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## *Editorial*

### ***He is Risen and we are His witnesses to the World!***

A Happy and Blessed Easter to all our readers!

It is the Spirit of the Risen Lord who shapes and strengthens us. It is the same Spirit who gives us 'the experience of faith and moves us to proclaim what we believe, not only what we know'. Thus argues *Sebastiano D'Ambra, PIME*, in his essay on "**Missionary Spirituality. Shaping the Formation Process**". Our proclamation has to come from a deep spiritual life of faith.

*Judette Gallares, RC*, views Communication as one of the areas that challenges missionary experience today. In "**Spirituality and the Culture's Understanding of Self in the Diverse Contexts of Mission**" Judette speaks of relating and relationship and of the need to understand our own identity and that of the others in order to communicate.

*Fr Jean-Claude Djereke* speaks to us about his views on "**Mission et Inculturation**". He quotes and analyzes Mgr Marion de Brésillac '*Dès que vous dégénérez en cure et évêque, vous ne méritez plus d'être appelé missionnaire*'.... Without real inculturation the mission could become an agent of division between world-zones of influence and patronage.

With *Ignace Bertin, OP*, we look at the issue of cultures from the perspective of globalization. "**L'Europe, les chrétiens et la mondialisation**" analyzes the role that we as Christians play and should play in this trend of economic globalization and how we can infuse the spirit of the Gospel into it through the preferential option for the poor.

*Satoru Ohara, SJ*, guides us through a panoramic view of Japanese culture in order to discover and understand better the process of the implantation of Christian life in Japan. "**Mentalité japonaise traditionnelle et christianisme: Rencontre de deux cultures**" argues for a mission that promotes 'witness and encounter' between Japan and Christ rather than the transplantation of Christian models of life.

Last among our Easter choices is the article by *Lazar Stanislaus, SVD*, on the **Dalits and the Mission of the Church**. Christ is alive when the poor can experience the manifestation of God's love and the people begin to hope in the reality of the Kingdom of God. The Dalits are but one of the minority groups to whom the Church is proclaiming this liberating message.

At the end of the Bulletin our readers will see two letters, one in English and one in French, prepared by the **SEDOS Working Group on Debt**. It is an appeal to the Congregations to join in the effort to influence the big governments of the World to include human values and human rights when addressing the policies that affect the dignity of human beings. Justice and Peace is an integral part of the Mission of the Church. Please, copy the letters and send them to the addresses supplied.

***May the Joy of the Risen LORD fill the hearts of all people.***

Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera  
SEDOS Executive Director



# *Missionary Spirituality*

## *Shaping the Formation Process*

- Sebastiano D'Ambra, P.I.M.E. -

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### **Introduction**

I am grateful to Fr Domingo Moraleda for inviting me to this gathering on the occasion of the Consecrated Life Week 2004 — to share with you my thoughts on the topic, the “Missionary Spirituality Shaping the Formation Process”.

First of all, it is important to recall that the concept of mission is changing, not only because the world is changing with all the implications that affect the Church in the modern world, but I believe the great change is because there is a new dawn: we are living a new stage of the divine presence in humanity after the perception of the “death of God”. Some authors identify this time as the post-modernization. A lot of people think we can live with technology and progress without God, but God is coming back like a boomerang. We are living now in a new epiphany. Giller Kepal in his famous book, “*La Revanche de Dieu*” says that today humanity wants to believe in God more than before. But the great problem today is to believe in “people” after the many forms of violence and division in different parts of the world. Many innocent people die because a new order in the world, created by a terrible form of globalization from above by those who are guided by the law of profit, is destroying human dignity.

In this context the “*duc in altum*” (put out into the deep) re-proposed to us by Pope John Paul II in the document “*Novo Millennio Ineunte*” is for me an invitation to rediscover the mission of the Church based on spirituality. This concept is expressed by St Paul in the Second Letter to the Corinthians (4:13). Scripture says, “*I spoke because I believed. In the same spirit of faith we also speak because we believe*”. Thus, spirituality is essentially an experience of faith, proclaiming what we believe, not only what we know. To proclaim the love of God with our life.

Looking at the history of spirituality in the Church we are touched by the many forms of spirituality that have emerged over the centuries. All of them have the following in common:

1. *The presence of the Holy Spirit* – The Holy Spirit inspires, sustains and guides the Church in the journey to the Kingdom.
2. *The centrality of Christ* – following Christ as disciples in the daily events of life. It requires a continuous effort of “*metanoia*” (transformation) based on the event of the Baptism.
3. *The life in the Church* – living as part of the Church, in communion, with the spirit of “*agape*”
4. *The eschatological life* – waiting for the coming of the Lord in history, in the spirit of astonishment and trust in the coming of Kingdom (2 Cor 5:7).

Indeed, the history of spirituality has a variety of approaches and expressions. Along the centuries the Holy Spirit has helped to start new forms of spiritualities according to the needs of the Church and of the world. God never stops surprising us, inspiring men and women to follow God in the different stages of life. The problem starts when we do not allow a spirituality to follow the dynamic presence of the Spirit, and, much more dangerous when members who live different forms of spirituality fight each other as the Apostles did when they were struggling to take the first place near to Jesus.

Indeed the Church has suffered dark days from inside and outside and today we are here to reflect on *missionary spirituality shaping the formation process*. In doing this we are focusing on Asia. Asia offers us the best challenge to rethink the concept of mission and spirituality and it offers us a new insight to rediscover the centrality of the spirituality of dialogue and, as a consequence, the centrality of the spirituality of life-in-dialogue as an habitat to shape the formation process.

Allow me to develop these points starting from my personal experience.

## I. Personal Experience

I arrived in The Philippines with Fr Salvatore Carzedda in February 1977 with the hope to have an experience of inter-religious dialogue. There was a political turmoil. The country was under Martial Law and the dictatorship of President Marcos. The PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions) community was in big trouble. Three of our companions had been deported and one was hiding in Manila. The military accused them of rebellion because of their life and ministry among the poor in Tondo. Church people working with the poor suffered the same fate. Fr Salvatore and I met the community and we were briefed on the situation in the country, especially the plight of the poor and human rights violations. We were not discouraged. We were challenged and inspired by their stories about the life and aspirations of the people, the stand of the Church and we wanted to help those who suffered most.

For a while we forgot our initial desire to have a special dialogue experience among people of other religions and we volunteered to be assigned to Tondo, the most difficult area of PIME. But God has a way of guiding us back to our "first love". Our local Superior, unaware of our initial dream, accompanied us to our new mission in Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte. We landed in Zamboanga City and realized that we were confronted with another reality. We took the small "*lancha*" (motor boat) that evening from Zamboanga City to Siocon. I was awake the whole night. The people travelling with us were curious and asked questions about us. Who were these two young foreign priests? We were encountering another culture, another people and were excited. It was our "baptism" to the Filipino mission. We reached Siocon before daybreak. We had to jump with all our things onto a smaller boat. That was not difficult for me. I was young and full of energy. Being born in a village near the sea in Italy, to jump from one boat to another was part of my enjoyment with my companions during my childhood. Soon I realized that adventures were part of a new reality.

I was assigned to one area of the mission of Siocon near the forest and I became close to the people: Christians, Muslims and Subanens.

Recalling that time I feel I must say that I was touched by the life of the Subanens. I tried to understand and share their struggle and aspirations, but the Lord had other plans for me. The presence of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the area of Siocon and the continuous encounter between them and the military had created a climate of feud and violence that was felt strongly by all, especially Muslims and Christians.

One day I told my four PIME companions assigned with me to Siocon that I wanted to have an immersion experience with the Muslims in Bucana to become a "bridge" of Peace in the midst of the conflict.

This was the beginning of a journey of no return. I consider this a spiritual journey that gradually unfolded before me, step by step.

One day I was introduced to a Muslim leader of Bucana. He was respected by the Muslims in the area because he belonged to a royal family, a Tausog from Jolo. We became friends after that first encounter. This friendship opened the way to many other relationships with Muslim friends. Each day offered new discoveries and new challenges. In the silence of my heart my daily prayer was: "O Lord, what am I to do? Why am I here? What is my next step?". I went to live in the house of one of the relatives of my Muslim friend, shared their simple life, listened to their stories and aspirations, and offered help in any way I could. I was happy, but still felt a stranger in the place. The presence of many children inspired me to build a little *nipa* hut near the river and the sea to gather them and I called it "Muslim-Christian Brotherhood". The Muslim community of Bucana offered the property to me. This was my first initiative in a Muslim community. The location was so accessible that people passing by could stop and talk to me. The "Muslim-Christian Brotherhood" centre soon became a meeting place for all. The experience lasted for a few months until the military from the checkpoint nearby threatened me because I would defend the people from their abuses. There were many incidents of military abuses especially at night when they were drunk and would enter Muslim houses and harass the women. They would also take things from their houses, especially food and their whole night's catch of fish. Many times I intervened and protested against this harassment. The military tried to silence me and later on openly threatened me. I was advised to leave the area. This was not the end, rather it was my initiation.

On 28 December 1979, the MNLF rebels attacked a "*lancha*" (boat) of passengers going to Zamboanga. We had just celebrated Christmas. That was a terrible experience for all of us in Siocon. The rebels forced the operator of the boat to proceed to an isolated seashore near Siocon where many were killed and about twenty others, mostly girls and business people, were kidnapped and taken to the mountains. I experienced an internal struggle, but I put aside my "whys". I hurriedly went to the Christian families of the victims imploring them to avoid any form of retaliation. I met the Muslim leaders of Bucana to find solutions and to ask for the release of the hostages.

The old prejudices between Christians and Muslims were reawakened and became very palpable in

Siocon. We could feel the tension on the road and in the market place. I started to question my own involvement and was tempted to abandon my dream of being a “bridge”. In addition, the Christian community started questioning my presence among the Muslims, telling me, “You have been sent to Siocon for the Christians and not for the Muslims!”. Others said: “It is useless to continue your dialogue with the Muslims”. They tried to convince me to abandon my dream of dialogue with the Muslims with their many arguments.

There is a part of me that refuses to surrender in the face of difficulty. I was convinced this was the will of God and the right thing to do. I processed the events in silence and prayer. As in the past, difficulties and obstacles have a way of challenging me to find new ways and means. I went to see my first Muslim friend, to share my pain and troubles. He told me: “Father, you can live with my relatives on the other side of the river. That is my land, we will protect you, you are already part of our community. We know and respect you. We know that you are not here to convert us, but to be our friend”.

Yes, I was waiting to hear those words of encouragement. One day, I crossed the river with my little bag and went to live in the house of a married daughter of my Muslim friend. The husband was a good man, who was always ready to help me. Through him I met the community of about a hundred families. I became one of them. The place was beautiful, near the sea, and the houses were built under the coconut trees. But the area had no potable water and the people were very poor.

I was the “father” of all, people were proud to have me with them. They would bring their visitors to my house or invite me. My days were occupied with caring for the sick, treating wounds and infections, and giving them medicine for their illnesses. Although I am not a doctor and only know basic first aid, most of my patients got well. The secret must have been that the medicine I gave was mixed with a lot of love and prayers. I began to respect and appreciate how the Muslims prayed. I realized the importance of these attitudes of respect and appreciation in dialogue. In dialogue we have to give space in our hearts to those we encounter. When we listen with the heart we begin to see the beauty in people and events even in the midst of conflicts. In times of crisis and suffering not only the worst and the violence emerge, but also the best and goodness in people.

We know that people of any culture and religion can express feelings of hatred and love. In times of conflict, suffering and calamity, we have to help people, especially the poor, express their love, and channel it for positive action. This will give us courage to stand against hatred and violence. Usually people react to violence with violence, but if we have the courage to respond with love, we discover the power of God’s love. These things became clearer to me while living with the poor and spending time with them.

It was there among the simple and poor Muslims that I heard the voice telling me the deeper reason why a Christian has to be in dialogue with Muslims and with all the peoples and groups of other cultures and religions.

“DIALOGUE STARTS FROM GOD AND BRINGS PEOPLE BACK TO GOD”, these were the words that rang in my ears. This message gave me the courage and conviction to continue my mission of peace. This spiritual experience became the foundation of my mission and has become a great source of joy and inspiration for me to go on and share my mission of dialogue with others. This profound understanding of dialogue brought me to the source and fountain of dialogue and gave me the deep motivation to pursue living a life-in-dialogue with my brother and sister Muslim. It is only when we discover the ordinary in the deeper part of our being that they become great and extraordinary. They have power to change our life and we must nurture this transformation in the way we live our new transformed life. People of all religious persuasions are called to rediscover the God of dialogue. The Christians are invited to read the Holy Bible focusing on the basic Christian concept of love; the Muslims to read the Holy Qur’an focusing on the basic concept of surrendering to Allah, understanding the deeper meaning of mercy and compassion. The same spirit of dialogue can be offered to people of other living faiths. All of us are called to rethink deeply the meaning of compassion and other dialogical elements of our faith tradition.

I think my experience is like the on-going reflection of the Church about dialogue. A continuous journey guided by the signs of the times. It was in the spirit of Vatican II that the Church entered the “era of dialogue”.

## II. Spirituality of Dialogue

There is an on-going reflection in the Church about the spirit of dialogue, inter-religious dialogue and the spirituality of dialogue.

Pope Paul VI was the one who officially introduced the word dialogue in the Church at the beginning by using the Latin word COLLOQUIUM in the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964). One part of this Encyclical focuses on the basic principle of The Dialogue for the Christians. We present here only the headings of the parts of the document, in which one can perceive the *spirit of dialogue* that has to guide Christian “dialogue”.

- dialogue is a message to deliver and a communication to offer.
- dialogue is found in the very plan of God.
- dialogue is relationship in the Trinity.
- dialogue is God's love.
- dialogue is motivated by love.
- dialogue without limits of ulterior motives.
- dialogue as a free offer.
- dialogue to all who are sincere.
- dialogue today even if it is difficult.
- dialogue to the world according to the level of people.
- dialogue through understanding, esteem, goodness.
- dialogue characteristics: clarity, meekness, trust, prudence.
- dialogue leads to discovering elements of truth in others and makes us wise teachers.
- dialogue teaches us that before speaking it is necessary to listen, with the heart.
- dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith.
- dialogue with all men of good will.
- dialogue as a great challenge for the Church that has the mission to be seed, leaven, salt and light of the world.

These points of *Ecclesiam Suam* are considered as the spirit of dialogue. Vatican II and other documents of the Church have deepened and expanded this initial sharing of the spirit of dialogue. Now the Church is guiding us to a deeper stage of dialogue helping us to understand the concept of spirituality of dialogue.

The forms of dialogue encouraged by the Church are:

- a) The ***dialogue of life***, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.
- b) The ***dialogue of action***, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.
- c) The ***dialogue of theological exchange***, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.
- d) The ***dialogue of religious experience***, where people, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.

When we talk about ***spirituality of dialogue*** in the Church today we are normally guided by a theological reflection that helps us to understand the mystery and events of salvation as the expression of love in relation/encounter/dialogue: starting from the Trinitarian relation – the love of God *Ad Intra*, to other forms of love and relation *Ad Extra*, like the Creation, the Revelation, the Incarnation, etc.

Meanwhile, talking of *dialogue of spiritualities* we are normally encouraged to exchange dialogue experiences between people of different religions in a positive way. This is considered a form of dialogue. The same concept can even be inside the Church, sharing the richness of different spiritualities.

The continuous theological reflections, experiences and the signs of the times are guiding the Church today to deepen the concept of spirituality of dialogue. But some talk only about forms of dialogue without spirituality. From the time the Church started to emphasize the concept of dialogue, from Vatican II up to now, the mission dimension of the Church has been affected. For some it is a time of crises of the mission. In reality we have to consider this time as a special time for the mission of the Church and consider dialogue an integral part of the mission of the Church.

### ***A. Mission and Inter-religious Dialogue in Asia***

When Pope John Paul II travelled to New Delhi to entrust his Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA) to the Asian Church on 6 November 1999. The welcome given him by the Indian people was marred by protests against his Visit from some Hindu groups. These incidents, though sad, challenge the Church to reflect on the different situations where the Christian message is not welcome in Asia. After two thousand years of Christianity, Asia still finds it difficult to welcome the Church's mission, in spite of the fact that Jesus' message is already present in Asia in a real though mysterious way.

In this context, EA offers a new opportunity to rediscover the Church's mission here and to understand the spiritual aspirations of the different peoples of Asia. The special focus here is to understand the latest document on the Church in Asia as an occasion to reflect on spirituality in Asia and the need for a missionary approach that give great attention to missionary spirituality.

In seven chapters, *EA* offers a good synthesis of the teaching of the Church and of her concern for Asia's peoples today. The document reminds us, "*Asia is the earth's largest continent and is home to nearly two-thirds of the world's population... The most striking feature of the continent is the variety of its peoples who are heirs to ancient cultures, religions and traditions*" (n. 6). In this situation, "*the great question now facing the Church in Asia is how to share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as the gift containing all gifts, namely, the Good News of Jesus Christ*" (n. 19).

*EA* emphasizes that Jesus is not a "foreigner" to Asia, where he was born. In fact, Asian people generally have a great respect for Jesus. The difficulty for many in the world, and especially in Asia, is, instead, to accept Jesus from those who oppressed them in the past through colonization, and who now continue this oppression through globalization. It is still difficult for them to understand the part played in all this by the Catholic Church both in the past and today. This perception was reflected in Gandhi's approach, who expressed much respect for Jesus and his message of love, but less for Christianity in general.

Aware of all this, *EA* says: "*The Synod was also an occasion to recognize the ancient religious traditions and civilizations, the profound philosophies and the wisdom which have made Asia what it is today... In recalling the Catholic community's humble condition, as well as the weakness of its members, the Synod was also a call to conversion, so that the Church in Asia might become ever more worthy of the graces continually being offered by God*" (n. 4). This "humility" of the Church in Asia is a good starting point for genuine dialogue in Asia today.

The light of the Gospel is present in the life of the peoples of Asia, in a mysterious way, although not as we might expect. The statistics, which tell us that Catholics in Asia are less than 2%, cannot be taken as a measure of the presence of God's plan of salvation in this continent. Interreligious dialogue helps us to extend the concept of Community (*koinonia*) to all God's creatures and to believe that the transformation (*metanoia*) of the people's hearts happens according to God's own time and style.

After two thousand years of Christianity, the Church has to accept that God is moving in Asia in a way that is not according to the understanding of the Christians. This can be said without in any way diminishing the value of the missionary zeal of the past, which has also mysteriously entered the life of the peoples of Asia and has become light of their light.

Nevertheless, it can be considered providential that Asian cultures and religions are still alive today. It means that in a spirit of dialogue we can be allowed gradually to discover the hidden mystery of this reality, and thus to share in the richness of God's own dialogue, as this develops in the encounter between the Oriental religious experience and the experience nurtured in the West.

The three major statements about dialogue are in *EA*'s fifth chapter, itself entitled "Communion and Dialogue for Mission".

## 1. Examination of Conscience and Courage

"*All this demands of the Catholic community a sincere examination of conscience, the courage to seek reconciliation and a renewed commitment to dialogue*" (n. 24). Christians are invited to begin from a "sincere examination of conscience". This also means rethinking the Christian missionary approach in Asia. A lot has been written on this area, but the results are still limited, because Christians need to start from the life and aspirations of Asia's people. Christians have to be grateful to *EA* because it has emphasized Asian spirituality, encouraging Christians to see in it an important element of dialogue. Some of *EA*'s statements on this point are especially striking:

- "*The people (of Asia) are more persuaded by holiness of life than intellectual argument*" (n. 42).
- "*A genuinely religious person readily wins respect and a following in Asia. Prayer, fasting and various forms of asceticism are held in high regard. Renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity and silence are considered great values by the followers of all religions*" (n. 23).
- "*People in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers and institutional administrators but as men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:5)*" (n. 43).

Many other quotations could be listed here, but these are enough to make an examination of conscience. One has to accept the mystery of God's plan and be more humble in the theological reflection, giving more space to spirituality. Christians are invited to see in this the way to dialogue: "*Their silent example of poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-sacrifice in obedience, can become an eloquent witness capable of touching all people of good will and leading to a fruitful dialogue with surrounding cultures and religions, and with the poor and the defenseless*" (n. 44).

*EA* calls for "*the courage to seek reconciliation and renewed commitments to dialogue*". Thanks be to God, though, there are also many examples of the "courage" that *EA* calls for, Muslims and Christians educated in an atmosphere of suspicion and hatred, once they start the journey to genuine inter-religious dialogue, are able to discover the beauty of this new pilgrimage with people of other cultures and religions.

## 2. Loving Origin

*“The desire for dialogue, however, is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples: it is an essential part of the Church’s... salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit”* (n. 29).

EA emphasizes that Christians are not in dialogue only to seek peace, but the *“dialogue... is... an essential part of the Church’s mission because it has its origin in the Father’s loving dialogue of Salvation”* (*ibid.*). The document does not enter into the many theological aspects by which our work must always be guided, out of respect for the sensibilities of Christians, so that by a gradual growth into inculturated forms of expressing the faith people are *“neither confused nor scandalized”* (n. 22).

If Christians really believe that *“dialogue is an essential part of the Church’s mission”* today, they have to conclude that mission has to change, especially in Asia. In fact it would not be correct to say that dialogue is already considered an essential part of mission in Asia, or that most Christians will be able to say that it is still at the planning stage. EA instead emphasizes that dialogue is essential, and adds this challenge: *“The Church... must be open to the new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia”* (n. 20).

Indeed, Christians are at the beginning of this new pilgrimage that can be considered an adventure of dialogue, because they have to be ready to face with joy, the new *“surprising ways”* mentioned by EA. What is important is to be guided by faith and to move in dialogue because we believe in it, not so much because we expect immediate results. In this adventure the vision of God’s own dialogue must enlighten our path.

## 3. Emptiness and Silence

*“The dialogue which the Church proposes is grounded on the logic of the incarnation”*. The incarnation of Christ is a mysterious self-emptying (*kenosis*) of God (Phil 2:5-11). This point can help the Church deepen her reflection on dialogue in Asia, focusing on the element of *kenosis* as important in continuing a positive theological and spiritual search with people of all religions in Asia.

This will be possible if Christians take to heart the example of John the Baptist who went to the desert to prepare the way for the Lord, through preaching conversion of heart. In the desert of our own lives, in silence and prayer, Christians have to find what the way of the Lord in Asia is. Meanwhile, they continue their mission of sharing God’s love through Jesus Christ, and the people of other religions continue on their way, in an attitude of mutual respect, appreciation and mutual compassion. To the Christian the document says that they must *“... retain a clear Christian identity in order to be a Christian leaven in Asian society”* (n. 37), *“sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit”* (n. 25).

### ***B. Points of the Church’s Teaching on “The Spirituality of Dialogue”***

On 9 November 2001, the Holy Father addressed the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The Council brought together 15 Cardinals, two Patriarchs and 29 Bishops to prepare a document on *“The Spirituality of Dialogue”*. It will offer guidelines to Catholics for dialogue with members of other religions. The Holy Father disagreed with the evaluation of the events of 11 September as the clash of religions. He said that this would be *“to falsify religion itself. Believers know that, far from doing evil, they are obliged to do good, to work to alleviate human suffering, to build together a just and harmonious world... it is all the more urgent for believers themselves to foster relations characterized by openness and trust”* (nn. 1, 2). The Holy Father also spoke about the need to work for peace through Interreligious dialogue. *“We realize, in fact, that peace will not come as the result of our own efforts; it is not something that the world can give. It is a gift from the Lord. And to receive it we have to prepare our hearts. When conflicts arise, peace can only come through a process of reconciliation, and this requires both humility and generosity”* (n. 2). The Holy Father on that occasion focused his sharing on Spirituality of Dialogue saying:

*“I make these brief remarks bearing in mind the theme chosen for your Planetary Assembly, The Spirituality of Dialogue. You have chosen to reflect on the spiritual inspiration, which ought to sustain those engaged in inter-religious dialogue. When we Christians consider the nature of God, as revealed in Scripture and above all in Jesus Christ, we realize that the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the perfect and eminent model of dialogue among human beings. Revelation teaches us that God has always been in dialogue with mankind, a dialogue which permeates the Old Testament and reaches its climax in the last days, when God speaks directly through his Son (cf. Heb 1:2). Consequently, in inter-religious dialogue we must take to heart the exhortation of Saint Paul: In your minds you must be the same as Jesus Christ (Phil 2:5). The Apostle then goes on to underline the humility of Jesus, his kenosis. It is in the measure that, like Christ, we empty*



ourselves that we shall truly be able to open our hearts to others and walk with them as fellow pilgrims towards the destiny that God has prepared for us.

“This reference to the *kenosis* of the Son of God serves to remind us that dialogue is not always easy or without suffering. Misunderstandings arise, prejudice can stand in the way of common accord, and the hand offered in friendship may even be refused. A true spirituality of dialogue has to take such situations into account and provide the motivation for persevering, even in the face of opposition or when the results appear to be meager. There will always be a need for great patience, for the fruits will come, but in due time (cf. Ps. 1:3); when those who were sowing in tears will sing as they reap (cf. Ps. 126:5).

“At the same time, contact with the followers of other religions is often a source of great joy and encouragement. It leads us to discover how God is at work in the minds and hearts of people, and indeed in their rites and customs. What God has shown in this way can, through dialogue, be purified and perfected (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n.17). The spirituality of dialogue will therefore attentively seek to discern the workings of the Holy Spirit, and will give thanks for the fruits of love, joy and peace that the Spirit brings”.

If we make a review of literature about mission and spirituality you seldom find a direct presentation on the spirituality of dialogue although there are already a lot of authors talking about dialogue and inter-religious dialogue. Now the new challenge of dialogue for the Christian is to deepen the mystery of incarnation.

The document *EA* says: “The dialogue which the Church proposes is grounded on the topic of Incarnation”.

The Holy Father in the same line of reflection talked about “*kenosis*” self-emptying (cf. Phil 2:5,7), saying: “*Like Christ, we empty ourselves that we shall truly be able to open our hearts to others*”.

### III. Shaping the Formation Process through a Spirituality of Life-in-Dialogue

What we have shared up to now shows that the Church is answering the signs of the times, making a deeper reflection about the concept of mission, inter-religious dialogue, spirituality of dialogue. We just presented a few points of reflection with the hope that we are able to harmonize all these new signs of God in the world and in the Church today, not as observers, but actors and instruments in God’s hand.

This hope grew in a spirit of mutuality between the world and the Church. This is possible for the Church if we are always attentive to the newness of the Gospel in a process of “conversion” as Pope John XXIII said: “*Ecclesia semper reformanda*” (The Church must keep on reforming herself).

This reforming attitude for the Church is possible if we apply in our life and mission the “style” of God, that is dialogue, that, for me, is love in action and silence through an harmonious approach of spirituality that we call here “spirituality of life-in-dialogue” in the spirit of INCARNATION.

#### How?

First of all through a process of purification. I am proud to know as a Christian that 12 March 2000, was a solemn celebration of the “*Day of Pardon*” led by Pope John Paul II in St Peter’s Basilica. It was the first Sunday of Lent. For the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, a pardon was asked in an official and solemn way, for the sins of the Church. The sacred liturgy began in front of Michelangelo’s statue of the *Pietà*, where the Holy Father said that the Church, like Mary, embraces her crucified Saviour and asks the Father for pardon. Then the liturgy of the Saints was sung as the penitential procession moved towards the Altar of the Confession, where the crucifix was placed along with seven candles which were lighted during the request for forgiveness. The confession of sins and the request for pardon, in the form of a solemn prayer of the faithful, took place after the homily. There was a confession:

- of sins committed in the service of truth,
- of sins that have harmed Christian unity,
- of sins against the people of Israel,
- of sins against love, peace and respect for cultures and religions,
- of sins against the dignity of women and the unity of the human race and,
- of sins related to the fundamental rights of the person.

Each category was introduced by a representative of the Roman Curia and was followed by the Holy Father’s prayer and the chanting of the triple *Kyrie eleison*. Afterwards the Pope kissed the crucifix as a sign of veneration; then, he implored for pardon. Christians have to feel privileged to have lived up to this time

and witnessed the Church having the courage to say on a solemn occasion like that: “Let us forgive and ask for forgiveness”. In this way, the Church underscored the spirit of “**purifying the memory**”.

Purifying the memory is the first step to enter a process of formation not only at the level of the universal Church, but also on the level of the local Church as well as at the level of religious life, and personal life. Going back to my experience I made my own journey of purification before entering into dialogue with the Muslims and becoming fully committed to dialogue as a special charism of my life. I had to overcome my “superiority complex” as an Italian, as a Christian in my relation with the Muslims, and accept the mistakes of the past committed by Christians. I was able to live among Muslims, alone, in a very simple way, ready to be misunderstood by Muslims and Christians, ready to be threatened by the military, ready to give priority to prayer and silence ... all these stages of purification helped me, as I mentioned before, to rediscover, at a deeper level, the God of love in the midst of poverty and conflict. It was there among the Muslims and the poor that I understood fully the meaning of: “*Dialogue starts from God and brings people back to God*”.

Yes, God is in dialogue with me, as well as with any other person: Christian or Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu, with those who trust in God and those who are against God. Indeed when we enter this understanding of dialogue there are no more obstacles to stop us from believing in it. With this spirit I started the Silsilah Dialogue Movement in 1984, still under Martial Law, aware of the suspicion of the military and even of some Muslim and Christian leaders.

Since the beginning I emphasized the spiritual dimension of dialogue as a deep and better way to have a sustainable dialogue with the Muslims, even though the normal understanding of dialogue at that time was very different.

Together Muslims and Christians in Silsilah understood that it is possible to live a life-in-dialogue starting from the major belief of our faith, that a deeper dialogue is not based on “strategies” but rather on a spirituality of dialogue, that we cannot talk about dialogue if we do not have an experience of dialogue, that peace can be achieved only through a process of personal transformation that brings a social transformation that creates the habitat for a genuine Culture of Dialogue, Path to Peace.

My understanding of the spirituality of life-in-dialogue is an experience of faith, which finds inspiration in God’s dialogue. Thus, we are encouraged to build our spiritual life on dialogue because this is the “style” of God. The entry points of this spirituality can be expressed in a schematic way as follows:

**First Stage: God takes the initiative of dialogue: Call of God.** We are just instruments of God’s dialogue to share God’s love. In this stage one can expect suffering from inside and outside and, in a process of purification, see God: “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Mt 5:8).

**Second Stage: Answer God’s will through a life-in-dialogue: Our Answer.** This means that one starts a new adventure of dialogue guided by God. This becomes possible and sustainable, through the *four pillars of life-in-dialogue*

- Dialogue in/with God
- Dialogue with self
- Dialogue with others
- Dialogue with creation.

**Third Stage: Our mission in life as a living dialogue: Our Vocation.** In this stage one can be effective if he/she lives fully a life-in-dialogue. It is only in this stage, in the process of growing in the four pillars of life-in-dialogue, that one can be ready to enter in dialogue with all, including people of other cultures and religions. We have to share in the spirit of H O P E.

\* **Hospitality** – Give space in our heart to others and find ways to develop the attitude of hospitality in society.

\* **Openness** – Listen and explore new signs of the times with open mind and heart.

\* **Prayer** – Continue to pray as a deeper form of dialogue, nurtured by meditation.

\* **Experience** – Share our experiences of life-in-dialogue and help others to do the same.

Thus, inter-religious dialogue becomes part of a commitment if one lives life-in-dialogue and if the different forms of dialogue (dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange, and dialogue of religious experiences) are sustained spiritually.

Unfortunately, the usual way to enter inter-religious dialogue and even to work for peace is out of fear

of violence or a specific problem of relations between people of different religions.

It is true that often tension and conflict are occasions for deeper reflection and one can enter into dialogue with people of other faiths out of a specific need. This also happened to me but when we are in special need of building inter-religious dialogue and peace we have to ask ourselves:

*Why and how can I be in dialogue?*

***Why and how can I be of help in building peace?***

I know a lot of people who, after the first enthusiasm to enter into inter-religious dialogue, got discouraged. Why? We must be convinced that we are not in dialogue to get results but because we believe and live it. Along the way results will come, and, if they do not come, the witness aspect that helps others to follow us remains.

## **Conclusion**

Based on my presentation I wish to say that the formation process of any vocation in life can be sustainable if we are able to build up a few, clear, goals for a life founded on spirituality. It means an experience of faith.

I have emphasized the spirituality of dialogue more because I am convinced that this is the source of any spirituality that brings us to contemplate the mystery of the Trinity and find inspiration in any expression manifested by the Trinitarian love in dialogue with humanity. This is our mission and the mission of the Church.

Finally, I believe that suffering and martyrdom help to cement the commitment and the formation process of many. This also happened to us in Silsilah when Fr Salvatore Carzedda was killed in Zamboanga City, on 20 May 1992, in his mission of dialogue and peace in the movement. It was on that occasion when we, Muslims and Christians together, said "*Padayon*" (go on) in spite of difficulties and fear.

Thus, Padayon!

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## **Note**

\* Fr Sebastiano D'Ambra is a member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME). He was born in Sicily, Italy, in 1942. He joined the PIME Congregation in Milan and was ordained in 1966. His first assignment was to the Minor Seminary, as educator and formator. He came to The Philippines in 1977 and worked in Mindanao. From 1981 to 1983, he studied in Rome at the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies. After returning to The Philippines he was elected Regional Superior of PIME missionaries for eight years.

In 1986 he founded the Silsilah Dialogue Movement and in 1990 was appointed as Executive Secretary of the Bishops' Conference for Inter-Religious Dialogue. In 1992, when one of his companions, Fr Salvatore Carzedda was killed by the radical Muslim fundamentalists, he had to leave The Philippines, and (as he himself says) went into exile in Italy for three years. At present, he is Coordinator of the Bishops' Conference for Christian-Muslim Dialogue and the President of the Silsilah Dialogue Movement.

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# *Spirituality and the Culture's Understanding of Self in the Diverse Contexts of Mission*

- Judette Gallares, RC\* -

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## **Introduction**

One of the challenges missionaries experience today in ministering to peoples of other cultures lies in the area of communication. This is so because of the complex nature of cultures of which language is only a small part. Communication is not just about speaking, conversing, or giving information but more essentially about relating. Part of our nature as human beings is to be in relationship — with self, others, God, and the whole of creation. The system of insight through which we begin to understand our selfhood includes identity awareness, meaning making, and world-view. This is intricately connected to the culture's system of communication, which goes beyond language and includes symbolic, literary, scientific and other expressions. These systems of insight and of communication are connected as well to the system of action, which include social, relational and technical patterns and practices and to the system of values, which involves norms, priorities, criteria, elements of judgment and ideology. The “Babel metaphor” is not just about human language but more so about human understanding — how we as humans are challenged to find ways of communicating the depths that unite us with one another in the midst of cultural barriers and differences.

We begin hurdling these barriers through our understanding of what selfhood is in the diverse cultural contexts. As a backdrop for the exploration of the contrasting ways of understanding the self in both East and West, I would like to begin with a discussion of the themes that are central to the thought of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan as interpreted by Professor Kevin O'Shea in the context of spirituality. Lacan's theory contributes to our greater understanding of the dynamics and processes of conversion to selfhood, which includes an experience of “breakdown” and “breakthrough”. Then I will explore several cross-cultural and multicultural studies on the understanding of the “self” and its many levels in the Asian culture. In doing so, I shall attempt to show the relationship between spirituality and the culture's understanding of “self”.

## **The Cry — A Human Experience of Breakdown/Breakthrough**

In order to understand the process of conversion to selfhood, we need to examine the human experience of breakdown/breakthrough, which I believe is integral to the process itself. I am aware of many theories describing the process of discovering and establishing one's sense of identity, but in this essay, I would like to propose one which will initially be based on the insights of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose theory of experience is influenced by structural theories of language. Although Lacan is a European, I have chosen his theory because his description of the dynamics of human experience seems to resonate with the Asian psyche.

His basic theory holds that the “cry” is prior to all “words”, and that the “cry is primordial”, without which, “the words mean nothing”.<sup>1</sup> Kevin O'Shea in an unpublished study<sup>2</sup> on Lacan cites three themes that are central to the thought of the French psychoanalyst. They are: (1) the existence of the human being as a ‘speaking subject’; (2) the unresolved and unresolvable character of this ‘speaking subject’; and (3) the possibility of passing beyond this ‘speaking subject’ into the roots of human existence.

First, the existence of the human being as a ‘speaking subject’. According to O'Shea, Lacan begins his thought with a profound conviction about the finitude of the human person, who enters this world not as *un homme*, but as *une hommelette* (a little human being), marked with a fundamental lack — a lived finitude. This little human being is “fundamentally in need, and this need translates itself into a want (*demande*) — which is a want to be wanted by a wanter, that is, to be recognized by someone who possesses the lack and recognizes the lack”. For Lacan, this state of *demande* is not just developmental. Rather, it is there from the origins of lived life, and remains there as long as life is lived. Later growth does not take it away. In Lacan's thought, “the first entry into this *demande* is the *entry into language*, into the use of signifiers to express towards another the basic state of want that no signifiers can ever adequately express or respond to”. In

other words there isn't any language that is capable of completely and perfectly expressing everything one wants. Even the word one makes up cannot carry all. It is out of this experience of trying to describe what one wants by way of images that *language*, or the attempt to speak, emerges. This is where the 'speaking subject' called the *moi* (me) originates.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, the unresolved and unresolvable character of this 'speaking subject'. The trouble with the *moi* is that it cannot adequately express oneself. Like other structures, the self-concept of the *moi* does not carry everything. In this limited 'speaking subject', two things are locked into conflict: desire and frustration. There is desire for adequate self-expression and self-communication, at the root of which is "a desire for an adequate self shared with an adequate self". It is a desire for total sharing, but the *moi* cannot get it all totally. The person underneath is not coming through completely. It is basically a desire for what Lacan calls a *jouissance* or an exhilarating experience of enjoyment in adequate self-communication. This *jouissance* one cannot find. In a sense, language becomes a way of covering up one's limitations. When adequate self-expressions fail, one starts using representations to fill the gaps. The more one uses language to conceal, the more concealment is compounded. Frustration results from this experience. For Lacan, what actually takes place at this point is a "recurring attempt at linguistic metonymy, which breaks down to metaphor". Therefore, "the 'resolution' of this conflict, is a kind of conversion to metaphor", i.e. the use of hints, hunches and inadequate fumbblings of one's own experience of reality to another. Language, in this sense, is "a field where broken metonyms become at best metaphors". Lacan says that the linguistic structure "assures us that there is, beneath the term unconscious, something definable, accessible and objectifiable".<sup>4</sup> It is like the difference between "signification" (fully grasped meaning) and "signifiante" (a broken suggestion of a broken object). Thus, "language and communication is a faltering, slipping, shifting, veiling recognition of a misrecognition". There is "no real equation between signifier and signified ... and that the real referent of discourse cannot be clearly and adequately indicated or defined". O'Shea thinks that if this is pushed too far, the foundations of faith and culture would be gone.

O'Shea in his article mentions Antoine Vergote's study which applies this line of thinking to religious language. Vergote "is fundamentally suggesting that there are two kinds of experience referred to in the usual discussion of religious experience. One kind corresponds to metonym, *l'imaginaire*; (the imaginary one) the other kind corresponds to metaphor, *le symbolique* (symbolic system)". Vergote tends to call the first kind "sacred experience", and the second kind "religious experience". In Vergote's application, any culture that uses largely *l'imaginaire* terms to talk about holy things, binary opposites tend to appear with "gaps" between them, such as, heaven and earth; spirit and matter; soul and body and so on. Vergote suggests two ways of dealing with such a situation. "One way is to seek for some kind of God who will close the gaps for us, and bring us to one-pointed positivity, without the dichotomies. An imagined experience of unity with this God is an experience of fusion, an oceanic experience of fulfillment. This is metonym, *l'imaginaire*. Vergote calls this 'sacred experience', and concedes that much holy language stems from it".<sup>5</sup> The other way of coping with this situation is "to feel the inherent impossibility and tension in it, and within the gaps, to 'cry out' where clear words are impossible. This cry is the existential beginning of metaphor, of *le symbolique*. The experience that goes with it, he calls 'religious experience'.... All words, rituals, myths, gestures, etc., are simply metaphoric and symbolic extensions of the unique cry that emerges in this felt gap".<sup>6</sup>

Thirdly, the possibility of passing beyond this "speaking subject" into the roots of human existence. O'Shea writes that for Lacan, the "speaking subject" itself, i.e., the doubting *moi* is itself a love-object, a representation, an instance of the *imaginaire*, a paranoid projection.... He thought the *moi* was an illusion and had to be broken down, basically into an unending series of random signifiers.<sup>7</sup> If this is the case, O'Shea suggests that it is not the only way that the *Moi* can be "broken down" in ways consistent with Lacan's direction. He thinks that if we follow Lacan's critique of language and of the self (*Moi*) ... then we come to a suspicion of a lost self that is not the *moi*, an unexpressed, unarticulated, unlanguage and unrepresented centre of which the speaking subject (*Moi*) is not even aware. This reality is made unconscious by the fact of the first mirror-stage attempt at articulation which produces the *Moi*".

O'Shea suggests that we can call it the *Je* ("I") — the unconscious *Je*. Therefore the *Moi* has to break down in order for the *Je* to break through. This emergence of the *Je* can only happen by decentering and deconstructing the *Moi*. There are experiences which seem to convey this kind of breakdown of the *Moi* and breakthrough of the *Je*, such as experiences of ecstasy, catharsis, orgasm or "protopathy with the world of the poor". In all of these, O'Shea believes that there would be an exposure of the *Je*, beyond the language protection of the *Moi*. Such an exposure is crucial. "When it happens, either the *Je* is met in mutuality by another *Je* or the *Je* is left without adequate protection, and pathology begins".<sup>8</sup>

However, as noted above, there is a gap between the *Je* and the *Moi*. In this gap lies a great potential for suffering. This is the origin of personal pain, a pain that can only find its full expression in the "cry". The "cry" therefore demands that we get out of this pain, this gap, and this dichotomy. O'Shea, in departing from Lacan,

describes the significance of the “cry” in a more poignant way as he said:

It is always an address to “someone” ... to no-one in particular ... but to “Some-one”. It is an unfinished cry... It is an overture to someone who is not like the other “someones” of one’s past experience.... The cry is opening up a new kind of reality to us ... in the face of another to whom we can cry. It is the most important human experience of all, from which the final meaning of all subsequent words must come.<sup>9</sup>

This “crying” to an “Other” is the beginning of authentic prayer. Something is happening beyond words, beyond the fumbling words we might use to call the “Other”. Although Lacan did not go far enough in his theory to touch the spiritual dimension of the person, I believe that it is at this point — the “crying” to an “Other” — that conversion to selfhood happens — the point when the *Moi* breaks down and the inner forces of the self allows the *Je* to break through. However this is not a single event. It is a process, which is “the result of an ongoing series of struggles and tensions deep within ourselves to respond in truth and in action to the all-powerful love of God”.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps we can also refer to this *Je* as the core of the person, from whose depths the “Other” hears the “cry”. The crying then becomes a “kairos”, a birth, “a genesis of ‘two’ at once: of the crier and the one being cried to”. O’Shea beautifully connects the “cry” to the “Spirit”. He believes that for us “the Spirit is the Cry”. The cry of the human person, of God’s People is the *epidesis* — the calling upon — of the Spirit of God. As he puts it,

It is the Spirit, the Cry, that breaks down the absoluteness of the word and gives it back to you so that you can hear its meaning within the reality of the Cry.<sup>11</sup>

### **Selfhood in the Asian Context**

Lacan’s theory of experience which is trans-cultural will help us see the process through which human beings go beyond themselves as the “speaking subject” to touch the roots of human existence. Thus, each culture has a way of enabling its members to reach down into the very core of their existence and discover the truth of their being. For instance, let us take the case of Asia and discuss the ways in which the various cultures experience and understand the core of selfhood.

Asia, according to Aloysius Pieris, can boast of its “linguistic heterogeneity”, for the whole continent is diversified into at least seven major linguistic zones. These are the following:

The semitic zone concentrated in the western margin of Asia. The Ural-Altai group is spread all over Asiatic Russia and northwest Asia. The Indo-Iranian stock and Dravidian ethnic groupings have their cultural habitat in southern Asia. The Sino-Tibetan region, by far the largest, extends from Central Asia to the Far East. The Malayo-Polynesian wing opens out to the southeast. Last but not least is the unparalleled Japanese, forming a self-contained linguistic unit in the north-eastern tip of Asia.<sup>12</sup>

These facts alone convince us of the distinctly different ways of “experiencing” reality and of understanding one’s selfhood and communicating one’s self. To know and to be in touch with one’s self are necessary for meaningful communication and dialogue with cultures.<sup>13</sup>

Alan Roland can corroborate this fact in his cross-cultural studies. He has found from his work in India, Japan, and America that the intrapsychic self varies significantly, if not radically, according to the social and cultural patterns of societies so civilizationally different. He has established that “people have a different experiential, affective sense of self and relationships, as well as vastly different internalized world views that give profoundly different meanings to everyday experiences and relationships”. He clarifies his use of the term “self” which he views from the sociological and anthropological perspectives, i.e. in terms of “social roles, presentations, and modes of communication, taking into account those aspects of the self directly and consciously related to differing patterns of interpersonal relationships”.<sup>14</sup> He then speaks of three overarching organizations of the self: “the familial self, the individualized self, and the spiritual self, as well as an expanding self”. Asian societies form a total organization of the “self” along the concept of the “familial self”, while Western societies, particularly Northern European and American, along the concept of the “individualized self”. By “familial self”, Roland means:

... a basic inner psychological organization that enables women and men to function well within the hierarchical intimacy relationships of the extended family, community, and other groups.<sup>15</sup>

In these cultures, he maintains that the following characteristics are present: (1) a constant affective exchange through permeable outer ego boundaries, (2) a highly private self is maintained, (3) high levels of

empathy and receptivity to others are cultivated, and (4) the experiential sense of self is of a “we-self” that is felt to be highly relational in different social contexts.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, by “individualized self,” he means:

... the predominant inner psychological organization of Americans, enabling them to function in a highly mobile society where considerable autonomy is granted if not imposed on the individual. The individual must thus choose from a variety of social options in contractual, egalitarian relationships ... governed by a predominant cultural principle of individualism. The individualized self is characterized by inner representational organizations that emphasize: an individualistic “I-ness”....<sup>17</sup>

Anthropologists, I think, would agree to such findings. Along this line, Gerald Arbuckle, in adapting anthropologist Mary Douglas’ two basic variables, the “group” and the “grid”, have come up with two cultural models in studying cultures: (1) the strong group and strong grid culture and (2) the weak group and weak grid culture.

In the first type he says “there is a vigorous ideology that gives priority to group cohesiveness, togetherness, interdependence and group harmony”.<sup>18</sup> He cites that most Asiatic cultures belong to this type. At a closer look, this type seems to approximate Roland’s “familial self”. In the second type, the “emphasis is on individualism, on individual decision-making and initiative”. Arbuckle continues to describe this type in the following manner:

In this model, personal significance is vigorously emphasized. Hence, the stress on individualism and the struggle to establish a sense of personal acceptance in community through competitive work and through material symbols of achievement... In this culture model, the cult of self-fulfillment is strong: how can I best improve myself through my own efforts, my own self-discipline, my own efforts at manipulation of others for my advantage?<sup>19</sup>

Arbuckle’s description seems to complement Roland’s idea of the “individualized self”.

Roland’s third overarching organization of self is the “spiritual self, as well as an expanding self”. For him, the spiritual self is:

the inner spiritual reality that is within everyone and is realized and experienced to varying extents by a limited number of persons through a variety of spiritual disciplines... This self is relevant to anyone involved in spiritual pursuits, but forms quite different psychological integrations in those having a familial self and those with an individualized self.<sup>20</sup>

He contends that the avenues toward realization of the “spiritual self” would differ from culture to culture. For instance, in Japan the aesthetic modes such as the tea ceremony, flower arranging, calligraphy, and communion with nature are the various ways of realizing and expressing the “spiritual self”. Together with the “spiritual self”, he uses the term “expanding self” to represent a growing individuation of the self. He cites the following as an illustration:

Both Indians and Japanese in their inter-civilizational encounters utilize various facets of their familial self to modernize, while simultaneously they assimilate certain aspects of the individualized self of Westerners; some Americans, on the other hand, have become involved in the spiritual self through a large influx of Eastern spiritual teachers, utilizing a new paradigm from outside contemporary Western secular culture.<sup>21</sup>

He believes that from a cross-cultural perspective, the distinctions between these three organizations of the self are important for the following reasons:

First, when the organizational cores of the individualized and familial selves are delineated, each highlights the other. Second, by formulating the various suborganizations of the familial self, it not only becomes more feasible to compare the various facets of the Indian and Japanese familial selves but it will also become possible to make comparisons with the familial self of persons from different cultures. These categories also allow comparisons among the differing integrations of the familial with the spiritual self in persons from India, Japan, and other cultures where some kind of familial self predominates.<sup>22</sup>

### **Relationship Between Spirituality and the Culture’s Understanding of Self**

From the above discussion, we are getting a sense of the profound difference in the basic cultural conceptions of the human person and of relationships, and the ways societies are structured in Eastern and

Western cultures. Let us leave this discussion for a moment and look at the relationship between religion and the culture's understanding of "self".

Joseph Spae once wrote that: "Religion appeals to man's [*sic*] deepest emotions because emotions are the warp and woof of conviction".<sup>23</sup> Conviction is, in fact, an integral part of conversion, for conviction is the inner dynamism within the person that demands change. On Eastern and Western spiritualities, Spae made the following comments:

West which has often prided itself on logic and rationality has difficulty assigning to emotions their rightful place in the perception and practice of Christianity. Perhaps the deeper reason for this lies in the fact that emotions find expression in what the analytic philosophers call a *do-language* rather than an *is-language*, in a convictional language rather than in an indicative language, in feelings felt rather than in feelings thought.<sup>24</sup>

He cites as an example the difference in approach to religion between Japan and the West. He said that, "While the West has often emphasized a certain type of arid dogmatism and called it faith, Japan has swung to the other extreme of the pendulum and opted for a non-conceptual approach to religion".<sup>25</sup> He asserts that the challenge to both East and West is for them to find a middle path. He offers the following signposts to that middle path:

While the Western mind has far greater difficulty in determining the religious quality of an emotion than that of an idea, the Japanese are sympathetic to Schleiermacher's claim that religion is not metaphysics but a sensitive and appreciative viewing or *Anschauung* of the infinite, tasted within a feeling of absolute dependency upon a mysterious but compassionate being. Obviously, in such an intuition, the emphasis is not on a rational and systematized view of God, man and the world. In the Japanese vision, the transcendentals of truth, goodness and beauty have been appropriated by man; they are kept within the confines of his experiential observation.<sup>25</sup>

He expounds that for Schleiermacher and to Japan, the core of religion is the heart, not the mind or the will. Therefore, the strength of a person's feelings determines the degree of one's religiosity and the harmonious integration within the individual is the prerequisite for a balanced personality. Spae presents a list of seven feelings which Schleiermacher and many Japanese consider especially numinous:

(1) Schleiermacher's list: longing/yearning, compassion/mercy, humility/meekness, reverence/piety, gratitude, contrition, and zeal/aspiration. (2) The Japanese list: charity/love, compassion, asceticism, loyalty, gratitude, sincerity, and tolerance.

According to Spae, these feelings are also attitudes. They determine conviction, generate action and stamp the person with his/her own "character". Thus, as feelings and convictions, they touch "the heart". Furthermore, as Spae puts it, "They are a plea for spontaneity in the moral life; they are conducive to that selfless interiority which the Japanese have often rendered by such emotionally pregnant words as Emptiness and Nothingness — words familiar to all Christian mystics, and to Christ himself".<sup>27</sup> Spae likewise argues against the criticism that the primacy of religious feelings as propounded by Schleiermacher and the Japanese, imprison the person too much within oneself and leave only a passive role to the deity and the Absolute. He claims that, on the other hand, "a feeling of absolute dependence, which is so common in Japanese pietism, is extremely valuable as man's first step to the numinous". He believes that "the basic emotions with which the Japanese identify themselves are 'religious emotions' and that they point to that vaguely perceived Object of the human person's dependence which Christians call God".<sup>28</sup> To further understand these emotions, one therefore has to first understand that the Japanese way of life is strongly situation-centred. By "situation" the Japanese mean society rather than the individual. As Spae puts it:

the situation-centred world of the Japanese is predicated on ties which bind him to closely related people in the nation, the family, the neighbourhood. He finds himself under an obligation to make repayment to his benefactors.<sup>29</sup>

Increasingly, with the West's influence on the East, the vertical relationship from inferior to superior on which Confucian principles established this indebtedness is breaking down. Likewise, the former uniform patterns of morality are breaking down. Studies have shown that to a certain extent, the Japanese religious feeling and the national ethos are developing more in the direction of individual-centredness. This trend seems to come with modernization and high technology. Spae comments that within this type of development, the individual finds dependence intolerable; the individual person wrestles free from parental and other yokes, including that of what the person sometimes calls "religion". Once free, however, one



becomes obsessed with the problem of the meaning of life and of one's personal moral identity. One develops the "eerie feeling of floating in an emotional void, of plodding through a moral wasteland" — a theme that seems to preoccupy modern Japanese novelists such as Mishima Yukio and Ishihara Shintaro.

Sociologists and behavioural researchers observe that despite the tight-knit family structure and communal orientation that are pervasive in Japanese culture, recent statistics and experience give evidence that the pressures associated with coping and competing in modern Japan have brought about an unusually high incidence of stress and frustration, psychological and spiritual disorientation, nervous breakdowns and a total loss of a sense of "religion".<sup>30</sup> More recently, experts from Japan have expressed their concern that the country is infiltrated with Western capitalism and materialism and has lost the old sense of "religion". Now, there seems to be a need for a conversion to selfhood before any religion can make any headway. It seems, from what I've heard, that the original Japanese sense of self (or no self) has been lost. It needs to be reclaimed and refounded.

However, in the midst of this materialism and affluence, there also appears to be another direction to which some Japanese seem to be turning — that of "supernatural-centredness". This direction, according to Spae, implies "uncommon challenge, transcendence, and progressive openness to truth, goodness, and beauty... The more real the challenge comes, the more it dawns upon the Japanese that it comes to them from Christianity".<sup>31</sup> This change is even a greater challenge for Christianity, which has developed its teachings along the lines of Western philosophy. The Western mind-set has, for many centuries, been close to the Eastern way of thinking and perceiving. Roger Walsh, in a recent article has this to say about the divergent approaches of both philosophies:

Western philosophy is a primarily conceptual enterprise that seeks the deepest type of understanding through intellectual analysis and logic. The Asian mystical philosophies, however, say that the deepest types of understanding are inaccessible to the intellect. They therefore tend to use the intellect, not as the primary means for revealing these deepest understandings, but to point towards and describe (within the limits imposed by concepts) a previously recognized nonconceptual understanding and the disciplines that can lead others to this same understanding.<sup>32</sup>

He suggests that the only way to approach Asian philosophies is through contemplative training. Otherwise "the more subtle, profound, state-specific depths of these philosophies" would be lost to the purely intellectual Western inquirer.

The depths of these philosophies touch the very heart of the person. That is why for Schleiermacher and the Japanese, the core of religion is the *heart*. This idea certainly parallels with the Asian Bishops' definition of prayer. In their Second Plenary Assembly in India in 1978, they defined prayer as "the first expression of man's [*sid*] interior truth, the first condition of the true freedom of the spirit".<sup>33</sup> For the Asian, a person's interior truth is the core of one's selfhood, of one's inner self. The person's core is similar to the biblical sense of "heart". For instance, the Japanese concept of truth, as reached particularly through spiritual intuition, comes close to that of the Bible. This truth, which must come from the person's inner self, is identifiable with the good of all living beings, and that, at the heart of all truth, there is an element of mercy. This aspect of mercy must be emphatically present in the presentation of truth, if it is to be truth".<sup>34</sup>

Theologian Jose de Mesa, in reflecting on the definition put forth by the Asian Bishops, related the concept of the person's "interior truth" to the Filipino understanding of the inner self.<sup>35</sup> He does this by exploring the rich meanings of the Filipino word *loob* (inner self or the core of one's selfhood) which is the root word of many Filipino concepts and expressions. As the core of one's selfhood, *loob* is where the true worth of a person lies. It is, according to de Mesa, the "very zone of creaturehood which is the substratum of ideas, feelings, and behaviours". Thus, it is also an "appropriate concept to describe a person in relationship to others because it provides an insight as to what kind of person one is". To illustrate this, de Mesa mentions that in the lowland Philippines, one would know what a person is like by describing the kind of *loob* s/he has. For instance, a person is of *magandang-loob* (*magandang* = literally means "beautiful"; *loob* = core or interiority) if s/he is kind, generous, and of good character. The concept connotes that such a person is not only well-intentioned, but s/he also promotes the well-being of others, especially those in need. In like manner, a person is of *masamang-loob* (*masamang* = literally means evil or bad; ) if s/he is of bad character, ill-intentioned or relates negatively with others. J. de Mesa adds that there is more to this concept of *loob*. According to him, "this *loob* is manifested through external behaviour, and behaviour in an authentic person stems from the *loob*; behaviour is not used to camouflage the inner self".<sup>36</sup>

Going back to the Asian Bishops' definition of prayer as "the first expression of man's [*sid*] interior truth", de Mesa sees prayer as the "Christian's acknowledgment and awareness of the true nature of the *loob*". It is therefore a Christian's consciousness of the *loob* with its richness and weakness as exposed by the light of faith. He adds that prayer, in this sense, is "an active receptiveness, an active listening to what God is revealing through one's

*loob*". Thus, when we truly reflect on the true nature of the *loob* in the light of Christian faith, the first thing that we realize is the human person's relatedness to God — that one's *loob* is made "in the image and likeness" of God's *Loob*. Thus the *loob* and the *loob's* relationship with God is a gift, a grace, a given. Seen in this light, the essence of prayer then is the recognition, acknowledgement, acceptance of this relatedness of one's *loob* in an explicit manner to God, to humanity, and to the rest of God's created world. Without such recognition and consciousness, a human person is liable to be the opposite and to do the opposite of what s/he is meant to be and meant to do. Understanding of the concept of *loob* in this vein, he therefore defines prayer as:

the basic receptive attitude — a profound listening, focusing, accepting of our most interior truth (*loob*) — out of which life can receive new vitality. This interior truth is the basis of our freedom, the call to be creative.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

Lacan's theory of experience has opened up for us one way of looking at an emergence of the authentic person. His theory, which I believe, is trans-cultural, describes a process that all human beings undergo no matter what his or her culture might be. His theory of experience, which holds that the "cry" is prior to all words, speaks to every person in any culture. The real person, the *Je* only emerges when there is a breakdown of the ego-centred, narcissistic structure of the *Moi*. The *Je* erupts in need, in pain, in *joissance*, in death. The cry of the person to an "Other" precedes all words. Rituals, myths, gestures and words coming from the depths of the *Je* are ways of expressing and revealing one's true self.

The *Je* is the authentic "self" that lies within each person's unconscious. It is not conditioned by any language or culture. I see Lacan's theory as a way of understanding the basic need and desire of every person to express him/herself in freedom and in truth. Yet one's authentic self is often masked by the conscious demands of the ego or cultural expectations. For instance, both the Western "individual self" and the Eastern "familial self" have aspects of the *Moi* that are conditioned by language, culture and environment. These can cause a gap between the conscious *Moi* and the unconscious *Je* within the person and family. Lacan does not identify the *Je* with the "spiritual self" nor does he mention the spiritual dimension of the "self" at all. However, I believe that the "spiritual self" is only awakened when the *Moi* breaks down and the *Je* breaks through.

Therefore I began with the discussion of Lacan's theory and O'Shea's application of it as a backdrop to our exploration of the Asian concept of selfhood. Although divergent in many ways due to the diversity of cultures in the region, the Asians' understanding of "self" is deeply intertwined with the worldview supplied by their religion and culture. This worldview is the basis of human interpersonal relationships and one's sense of self as "familial" and "spiritual". Yet the discovery and expression of one's true self or *Je* oftentimes get hampered by language and cultural expectations. For the Asian, to reach the spiritual dimension of the self, one must learn to get underneath the surface of the words and cultural constructs. One does this through empty space, silence or "wasting" time alone or with "significant" others. Culture simply becomes the medium through which one lives and expresses one's interior truth. The person's interior truth must come from one's inner core, one's "heart". One reaches the truth of oneself not through persuasive words but through intuition and the experience of being. It is from the depth of one's inner core, one's inner truth that one sees oneself as part of a communitarian reality. Thus when one's interior self is in harmony, this is reflected in one's relationship with family, society, and nature. To attain selfhood, one must therefore be in touch with one's heart. For the Japanese Buddhist, this can only be reached through contemplation where one attains "emptiness or nothingness". For the Filipino, it is an experience of one's *loob* as essentially related to God, to others and to God's creation.<sup>38</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin O'Shea, "The Cry: Initiation Into Spirit" (unpublished manuscript, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin O'Shea, "Lacan: An Introduction to Post-Modern French Psychoanalytic Theory" (unpublished manuscript, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Muller translates the "Moi" as ego, cf. "Ego and Subject in Lacan" in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 1982, p. 234.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> See O'Shea, "The Cry...", p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, S.M. *Strategies for Growth in Religious Life* (New York: Alba House, 1987), p. 222. For an updated discussion on the formation of religious for mission in current times, see Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission* (Australia: St. Paul's Publication, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> O'Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Aloysius Pieris, S.J., *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> FABC, "Dialogue Between Faith and Culture: Towards Integral Human and Social Development", Manila, The Philippines (14 January 1996), No. 23 and No. 29.

<sup>14</sup> O'Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 5. In this vein, Roland prefers the use of the term "self" to Erikson's concept of "self-identity" which he thinks is far too rooted in Western individualistic personality and culture to be an accurate representation of the Asian self.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, S.M. "Inculturation, Community, and Conversion" in *Review for Religious*, Nov.-Dec. 1985, p. 839.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 842.

<sup>20</sup> Roland, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph J. Spae, C.I.C.M. *East Challenges West: Towards a Convergence of Spiritualities* (The Chicago Institute of Theology and Culture and Oriens Institute for Religious Research in Tokyo, 1979), p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* He is referring to F.E.D. Schleiermacher's work, entitled *On Religion*, tr. by J. Oman, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1955, p. 108.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Counseling Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Theory & Practice for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), pp. 126-127.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Roger Walsh. "Can Western Philosophers Understand Asian Philosophies?", in *Cross Currents*, Fall 1989, p. 290.

<sup>33</sup> Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, *Prayer: The Life of the Church of Asia* (Manila: FABC, 1979), p. 17. Cited by J. de Mesa in his book, *In Solidarity with the Culture* (Quezon City, Phil.: Maryhill School of Theology, 1987), p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Spae, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> J. de Mesa describes this in greater detail in his chapter on "Loob and Prayer" in his book *In Solidarity With the Culture*. See footnote 33 above.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

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## *Mission et inculturation*

- P. Jean-Claude Djereke -

### **Le vrai missionnaire ...**

Si je devais ajouter une béatitude à celles qui nous sont proposées par le Christ dans l'évangile de Matthieu, ce serait celle-ci : Bienheureux les missionnaires qui ne cherchent pas à s'installer et à occuper les premières places dans les pays qui les ont accueillis ! En disant cela, je ne peux pas ne pas penser à Mgr Marion de Brésillac qui s'adressait à ses fils missionnaires en ces termes :

«Dès que vous dégénérez en curé et évêque, vous ne méritez plus d'être appelé missionnaire... Faire des prêtres, faire des évêques, établir de véritables Églises, voilà donc la vraie mission de l'apôtre».<sup>1</sup>

Le fondateur des pères SMA<sup>2</sup> ne tolérait pas que, après des années de mission, les jeunes Eglises «n'aient pas encore de vrais pasteurs ; que ces prêtres que nous sommes habitués à regarder comme nos serviteurs ne puissent être canoniquement les curés de leurs ouailles... ; enfin, et c'est le plus déplorable, qu'ils soient si peu clergé que leur vie sacerdotale dépende absolument de la nôtre, n'ayant aucun moyen de se perpétuer».<sup>3</sup> Soyons clair : il ne suffit pas d'avoir des Africains à la tête des diocèses pour affirmer que l'Église en Afrique est devenue majeure. La vraie question est de savoir si ces évêques sont libres de mener leur propre politique et si leur autorité est reconnue par les différentes congrégations qui travaillent dans leurs diocèses. Car la religion est encore inexistante «là où des prêtres étrangers se sont établis comme dans leur propriété spirituelle». Il est en effet ahurissant, voire scandaleux de voir telle ou telle congrégation faire comme bon lui semble, s'opposer ouvertement à l'ordinaire du lieu ou railler ses décisions. Christoph Schönborn, dominicain et cardinal autrichien, désapprouve clairement cette manière de se comporter qui commence à contaminer certaines communautés nouvelles. Pour lui, congrégations et mouvements doivent se considérer comme «partie de l'Église, comme des membres de l'Église, du Corps du Christ».<sup>4</sup> En d'autres termes, ces ordres et communautés doivent éviter de se conduire comme une « sorte d'Église dans l'Église ».<sup>5</sup> Cela ne signifie pas qu'ils n'ont pas à vivre leur charisme, bien au contraire. Ils ont à exprimer ce qui les caractérise et les distingue. L'Église diocésaine a besoin d'être interpellée par le style de vie de ces communautés et congrégations. Elle ne peut qu'être enrichie que ce qui est différent. Il reste que cette diversité doit être vécue dans l'Église, c'est-à-dire sous l'autorité de l'ordinaire du lieu car ils ne «sont pas l'Église mais dans l'Église».<sup>6</sup> C'est pourquoi Mgr de Brésillac donne ce conseil aux missionnaires :

«Vous n'êtes ni le curé ni l'évêque du lieu que vous administrez. Plus il y a longtemps que vous y êtes, plus devez vous humilier devant Dieu, car c'est une preuve que le Bon Dieu n'a pas béni vos efforts. Partout où la religion a jeté l'ancre pour demeurer, les premiers missionnaires n'ont fait que passer, ils ont prêché Jésus-Christ, ils ont consacré des prêtres, ils ont élevé des sièges, et ils sont partis... Malheur aux pays où la voix des missionnaires ne se fait jamais entendre, plus grand malheur encore aux pays où l'on n'entend que des missionnaires».<sup>7</sup>

Brésillac a-t-il été compris ? Le moins que l'on puisse dire, c'est qu'il a prêché dans le désert quand on voit l'arrogance et la volonté de puissance de certains missionnaires en Afrique. Soyons explicite : au lieu d'aller dans les campagnes où le Christ n'est pas encore connu, ces missionnaires s'installent dans les villes où les églises sont déjà pleines à craquer. Qui plus est, ils ne sont intéressés que par les apostolats d'influence : aumônerie universitaire, accompagnement des cadres et des élites. En somme, on a l'impression qu'ils préfèrent travailler là où ils peuvent trouver de l'argent, ce qui pousse à se demander s'ils n'ont pas fait une option préférentielle pour les riches. Et ce n'est pas tout. Deux autres faits méritent d'être mentionnés. Ayant peur de rentrer chez eux, où ils passeraient certainement inaperçus, certains missionnaires empêchent les jeunes religieux africains d'arriver au bout de la formation. Les arguments donnés pour se justifier n'ont jamais varié : la vie religieuse est trop difficile pour les Nègres ; ceux-ci ne seraient pas faits pour vivre la chasteté ou la pauvreté.

Des arguments qui sont d'autant moins crédibles que les témoignages sont nombreux au sujet de prêtres pédophiles, homosexuels ou géniteurs de petits métis à Kinshasa, Abidjan, Yaoundé, Ouagadougou, Bangui ou Nairobi.<sup>8</sup> Le départ (volontaire ou non) de certains Africains des congrégations dites internationales ne tient donc pas à de graves déficiences qui auraient été constatées chez ces Africains mais purement et simplement au fait que ces missionnaires refusent de passer la main.

En dénigrant systématiquement les dirigeants africains qui souhaitent une révision des relations économiques et politiques entre la France et ses anciennes colonies, en limitant leurs visites à leurs compatriotes et en prenant aveuglément fait et cause pour leur pays, ces missionnaires donnent l'impression de servir leur pays plutôt que l'évangile. Scandalisés par cette façon de faire, certains Africains n'hésitent plus à se demander si Jésus-Christ et la mission ne sont pas un prétexte pour couvrir des activités qui n'ont rien à voir avec le message chrétien qui est avant tout un message de libération : «L'Esprit saint m'a consacré pour briser les chaînes des captifs, rendre la vue aux aveugles et la liberté aux opprimés» (Lc 4,18). Telles sont les «ambiguïtés de la mission» dont parlait le théologien camerounais Jean-Marc Ela.<sup>9</sup>

Qu'on me comprenne bien : Je ne mets pas tous les missionnaires dans le même sac. Je ne dis pas que tous désirent s'installer en Afrique, opposent les ethnies africaines les unes aux autres, défendent d'abord les intérêts de leur pays ou méprisent les Africains. Je veux simplement souligner ceci : en voyant vivre certains prêtres et religieux venus d'Europe ou d'Amérique, on n'a guère le sentiment que si «les missionnaires devront surtout être des initiateurs, l'œuvre durable doit être accomplie par les Africains eux-mêmes devenus chrétiens et apôtres».<sup>10</sup> Il n'est pas trop tard pour le comprendre et rectifier le tir. Il n'est pas trop tard pour renouer avec la pratique de saint Paul et des premiers missionnaires. Jamais installés, toujours partis à la conquête de nouvelles terres, toujours prêts à défaire leur tente pour la planter momentanément ailleurs : tels étaient les premiers missionnaires. Ils avaient un profond sens du détachement. Ils avaient à cœur de marcher dans les traces d'Abraham qui montra, le premier, que la demeure du missionnaire se trouve sur les routes. Seuls de nouveaux comportements missionnaires pourront donc réhabiliter la mission et apporter un démenti au propos de Fabien Eboussi :

«La mission des temps modernes s'installe *sub specie aeternitatis* : elle n'envisage jamais sa fin. Après trois siècles, de nombreux pays d'Amérique latine sont encore pays de mission, fixés dans la dépendance à perpétuité. La mission est la première forme du partage du monde en zones d'influence, en patronages. Elle dispose librement d'autres humains pour les soumettre à son empire spirituel. La mission est un système qui a sa logique fondée sur l'exploitation ou la création de l'inégalité spirituelle, et sur la condescendance méprisante».<sup>11</sup>

Eboussi est un des théologiens africains ayant étudié le fait missionnaire. Il ne jette pas le bébé (la mission) avec l'eau du bain (certaines pratiques peu catholiques). Sa pensée est en effet beaucoup nuancée, qui reconnaît et salue les bienfaits de la mission. Que cette dernière ait contribué au progrès de l'Afrique, le philosophe camerounais ne l'a jamais nié.<sup>12</sup> Il n'en demeure pas moins que cette même mission a fait et continue de faire beaucoup de mal par la faute de certains missionnaires. C'est pourquoi il me semble important que soient relues les réflexions de Fabien Eboussi sur les limites de la mission : «Ce qui caractérise, c'est la recherche de soi, l'affirmation de soi au détriment d'autrui».<sup>13</sup> Les nouveaux missionnaires font-ils mieux que les anciens ? Présentent-ils un meilleur visage ? Écoutons encore Eboussi :

«La même désinvolture à l'égard de l'Afrique, le même mépris de l'altérité et la même certitude qu'on détient la vérité et le salut, la même absence de réciprocité ont été réitérés. Le désir de faire triompher ses convictions, son mode de penser, de sentir, l'a emporté sur le respect et la recherche de la vérité».<sup>14</sup>

D'où cela vient-il ? Cette arrogance et cette suffisance peuvent-elles s'expliquer ? Selon Fabien Eboussi, cela tient au fait que, «à côté des gens de qualité qu'on laissa partir avec parcimonie, il y eut les autres : les médiocres, les instables, les inadaptés, les gens en difficulté dans leur diocèse ou en désarroi devant leur société et le reflux catastrophique du christianisme ou l'effondrement de leur foi».<sup>15</sup> Il doit être clair une fois de plus que nous ne condamnons pas tous les missionnaires. Nous parlons ici de ceux qui se croient détenteurs de la vérité, veulent jouer les premiers rôles, s'accrochent par tous les moyens et n'éprouvent que mépris et morgue à l'endroit du clergé local. Nous pensons sincèrement que leur place ne se trouve plus en Afrique et qu'ils seraient plus utiles dans les pays qui les ont vu naître car le lieu de la mission, aujourd'hui, c'est bien le monde capitaliste.

C'est en effet dans ce monde que les paroisses manquent le plus de prêtres. C'est le lieu où les gens

ont le plus besoin d'être invités au partage, à l'attention aux défavorisés, au respect et à l'accueil de l'étranger, etc. Car c'est là-bas qu'on assiste le plus à «la montée d'un individualisme négateur de l'autre liée au déclin de la croyance et de la pratique religieuse, au repli sur soi et à un hédonisme sans frein», pour reprendre la formule de Jacques Delors.<sup>16</sup> Ce que Fabien Eboussi résume en ces termes :

« Un temps de pause, de concentration sur les questions fondamentales et l'évangélisation du monde industriel 'avancé' ne saurait être interprété comme désobéissance à l'ordre du Seigneur d'annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle à toute créature et par toute la terre. Le monde tel qu'il est retentirait tout entier de la conversion même très partielle de l'Occident capitaliste. Surtout qu'on n'aille pas répéter qu'on ne peut pas ne pas partager ce qu'on a de meilleur, de plus précieux, sa foi et son espérance. Rien n'autorise l'activisme de l'offre. De plus, on n'est pas loin de se mystifier quand on résiste, par ailleurs, à offrir à tous l'accès au savoir et à l'autodétermination personnelle».<sup>17</sup>

N'est-ce pas cette autodétermination personnelle qui est en jeu dans l'inculturation ?

### **L'inculturation**

La grande question qui se pose ici est de savoir si Africains et Occidentaux ont la même conception de l'inculturation. Pour Antoine Babé, il y a un *quiproquo* en ce sens que les uns et les autres ne parlent pas de la même chose. Selon lui, les premiers sont en effet persuadés que seule « une théologie africaine ouverte aux aspirations fondamentales des peuples africains amènera le christianisme à s'incarner efficacement dans la vie des peuples du continent noir».<sup>18</sup> Alors que Rome estime que presque tout a été inventé, réfléchi et expérimenté par l'Occident et que les Africains n'auraient plus qu'à adapter ce qui a déjà été réalisé ailleurs. Telle serait du moins la signification du discours du pape Jean-Paul II à des évêques de l'ex-Zaïre en 1983 : «C'est cette foi authentique au Christ qu'il faut approfondir, affermir et rayonner en en puisant la sève dans l'Église, lieu où s'est déployée et se dévoile sans cesse la puissance de l'Esprit du Christ, à travers une tradition ininterrompue, une réflexion sur la foi qui a déjà élaboré des solutions à beaucoup de problèmes difficiles, des formes de prières de vie communautaire qui ont fleuri en correspondance avec leurs milieux et dont l'Église a sanctionné la valeur».<sup>19</sup>

Paul VI ne tenait pas un discours différent quatorze ans plus tôt à Kampala (Ouganda). Quoiqu'il affirmât l'opportunité et la nécessité d'un christianisme africain, il n'était pas loin de prêcher une adaptation :

«Votre Église doit être avant tout catholique. Autrement dit, elle doit être entièrement fondée sur le patrimoine identique, essentiel, constitutionnel de la même doctrine du Christ professée par la tradition authentique et autorisée de l'unique et véritable Église... Mais la façon de manifester l'unique foi peut être multiple et par conséquent originale, conforme à la langue, au style, au tempérament, au génie, à la culture de qui professe cette unique foi. Sous cet aspect, un pluralisme est légitime, même souhaitable. Une adaptation de la vie chrétienne dans les domaines pastoral, rituel, didactique et aussi spirituel est non seulement possible, mais est favorisée par l'Église».<sup>20</sup>

Certes, l'adresse de Paul VI marque une rupture importante par rapport au mépris affiché par beaucoup de missionnaires à l'égard des savoirs et du savoir-faire des autochtones. Il n'en demeure pas moins que, dans l'esprit du pape, seule la forme du christianisme peut subir des modifications ici et là. Le fond du christianisme (dogmes, théologie, droit, etc.) devra rester intact. On devra éviter d'y toucher, selon lui.

Pour Babé, une telle vision des choses montre clairement qu'on n'est pas encore sorti de la théorie de l'adaptation, théorie à laquelle les évêques africains s'étaient vigoureusement opposés en 1974 lors de la IV<sup>e</sup> Assemblée ordinaire du synode sur l'évangélisation. Depuis 1983, beaucoup d'eau a certainement coulé sous les ponts, l'Afrique a changé et le monde n'est plus le même mais les autorités vaticanes ont-elles changé d'avis sur la question ? Babé ne le pense pas. Il en veut pour preuve l'omission au synode africain (avril et mai 1994) de certaines questions importantes telles que le mariage coutumier, la création de certains ministères institués, la célébration de la liturgie, un droit propre aux Églises d'Afrique, le culte des ancêtres, etc.<sup>21</sup> Pour le théologien camerounais, l'inculturation devrait consister en une rencontre entre l'Évangile et les peuples africains. Ceux-ci, d'après lui, n'ont pas besoin de passer par l'Occident mais doivent découvrir eux-mêmes ce que Jésus «a dit et fait, comment il a pris le parti des malades, des méprisés, des opprimés, comment il a ordonné et réordonné les choses pour que tout homme puisse vivre dans la dignité, comment il a pris en compte les besoins fondamentaux de l'homme, comment il a révélé à la foule que Dieu qui est son Père est aussi le Père de tous».<sup>22</sup>

L'un des handicaps du christianisme africain réside précisément dans le fait que le contact de l'Afrique s'est fait non pas avec l'Évangile mais «avec un christianisme structuré par l'Occident»,<sup>23</sup> selon lui. C'est ce qui l'amène à dire que «l'Église d'Afrique n'a pas eu le temps de passer par les différentes étapes d'une croissance normale de vie humaine (naissance, enfance, adolescence-jeunesse, maturité et vieillesse)».<sup>24</sup> L'idée selon laquelle le contact de l'Afrique devrait se faire directement avec l'événement-Jésus et non par l'intermédiaire de l'Occident ou de l'Orient a un fondement. Antoine Babé nous apprend ainsi que la première inculturation a été réalisée par les disciples du Christ dans la mesure où les paroles et les actes de Jésus n'ont pas été interprétés d'une seule et même manière :

«Le même événement-Jésus a été consigné par écrit sous quatre formes... Ce sont nos quatre évangiles. Matthieu va interpréter la Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ à la société juive ; Marc fera le même travail pour la société romaine et Luc pour la société grecque de son temps ; quant à Jean, nous pensons que son interprétation s'adressait à une société de l'Asie mineure».

Le principal enseignement que Babé tire de ces différentes interprétations, c'est que «ce qui s'est passé au début de l'ère chrétienne devrait être paradigmatique, c'est-à-dire servir de modèle».<sup>25</sup> C'est de cette façon, ajoute-t-il, qu'ont agi saints Cyrille et Méthode, évangélistes des peuples slaves.<sup>26</sup> Babé veut-il pour autant que les Africains se coupent du monde et de l'Église universelle ? Non ! Il ne soutient pas que les Africains devraient ignorer la manière dont les autres peuples ont compris et interprété la Bonne Nouvelle. Ce qu'il veut faire comprendre, c'est que «cela ne devrait pas être le passage obligé dans l'œuvre d'évangélisation car la référence devrait toujours être Jésus-Christ et son message».<sup>27</sup>

L'autre aspect du problème, c'est le contenu de l'inculturation. On a en effet l'impression que certains voudraient réduire cette dernière à la liturgie. Autrement dit, on reconnaît aux Africains le droit d'inculturer aussi longtemps qu'ils peuvent jouer du tam-tam et du balafon ou danser pendant la procession des offrandes. Là aussi, il faut l'admettre, il y a comme un malentendu car l'inculturation signifie plus que cela comme en témoigne le second rapport au synode africain de l'ancien archevêque de Dakar :

«L'inculturation touche à tous les aspects de la vie. Toutefois certains domaines sont particulièrement visés : la formulation de la foi sous la forme d'une authentique théologie chrétienne africaine, les structures ecclésiales qui incarnent l'Église, vue comme famille de Dieu, capables d'offrir de nouveaux ministères mieux appropriés, la vie religieuse et monastique, sous ses différentes expressions, la liturgie, les ancêtres et leur vénération, la moralité des mœurs, au niveau individuel et au niveau de la société, la vie publique et la politique».<sup>28</sup>

René Luneau confirme cette analyse quand il écrit : «Il n'était plus question cette fois d'adaptation, d'illustration, de traduction nouvelle, mais d'un immense effort de création, conjuguant réflexion théologique et patiente mise en œuvre dans la pastorale quotidienne».<sup>29</sup> L'inculturation ne devrait donc pas se limiter à la liturgie et aux sacrements. S'appuyant sur les propositions de certains évêques présents au synode (Anselme Sanon et feu André Wouking), Ignace Ndongala se demande pourquoi ne pas envisager un droit canonique pour les Églises d'Afrique. Le théologien congolais rappelle que les facultés catholiques de Kinshasa avaient déjà fait cette proposition peu avant la tenue du synode africain.<sup>30</sup> Or, déplore-t-il, «le souhait de la promulgation d'un Code de droit canonique pour l'Église d'Afrique n'est mentionné que sous la forme d'une question ouverte».<sup>31</sup>

René Jaouen n'était pas plus optimiste en écrivant en 1984 : «Dans l'état actuel des choses... l'inculturation est plus une utopie qu'un projet dans la mesure où elle trouvera difficilement le lieu de sa réalisation sans une révolution radicale des structures de l'Église latine».<sup>32</sup> Faut-il comprendre par là que Rome veut continuer à décider à la place des Africains et que le Vatican n'est pas près de donner plus de pouvoir aux Églises d'Afrique ?<sup>33</sup> Pendant combien de temps les autorités romaines refuseront-elles de laisser les Africains prendre leur destin en main ? Les Églises d'Afrique accepteront-elles indéfiniment d'être muselées ? Pour Jean-Marc Ela, «les Églises d'Afrique ne peuvent se contenter de réagir par une sorte de silence sacré face au style d'exercice du ministère de Pierre dont on constate qu'au lieu de tendre vers plus d'ecclésialité, il s'oriente plutôt vers plus de centralisme».<sup>34</sup> Son compatriote Eboussi juge incontournable la nécessité d'inculturer l'évangile :

«Le contact immédiat avec l'Évangile, sans prisme déformant, est une illusion. Il suffit de situer un tel usage du Nouveau Testament dans l'histoire du catholicisme récent, dans les mouvements d'action catholique, de rappeler leur éclatement et leurs désaccords en même temps que leur incapacité à transformer

les structures sociales pour reconnaître qu'il n'est pas naturel et qu'il a déjà subi la réfutation de l'histoire. L'Évangile comme livre est infiniment distant de nous et, s'il est efficace, c'est dans la mesure où il peut être actualisé comme un événement fondateur d'un ordre universel et terminal».<sup>35</sup>

Ce qu'on pourrait donc souhaiter, c'est que prenne fin le plus tôt possible le malentendu au sujet de l'inculturation, c'est-à-dire que soit abandonnée une fois pour toutes la théorie d'adaptation et que soit enterrée l'idée selon laquelle l'inculturation ne pourrait mieux se faire que par des non-Africains. C'est tout le sens de la mise en garde de Hyacinthe Thiandoum déjà citée: «C'est maintenant à nous d'inculturer l'Église dont nous avons hérité».<sup>36</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mgr Marion de Brésillac, *Théologie missionnaire*, Paris, Cerf, 1962, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Société des missions africaines de Lyon.

<sup>3</sup> Mgr de Marion Brésillac, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>4</sup> C. Schönborn, *Le défi du christianisme*, Paris, Cerf, 2003, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>6</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>7</sup> Cité par R. Agneau et D. Pryen, *Les chemins de la mission d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Spiritus, 1972, p. 166.

<sup>8</sup> Je signale, entre autres, le n. 133 (1<sup>er</sup> mai 2002) de *Croire aujourd'hui* qui parle de plusieurs évêques et prêtres américains impliqués dans des affaires de pédophilie. Plusieurs diocèses et congrégations d'Europe ne sont pas épargnés par le phénomène.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Le cri de l'homme africain*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1980.

<sup>10</sup> Mgr de Brésillac, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> F. Eboussi, *A Contretemps. L'enjeu de Dieu en Afrique*, Paris, Karthala, 1991, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Changer de politique vis-à-vis du Sud*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> F. Eboussi, *A Contretemps*, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Voir son interview dans *Panorama*, n. 403, d'octobre 2004, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> F. Eboussi, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> In Maurice Cheza et alii, *Les évêques d'Afrique parlent (1969-1992)*, Paris, Centurion, 1992., p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *La Documentation catholique* (1983), n. 1852, p. 512.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *La Documentation catholique* (1969), n. 1546, p. 765.

<sup>21</sup> A. Babé, *Églises d'Afrique! De l'émancipation à la responsabilité*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Academia Bruylant, 1998, pp. 91-92.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *La Documentation catholique* (1994), n. 2095, p. 524.

<sup>29</sup> R. Luneau, *Paroles et silences du synode africain*, Paris, Karthala, 1997, p. 59.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Quelle Église pour l'Afrique du troisième millénaire ? Contribution au synode spécial des évêques pour l'Afrique*. Actes de la XVII<sup>e</sup> semaine théologique de Kinshasa, 1991, p. 326.

<sup>31</sup> Ignace Ndongala Maduku, «Les Églises d'Afrique entre romanité et africanité», in *Christianisme et humanisme en Afrique*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>32</sup> R. Jaouen, «Les conditions d'une inculturation fiable», in *Lumière et vie*, 168, 1984, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> I. Ndongala, *art. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>34</sup> J.-M. Ela, *Repenser la théologie africaine*, Paris, Karthala, 2003, p. 387.

<sup>35</sup> Eboussi, *A Contretemps*, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> Maurice Cheza, *op. cit.*, p. 199.



# *L'Europe, les chrétiens et la mondialisation*

- Ignace Berten, OP -

Quel rapport entre l'Europe et la mondialisation ? Nous approcherons la question à partir de l'Union européenne, en tant que celle-ci est un processus dynamique qui a pour horizon l'unification de toute l'Europe. Et c'est dans le cadre de cette Union que nous envisagerons la question de la responsabilité des chrétiens.

## **1. La mondialisation et l'Europe**

La mondialisation, telle qu'elle se présente actuellement, est un phénomène essentiellement économique, étroitement lié au développement des technologies de production et de communication. Elle n'est pas un produit naturel de l'histoire ni la conséquence nécessaire et immédiate des nouvelles technologies : l'ouverture des frontières, la modification profonde des régulations (et non pas simplement la dérégulation), le rôle reconnu au marché sont les conséquences non des technologies, mais de choix politiques rendus possibles par ces technologies et effectués sous la pression des grands acteurs économiques nationaux et transnationaux.

Les mécanismes de marché et les systèmes de production mondiaux mis en place, la puissance du processus et celle des grands acteurs économiques transnationaux (entreprises et institutions financières) réduisent considérablement les capacités d'action et d'initiative des États, et donc leur souveraineté réelle. Cette limitation d'autonomie est d'autant plus marquée qu'il existe une seule superpuissance qui allie la puissance économique, politique et militaire : les États-Unis. Ceux-ci pèsent de tout leur poids dans le sens de la libéralisation de l'économie au niveau mondial, pour autant que cela répond à leurs intérêts (leur protectionnisme agricole et industriel est de fait en contradiction totale avec le libéralisme proclamé...).

Les gouvernements européens (du moins ceux d'Europe occidentale, car à l'époque l'URSS et les États placés dans leur orbite étaient hors-jeu), ont contribué à façonner la mondialisation en participant à la définition de ses règles. Nous sommes de ce fait tous liés, dans une certaine mesure, par les décisions prises depuis une trentaine d'années.

Cela ne signifie pas que les États nationaux n'ont plus aucune marge de manoeuvre : la mondialisation est trop souvent le prétexte de la passivité, de l'incapacité à prendre les décisions politiques nécessaires, ou la fausse justification de décisions impopulaires prises sous la pression des puissances économiques. Cela ne signifie pas non plus que la mondialisation telle qu'elle est ne pourrait pas être orientée différemment. Mais le processus est très puissant et les États individuels ont fort peu de prise sur lui.

La mondialisation est un phénomène ambivalent. Elle offre d'énormes potentialités de développement ; elle a permis et elle permet à certains États de décoller économiquement, en particulier en Asie.

La Chine en profite largement, mais est assez puissante pour gérer à sa manière et dans son intérêt son insertion dans le processus. En même temps, la mondialisation menace les systèmes sociaux, elle creuse largement les inégalités dans les pays et entre les pays et a des effets dramatiques d'exclusion, en particulier dans l'Afrique subsaharienne.

Être contre la mondialisation n'a aucun sens ni pertinence. Les expériences de développement autocentré en déconnexion du marché mondial ont dramatiquement échoué. Il s'agit de promouvoir une autre mondialisation. Telle est l'importance du mouvement altermondialiste, dont l'expression principale est le Forum social mondial, quoi qu'il en soit de ses limites et contradictions internes.

## **2. Mondialisation et projet européen**

L'Union européenne est-elle le cheval de Troie de la mondialisation pour nos pays, c'est-à-dire la mécanique visant à soumettre nos économies, de gré ou de force, aux exigences du marché mondial ? Ou est-

elle, ou peut-elle être un acteur dans la mondialisation ? Et si oui, en quel sens et à quelles conditions ?

Les États isolés ne peuvent plus être de véritables acteurs mondiaux, en dehors des États-Unis et, sans doute à moyen terme, la Chine. Un ensemble cohérent d'États comme l'Union européenne représente un ensemble géographique, économique et politique de taille largement suffisante pour être un tel acteur.

Encore faut-il que cette Union soit portée par un projet commun et développe une politique cohérente en interne et en externe. En interne d'abord. L'enjeu est fondamentalement celui de la sauvegarde du modèle social européen : l'ensemble de nos systèmes de protection sociale et les services publics, dans leur qualité et dans leur universalité (accès assuré à tous), sont menacés à la fois par la pression du marché mondial et par une idéologie d'inspiration très libérale. Dans un tel contexte, si la concurrence entre les États-membres concernant la fiscalité et les normes sociales prédomine par rapport à la coopération et la convergence, la pression à la baisse et à la dégradation est inévitable. En externe, ensuite, l'Union européenne ne peut être un facteur efficace de paix et de développement, et constituer un contrepoids nécessaire aux États-Unis, sans une véritable politique commune : la concurrence des intérêts politiques et économiques nationaux ont des effets désastreux dans les pays du Sud. L'Afrique en est le témoin dramatique.

Le futur "Traité constitutionnel", malgré ses limites, offre une base pour un projet européen. Les principes et valeurs déclarés dans le préambule de ce traité et dans le Titre I consacré à la définition et aux objectifs de l'Union sont suffisamment clairs : «*les droits inviolables et inaliénables de la personne humaine, ainsi que la démocratie, l'égalité, la liberté et l'État de droit*» ; «*la paix, la justice et la solidarité dans le monde*» (préambule) ; «*les valeurs de respect de la dignité humaine, de liberté, de démocratie, d'égalité, de l'État de droit, ainsi que de respect des droits de l'Homme*» (article 2). Ces valeurs sont aussi clairement affirmées dans la "Charte des droits fondamentaux", qui fait partie intégrante du Traité.

### **3. Une responsabilité pour les chrétiens — Déclarations d'intention et mise en œuvre politique**

Les chrétiens ont une triple vigilance politique et évangélique à exercer. Le "Traité constitutionnel", — à condition qu'il soit ratifié ! — offre les fondements d'un projet de société humaniste, dont les valeurs déclarées sont conformes à celles que porte et promeut la tradition chrétienne. Mais il ne suffit pas de déclarer des valeurs, de formuler de bonnes intentions : il s'agit de les mettre en œuvre.

D'où une première fonction de vigilance : les politiques développées par l'Union sont-elles conformes aux valeurs déclarées, ou les menacent-elles ? Concurrence : et les droits sociaux ? Privatisation ou libéralisation des services publics : jusqu'où et à quelles conditions ? Politique commune dans les négociations de l'OMC : quelles conséquences pour le développement des pays pauvres ?

Deuxième lieu de vigilance. On déclare des valeurs de dignité humaine et de solidarité. Quel contenu donner à ces valeurs ? Et quelles implications ? Dignité humaine et biotechnologies, et conditions de travail, et accueil des immigrés ou exilés ? Solidarité et secteurs de la population plus fragile, et intégration des nouveaux pays d'Europe centrale, et relations avec les pays du Sud ? La détermination du contenu de ces valeurs demande qu'il y ait débat politique, afin d'assurer la conformité des législations et des pratiques publiques avec ce que ces valeurs impliquent. Dans une société dont les convictions sont plurielles, la stimulation du débat interconvictionnel et la participation à ce débat répondent aujourd'hui à une urgence.

Troisièmement, du point de vue du projet politique et des valeurs, le "Traité constitutionnel" présente des contradictions et de graves limites : il y a un déséquilibre fondamental entre la concurrence, principe qui a force de loi, et la protection sociale qui est un objectif largement soumis à la subsidiarité (c'est-à-dire à la responsabilité des États) ; et, pour l'essentiel, tout le domaine de la fiscalité reste lié à la décision à l'unanimité, or elle est un outil essentiel de solidarité sociale. C'est trop souvent le pot de terre contre le pot de fer... A plus long terme, il faut viser à un meilleur équilibrage constitutionnel. Le "Traité" sera certes très difficile à réviser, toute révision requérant l'unanimité. Il y a une responsabilité citoyenne et chrétienne, dans chacun des pays, dans la préparation des opinions publiques et la mobilisation des pouvoirs politiques afin que soient mis en place les moyens législatifs européens permettant d'assurer plus de cohérence entre les intentions déclarées et leur mise en œuvre. Seul un droit européen commun peut donner la force d'un projet de société porté par des valeurs dans le contexte de la mondialisation.

## Un projet politique de puissance, défi pour les chrétiens

Vouloir agir au sein de la mondialisation, c'est faire oeuvre de puissance comme acteur géopolitique. Il y a parmi les chrétiens une forte réticence à vouloir exercer un jeu de puissance. N'est-ce pas en contradiction avec l'Évangile ? Il faut se rappeler que la force est une vertu humaine et chrétienne : la force est la capacité de s'affirmer, d'agir en fonction de ses propres choix fondamentaux et quand, c'est nécessaire, de s'imposer à autrui pour faire prévaloir ces choix (la vertu étant évidemment liée à la moralité fondamentale de ces choix). La puissance est l'équivalent politique de la force.

Nous avons à soutenir le projet d'une Europe forte et puissante capable de faire prévaloir dans le monde les valeurs déclarées. Cela implique l'usage des moyens politiques et diplomatiques (le ministère des affaires étrangères institué par le "Traité" devrait y contribuer), des moyens économiques et des moyens militaires (la politique extérieure et de sécurité commune). Puissance, oui. Mais puissance contenue et limitée, constamment gérée politiquement en fonction des objectifs qu' on se donne.

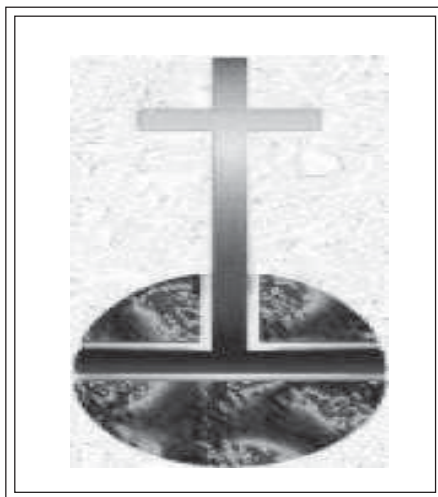
Et donc vigilance constante indispensable : il y a une défense nécessaire de nos intérêts vitaux (matières premières, pétrole, exportations...), mais la défense légitime de ces intérêts ne peut se faire en sacrifiant la vie, le droit à la dignité et au développement de populations entières. De même, il y a un droit à la sécurité des citoyens et un devoir des pouvoirs publics de l'assurer, mais cela ne peut pas se faire au prix de la mise en cause des libertés essentielles.

## Mondialisation et choix prioritaire des pauvres

L'Évangile invite à un choix prioritaire des pauvres. Choix du cœur, choix du regard posé sur la réalité. Dans les circonstances concrètes, quelles sont les conséquences des politiques développées et des décisions prises, pour les plus faibles parmi nous et ailleurs dans le monde ? Oui pour une économie compétitive («*un marché unique où la concurrence est libre et non faussée*» ; «*une économie sociale de marché hautement compétitive*», article 3), instrument de progrès. Mais à condition que ce ne soit pas la loi du plus fort avec l'exclusion des plus fragiles ou des moins bien nantis. Toute politique demande à être interrogée à partir de ce point de vue. Les chrétiens, — Églises, associations — sont appelés à être constamment les porteurs de ce questionnement dans le dialogue avec les mandataires et les pouvoirs politiques.

Réf. : *Mission de l'Église*, n. 145, octobre/décembre 2004, pp. 72-76.

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# *Mentalité japonaise traditionnelle et christianisme : Rencontre de deux cultures*

- Satoru Ohara, SJ -

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[NDLR – *Le nombre des catholiques au Japon ne représente que 0,356% de la population.<sup>1</sup> Une faible proportion qui, chaque année, est en hausse constante quoique minime. La vague de conversions attendue par certains à la fin de la guerre du Pacifique ne s'est pas produite. Les Japonais ne se convertissent pas ou peu. Pourquoi ?* Le P. Satoru Ohara, jésuite, professeur d'histoire à l'université Sophia (Jôchi) de Tôkyô, a écrit la présente étude pour les Japonais afin de les inciter à la réflexion. Par ricochet, il donne une réponse à notre question. Son texte est paru dans Fukyô ('Mission'), la revue mensuelle du Centre d'études religieuses Oriens (Tôkyô), vol. 33, n. 5, juin 1978.<sup>2</sup> La traduction est de la rédaction d'Églises d'Asie].

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Dans cette étude, il s'agit, au sein de la rencontre du Japon avec tout ce qu'a pu lui apporter l'Occident en matière d'idées politiques, commerciales et culturelles, de découvrir les signes de l'implantation d'une vie chrétienne vécue, d'évaluer le présent et de prévoir les orientations à venir. Ici, avec la littérature comparée qui met bien en évidence le caractère hétérogène de la culture japonaise par rapport à celle de l'Occident, se posera encore une fois le problème de la rencontre, c'est-à-dire de l'acculturation.

[...] Du point de vue historique, la rencontre entre le monde occidental et le Japon se divise en deux périodes. Celle des premières chrétientés implantées aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles et la seconde, celle de la nouvelle évangélisation de l'ère Meiji (1868-1912). Les deux phases de cette rencontre Orient-Occident sont tellement différenciées que l'histoire du christianisme au Japon peut se diviser en deux périodes distinctes. Mais se pose alors pour nous, les Japonais, le problème de devoir nous situer aujourd'hui. C'est-à-dire, vivons-nous encore et toujours sous l'ère Meiji ou vivons-nous une nouvelle troisième période, les deux premières étant reconnues comme historiquement closes ? Qu'est-ce qui différencie la période d'après la guerre du Pacifique et qu'est-ce qui décide de l'orientation des temps à venir pour le Japon d'aujourd'hui ?

Dans cet exposé, nous essaierons de voir ce qu'a été, dans le passé, cette rencontre entre le Japon et de l'Occident et, après l'avoir évaluée, nous tenterons de situer ce temps présent qui est le nôtre et de prévoir son orientation.

## **Première période : culture «singulière» et culture «plurielle»**

En schématisant le problème de la rencontre du Japon et de l'Occident, on peut dire de l'Europe que le christianisme est au cœur même de sa culture. L'Occident, c'est une culture vitale liée en profondeur au christianisme. Ce qui ne signifie pas que tout y est peint aux couleurs du christianisme et que le monde occidental est gouverné par l'Église catholique. Au moment même où l'Occident, à l'époque des grandes découvertes, partait à la recherche du nouveau monde, la vigueur Âge du mouvement protestant, le gauchissement d'une longue tradition chrétienne héritée du Moyen Âge mais routinière et la collusion entre religion et politique engendrèrent une prise de conscience anti-chrétienne active qui, mêlée d'hérésies, fut pour l'Occident une épreuve difficile à supporter. Quoique ce fût pour le christianisme quelque chose de négatif, ce ne fût pas une simple péripétie. Les structures de l'anti-christianisme, de par leur antagonisme même, ont donné naissance à un dynamisme lié à l'approfondissement de sa source première. Un christianisme sans son interface anti-chrétienne n'existe pas. L'Occident est une civilisation originale dont le cœur est le christianisme, ses adversaires anti-chrétiens y compris.

En revanche, il est difficile de schématiser d'un coup tous les aspects de la culture du Japon. En la comparant à l'unique source d'inspiration de l'Occident, on peut dire que, pour ce qui est du Japon, ses sources d'inspiration sont multiples. La culture du Japon ne relève pas d'un modèle clos. Elle accepte ce qui vient d'ailleurs, c'est-à-dire toutes choses nouvelles jugées par elle d'une valeur digne du plus grand respect. Cette tolérance qu'on peut dire généreuse et sans limite peut se réaliser en un laps de

temps record et sans exemple ailleurs. Cependant, même accueillante, la culture du Japon ne se laisse pas pour autant dominer par ce qu'elle a coopté. Ce qu'elle adopte garde sa spécificité et ne se transforme pas en élément fédérateur, mais, tout en s'infiltrant largement, ira en se développant certes, mais 'à la japonaise'. C'est-à-dire que ce qui vient d'ailleurs n'est pas submergé par une confrontation inévitable, mais, tel quel, cohabitera et continuera d'exister le plus harmonieusement possible.

Par exemple, l'arrivée du bouddhisme a exercé, c'est certain, une grande influence sur le Japon. Pourtant on ne peut pas dire que la source première de la culture japonaise soit le seul bouddhisme. Les idées du bouddhisme telles qu'elles ont été reçues ne sont pas devenues pour autant un pivot de la culture japonaise. Le Japon n'est pas devenu un pays bouddhiste. Toléré au Japon, le bouddhisme s'y est développé mais en tant que bouddhisme japonais et la pensée bouddhiste y demeure toujours une doctrine étrangère. La religiosité du Japon, sans refus catégorique et sans lutte, a simplement choisi de célébrer ensemble *«les dieux shintoïstes et les dieux du bouddhisme»*. On peut en dire autant du confucianisme. Confucianisme et bouddhisme n'enseignent pas la même chose. Mais dans la culture du Japon, quand on fait l'historique des idées adoptées au fil des siècles, quelles qu'elles soient, on leur découvre inévitablement des ascendants bouddhistes ou confucéens. C'est-à-dire que confucianisme ou bouddhisme, l'un et l'autre, à l'évidence, sont deux des sources de la culture japonaise.

Ce Japon pluriel a rencontré le monde occidental monolithique pour la première fois au début de l'ère moderne. Aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles, l'entrée de l'Occident au Japon avait, certainement, pour but principal le commerce, spécialement celui des armes. Cependant, ce commerce qu'on disait *«à la recherche des épices et de l'or»*, on ne doit pas oublier qu'il avait au point de départ d'authentiques intentions spirituelles et religieuses, *«la recherche des âmes»*. Mais les demandes formulées par le Japon n'avaient, elles, rien de religieux ou de spirituel. Les Japonais voulaient des choses modernes utiles, des techniques utilisables sur l'heure et, pour tout dire, les fusils qu'ils ne possédaient pas encore. Entre cette demande et les intentions occidentales, la *«différence»* était immense.

A l'époque des grandes découvertes, l'Occident, l'Espagne et le Portugal en tête, avait comme premier objectif, selon la formule consacrée, la diffusion du christianisme. Pourtant, ce n'est qu'après, une fois que les deux empires aztèque et inca d'Amérique centrale et du Sud et les Philippines furent conquis et colonisés par les deux puissances ibériques que le religieux apparut avec la christianisation de la population par les missionnaires. Ce qui montre que le souci religieux ne fut pas premier. Dans un Japon très difficile où les méthodes colonialistes s'avéraient inapplicables, l'Occident chercha donc, pour commencer, à lui faire rencontrer le christianisme. Or, comme je l'ai déjà dit, malgré les tentatives des Occidentaux de lui présenter *«la civilisation unique»* fondée sur l'unique christianisme, le Japon, de son côté, jamais, ne lui présenta de requête d'ordre religieux.

Dans la région de Nagasaki, les conversions des seigneurs féodaux et la christianisation des populations vassales relevaient à n'en pas douter de l'idée toute simple de vouloir doter le fief d'un port qui, fort du monopole de la vente d'armes, permettrait ainsi d'acquérir une position dominante très utile en cette période de guerre civile.<sup>3</sup> La demande n'ayant pas été satisfaite immédiatement, s'ensuivit une forte opposition. Les hommes d'État japonais des XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles, plutôt que de s'opposer directement au christianisme en tant que tel, forts de l'idée politique de devoir établir une autorité unique dans le pays, préférèrent la solution isolationniste dénommée *«sakoku»* (fermeture à l'étranger). Pourtant, cette volonté de fermeture ne fut jamais totale, irraisonnée et exempte de tout espace de liberté. Cet isolationnisme ne fut jamais absolument hermétique.<sup>4</sup>

Du fait des controverses théologiques soulevées par la réforme protestante et suite au Concile de Trente qui clarifia la doctrine catholique, le christianisme de cette époque était un christianisme revivifié. L'isolationnisme du Japon survint après qu'avec sa large capacité d'accueil et son immense intérêt pour les idées nouvelles, le Japon eut compris vraiment en profondeur ce qu'était l'Occident et sa culture toute imprégnée de cette religion chrétienne. Malgré toute la différence entre les propositions religieuses d'un côté et les requêtes de l'autre, l'Occident, riche de sa culture et tout imprégné de ce christianisme revivifié, à travers déportations, interdits et persécutions, a laissé chez les Japonais les traces d'une authentique et profonde rencontre.

Au milieu des situations extrêmes de tout un peuple persécuté, sans pasteurs et sans sacrements, la seule idée d'une vraie *«contrition»* qui vous met en présence du Dieu d'amour a fait vivre les communautés chrétiennes pendant deux cent cinquante ans. Certaines d'entre elles choisirent de rallier le bouddhisme syncrétiste.

Mais ceux qu'on appelle encore *«les chrétiens cachés»*, inspirés par la pensée de la charité et de la croix, continuèrent à vivre leur foi chrétienne jusqu'à la restauration de Meiji<sup>5</sup> et la résurrection de ces communautés chrétiennes enfin sorties de deux cent trente ans de clandestinité.<sup>6</sup>

## Deuxième période : «une technologie inconnue à intégrer»

Au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'Occident se souvenant de sa précédente et douloureuse expérience, cesse de mettre en avant sa culture et sa religion chrétienne et privilégie sa technologie. Avec A. Toynbee, il avait appris en effet que *«quoique faisant partie de la culture, une technologie dont on ignore tout sera plus accessible qu'une religion méconnue dont cette culture est pourtant l'émanation. C'est-à-dire qu'introduire à l'étranger une partie seulement d'une culture rencontre moins de résistance que de vouloir l'introduire dans son entier. Elle s'y insère plus rapidement»*.

En comparant avec la période précédente où le décalage technologique n'était pas très important, l'Occident du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui avait connu la révolution urbaine et la révolution commerciale, possédait une technologie moderne avancée et un capitalisme organisé. Il se tenait devant le Japon en position de force et celui-ci se vit dans l'obligation d'ouvrir ses portes au défi de la technologie occidentale. Le Japon, de son côté, devait lutter pour sa modernisation, l'accélération de la construction d'un État moderne et l'amélioration de sa position internationale. Dans cet esprit étaient lancés des slogans comme : *«Forces armées et richesse nationale»*, *«Production industrielle et développement»*, *«Culture et Civilisation»*. Les pionniers de l'ère Meiji, ne voulaient pas des idées qui avaient cours en Chine à l'issue de la guerre de l'opium,<sup>7</sup> ni fouler les mêmes ornières qu'elle. Ils visaient plus haut. Le Japon, en un court laps de temps, montrant des facultés d'accueil peu communes et sans aucune révolution industrielle, se dota, sans coup férir, d'une industrie lourde. De par ses propres forces, il prit sa place sur la scène internationale. A peine une trentaine d'années après son ouverture au monde, il remportait la victoire dans sa guerre contre *«le lion endormi»*, la Chine des mandchous.<sup>8</sup> Au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle encore, avec la guerre russo-japonaise,<sup>9</sup> il obtenait une victoire et se hissait au rang de grande puissance.

Ainsi, les rencontres du Japon et de l'Occident ont chacune été différentes. Au XVI<sup>e</sup> et au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, il s'agissait de rencontrer une religion et une culture étrangère, au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, de s'appropriier un des aspects de cette culture, la technologie de l'étranger. Dans cette dernière rencontre, la religion chrétienne, source essentielle de la civilisation occidentale, a été complètement laissée de côté. Le phénomène religieux ne posant pas de problème particulier, il fut froidement ignoré. Le Japon de l'ère Meiji tout occupé à se moderniser, c'est-à-dire à s'occidentaliser, n'adopta que la civilisation technologique occidentale. Ce qui était cette dernière, ce qui fait vivre les hommes et les relie à Dieu, a été complètement occulté. Ce parti pris continue de nos jours. Même chez les intellectuels, le facteur essentiel qu'est le religieux et qui fait que l'homme vive en homme ne recueille aucun intérêt. La cause lointaine est à chercher dans le fait que les Japonais de l'ère Meiji ne pensaient qu'à la modernisation, l'occidentalisation et la civilisation technologique. Ce fulgurant progrès soutenu par l'impérialisme et le militarisme aboutit soixante-dix ou quatre-vingts ans plus tard à la catastrophe de la guerre du Pacifique qui affectera pratiquement le monde entier.<sup>10</sup>

## Troisième période : l'avenir

Après l'ère Meiji, concevoir la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale comme un autre changement majeur dans l'histoire du Japon paraît évident. Il est certain qu'au cours de cette guerre, le fardeau porté par l'Église catholique japonaise a été fait de beaucoup de souffrances. Après la défaite de 1945, grâce à la promulgation d'une nouvelle constitution, les droits de l'homme seront globalement respectés au Japon et la liberté religieuse assurée. Après la longue période de contrainte, on pouvait penser que renaîtrait une grande espérance. Du monde entier furent donc envoyés de nombreux instituts missionnaires et des religieux aux moyens financiers importants. Pourtant, plus d'une trentaine d'années après la fin de la guerre, peut-on, aujourd'hui, parler d'une croissance du Royaume de Dieu au Japon ? Le nombre des catholiques représente à peine 0,35% de la population et la baisse des vocations met en péril la continuité de la mission. Malgré la liberté et la paix d'aujourd'hui, les conditions de l'évangélisation au Japon ne sont pas brillantes. La mutation historique du Japon et l'occasion d'une nouvelle rencontre avec le christianisme, n'ont-elles donc pas provoqué un essor ?

Cette rencontre à la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale n'a absolument pas été une de ces périodes historiques dont on se souvient. Après cette terrible guerre, il semble que s'est simplement transformée en institution ce qu'on pourrait appeler une reconduction du schéma de l'époque de Meiji. Après la guerre, la thèse du Japon de l'ère Meiji, celle de la modernisation, de l'occidentalisation et de la technologie, n'a pas disparu. A seulement été supprimé ce qui avait conduit à la catastrophe, le nationalisme et la suprématie de l'armée. Pour les générations de l'après-guerre, la notion de défense du Japon et d'amour de la patrie, le fait même d'exprimer ces mots, provoquait une réaction allergique de rejet de tout nationalisme et de tout militarisme. Se dépouiller du militarisme obsessionnel, qui avait dressé le monde contre lui et lui avait fait tant de mal, pouvait apparemment exprimer un grand changement. En fait, alors qu'il n'était plus nécessaire pour le Japon de devoir se dépasser, ce fut au contraire pour lui,

immédiatement, comme un coup d'éperon vers plus d'occidentalisation et de technologie. Près de soixante-dix ans avaient été nécessaires pour que le Japon de l'ère Meiji accède à une stature internationale. L'après-guerre réussit en moins de vingt ans, grâce à son habileté innée et à son application au travail, à faire du Japon un empire économique, un «*animal économique*» comme il est souvent désigné en anglais.

Arrivé à ce stade, la vraie modernisation du Japon signifie-t-elle son occidentalisation ? L'«*occidentalité*» se réduit-elle à une culture technique ? Pas de place ici pour se poser des questions existentielles et douter. Comme au début de la restauration de Meiji, la foi religieuse qui est au cœur de l'«*occidentalité*» est laissée de côté. N'est recherchée que la technologie importée de l'étranger, accompagnée d'une détermination sans faille à vouloir rejoindre et dépasser l'Occident.

Pourtant, à l'heure où il est parvenu à se hisser au rang des premiers pays industriels du monde et où il réfléchit à ce qu'il lui faudrait faire pour soutenir son économie de pointe, le Japon éprouve une certaine vacuité et commence à connaître l'incertitude de ne pas avoir d'objectif clair pour un avenir à définir. Jusqu'alors, pas d'erreur et rien d'inutile. Mais, après avoir foncé sans trop réfléchir, arrive la maturité et brusquement vous assaillent doutes et hésitations. C'est comme une remise en question radicale de la modernisation, de l'occidentalisation et de la technologie comme culture, c'est-à-dire de l'orientation prise par le Japon depuis l'ère Meiji. Comme un tâtonnement vers une prise de conscience globale de grande dimension qui dépasse de loin l'ancien slogan : «*Wakon-yōsai*».<sup>11</sup>

Il ne s'agit pas de désavouer le passé mais, au contraire, pour mieux aller de l'avant, de s'examiner soi-même, de rencontrer «*l'homme*» et de se demander qui il est et quelle devrait être sa vie. Dans le Japon d'aujourd'hui, la réponse immédiate à cette question ne sera pas celle que lui donnera une religion établie.

Quoique l'histoire religieuse du Japon ne soit pas le sujet de cet article, quand on réfléchit à son histoire et à ses traditions, c'est le développement et le travail «*à la japonaise*» ainsi que l'adaptation au réel qui émergent avant tout. Ce qui induit une perte du sens de l'au-delà (transcendance) et une imprégnation profonde des masses populaires plus orientées vers l'action politique que vers les sentiments religieux ou les idées. Pour les gouvernants de ce pays, les gens qui portent le nom de leur religion en bandoulière sont des groupements fanatiques dangereux qui provoquent à répétition les conflits entre politique et religion. A l'époque d'Edo,<sup>12</sup> la religion politiquement soumise conserva une position acceptable dans une société féodale à base de consanguinité mais ne joua aucun rôle au moment de la réforme de Meiji. Devenue alors un shintoïsme national, elle servit de slogan politique et la réforme religieuse du «*Haibutsu-kishaku*» finira par être rejetée.<sup>13</sup>

Depuis Meiji, le rationalisme évolutionniste est le soutien des intellectuels de la classe dirigeante. La religion ne se projette pour eux que sous le vocable habituel de superstition. Elle n'est l'objet ni de persécution ni de lutte, elle est seulement et froidement ignorée. Pour les Japonais d'aujourd'hui, la religion, souvent, n'est plus qu'une sorte de nostalgie familiale ou folklorique évocatrice du passé. Dans une société qui évolue difficilement, elle n'est pas quelque chose qui puisse peser fortement sur le présent d'une humanité mature ni sur son orientation future. Telle est la conception de la religion qu'ont les Japonais, bonne pour les uns parce qu'indulgente, mauvaise pour les autres parce qu'ambiguë. Au shintoïsme, la joie et la création, au bouddhisme, la mort et le culte des ancêtres.<sup>14</sup> Dans cette nation avancée où plus de la moitié des 125 millions d'habitants a une religion, le climat religieux y est plus que tempéré. Mais, compte tenu de la compréhension qu'ont les gens de la religion, une réponse religieuse immédiate, claire et directe aux questions profondes qui commencent à se poser au Japon et aux hommes d'aujourd'hui ne serait pourtant pas une solution. Ce serait refaire ce qu'on a connu déjà avec la stagnation imprévue de l'Église catholique après la guerre.

Ici, je voudrais réfléchir non pas à la réforme historique du Japon à la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale, mais à cette thèse indéboulonnable qui, depuis Meiji, perdure encore selon laquelle modernisation égale occidentalisation et civilisation industrielle et qui fait question aujourd'hui. C'est-à-dire que le Japon, à partir de ce questionnement intérieur, se doit d'inaugurer une troisième période substantiellement différente de celle qu'il a connue au XVI<sup>e</sup>- XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et à l'époque de Meiji.

[...] La rencontre du Japon avec l'Occident doit s'élargir pour amorcer une troisième période et prendre une nouvelle orientation. L'Occident de l'époque des chrétiens cachés avait à l'égard du Japon certainement le même désir de lui faire connaître l'Évangile. Mais il s'agissait d'un dogmatisme chrétien trop direct, rempli de la certitude qu'en dehors de lui il n'y avait point de salut. Les vues politiques internes du Japon étant devenues un élément à prendre en compte, l'agressivité de l'Occident a favorisé le sentiment d'hétérogénéité et l'isolationnisme, deux éléments qui se sont ligüés pour refuser l'ensemble de la culture que représentait cette religion dite «*perverse*».<sup>15</sup>

C'est pourquoi, peut-on dire, la tendance pro-occidentale de l'ère Meiji s'est tournée vers la haute technologie de cette civilisation, sans passer par sa source, pour en arriver aujourd'hui à vivre en dehors de toute rencontre avec la religion chrétienne, source originelle pourtant de tout occidentalisme. Cependant, aujourd'hui, l'Occident, en particulier le christianisme, grâce au Concile Vatican II, a élargi considérablement et fait mûrir l'adage ancien qu'en dehors de l'Église il n'y avait pas de salut. On s'est débarrassé de la faiblesse de l'homme qu'on faisait s'incliner devant la supériorité arrogante qui regardait de haut les autres, de la conscience d'un peuple élu qui regardait la grâce du salut comme exclusive.

[...] Quoiqu'il en soit, il n'y a rien qu'un Japon qui voudrait se mettre à la remorque de l'Occident ne puisse imiter ou recevoir. Mais ce qu'il lui faut apprendre, ce qu'il lui faut rencontrer maintenant ou jamais, et qui lui est ouvert à l'infini, ce sont non pas des résultats dramatiques superficiels mais une plénitude intérieure profonde. Il ne s'agit pas d'une simple transplantation d'un christianisme grandi en Occident, ni de la fabrication univoque d'un christianisme japonais autochtone. Il s'agit de la rencontre du Japon avec le Christ et du « *témoignage* » qu'il en donnera.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Statistiques 2003 de la Conférence épiscopale : 449 927 catholiques pour une population de 126 478 millions d'habitants.

<sup>2</sup> Étude parue dans Fukyô ('Mission'), revue mensuelle du Centre d'études religieuses Oriens (Tôkyô), vol. 33, n° 5, juin 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Sengoku : période d'une longue guerre civile entre sectes religieuses, grands seigneurs féodaux et petits seigneurs locaux pour conquérir la suprématie. Elle dura de 1490 à 1600 avec l'entrée d'Oda Nobunaga à Kyôtô, le premier unificateur du Japon.

<sup>4</sup> Sakoku : fermeture du pays à toutes relations internationales de 1639 à 1868, période pendant laquelle les relations avec les pays européens furent interdites sous peine de mort, à l'exception de celles avec les Hollandais de l'îlot de Dejima à Nagasaki. En revanche, les relations avec les pays asiatiques étaient autorisées mais strictement contrôlées. Il était également interdit aux Japonais de sortir du pays.

<sup>5</sup> Meiji isshin : Restauration de l'ère Meiji, révolution qui mit fin en 1868 au shôgunat et mit au pouvoir l'empereur Mutsuhito. La période de Meiji se caractérise par la modernisation du Japon, l'ouverture du pays aux étrangers, la liberté religieuse, l'adoption d'une constitution, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Sur les 'chrétiens cachés' du Japon, voir *EDA* 245, *EDA* 380 (Dossier : «L'Église du Japon : 444 ans d'histoire») et *EDA* 317 (Cahier de documents : «La 'christologie' du romancier japonais Shusaku endo»).

<sup>7</sup> Guerre de l'opium (1839-1842). L'empereur de Chine interdisant l'importation de l'opium, les Britanniques occupèrent Shanghai et imposèrent à la Chine le traité de Nankin. Ce qui, aux yeux des Japonais, symbolisait l'idée d'une compromission avec l'étranger.

<sup>8</sup> Guerre sino-japonaise : septembre 1894-avril 1895.

<sup>9</sup> Guerre russo-japonaise : février 1904-septembre 1905.

<sup>10</sup> Guerre du Pacifique : décembre 1941- août 1945.

<sup>11</sup> Wakon-yôsai : mot à mot : 'Esprit japonais et connaissance occidentale'. Expression par laquelle au début de la période Meiji, on prônait l'acceptation de la science occidentale tout en conservant un 'esprit national'.

<sup>12</sup> Période qui correspond au shôgunat des Tokugawa (1603-1868) qui avaient fait d'Edo (Tôkyô) leur centre névralgique.

<sup>13</sup> Haibutsu-kishaku : 'Contre le Bouddha et contre Shaka'. Mouvement de réforme religieuse du début de l'ère Meiji, entre 1868 et 1871. Il visait à séparer les sanctuaires shintô de l'emprise du bouddhisme et à faire du shintô une religion d'État.

<sup>14</sup> L'auteur fait allusion ici au syncrétisme traditionnel des Japonais qui viennent présenter un nouveau-né au prêtre shinto dans la joie et l'action de grâce mais ne conçoivent pas que des funérailles puissent se dérouler autrement que sous la présidence d'un bonze.

<sup>15</sup> Jashûmon : appellation appliquée au christianisme par ses adversaires en particulier pendant la période d'Edo. Mot à mot : 'mauvaise religion' (*EDA*, Fukyô, novembre 2004).

Ref. : Dossiers et documents n. 9/2004. Supplément *EDA* n. 407, Novembre 2004. Cahier de documents. Document n. 9 E/2004.



# ***Dalits and the Mission of the Church***

- Lazar Stanislaus, SVD -

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The context of the Dalits has a number of historical layers and a very long history. It is rooted in the present Indian social order, which is based on the caste system. The present factors of Liberalization, Privatisation and Globalization (LPG) have created more problems for the oppressed sections of society. The majority of the victims in India are the Dalit communities. The Dalit Christians are similar to others and the dynamics of their faith have not led to a dynamic change in the structure of their society. Hence, the role of the Church is vital in this context. When the manifestation of God's love is experienced by the Dalits, we can say that the Church is alive and the people have hope and the Reign of God is here and now. This article attempts to understand the mission of the Church among the Dalits and the various implications stemming from their contextual problems.

## **I. Present Conditions of the Dalits**

The oppression of the Dalits has continued for the past 3,000 years. They are segregated in all spheres of social life: in places of worship, education, housing, land ownership, use of common property resources such as wells and village water taps, roads, buses and other public facilities. They are the people who are made to do all the menial and degrading jobs in our society. They are considered to be untouchables, and 'polluted'. In their daily lives, untouchability continues in every sphere of their life. The following are some of the inhuman practices in society:

- Dalits are not allowed to wear shoes; if they wear shoes, they will be forced to take them off when coming into the presence of a dominant caste person.
- In rural areas, Dalits are not allowed to cycle through the dominant caste area of the village.
- Dalits live mainly in separate communities, outside the actual village.
- In villages, Dalits are not allowed to sit at bus stops; they have to stand and wait until the dominant caste people have boarded the buses. Dalits are also not allowed to sit on the bus seats, even if they are vacant.
- Dalits are not allowed to enter many Hindu temples, for fear of them polluting the temples. Dalits have been chased out, abused and beaten up for daring to set foot inside a temple, even though it is a temple for their religion.
- After half a century of Independence, even many educated Dalits continue to face discrimination in renting a house to live in.
- Most upper caste persons will avoid having a Dalit to prepare their food, for fear of being polluted by them.
- In many dominant caste (rich) families, the servants are Dalits. They are employed only to do the menial jobs of cleaning their toilets, cowsheds, streets, etc.
- Dalits have been systematically attacked or socially boycotted for asserting their basic rights to land, the minimum wage, education, housing, food, water, etc.
- A total of 23,742 crimes were committed against the Dalits in 2000. There were 6,599 cases in UP; 5,623 cases in Rajasthan; 4631 cases in Madhya Pradesh and the rest were from other States (*The Indian Express*, 18 November 2001).

The *Conclusions* of the National Consultation on *Education as Mission* (2004) states, "The Indian mind is still incapable of conceptualising all human beings as equal by birth, as brothers and sisters in God's creation, sharing in divine dignity and honour. The Dalits are still treated as inferior human beings unfit for human fellowship.... They cannot perform their duties as Panchayat Presidents even if they are duly elected. Those who dare to disobey the caste constitution of Manu are severely dealt with, even with brutal murder. If the Dalits ask for just wages or repayment of money borrowed from them, their houses are burnt, their women are gang raped or subjected to inhuman treatment such as being forced to eat human excreta or drink human urine. In the name of protecting the holy cows, Dalits who skin dead cows can be stoned to death, and those who eat

beef can be contemptuously treated as inferior humans, if not anti-nationals... Their presence and participation in the higher echelons is, by and large, still an unrealised dream. In the villages and slums of many modern metropolis, Dalit women are still forced to collect the nite soil by hand and carry it on their head" (no.10).

The stranglehold of the caste restrictions based on the traditional Hindu purity and pollution ideology is so rampant that the open practice of untouchability still exists, and one may wonder whether they are a part of a modern and democratic nation or whether the law and order agencies exist at all.

On the eve of the Golden Jubilee of our Republic, the then president K.R. Narayanan said, "Untouchability has been abolished by law but shades of it remain in the ingrained attitudes nurtured by the caste system. Though the constitutional provision of reservation in educational institutions and public services flow from our Constitution, these provisions remain unfulfilled through bureaucratic and administrative deformation or by narrow interpretations of these special provisions" (2000:249).

## II. Theological Paradigms for Liberation among Dalits

### 1. *Jesus as a Dalit*

Jesus by emptying himself (Phil 2:7), became a slave, a *dalit*. When he came to his own, he was rejected, discriminated against (Jn 1:10). Though Jesus personally was rejected, he proclaimed liberty, freedom, life and love to the "outcastes" (Lk 4:18). He identified with them, and casting his whole being for them, he promised to pull down the corrupt *temple of casteism* and to build a new city of Jerusalem where there would be no new temples but only a new people with equality and fraternity. He had cautioned against any power, prestige and possession but concerned himself with the powerless (Mt 7:24-27; Lk 6:47-49). He refused to side with the upper and the dominant groups.

He chose to be a *dalit*, an outcaste, unrecognised by society. He became a rejected stone, but he was elevated as the keystone in the revolutionary process. Rayan says, "Rejected and thrown out of the vineyard and out of the town, Jesus finds himself outside the walls where the untouchables are forced to live and suffer. He finds himself among the external groups, those pushed out of society and excluded from its wealth and culture which, however, they have worked to create" (1992:138). Jesus was labelled by the religious teachers as a *Samaritan*. In John, we read, "The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honour my Father, and you dishonour me" (8:48-49). Here, Jesus refuted the charge that he was possessed by a demon, but *he did not negate or protest against being called a Samaritan, an outcaste*. By narrating the Good Samaritan story, he also commanded everyone to live like a Samaritan, hence he told them "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37). Jesus touched, healed and interacted with the social outcastes, the poor, sick, sinners and all the marginalized. He ate with the outcastes. The whole personality of Jesus revolutionized the life pattern in society. He lived and suffered as a *dalit*, cast out of Jerusalem, as a polluting carcass, as a friend of outcasts, poor and sinners, and one who broke the sacred traditions of the purity-pollution laws and challenged the traditions, which were inhuman. He died seeking hope. The Father fulfilled the hope by raising the outcaste Jesus from the dead. Jesus has become the liberator (Stanislaus 1999:381). This propels a believer in Jesus to a new understanding as well as a new force to live for. Thus, the hierarchical society cannot be a model to live for and seek peace, but we need to follow the steps of Jesus. He "suffered outside the camp in order to disclose, proclaim, and affirm the unborn dignity and the native purity of all our castes. All who would participate in the feeding and life-giving love and struggle of Jesus will have to seek him outside the city, with the lost, the lowliest, and the least" (Rayan 1992:139). We live in a society with this Jesus, our Master, who was an outcaste, a surprising teacher and a challenging person.

### 2. *Jesus as Drum and Drum as Jesus*

Dalit culture has three main elements: goddess, drum and music/song. For the Dalit, *Paraiyar*, the drum functions as a dominant symbol of both resistance and emancipatory theography. The primary object of this resistance-emancipation process was to retain and actualise Dalit communal subjectivity. Through sociological analysis, one can say that the subaltern dynamic activity of emancipation is achieved through resistance and reconciliation. The drum depicts the *no* of the

*Paraiyar* to the colonizing and demonising tendencies of the valuation system of the caste communities. It is also in and through the drum that they pronounce a symbolic *yes* to their own communal identity. This retention of the drum is an auspicious and empowering religious symbol despite its inauspicious characterization by the caste community.

In reality, the Paraiyars in particular and the Dalits in general are primarily actors rather than participants in the drama of communal life. The participation of drummers in the ritual of the caste community is a position that exemplifies the activity of a 'reconciliatory' position within the primary dynamic of resistance with an eye to emancipation. Paraiyars by means of the drum (a) establish their human identity in interrelationship with other caste groups through their participation in the ritual community, and (b) reiterate their particular authority as human mediators and controllers of the sacred powers with which the caste communities need to be reconciled. The drum mediates the Divine presence, which empowers them to appropriate their humaneness as communicated to them within their Divine-human relationship. On the other hand, the *christic presence* represented by the drum enables them to assert their self, which they acquired from the Divine (Clark 1999:191).

Crossan states, "What Jesus was doing is located exactly between the covert and the overt acts of resistance. It was not, of course, as open as the acts of protesters, prophets, bandits, or messiahs. But it was more open than playing dumb, imagining renege, or simply recalling Mosaic or Davidic ideals. His eating and healing were, in theory and practice, the precise border line between the private and public, covert and overt, secret and open resistance" (Crossan, 1994:105). The emancipatory resistance of Jesus to oppression was evident, but at the same time he insisted on the emancipatory reconciliation with others. He did not compromise with justice, but he taught the importance of forgiveness. Jesus's resistance to the inhuman practices of the Pharisees and Scribes made them think and oppose him. The Drum sounds resistance of the Divine and in this process, the Dalits too will be opposed, thrashed and killed. "Analogous to the drum in the religion of the Paraiyar, which functions as a symbol of the text of resistance and emancipatory theology, Jesus deliberately continues the behaviours of deviance in order to alter society's valuation system" (Clark 1999:205). Thus Jesus as the Drum becomes the pivotal point to resist humiliation and let the sound of the drum evoke conscientious effort among the Dalits to resist dehumanisation, and at the same time as Jesus is the Saviour and reconciled with everyone, let Dalits reconcile with others to build a just and humane society.

### III. Missiological Implications

#### 1. Dalitheoethics

A general tendency is to separate faith, religion, and spirituality from economics that is concerned with the maximization of profit or at best making production and distribution efficient through the magic of the market. Hence, it is left to the professionals to see that everything works out for the 'good of all'. Unfortunately, the way in which production and distribution is organized needs critical scrutiny. The division between rich and poor, dominant and dominated, haves and have-nots is growing. From a faith perspective, we must critique the principle of maximization of profits as the key principle regulating economic activity. In the final analysis, it is human greed, avarice and commodity fetishism that are the propelling factors of globalization, and the logical result will be the promotion of a global class and the marginalization of a non-globalized class.

The economic condition of the Dalits is at a sub-human level. The magnitude and gravity of the problems are mind-boggling. Faith in God who is our Creator, sustainer, liberator and the God of justice and freedom impels us to live the life of justice. Jesus is the liberator and he challenges all evil, so that everyone could realize that they are children of God. Hence, we call for Dalitheoethics. A just understanding of Dalits calls for the creation of a system of economics, where equality reigns and there is no manipulation. Dalitheoethics is grounded on the saving power of Jesus Christ and the *distinctiveness* of his life; his preferential concern for victims and his kenotic love for, and openness to, others rather than on the assumptions, and the ideology of neo-liberalism. Dalitheoethics challenges and confronts the current phase of globalization with Jesus's message, 'you cannot serve God and mammon' (Mt 6:24), (see Razu, 2003:22-23).

Do Dalitheoethics deal with the values that are juxtaposed *vis-à-vis* a profit-oriented way of life as a matter of faith, or total withdrawal into the private sphere? It serves to answer or allowing your total being to get lost in the process (Razu, 2003:22-24). We need to create alternative discourses to

counter the grand narratives of the global market. The world in which we live is asymmetrical in terms of power and influence, and therefore we need to distinguish the forces that deny life and the forces that affirm life. In this manner, Dalittheothics is involved in the exercise of locating and challenging the forces that foster inequality and oppression. The forces of the upper castes control the market and exercise their power to edge out the Dalits' role in the market. In essence, **a non-revolutionary situation is created**. One of the achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is its ability to create *impoverished myths*, which disassociate life further.

Analysing the present situation one realises the urgency for the Dalits total liberation. "The future homes of the genocidal project will not be some other wars, but precisely liquidation of Dalits through abject poverty, hunger and unemployment. What we need are new kinds of dreaming ... discourses. We need to liberate Dalits from the 'expert' 'professional', 'expert', 'progressive', 'individualist', 'consumerist', 'stratified' and 'monocultural' frameworks and theories" (Razu, 2003:24). Here, the role of the Church has to be clear. It cannot shy away from the market matrix that marginalizes Dalits. First it has to create an atmosphere where it influences society like salt and leaven, so that Dalits may assert their human rights and dignity as persons. Second, the Church has to challenge the forces that create the disequilibrium and find ways with other forces or systems to implement a humanizing process of action. A great challenge is on the cards for the present and the future.

## 2. Political Empowerment

Democracy was built on the nation State. Globalisation seeks to remove power from the nation-State and puts it in the global arena thus crippling the nation-State in meeting the democratic aspirations of its people. "The erosion of democracy under globalisation spells blockade of the very emancipation discourse of oppressed people like the Dalits. With powerful surveillance technologies at their disposal, they can nip any such attempts in the bud" (Teldumbde, 2003:31). Dalits as powerless social outcasts in the political sphere can easily be targeted or suppressed.

Democracy assumes a society where different races, groups and castes can be found, "but neoliberalism dismisses them and atomises the population into discrete self-seeking individuals. This conception clearly favours business because it eliminates the concept of collective (power) and thereby emasculates labour" (Teldumbde, 2003:30).

Danger is inevitable in opposing the dominant groups but that should not deter the aspirations of the Dalits. Political power has more influence today and this power can change the fabric of society. Social and economic transformation without political power is a myth. Hence, anyone who wants to control political power has to be opposed and a favourable strategy has to be worked out to control the infiltration of globalization. The *collective power* of the Dalits is the best alternative and *collective bargaining* will certainly have an impact on society.

Political transformation among the Dalits is a must. Any work of empowering the people, especially the powerless Dalits, automatically touches upon the existing power structure either in the Church or in society. Power remains with the organised groups of people, this is political activity and no one should be apolitical. The aim of politics should be the transfer of resources, whether economic or political, to the majority of the people. The Dalit People's politics is to enter into this process so that the structure of the society can change and the resources be shared among the people. This is different from party politics. In this context, are we convinced of the demand "to politicise our evangelisation and evangelise politics?" (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn. 25-31).

In the recent past the believing community has been grappling with the realistic concept that liberative mission is a **political act**. Forming leaders and paving the way into the political realm of society will help the Dalits and the oppressed to be able to participate in the decision-making process. Dalits need power, not to rule over others, but power to stop the dominant castes and other oppressors from the misuse of power. This 'Dalit power' should be at the service of the poor and marginalized. How to empower the Dalits? The Church has to get involved in this process. "The political life of a citizen is as much a reality as social and spiritual life. Christians cannot shy away from the political life of the country. But I must hold that any movement, ideology or political or social philosophy of a Dalit Christian must not be repugnant to Christianity and its basic precepts. Looking with concern to the oppressed and depressed, exploited, broken hearted, whether one is a Christian or not without discrimination is definitely ... the theology of 'Love'" (Danam, 2000:277).

The economic and political empowerment of the Dalits is a reasonable possibility as the Dalits are a political force in the making, given the egalitarian and secular constitution, which accepts

human dignity and rights as something sacred. In addition this process can be accompanied by their socio-religious empowerment. We should take note that the attempts of traditional ascetic Hinduism, modern religious movements around *Babas* and *Matajis*, to integrate the Dalits with Hinduism, however genuine they may be, are not caste movements. “Therefore dialogue and community building exercises with these change agents within the greater tradition will be a path towards strengthening *Protestant Hinduism*, which stands in closer spiritual affinity with the Christian worldview as regards sacred human dignity” (Ayrookuzhiel, 2000:304). The socio-religious empowerment will help the Dalits in political empowerment and in this process, economic growth should also be given priority. The Church has a role to play in this multi-dimensional approach of empowerment.

### **3. Option of/for Justice**

The preferential option for the poor gives us to understand that our work in the context demands us to work for the poor. This option is always as option of justice, because right relationships with one another and the emphasis on human dignity and rights give a clear indication of justice in society. How to view this option from the scriptural perspective: the three aspects of how to look, how to listen and how to share would explain the process of option (Gutiérrez 1997:76-80).

a. *Knowing how to look*: In Mark 12:41-44, we read that Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitudes putting money into the treasury box. He chose an important place to watch the people. In the temple there were many doors, but he chose to see from the right place. Jesus teaches us how to see. The viewpoint is important. If one stands near the door of MNC, TNC and the World Bank, one will see many interesting things. But if a person sat among the Dalits, then their poverty, untouchability, illiteracy and inhuman condition would be seen clearly and would disturb the viewer.

b. *Knowing how to listen*: The Gospel of Mark 10:46-52, narrates the episode of the blind man of Jericho. Jesus asks the blind person, “what do you want me to do for you?”. Although the answer would be obvious, he still engages in a brief conversation. Finally, Jesus told him, “Your faith has saved you”; he makes this poor beggar participate in the healing process. Dalits have a lot of stories, myths and experiences to share and narrate to us. Listening to them would be a liberating process.

c. *Knowing how to share*: The story of feeding the multitudes in the Gospel gives us a tremendous motivation to share. Jesus dialogues with his disciples to solve the problem of hunger. The message of breaking the bread is to share what one has. Our own meals at home are to share what we have with others. When millions go hungry, one cannot eat alone, but share with the hungry.

This is the process of the option: after looking, listening and sharing from the perspective from below, we would achieve just relationships. This leads us to challenge those who would not participate in this process of the option and who are untouched by the dehumanising situation of the Dalits in India. The preferential option should have the following aspects: (a) the fundamental option for the poor is to keep alive the right to dream of a better society; (b) option should create confidence or fidelity that this liberation is possible; and (c) let us create a sense of hope that justice is possible with the suffering, laughter and struggle. Gutiérrez says, “I wish indeed we could be clasped by the laughter and the happiness of the poor, a happiness as festive as that with which in these days we want to remember Monsignor Romero” (1997:82).

We are committed to a vision of life in all its fullness not only for human beings but also for nature and the creatures. The God of life, the God of justice and the God of peace, exhorts us to translate these in our life situations and human relationships. There is no *shalom* without justice. The integral dynamics between peace and justice should be our life to bring God’s rule on earth. The culture of peace is possible only when we strive for the realization of the values of the Reign of God: justice, peace, freedom and love. As Weizacher succinctly puts it:

No peace without justice  
 No justice without peace  
 No justice without freedom  
 No freedom without justice  
 No peace among people without peace with nature  
 No peace with nature without peace among peoples.

Life means justice, above all social justice. The will of God is life abundant, life contains food,

culture, friendship, evangelization, and prayer and above all love. When love is full, life is also full. Poverty means death, being committed to the poor, signifies taking part in the struggle for justice. It also signifies having friends among the poor. Commitment to justice without friendship with the Dalit is shallow.

#### **4. Dalit Identity and Consciousness**

Bizay Sonkar Shastri, the new chair-person of the National Commission for SCs/STs, says, Tribals do not have any separate identity but are part of the Hindu fold, "There should be no discussion on this issue. How can they be different? Hindus and Tribals worship almost the same gods" (*The Times of India*, 26 March 2002). The *Sangh Parivar* has created a 'we-ness' identity based on tradition and ritual. At the same time they have created the 'Other'. The Muslims, Christians and Communists have become the 'Other'. Pluri-cultural and multi-religious identity is questioned and the crisis of identity will be the crisis of humanity and the nation today.

Hindutva offers an oppressive nationalism. It is oppressive, because it leaves no room for various identities; it asserts only a Hindu identity, thus, denying other identities. It leaves room neither for the aspirations of the various groups; nor opportunity for the representation of smaller groups and minorities through their symbols (Wilfred, 2000:219). Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has stated that to define the Indian identity as Hindu, would be to undermine the tradition of heterodoxy (*The Times of India*, 3 March 2001). Amaladoss comments, "Identity and mobility are what people make of themselves and their lives, individually and collectively, in religion as in other spheres of life. A true democracy should enable people to be themselves and to be creative and yet to live together in larger communities recognizing, respecting and accepting others" (Amaladoss, 2000:674).

*Dalit* is a condition, which negates the power of the Gospel and the position of the believers in Christ. Dalit identity is in terms of Dalit solidarity and Dalit *Desiyata*, Dalit ethnic nationalism, which is culturally different from the Aryan Vedic, Sanskritic, Hindu nationalism. Dalit identity is in the pathos, the past and the present sufferings of the Dalits. Dalit consciousness has to be counter-cultural; that is, something unique and different, rather than cross-cultural. In history, Christians were primarily cross-cultural, that is, Christianity engages with rather than confronts those of other groups. Christianity Dalit consciousness is a protest against the oppressive Brahminical Hindus.

As Christian Dalits develop their own *dalit consciousness* and identity as well as the Christian identity which evolves in relation to Christ and the faith community. "The discovery of self-identity and self-worth as a child of God revealed in the Scripture was an influential factor in the formation of the new Dalit consciousness and identity. The invitation to discover such an identity in Christ provided fulfilment and security to the poor and the oppressed" (Jayakumar, 1999:339).

When the subaltern identity is asserted through awareness, and the liberative process is shown to the marginalized, a humane character is recognized in their community. The challenge of the Church is to show them a process that can enable them to assert their identity and with this, they can work for their own liberation. The Church acts as a catalyst in this process.

#### **5. Prophetic diakonia**

The Christian commitment to justice and peace calls for the prophetic dimension of Christian living. This prophetic dimension can be *prophetic diakonia*. The real service to the oppressed masses would be to show them how we involve ourselves with restoring justice and peace in society. But, "restoration as an expression of the Christian commitment to overcoming structural oppression needs to be accompanied by the readiness to be transformed and to transform structures and people". Thus, **transformative justice** is pivotal to Christian engagement in issues of social justice. The WCC *Study on Racism* (2002) says, "Transformative justice deals with the past in the present. Its goal is to overcome racism and to achieve healing, reconciliation and the re-establishment of people's relationships, with a particular focus on justice to racially and ethically oppressed peoples. Transformative justice calls us to overcome that ambiguity of human existence to believe and act as saints, to explore our capacity for goodness and generosity and love and to be open to the newness of not complying with the standards of this world but, on the contrary, undertaking deliberate, consistent and constant action against racism (casteism)" (quoted by Raiser, 2003:191).

Love acquires in this process fuller meaning through justice. As Yuzon says, "justice is the

minimum demand of love and love the maximum demand of justice". As in reality, Ricoeur says that *love lends justice its vision*, and at the same time, "justice is the efficacious, institutional and social realization of love" (quoted in Razu, 2000:975). By being a Christian community it indicates that it has values and attitudes, which present an alternative to the values of the dominant system and its structures of oppression. The Christian vocation demands ethical and spiritual transformation. The ethical message and the life of the Church give shape to the vision of the Kingdom and reshape the community for fuller humanity.

The unity of the Churches is real witness to justice as well as witness to Christian values. We can establish God's Reign in the midst of chaos and structural injustice with Christian unity. This witness becomes all the more important in situations where life is threatened, abused and denied to many on account of the hierarchical caste and economic structures. The ecumenical union gains importance at this juncture of effective service and that should be a prophetic service. "As the Indian Churches engage themselves with one another and with the movements for justice and with the people of other faiths for the cause of the liberation of the oppressed, the ecumenical movement looks forward to new definitions and models of dialogue in action" (Raiser, 2003:194).

The mission of the Church is to reach out to all without distinction. Its involvement is crucial and its role has to be prophetic. The Forum of Religious for Justice and Peace says, "institutionalized violence often goes unnoticed whereas resistance to violence of the poor is condemned. The Church is not averse to mobilizing people to demonstrate when Church rights are infringed. But it closes its eyes against the poor being mobilized to fight injustice in society. At bottom, the concern of the Church for its institutions, property and privileges makes it a silent spectator, an unresisting witness to the violation of human rights by those in power" (Vattamattam, 1991:87). The challenge of the Church is to be proactive and interactive in society. The silence and the neutral position of the Church in personal and structural violence is to betray Jesus.

## 6. Dalit Revolution

Dr Ambedkar clearly stated that the caste system was responsible for all the evils in the existing society. He therefore called for an annihilation of caste. This is possible only when we annihilate the religious notions on which the caste system is founded. According to him the possible way is through a *Kranti* (revolution), and not through a simple reformation. For this *Kranti*, he suggested the following three steps: (i) New doctrinal basis, this means to reinterpret the Hindu religious text that carries the philosophical basis of religion, and bring it in to consonance with the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity; (ii) A complete change in the fundamental notions of life, this can be done through a change in the notion of purity-pollution, encourage inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages; (iii) the old body must die to receive a new body, this implies discarding the authority of the *Shashtras* and destroying the religion of the *Shashtras* as the Buddha and Gurunanak did (see Ambedkar, 1989:57-78).

The biblical praxis of Exodus should inspire and motivate us to build a new power out of the powerlessness of the Dalits (Stanislaus, 1999:192-219). **Jesus, the Kenotic Liberator** announced the Good News of God's Reign and took a strong stand against all sinful structures and initiated a movement of liberation. His *distinctiveness* has two aspects: his preferential concern for the victims and his self-emptying love for, and openness to, others. This Jesus who inspires us and directs our commitment to mission (*Conclusions*, 2001: no. 22). Today, along with the biblical inspiration, the invitation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* not to resign but to fight, and the Gandhian vision of bringing power to the *Panchayats* and the Ambedkarean praxis of uniting, and educating the Dalits to agitate for a new society are important in the liberative struggle. These elements broaden the thinking and action process. A dynamic collaboration with all those who work for the empowerment of the poor have to be organized as we move ahead in this liberating process.

The National Seminar on *Charting a New Course for Churches in Dalit and Adivasi Struggles* recommends, "to launch Dalit and Adivasi Liberation as the millennium agenda of the Church in India" (*National Seminar*, 2000:597). Though the Church was involved in charitable activities to rehabilitate the Dalits, the liberation of the Dalits was not the central aspect of the mission of the Church. **The Liberation of Dalits should become the centre of the mission of the Church.** How to achieve this radically? **The Dalit Movements have some solutions and these movements are a step forward in this revolutionary process.**

Dalit Forums, Ambedkar Movements, Dalit NGOs, SC/ST Employees' Forums, mass movements

have recognizable Dalit content and leadership at the grass root level. In addition, Dalit men and women are also active in other economic and social forums to further their livelihood and political spaces and opportunities. The RPI and BSP have helped to evolve greater political spaces for the community. "Collective and collaborative interventions have to be taken up with other organizations and movements at grass root levels for the day-to-day livelihood and dignity issues. Untouchability and atrocity issues, actions for fair wages, access to land, credit and other resources have to be fought for. The Church is conspicuous by its absence in these interventions" (*National Seminar*, 2000:593).

The Dalit Movements have mostly helped the Dalit men in general and no major commitment is undertaken for Dalit women. On 11 August 1995, the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) was formed at Delhi, to liberate Dalit women from all oppression. The main issues are: **1)** to liberate women from male dominance and patriarchy within the Dalit community and **2)** the caste in determining the Dalit identity. The Church should play a pivotal role in joining with these movements, which in a way are revolutionary steps to assert their identity, and dignity.

To cite an example to this process, the recently concluded World Social Forum (WSF), 2004, in Mumbai, has some pointers. The forty-day ***Dalit Swadhikar Rally*** (DSR), which began on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003, from four corners of India, tried to address various burning issues on its long and arduous journey weaving thorough various villages, towns, cities and States in the country. Flagging of the rally from Delhi, K.R. Narayanan described it as 'a beginning of a new revolution'. Along with the issues of casteism, fundamentalism and communalism, the dimension of the struggle against globalization was addressed along the routes. About 500 meetings, which were attended by nearly 10 lakh [hundred thousand] people, were held to address locals and about 500 cultural skits were performed. The DSR was initiated by the National Commission for Dalit Human Rights in the context of the WSF, 2004, to create awareness among Dalit communities about the effects of globalization and to organize them to fight casteism, imperialism, patriarchy, militarism and communalism, which were the main themes of WSF 2004. This rally awakened consciousness among the Dalit communities on various crucial issues affecting them now (Divakar, 2004: 28-31).

An informed and strategised national Dalit movement should effectively address the current issues of the Dalits' life security and livelihoods in the context of globalisation, and this should be the main agenda of all Dalit activists and movements in the country. The decade 2000-2010 is designated as the International Decade for the Culture of Peace. We should work with other peoples' movements, non-governmental organizations, and like-minded groups for peace.

#### IV. Challenges to the Church

We cannot be tired of empowering the Dalits; otherwise, our democracy would be like a palace built on a dung heap. Our mission is the continuous struggle for a just society. The following are some of the challenges to the Church to continue the mission among the Dalits.

a. Revelation has to be re-read with the hermeneutical categories of the victims especially that of the Dalits in order to draw out the transforming power of the Good News to challenge the forces of exploitation and to inspire the emergence of alternatives and to coordinate them to work for the maturation of the Kingdom of God here and now.

b. Enlightening Dalits should discern new forms of liturgy and sacraments to heal their servile, alienated and wounded psyche in order to build a new understanding about themselves and others as equals before God.

c. The Church should make the issues of the Dalits and other subaltern people the urgent concern of *orthodoxy* (right belief) and *orthopraxis* (right practice) of the Indian Christian Communities.

d. Going beyond the ecclesial borders and working at the wider human and secular levels for the total humanization/divinisation of all, and being in solidarity with the humanist and secular forces should become a norm for pastoral action.

e. Measures should be undertaken to counteract the spread of the myth of helplessness of the people and inculcate in the people hope for a better society. The people and groups who are involved in the struggle against the global forces of exploitation have to be identified and brought into contact with the Dalits in order to build up a solidarity of *prophetic friends or partners* who will be catalysts in transforming the world.

f. The Church's participation in the struggles of the Dalits for achieving social rights and human dignity and their political and economic empowerment is an ongoing challenge.



g. Pastoral ministry should have a Christian component for the people, which will promote a sense of dignity as *people of God*, created in the *image of God* and also inculcate in them 'spirituality for combat'.

h. The Churches should commit themselves to revive the Dalits' cultural traditions and history. The powerful use of the drum has to be explored. They need to be open to and enriched by the cultural and spiritual insights found among the Dalits.

i. The Churches are urged to organise programmes such as political consciousness-raising, training in leadership skills, political work, campaigning, parliamentary procedures, etc., at schools, *Panchayat*, State, and national levels. A campaign for *Literacy for every Dalit* should be launched (*National Seminar*; 2000:598-99).

j. In the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence Today, a spirituality of resistance is seen as an apt form to counter oppression and violence against the Dalits. Spirituality of liberation calls for organized resistance to the prevalent value system.

## Conclusion

The Report on *Human Development in South Asia 2001* has specially stressed the roles of civil society in guarding the interests of the oppressed groups. The civil society recognizes the rights of an individual in every sphere of life. The twin principles of freedom and equality are the governing principles of such a society. To reach this status, the Dalits should be given membership in decision-making bodies. The Churches should be forerunners in this regard, so that the pattern is followed in other secular spheres too.

The Dalits' world-view is based on their autochthonous cultural roots and therefore, by and large, it is egalitarian, communitarian, simple and open-ended. The majority of them are aware of the root causes of suffering, discriminating attitudes, and the oppressive structure. Most of them are able to perceive the social and spiritual dimension of empowerment. In the first place, this inherent potential should be learnt by the Church to work for liberation among the Dalits.

The mission is to humanise the total history. The liberation struggle of the Dalits would then be informed with a vision for the future, the *heavenisation* of this earth. This would consist of: the socio, economic, political and religious dimensions. Here, as we accentuate the liberation process, and when optimism grows among the Dalits, then, the God of justice becomes real and tangible and does not remain an utopia. The Church envisages a horizon for such a mission in and through faith in Jesus, who was born as a *dalit*, lived as a *dalit*, touched *dalits*, ate with *dalits*, got *polluted*, thrown out of the city, and died a *dalit*. But death was not the last word, through the power of resurrection, he has attained victory and glory. The Churches, as they participate in Jesus' mission today, are called upon to recognise the ***dalit Jesus*** in the millions of oppressed and excluded people. The challenge to the Church is to understand them from their own ***dalit perspective*** and to work among them for integral liberation with the hope that we can bend and change their present life and future history with justice, freedom and harmony.

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# ***Debt Cancellation: An Ongoing Call***

- SEDOS Working Group on Debt -

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For the first time in human history we have the means to put an end to abject poverty. The year 2005 can be the year when citizens around the world unite in solidarity against poverty. The *Global Call to Action Against Poverty* is a worldwide alliance committed to helping world leaders keep the promises of the Millennium Declaration. It represents a coming together of hundreds of Non-Governmental Organizations, peoples of all faiths and political beliefs to join together to end poverty

During 2005, there are important political events giving us unique opportunities for people around the world to unite and speak out about the need to end global poverty.

- July 2005: G8 Summit will concentrate on global poverty.
- 10 September 2005: UN Millennium Summit- This year is the 5 year review of the Millennium Declaration and the promises made by world leaders to end extreme poverty by 2015
- December 2005 Meeting of the World Trade Organization

April 10-16 is International Global Week of Action on Trade.

It is in this context that the SEDOS Working Group on Debt, once more, invites you to send a letter to the leaders of the G7 nations urging them to cancel the unjust debt of the world's poorest countries.

Below is a sample letter that you can send or you can use as a guide in writing your own letter.

We include the names and addresses of the G7 leaders. (G7 are the members of the G8 minus Russia who is not involved in debt cancellation), as well as the names and addresses of the president of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.

Thank you for your cooperation and continued support of this important endeavor of cancellation of the unjust debt.

At an address at the United Nations on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2005, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer at the UN said, "we are convinced that the MDGs can only be achieved if poverty eradication policies are aimed squarely at the poor as persons of equal worth; if serious progress is made in good governance and combating corruption; if financial and trade reform is adequately introduced to make markets work in favor of developing countries; if the long-standing 0.7% [of] GNP pledges are truly honored in justice and solidarity; and if debt is canceled in all the applicable cases.

## **Sample Letter**

To G8 Heads of State — World Bank President IMF

My religious institute, \_\_\_\_\_, serves in many of the countries that are heavily burdened with an unjust debt so we know from our experience the suffering and the injustice that is brought about because of the debt.

It is now nine years since the World Bank and the IMF launched the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and six years since modifications were introduced to establish the Enhanced HIPC Initiative. We are grateful that some progress has been made and we are encouraged by the decision of the Finance

Ministers of the G7 countries to call for 100% cancellation of this unjust debt. We continue to be concerned that this progress remains hopelessly inadequate in relation to the need of the indebted countries. We take note particularly of the following:

1. The amount of debt cancellation remains small in comparison to the scale of the debt and the needs of the indebted countries. The IMF gives the figure for the total public external debt for low-income countries as being "some \$460 billion", but the outcome of the HIPC Initiative so far is a mere \$32 billion of debt service relief to be granted "over time" to the twenty-seven countries now eligible to receive it. Debt cancellation needs to be extended beyond the fairly arbitrary list of countries known as HIPCs to all low income countries with excessive debt burdens.

2. Debt relief under the HIPC Initiative remains connected with economic policies that many working with the poor in indebted countries find to be detrimental to the poor and the long term well-being of the country.

3. The creditors and developed countries have failed to take seriously the criticism of many from the indebted countries and from concerned NGOs that the creditors themselves bear a great deal of responsibility for the creation of the debt crisis and need to be held more accountable. This is particularly true for debts that can be classified as odious debts and for debt arising from failed development projects in which frequently the creditors or others from the developed countries had an important decision-making role.

4. Creditors and others often speak of the lack of funds available for debt relief or debt cancellation. However, when the United States can prosecute a war whose cost averages \$4.8 billion per month it is clear that what is lacking is not funds but political will and proper priorities.

5. Much of the assistance to the countries struck by the tsunami is in the form of loans. The Paris club has granted a moratorium on debt servicing but without stopping the accrual of interest for that period. Both of these factors will create a future debt crisis. The Paris Club points out that it is "necessary for the borrower to make sure that it will be in the future in a position to repay its debt, notably through an efficient use of the loans, in order to generate income that will be used to repay the debt." Funds used for disaster relief do not generate income. The assistance provided should therefore be in the form of grants, not loans.

We therefore join with many other civil society organizations in calling for "vastly more extensive debt cancellation, beginning with full (100%) multilateral debt cancellation, without harmful conditions, for low-income countries in 2005." We also call for the establishment of an independent (including independence from multilateral creditors) and transparent body, preferably under the UN, that will both oversee international lending in the future and will also evaluate the current debt crisis, making sure that it is dealt with in a way that is fair and equitable.

We believe that we are all one family and Earth is our home. We are all entitled to basic human rights, among them: food and water, education and health care.

The decisions that you make in your positions as Heads of State can alleviate or add to the suffering in our world. We know that cancellation of the debt will not solve the problem of poverty in our world today but we do believe it is a step toward the elimination of poverty and an essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

May God fill you with wisdom and courage.

Sincerely,

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# ***Annulation de la dette: appelle permanent***

- Groupe de travail sur la dette du SEDOS -

Pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'humanité, nous avons les moyens de mettre fin à la misère. L'année 2005 pourrait être l'année où les citoyens s'unissent à travers le monde de façon solidaire contre la pauvreté. L'appel permanent pour une action contre la pauvreté est une alliance mondiale engagée à aider les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement du monde à tenir les promesses de la Déclaration du Millénaire. Il regroupe des centaines d'Organisations Non-Gouvernementales et des personnes de toutes appartenances religieuses et politiques qui s'unissent pour mettre fin à la pauvreté.

En 2005, des événements politiques importants auront lieu ; ce sont des occasions uniques pour s'unir et parler ensemble pour mettre fin à la pauvreté globale :

- Juillet 2005 : le Sommet du G8 se concentrera sur la pauvreté globale.
- 10 septembre 2005 : Sommet du millénaire de l'O.N.U. C'est la 5<sup>ème</sup> année où seront revues la Déclaration du Millénaire et les promesses faites par les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement du monde pour mettre fin à l'extrême pauvreté.
- Décembre 2005 : Assemblée de l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce (OMC).
- Du 10 au 16 avril : Semaine globale d'action pour un commerce équitable.

C'est dans ce contexte que le Groupe de travail sur la dette du SEDOS vous invite une fois de plus à envoyer une lettre aux chefs d'Etat du G8, les pressant d'annuler la dette injuste des pays les plus pauvres de la planète.

Ci-dessous vous trouvez un exemple de lettre que vous pouvez envoyer ou dont vous pouvez vous inspirer pour composer votre propre lettre.

Nous donnons les noms et adresses des chefs d'Etat du G7 (ce sont les mêmes que ceux du G8 sauf la Russie qui n'est pas impliquée dans l'annulation de la dette) ainsi que les noms et adresses du président de la Banque Mondiale et du directeur-gérant du Fond Monétaire International.

Merci de votre coopération et de votre soutien constant pour cette démarche importante qu'est l'annulation de la dette injuste.

Dans une allocution aux Nations Unies, le 24 février, Mgr Celestino Migliore, archevêque et observateur permanent du Vatican à l'O.N.U., disait : «Nous sommes convaincus que les objectifs de la Déclaration du Millénaire peuvent être atteints si les politiques d'élimination de la pauvreté visent carrément les pauvres comme personnes d'égale valeur, s'il y a des progrès sérieux dans la bonne gouvernance et la lutte contre la corruption, si les réformes financières et commerciales sont introduites de façon adéquate dans les marchés en faveur des pays en voie de développement, si les engagements pris depuis longtemps d'affecter 0.7% du PNB sont vraiment respectés en toute justice et solidarité et si la dette est annulée dans tous les cas où c'est applicable».

Sincèrement

Au Président de la Banque mondiale, Au Directeur du FMI,

La congrégation religieuse à laquelle j'appartiens, \_\_\_\_\_, est engagée dans de nombreux pays où le poids du service de la dette injuste handicape fortement tout progrès. Nous connaissons par expérience les souffrances et les injustices causées par cette dette.

Cela fait neuf ans que la Banque Mondiale et le Fonds Monétaire International ont lancé l'initiative en faveur des pays pauvres très endettés (PPTE), et six ans que des modifications ont été introduites pour étendre cette initiative. Nous sommes reconnaissants des progrès qui ont été accomplis, et encouragés par la décision que les ministres des finances des pays du G7 ont prise en demandant l'annulation complète (100 %) de la dette injuste. Toutefois, nous continuons à être inquiets car ces progrès demeurent totalement inadéquats face aux besoins des pays endettés.

Nous prenons acte en particulier de ce qui suit :

1. Le montant de l'annulation de la dette reste bas par rapport à l'ampleur de la dette et des besoins des pays endettés. Le FMI indique que la dette publique extérieure des pays à faible revenu s'élève, au total, à «environ 460 milliards US \$», alors que le résultat de l'initiative PPTE à ce jour ne prévoit que 32 milliards US \$ à accorder «au fil des temps» aux vingt-sept pays actuellement éligibles pour l'allègement du service de la dette. Au-delà de la liste plutôt arbitraire des pays dits PPTE, la remise de la dette doit être étendue à tous les pays à faible revenu excessivement endettés.

2. L'allègement de la dette appliqué par l'initiative PPTE reste lié à des politiques économiques qui, selon grand nombre de ceux qui travaillent avec les pauvres dans les pays endettés, sont néfastes pour les pauvres et pour le bien-être à long terme du pays.

3. Les créanciers et les pays développés n'ont pas pris au sérieux les critiques venant des pays endettés et des ONG concernées, selon lesquelles il faudrait reconnaître que les créanciers eux-mêmes sont fortement responsables de la crise de la dette. Cela est particulièrement vrai pour les dettes que l'on peut qualifier de dettes odieuses et pour les dettes dues à des projets de développement qui ont échoué, pour lesquels les créanciers et autres représentants des pays développés jouaient souvent un rôle important dans la prise de décision.

4. Les créanciers et autres responsables parlent souvent du manque de fonds disponibles pour l'allègement ou l'annulation de la dette. Or, si les États-Unis peuvent engager une guerre dont les coûts s'élèvent en moyenne à 4,8 milliards US \$ par mois, il est évident que ce ne sont pas les fonds qui manquent, mais plutôt la volonté politique et une juste définition des priorités.

5. Une grande partie de l'aide aux pays frappés par le tsunami est dispensée sous forme de prêts. Le Club de Paris a accordé un moratoire sur le service de la dette, mais sans arrêter l'accumulation des intérêts pour cette période. Ces deux facteurs entraîneront une prochaine crise de la dette. Le Club de Paris signale que «l'emprunteur doit assurer que, dans l'avenir, il sera en mesure de rembourser sa dette, notamment à travers une utilisation efficace des prêts, en générant des revenus qui seront utilisés pour rembourser la dette». Or, les fonds utilisés pour le secours n'étant pas générateurs de revenus, l'aide devrait être dispensée sous forme de subventions et non pas de prêts.

Nous nous unissons donc aux nombreuses organisations de la société civile qui demandent non seulement «une annulation beaucoup plus étendue de la dette, en commençant par l'annulation totale (100%) de la dette multilatérale, sans conditions nuisibles, pour les pays à faible revenu, en 2005». Nous demandons aussi la création d'un organisme transparent et indépendant (notamment des créanciers multilatéraux), de préférence sous la direction de l'ONU, qui supervisera les prêts internationaux futurs et évaluera, en même temps, la crise de la dette en cours, pour s'assurer qu'on y prend des mesures justes et équitables.

Nous croyons que nous sommes une seule famille et que la Terre est notre maison. Tous ont droit au respect des droits fondamentaux de la personne, parmi lesquels les droits à la nourriture et à l'eau, à l'éducation et aux soins de santé.

Les décisions que vous prenez en tant que chefs d'Etat peuvent alléger ou aggraver les souffrances de notre monde. Nous savons que l'annulation de la dette ne résoudra pas le problème de la pauvreté dans le monde actuel, mais nous croyons qu'elle représentera un véritable pas vers l'élimination de la pauvreté et un point essentiel dans la réalisation des Objectifs de Développement du Millénaire.

Que Dieu vous remplisse de sagesse et de courage !

Nous vous prions d'agréer, Messieurs, nos sentiments les meilleurs,

*Please copy the letter on your official stationary, fill in the name of your Institute, and send it to:*

**Germany:**

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# *Coming Events*

- *SEDOS Seminar 2005* -

*Mission on the Go:  
Migration, Proclamation and Testimony*

3/7 May 2005

“Casa Divin Maestro”  
- Ariccia (RM) -

*(For SEDOS Members Only)*

***Working Group***

Tuesday, 3 May, **Bible and Mission** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**