilà un mot difficile à manier aujourd'hui, tellement il est chargé d'un sens qui dénature ce que peut être le mystère de la catholicité dans l'Église; tantôt il désigne une identité distinguée d'autres identités; tantôt il suggère la simple juxtaposition de diversités culturelles, sociales ou nationales.

Sur quelle base établir les ressemblances et différences de rassemblement entre la coupe du monde de football, l'idéal olympique, un rassemblement rock et un rassemblement J.M.J. ? Deux points de passage incontournables nous renvoient au mystère de la catholicité dans l'Église. Il y a catholicité là où la vie ecclésiale s'enracine dans le mystère pascal; c'est dans sa Croix que Jésus tue la haine, qu'il réconcilie les juifs et les païens, qu'il arrache les uns et les autres à l'arrogance spécifique qui caractérise chacun d'entre eux; c'est lui qui fait ainsi des deux un seul et unique peuple. Cet enracinement dans le mystère pascal, c'est aussi l'entrée dans la dynamique de celui qui s'est fait pauvre, jusqu'à la mort sur la Croix, pour nous donner de sa pauvreté; c'est ce don qui donne à chacun de devenir pauvre de cette pauvreté qui permet à l'autre d'exister dans sa dignité et sa liberté, qui donne à chacun «la possibilité d'entrer de manière responsable dans le jeu essentiel de l'échange» (G. Lafont), échange économique, culturel, social et spirituel. D'où l'autre point de passage incontournable: il y a catholicité là où chacun apprend à parler, agir et être «selon le tout», en tenant compte de l'ensemble de l'univers et de l'unicité de la vocation de l'humanité, à entrer dans la fraternité que nous donne le Christ, lui qui, fils unique, ne rougit pas de nous appeler ses frères et devient ainsi le Premier-Né d'une multitude de frères (cf Rm 8, 29; He 2, 11-12). Ces deux points de passage nous renvoient chacun à l'œuvre de l'Esprit Saint dans l'Église; c'est l'Esprit qui nous relie au mystère pascal, confondant en nous tout ce qui résiste à la victoire du Christ sur nos divisions, tout ce qui résiste en nous à la mort à nous-mêmes. C'est l'Esprit qui nous permet de nous acquitter de notre dette envers Dieu créateur et sauveur de notre humanité, de cette dette que nous contractons du fait des dons que nous recevons de lui; et c'est l'Esprit qui permet de mettre ces dons au service de tous et d'agir «selon le tout».

Les articles recueillis dans cette troisième partie nous offrent trois repères des nouveaux défis missionnaires.

Le premier repère est celui du phénomène des migrations en Europe, pris dans toute son amplitude, migrants chrétiens ou non chrétiens, en particulier la présence forte des hommes et des femmes de tradition musulmane. Autre repère, c'est celui de ces étrangers chrétiens venus s'intégrer dans une vie ecclésiale: à quelle expérience spirituelle cette épreuve de la migration renvoie-t-elle? Le dernier repère enfin, c'est celui de communautés chrétiennes qui accueillent, par le biais du catéchuménat, ces hommes et femmes que «le Seigneur ne cesse d'adjoindre à la communauté» (Actes 2, 47).

Que pouvons-nous entendre dans ces témoignages? Ils nous renvoient au cœur de ce que sont aujourd'hui les défis missionnaires, ce cœur que l'on peut formuler ainsi: les phénomènes migratoires et tout ce qu'ils entraînent, en termes de métissage, d'interculturalité, en particulier dans le cadre de la mondialisation, sont bien souvent vécus à l'intérieur des structures de péché de notre monde.

Comme l'ont affirmé les messages pontificaux adressés à l'occasion des journées mondiales de la migration (en particulier dans les années 1990), la réalité de la migration permet de découvrir ces structures de péché, tant dans les pays de départ que dans les pays d'accueil; et cela s'accroît lorsque les migrants prennent la figure de clandestins, de réfugiés, de victimes de la prostitution (*messages* de 1992, 1994, 1995); ils viennent alors manifester les prisons dans lesquelles sont enfermés les pays riches, prisonniers du mal qu'est leur manie de concentrer dans leurs mains les richesses mondiales. Comme le dit Joseph Maïla (*La Croix* - 15 avril 2004), la violence ne résulte pas tant de deux mondes qui s'affrontent que de deux mondes qui s'ignorent et qui ne se perçoivent que dans des images déformées les uns des autres. C'est là le défi lancé à notre humanité: repenser les conditions d'une véritable solidarité, de véritables rencontres sociales et culturelles, de mélanges affectifs dans lesquels puisse se forger une nouvelle humanité. C'est là que vient s'inscrire le défi missionnaire de l'Église: être au service de transformations radicales des relations entre groupes humains qui, non seulement peuvent être différents socialement, culturellement, religieusement,

économiquement, mais qui font vivre en leur propre sein des expériences de métissage, d'appartenances à plusieurs cultures, etc... Le défi missionnaire s'inscrit en particulier là où ce qui est en jeu est de l'ordre de la conversion, du combat spirituel, de la réconciliation et du pardon mutuel, de l'entrée dans le mystère pascal : c'est une nouvelle réalité de passion et de résurrection que l'accueil de l'étranger et la culture de l'hospitalité réciproque appellent à découvrir : comment «mourir à soi-même», «perdre sa vie», «se vider du trop-plein qui nous habite» peuvent-ils être vécus pour que s'ouvre un espace où échanges réciproques et solidarité puissent être vécus, pour que le métissage, l'interculturalité, les migrations deviennent une chance pour les hommes et les femmes et pour l'humanité tout entière, tel que le témoignage de Goyita Epailard le manifeste ?

Ce service missionnaire ne peut devenir effectif que là où des Églises deviennent elles-mêmes un champ d'expérience, un laboratoire, un sacrement de l'hospitalité réciproque et de la catholicité. Ceci est mis en forme aujourd'hui sous les formes les plus diverses ; que ce soient les rassemblements dominicaux autour de «messes des peuples», que ce soit tout ce qui se passe autour de la pastorale des migrants, de l'internationalisation d'instituts religieux, des jumelages de diocèses, des mariages mixtes, etc... pour n'en citer que quelques-uns : autant de lieux d'apprentissage de la catholicité. Une nouvelle forme apparaît aujourd'hui, à laquelle les événements récents donnent une forte actualité, ce qu'un livre met sous le sous-titre «pour une ecclésiologie du respect mutuel et de la réciprocité intercontinentale».¹ Si ce livre se centre sur un événement précis témoignant du manque de respect mutuel entre Églises, il invite à faire l'apprentissage ecclésial de nouvelles relations entre Églises de divers continents : que, par exemple, les Églises d'Afrique et les Églises d'Europe apprennent à ne pas renvoyer l'autre à une mauvaise conscience européenne ou africaine, mais grandissent ensemble dans une estime réciproque, chacune avec ses charismes propres et sa mémoire (cf par exemple la repentance des évêques d'Afrique répondant à la repentance du pape Jean-Paul II autour du drame de l'esclavage).²

De quelles ressources l'Église dispose-t-elle pour répondre à ces défis ?

Elle dispose déjà d'une longue *tradition de pèlerinage au cœur de la conscience de chacun*. Sans doute, ses rappels éthiques peuvent être tâtonnants ou maladroits ; sans doute, un certain rabattement de la foi sur la morale dans les discours d'Église réduit tant la foi que la morale ; mais elle a des ressources en elle et dans sa tradition, et plus encore dans sa relation à la Bible, pour retrouver ce chemin de la conscience de chacun, là où ce qui est appelé à naître, c'est cette solidarité et

cette communion constitutives de ce que l'humain, homme et femme, est appelé à être.

Elle dispose d'autre part d'une *mémoire vivante* et toujours à revivifier, mémoire d'une histoire humaine faite de violence, de jalousie et d'envie et pourtant toujours déjà travaillée par la bénédiction de Dieu, par une culture de réconciliation et du pardon et par une culture de l'espérance. C'est en particulier dans son rapport à la Bible que cette mémoire se revivifie, mémoire dynamique, productrice de récits aujourd'hui, qui, dans les lieux les plus déshumanisés par la violence du mal, ré-ouvre des chemins d'humanité.

Elle dispose de *sacrements* qui sont autant de *champs d'expériences* de ce que la puissance de Dieu peut produire aujourd'hui. Ce que quelqu'un dit du rassemblement dominical autour de l'Eucharistie («un lieu social original», «un rassemblement dominical qui surprend, particulièrement en banlieues», «un lieu de médiation avec les immigrés», «un des rares lieux où cette cohabitation devient expérience réellement communautaire») pourrait se dire de ce qui se passe autour de chacun des sacrements.

Elle dispose en son sein de tout ce qui peut lui permettre de *se transformer dans sa manière d'être*. Si les chrétiens bien souvent n'ont pas à faire d'autres choses que ce que l'ensemble d'une humanité est appelée à faire, ils ont à le faire autrement. Ils ont à allier l'urgence de la charité et la patience de l'espérance, à vivre une charité qui n'attend pas et des choses humaines importantes, des transformations humaines qui ne se font que dans la durée. Ils ont à découvrir une manière de vivre dans le rapport à la vérité, non pas une instrumentalisation de la vérité au service du pouvoir, mais un service de l'autorité de la vérité : et cela implique que celui qui sert cette vérité se laisse lui-même juger par cette vérité et qu'il soit prêt à l'accueillir de toute personne à qui Dieu fait don de cette vérité, de cet étranger, migrant, clandestin ou réfugié qui est né de la Vérité.

Notes

¹ S. Kalamba Nsapo, *Chrétiens africains en Europe*, Kinshasa-Munich-Paris, Publications Universitaires Africaines, 2004.

² *Documentation Catholique*, n. 2047, 1992, p. 325.

Former - se former aujourd'hui

- Jean-Marie Bulumuna, OMI -

«Le contenu (...) [de la formation] tout en étant objectivement riche et valable, n'a pas pénétré vraiment, je crois, chez bon nombre de jeunes de cette période (...). Et cela, soit par manque de pédagogie de notre part ou parce que ces jeunes étaient déjà d'une sensibilité religieuse, d'un monde très différent du nôtre. Notre centre de référence, par exemple, écrit-il, c'était l'être, l'objet; le leur c'était de plus en plus la personne humaine, le sujet. Et aussi, nous avançons peut-être beaucoup plus vite pour eux».*

Le sens de notre propos

Le sens de notre propos, dans le cadre de cet entretien, est clair : aider à comprendre ce qu'on croit, ce qu'on est et ce qu'on fait. Le fait d'aider dans ce domaine précis est une responsabilité inaliénable des supérieurs. «*Aucun supérieur ne peut renoncer à sa mission d'animation, d'aide fraternelle, de proposition, d'écoute, de dialogue*» (*Repas du Christ*, n. 14. «*Instruction de la Congrégation pour les Instituts de vie consacrée et les Sociétés de vie apostolique, Pour un engagement renouvelé de la vie consacrée au troisième millénaire*»). Et il y a ensuite le fait de constamment chercher à comprendre ce que l'on croit, ce que l'on fait, pour mieux croire et mieux faire. C'est l'attitude qui devrait accompagner toute existence qui se veut totalement consacrée au Seigneur. Pour la simple raison que dans l'ordre de la foi et de l'amour — et la vie religieuse est et doit redevenir histoire d'amour et d'obéissance — rien n'est acquis une fois pour toutes. Tout dépend de l'option qu'on lève au quotidien de la vie. Tout dépend de l'orientation profonde de la vie qui se détermine hors de toute préoccupation formaliste.

1. Conscient des besoins de la société et de l'Église

On rencontre de plus en plus des prêtres, religieux et religieuses qui semblent avoir perdu la conscience de leur identité. Des ecclésiastiques qui cherchent à ressembler à n'importe qui,¹ décentrés du Christ, se fourvoyant à la suite d'autres choses. Ce décentrement de la vie religieuse, expression d'une vie qui se cherche un style nouveau dans un environnement difficile et complexe, n'est pas une fatalité. Tout dépend certainement des Instituts de vie consacrée et des

Sociétés de vie apostolique eux-mêmes. Selon qu'ils acceptent ou non, dans cet environnement planétaire à tendance autorégulatrice, de gérer et de gouverner rigoureusement et tranquillement leurs institutions et de former attentivement leurs membres. D'où l'impératif de repenser la formation comme réponse de fond aux défis de la vie consacrée aujourd'hui. Cependant, rappelle et exhorte d'entrée de jeu *Perfectae Caritatis* au n. 2 : «*Les Instituts doivent promouvoir chez leurs membres une suffisante information de la condition humaine à leur époque et des besoins de l'Église, de sorte que, discernant avec sagesse, à la lumière de la foi, les traits particuliers du monde d'aujourd'hui et brûlants de zèle apostolique, ils soient à même de porter aux hommes un secours plus efficace*». Pour ce qui concerne l'Afrique, son problème est essentiellement politique, économique et culturel.

Sur le plan politique, l'environnement africain est négativement marqué par la course, sans finalité digne, au pouvoir et par le désir immodéré de s'y maintenir à tout prix. Tous prétendent et veulent accéder aux très hautes et nobles fonctions symboliques de la société mais pas nécessairement pour donner une nouvelle impulsion au changement et au progrès au service du bien commun. On le voit d'ailleurs que c'est non seulement du haut de la pyramide où sont placés les génocidaires africains, mais aussi et surtout c'est d'en haut que partent la corruption, la vénalité, la violence et toutes sortes d'injustices sociales.

Cette situation a des conséquences lourdes dans tous les autres secteurs de la vie en société notamment dans le domaine religieux. «*On rencontre de plus en plus de prêtres (de religieux) qui ne sont pas heureux dans l'exercice de leur fonction ou dans l'état de vie qui depuis longtemps est lié dans l'Église à cette fonction... Nombreux ne savent plus ce qu'ils sont et encore moins pourquoi on leur demande de poser certains gestes*».²

Face à cette Afrique-là, nous avons besoin d'une autre plus respectueuse de la vie, des identités et des institutions productrices de sens. Cela n'est possible que là où les hommes réapprennent individuellement et collectivement à penser l'orientation profonde de leur vie en terme de vocation et se donnent la peine d'approfondir celle dans laquelle leur vie se trouve engagée. Là où l'on se donne de réfléchir de façon concentrée pour découvrir la dimension profonde du monde et la vocation de l'homme dans celui-ci.

Une vocation suppose la reconnaissance d'une puissance, d'un souverain (croyance et convictions), le sentiment de dépendance à l'égard de ce souverain (ce qui impose respect des règles de conduite) et le désir d'entrer en relation avec Lui (par le biais des rites d'insertion). Dans cette perspective, l'opportunisme n'a pas droit de cité.

Sur le plan économique, l'Afrique est insensible à sa propre misère. Elle ne se laisse plus effrayer par la perspective de la précarité. Pourtant, en politique comme en religion, si la paupérisation extrême n'explique pas tout, elle renforce cependant l'intolérance qui entraîne la violence. Cette misère s'accompagne malheureusement de l'inversion des paramètres : «*Quiconque a travaillé dans le domaine du développement en Afrique noire sait à quel point l'aide étrangère est considérée par les autorités et les populations bénéficiaires comme une chose naturelle, et à quel point il est difficile d'obtenir la participation des populations à la réalisation des projets même lorsque les priorités sont définies par elles*».³

Face à cette inversion, et pour une nouvelle espérance, s'impose la nécessité de valoriser et d'organiser la productivité, l'inventivité, la communauté de biens et d'assumer clairement la fonction de contrôle (la lutte syndicale). Car la prospérité matérielle des peuples ne se conquiert que sur ce terrain-là. Il n'existe pas d'exemple de nation, de continent au monde, qui soit parvenu à nourrir correctement ses populations en comptant sur le pouvoir des multiplicateurs des billets ou sur les bailleurs de fonds. C'est pourquoi, une formation qui se veut contextualisée doit désormais — vu que nous recrutons nos vocations dans cette jeunesse africaine qui, dans sa grande majorité, n'a que le chômage comme horizon — s'efforcer de mettre en confiance et de remettre au travail. Deux services indispensables pour la survivance matérielle de notre société tout comme de notre Église.

Sur le plan culturel, le problème africain s'exprime à travers sa misère intellectuelle, c'est-à-dire à travers la difficulté pour l'Afrique à feu et à sang de mener une réflexion critique sur elle-même. Cette misère contribue au renforcement d'un certain

narcissisme culturel relatif à la fausse pauvreté entretenue. Il s'agit de cette propension marquée de populations manifestement démunies, à investir leurs revenus dans des manifestations collectives éphémères et dispendieuses, ayant pour seule fonction d'assurer la pérennité des traditions.

Nous recrutons nos vocations dans cette Afrique-là. Nous devons par conséquent, par la formation, amener nos jeunes à savoir que les capacités respiratoires d'une culture sont aujourd'hui fonction de son aptitude à inhaler les courants créatifs de la planète et à insuffler au marché mondial des énergies sans cesse renouvelées.

Ce ne sont pas nos traditions qui nous conduiront au développement, à la prospérité comme par enchantement ! Dans cette perspective, la formation de nos membres suppose l'apparition d'un monde nouveau et non seulement le grossissement quantitatif de ce qui existe déjà. Le monde nouveau c'est cette "communauté spirituelle" (cf. Is 26,1-6) répondant au besoin profond de justice, de paix et de salut qui habite tous les hommes. Son avènement suppose la conversion, «l'éveil de l'humanité périphérique à la conscience de son historicité, de sa dimension de maître de son monde et de sujet de son histoire».

Voilà pourquoi «*Il est donc nécessaire de susciter chez tous les fidèles ... un fort désir de conversion et de renouveau personnel, dans un climat de prière toujours plus intense et de solidarité dans l'accueil du prochain...*» (*Vita Consacrata*, n. 39). La vie consacrée a la mission de rappeler aux autres cet appel afin d'aider et de soutenir en tout homme la recherche de la dimension profonde de la vie contre l'étouffement du monde par le tourbillon de l'éphémère (cf. *ibid.*, n. 105).

2. La vie consacrée : une formation permanente

La vie religieuse consacrée demeure, en soi, une formation permanente. Elle est concomitamment processus de dépouillement et d'*appropriation progressive des sentiments du Christ* (*ibid.*, n. 65). «*La vie religieuse est un chemin où l'on essaye, le mieux possible, d'atteindre la sainteté, c'est-à-dire de se laisser sanctifier. Et cela est difficile*».⁴ Il s'agit en fait de "devenir franchement saint", c'est-à-dire d'accepter de renouer avec ce type d'engagement que les fondatrices et les fondateurs de la vie consacrée ont toujours apporté au pied de l'autel, à savoir : «*le travail sans limite, la confiance sans raison, la prière sans arrêt et l'espoir sans fin*».⁵ Mais ceci, comme vous pouvez le remarquer, ne va pas de soi. Ceci appelle la découverte de l'ascèse «indispensable pour que la personne consacrée reste fidèle à sa vocation et suive Jésus sur le chemin de la Croix» (*Vita Consacrata*, n. 38).

«*Nous sommes tous conscients des épreuves et des purifications*

*auxquelles ... [la vie consacrée] est aujourd'hui soumise» (Repartir du Christ, n. 11). Pensons à "la présence du mystère du mal qui poursuit également ceux qui consacrent leur vie à Dieu, la menace de la médiocrité dans la vie spirituelle, de l'embourgeoisement progressif et de la mentalité consumériste, la prédominance des projets personnels sur les projets communautaires au risque de la communion de la fraternité" (cf. *ibid.*, n. 12). Pourtant la dignité extraordinaire de laquelle sont revêtus les consacrés vient de la "consécration dans la vérité", c'est-à-dire de la communion étroite avec le Dieu saint et, entraîne de *facto* la communion étroite, avec le peuple saint (cf. Jn 17,11-26). C'est pour «que tous soient un» (Jn 17, 11) que Jésus a donné sa vie.*

Cette situation cependant n'est pas une fatalité. Car «*les défis actuels peuvent constituer un puissant appel à approfondir le vécu de la vie consacrée, dont le témoignage est aujourd'hui plus nécessaire que jamais» (Repartir du Christ, n. 13). Tout dépend des congrégations religieuses selon qu'elles acceptent ou non de gérer et de gouverner sérieusement et tranquillement leurs Instituts et de former attentivement leurs membres. Si la vocation suppose la rencontre avec Dieu qui appelle et donne la grâce de l'obéissance à sa voix, la pleine réalisation de la configuration au Christ, l'Esprit qui forme le Christ en nous (cf. Lc 1,35) par la formation, requiert le concours, la coopération de trois acteurs importants : le formateur, la communauté formatrice et l'appelé lui-même.*

3. Le formateur

Lorsqu'on veut former, il est important d'accepter la souffrance d'être là, avec mais surtout pour "l'appelé", pour voir clair. Voir clair non pas pour bien juger d'en haut, pour condamner, mais pour bien contempler, avec et dans l'autre, appelé comme moi, l'œuvre de Dieu, qui change de destin à ceux qu'il attire vers lui, pour mieux coopérer à son épanouissement.

C'est pourquoi, conseille Guy Lespinay, dominicain et formateur de longue date, «*le formateur et la communauté formatrice doivent s'adapter aux difficultés de chacune des personnes en formation. Tout doit être vécu dans un acte de foi et de miséricorde envers tous ceux que le Seigneur nous envoie. Gardons nous de jugements trop simples ou d'opinions trop certaines. Laissons la grâce faire son chemin».*⁶

La formation à la vie religieuse est un sujet difficile. Parce qu'entre autres la situation est complexe! Aujourd'hui il faut beaucoup de foi, de courage et de générosité pour s'y engager. Nous nous rendons de mieux en mieux compte que les formateurs se sentent parfois démunis face à cette tâche. Cette pauvreté à l'avantage de nous rendre un peu plus humbles.

Effectivement, «*pour s'occuper des vocations, pour devenir, formateur il faut deux choses importantes : l'humilité et un sens de l'humour...».*⁷ Humbles, nous serons bien conscients du fait «*... que le formateur ne joue qu'un rôle partiel dans la formation. C'est surtout la communauté qui est formatrice. Elle forge le contexte où croissent les vocations. Chacun de ses membres devient le modèle de ceux ... qui constituent la relève. C'est une responsabilité capitale. Lorsqu'on réussit à faire prendre conscience de cela, les membres deviennent coresponsables».*⁸

C'est ainsi que, dans la perspective d'une immense espérance à faire naître, nous souhaitons voir, mieux qu'avant, la formation de nos membres comprise comme un effort de tous afin d'offrir à la Congrégation et à l'Église des hommes animés par l'Esprit de l'Évangile. C'est ensemble qu'il nous faut préciser, puis créer, les conditions d'un véritable accueil, qui soit pleinement respectueux des personnes, de leur recherche et de leur fragilité.

4. La communauté formatrice

Dans la formation, c'est surtout la communauté qui est formatrice. Elle forge le contexte où croissent les vocations. C'est à elle qu'il revient de préciser les conditions d'un véritable accueil qui soit pleinement respectueux des personnes, de leur recherche et de leur fragilité.

Ces conditions sont celles que nous pouvons déduire de Lc 8,1-3, à savoir :

- Accueil de la Bonne Nouvelle. Dans l'esprit et les traits marquants de la Bonne Nouvelle, il n'y a aucune différence entre les hommes, entre l'homme et la femme comme entre les formateurs et les formés ! C'est pour l'ancien testament, comme pour beaucoup de vieilles civilisations, que la femme était frappée d'«interdit» (Lc 4,38 ; 13,16 ; 8,43), tandis que les enfants étaient considérés comme quantité négligeable, insignifiante. Pourtant lorsqu'on décide d'entrer dans l'alliance nouvelle on constate un retournement sans précédent : les femmes mises en relief, à l'avant garde de l'Évangélisation (première messagère de la résurrection de Jésus), et tous invités à «devenir comme des enfants» (cf. Mt 18,1-14).

- Esprit d'enfance. Nous ne savons pas toujours de quoi les enfants sont capables, tout ce que les enfants, les jeunes connaissent : fraîcheur, beauté, innocence, confiance pourquoi pas ? L'enfant ne peut pas vivre tout seul, il ne peut se suffire, il a besoin d'être aimé, il attend tout de sa mère. L'esprit d'enfance, c'est la base, combien profonde, de toute vie communautaire : le respect de tout homme, surtout des plus faibles. Comme nous en sommes encore loin.

- Chasser les esprits mauvais, vaincre les maladies, faire reculer le mal. Avec les Douze, il y avait un groupe de femmes qui suivaient Jésus. Toutes délivrées et guéries, débarrassées du vieil homme et revêtues de l'homme nouveau et donc disposées, prêtes à servir...

- La spiritualité de l'appauvrissement. Elle menace l'attachement viscéral à l'argent. *«La racine de tous les maux, c'est l'amour de l'argent. Pour s'y être livrés, certains se sont égarés loin de la foi et se sont infligé à eux-mêmes des tourments sans nombre»* (1 Tm 6,10).

- Pourtant il faut de l'argent pour pouvoir annoncer l'Évangile ! C'est ici qu'il faut bien appréhender la politique financière de son Institut. Le droit universel défend «aux clercs de faire le négoce ou le commerce par eux-mêmes ou par autrui, à leur profit ou à celui des tiers, sauf permission de l'autorité ecclésiastique légitime» (Cann. 286 et 1392). Il faut être libre de tous soucis humains et matériels pour se dédier sans ménagement à l'annonce de la Bonne Nouvelle. Et si les Douze, et Jésus, semblent si libres, sans soucis matériels, c'est qu'il y a des femmes qui font l'intendance ! travail capital, qui permet tout le reste (cf. Lc 8,1-3). Ceci interpelle chaque religieux. Suis-je, sommes-nous de ceux qui sont complexés par les humbles tâches ? Ou bien est-ce que je sais leur donner une valeur divine ? Nous sommes tous égaux, mais nous n'avons ni les mêmes tâches quotidiennes ni les mêmes charismes particuliers. Il y a une valeur divine en cela. Notre survie en dépend.

L' instruction *«Repertir du Christ»* au n° 16, §4 affirme : *«la nécessité des communautés accueillantes et capables de partager leur idéal de vie avec les jeunes, en se laissant interpeller par les exigences d'authenticité et en étant prêtes à marcher avec eux»*. En d'autres termes, le discours sur l'adaptation des candidats, des jeunes à la vie consacrée doit aller de pair avec l'insistance sur l'adaptation de la communauté aux nouveaux arrivants. *«C'est pourquoi il est nécessaire, dans ce domaine, que soit effectué un discernement serein, libre de toute préoccupation de nombre ou d'efficacité, afin de vérifier, à la lumière de la foi et des contre-indications possibles, l'authenticité de la vocation et la rectitude des intentions»* (des motivations) (*ibid.*, n. 18).

La formation est un processus d'imitation du modèle christique. Les consacrés sont appelés à en être le reflet en ce monde. De là l'importance pour les consacrés de se rendre visibles (moins occultes) et lisibles (moins opaques) auprès des jeunes.

Il nous faut prendre conscience du fait qu'*«après de nombreuses années de vie religieuse, nous avons accumulé des notions déterminantes et passionnantes sur notre forme de vie. Mais ceux qui veulent suivre le Christ par ce moyen très original, et un peu spécial, n'en sont pas là. Soyons un peu plus modestes et essayons*

d'avancer sur le même terrain que ceux qui viennent à nous».⁹

Les jeunes qui veulent être accompagnés, qui acceptent de se former, ne viennent pas pour connaître les problèmes (nos problèmes ou leurs problèmes). Ils cherchent Dieu de manière consciente ou inconsciente ! C'est vrai ! D'où la nécessité de les aider à accepter, à leur tour, la souffrance qu'exige le passage de la matière à la forme du Christ à sculpter sur leur visage. Cette acceptation peut se vérifier à travers la contemplation de l'orientation générale d'une vie. La communauté formatrice est le lieu de cette contemplation. A cette fin, elle se construit au jour le jour de façon à devenir une «école de la spiritualité évangélique», un espace de vie régulière et de responsabilité partagée. La communauté formatrice est aussi un véritable «pays des missions». De là, comprendre avec ces paroles de Saint Eugène¹⁰ «que ces sortes de missions crucifient la nature et qu'on a beaucoup à y souffrir». Il ne faut donc pas que ceux qui sont appelés s'étonnent «d'y rencontrer bien des peines ; c'est là ce qui excite le zèle et la ferveur de tous ceux qui demandent d'être des préférés».

«Comme les ouvriers évangéliques ne retireront jamais de fruits abondants de leur travaux s'ils ne font pas le plus grand cas des souffrances de mort de Jésus et ne les portent, pour ainsi dire continuellement, dans leur propre corps, les membres de notre Société s'appliqueront avec soin à réprimer leurs passions et à renoncer en tout à leur volonté propre ; et, à l'imitation de l'Apôtre, ils mettront leur gloire dans les faiblesses, les outrages, les persécutions, les angoisses endurés pour le Christ».¹¹ On voit combien la vie consacrée est une *sequella Christi* spéciale, pleine de responsabilités. Responsabilités inaliénables de ceux qui sont appelés !

5. La responsabilité inaliénable de ceux qui sont appelés

Former aujourd'hui c'est aussi reconnaître la responsabilité inaliénable de ceux qui sont appelés dans la maturation de leur vocation. Cette responsabilité passe par la volonté de grandir et de s'affermir dans la consécration. Dans la formation on assiste facilement au refus de la maturation et du développement de la vocation. Il commence généralement avec l'occultation des responsabilités des membres face à leur histoire. La formation aujourd'hui doit aussi et surtout consister à placer les individus face à leurs incontournables responsabilités : «travail sans limite, confiance sans raison, prière sans arrêt, espoir sans fin». C'est l'engagement que les fondatrices et les fondateurs de la vie consacrée ont toujours apporté au pied de l'autel. Cela signifie, à l'imitation de l'Apôtre, nous montrer imitateurs du Christ : il supporte tout, s'adapte à tout et fait tout pour la gloire de Dieu. Ne veut donner scandale à personne : «ni aux juifs (compatriotes, confrères), ni aux grecs (ceux qui ne

pensent pas comme nous ni ne partagent notre foi) ni à l'Eglise de Dieu (aux chrétiens), (...) en tout, ne cherchant pas son propre intérêt, mais celui du plus grand nombre, afin qu'ils soient tous sauvés» (cf 1 Co 10,31-11,1).

Mais «un regard réaliste sur la situation de l'Eglise et du monde nous oblige à saisir aussi les difficultés que la vie consacrée doit aujourd'hui affronter» (*Repartir du Christ*, n. 11) notamment la prédominance des projets personnels sur les projets communautaires, véritable défi contre la communion et donc une menace directe à la dignité extraordinaire dont sont revêtues les personnes consacrées. C'est ici que, pour finir, la formation aujourd'hui exige la patience, la simplicité et la prudence.

Il faut d'abord la patience face à la lenteur dans la réalisation d'une vocation. Patience dans les expériences vécues au jour le jour et dans leur accumulation dans la mémoire où elles détermineront progressivement les goûts et les motivations.

Il faut ensuite la simplicité, la modestie. Ce n'est pas à force d'accumuler les expériences et les notions, fussent-elles déterminantes et passionnantes sur notre forme de vie, qu'on devient franchement saint. La vie religieuse consacrée fait appel directement à la conscience des appelés. C'est au fond de son cœur, ouvert à l'Esprit qui forme en lui le Christ, que la personne consacrée puise le témoignage qui fait tout de suite autorité (cf Lc 4,36). Ce témoignage n'est pas une histoire d'observance stricte mais d'amour, d'obéissance et d'orientation profonde de la vie. Et une vie peut prospérer, grandir, tout comme elle peut tarir, s'amoindrir, s'atrophier. Tout dépend des choix à faire au jour le jour et des sacrifices conséquents à assumer !

Il faut enfin la prudence pour former et/ou se laisser former. Pour qu'une personne développe un équilibre religieux qui soit, en soi, une contestation vivante contre les excès de la possession (appel à la pauvreté), du pouvoir (appel à l'obéissance) et sur le plan affectif (appel à la chasteté), il lui faut du temps. «Quand on brûle les étapes, on brûle les gens» ! Il faut parfois savoir vivre avec les gens qui ne comprennent pas. C'est crucifiant mais c'est aussi divin (cf Mt 17,17).

* Conclusion

En guise de conclusion, laissons-nous bousculer par ces paroles (un texte de 1818) de Saint Eugène de Mazenod : «*Les missionnaires doivent autant que le comporte la faiblesse de la nature humaine, imiter en tout les exemples de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, principal Instituteur de la Société et de ses Apôtres, nos premiers pères... Ils tacheront de devenir d'autres Jésus-Christ, répandant partout la bonne odeur de ses aimables vertus*» (cf. *Constitutions et Règles des OMI*, p. 48).

Comme quoi, «Pour progresser dans l'amour de

Dieu ..., nous ne connaissons pas de livre plus beau et plus vrai que Jésus Christ crucifié». ¹² Et le ministère particulier de la formation n'est pas seulement une émanation de la communauté, ni une délégation du pouvoir venant du groupe. C'est une responsabilité mystérieuse. Un rôle confié par Dieu, reçu de Dieu et de son Esprit Saint (cf Ac 20,28-38). C'est pourquoi «le premier engagement de la pastorale des vocations demeure la prière» (*Repartir du Christ*, n. 16). Jésus nous en donne l'exemple et le sens dans sa prière sacerdotale (cf Jn 17, 1-19). Il prie pour ses amis, ses disciples afin qu'ils se gardent fidèles au nom de Dieu. Ils ont été appelés. Ils ont accepté de le suivre. Maintenant qu'il s'en va, il est conscient de la difficulté dans laquelle il met ses Apôtres en disparaissant de leurs yeux. Mais c'est certainement pour les responsabiliser. Il doit disparaître pour que, à sa suite, ils grandissent et traversent à leur tour de ce monde vers le monde nouveau, celui du Père.

Cette façon de faire de Jésus met en crise notre vécu de la vie religieuse. «*La vie religieuse a souvent favorisé un retour à des attitudes adolescentes, voire infantiles*». ¹³ Pourtant, il faut faire «*confiance et ne pas hésiter à donner des responsabilités aux jeunes religieux*». ¹⁴ C'est lorsque le projet de formation ou le projet communautaire n'est pas clair qu'il y a tout à craindre ! Car «on ne s'adapte pas à ce qu'on ne connaît pas».

Dans la situation qui est la nôtre où les jeunes n'ont comme horizon que le chômage, nous n'avons d'autre stratégie de formation responsabilisante que ce que nous inspire le Maître, dans Mt 20,1-16, à savoir : «*mettre nos membres en confiance pour les remettre au travail*». Le Seigneur est là où notre travail nous attend. Il a horreur du chômage et des chômeurs.

Notes

* Extrait de la conférence du père Jetté, du 16 juillet 1979, cité dans Archiati Paolo, O.M.I., «Père Jetté et la formation», *Documentation OMI*, n° 253 (français) septembre 2003, p. 10.

¹ Cf Abbé MUSUA Mimbari, Matthieu, *La noblesse du sacerdoce*, Kinshasa, Ed. le Sénévé, 2000, p. 9.

² Page, Jean-Guy, *Prêtre un métier sans avenir ?*, Montréal, Paulines, 1989, p. 14.

³ Kabou, Axelles, *Et si l'Afrique refusait le développement ?*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1991, note n° 20, p. 23.

⁴ Lespinay, Guy, *Être formateur aujourd'hui*, Montréal, Médiaspaul, 2002, p. 21.

⁵ Chittister, Joan, *Le feu sous les cendres. Une spiritualité pour la vie religieuse contemporaine*, Québec, Bellarmin, 1998, p. 146.

⁶ Lespinay, Guy, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ Cf. de Mazenod, Eugène, *Lettre aux Frères Surel et Janin*, le 11 mars 1852.

¹¹ *Règle-OMI* de 1826.

¹² (De l'Extrait des lettres de Saint Maximilien Kolbe, *Le zèle apostolique pour le salut et la sanctification des âmes*, cf. Sanctoral Franciscain, Lyon, 1985, pp. 277-278.

¹³ Lespinay, Guy, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

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Messianic Ecumenism: Missiological Reflections

- Prof. Jan A.B. Jongeneel -

Abstract: *In this article the author pleads for a new type of ecumenism as the way forward for the Christian ecumenical movement both within and outside the WCC. K.-J. Kuschel has proposed an Abrahamic ecumenism of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Jongeneel proposes a messianic ecumenism with all people striving to break away from sin and crime, as they resist the de facto demonic pressure of those who want to subjugate fellow humans, and work for a brighter future on six continents.*

The decision to establish the World Council of Churches was made at the Dom Square, Utrecht, in 1938, the year of my birth. It had become clear at that point that the existing ecumenical movement needed formalising and structuring. There comes a time in the life of every global movement when it can no longer avoid establishing some kind of structure in its organisation and work, fully realising that this structure will lead to rigidity in the long run. And indeed, the World Council of Churches has experienced this inflexibility both internally and externally.

The World Council of Churches can be defined as the ecumenical movement of the 20th century, rooted in the missionary activities of the 19th century. To prevent further loss of elasticity, now and in the future, it would do well to be continuously aware of its origins and to strive proactively towards the renewal of the concept of ecumenism. The Greek word *oikumene* was used to indicate 'the entire inhabited world'. The Early Church held 'ecumenical councils', i.e. councils at which all of Christendom within the Roman Empire was represented. Loosely following on from this idea, the ecumenical movement, founded and structured in the last century, seeks to establish one Church for all Christians. In the very recent past this unifying endeavour has been extended by some groups to the adherents of other religions, worldviews and ideologies. In this way the concept of *Abrahamic ecumenism* was born to give new impetus to the ecumenical movement, and thus also to the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Here, I want to plead the cause of *messianic ecumenism*. This concept too can contribute to further insight into the way forward for the ecumenical movement both within and outside the World Council of Churches.

Abrahamic and Messianic ecumenism differ from the concept of ecumenism on which the World Council of Churches is based. The latter is primarily *idealistic* in nature: starting from commonly held ideas one strives towards consensus of faith, values (ethics); liturgy, Church order, etc., Abrahamic and Messianic ecumenism on the other hand are primarily *personal* in nature: they point to a person — Abraham, the Messiah, Jesus, etc. — as the source of truth and guidance for mankind, and then focus on people.

To begin with, this valedictory lecture in missiology will briefly sketch the personalistic concept of Abrahamic ecumenism. Then it will present a more detailed view of the personalistic concept of messianic ecumenism, first describing it in general terms and then concentrating on four specific points. It ends with a conclusion.

Abrahamic Ecumenism

Recently, Karl-Josef Kuschel, successor to Hans Küng at Tübingen, ardently pleaded the case for Abrahamic ecumenism, *i.e.* an ecumenism of Jews, Christians and Muslims who all look back to Abraham/Ibrahim as their ancestor in faith, each in their own way. In his book *Streit um Abraham* (1994), this scholar first shows which place the Patriarch Abraham occupies in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and then looks at Abrahamic ecumenism from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspective in turn. At the end of this volume he points out the joint responsibility of Jews, Christians and Muslims to all peoples of this world, and urges the establishment of processes and institutions for mutual development and cooperation, and concludes: "[...] if Jews, Christians and

Muslims were to practise 'Abrahamitic ecumenism' in that spirit, the world would be so much the better for being a more friendly, just and humane place".²

Although, of course, I wholeheartedly support any effort that causes more friendliness, justice and humanity between faiths and cultures, I am not an advocate of Abrahamitic ecumenism. In my opinion this form of ecumenism is not truly ecumenical: it excludes about half the population of the world, especially Hindus, Buddhists and adherents of other cyclical religions and worldviews.³ Furthermore, this ecumenism is not forward-looking but backward-looking: it wants to go back to the Patriarch Abraham. Lastly, it does not really do justice to the main characteristics of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as they revere Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed respectively as their central figure, not Abraham.

Messianic Ecumenism

I call for the replacement of the concept of Abrahamitic ecumenism by the concept of messianic ecumenism, i.e. an ecumenism that focuses on the figure of *the Messiah/the Christ/al-Masih/al-Mahdi*, which intends not to be an ecumenism of 'ancient times', but an ecumenism of 'the end time'. I am convinced that this figure has, throughout the centuries, inspired more individuals and communities than the figure of Abraham.

In the past 2,000 years not only Christians have seen Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, but many Jewish and Islamic movements have also developed messianic expectations and programmes.⁴ Moreover, 'messianism' occurs in many forms outside Judaism, Christianity and Islam.⁵

In the same way Kuschel demonstrated points of similarity and dissimilarity in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions where Abraham is concerned. We must compare the different ways in which the Abrahamitic religions and others regard the Messiah.

The figure of the Messiah is Jewish in origin.⁶ The Old Testament characterises him in three distinct ways: politically, spiritually, and apocalyptically.⁷ The first is the most important: the Messiah is the Son of David, who will restore Davidic rule in all its glory, either with or without violence, in God's own time. The Old Testament describes him as a figure who is yet to come. This is also the view of the Jewish confession of faith drawn up by the Mediaeval philosopher and theologian Maimonides: in the article concerning the coming Messiah it is said that though he tarries, he is to be expected daily.⁸ More than once the Jews have indicated they expect the Messiah to come in times of oppression: just as birth pangs announce the birth of a child, so the coming of the Messiah may be heralded by pain and suffering.⁹ Also,

they believe that the Messiah will not only restore Davidic rule, but also rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

Christianity is rooted in Judaism. It has recalibrated the Old Testament material. The New Testament proclaims Jesus of Nazareth as son of Abraham and son of David, but most of all as the Messiah who has already come. At the same time it speaks of his coming again. The figure of the Messiah is understood primarily as spiritual, and secondarily as apocalyptic. The political aspect has disappeared into the background in the New Testament. Nevertheless, radical authors such as Hermann S. Reimarus, Robert Eisler and Samuel G.F. Brandon have defended the premise that Jesus was a political Messiah: the Romans suppressed his insurrection and sentenced him to death by crucifixion in punishment.¹⁰ Lastly, the Christian concept differs from the Jewish one in that the former clearly draws universal conclusions: the Messiah was born and raised as a Jew, but he is also a human being who unites Jews and non-Jews (*goim*) in one messianic movement. In effect, with his coming the end time has already started.

For centuries the question whether Jesus of Nazareth is or is not the Messiah has been the main point of contention between the Church and the Synagogue. The Church is completely committed to this belief, but apart from the tens of thousands of Messianic Jews,¹¹ adherents of the Jewish faith deny it categorically. Formally the mosque is on the side of the Church in this matter: in the Medinensic suras of the Qur'an Jesus is mentioned eleven times as the Messiah (*al-Masih*).¹² However, the controversial Gospel of Barnabas, written only in the sixteenth century by a southern European Christian convert to Islam, has not Jesus, but Mohammed in the role of the Messiah.¹³ It is also important to realise that several Islamic groups see the Messiah as a figure of the end time: the Mahdi, sometimes identified as Jesus Messiah, shall one day return as the harbinger of the end time.¹⁴

From the above it will be clear that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are not only connected by the Patriarch Abraham in ancient times, but also by the Messiah in the end time. Moreover, the figure of the Messiah is also widely known outside these three religions. Here I would like to bring to your attention Emanuel Sarkisyanz's study concerning the 'messianism of the East', in which the author has treated not only communism, but also various Asian movements with a cyclic worldview.¹⁵ When thinking of Marxism-communism one should keep in mind its explicit eschatological expectations: the new social order beyond the horizon.¹⁶

Just as the concept of Abrahamitic ecumenism is independent from the results of historical research into the figure of Abraham in ancient times (did he

exist at all?) the concept of messianic ecumenism is independent from the latest scientific research into the figure of the Messiah in Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other religions, worldviews, and ideologies. Nevertheless, this type of research does have a place, and its significance increases as scholars of diverse religions, worldviews, and ideologies work together more vigorously. Christian theologians have been used to studying Old Testament texts about the Messiah in Hebrew for centuries. It is a great boon that now also Jews such as Joseph Klausner, David Flusser, Geza Vermes and Paula Fredriksen are studying Jesus' messianic aspects from the Greek New Testament.¹⁷

Unfortunately, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, communists, etc., are hardly involved in similar studies on source material outside their own immediate interest.

The above has, I hope, shown that messianic ecumenism is not only wider in range, but also more contemporary, and more forward-looking than Abrahamitic ecumenism. It must be noted that for Christians, messianic ecumenism is not solely a thing of the future: to them the messianic era started 2,000 years ago in the person and the work of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁸

Before embarking on the description of four special forms or aspects of messianic ecumenism, it must be remarked that this lecture has as its title not 'messianic spirituality' or 'the messianic congregation', but messianic ecumenism. In the person and work of the Messiah I acknowledge three inseparably connected dimensions: the Messiah takes humanity into a new relationship with God (spirituality); creates a messianic community of believers on six continents (congregations, churches); and is concerned with the entire population of the world — ecumenism in the original sense of the word. Here, I will limit myself to the third dimension: the Messiah and mankind.

Messianic thinking and speaking: The ecumenism of not repaying evil with evil (Sermon on the Mount)

Nowhere does the New Testament state messianic thinking and speaking more clearly than in the so-called 'Sermon on the Mount' (Mt Ch., 5-7; Lk 6:20-49). This *magna carta* contains several of Jesus' authentic sayings (*ipsissima verba Jesu*).

The Sermon on the Mount is ecumenical in several ways. In the first place it prescribes living by the 'Golden Rule', which is endorsed by almost all faiths and worldviews. The negative phrasing is best known: 'what you would *not* want done to yourself, do *not* do unto others'. From messianic motives the Sermon on the Mount chooses the affirmative phrasing: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you [...]" (Mt 7:12, Lk 6:31). Note

that this statement is not egocentric but altruistic in nature.¹⁹

Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount uses terms that are also typical of Judaism and Islam: justice and peace. Whoever wants to walk the way of the Messiah must do justice and be a peacemaker, etc. Those who manage to make this manifest in the world may call themselves blessed (*cf.* the beatitudes). It must be noted, however, that justice in its messianic meaning is more than the *iustitia* of Roman Law: it means to be just to the poor and the oppressed.²⁰ Something similar can be said about peace (*shalom/irene/salam*): the messianic concept of peace is not merely the absence of war (negative phraseology); rather, it promotes a sense of community, harmony, and integrity among people and nations (affirmative goal).²¹

Lastly it needs to be pointed out that the Sermon on the Mount supersedes Mosaic Law or the Islamic *shari'ah* on at least two issues. Firstly, it distances itself from violence in general, and the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) in particular.²² It replaces the concept of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' of the Codex Hammurabi, the Old Testament (Ex 21:23-25; Lev 24:19; Dt 19:21), the Roman Law (the XII Tables and later legislation), as well as that of the *shari'ah*, by the messianic injunction from Mt 5:39-41: "[...] Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also: and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well: and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile".²³

Secondly, the Sermon on the Mount describes a *morale ouverte* (a term coined by the Jewish philosopher Henri Bergson),²⁴ aiming towards a fulfilled life, *i.e.* a life that fulfils the law — not just the Jewish *torah* (Mt 5:17), but also other (previous and later) laws such as the Indian *dharma* and the Chinese *tao*.²⁵ Whoever lives according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount is no longer 'under the law' but 'under grace'. If in the messianic time which started with Jesus there is still room for any law, it can only be the 'law of freedom' (Jas 1:25; 2:12).²⁶

To Christians, the Sermon on the Mount is the Messiah's universal *mission statement*, but it is a fact that this statement finds wide acceptance outside Christianity as well. Firstly among Jews and Muslims: the Jewish rabbi Pinchas E. Lapide has devoted an entire publication to the question whether the Sermon on the Mount is utopian in character, or whether it is a practical plan, a programme,²⁷ while the Egyptian Muslim M. Kamel Hussein refers to 'returning to the Sermon on the Mount' in his book *City of Wrong...*²⁸ Secondly, this mission statement can also be found outside Abrahamitic ecumenism: influenced by the writings of Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu, based his ethics of non-violence (*ahimsa*) (partly) on

the Sermon on the Mount.²⁹ Swami Prabhavananda, disciple of Swami Brahmananda of the Sri Ramakrishna-school, has looked at the Sermon on the Mount from the perspective of the Vedanta-doctrine, and has pronounced love to be a source of hallowed life.³⁰ Furthermore, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, a.k.a. Tenzo Gyatso, pointed out the similarities between Jesus and the Buddha in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount: in their own way, both taught and practised tolerance and patience.³¹ In other words, the Sermon on the Mount, with its creed of 'not repaying evil with evil' is thoroughly ecumenical.

Messianic practice: the ecumenism of the 'non-profit' diaconate

The Messiah's mission statement aims at deeds. Jesus' works (his ministry) merge seamlessly with his words (Sermon on the Mount). Again, I can only select a few examples.

Jesus' own actions (*ipsissima facta Jesu*) are messianic in nature: *pro Deo*, a great deal of freedom and responsibility are shown towards humanity. This messianic ardour allowed Jesus to interact freely with women, Samaritans, and outcasts (prostitutes and tax collectors for the Romans).³² Acting from this same premise he was a peacemaker, a doer of justice; he was concerned with the plight of the poor, the sick, the leprosy, the possessed, etc. He performed all his work as a gift, without payment, free of charge (Mt 10:8; cf. II Cor 11:7; Rv 21:6; 22:17).

Throughout the ages there have been thousands of people in both the West and the East who have spent their lives serving in the non-profit movement of the Messiah.³³ All those who toiled without remuneration to promote peace and justice belong to it. Christianity as a messianic movement has inspired many people to strive for justice and peace in the recent past as well. As a consequence the Nobel Peace Prize was not only awarded to politicians — for example the South African Christian Albert J. Lut(h)uli (1960) — but also to the Society of Friends (Quakers) as a community (1947) and to individual Christian leaders such as the Swedish Archbishop and leader of the ecumenical movement Lars O.N. Söderblom (1930), the American president of the International Missionary Council John R. Mott (1946), the German medical doctor Albert Schweitzer in Africa (1952), the Belgian Dominican Georges H. Pire who led an organisation to help refugees (1958), Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., from the U.S.A. (1964), Mother Theresa of Calcutta in India (1979), the Anglican Bishop Desmond M. Tutu from South Africa (1984), and the Roman Catholic Bishop Carlos F.X. Belo from East Timor (1996). However, making peace and doing justice is not the sole prerogative of

Christians. The Nobel Peace Prize has also been awarded to the Jew Eli Wiesel (1986) and to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (1989).

Something similar can be said about the unselfish care of the poor, the sick, and those possessed of demons.³⁴ In the past 2,000 years many thousands of Christians have offered a helping hand to many tens of thousands of needy people, without any thought of recompense. Throughout the World, in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in particular, many serving ministries were started, and much voluntary work was done. During that period, thousands of mission schools and mission hospitals were built in the non-Western world, which were mostly nationalised and secularised when the former colonies became independent.³⁵ Albert Schweitzer is typical of all those medical doctors and nurses who, following in the footsteps of the pioneers John Thomas in India and Peter Parker in China, felt called to work abroad.³⁶ Just like many other missionaries, they did, to borrow a phrase from the Dutch author Feitse Boerwinkel, '*meer dan het gewoné*', 'more than the usual'.³⁷ The example of the Belgian priest Bl. Damien de Veuster, S.S.C.C., is famous: he volunteered to go and work among the lepers of Molokai, Hawaii, and died there, after many years of loyal service to them, as one of them, a leper himself.³⁸ 'More than the usual' was also done by the Swiss J.-Henri Dunant, who, after witnessing the horrors of the Battle of Solferino in Italy's effort at unification of the country, founded the international Red Cross (he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901).

Like the Sermon on the Mount, the messianic radiance of Jesus' diaconate was also perceived far outside Christianity. Here I will only point out two instances. Firstly, an example from the world of Islam. Although Turkey substituted the symbol of the Red Crescent for that of the Red Cross in 1876, this does not take away from the fact that wherever the Red Crescent operates in the healthcare services of Islamic countries, it is carrying on the work originally started by a disciple of Jesus, the Messiah.³⁹ Secondly, an example from outside Abrahamitic ecumenism. Much educational, medical and agricultural missionary work started in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century is being carried on today, albeit in a secular fashion. *Medécins Sans Frontières* (Nobel Peace Prize 1999), for example, can be seen as the secular successor of the Medical Missionary Society (1838) and similar medical missionary organisations after that.⁴⁰ Doing diaconal work at no charge, among neighbours close by and far away, therefore, is neither confined to Christians nor to Jews, Christians and Muslims together. Besides, it should be noted that messianic diaconal work is not only characterised by its non-profit aspect, but also by the fact that the recipients of these services

are not limited to those of one's own religion, tribe, class and/or nation.

Messianic perseverance until the end: The Ecumenism of martyrdom

The figure of the Messiah is described in both the Old and the New Testament as one whose path is not strewn with roses. The Old Testament prophecy of the suffering servant of the Lord (*ebed JHWH*) is believed by the apostles and evangelists to have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus. Jesus walks the messianic way, combining perseverance with non-violence, till the very end, dying on the cross at Golgotha as the ultimate consequence of this behaviour.⁴¹

During the course of the centuries Christians have given many interpretations to the cross of Jesus: victory over sin/the devil, payment of debt, substitution, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, reconciliation, as well as a call to conversion, faith, hope, love, etc.⁴² The French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal added a new dimension to these classical ideas about the significance of the cross when he asserted that the suffering of the Messiah is not limited to Gethsemane and Golgotha, but stretches out to the end of time. In Pascal's own words: "Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world; these are no times for sleeping".⁴³

Within the framework of the ecumenical significance of messianic voluntary suffering the following is very important. Dozens of examples can be given from all over the world about staff in orphanages during times of war, or of doctors and nurses in hospitals in times of severe epidemics who have stayed on at their posts of their own free will, as well as about people who have not given in to death threats (such as from the mafia). However, this perseverance to the end, at great risk to one's own life, is only truly messianic if those concerned extend their efforts to those beyond their own religious or ethnic group.

Martyrs take up a very special position.⁴⁴ The Early Church, both within and outside the Roman Empire, produced many martyrs. In the Roman Empire this situation changed when Emperor Constantine the Great converted to Christianity in A.D. 325. From this time onward a shift occurred: from Christians who were prepared to go the messianic way of non-violent perseverance to the end, accepting martyrdom as the ultimate consequence, to Christians who used power in the service of the Gospel, and who used the Gospel in the service of power. Church history shows the disastrous consequences of this change: Charlemagne forced the Saxons to choose between baptism or death, Pope Urban II promoted the Crusades (counter-*jihads*), and

the Fourth Lateran Council established the Inquisition. In this way the cross as a universal symbol of forgiveness and reconciliation became what it did not want to be: a symbol of power, subjugation and conquest. Gerrit J. Heering, the father of my first promotor Herman J. Herring, wrote a book about this change of direction in the Jesus movement from the time of Constantine the Great onwards with the provocative title, *The Fall of Christianity* (Dutch original: *De zondeval van het Christendom*).⁴⁵ Outside the boundaries of the Christianised Roman Empire (the so-called *corpus christianum*) and in the West after the French Revolution (1789), which advocated the separation of Church and State, the situation regarding martyrs is quite similar to that of the Early Church: just like the martyrs of before 325, non-Western martyrs and modern-day martyrs did 'more than the usual' by persevering in the way pointed out by the Messiah under circumstances of oppression and violence. I will mention a few names from the tens of thousands of martyrs of the 20th century, covering an ecumenically and geographically wide range of backgrounds. Jewess Edith Stein (a.k.a. Sister Teresa Benedicta a Cruce) in Auschwitz, the Polish priest Maximilian M. Kolbe, Secretary General of the United Nations Dag H.A.C. Hammarskjöld from Sweden (who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously in 1961), the Russian priest Aleksandr Vladimirovitch Men(n), Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, in the U.S.A., Archbishop Oscar A. Romero y Galdamez from San Salvador, Archbishop Janani Luwum from Uganda during the time of Idi Amin, Archbishop Christophe Munzihirwa from Rwanda, the Korean missionary Ki-Poong Yi (Ki-Poong Lee), the Hungarian missionary Maria Molnar who worked in Papua New Guinea and the Australian missionary Carl Heine who served in Micronesia.⁴⁶ Many non-Christians have also walked the way of non-violence, reconciliation and forgiveness to the end, whether inspired by the Messiah or not. One example from outside Abrahamitic ecumenism is Mahatma Gandhi, who paid the ultimate price for his peaceful resistance.⁴⁷ He made a deep impression on Dr Martin Luther King, Jr.

The above illustrates that 'martyr' in the messianic sense can only refer to a person who promotes his/her convictions in a non-violent way, who will under no circumstance forswear these convictions, and is fully prepared to suffer and even die for them (death is undergone passively). However we owe much respect to the Czech student Jan Palach who set fire to himself in Prague in January 1969 to protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops, we cannot call him a martyr in the messianic sense of the word, as he did not passively endure death. This holds true to an even greater extent for

the perpetrators of suicide bombings in the Middle East and in other places, who drag innocent people along with them in their actively pursued death.

In a recent study Andrea Riccardi from Italy spoke about the 'ecumenism of the martyrs'.⁴⁸ This is characterised primarily by non-violence and perseverance to the end, preferring martyrdom to torturing, and, ultimately, being killed to killing. It shows Messiah Jesus as the martyr *par excellence*. This particular ecumenism of the martyrs does not limit itself to voluntary messianic suffering in Abrahamic ecumenical circles only. Although Riccardi does not explicitly refer to Gandhi in India, the latter's name ought to be mentioned here.

Rising out of perdition: The messianic ecumenism of hope

The power to rise above circumstances is also characteristic of a messianic lifestyle. Nowhere has this power been more beautifully worded than in the parable of the Prodigal Son: "I will *arise* (KJV) and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you [...]' (Lk 15:18).⁴⁹ Thousands of conversion stories of the past centuries testify to this power to arise. Here I do not refer primarily to 'pub to pew'-type conversion stories, but to the true stories of people who have turned away from a position within the established religions, worldviews, and/or ideologies to a messianic lifestyle, regardless of the consequences (for instance being cast out of one's family/clan).⁵⁰

The power to rise from perdition, *i.e.* to overcome the misery of poverty, oppression, discrimination, etc., implies there is hope for mankind. The philosophy and theology of hope developed by the Jew Ernst Bloch and the Christian Jürgen Moltmann are aids to guide our thoughts from this perspective.⁵¹ However, there is far more significance in the hopeful testimonies of those who, without counting the cost, sought a way out of perdition. *Pars pro toto* I refer to the lifestory of White minister Christiaan F. Beyers Naudé, who, in the battle against *apartheid*, offered hope to the non-White population of South Africa. His biographer entitled this story *Resistance and Hope*.⁵² Whilst political *apartheid* in South Africa is a thing of the past, the misery, for example, the caste system causes the casteless in India, the so-called *dalits*, still continues undiminished. In this situation also there is hope for a way out. Many have been encouraged by the Gospel of the Resurrection.⁵³ Some *dalits* have converted to Christianity. Although the Asian theologian Choan-Seng Song called Christianity 'the religion of hope',⁵⁴ this religion is not the only one to have a right to claim this, as there are also *dalits* who have sought salvation in Buddhism. It would seem that

the Buddha also offers hope to this category of people at the bottom of Indian society.

This hope, offered together with the power to overcome suffering and evil, is not only manifested in circles of Abrahamic ecumenism. Outside this ecumenism also, there are those who know about rising from perdition and about hope. This power, this hope can only be called messianic if they are directed towards more than merely self survival, or that of one's blood or other relations. Messianic ecumenism wants to pave the way for a universal breaking away from sin and crime; to resist the *de facto* demonic pressure of those who want to subjugate fellow humans; and to strive for a brighter future on six continents.

Conclusion

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), drawn up and proclaimed by the United Nations, can be seen as the ethical minimum for mankind. The messianic way of life, on the other hand, is the ethical maximum. This way, which has been walked to the end in an exemplary fashion by Jesus of Nazareth, has universal significance and is manifest in not repaying evil for evil (abolishing the *ius talionis*), in service to our neighbours near and far, *pro Deo*, non-profit, in preferring to suffer oneself rather than to allow the suffering of others, and in rising out of perdition in its many enslaving guises. Naturally, this point of view has consequences for the World Council of Churches, for the Council of Churches in The Netherlands (Raad van Kerken in Nederland) and for the newly established Protestant Church in The Netherlands.

Over the years I have sometimes had to listen to dismissive remarks about missiology being an outdated discipline. I, however, consider missiology to be a discipline for the present and for the future. It historically and systematically researches both peaceful and violent mission statements and missionary activities of all religions, worldviews and ideologies, starting with Christianity. Ultimately it seeks to determine what messianic and ecumenical content these statements and activities have. It goes without saying this discipline is critical in the way it works: it cannot accept everything that purports to be messianic or ecumenical. It will only endorse the claims of what is in accordance with the global mission of the Messiah, who has already come, and who will come again.

Notes

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¹ This is the Valedictory Lecture Jan A.B. Jongeneel gave on the occasion of his retirement as Professor of Mission Studies at Utrecht University on 20 November 2003.

² Dutch translation: K.-J. Kuschel, *Strijd om Abraham: Wat joden, christenen en moslims scheidt en verbindt*, Zoetermeer 2001, pp. 233-301: 'Perspectieven voor een abrahamitische oecumene'. Cf. C. van de Kooi, 'Naar een abrahamitische oecumene?', in: A. A. van Houwelingen *et al.* (eds.), *De Islam en het Westen: Botsende religies — theologische visies op macht in Islam en Christendom*, Kampen 2002, pp. 152-162.

³ At the end of the Age of Enlightenment it was suggested, especially in France, that the words 'Abraham' (exodus from 'the cycle' in the Bible) and 'Brahma(n)', representative of 'the cycle' or 'the wheel' in India) were etymologically connected. To my knowledge handbooks on the Old Testament do not take up this suggestion.

⁴ For the Jewish religion cf. e.g. A.H. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the first through the seventeenth centuries*, Boston 1959; G. Scholem, *The messianic idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York, 1971; J. Neusner, *Messiah in context: Israel's history and destiny in formative Judaism*, Philadelphia 1984; G.S. Oegema, *The Anointed and His People: Messianic expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba*, Sheffield 1998. For Islam cf. e.g. E. Blochet, *Messianisme dans l'hétérodoxie musulmane*, Paris 1903; A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The idea of the Madhi in Twelver Shi'ism*, Albany 1981; R. Hassan, 'Messianism and Islam', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 22 (1985), pp. 261-291.

⁵ Cf. e.g. E. Sarkisyanz, *Rusland und der Messianismus des Orients: Sendungsbewusstsein und politischer Chiliasmus des Ostens*, Tübingen: 1955; H.-J. Margull, *Aufbruch zur Zukunft: Chiliasmisch-messianische Bewegungen in Afrika und Südostasien*, Gütersloh: 1962; S. Fuchs, *Rebellious Prophets: A study of messianic movements in Indian religions*, London: 1965; F.Ch. Kamma, Koreri: Messianic movements in the Biak-Numfor culture area, The Hague: 1972; M. Sinda, *Le messianisme congolais et ses incidences politiques: Kimbanguisme, Matsouanisme, autres mouvements*, Paris 1972; P. Schäfer – M. Cohen (eds.), *Toward the millennium: Messianic expectations from the Bible to Waco*, Leiden: 1998; D.S. Katz and R.H. Popkin, *Messianic Revolution: Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium*, New York: 1999.

⁶ The question how much the Jewish concept of the Messiah owes to older cults and cultures of the Middle East is not considered here.

⁷ Cf. e.g. J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, New York 1955:

S. Mowinckel, *He that cometh: The messianic concept in the Old Testament and later Judaism*, Oxford 1956; H. Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, London 1967; J. Beker, *Messianic expectation in the Old Testament*, Philadelphia 1980; G. van Groningen, *Messianic revelation in the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids 1990; P.E. Satterthwaite - R.S. Hess - G.J. Wenham (eds.), *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, Carlisle 1995.

⁸ D. Cohn-Sherbock, *The Jewish Messiah*, Edinburgh, 1997, p. 182, quotes this confession of faith: 'I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming, (article 12). Cf. M. Poorthuis, *Messianisme tussen rede en waanzin: Maimonides over des Messias*. in: *Concilium*, 29/1, 1993, pp. 64-74.

⁹ D. Cohn-Sherbock, *op. cit.*, Edinburgh 1997, p. 97.

¹⁰ C. J. den Heyer, *Opnieuw: Wie is Jezus? Balans van 150 jaar onderzoek naar Jezus*, Zoetermeer 2002, pp. 162-164: 'Een rebelse Jezus'.

¹¹ D. Cohn-Sherbock, *Messianic Judaism*, London, 2000.

¹² G. Parrinder, *Jezus in de Koran*, Baarn 1965, pp. 24-27. Cf. O.H. Schumann, *Der Christus der Muslime: Christologische Aspekte in der arabisch-islamischen Literatur*, Köln, 1988; K. Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim: An Exploration*, Oxford 1999.

¹³ L. and L. Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas*: Edited and translated from the Italian ms. in the Imperial Library at Vienna, Oxford 1907. Later the Gospel of Barnabas was translated into many languages, among which Arabic and Dutch.

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. Ali Akbar, *Israel and the Prophecies of the Holy Qur'an*, Kuala Lumpur-Singapore 1974, 124-128, who, without using the term *al-Mahdi*, treats the controversial issue of whether Jesus will return or not. Cf. J.A.B. Jongeneel, 'De lokkende façade van de westerse cultuur', in: *Kerk en theologie*, 31 (1980), 22-43; O. Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, Uppsala 1999.

¹⁵ E. Sarkisyanz, *op. cit.*, Tübingen 1955.

¹⁶ A. Kee, 'Het messiaans geloof van Marx', in: *Concilium*, 29/1 (1993), 104-117.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching* London 1925; D. Flusser, *Jesus*, New York 1969; G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, Philadelphia 1981; and P. Frederiksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*, New York 2000.

¹⁸ Cf. especially C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, London 1961; *idem*, *The Founder of Christianity*, London 1971. Dodd was the one to introduce the term 'realized eschatology'.

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. H.H. Titus - M. Keeton, *Ethics for Today*, New York 1973, pp. 97, 245, 264.

²⁰ J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, London 1946, 336-410; G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I. München, 1962, 382-395; E. Berkovits, *Man and God: Studies in Biblical Theology*, Detroit 1969, pp. 224-252.

²¹ J. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, London 1946, 263-335; L.A. Hoedemaker – P. Tijmes, *De kerk binnenste buiten: J.C. Hoekendijk, keuze uit zijn werk*, Amsterdam 1964, 20. Cf. N.

Turner, *Christians Words*, Edinburgh, 1980, 320-321.

²² J. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, London 1946, 392, e.v., 401 e.v. H.H. Titus – M. Keeton, *op. cit.*, New York 1973, 54: 'The law of retaliation'.

²³ In India and Indonesia Christians and Churches have recently been given the messianic task to abstain from retaliating in response to arson attacks by fanatical Hindus and Muslims on church buildings. Unfortunately, some Christians could not resist the temptation to repay evil for evil.

²⁴ H. Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, Paris 1932. Cf. J. de Graaf – R. Bakker, *De mondige mens tussen goed en kwaad. Van Petrarca tot Sartre*, Utrecht 1961, 126-132.

²⁵ J.N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*. London 1913. About Farquhar: a.o. J.J.E. van Lin, *Protestantse theologie van de godsdiensten: Van Edinburgh naar Tambaram* (1910-1938), Assen, 1974, 62-92: 'Theologie der godsdiensten in de Angelsaksische zendingswereld'; G.H. Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, New York 1998, 208. Cf. W. Schilling, *Religion und Recht*, Schorndorf 1957, 97-120, which does not only treat *tao* and *dharma*, but also *tabu*, *rta*, *asha* and *fridr*. The New Testament idea of 'the fulfillment of the Law' can also be applied to these concepts and realities.

²⁶ My Indonesian handbook on ethics is entitled *Hukum kemerdekaan* (1980), which means 'Law of Freedom'.

²⁷ P. E. Lapide, *Debergrede – utopie of program?*, Baarn 1991.

²⁸ M.K. Hussein, *City of Wrong: A Friday in Jerusalem*, Amsterdam 1959, 193-205: 'Return to the Sermon on the Mount'. Nederlandse vertaling: *Stad des verderfs: Een vrijdag in Jeruzalem*, Amsterdam 1961, 183-194: 'Terug tot de bergrede'.

²⁹ R. Ellsberg, *Gandhi on Christianity*, Maryknoll 2000, p. XII: 'Gandhi found in Tolstoy confirmation of his own inclination to distinguish freely between the message of Jesus and the teachings and practice of the Christian Church'. Vgl. M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, London 1969, 193-238: 'Mahatma Gandhi: Jesus, the Supreme Satyagrahi'.

³⁰ Swami Prabhavananda, *De bergrede in het licht van de Vedanta-leer*, Amsterdam 1977. Response to this monograph in F. Boerwinkel, *Meer dan het gewone: Over Jezus en zijn bergrede*, Baarn 1977, 140-141.

³¹ Dalai Lama, *Het goede hart: Het Nieuwe Testament vanuit een boeddhistische visie*, Emst 1999.

³² E. Rau, *Jesus — Freund von Zöllnern und Sündern: Eine methodologische Untersuchung*, Stuttgart 2000.

³³ Cf. the handbooks for mission history: K.S. Latourette, *A history of the expansion of Christianity*, I-VII New York 1937-1945; S.C. Neill, *A history of Christian missions*, Harmondsworth 1979. Unfortunately there is no concise history of Dutch missionary history to refer to.

³⁴ Cf. especially C.H. Grundmann, *Gesandt zu heilen: Aufkommen und Entwicklung der ärztlichen Mission im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, Gütersloh 1992.

³⁵ J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science and Theology of*

Mission in the 19th and 20th centuries: A Missiological Encyclopedia, II, Frankfurt am Main 1997, 325: 1,238 Protestant mission hospitals abroad in 1967; furthermore a similar number of Roman Catholic mission hospitals in that same period.

³⁶ J.A.B. Jongeneel, *op. cit.*, II, Frankfurt am Main 1997, 324-325.

³⁷ F. Boerwinkel, *op. cit.*, Baarn 1977.

³⁸ J. Winkler, *In Gods naam: Acht levens voor anderen*, Amsterdam 1960, 129-162: 'Pater Damiaan de Veuster 1840-1889, Melaats onder de melaatsen'; G.H. Anderson, (ed.), *op. cit.*, New York 1998, 166-167: 'Damien of Molokai'.

³⁹ A. J. Schmidt, *Under his Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*, Grand Rapids 2001, p. 166 quotes Dunant's last words on his deathbed: 'I am a disciple of Christ as in the first century, and nothing more.'

⁴⁰ J.A.B. Jongeneel, *op. cit.*, II, Frankfurt am Main 1997, 320; C.H. Grundmann, *op. cit.*, Gütersloh 1992, 158-168.

⁴¹ Jesus is part of the tradition of non-violent Jewish prophets dating from the Babylonian exile. (The rather violent behaviour of Elijah on Mount Carmel dates from the previous period). It is true that Jesus used violence when he overturned the tables in the Temple (Mk 11:15 and parallels), but there were no casualties on this occasion. This act of Jesus had a primarily symbolical meaning, as has been explained by M. Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah*, Downers Grove 1996, p. 92: 'Jesus' demonstration in the Temple, then, symbolically expressed God's judgement over the present corruption, and affirmed the imminent destruction of the Temple as part of the restoration of the new age'. NB: *New Age* is the term Bockmuehl uses to refer to the age that has started with the coming of the Messiah.

⁴² Cf. F.W.A. Korff, *Christologie: De leer van het komen Gods*, II, Nijkerk 1942, 148-215; H. Berkhof, *Christelijk geloof*, Nijkerk 1985, 297-305.

⁴³ L. Sjestow, *Crisis der zekerheden: Pascal – Dostojewsky – Husserl*, Hilversum 1934, 5-62: 'De nacht van Gethsemané: de philosophie van Pascal'. Although this publication is not mentioned in the dissertations of A.J. Plaisier (1996) and K. Bom (1999) on Pascal, this is still one of the most impressive treatments of Pascal's idea that 'Jesus sera en agonie jusqu'à la fin du monde : Il ne faut pas dormir pendant ce temps-là'.

⁴⁴ For early Jewish martyrdom cf.: J.W. van Henten, *The Maccabean martyrs as saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, Leiden 1997.

⁴⁵ G.J. Heering, *The Fall of Christianity: A Study of Christianity, the State, and War*, London, 1930. Cf. A. Kee, *Constantine versus Christ: The Triumph of Ideology*, London 1982.

⁴⁶ For a historical overview of recent martyrdom cf.: P. Marshall, *Their blood cries out: The worldwide tragedy of modern Christians who are dying for their faith*, Dallas 1997; A. Riccardi, *De eeuw van de martelaren: Geschiedenissen van christenen uit de twintigste eeuw vermoord omwille van hun geloof*, Tiel 2002. Cf.: G.H. Anderson (ed.), *op. cit.*, New York

1998, p. 781: 'Biographies of martyrs'. Unfortunately there is no history of martyrdom covering Dutch martyrs of the last two centuries at home and abroad to refer to.

⁴⁷ R. Ellsberg, *op. cit.* Maryknoll 2000, pp. 104-106: 'Non-violence and the cross'.

⁴⁸ Riccardi, *op. cit.*, Tiel 2002, 14.

⁴⁹ The Bible quotations in this lecture have all been taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), except the verb 'to arise' in Luke 5:18-23, which has been taken from the King James Version (KJV).

⁵⁰ Islam is one of the religions that severely punish apostasy. Cf. 'Murtadd' in: A.J. Wensinck – J.H. Kramers (ed.), *Handwörterbuch des Islam*, Leiden 1941, 544-546. Cf. J.A.B. Jongeneel, 'Apostasy', in: I. Daneel – CH. van Engen – H. Vroom (eds.), *Fulness of Life for All: Challenges for Mission in Early 21st Century*, Amsterdam 2003, pp. 181-187.

⁵¹ E. Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Frankfurt am Main 1959; J. Moltmann, *Theologie van de hoop*, Utrecht (no date). Both books are discussed in: J. Sperna Weiland, *Voortgezette oriëntatie: Nieuwe wegen in de theologie*, Baarn 1971, 24-34, 87-99.

⁵² Ch. Villa-Vicencio – J.W. Gruchy (eds.), *Resistance and Hope: South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naudé*, Grand Rapids 1985.

⁵³ Cf. S. Clarke, 'Dalit theology', in: V. Fabella – R.S. Sugirtharajah (eds.), *Dictionary of Third World Theology*, Maryknoll 2000, 64: 'Substantive themes of *dalit* theology are thus imaginatively worked out by correlating the knowledge of suffering *dalit* communities of the faithful presence of the Divine One (the God-with-us) with the knowledge of striving *dalit* communities of the unfailing presence of Jesus Christ (the God-for-us)'.

⁵⁴ Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Attempt*, Madras 1975, 239: 'Christianity Is the Religion of Hope'.

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Violence and Christian Mission

- Biju Kollakombil -

Introduction

Today we live in a world where the seeds of violence and hatred have grown into diabolic trees branching out to all spheres of human life. Human conscience turns numb before these atrocities. Those who perpetuate violence and conflicts go ahead unpunished. India, a land known for *dharmā* and *ahimsa*, is turning into a land of communal violence, religious fanaticism, political unrest, economic disparity and social injustice. We had been propagating *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma*, but in the name of religion and power craziness we advocate *Himsa Paramo Dharma*. Moreover there is degeneration of the value system and a growth of cruelty and arrogance in human beings. All these result in violence, terrorism and bloodshed.

Even in the midst of unimaginable scientific and technological achievements, man finds it difficult to deal with domestic and international violence. The end of the Cold War did not bring peace but engulfed different parts of world in conflict and violence. In almost every aspect of life we have been trained to respond to conflicts with violence because even in school we are taught about war, victories, defeats and violence. "The summit of the situation consists in the tendency of one part of mankind, to sacralize powers and violent conflicts as new idols".¹ In this context, the Church that is sent as a messenger of peace becomes relevant. In spite of the world's hostility Jesus did not want his disciples to be taken out of the world (Jn 17:15). They are sent into the world where there is conflict which results in violence and misery to the people. Christian mission is a heroic refusal to compromise with a system; seen as aligned with the forces of sin and death. A Church that compromised to avoid suffering has failed in her call.

In this article we attempt to identify feasible means for mission in the context of violence. First, we delve into the factors of violence and proceed to find proper solutions to eradicate such factors. Our approach aims to equip the mission to face the circumstances of conflict and violence. So, we begin by illustrating the concept of violence and the factors of violence.

1. Concept and Factors of Violence

Etymologically the term 'violence' derives from

the Latin word *violare* which means force. To violate means to treat with force. So, violence is force, which is employed for destruction. The equivalent Indian term for violence is *himsa* which is derived from the Sanskrit term *him* desiderative form of *ham* which means to kill or to injure. Violence emanates from social injustice, cultural nationalism, ethnic consciousness, religious fundamentalism, narrowness of heart and above all finiteness of human life. Lack of transcendent vision is also a cause of violence. Torrent changes, break up of empires, technological breakthroughs, global communications, new power poles and urban concentration accelerate further violence. "The condition in the big cities with an inhuman density of population makes many people vulnerable to the temptation of violence or down right terrorism".² Violence continues unabated despite the sincere efforts of dedicated peace lovers who are trying to reduce tension in all parts of the world. It has adversely affected every tenor of life in a large number of countries including the developed one, causing unprecedented loss of human life and degradation of the environmental and ecological systems of the planet. Violence in all its manifestations is a challenge to peace at all levels of human existence and consciousness. Poverty, disease and unemployment are the offspring of violence.³

1.1. Internal Factors

Since the human being is an emotional being, emotional agitation often leads to violence. As long as human avarice and greed go on escalating there will be violence. Anger, ill will, cruelty, harsh words, oppression, and humiliation of the weak, all manifest violence. An act of impatience creates violence. Prejudice, self-righteousness and ambition are internal factors of violence.

1.2. External Factors

Socio-political, economic and religious systems that maintain the vast discrepancy between the rich and the poor are the external reasons for violence. Violence stems from the prejudices of sex, class, caste, race and religion. People imitate violence or aggression learned from movies, television channels, newspapers, books and other media.

Images of violence are innumerable and so people tend to behave violently. The steady erosion of basic human values like fraternity, compassion, tolerance, love, freedom and justice is responsible for the ever-increasing trend of violence. Absolutism in things and actions is also responsible for violence. We have built a society, which is violent, and we as human beings are violent. The environment and the culture in which we live are the product of our endeavour, struggle, pain, and appalling brutality.⁴

1.2.1. The Role of Modern Media

Today the world has become a global village through the growth of information technology and the advancement of communication media. Whatever happens in any part of the world can be viewed from one's own room. Children are also watching the live telecasts of wars, terrorist attacks, bomb explosions, conflicts, etc. So the minds of children are full of images of attacks and aggression. Children, who are not capable of discerning good from evil, are attracted to them and start imitating whatever their heroes and heroines do in the serials and movies.⁵ If the elders and teachers do not guide them in the right path, whatever they perceive in the media will be actualized when they confront the realities of world.

1.2.2. Globalization and Greedy Consumerism

The growth of science, technology and commerce made the whole world interconnected. The world is abundant with resources but it is not sufficient to satisfy the greed of any individual. The industrialization and growth in science and technology have increased the life expectancy as well as the comfort of people. The exhibitions and sale of luxurious things in the market sow passion for those things in the minds of individuals those who cannot afford to have them. They are frustrated and their depressed feelings cause conflict in the person and very often end up in violence.⁶ People who are behind comforts and luxuries search for any means and ways to attain pleasure and make life more crazy and happy. But they do not think of their income and life situation. Thus they originate all types of mental and emotional depression. Another reality is that globalization causes the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a very few. For example, about 41% of the world economy is centered in the hands of 200 people.

2. Manifestations of Violence Today

Violence is manifested in different forms in the world. The closing years of the 20th century were years of violence and hatred. We understand humankind's ever-increasing capacity for violence

through advances in science and technology. The increase in weapons of mass destruction and the arms race cause violence in the international arena. Political, religious and ethnic violence have become the culture of the day.

Actions of violence can be traced to the Holy Scriptures of different religions. The first incident of violence in the Holy Bible is that of the murder of one's own brother (Gn 4:8). Thereafter physical and psychological violence continued in the history of Israel. Violence shook the history of Israel at many other times, particularly in the wars fought by Israel in the days of David and his successors. The New Testament also pictures manifestations of violence from the birth of Jesus (Mt 2:16-18). Jesus himself and his disciples like Paul, Peter, Thomas, Stephen and other disciples accomplished the mission in the context of violence. Violence in the Bible is understood as any strong initiative or forceful action that reaches beyond normal dialogue, infringes upon the freedom of others and imposes a solution or a situation upon others, at times against their desires.⁷

Human life from the mother's womb to the tomb is affected by violence or conflict. Even in the womb of the mother the baby is not free from aggression. When one is born to the world one faces all types of conflicts and attacks starting from one's own home, school and it continues in every stratum of life. Every nook and corner of the world is threatened by escalating violence. Religious fundamentalists and political extremists sow the seed of terror and violence. The countries most affected are, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Israel; India, Pakistan, Irish Republic and some of the African countries. In these countries particular places like Kashmir and Gaza witness violence or terrorist or militant attacks almost everyday. The Indian State of Gujarat witnessed about 2,928 riots and conflicts from 1960 to 69 (three riots in four days). The recent violence in Gujarat destroyed thousands of lives and caused the loss of enormous wealth. People in some of the north-eastern states and Kashmir are victims of violence and conflicts throughout the year. Some parts of the southern states especially Kerala is not free of violence and conflict. The northern districts of Kerala are affected by political violence due to enmity and rivalry between different parties. The demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya caused communal violence in almost every part of India. Among them the most degrading one was the Mumbai riots in 1992-93 that continued for months, destroying hundreds of lives and causing loss to the national economy. The attack on the World Trade Centre shocked the whole of humanity.

2.1 Political Violence

Any type of violence, which originates for political

motives, can be termed political violence. Usually the motives behind all these conflicts will be the vested interests of either parties or persons. "National and international conflicts become treacherous because of unusual mixing of interest of groups, ideologies and beliefs".⁸ In order to satisfy the political leaders the followers of parties turn to violence. Violence is always used as a means to suppress the political opponents and parties. As far as recent incidents reveal political parties and governments use violent methods to eliminate the opposition. The State government sponsors violence. If we analyze the number of outbreaks of violence and the growth of some political parties we see that the growth is in proportion to the violence. Such parties do not exist without riots. Some ministers and police officers were directly involved in the recent Gujarat violence. Since Hitler, it may be the first time in the modern world that State sponsored violence or destruction of human beings shook the consciousness of humanity.

2.2 Religious Violence

Every religion is a messenger of peace and no religion teaches the means of violence. All religions call for universal harmony and love. Islam is a religion of peace, Hindus are famous for tolerance and Christians have the revelation of God's love manifested in their religion. If so, why does religious violence occur? Jonathan Swift says, "We have enough religions to make us hate. But not enough to make us love one another". Religious fundamentalists sow the seeds of violence. They instigate the people against the truth. The best example is the recent violence against the minority community in Gujarat. The Hindu fanatics propagate myths about minority community that Islam teaches violence and separatism and that it justifies violence against non-believers. Naturally, the Hindus who are non-violent turn to violence. Communalization of civil society by different religious groups is the main cause of religious violence in the world.

2.3 Class Violence

Besides political and religious violence different types of violence take place in society. Many of them derive from selfish motives of some individual groups or peoples. Sectarian and ethnic violence emerge because of vested interests. Many of these are premeditated violence. Caste, race and region are factors that cause class violence. Much of this violence originates because of the absolute and non-tolerant mentality of the people of the particular group concerned. If one group recognizes the other there will be no struggle or competition.

2.4 Domestic Violence

We cannot close our eyes to the reality of domestic violence against women and animals. The basic traits of violence actually originate in the family. Children who come from a perverted family set-up naturally turn to violence when their emotional needs are not satisfied. Emotional aggression is the starting point of much domestic violence. Many housewives in Indian families suffer from persecution from their husband and from their mother-in-law. The women who experience quarrels and conflicts become mentally affected and their children are affected too.

3. Consequences of violence

Since violence is an act of aggression it has serious consequences for humanity. It is a threat to the integral growth of human existence. "Coexistence becomes difficult because the egoist interests are skillfully hidden behind ideologies".⁹ It disturbs the ecology. The whole planet is affected. It is a hindrance to the economical growth of a nation. Wealth and property of individual and society are destroyed. The fundamental human rights are questioned. The life of the individual in society becomes more miserable. Children lose their parents, wives their husbands and sisters their brothers. Many are deprived of food, shelter, clothing, etc. Thus the consequences of violence are serious and shocking. We list some of the consequences of violence in society.

3.1 Threat to human rights

The fundamental human rights guaranteed by the State are questioned when violence continues to grow at an alarming pace. Every individual has got certain rights and duties in society. But due to conflict and violence every one in society is deprived of his rights. The most important right of a person is the right to live. The escalating violence claims the lives of hundreds of innocent people in the world. Only the Giver of life has the right to take away life. Humanity that should protect life thus becomes the destroyer of life through violence and conflict.

3.2 Mental and Physical Suffering

The unabated violence and conflict not only distress life but threaten the survival of humanity. Consequently, the integral growth of the victims of violence is naturally blocked. Violence causes mental shocks and depression to individuals; consequently - many become mentally challenged and physically handicapped. The recent judgment of the Additional District Session court in Kerala shows the seriousness

of violence in the minds of children. The above judgment sentenced five persons to capital punishment who brutally killed a school teacher. This heinous murder took place in front of innocent little children who were attending the class. This cruel and inhuman act imprinted an indelible deviation in the minds of children.

Violence also causes physical impairment or impediment. As a repercussion of violence some people lose sight, hands, legs, and other parts of the body that make them always dependent and unable to earn their livelihood. It is actually a burden to family and society. The continuing violence in different parts of the country gives rise to hundreds of disabled people.

3.3 Poverty and Misery

Poverty and misery are the far-reaching effects of violence. Conflict and violence destroy the means of livelihood of individuals and society. When the head of the family or the one who generates income, becomes the victim of violence, the source is blocked and the members of the family are deprived of their square meal a day. Many of the African nations like Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia are still under poverty and misery not because of the lack of resources, but mainly due to the escalating violence in those nations.

3.4 Loss of Private and Public Property

If a State or country is not peaceful due to violence and conflict, no one will invest capital in it. Naturally the sources of economic growth and development will be stunted. The economy of a nation is seriously affected by unabated violence. For example due to violence and riots during 1992-93 the economy of India suffered great loss. Violent mobs destroy private and public property. During the recent violence in Gujarat, property worth thousands of crores was destroyed. Hence many multi-nationals had second thoughts about investing capital in that State. The 11 September attack on the World Trade Centre had bad effects on the economies of America and other nations. The places affected by violence continue to be backward in development and growth.

3.5 Ecological Disturbances

The planet on which we live is disturbed by continued violence, and other conflicts. The ecological harmony is threatened by the terrorists' attacks and the suicide bombings of the militants and fundamentalists. Global warming and extreme climatic conditions are the result of the arms race, nuclear explosions as well as regional and global conflicts. Ecological harmony is lost due to conflicts.

The creatures of the universe are created to have a harmonious existence but the equilibrium is threatened by upheavals of violence and conflicts.

4. Mission Today

The pilgrim Church by her very nature is missionary (*Ad Gentes*, n. 2). She represents Christ the first missionary of God who is the light of humanity (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 1). So, the responsibility of the Church is the same as that of Christ who carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression (*ibid.*, n. 8). Mission is being involved in the ongoing dialogue between God, who offers salvation, and the world — enmeshed in all kinds of evil — which craves that salvation (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1). Therefore our mission is to apply what Christ has accomplished in the world, i.e. mission is the participation in the liberative mission of Christ. It is the social continuation of incarnation. Christ has accomplished the liberation of humanity by proclaiming the Good News, by healing, liberating and forgiving sins (Lk 4:18-19) and ultimately by giving himself for the sins of humanity in order to break the stranglehold of the evil one so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God's design and brought to its fulfillment (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 2). The frontiers of mission in the 21st century will be marked by different from those of the past 200 years. "A relevant missiology will be one that helps the Church embrace its mission fully through a clear discernment of times, together with a vision of what a dynamic response requires".¹⁰

4.1 Mission as Human Promotion

Evangelization is linked to human advancement. As far as the human person is in the image of God, and Christ restored proper dignity through his salvific works, the Church cannot be a silent spectator to the naked dance of demon violence, which destroys human dignity and human values. In Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity of the heights to which he is raised of the surpassing worth of his own humanity and of the meaning of his existence (*Redemptor Hominis*, n. 11,2). In fulfilling her mission the Church has to look for Christ himself, the first evangelizer. He proclaimed the Good News through healing the sick, feeding the hungry, liberating the oppressed, and bringing about peace in society. The Apostles followed what Christ did. Thus the human person's dignity itself becomes part of the content of proclamation. Life in the world should conform more to the human person's surpassing dignity in all its aspects so as to make life ever more human (*ibid.*, n. 13,1). The mission of the

Church is fundamentally and primarily ordained towards liberation from sin and death and towards a reconciliation of people among themselves in Christ (GS, nn. 13, 18, 32, 92). The Church also cannot abandon persons, for their destiny is closely linked with Christ. Human promotion is also liberation from all human slavery: economic, political, social, and cultural that derives from sin (GS, n. 41). The mission and proclamation of the gospel should not be confined to a particular place or time or people, she has to work for the liberation of all humanity since Christ has come to liberate the whole world.

4.2 Proclamation of Peace and Justice

Christ himself came into the world to establish peace and harmony. When Christ was born, the angels sang 'peace on earth among whom he favours' (Lk 1:14). Christ through shedding his blood became the revelation of peace and reconciliation and the victory of love in the great conflict between the new creation and incarnate egoism. When Jesus sent his disciples for mission work he told them to wish peace to whomever they met (Lk 10:5). Christ the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6) reconciled humanity with God through cross and thus making or providing peace to all (Eph 2:15). And he has given the peace to his disciples (Jn 14:25). Jesus is the prince, establisher and giver of peace. Peace is the result of justice and love. "Peace is an order that is founded on truth, built up on justice, matured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspicious of freedom" (*Pacem in Terris*, n. 167). Even if the Church does not have any political role proper her mission serves to structure and consolidate human community according to divine law.

"The promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, for she is, thanks to her relationship with Christ, a sacramental sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (*cf. Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42,3).

In its advancement to maturity the human community faces the greatest threat of violence unless each person is devoted to the cause of peace with renewed vigour (Mt 5:9). Missionaries should cooperate for realising peace with other groups of people without compromising faith and morals. The world will never be a dwelling place of peace unless every man finds peace in his heart that is ordained by God.

Respect for others and their dignity and brotherhood are necessary for the establishment of peace. Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel. Injustice and hatred are imbalances against the

structured order of humanity that destroy peace and harmony. The mission of the Church should have more compassion towards human beings in the model of Christ (Mk 8:2).

The goal of mission is the establishment of God's new order in which the values of the Kingdom, justice and peace dwell. The gospel of peace is nothing less than the vision of *shalom* in which God invites people to live in peace and harmony.¹¹

4.2.1 Mission as Training People in Peace and Non-Violence

In the dark moments of uncontrollable violence the Church cannot openly contest, she must continue to count by constructive witnessing. The Church should never fail to promote non-violent resistance even when all doors are closed. She is called to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Mt 5:3-14). As Nehru depicted Gandhi as an island of hope during Partition and the violence thereafter; a true messenger of peace and ambassador of non-violence will be a beacon of light in conflicting situations. Peace-making is an intrinsic aspect of the Church's missionary message. If we fail in this mission we stand guilty before the Lord of mission. There is no room for vengeance in the heart of Jesus' followers (Lk 23:34). The propagators of violence spend enormous wealth, time and human labour in order to perpetuate conflicts and terrorist attacks. They are given training in all means of destruction. So it is natural that if we want to eradicate violence from the whole hemisphere we should train people in peace and non-violence. Thus the Church can become a sign, a beacon of salvation which some may discover but which others may not.¹²

4.3 Inseparability of Mission and Liberation

Social problems and conflicts are in the background of violence. So the Church has to read the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel in order to eliminate violence from society. No one can be indifferent or blind to today's conflicts and inequalities. We should not be simple speakers of the Word but doers of the Word (Jas 2:15-16). It requires sacrifice, effort and suffering. We must associate ourselves with the poor and oppressed in their demand for greater justice and their fight for equal rights. We can unmask the ideologies, which put their confidence in violent and cruel upheavals, in order to attain social justice only if we succeed in showing the forcefulness of the great revolution of the gospel in peace and justice. Only a Church which has decided to live according to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:20) can be a gospel of liberation for a world threatened by violence of the powerful and also equally the violence of the oppressed.¹³ Only

those Christians who witness to justice in firm solidarity can overthrow the modern idols of violence and overcome systematic hatred. The God of the Bible will liberate oppression. He will redeem the lives from exploitation and outcry (Ps 74:14). One day all tears will be wiped away (Rev 7:17) and the lamb will lie down with the lion (Is 11:6).

4.4 Mission as Accepting Martyrdom

The mission of the Church is always modelled on Christ. Christ shed blood in the midst of violence and conflict. So violence should inspire Christians to discover all the dimensions of suffering in the light of the Cross and reconciliation. Mission of Jesus had to struggle with temptation (Mt 4:1-11) to be a different kind of Messiah. The mission of messianic community was likewise characterized by conflict. The mission of the twelve involved being sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves (Mt 10:16). Messianic mission down through history has always included the long passage of persecution and martyrdom. In evangelization the disciples courageously confronted the hostile powers of their time (Acts 4:8-12). "From the earliest days of Christianity, when the faithful accepted implicitly that it was simply impossible for a true believer to deny Jesus, martyrdom has been the epitome of heroism".¹⁴ For the cause of Christ they joyfully bore imprisonment, torture and even death. Jerusalem at the time was known for killing prophets. Evangelization was carried out under the sign of the cross. The last word for a missionary is not suffering but hope, i.e. resurrection. So today's mission has to learn from the first missionary and from the past missionaries. Martyrdom should be our means for the cause of peace and non-violence. Patiently enduring discrimination and abuse for the sake of Christ may be what God requires. And this is not less than verbal proclamation. It allows the watching world to catch a glimpse of Christ. A Church that compromised to avoid suffering has failed in its call. Proclamation is more important than individual life. "Generous people are steadfastly announcing the Good News in trying circumstances with little thought for personal safety. They die as they live, convinced of the authenticity of the mission they share with Christ".¹⁵ Christians are called to be victim missionaries rather than exemplar missionaries in today's context because the cross, suffering and persecution are not accidental to their faith, when the Risen Jesus appeared to his disciples his scars were proof of his identity. It is because of them that the disciples believed (Jn 20:20). Instead of giving more effective and successful methods of mission, evangelists should turn to the way of the cross, path of self-sacrifice in the face of violence and conflicts.¹⁶

4.5 Proper Dialogue with Religion and Other Systems of Society

Dialogue is the capacity to listen to others with the desire to understand them. It is the art of sharing their experience and reflections in order to reach a most complete vision of the word. Dialogue is the expression of reciprocity of conscience. "Through loyalty to conscience Christians are joined to other men in the search for truth and the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of the individuals and from social relationships" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 16). Since religious fundamentalism and political misgovernment are the main factors of violence in society, the Church should join with secular forces to reduce tension and violence. Fundamentalism is blind devotion to a fixed set of beliefs to the point of excluding all other views. In our relation with Hindu and Islamic fundamentalists we need to hold together both dialogue and challenge them to follow the fundamental teaching of love. We should be open enough not to ignore the gross insensitivity and lack of respect for human rights.¹⁷ Alternative views should not be condemned and they are not incorrect but only incomplete. All religions teach love, truth, non-violence, peace, etc.

4.6 Mission as Reconciliation

Central to the mission of the Church is the reconciliation of individuals with one another and of human kind with God. Evangelization is the simultaneous proclamation of liberating justice and of reconciliation.¹⁸ Forgiveness is crucial to the whole process of reconciliation. Healing and recovery of full humanity takes place only when one is able to forgive. It is relevant here to note the proclamation of forgiveness by Graham Stain's wife. The remark of Izaak Robin when he met Yassar Arafat in a peace conference is significant for a missionary who is in dialogue with unabated violence and terror, "it is not with our friends but with our enemies that we negotiate". Reconciliation is a term indicating the changed relationship, for the better between persons or groups. In the context of violence, terrorism and conflicts the mission of the Church should be the reconciliation of groups, society and nations. The Church is a sacrament of reconciliation since she invites Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, non-Greeks, slaves and freed man to unity.¹⁹ The Church can participate in the mediatory role of Christ in solving the conflicts. Reconciliation is restoring the lost relationship. It can be between individuals, religions, societies, states and nations. One of the most important images of reconciliation depicted in the Old Testament is Ps 85:8-10 where, love, peace, truth and justice are

mingled together. Christ has shown us the duty of forgiveness even in the midst of persecution, suffering and death. If the missionaries live a life of forgiveness and love they can be islands of hope in conflicting situations. Evil should be overcome by goodness. The disciples of Christ must offer blessing and grace for persecutors and do good to those who hate (Mt 5:43-45).

4.7 Prophetic Dimension of Mission

Prophets are called to bear witness to God's covenant in particular situations and call people to conversion and building of a new society of equality, peace and love. Prophecy is participation in affirming life. Prophets are called to eradicate violence and conflicts. It demands knowledge of the situation and discernment, sometimes it may accelerate violence. For example, the Dutch Cardinal protested against the persecution of Jews by Nazis and this caused new victims. Christians are to proclaim the Good News of universal salvation to the world and also heroic refusal to systems and forces of sin and death.²⁰

4.8 Mission is contemplation in Action

The contemplative aspect of mission is very important in a world of conflicts and disharmony. Missionaries like Bede Griffiths, Abhishiktananda and many others have taken up the path of contemplation in their missionary life. They considered evangelization as indissolubly linked with contemplation. The Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* insists on contemplation in the life of the missionary.

It says, "the missionary must be a contemplative in action" (*ibid.*, n. 91).

In the particular context of violence, the Church in India should imbibe the Indian religious mentality of silence, interiority, asceticism and prayer. We have to make use of and apply the spiritual element in order to make it capable not only of impeding the conduct of persons and predisposing them to peaceful and civilized sentiments but also of producing reconciliation among those same persons that is, generating peace.²¹

Conclusion

As the Church in the third millennium is called to proclaim the Good News to a world that is engulfed by violence and other inhuman activities, she should be prepared to confront the challenges of today. Persecution and suffering are not unfamiliar to the Church's mission. Christ and those who followed Christ proclaimed the gospel of peace and love to the troubled society of their time. Christ addressed

the gospel to the social problems, economic anomalies and religious fundamentalism. Our task is also to identify the signs of the times and interpret them with the Gospel and the Kingdom values.

To conclude, we propose that the mission in the third millennium calls for a return to the sources and history of Christian mission. Christ the incarnate Word of God reinterpreted the Mosaic Law and prevailing system of justice. Thus He preached a new message of justice, forgiveness, truth and love in the place of revenge and retribution. The Apostles who faced enormous conflicts and persecutions, trod in Christ's footsteps. In today's culture of violence and terror the message and path of Christ should be followed to face the challenges in the world. The fundamental causes for the prevailing culture of violence is nothing other than injustice, inequality and other types of oppression. So one's first duty is to proclaim a gospel of peace and justice. Our proclamation should be more convincing and credible. We are also called to be doers of the Word (Jas 2:14). The training of disciples in peace and non-violence, (peace brigadiers) giving value education, utilizing the modern means of communication and technology are some of the practical and suitable methods to address the factors of violence. If a Christian can be a beacon of hope and source of inspiration in the conflicting situation and at the time of sporadic violence, the mission of Christ becomes more penetrating and those affected by violence see a glimpse of Christ in those difficult situations of theirs. As violence escalates Christ and his word must take flesh to identify with the suffering humanity. A poor theology of preaching should be replaced by martyrs and victim missionaries and brigadiers of peace and non-violence. The prayer of St Francis of Assisi, the second Christ and messenger of peace will give courage and consolation to the missionaries who are preaching the Gospel in the context of violence.

End Notes

¹ Bernard Haring, *Evangelization Today*, St. Paul's Publications, England, 1990, p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³ S.L. Gandhi, *Anuvibha Reporter*, Vol. 5 September-December 2000, Jaipur, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷ Donald Senior, Carrol Stuhlmueller, eds, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission*, Orbis Books, New York, 1999, pp. 40-41.

⁸ Bernard Haring, *Evangelization Today*, p. 154.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, New York, 1996. p. 30.

¹¹ Wibert R. Shenk, *Transfiguration of Mission. Biblical Theological and Historical Foundation*, Herald Press, Pennsylvania, 1993, p. 11.

¹² James A. Scherer, Stephen B. Bevans, eds, *New Direction in Mission and Evangelization 2. Theological Foundations*, Orbis Books, New York, 1992, p. 156.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁷ Donald Dorr, *Mission in Today's World*, Columba Press, Dublin, 2000, p. 116.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁹ Bernard Haring, *Evangelization Today*, p. 160.

²⁰ Donald Senior, Carrol Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission*, p. 305.

²¹ Joseph Gremillion, *The Gospel of Peace and Justice, Catholic Social Teaching since Pope John*, Orbis Books, New York, 1984, p. 610.

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L'Église catholique et les peuples autochtones des Philippines

- *Églises d'Asie* -

[NDLR – Dans son travail auprès des peuples autochtones des Philippines, l'Église catholique devrait abandonner l'attitude «paternaliste» qui a été la sienne jusqu'à ce jour. Telle est l'opinion de Benjamin Abadiano, récent lauréat du prix Ramon Magsaysay, distinction souvent présentée comme le prix Nobel de l'Asie. Agé de 41 ans, Benjamin Abadiano a été distingué le 31 août dernier au titre des « dirigeants de demain ». Ancien novice de la Compagnie de Jésus, Benjamin Abadiano a été distingué par le jury du prix Magsaysay pour son travail dans le domaine de l'éducation auprès des peuples autochtones des Philippines (il est notamment l'auteur d'un dictionnaire mangyan-tagalog, les Mangyan étant un peuple de la province de Mindoro Oriental, sur l'île de Mindoro) ainsi que pour avoir contribué à restaurer la paix au sein des communautés de «lumad», les peuples autochtones des Philippines, déplacés par le conflit de Mindanao. L'entretien ci-contre a été réalisé par l'agence Ucanews et diffusé le 21 septembre 2004. La traduction est de la rédaction d'Églises d'Asie].

Ucanews : Quelle est la situation des peuples autochtones des Philippines aujourd'hui ?

Benjamin Abadiano : Pour l'ensemble du pays, il y a des signes positifs et des signes négatifs. En ce moment, je suis très heureux du fait que de plus en plus de gens prennent conscience du sort difficile fait aux peuples autochtones. Il y a dix ou quinze ans, il y avait seulement quelques rares organisations qui travaillaient pour le bien de ces gens. En 1997, il y a eu le vote de la Loi sur les droits des peuples autochtones. Ces derniers disposent donc d'une base légale pour affirmer leurs droits. Beaucoup d'entre eux aujourd'hui ont suivi une scolarité complète, quelques-uns ont suivi des formations professionnelles et ils peuvent désormais se battre pour les droits de leur peuple. Un certain nombre peuvent déjà mener une bien meilleure vie.

Quels sont les défis qui restent à relever ?

En général, nombreux sont parmi les hommes et les femmes des peuples autochtones à vivre dans les montagnes. Beaucoup de ces communautés manquent d'accès aux services de base comme l'éducation, la santé, les infrastructures de déplacement et les autres services du gouvernement. Mais ce qui est encore plus important, nombre de leurs terres sont devenues la propriété ou sont occupées par des gens influents, parfois même par des hommes politiques, et les peuples autochtones n'ont pas été justement indemnisés. Il faut comprendre que, pour eux, la terre c'est la vie. Ils ont été déplacés et poussés plus loin

vers l'intérieur. Ils n'ont pas beaucoup de possibilités pour vivre. Plus haut on va dans les montagnes, plus il est difficile de cultiver. Et puis, on est loin des services et des ressources. Ces gens sont pris dans les conflits qui opposent les militaires et les groupes insurgés. Et leurs jeunes sont recrutés soit par l'Armée du Peuple Nouveau (NPA), communiste, ou par un camp militaire.

Que pouvez-vous dire de l'apostolat de l'Église catholique auprès des peuples indigènes ?

Certains travailleurs ecclésiaux ont besoin d'améliorer leur manière de voir et leur attitude, car ils sont trop paternalistes. De plus, certains de nos partenaires dans l'Église n'ont pas réfléchi à des programmes concrets. Les gens d'Église regardent les peuples autochtones purement comme des minorités qui ont peu de besoins auxquels on doit répondre. Or, les autochtones constituent «*les plus petits de nos frères*» et l'Église est supposée s'occuper des besoins de ce groupe. Nous devons les considérer comme des êtres humains, avec la même dignité que la nôtre. L'Église doit aussi être plus systématique dans son action car le travail de la mission avance par tâtonnements, au gré de nos essais et de nos erreurs. C'est une des faiblesses du travail de l'Église avec les autochtones. Les gens d'Église sont inspirés par l'Esprit mais ils manquent de méthode. Il y a un grand gâchis de ressources et d'énergie.

Avec le Concile Vatican II, l'Église a compris l'importance de prendre en considération la culture des gens. Elle semble avoir réalisé qu'il y a tant de choses à apprendre de la culture indigène et que les valeurs

chrétiennes sont très présentes dans ces cultures. Le problème est que beaucoup de nos travailleurs pastoraux – et plus particulièrement les missionnaires – n'ont pas été formés à mettre en œuvre les programmes de développement ou leur travail missionnaire en accord avec ce que Vatican II a dit de la manière dont l'Église doit répondre aux réalités de la culture. L'inculturation, par exemple, est une question importante et un problème auquel l'Église catholique doit faire face. Comment réaliser cela concrètement ? Sous beaucoup d'aspects, en bien des dimensions, cela reste un grand défi. Les travailleurs pastoraux, y compris les prêtres, les religieuses, les missionnaires, devraient suivre un programme de formation spécial pour être capables de comprendre cela. Distribuer des aides çà et là et recourir aux autres méthodes habituelles, tout cela est trop paternaliste. Deuxièmement, nous devons éviter les conversions agressives sans examiner quelles valeurs chrétiennes sont déjà présentes – et comment sont-elles présentes – dans la culture de ces peuples. Les missionnaires ne devraient pas imposer. Ils devraient laisser les gens penser librement. La clé, c'est témoigner : comment votre vie témoigne maintenant des valeurs chrétiennes. De cette manière, les gens verront et se diront : «*Voilà ce que être chrétien veut dire*».

Y a-t-il eu des progrès dans l'apostolat ?

Il y a des diocèses qui répondent aux besoins des autochtones, et d'autres ont amélioré leur approche. A Tabang Mindanaw (une fondation pour le développement de Mindanao), par exemple, nous travaillons avec des diocèses de Mindanao. Sous des aspects variés, nous avons réussi à réaliser nos projets et nos programmes et maintenant nous réalisons le programme de sécurité humaine de la Fondation Assise pour les autochtones. Nos partenaires d'Église ont approuvé cela et ils soutiennent aussi le programme de sécurité humaine.

Que peut faire le gouvernement ?

Il peut faire en sorte que la Loi sur les droits des peuples autochtones soit pleinement appliquée. Deuxièmement, ceux qui appartiennent à la Commission nationale pour les peuples autochtones devraient prendre au sérieux dans leur mission. Ils doivent réellement travailler dur pour répondre aux besoins des peuples autochtones et ils doivent aussi utiliser intelligemment leurs ressources. Si seulement la Commission pouvait faire diminuer la corruption ! Elle devrait revoir comment des politiciens, qui sont supposés servir le bien public, sont capables de s'approprier des terres appartenant aux peuples autochtones.

Comment réagissez-vous au fait d'avoir reçu le prix Magsaysay ?

Lorsqu'on me l'a annoncé, cela a vraiment constitué

une surprise car personne ne m'avait dit que j'étais sur la liste des éventuels lauréats. Bien sûr, j'étais très heureux que nos efforts, bien que modestes, aient été reconnus. Pas tellement pour moi mais pour les efforts des gens, parce que ce que nous avons fait, ce n'est pas ce que j'ai rêvé mais c'est ce que les gens ont rêvé. Je me suis senti aussi bien peu digne de ce prix parce que je connais beaucoup de gens qui font des choses bien plus spectaculaires. Ce que j'ai fait représente si peu ! J'espère que ce prix nous encouragera et nous donnera l'inspiration pour continuer ce que nous avons commencé.

C'est une tâche très difficile que de traiter avec les gens et les gens sont changeants. Vous devez mettre en balance beaucoup d'éléments, la culture et les traditions culturelles, l'idéal et la réalité. Par exemple, beaucoup parmi les chefs autochtones vendent leurs terres parce qu'ils sont pauvres et des autochtones ont exploité leurs terres. Nous ne pouvons pas romancer ces questions. Nous devons être analytiques.

Parmi les difficultés externes, nous avons été qualifiés de communistes parce que nous aidons les gens à devenir conscients de leurs droits. Même la Fondation Assise a été qualifiée ainsi. La question des peuples autochtones est devenue si complexe ! Et nous n'avons pas beaucoup de ressources pour soutenir nos programmes.

Que pensez-vous faire avec votre prix ?

Vous savez, Dieu seul connaît réellement les désirs de chacun. Je me suis dit que si j'avais seulement un million de pesos, je pourrais faire beaucoup de choses. Maintenant, on m'a donné plus d'un million. Je prie vraiment pour savoir ce que j'en ferai. 30,000 dollars US sont supposés être pour moi et 20,000 sont supposés être pour les projets. Donc j'ai pensé à utiliser les 30,000 dollars pour financer des bourses d'études et envoyer des membres des peuples autochtones à l'université. Je mettrai cet argent dans un compte bloqué pour qu'il ne soit pas dilapidé. Je procéderai doucement et il se peut que je commence avec cinq étudiants l'an prochain, puis six ou sept l'année suivante. Les 20,000 dollars restants seront pour un programme ou un centre dédié à l'animation de base (*grassroots leadership*). Nous formerons des *leaders* et aussi nous ouvrirons à des volontaires. J'aimerais fournir à des jeunes, spécialement à ceux qui viennent des écoles publiques la possibilité de servir leur pays.

(EDA, UCAN, novembre 2004)

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The Bodhi and the Cross: Icons of the Two Spirit-Odysseys

- Fr Leopold Ratnasekera, O.M.I.* -

Christianity and Buddhism are undoubtedly two of the world's greatest living religions continuing to exert influence across continents even in this post-modern era, characterized by a global phenomenon of secularity and a wide-spread spirit of materialism. Christians account for over 2 billion while Buddhists of all hues account for very nearly half a billion throughout the world. Most of modern civilization, as we perceive today in the Western world and on the continents where it has had some influence since the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama, resulted from a religious and socio-cultural value-system that came with Christianity. Buddhism on the other hand, has had a vast impact in the East covering a large expanse of the Asian continent. Asia continues to be the oasis and the sacred sanctuary of Buddhism founded on the pristine *Dhamma* (doctrine) taught by the Lord Buddha. Both these religions have brought paradigm-shifts in history for the last 20 centuries of human civilization. However, we must all take pride in the fact that both Christianity and Buddhism have as their founders the hallowed personages of Jewish Jesus and the Indian Buddha hailing from Asia who have brought to a climax, the thirst for the spiritual and the "Absolute", so much at the core of the ancient cultures and the religiously contemplative soul of Asia.

The Buddha and Jesus truly provide a tale of two sages from the East, though their vision of man and life show a clear contrast. Both address the basic anthropological enigma of the precariousness of human life and existence. The root causes had to be diagnosed and a therapy prescribed. Jesus came to heal the wound of sin and the Buddha discovered the recipe for the escape from suffering. The phenomenal contingencies had to be transcended in order to reach the inner core and meaning of life. "Bodhi", the tree of Illumination for the Buddha¹ and the Cross "where all was accomplished", were decisive turning points in the life and message of the Buddha and Jesus respectively. If there is any moment of "Kairos" in salvation history, this was it. Similarly, the event of Enlightenment that lasted a full-night

under the Bodhi-tree contained the unique phases of the liberation-experience of the Buddha and the intense awareness of that spiritual and mental process that transformed him. In fact, the content of the liberation message, found in the first sermon preached by this seventh enlightened Buddha immediately after his enlightenment to the group of the first five ascetics (his early co-recluses) flowed from that experience as well.² We remark that the cross was raised on a hill near the city of Jerusalem amidst a scene of brutal violence (*cf.* Mk 15:20-23), whilst the Bodhi nestled serene, lost in the luscious verdure of the forest in the Gaya village in India. Associated with both are the stories of two human beings who radically changed the course of history at the cost of much personal struggle.³ The best way of defining these two great spiritual masters would be as two spiritual icons who walked this earth among mortals. And so, they have become trees of life whose fruits are meant for the good taste and benefit of the many (*bahu-jana-sukha*).⁴

Wherever Christianity is introduced and established, the sign of the Cross begins to span all its spiritual edifices, social institutions and ethical values in much the same way as Buddhism everywhere considers the Sacred Tree of the Bodhi to be a unique symbol of spirituality and culture. Devoid of these two symbols and signs so deeply ingrained in these two religions, they may not always be identified. In fact, the Bible teaches a wisdom connected with the mystery of the Cross as St Paul of Tarsus, the great missionary of early Christianity taught the Christian converts of Corinth (*cf.* I Cor 1:18-25), the city reputed to have been a strategic cosmopolitan centre of the ancient Middle-East. The wisdom contained in the cross far surpassed all manner of other human wisdom and acumen. It may be unpleasant and even illogical to some, but to those who walk in the path of salvation, it is a wonderful divine light and guidance to righteous living. According to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, all his true disciples are challenged to carry their own personal cross and follow his example that led not to his annihilation but rather to this

glorification. It is the narrow path that leads to life and only a few take it. Thus, in the same way as core-Buddhist spirituality flows from the teaching of the Buddha to follow the path he discovered in his Enlightenment experience under the Bodhi,⁵ so does the core-Christian spirituality flow from the Cross-event. Paul teaches that Christians must nail their sins and passions to the cross and be buried with Christ in order to rise with him to a new life. Mystics have written remarkable treatises on the mystery of sin that is revealed in the reality of the cross, showing how a profound contemplation of the cross can engender in a devotee a horror of sin enabling him to have an aversion and distaste for it.

Without his death and the loving sacrifice he made of his life for the freedom of sinful mankind, there would not have resulted his risen Glory — the power of the One who vanquished death and all that it entails, including the mysterious power of sin.⁶ We can recall here the theological interpretations of the Cross-event as expiation, ransom and liberation.⁷ Therefore, the tree of the Cross is a central symbol of veneration amongst Christians. The Good Friday Service focuses on this symbol in its poignant liturgy.⁸ It is the cynosure of every Christian edifice. People sign themselves with the sign of the Cross as a means of benediction, good fortune and protection from evil and all harm. At the head of all religious processions a cross it is always carried. Needless to say, that it is with this sign that all blessings are asked and given. In modern liberational thinking, the cross is identified as the symbol of those who suffer as a result of oppression in all its forms and exploitation. As a stark symbol, it reminds us of the millions of voice-less peoples around the globe whose human rights are violated, human dignity demeaned and who suffer the scourges of those in power resulting in utter destitution.⁹

On the other hand, the Sacred Tree of the Bodhi¹⁰ or simply the Bo-Tree under which Gautama Siddhartha attained enlightenment on that auspicious and hallowed moonlit night of the Vesak Poya (the month of May), graces all hallowed shrines of Buddhist viharas, dagabas (*caitya/stupa*=relic-container), temples and monasteries. Saplings of the original Bo-Tree in Gaya, considered now as relics, are now distributed all over the Buddhist world and are given a safe haven in many countries. One such is the revered “Maha Bodhi” of Anuradhapura, a city in Sri Lanka, which is believed to have grown from a sapling of the Sacred Bo-Tree of the Enlightenment brought to Sri Lanka, by Bhikkuni Sangamitta, the sister of Mahinda Thera,¹¹ who introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka. However, what is important is not the

external symbol that we might plant or construct. Strange as it may seem a Cross can even be gilded marble or made of gold but not the Bodhi-Tree; a statue of the Buddha, yes, as is a statue of the Lord Jesus. These two trees carry immense depth — meaning and indeed are “sacraments” in the sense that they are icons of the most inner-core realities of the two respective spiritualities, Christian and Buddhist. They symbolize the way the two religions and their founders interpret the precarious realities of life and its vicissitudes — namely the mystery of sin in the case of the cross and the mystery of human suffering in that of the Bôdhi.

The most sublime truths of the life of Jesus and the Buddha radiate from the Cross and the Bodhi respectively. In the cross of suffering and death, Jesus saw the consummation of his life and his mission. He looked forward to this free life-giving as his final and lasting action for mankind’s emancipation from the stain of sin. In his death, mankind was to discover the path to life. In his wounds incurred, five of them, in hands, feet and side, we find healing for our own wounds that weaken and drain the spirit (*cf* I Pt 2:24). Early Christians are told by Peter, the chief Disciple and head of the community, that in those wounds we are healed of our infirmities from acts of bodily immorality in particular. Many religious services that are meant for healing invoke the power of the wounds of Christ to bring solace to those feeling hurt and wounded in body and mind in many ways. With the cross we bless and invoke divine protection on devotees. Devout Christians always make the sign of the cross before embarking on an errand, when leaving the house, beginning an important task, in time of danger; and in time of prayer, meditation and contemplation, it is the first devout gesture. At times, it is also made as a sign of thanksgiving and gratitude for blessings received and feats accomplished. Jesus often saw the image of the Cross which he referred to in strange terms such as the Son of Man to be betrayed thereon, when the “Hour” comes. It was to be an hour of darkness, but soon to be followed by the Day of God, which is full of light. The spirituality of Christians consists in nailing to the cross, their own sins and evil passions, burying them with Christ and in turn rising with him to a new life of grace and truth — becoming a new creation. St Paul repeats that this Passover or paschal life is crucial for daily Christian living. All believers are called by their Master to carry their individual cross in life in imitation of Him who set the example (*cf* Mt 16:24-25; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). Such imitation is absolutely essential for becoming a true disciple of Jesus. No cross, no Christianity: there we have the typical sign of identification. The Buddha, the guru, too exhorted

his followers to follow the path he discovered and taught taking the initiative themselves and persevering in it since no one else can help or save them, for each one is a refuge to himself.¹² The cross is no longer an instrument of torture used by Roman authority to punish rebels, extortioners, criminals, traitors or murderers — a sign of shame, but with the death of Christ, it is now transformed into a symbol of hope and freedom.

The parallel is true of the Sri Bodhi — the Pippala tree of the Gaya — that witnessed the Enlightenment of the Buddha as he sat with mind tranquilized and purified, thus became the hallowed relic and incandescent symbol of great veneration for all Buddhists. Often its precincts are well guarded, decorated, landscaped and beautified with gilt fences. It is the object also of “poojas” or devout acts of worship and covered with saffron cloth. Lamps are lit around and devotees chant “Sadu” (Parallel: Amen, Alleluia) in praise. They greet and worship it on bended-knee and joined hands. It is said that during the seven weeks that followed the Enlightenment, Lord Buddha spent seven long weeks, sitting under the Bodhi-Tree and in its vicinity as well, remaining motionless in contemplation and gratitude. In fact the first week was entirely spent sitting under the tree enjoying the bliss of emancipation from sorrow and greed — *Vimutti-Sukha*. Throughout the second week, he stood gazing at it with motionless eyes in gratitude to the tree that had sheltered him during the struggle for enlightenment. The story of the post-enlightenment period shows that the Buddha had chosen several trees to sit motionless in contemplation and in peaceful rest such as the Ajapala Banyan tree in the vicinity, the Mukalinda and the Rajatana. They all served him with the shade needed to sit tranquil in enjoying the bliss of emancipation — the state of *Nirvana*. There is a reference to the fifth week, when the daughters of “Mara” (personification of evil) tried to seduce him.¹³ Would this not be a parallel to the temptation accosting Jesus in Gethsamane and more dramatically when being asked to come down from his cross! (Mt 27:40-42; Mk 15:29-32).

The “Bodhi” or simply the Bo-Tree invites devout Buddhists to recall the immortal memory of Lord Buddha’s enlightenment. It reminds Buddhists of the struggle Gautama Siddhartha, once the royal prince, went through to attain the bliss of liberation during the three watches of that memorable night of the Vesakh full moon. That is the story of how he was able to have reminiscence of his past births; reach a clairvoyant vision dealing with the causes relating to the death and rebirth of beings and finally developing knowledge about the destruction of passions, coming

to comprehend things as they are revealed in the four noble truths, thus attaining perfect enlightenment — *Samm sam-bodhi*.¹⁴ It was supra-wordly knowledge realized by his own intuitive wisdom which makes him an “*acchriya manussa*” — a noble human being.¹⁵ The “Bodhi” is thus a dramatic symbol for all those who can still gaze at it in wonder as the sacred tree that is part of the hallowed event of Enlightenment and could never be divorced from that significant happening to which it is an auspicious witness. Thus, a simple tree takes on a tremendous meaning as it claims a link with the Buddha’s full realization of the Dhamma, which as his own treasure, he later bequeathed to the disciples whom he formed into a sacred community of monks — the *Saṅgha*. Gazing at the Bo-Tree it would be easier for a simple devotee to recall the Master and what He taught. Thus, the Bo-Tree together with the Buddha statue, the *chaitaya* (repository of relics) and the *kotha* become important in the religious devotion of the Buddhists. In some countries like Sri Lanka, where there was tree-worship¹⁶ identified with various divinities, the arrival of Buddhism marked a transformation of this popular worship by introducing the veneration of the Bo-Tree. It is a perfect example of religious inculturation, which in fact integrated well with the rites and rituals of the rural population and their culture to the advantage of Buddhism.

There is however a radical difference in the way reality is portrayed in the symbols of the Cross and the Bodhi. Jesus on the one hand was able to personalize the content of the cross-experience of which was constitutive not only the vertical dimension of obedience to God, but also the horizontal dimension of being the source of redemption. It was the redeeming sacrifice: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw everything to myself” (Jn 12:32-33).¹⁷ The enlightenment-experience however resulted from the conscious discovery of a truth of reality (the Dhamma) that is external to and independent of the enlightened Buddha or Buddhas. In fact, Gautama Siddhartha mentions six Buddhas who preceded him. Dhamma therefore is an *a priori* given — the Eternal Verities, *a priori* truths. There is no revelation here, but some illumination from within. Buddhism rejects revelation as a criterion of truth and the Canon in many instances strongly opposes this idea, of course in the light of what it knows about revelation of the divine in Hindu Upanishadic scriptures and the practice of rituals.¹⁸ One thing that is common to Enlightenment and the Cross-Event is that in both, there is an aura of utter personal poverty shrouding the personalities of Jesus and the Buddha and a sense of self-emptying that is complete — a full *kenosis* powered by a profound renunciation in the scene of

the enlightenment night and that of Calvary (Phil 2:6-11).¹⁹ What both of them achieved is of a meta-historical and transcendental nature. A matter of poignancy here is that both Gnosis and Agapé elements coalesce in a great synthesis and reciprocity. Enlightenment is fundamentally “Gnosis” but the enlightened Buddha also becomes an icon of compassion and kindness that filled his life and ministry in the post-enlightenment period. The Cross is predominantly the “Agapé” of God for sinful humanity, but it is also, as Paul points out: “the wisdom of God” (cf I Cor 1:18-25).

A tree and a cross in themselves remain ordinary and insignificant. What made this particular tree and this particular cross important is their link to two extraordinary people, Jesus and the Buddha, teachers of the Transcendent, of whom they are reminders and symbols. That symbolism transforms them into icons of liberation which makes them objects of veneration and respect. The history of religions bears ample witness to the nature of symbols as part of religious expression, thus integrating into respective spiritualities. However, one must distinguish a specific difference between the Cross and the Bodhi (Bo-Tree). On the Cross that marked the death of Christ in obedience to the Father, the mystery of salvation was accomplished as the once and for all (*eph-hapax*) sacrifice. Hence the cross remains not only a symbol, but a sacrament of salvation. In fact, the Gospel of John sees in the pierced side of Christ, a sacramental source where the water and blood that gushed forth symbolized Baptismal cleansing and Eucharistic sustenance. The Bo-Tree however is external to the Enlightenment of the Buddha, though its shade with the serene surrounding and the stillness of the night bathed with the light of the full moon, provided a safe haven for the Buddha sitting cross-legged steeped in deep yogic meditation and contemplation. The core-message of liberation was discovered by the Buddha in the course of this intense spiritual exercise of “insight”, supported by bodily and mental discipline through profound concentration. However we note that Buddhist enlightenment is not mere intellectual achievement. The main aim is moral perfection and secondly its accompanying personality-integration.²⁰ We see a point of convergence in what the Buddha discovered in the “Wisdom” required to attain freedom from suffering while the cross itself is wisdom to the Christian believer that confounds the wisdom of the worldly wise. Both messages are qualified as beyond earthly wisdom.²¹

Will the Tree of the Cross, on which Lord Jesus sacrificed his life to emancipate mankind from sin, death and the dominion of evil continue to be a sign

of the “sacred” and part of the core-spirituality of Christianity? Would people embrace it with devotion and hope of eternal life? Would they be touched by the awesome mystery of sin symbolized in it? And conversely, would the Bo-Tree continue to fascinate the devout Buddhist-beholder as a memorial of the ecstatic triumph of the Lord Buddha, the master-teacher of the Dhamma of human liberation from suffering? In both cases, the answer is a crystal-clear affirmative. In an age where symbols and images keep proliferating in the globalized world filled with mass media communication networks, with more and more people longing for solace, peace of mind and freedom in a troubled and sick society, these two glowing symbols of a radical religious message, if globalized powerfully, would certainly serve to wean us away from this oft-disillusioned post-modern era, where greed and selfishness abound, and thus become signs of hope to a bereaving humanity and a demoralized civilization.

The Cross and the Bodhi, rooted firmly in the soil and very much down to earth, can be hailed as a pedagogy of the Sacred. In a spirit of inter-religious cordiality, Christians and Buddhists can jointly wish that wherever the sight of these immortal symbols catch the eye, those who behold may capture the memory of the two great religious luminaries who revealed to the world a twin-path of spiritual liberation and true bliss. Mankind can look to them as great milestones of its religious history — signs that symbolize unique victories of the Spirit, the higher power in man that provides satisfactory answers to the enigma of his being and existence. On the one hand, the Bodhi is reminiscent of the Buddha who sat in search of enlightenment, becoming the Buddha, the one who reached wisdom through his own efforts — an illumination from within. The Cross on the other hand is a revelation of God’s saving intervention in Christ — the one on the cross, himself in person, being the content of that revelation. The two icons are veritable symbols of spiritual odysseys embarked upon by the two religious founders. And they are a sign of hope, first of all to those who distrusting the impermanence of the things of this world, see greed as the root of all suffering, be it mental, bodily or spiritual as Buddhism teaches and secondly, to all those who see sin, as Christianity teaches, as the cause for so much evil and misery that afflict mankind. In pursuit of wisdom, they can all take on the pathways to spiritual development through an insight into the true nature of life and its vicissitudes.

Endnotes

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¹ Tree of enlightenment or tree of wisdom, on the bank of the River Nerañjara at Gaya (today known as Buddha Gaya in Varanasi, India). It is specifically mentioned in the Mahapadhana-Skutta (Digha-Nikaya ii, 4). It is an Assattha, the sacred fig tree, *figus religiosa*. The Buddha says that he attained enlightenment under the fig tree (assatthassa mule abhisambuddho). Cfr. Piyadassi Thera, *The Buddha's Ancient Path*, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy (Sri Lanka), Reprint 1996, p. 15.

² It is called the "Dhamma-cakkappavattana-Skutta", meaning "setting in motion the wheel of Truth" or the establishment of the sacred wheel of the doctrine (*cf.* Samyutta-Nikaya, v. 420; Vinaya i. 10). This "Dhamma" is one of the three jewels of Buddhism in which all Buddhists have to take refuge as they do in the other two: the Buddha and the Sañgha. The symbol of this wheel is often used to refer to the core-teaching of the Buddha central to the its message of liberation. It is almost identical with Buddhism itself as a public sign and symbol. What is symbolized there could be compared with the "Paschal mystery" — so central to the liberational experience in Christianity. Everyone who is saved in some way is touched by this Paschal Mystery thanks to the workings of the Holy Spirit as Vatican II teaches in "*Gaudium et Spes*", n. 22.

³ In the case of the Buddha, the final night of the struggle for the defeat of evil and attainment of enlightenment marked a long six-year search for liberation from suffering, including a period of severe asceticism that reduced his bodily frame to almost a skeleton, bringing him to the verge of death. In the life of Christ, the drama of the agony and the subsequent death on the cross was the climax of the struggle against the prince of darkness, who was to be cast out. This constituted the great paschal 'Hour' as repeatedly insisted upon by John, *cf.* Jn 7:30; 8:20; 12:23-27; 13:1; 17:1.

⁴ John 10:10 "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"; Lord Buddha's words to the first sixty monks as he sent them were: "Go forth O Bhikkhus, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world... Proclaim the Holy Life, altogether perfect and pure" (Vinaya, Mahavagga). As the text proceeds to say, it was to share with others the personal experience of the Buddha and the sixty who had also experienced release from all fetters, human and divine.

⁵ "In conformity with the psychological orientation of his teaching, the Buddha gave special attention to the subjective springs of morality. He traces immoral behaviour to three mental factors: greed, hatred and delusion. Generosity, kindness and wisdom, their opposites, are the sources of good moral behaviour. A more refined interior level of ethical purity can be achieved by developing, in meditation, the four lofty attitudes called the "divine abodes" (*brahma vihara*), namely loving-kindness (*mettara*), compassion (*karuna*), altruistic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*". *Cf.* Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Wheel Publication No. 433/434, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1999.

⁶ St Paul refers to it as the "Power of sin" (*Hé Hamartia*), which is interpreted as "original Sin" in classical theology, a sinful condition of human existence that wounds human nature as Trent has defended against Luther without totally corrupting it. The Buddha pointed to "Greed" (*Tanha*) as the greatest form of selfishness that is the sole cause of the many-faceted human suffering that human beings are afflicted with on earth. He prescribed "renunciation" as the only effective antidote to this source of suffering. The seed has to fall to the ground and die to produce fruit. Likewise through the enlightenment experience, the Buddha was able to put to death the triple-root of evil: ignorance, greed and hatred, breathing them out of his body, psyche and mind.

⁷ The classical themes of the treatise "*De Redemptione Christi*". Redemption as Liberation has emerged as a more emphatic dimension of the Christian understanding of Redemption and salvation especially in the context of Liberation Theology with "social sin" and "strictures of sin" as objects of faith-reflection.

⁸ "*Ecce Lignum Crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit*" (Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world".

⁹ This is mainly focused in all forms of liberation theology, not only in relation to Latin America, but even in relation to Asia and Africa when discussing the structures of forced poverty and in Europe and the USA as well when focusing on minorities and immigrants.

¹⁰ Sometimes called "Bodhinvahane" on a par with Budunvahane -- See Gombrich, Richard F., *Precept and Practice*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, p. 76: attaching a special sense of the sacred as an object of reverence and worship.

¹¹ Mahinda Tera, the son of King Asoka (the Constantine of Buddhism) who is seen as the initiator of the great Buddhist Missionary movement showering it with his royal patronage following the Third Council held in Patna, two hundred years after the death of the Buddha.

¹² “You should exert yourselves. The Tathagatas are only teachers”: Tumhehi kiccama tappam akkhataro tathagata (Dhammapada v. 276); “Be ye isles unto yourselves; be ye a refuge unto yourselves; seek no refuge in others”: Attadipa viharatha, attapaatisarana, anaññasarana (Digha Nikaya, Mahaparinibbana Sutta, Vol. 2, p. 100. There is this common saying too: *Attahi attano natho*, meaning: you are your own refuge (Dhammapada 160).

¹³ There are five kinds of Maras — namely, Mara the deity (Devaputta), the five aggregates of attachment Khandha), moral and immoral actions (abhisamkhara), death (maccu), and passions (kiilesa).

¹⁴ The texts portraying the graphic description of the struggle and search for enlightenment are to be found in places such as Majjhima-Nikaya-Satta 26 and 36 (and so on). Note however that in these two particular suttas, there is no mention of the tree, the reason being that it was a well-known fact that recluses and ascetics sat cross-legged in the open under trees, for their meditation.

¹⁵ See Narada Maha Thera, *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Vajirarama, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1973, p. 37; the Buddha is no mere human being, but “an Enlightened Being who had attained the Transcendent”. So says K.N. Jayatilleke in, *The Message of the Buddha*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1975, p. 59.

¹⁶ Cf. Rahula, Walpola Rev., *History of Buddhism in Ceylon (The Anuradhapura Period)*, M.D. Gunesena and Co. Ltd., Colombo, Ceylon, 2nd Edition 1966, pp. 41-42. Two trees are mentioned in particular: the Banyan tree linked to divinities and the Palmyrah tree linked to the “god of hunters”. H. Parker in his book: “Ancient Ceylon”, London 1990, thinks that this particular god is identical with the Hill God of the aborigines of South India and the knowledge of him was brought to Ceylon by the first comers in very early times (p. 177).

¹⁷ This “lifting up” is identified as his death on the cross.

¹⁸ Cf. K.N. Jayatilleke, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-64. The author cites the Sandaka Sutta and Subha Sutta in defense.

¹⁹ This is considered to have been a Christological hymn, either recited or sung during the liturgy by the first Christian communities.

²⁰ See Dharmasiri, Gunapala, *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God*, The Buddhist Research Society, Singapore, Second edition, pp. 205-207.

²¹ It is essential that the core-message and the core-experience of any religion transcend any sort of worldly wisdom and have direct reference to some spiritual reality and thus be ordained to transcendence — an absolute which cannot be deciphered in terms of just a non-material reality or something that is to be experienced in a history of man open to various better and more perfect possibilities. Some modern

thinkers teach that man transcends himself in an “openness-to-the world” (a *welt-offenheit*) or in his mastery of matter, or else in becoming the creator of history, or with the dawn of the “Über-Mensch” — super-man. Among these authors are Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche and Satre. For all their pains, these are still immanent and materialistic anthropologies which religions would clearly defy, for it is certain, that without an “Absolute” that transcends the world of time and space, death and history, one is hard put to explain the sense and meaning of life with its struggle and pain, and of course the desire for freedom and the eternal. Religiosity is the expression of this basic orientation to transcendence which philosophical anthropology is called to defend today in opposition to immanentistic anthropologies.

Ref.: Text from the Author. Sent by e-mail in September 2004.



SEDOS Executive Committee

Annual Report 2004

INTRODUCTION

Year after year SEDOS Members have been slowly sowing the seed without much fanfare. We now realize that our 40th anniversary is approaching. We are all contributing to fulfil the dream that moved those who envisioned a better way of cooperation between the Missionary Institutes in a continuous search towards understanding and sharing our faith with others. This year has brought many new faces to the different Institutes, even to the Executive Committee of SEDOS, whose members all share the same spirit of service and human impotence in facing our task that only the Lord can bring to fulfilment.

Where is SEDOS going from here? What issues are challenging the Mission of the Church in our day? These are some of the concerns in the hearts of the Executive Committee members. The challenges are often like the old ones, but the way they present themselves to us is different and with such subtle aspects that we need to listen and look very attentively in order to perceive the call.

This year brought a new Director. I was the new face in town and therefore this has been an exceptional year of encounter and learning in order to familiarized myself with the work of SEDOS and the amazing reality of its many activities and so much commitment on the part of the different members of Religious Institutes. Much effort has been put into reaching out to as many groups as possible in order to strengthen the relationship of SEDOS with many other related groups and organizations in Rome and abroad and to make SEDOS known to those who can benefit from its services. This effort will continue during the coming years with the aim of fostering better ways of cooperation in order to maximise our efforts and spread our services.

In this learning process I owe much gratitude to so many of you who guided me through the murky waters. This is why I begin this brief report by sending a word of thanks to all of you, especially to all the members of the SEDOS Executive Committee and to my two special mentors, the members of the staff who have to put up with me and to all those who have helped me in so many ways, by making me feel welcome and at home.

A special word of thanks to the members of the **Society of the Divine Word**. For many years the **SVDs** have generously offered the premises to house the office of SEDOS, a contribution that cannot be repaid but by the Blessing of the Lord. I wish to express my personal gratitude to them for opening their doors to

me and “adopting” me as one more in the family. I have no words to express my appreciation. Thank you!

SEDOS ORGANIZATION

In spite of our efforts this year we received no new applications for membership. We shall continue in our efforts to expand our membership in order to benefit from the experience of other Institutes.

- Executive Committee -

During the year, the members of the Executive Committee set some time aside from their busy schedule every month to meet and guide the activities of SEDOS. Whenever they were away visiting their respective Congregations they contributed their opinions via e-mail which, at the click of a mouse, put them all in touch with the office.

The planning of the Seminar 2004 took up much time and energy as additional meetings had to be called. They all answered these calls from the office in different ways depending on whether they were in Rome. Their continuous support is much appreciated and very encouraging.

- Members of the Executive Committee for the year 2003-2004:

President: § **Fr Piero Trabucco**, Superior General of the Consolata Missionaries. Elected to the Executive in 1997.

Vice-President: § **Sr Mary Wright**, Superior General of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Elected to the Executive in 2001.

Treasurer: § **Fr Eric Manhaeghe**, General Councillor of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Elected to the Executive in 2000.

Members:

§ **Sr Irini Chenouda**, General Councillor of Our Lady of the Apostles. Elected to the Executive in 2003.

§ **Sr Monika Lita Hasanah**, General Councillor of Ursuline Roman Union. Elected to the Executive in 2003.

§ **Fr Pierre-Paul Walraet**, General Councillor of the Order of the Holy Cross (Crossiers). Elected to the Executive in 2001.

§ **Fr Juan Antonio Flores Osuna**, Generalate of the Xaverian Missionaries. Elected to the Executive in 2002.

§ **Fr Michael McCabe**, Generalate of the Society of African Missions. Elected to the Executive in 2002.

§ **Sr Maureen McBride**, Superior General of the Religious of Our Lady of the Missions. Elected to the Executive in 2003.

§ **Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera**, Order of Preachers (Dominican Order). Elected as Executive Director in 2003.

- SEDOS Staff -

There was no change in the staff members and we continue to enjoy the help of those faces familiar to most of you. The publication of the Bulletin and Home Page articles continues to be taken care of by Ms Ilaria Iadeluca; Mrs Margarita Lofthouse takes care of accounting, subscriptions and office administration, and Mrs Federica Pupilli works in the Documentation Centre. Apart from their specific tasks they are called upon to share in the organization of the different activities throughout the year.

Providing a special, professional help is also Ms Philippa Wooldridge as proof-reader and at times translating. Fr André Norelaers, OSC, has helped with the proof-reading of French material. And Mr Stefano Cacace and Ms Emanuela Gismondi continue to help managing the SEDOS homepage on a part-time basis.

LOOKING AT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE YEAR

As mentioned above, one of the main tasks of the Director has been strengthening the connections and relationships of SEDOS with other groups and Institutions related to our line of work in global mission programmes, whether in Italy or abroad. Time and energy have been invested in attending meetings and events related to Mission endeavours in order to make our SEDOS resources available and known to the staff and students at Universities and members of different commissions and committee groups.

SEDOS has attended some meetings with members of the WCC, IAMS Congress (International Association of Mission Studies) in

Malaysia, the Symposium on Mission History in China celebrated in Hong Kong, the Congress on Consecrated Life and *Caritas Internationalis*, among others. We have visited the officers of our donors Institutions: *Misereor* and *Missio Aachen* in Germany and we plan to visit the officers of *Missio Munich* to study ways of further cooperation with these Organizations. To these Three Organizations SEDOS owes a debt of gratitude for the support they have continued to provide throughout the years thus making it possible to organize more educational mission programmes, mainly Seminars and Conferences.

Another aspect we have been paying attention to is the office management. The restructuring of the office is a necessity in order to cope with the new demands of modern age and needs of our members; therefore an effort is being made to retrain the personnel and provide the office with suitable and legal equipment to carry out our task in a more efficient way. Time, energy and money are needed to achieve this goal. The generosity of the Congregations will determinate the prompt achievement of this goal.

A. SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

Thanks to the financial assistance and spiritual support of *Misereor*, *Missio Aachen* and *Missio Munich*, SEDOS has been able to organize and carry out four educational Conferences and one Residential Seminar during the year. In this Report we acknowledge their help and express our gratitude to the members of these three Organizations for their continuous support and encouragement and pray that we may continue to develop ever newer ways of cooperation in the field of Mission. Likewise our gratitude goes to the Brothers of the Christian Schools at whose Generalate SEDOS hosts its Conferences.

- Conferences

1. Fr **Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP**, spoke on 3 December 2003 at the Annual General Assembly of SEDOS on: "**A Call to Mission: the Church on the Threshold of the Third Millenium**".

2. On the 13 February 2004 Fr **Antonio Pernia, SVD**, presented his expereineces on Multicultural Communities with his talk on "**International Religious Communities in a Multicultural World**". Also Sr **Rosanna Marin, FMM**, shared her experiences in this field speaking on, "**Multicultural Communities: The Dynamics of Fellowship**". Both topics were very relevant and of real interest to the Religious Communities.

3. On 21 April we explored the realm of Spirituality to Mission by listening to the talk given by Fr **Roest Croelius, SJ**, on "**Stumbling Steps on the Contemplative Way of Mission**".

4. After the Seminar and the Summer break Fr **Gianfranco Testa, IMC**, was invited on the 15 October 2004 to discuss the subject of Forgiveness and Reconciliation: "***El Perdón, una Opción Inteligente***", which was followed by a special workshop with a group of Spanish speaking religious.

Residential Seminar

The Annual SEDOS Residential Seminar was held at the "Salesianum" from 18-22 May 2004. The topic on which the participants shared experiences was "***Strategies for Building Reconciliation in Environments of Violence***". The structure of the Seminar emphasized the experiences of the participants working in small groups under the leadership of our experienced facilitator Fr **Brian Starken, S.P.P.S.** As a special contributor to the Seminar we had the Director of the Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation from Colombia, Fr **Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC**, who addressed and shared with all the participants their working experiences in the field of Pardon as a way to reconcile society.

At this point we wish to remind all our members that next year (2005) the Annual Seminar will be held at Ariccia **in the first week of May 2005 – from 3-7** instead of the third week in order not to overlap with the Congress of the WCC. The theme of the Seminar will dwell on ***Migration and Mission***.

B. SEDOS WORKING GROUPS

We have continued to host and encourage the Working Groups to study and deepen their commitment to the Mission of the Church in various fields. A new Working Group is being formed to share the work of the Secretaries of Mission from Women Religious Congregations: "***Donne Ad Gentes***". We encourage the Mission's Secretaries from Missionary Congregations to join the group and enrich it with their work and experience.

- Debt

The cancellation of the unjust debt of the world's most impoverished countries is a long journey. Small advances have been made but there is much work still to be done. Until now, only 15% of the "heavily indebted poor countries" total debts have been cancelled. These countries still owe more than \$300 billion to rich countries' banks, and international institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk).

One of the main reasons why very poor countries cannot provide decent education and health care is because they are paying back their debt. Many of

these countries have paid back in interest more than they originally borrowed, but have not yet been able to pay the principal. For example, in the 1970s Nigeria borrowed \$5 billion, the country has paid back \$16 billion and still owes \$32 billion on the same debt (www.jubileeusa.org).

The United Nations has estimated that for the fifth year in a row, there has been a phenomenon of a net reverse transfer of resources, that is, from developing to developed countries, reaching last year, the dizzy figure of \$250 billion. In other words, the poorer countries are actually helping to finance the growth of the richer countries through their capital and dividend outflows, interest payments on the foreign debt, and earning shortfalls due to unfavourable trading opportunities, which is not offset by the much smaller inflows of aid and fresh capital.

The **SEDOS Working Group on Debt** is part of the world-wide campaign for cancellation of this unjust debt. The working group has formed a coalition of more than 90 religious Congregations who each year participate in a letter writing campaign to the Governments of the G7 countries (Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United States of America) urging debt cancellation.

The **SEDOS Working Group on Debt** also provides information on the SEDOS Web page: www.sedos.org/debt.htm

The **SEDOS Working Group on Debt** meets on a regular basis depending on the schedules of its members. New members are welcome. For further information, please contact: aratac@pcn.net

- China

For the SEDOS WORKING GROUP ON CHINA 2004 was a quiet year. Four meetings were scheduled, which usually consisted of a reflection on a current article about the PROC and the Church and religion there. There was also the opportunity to share community news and experiences and a lively exchange of information and impressions during a question and answer period.

Attendance was low. This can be explained in part because several of the stalwart members who regularly attended have finished their mandates in Rome and have returned to their local communities or entered new ministries outside the City of Rome and its surroundings. Their replacements have not yet found their way to the SEDOS Meeting Place for our quarterly afternoon of conversation about China.

One of the aims of this working group is to provide orientation and current information on the PROC and the religious situation there for Superiors General and those co-ordinating the community's response to China today. An afternoon with the **SEDOS Working Group on China** often introduces

one entering this ministry to the reality of the PROC with its Church and religious groups.

A proposed project for 2005 is to print this introductory information on fact sheets. Topics will include updated and accepted terminology for the Church and its structures, government policy on religion, formation of priests and religious, role of laity, pastoral needs and approaches, ecumenical and social activity, and resources on the PROC. Where possible, reference will be made to official documents and practical experience. The fact sheets will be elaborated during the 2005 series of meetings. As a result new members will have a summary of basic information. More meeting time can then be devoted to in-depth study. The proposal will be our response to the suggestion that the working groups play a more direct part in the SEDOS mission of documentation and information.

The quarterly meetings will resume in January 2005. Events pertaining to China will be called to the attention of the members. When there is a guest visitor, a special meeting can be called to allow the Working Group to meet this expert or share the experience of the speaker.

- **"BIBLE and MISSION"**

During the year 2004 the Working Group *BIBLE and MISSION* met five times at bi-monthly intervals, not counting vacation time. This is a summary of all five sessions:

- **10th Meeting:** 26 January 2004

Topic: Reading the Bible in an Asian Context: China

Article read and discussed: Sr Maria Ko Ha Fong, "Reading the Bible in an Asian Context"; her keynote address during the 5th Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation, Hong Kong, 1996.

Participants: 6, plus 4 guests from the China Group and the author of the article as guest and resource person.

- **11th Meeting:** 9 March 2004

Topic: Reading the Bible in an Asian Context: Korea
Articles: Sr Maura Cho, SOPH, "Reading the Bible in an Asian Context" and "The Bible in Pastoral Work – Experiences from Korea, SEDOS Bulletin 1996, pp. 187-214.

Participants: 7, plus Korean Ms Regina Lim, student at PIB as guest and resource person.

- **12th Meeting:** 13 May 2004

Topic: Reading the Bible in an Asian Context: India
Article: Stanley M. Samatha, "The Asian Context: Sources and Trends" in: R.S. Surgitharaj (Ed.) *Voices from the Margin — Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, 1991.

Participants: 4

- **13th Meeting:** 6 October 2004

Topic: Reading the Bible in an Asian Context: Asia in general. Article: R.S. Surgitharaj, "Postscript: Achievements and Items for a Future

Agenda", from: R.S. Surgitharaj (Ed.) *Voices from the Margin — Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, 1991.

Participants: 6

- **14th Meeting:** 19 November 2004

Topic: Reading the Bible in an African Context: Africa in general. Articles: Emmanuel Asante, "The Gospel in Context — An African Perspective", in *Interpretation*, October 2001, pp. 355-366; Paulin Poucouta, "E. Mveng's African Reading of the Bible", in *Theology Digest*, 48:1 (Spring 2001) pp. 21-25.

Participants: 4

- **15th Meeting:** 18 January 2005

We continued with our reflection on: "How the Bible is being read in different contexts". Having dealt with Latin America and the Middle East in 2002 and 2003, we move on to Asia and Africa.

On the average 5 to 6 participants attended the meetings; two group members have left Rome for other assignments, four others joined.

The fluctuation in attendance is conditioned by the fact that most participants are members of the Generalates of their respective Congregations and for congregational purposes are often absent from Rome.

The group, consisting of men and women of different missionary congregations and from a variety of cultural backgrounds and work experiences, finds the exchange on the chosen articles in the light of their own experiences very interesting and enriching.

In dealing with the contextual reading of Scripture the group comes to grips with the basic and the most important phase of inculturation and of the incarnation of the Word in the world today.

The group will continue and invites others to join!

For more information and for joining the group contact **Fr Ludger Feldkämper, SVD**, lfsvd@libero.it (Tel: 06.571.15.193)

C. SEDOS PUBLICATION

- *SEDOS Bulletin*

The publication of the SEDOS Bulletin continues to be of the first importance to the office. Six bi-monthly issues are published in order to save on postage, but the number of pages has been increased so as not to reduce the amount of the material offered to our readers. The language structure of the publication has not changed, although there are more and more voices asking for space in Spanish. This is something of a headache since more languages will complicate printing and might devalue the bulletin itself, and substitution of one language for another is not an issue on the discussion table at this moment.

There has been a slight increase in the enquires about subscription and exchange although this does not correspond to the real overall receipts from subscriptions in the accounts due to administration and postage problems. We have identified the problem and we are confident that the subscription database will be put in order.

The editorial policy continues to maintain the global scope of the articles inserted. All the members of our Congregations read and come across good articles on Global Mission. We invite and encourage all our readers to share their insights by writing. They could send or inform us about the many interesting articles they come across so that we can make them available to everybody.

- *SEDOS Homepage*

Our Webpage (at <http://www.sedos.org>) is frequently consulted, a fact that we have been able to confirm during our contact with people at different meetings and Symposiums. The contents and availability of the material posted to all is widely appreciated. Of course we could improve it and there is much room for improvement; we are not satisfied nor complacent with the present situation and we are looking for ways of making it more interactive and user-friendly. We are looking for people to help in improving the design of the Webpage in order to increase the contents. There are many religious in our houses with the know-how we need. So, we are making an appeal to whoever is willing to contribute some time to this purpose.

- *Documentation Centre*

Maintaining and building up the Documentation Centre is an enormous task. It requires both personnel and resources. Now-a-days we observe that there are University Libraries that are building up a good pool of material on Mission and they have the resources to grow and develop, as well as the ability to make this material available on the Internet. As hard as we try SEDOS does not have the material resources to reach this goal. Hence our Documentation Centre is been under-used by the researches. Does this mean that we should begin thinking about the possibility that SEDOS could team up with some of the Faculties of Missiology of the Universities in Rome in order to merge and benefit from the resources they posses?

Efforts are being made to strengthen the database of titles and to look for an appropriate Internet

Service provider on which to base our Catalogue so as to make it available through Internet.

LOOKING AHEAD

Through the contacts with different people from the Institutions dedicated to Mission Studies and by listening to the concerns of quite a big number of religious of our Member Institutes we, the Executive of SEDOS, have observed that there is a new field of concern among those involved, that is 'the need for some coordination' and cooperation at international level among Mission Institutes. It seems that SEDOS being a neutral Institution could play an important role in this field. Therefore, the members of the Executive are listening attentively to opinions and suggestions.

The digital world is expanding and SEDOS has to invest more resources on the Internet. New hardware and software are needed to offer a quality service. We need to retrain the office personnel to manage the basic tasks of maintaining the Homepage without having to depend on outside help, as well as the ordinary tasks and to manage and work effectively with the wide Database SEDOS posses.

A new Homepage design would facilitate the creation of a 'Forum' open to the members to exchange short missionary experiences. Information bulletins could be made available to members....

These are only a few of the possibilities open to us. But of course, all this has a cost and material resources are needed as well as commitment on the part of the Religious Congregations members of SEDOS to achieve the goal. Some Organizations, mainly *Misereor*, *Missio Aachen* and *Missio Munich* are already providing help to SEDOS activities, but we invite all our Members to help find more means – voluntary personnel and/or monetary contributions – towards the goal of providing a better service to the cause of Mission.

There are many Missionary Congregations that are not members of SEDOS. Maybe our members could – in their contacts – encourage them to join in our efforts to serve the people of God.

Respectfully,

Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP
SEDOS Executive Director



Missionary Institute London

The Missionary Institute, London, is pleased to offer the following courses to people involved in any form of mission activity in the world.

Current Courses: (February and September intakes)	
MA in Peace and Justice <i>(3 semesters)</i>	<i>This well established MA offers insights and new approaches to human areas where Peace and Justice and Integrity of Creation are needed.</i>
MA in Mission Studies <i>(3 semesters)</i>	<i>A popular MA that tackles the views and concepts of Mission in the 21st century.</i>
Diploma Missiology <i>(2 semesters)</i>	<i>The diploma offers possibilities to both understand and transmit Gospel values in multicultural and multi-faith societies.</i>

New Courses from September 2004	
MA in CHRISTIAN Leadership <i>(3 semesters)</i>	<i>This MA provides a sound theoretical and skill-based approach to work as a church leader.</i>
MA in PASTORAL Theology <i>(2 semesters)</i>	<i>This MA equips students with a sound theoretical approach and practical skills to work in contextual pastoral care.</i>
Diploma in Evangelization <i>(2 semesters)</i>	<i>The understanding of evangelization in recent years has undergone many changes particularly in the context of economic and political situations. This course will examine those changes and find today's basis for evangelization.</i>
Diploma in Mission Spirituality <i>(2 semesters)</i>	<i>Evangelization flows from a deep personal conviction. This course provides a sound foundation for mission, taking into account the challenges of today's world.</i>

All enquiries should be directed to
 The Registrar - Missionary Institute London
 Holcombe House, The Ridgeway, London NW7 4HY,
Tel: +44 (0)20 8906 1893 — E-mail: mil@mdx.ac.uk

Coming Events

SEDOS Seminar

Migration and the Mission of the Church

3/7 May 2005

**“Casa Divin Maestro”
- Ariccia (RM) -**

- More details will follow -

Working Group

Tuesday, 18 January, Bible and Mission Group 15:30 at SEDOS



Marry Christmas and Happy New Year