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EDITORIAL

The first number of our SEDOS Bulletin 1996 presents a reappraisal of our General Assembly. We undertook an introductory study of the Papal Document 'Ecclesia in Africa'. Sister VERONICA OPENIBO, SHCJ, read the Document for us from the point of view of an African woman. She sees many reasons for hope and optimism, if the local Churches have the courage to be creative. — If you were looking for a good, general introduction to the Papal Document, Fr PIERRE SCHOUVER, CSSp, offers some very interesting and helpful reading. — Dr ELEONORA MASINI, a

woman sociologist from the Gregorian University, has re-elaborated her paper on the Fourth World Conference On Women in Beijing. Looking back on Beijing, her reflections will be helpful for the implementation of the Beijing Platform For Action. At another Seminar for our SEDOS audience, held in Rome in November, Msgr. MICHAEL FITZGERALD, M.AFR., of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, studied the widespread phenomenon of rising fundamentalism in the main world religions.



ECCLESIA IN AFRICA

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II: AN AFRICAN WOMAN'S VIEW

Veronica Openibo, SHCJ

(Sister Veronica Openibo, SHCJ., is from Nigeria. She gave this Conference at the Annual General Assembly of SEDOS, on 5th December 1995).

Background of the African Synod

On the solemnity of the Epiphany, 6 January 1989 during the Angelus, the Holy Father John Paul II, made the announcement of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, "in order to promote an organic pastoral solidarity within the entire African territory and nearby islands". The topic chosen by the Holy Father was: after many consultations, "The Church in Africa and her Evangelising Mission Towards the Year 2000: 'You shall be my witnesses' (Acts 1:8)".

The central theme for this Synod, Evangelisation, was further divided into five topics; Proclamation of the Good News of Salvation; Inculturation; Dialogue; Justice and Peace; and Means of Social Communication. The Lineamenta was prepared and presented at the Ninth Plenary Session of SECAM in Lomé, Togo, on 25 July 1990. And, in Uganda, on 9 February 1993, the Holy Father announced the date and venue of the African Synod and unveiled the two phases: a working session in Rome and a celebration session in Africa. To show you the extent and thoroughness of the preparations: it took five years and three months from the date of the announcement to the actual Synod proceedings.

Well-prepared after five years of reflection, discussion and planning, the representatives of the various Regional Episcopal Conferences, the Continental Episcopal Conference (SECAM), priests, religious women and men, lay men and women packed their bags and moved to Rome for one month to participate in the Special Assembly from 10 April to 8 May 1994.

As we can all recall, the Synod was opened with a festive Eucharistic celebration by the Holy Father on 10 April 1994. St Peter's Basilica resounded with African musical instruments, gestures, and songs in different languages at various points during the opening, Beatification and closing liturgical celebrations.

We remember the two sad events that occurred during the Synod: one was the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda and the other, the Pope's accident which prevented him from actively participating till the end of the Synod and from celebrating the closing liturgy. This was done by Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria.

At the close of the Synod, there was a feeling of great jubilation. The Synod was a success, many felt, because it was an expression of the maturity of the Catholic Church in Africa and a call to proclaim the Gospel with ever greater fervour. Yes, the Synod was indeed authentically and unequivocally African, and was celebrated in full communion here in Rome with the universal Church, in a way that made the Synod Fathers feel that universality "is not uniformity but rather communion in diversity compatible with the Gospel" ("Message of the Synod", L'Osservatore Romano, 11 May 1994).

It was a Synod of "resurrection and hope" as the Synod Fathers joyfully and enthusiastically declared in the opening words of their Message to the People of God at the end of the Synod, "Like Mary Magdalene on the morning of the Resurrection, like the Disciples at Emmaus with burning hearts and enlightened minds,... Christ our hope is risen. He has met us, has walked along with us... We want to say a word of hope and encouragement to you, the family of God in Africa, to you the family of God all over the world: Christ our hope is alive; we shall live" ("Message of the Synod", L'Osservatore Romano, 11 May 1994). One can see and feel the hope and encouragement of the Synod Fathers in this statement. In reading the "Message" and the Exhortation, as an African woman, my heart too burns with joy. I feel enlightened and affirmed. I experience the hope and encouragement given, and feel the urge to do something about the challenges posed!

The Church as Family

One strong image that has stayed with me from the Synod, is of "the Church as the Family of God" ("Message of the Synod", L'Osservatore Romano, 11 May 1994). In the Documents of the Second Vatican Council, we have the image of the Church as the "People of God" which puts emphasis on the human and communal side of the Church (Lumen Gentium, n. 9). The Synod Fathers' choice of this image of the Church as Family further clearly enunciates the Second Vatican Council's image of the Church as a community - pastors, as well as the faithful, for the assimilation of the African man and woman, who of course value the concept of the family (L'Osservatore Romano, 27 September 1995, p. 8). Indeed, the Pope values this too, for he said at Uhuru Park in Nairobi, Kenya: "Why does the Pope visit Africa so often?... Africa is the continent of the family". We all know that for Evangelisation to be fully effective the members of the family must be committed to their faith in God, to the knowledge of the Person of Jesus in their life, to the knowledge of the family as Church and the Church as Family.

As an African woman, I identify with this image very much, knowing the role each member of the family plays in the development and growth of the family at every stage, especially the place of the mother in the initial formation of the child. I see this as very important for true, deeply rooted evangelisation to take place in Africa. In my language, Yoruba, we say: "Mother is gold, father is mirror; the mother is the one who contemplates and deliberates with the child all through life". I shall return to this issue of the family later. We know the family creates, nurtures with love, tolerates and protects.

The Holy Father with the assistance of the Council of twelve African Bishops transformed the "Message", the sixty-four "Propositions" and the two reports of the General Secretary, after prayerfully studying and modifying them, into the Final Document presented to the Church in Africa, the post-Synodal Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Africa*. This brings to a conclusion the first phase of the Synod and marks the beginning of the second phase.

Then the Pope started the celebration of the next phase of the Synod on African soil from 14 to 20 September 1995. He visited three capitals of three different nations: he signed the document at Yaoundé in Cameroon - Cameroon was chosen for the countries of West and Central Africa; then he went on the Johannesburg in South Africa for the Southern part of Africa including Madagascar and the islands; and lastly he went to Nairobi in Kenya for East Africa.

All the way, it was a three-in-one celebration: Three arrivals and departures; three Eucharistic celebrations, characterised by colour, melodious music, song and dance; and three mini-Synodal sessions.

At the end of each Eucharistic celebration, the Pope handed over the post-Synodal Exhortation, which he constantly referred to as the fruit of the work not only of the Bishops but also of all the members of the Family of God on the continent, to representatives of Bishops, priests, religious men and women, catechists, lay men and women and the family.

Each time, he accompanied the symbolic gesture with the following words: "I hand over to you the Apostolic Exhortation, gift of the Synod for Africa...Meditate on it; live it in your homes, in your grasslands, in your villages, on your farms, in your cities, in your streets, in your workplaces. Pass it on to your children, to your children's children and to all generations to come" (SECAM Newsletter, December 1995). This indeed is my hope for the Church in Africa as she plans the implementation of the Exhortation for the Third Millennium.

Ecclesia in Africa

Here is a quick summary of the Exhortation. This "pastoral plan of action" is elaborated in 150 pages with an introduction, seven chapters and a conclusion. It is significant to note that in the Old Testament, there are 150 psalms and in the Book of Revelation the number "seven" embodies fullness.

Briefly the Exhortation includes the following:

In Chapter I, the Holy Father enunciates why the Synod is "an historic Ecclesial event". It is a moment of grace, lived by the Synod Fathers fully conscious of being Catholic and African.

Chapter II gives a brief history of evangelisation in Africa, beginning from the first Christian centuries to the present era. Here it pays glowing tributes to the missionaries of various eras and nationalities who gave their lives for the spread of the Church in Africa. It calls on the Church to be evangelised herself in order to evangelise.

The third Chapter deals with the major tasks of evangelisation in terms of the five main topics of the Synod: proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace and the means of social communication.

In Chapter IV the Pope examines the challenges faced by the Church in Africa in the light of the third Christian millennium.

The fifth Chapter goes on to review some strategies for confronting the challenges identified in the previous chapters.

In Chapter VI the Pope analyses the prophetic role of the Church in building God's kingdom of justice, peace and love within the realities facing Africa today.

Chapter VII dwells on the all-important issue of mission not only to ourselves in Africa but also to the whole world.

In the concluding section, the Holy Father assures us that God has not abandoned Africa and that the Gospel of Christ is Good News also for our continent.

Thus, in the Exhortation and visit of the Holy Father, the Synod has finally come home to Africa. In the words of the Pope: "The document... is only an instrument and a beginning. What counts is the effective renewal of the Church's members and their ever more generous ministry and service".

Again, as an African women, I find the Exhortation very affirming of the African Church, its cultural values and contributions to the universal Church; as well as challenging us to further growth by making the Gospel message our own as we move towards the year 2000.

My View as an African Woman Religious

As a woman reading this text, I ask myself what does it say to me about being African and a woman? What does it say to other Africans - women, men, youth and children? What does it say to all those ministering in Africa?

I agree with the Synod Fathers in this statement: "The main question facing the Church in Africa consists in delineating as clearly as possible what it is (identity) and what it must fully carry out (Mission), in order that its message may be relevant and credible" (L'Osservatore Romano, 13 April 1994, p. 5).

The statement, too, is particularly striking: "The most important (resource) after the grace of Christ is the people. The whole community needs to be trained, motivated and empowered for evangelisation, each according to his or her specific role within the Church" (n. 53). It is in the light of these quotations that I express my views. I must add that I appreciate the emphasis on integral evangelisation which includes concern for the promotion of justice and peace, as well as the denunciation of abuse.

Let me quickly say here that I have much greater admiration for the Pope since his Letter to Women. These words still ring in my ears, "Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic" (Letter to Women, n. 2, 25 May 1995). In this Letter he set out his reflection on the advancement of women and the relationship between the sexes today. He followed up the acknowledgement of women's gifts by appointing very eminent women to represent the Vatican at the World Conference on Women in Beijing, (the head of the Vatican Delegation being Mary Ann Glendon). We know the Delegation's challenging contributions made a difference there. Again, that spirit of affirmation of woman is evident in the Exhortation (as well as in the African Synod's "Message" and the "Propositions"). One would hope that the gifts of women would be used to their full potential at every level of the Church's planning and implementation of the Exhortation; that the three Rs of Recognition, Respect and Responsibility will be mutually shared with all the members of the Church as Family, especially with the women.

The Exhortation generally used the African language of inclusivity. Each group was recognised, acclaimed and encouraged: children, youth, men and women. I found myself affirming in most places the use of the words like people, men, women, youth and children. This is the language of most African people. I believe each group can easily identify with it. And I feel when it is translated into African languages for people at the grass roots level to read and understand, there would be a lot of jubilation. As an expression of my excitement for the Church in Africa in this post-Synodal era I envisage the implementation of the Exhortation in the image of a family celebration of every man, woman, youth and child dancing, (even the baby on the mother's back dances) to the rhythm of the African evangelisation/inculturation music.

Hopes and Expectations

In order of preference I will share the areas I would love to see given immediate attention. In Chapter II, where emphasis is placed on the strength of witness of life, the essential role of marriage and vocation, and the need for adequate formation for all agents of evangelisation, I feel energised, as an African woman, and I am sure many Africans do, to take up this challenge. I hope that the criteria for the theological discernment on inculturation will be given emphasis in the Church as Family of God especially in the area of liturgy, Eucharistic celebrations and in the administering of some of the Sacraments - Baptism and Matrimony. I believe the most important challenge for the Church in Africa is to know its unique identity and its mission as we move towards the year 2000.

I found it interesting to note that the "dignity of the African Woman" appeared under the heading of "some worrisome problems" in Chapter VI. As an African woman, what sign do I see in this layout? It is

that our Elder recognises our plight and empowers and encourages us to "Arise" (like Jesus in Lk 8:40-56 - the curing of the woman with the haemorrhage). The affirmation and hope expressed in this section of the Exhortation stir up many other specific hopes in me, not just for African women but also men and for the whole Church. To me, it means that all the worrisome problems of Africa can be overcome if women move to the forefront side by side with men and utilise their qualities of good human relations, affectivity, nurturing, caring, loving, showing understanding and sharing their deep insights for a better Africa as we move into the 21st Century.

Again I emphasise, for all men and women, that there needs to be promotion of mutual respect, shared responsibility and affirmation of each other's uniqueness, interdependence and connectedness. I hope that the theological formation of the members of the family of God will not be exclusive to the chosen few, but shared with women, and of course, men and youth. I hope that in the appointment and training of agents of evangelisation, women will be considered and given financial support when needed, especially in the training of catechists.

The Pope encourages the Church, "through special commissions (headed by women) to study women's problems in co-operation with interested Government agencies" (n. 21). I hope that the Church will encourage and champion the advancement of women in society and promote their involvement when it comes to political, religious and other social and/or conflictual situations. Has the Church in Africa sufficiently formed "the lay faithful, enabling them to assume competently their civic responsibilities and to consider social or political problems in the light of the Gospel and of faith in God?" (n. 54). Not yet! I hope that we may be humble enough to admit that "the members of our family as Church - the laity at most levels - still lack deep grounding in the Catholic doctrine, in their understanding of the Bible, and in speaking confidently about their faith" (n. 54). We need to map our family-oriented programme of training our people to be custodians of the faith and to lead a fully integrated life.

Women/Girl Issues:

"The Liberation of Women and Children"

Issues related to women/girls specifically are of great concern to the Church as Family. The Pope says: "The Church deplores and condemns...all customs and practices which deprive women of their rights and respect due to them" (n. 121), for example, widowhood rites, bride price, teenage pregnancies, single mothers, injustice in marriage especially in regard to women caught in the web of polygamy, and adequate remuneration for work. The plight of the girl-child is still terrible: genital mutilation is most prevalent in Somalia and Djibouti - 98 per cent of girls there are affected; in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Eritrea 90 per cent; in Sudan 89 per cent, Mali 75 per cent and Burkina Faso 70 per cent (New Internationalist, June 1995, p. 14). Ninety million girls altogether are still deprived of formal schooling. About 75 per cent of girls in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali and Niger are affected, and over 50 per cent in Guinea, Morocco and Senegal. I hope that women's groups themselves, with proper integral formation, education and with encouragement from other groups - pastors, men and youth - will find ways to address this issue. The Pope stressed: "Women should be properly trained so that they can participate at appropriate levels in the Church's apostolic activities" (n. 121).

"The Problems of Refugees and Displaced Persons" - "Fratricidal Wars"

As an African women, I cannot but grieve at the terrible situations facing that continent. One major one is the problem of refugees because of wars and ethnic strife. In Zaire, more than 800,000 people have been displaced; up to 50,000 killed in Burundi in 1993, Rwanda lost an estimated 200-500,000 at the time of the genocide; fifteen million people, mostly women and children, many from African countries (Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan) seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The Church's response to all these situations has been marvellous in terms of creating refugee camps, providing health care,

education and other facilities. But I believe the greatest need is to conscientise our people to find non-violent ways of resolving differences instead of taking up arms.

The Pope challenged us as a Family during his visit to Yaoundé: "Do not let the differences and distances between you crystallise into divisive barriers but rather... share the extraordinary riches of Christ's heart... Be witnesses of Christ; tirelessly forgive" (L'Osservatore Romano, 27 September 1995, pp. 2-3). Like a truly African Family, we as Church will need to seek ways to appreciate, promote, nourish and cherish that "variegated mosaic of races (ethnic groups)" in order to relish our unity in diversity. These plans will also counteract the negative sides of the family life of today and some of the African cultures.

Hunger Problems: "Increasing Poverty, Malnutrition caused by Widespread Deterioration in the Standard of Living" (n. 114)

There are also major hunger problems. "A hungry person is an angry person" so the saying goes. As a woman, I am worried to see that there are many who face persistent everyday hunger in Africa today. The number of undernourished in 1970 was 94 million = 35 per cent, in 1975 it was 112 million = 37 per cent, in 1980 it was 128 million = 36 per cent, in 1990 it was 175 million = 37 per cent. I am sure the number has grown in recent years to 200 million. In most countries very few can afford to eat two meals a day. The Church as Family needs to ask herself: "What unnecessary demands do we make on the poor? How prophetic are we in our lifestyle?" The Exhortation challenges us to look at this: "It is necessary therefore to examine with care the procedures, the possessions and the life style of the Church" (n. 106). There is a spirit of sharing in the African family. How can we encourage and challenge one another to be prophetic, honest Christians, in our places of work and to share our gifts generously?

Education is the key to success and enlightenment. As an educator, my heart aches to see that literacy rates have fallen in 30 out of 39 sub-Saharan African countries. Generally, new schools are not being built, while drop-out rates run as high as 45 per cent in Senegal, for example. Enrolment in higher education is 21 students per 100,000 inhabitants in Tanzania (New Internationalist, December 1994, p. 29). University students in Ghana and Nigeria in recent years have lost a whole year because of strike actions. Primary and Secondary schools are closed for months, teachers and students go in search of other means of making a livelihood because of lack of an adequate living wage. What can the Church as Family of God do to fulfil her prophetic role in this area? The Pope's challenge to the Church as Family is to foster "education for all" (n. 102).

Economics

As an African woman, I do care about the plight of many of our people who experience in a terrible way the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programmes. At present the former middle-class and lower middle-class seem to have been wiped out. Many families are feeling the pinch. In fact twenty-five out of the fifty-four countries of Africa are feeling this severe effect of the Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed by the International Monetary Fund. This devaluation favours the First World market, in that it determines the price of African cash-crops like cocoa, coffee, bananas, to name but a few. There is "need for a compassionate ear" from First World countries to the cries of the poor nations" (n. 114).

I remember the Synod Fathers wrote an open letter to their Brother Bishops in Europe and North America on the issue of the foreign debt entitled "Forgive Us Our Debt". The U.S. Bishops responded with a programme of action, calling for systemic changes and co-responsibility from their Governments and the banks (SECAM Newsletter, August 1995). Groups working for justice and peace, too, have been very outspoken on this issue of the Third World Debt. I am told, "The Bank Members are faceless, so nothing can be done". As a Church, we have our Church Family members in strategic positions and we need to encourage them to put pressure on their Governments not to go into further debt and to learn to

spend wisely and honestly, being able to differentiate between private, individual pockets and the public fund. The Pope's pressing appeal in this area was very encouraging and challenging (n. 120).

Environment

It is impressive to see that many all over the world are championing the cause of Africa, calling for a ban on the dumping and import of toxic and solid waste, nuclear weapons and the sale of arms, calling for investment in renewable energy resources - use of solar energy for cooking and lighting in Africa, inclusion in decision-making processes on environmental issues and education of rural women and men about alternative sources of energy which reduce men and women's work while protecting the environment. Can anyone tell me why solar energy is not used in every household in Africa?

Many have urged that strong measures be meted out to African Heads of State who are dictators: freezing the foreign bank accounts of the individuals concerned, and those of their family members and associates; formally suspending these countries from the IMF and the World Bank; placing embargoes on the countries' exports; banning weapon sales to the regimes; expelling their ambassadors from Western capitals... (New Internationalist, September 1994, p. 25). I think some of these measures would only make life more unbearable for the ordinary people. What other strategic plans can the Church as Family make? I hope the image of Church as Family will move and empower people to address these problems individually and as a community.

Mass Media

A teacher once said "When I listen, I know; when I read, I understand; when I see, I am enriched". But the effect of hearing and seeing can be negative - which is often the effect of most mass media programmes today. The Vatican Radio and Television is a powerful force in Italy and indeed in the world for spreading the Good News of the love of God, especially Good News in Africa - which is rarely proclaimed elsewhere. As an African woman living in Rome, I see the potential for our Church as Family in this area to produce good and challenging media coverage that would educate, conscientise and liberate our people, and also train them in the area of media-critiquing.

Health - Demographic Concerns and Threats to the Family "Lack of Elementary Health and Social Services, Resulting in Endemic Disease, the Scourge of AIDS"

In the field of health there are also grave concerns. Many of our members from all over the world, including Africans both lay and religious, have responded very generously to the cry of African countries for help in the area of primary health care, e.g., those attacked by Ebola disease in Zaire, victims of AIDS in East Africa, the refugee centres in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Uganda and Sierra Leone, to name a few. Much more needs to be done in the area of preventive medicine. The Exhortation calls for more education and involvement in this area.

Politics and Government: Political Instability

"I feel it my duty to express heartfelt thanks to the Church... as a promoter of peace and reconciliation in many situations of conflict, political turmoil and civil wars" (n. 45). As a woman, I acknowledge with great admiration what the Bishops' Conferences of many African countries had done before, and more so after the Synod, in the area of political conscientisation, by posing very challenging questions to African Governments. Through their communiqués they address unjust structures in various countries. Letters have been written to Governments and regimes by Bishops' Conferences on democratic rule, justice and peace, etc.; they are, of course, a strong force to be reckoned with. They are in many places the voice of the voiceless. How can the different groups in the family be mobilised to do the same in this non-violent prophetic way? I would hope that more education will be available at all levels to conscientise our people on their voting rights and obligations, too. With the Synod Fathers and the Pope I pray

ferently that "holy politicians" (n. 111) will arise in Africa as we move towards the year 2000. Evil triumphs when good people stand by and do nothing.

These are some of the major areas of concern which the Church as Family must continue to find ways to deal with.

Post-Synodal Plans

Many national Episcopal Conferences have mapped out strategies for working with the people to claim and to proclaim the post-Synodal message; for instance, calling for good and solid formation programmes in the area of Evangelisation, and in the promotion of reconciliation. Translation of the Documents of the Synod including the Exhortation have been and are being made in many countries into local languages: Swahili, Arabic, Yoruba, etc. At the Regional Conference level and SECAM, plans have also been made to implement the Synod. I hope that with all these plans more of our Church members at every level will be involved.

I feel very positive about the Exhortation. Personally, as an African woman, I do not find it offensive, patronising or discouraging, but rather confirming and empowering.

While there is much that is positive, there is also some disappointment regarding the Synod and the Exhortation. I see these disappointments as continuous challenges to the Church as Family:

a. Priestly Celibacy: One would hope that adequate formation in the areas of spiritual and human development would be given in all institutes of initial and continuing formation. I single out this comment: "I would have thought that this should have been raised as an issue requiring the pastoral concern of the Church and perhaps requesting the Church at the universal level to look at the issue in relation to the Church tradition" (Rt. Rev. Prof. Zabion Nathamburi, a Methodist Bishop from Kenya, who was a Fraternal Delegate at the Synod: SECAM Newsletter, August 1995). My response is that celibacy is a universal challenge to the Church and the African scene is no exception.

b. The Challenge of Polygamy: Baptism of the women and men who want to be Christians. There was surprise in some quarters that this topic was not addressed under the section on Marriage and Family, nor under the Dignity of Women. I suppose the Church in Africa as an adult Church feels that many of her members for decades have been conscientising and exploring ways of ministering to the people concerned. I hope this exploration will continue especially in the area of formation of youth in their choice of partners for Christian marriage. (Other issues like the combining of traditional marriage with Church weddings, and naming ceremonies with Baptism, are being given attention in experimentation).

c. Youth: Some felt that the problems of youth in African society were not given priority in the Exhortation. Briefly but concisely, this topic was treated and, of course, young people are included in other areas of the Exhortation. The Exhortation encourages youth to take seriously their own personal development and that of their country. I suppose that the youth in Africa will face the next century with greater confidence if the Church as Family forms her youth to value Christianity as a way of life, and tackles some key problems such as the exodus to urban areas and other countries, respect for other Christians and religions, and ethno-centricity. Also we need to encourage adequate family supervision, provide positive media programmes, form youth to ask the right questions, and teach them to be self-reliant as was done in the traditional family.

d. Environment: I would have loved to see more done on this topic, but then it is impossible for the Pope to touch on every area in great detail. In Yoruba we say: "A small word is enough for the wise one, for when it gets inside the person, it grows into a huge bunch".

Conclusion

The post-Synodal Exhortation is very rich, full of possibilities and challenges for the Church in Africa as it faces the third millennium. Like an endangered species in today's world, the Church as Family in Africa must seek creative ways to face squarely its challenges of inclusivity, interdependence and inculturation in order to be deeply rooted in Christ our Elder Brother, Healer, Liber-ator and Friend. Evangelisation needs personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, understanding of the African culture and spirituality. In owning the Gospel message, we must be ready to be counter-cultural. The Church as Family must resist the pressure of materialism and the negative effects of the media and promote its connectedness as a united family of God with all the diversity of cultures and languages. The laity, priests, religious and Bishops as a family embody Christ, and each one needs the others to promote life in the Church. We are all called to a life of holiness as faithful followers of Christ. "The fully trained disciple will always be like the teacher" (Lk 6:39-49).

We need to be liberated from our fear and suspicion of one another, from fear of the forces of evil spirits and of sects that entice our members away. We must find ways to include the contribution of our members in our liturgies by making the Eucharist a celebration of life in every aspect. As we move towards the year 2000, we Catholics in Africa must be empowered to see ourselves as guardians of the faith and to proclaim it confidently by our way of life. We have been commissioned "to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16).

In this presentation, I have shared with you the story of the African Synod at its various stages. My impression of that great Document *Ecclesia in Africa* has many possibilities for the "Church as Family" in Africa. My hope and expectation is that it is in the concrete strategies that the Family of God in Africa, at all levels of the Church, will map out for further exploration, experimentation and implementation, trusting that our God is with us and leading us in the dance. It is said that "It is not the size of the giver of the gift that counts, but the size of gift in the giver". The African Church is fully equipped for action! She must dance in response to the fruits and gifts of the Spirit. Indeed, I am proud to be an African and to be part of this great African Church with so many possibilities for its self-discovery and work on the eve of the third millennium. Africa continues to depend on your support and to give you hers in an interdependent way just as it is in the family.

Yes, the stage is set, the fruit of the Synod, the FAMILY DANCE of the African Church continues. In the words of this special song, I end: "...Since Love is Lord of Heaven and earth, how can we keep from singing?" How can we keep from dancing to the rhythm of those musical instruments which are so alive that they echo on?

ECCLESIA IN AFRICA - POINT DE VUE D'UN MISSIONNAIRE

Pierre Schouver, CSSp

(Le Père Schouver est actuellement Supérieur Général de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit. Il a présenté cette conférence à l'Assemblée Générale du SEDOS, le 5 décembre 1995).

Introduction: A propos du "point de vue"

La Congrégation du Saint-Esprit dont je fais partie est engagée en Afrique depuis plus de deux siècles. Elle est née en deux temps, de deux fondations, la Société du Saint-Esprit en 1703 et la Société du Saint-Coeur de Marie en 1842, dont les buts étaient convergents et qui ont fusionné en 1848.

Nos relations avec l'Afrique constituent une longue histoire, écrite avec quelques lignes droites et beaucoup de lignes courbes. Malgré le contexte de la colonisation et de la traite des esclaves, nos confrères ont établi des relations de confiance avec la population. Au début de ce siècle, un de nos anciens d'Afrique Centrale écrivait: "Je suis content d'appartenir à la Mission de l'Oubangui: je n'ai à me plaindre ni du pays, ni des gens; je ne suis mécontent que de moi-même".

Depuis, beaucoup de membres de notre congrégation ont travaillé en Afrique. Ils y allaient pour la vie, motivés par le salut des peuples d'Afrique, le salut des âmes, mais aussi la libération concrète des maux et des servitudes qui accablaient le continent. Dans les premiers temps, ils mouraient jeunes; beaucoup ensuite y ont passé 40, 50, parfois 60 ans et y ont été enterrés.

Notre engagement en Afrique a beaucoup changé. Les Églises locales sont devenues les premières responsables de l'évangélisation; nous les aidons à faire face à cette responsabilité, soit en prenant en charge des projets élaborés par elles, soit en proposant nous-mêmes des projets nouveaux qui nous font revenir au mouvement de la première évangélisation. Une autre grande nouveauté, c'est que nous avons 600 membres africains dans la congrégation aujourd'hui. A travers les changements, nous avons un peu mieux découvert quels étaient les vrais obstacles à l'évangélisation et quels étaient les vrais atouts. Le P. Libermann, un de nos fondateurs, nous a laissé des recommandations prophétiques que nous n'avons pas toujours suivies.

Il demandait à la communauté de Dakar de ne pas juger les Africains "au premier coup d'oeil"...: "Ne jugez pas d'après ce à quoi vous avez été habitués en Europe...; faites-vous à eux comme des serviteurs doivent se faire à leurs maîtres, aux usages, au genre et aux habitudes de leurs maîtres". Il faisait confiance aux gens et aux ressources du pays. "Pour un grand nombre de missions non basées sur des éléments inhérents au sol, écrit-il, il semble qu'il suffirait d'un souffle pour tout détruire". Au sujet des affirmations pessimistes concernant les populations africaines, il écrit: "Maintenant que nous avons l'expérience des choses, nous sommes en mesure de donner un démenti formel et complet de ces assertions". Parlant des mutations sociales, il dit: "Le mal du clergé a toujours été, dans ces derniers temps, qu'il est resté dans l'idée du passé...Embrassons donc avec franchise et simplicité l'ordre nouveau et apportons-y l'esprit de l'Évangile".

J'ai travaillé moi-même en République Centrafricaine pendant 18 ans.

Je vais parler du texte de l'Exhortation Apostolique "Ecclesia in Africa" à partir de l'expérience missionnaire de ma congrégation et de la mienne.

I. SURVOL RAPIDE DE "ECCLESIA IN AFRICA" (EA) CONTENU ET PLAN

Le document est plein de ce que le Synode a exprimé: grands thèmes, grands défis, grandes affirmations de foi, propositions et appels. Par rapports aux divers textes produits par le Synode, certains éléments ont été réduits, telle la réflexion sur l'inculturation; certaines déclarations sont moins incisives, telle celle sur les femmes; d'autres éléments ont été exprimés avec plus de vigueur, tels les appels concernant la justice et la paix.

Comme d'autres, j'ai eu du mal à comprendre le plan. L'explicitation des cinq grandes composantes de l'évangélisation avait balisé le texte du document de travail et les travaux du Synode. Elle pouvait conduire à une évaluation radicale de toute l'action et de toute la structure de l'Église en Afrique, Ici, les cinq composantes sont mentionnées en divers endroits; elles ne forment plus l'ossature de l'ensemble.

La structure de EA correspond, je pense, à la visée de donner une sorte de plan global d'évangélisation. Elle répond ainsi au but du Synode exprimé dès la première annonce, à l'Angélus de l'Épiphanie 1989: "favoriser une solidarité pastorale organique dans tout le territoire africain et dans les îles adjacentes". L'entreprise n'est pas une révision fondamentale qui aurait cherché à répondre aussi au regard plus extérieur et plus critique d'autres Églises et religions ou de gens façonnés par la société sécularisée. La réflexion part d'emblée du point de vue catholique pour proposer des actions de renouveau de la société et de l'Église.

Voici le plan:

Introduction et ch.1: Genèse, déroulement et sens du Synode

L'introduction rappelle les premières concertations entre évêques d'Afrique à partir du Concile Vatican II, la mise en place de la structure permanente du SCEAM, la naissance de l'idée de grandes assises de l'Église en Afrique, la proposition lancée aussi par des théologiens et intellectuels africains d'un Concile africain et finalement la décision d'une "assemblée spéciale pour l'Afrique du Synode des évêques".

Chapitre II. La situation de l'Église en Afrique

Le chapitre II commence par une évocation de l'histoire de l'Église sur le continent où sont soulignés, à juste titre, les aspects positifs. L'évocation des aspects négatifs aurait ajouté quelque chose de plus convaincant pour des esprits critiques. L'hommage aux missionnaires qui suit est allé droit au coeur des membres de nos instituts. Puis le texte souligne des signes de croissance et d'enracinement de l'Église.

Vient alors un tableau de l'Afrique aujourd'hui, grand défi pour l'Église. EA ne fait pas une analyse approfondie de la situation car elle ne vise pas un plan d'ensemble de renouveau de l'Afrique. Elle ajoute au tableau très sombre une évocation de valeurs et d'options positives des peuples africains.

Le document évoque alors une série de problèmes actuels de l'Église elle-même sans en faire un examen critique. Il est vrai que cet examen est fait par d'autres, parfois de manière caricaturale.

Chapitre III. Les cinq aspects de la mission évangélisatrice de l'Église

Le Synode a voulu répondre au défi de la situation désastreuse de beaucoup de pays du continent et aussi aux faiblesses des Églises locales. Ces Églises, devenues responsables de la mission, devraient déployer un nouveau style d'évangélisation, capable de renouveler les personnes et les sociétés. Le

document cite à ce propos 'Evangelii Nuntiandi': "Le but de l'évangélisation est de transformer, rendre neuve, l'humanité elle-même".

Le chapitre III présente brièvement les composantes de l'évangélisation: proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, engagement pour la justice et la paix, communications sociales. C'est une réflexion générale qui sera appliquée dans les chapitres suivants. Beaucoup de gens ramènent l'évangélisation à la seule annonce ou proclamation, alors que celle-ci n'en est qu'une composante.

Chapitre IV. Appels pour répondre aux urgences et défis actuels

Après la réflexion du chapitre IV, le document précise les actions à mener.

Parmi les urgences, relevons celle de la formation pour approfondir la foi, rendre les chrétiens capables de témoigner avec conviction.

L'inculturation est condition pour un vrai témoignage. "La synthèse entre culture et foi n'est pas seulement une exigence de la culture, mais aussi de la foi parce qu'une foi qui ne devient pas culture est une foi qui n'est pas pleinement accueillie, entièrement pensée et fidèlement vécue" (EA 78).

Un autre élément essentiel du témoignage est une communauté réconciliée. Par le dialogue, l'Église doit devenir "pour tous un lieu d'une authentique réconciliation.

Le document revient une fois de plus sur la famille. Elle doit être évangélisée, car "l'avenir du monde et de l'Église passe par elle".

Chapitre V. Pour que l'Église soit vraiment témoin en Afrique.

Le témoignage est l'élément central de la tâche de l'Église en Afrique. Pour former des témoins, l'évangélisation doit conduire à la sainteté, à une transformation de mentalité, à une inculturation de la foi. La liturgie joue un rôle très important comme manifestation riche et forte de la foi dans la culture.

Le chapitre V présente alors les divers agents de l'évangélisation, puis ses structures essentielles.

Chapitre VI. Construire le Royaume de Dieu. Dimension ecclésiale du Témoignage

Chaque chrétien est appelé à s'engager de manière déterminée pour la justice et la paix. Mais il y a aussi un témoignage de l'Église comme corps organisé. Elle doit être "la voix des sans-voix" (cf. EA 105, 106).

Notre engagement en Afrique a beaucoup changé. Les Églises locales sont devenues les premières responsables de l'évangélisation; nous les aidons à faire face à cette responsabilité, soit en prenant en charge des projets élaborés par elles, soit en proposant nous-mêmes des projets nouveaux qui nous font revenir au mouvement de la première évangélisation.

Ce chapitre présente à l'Église en Afrique un programme d'engagement pour la justice et la paix, d'engagement dans les médias aussi, pour qu'elle soit vraiment témoin de l'Évangile.

Chapitre VII. "Vous serez mes témoins jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre"

Le document se termine par un appel à l'Église d'Afrique pour qu'elle soit missionnaire même au-delà du continent. Le Saint-Père rappelle l'objectif de la promotion d'une "solidarité pastorale organique dans tout le territoire africain et les îles adjacentes" (EA 131). Il relève les signes de l'esprit missionnaire en Afrique: un nombre croissant de prêtres répond à l'appel à la mission universelle, les instituts

missionnaires accueillent de plus en plus de candidats africains, de nouveaux instituts missionnaires africains sont nés.

II. LE SYNODE, UN EVENEMENT PROPHETIQUE?

La question est celle-ci: Le Synode a proposé un programme structuré et argumenté pour une nouvelle évangélisation de l'Afrique. Il revient maintenant à tout les membres de l'Église en Afrique et à nous tous de mettre en pratique ces directives. Mais est-ce que l'événement lui-même a eu une force symbolique? A-t-il été un événement prophétique? EA dit au n.53: La ressource la plus importante de l'Église en Afrique, pour relever les défis mentionnés, "après la grâce du Christ, est celle du peuple. Le Peuple de Dieu - entendu au sens théologique de Lumen Gentium... - a reçu le mandat... de proclamer le message évangélique". Comment ce peuple sera-t-il mis en mouvement?

L'évocation du Synode

L'Introduction et le chapitre I relèvent les éléments significatifs qui expriment le sens de l'assemblée. La participation du peuple de Dieu en Afrique à la préparation du Synode, le nombre et la qualité des "Pères synodaux", le bon fonctionnement de l'assemblée, la liturgie, les professions de foi, tout cela constitue un ensemble symbolique construit par les organisateurs, dans lequel sont entrés de bon coeur tous les participants, moi-même y compris!

Le Synode a été ainsi vécu par nous comme, je cite: un événement de grâce, une grande profession de foi en Jésus-Christ Sauveur de l'Afrique, un Synode de Résurrection, un Synode d'espérance, une manifestation de collégialité affective et effective, en pleine communion avec l'Église universelle, la Famille de Dieu en cheminement synodal, voulant offrir à l'Afrique un message pertinent et crédible.

Remarques sur les limites d'un style

C'était très bien pour nous qui avons participé. Nous avons l'impression de vivre un grand moment de la vie de l'Église. Dans le cadre imparti il y avait liberté de parole; les rapports entre participants étaient simples et fraternels, les interventions individuelles étaient de vrais témoignages de personnes engagées. C'était peut-être la meilleure façon de faire possible.

Style peu percutant

Cependant, une autre possibilité avait été écartée, celle d'un "Concile africain" constitué à partir de l'Afrique, avec participation de toutes sortes de représentants du peuple de Dieu, tenu en Afrique même, sous la responsabilité directe des évêques d'Afrique. Ce schéma aurait impliqué plus fortement la base de l'Église en Afrique et aurait parlé plus directement aux peuples du continent.

Le style de travail choisi a produit à la fin un message officiel puis une exhortation générale qui sont très riches de contenu mais moins bonnes pour ce qui est de toucher le coeur du peuple et le motiver.

Esprit critique de nos contemporains

Pour tous ceux qui sont imbibés de l'esprit des sociétés sécularisées, la religion n'est plus le fondement des valeurs et la source des appels éthiques, c'est une des composantes de la culture parmi d'autres. Des jeunes interrogés au cours de la dernière réunion des Supérieurs Généraux nous ont fait comprendre que dans nos sociétés de consommation, les jeunes voient le monde comme un immense super-marché où il y a aussi un rayon religieux qui intéresse certains. Ce qui introduit alors au sens de l'Évangile et appelle à l'engagement, c'est plutôt une parole pertinente exprimée dans le langage d'un groupe donné et surtout le témoignage fort d'une personne ou d'une communauté.

En Afrique, beaucoup de gens ont une grande confiance dans l'Église. Mais le continent est touché aussi par la sécularisation. Le peuple est devenu très critique, entre autres parce qu'il a été souvent trompé et exploité. Il est important qu'il se reconnaisse dans ce que dit et fait l'Église. «LS1.5»

L'assemblée devant les drames de l'Africa

Concrètement, pour ceux du dehors touchés par les malheurs de l'Afrique, l'assemblée n'est guère apparue comme une assemblée témoin au moment du drame du Rwanda qui avait éclaté juste avant le Synode, ni par rapport à d'autres situations de détresse. Un évêque du Libéria a dit: "Les quatre dernières années et demie ont été un cauchemar indicible". Même un évêque du Soudan, devant l'absence de réponse aux souffrances des chrétiens de son pays a pu demander: "Allons-nous repartir sans réponses concrètes à nos problèmes, en vous disant: ceux qui vont mourir vous saluent?". Cela ne veut pas dire que l'assemblée n'a pas eu et n'aura pas une influence à plus long terme pour porter remède à ce genre de situations.

Témoigner par une démarche?

Quand nous avons constitué un consortium d'instituts missionnaires, nous avons rêvé d'une formation qui serait missionnaire non seulement par le contenu, mais aussi par la démarche même. Pendant 5 ans, j'ai enseigné la théologie avec à côté de moi un philosophe anthropologue qui me provoquait: D'où parles-tu? Sur quoi t'appuies-tu? Nous avons essayé de faire tout le parcours théologique en "dialogue" avec les questions des autres cultures et des non-croyants.

On pourrait dire que le Synode a été fortement missionnaire dans ses intentions et ses directives; il l'a été moins dans sa démarche même.

III. REPONSE AUX DEFIS AVEC LES RESSOURCES PROPRES DE L'AFRIQUE?

Le défi de la situation actuelle de l'Afrique

La question qui nous habitait tous dans la salle synodale, et sans doute beaucoup de gens qui regardaient les images de l'Afrique à la télévision, était celle posée par le Cardinal Thiandoum dans le Rapport avant discussion, repris en EA «MDBO»40: "Dans un continent saturé de mauvaises nouvelles, comment le message chrétien est-il 'Bonne Nouvelle' pour notre peuple?"

Le tableau

Le texte décrit ainsi la situation: "Une situation commune est, sans aucun doute, le fait que l'Afrique est saturée de problèmes: dans presque toutes nos nations, il y a une misère épouvantable, une mauvaise administration des rares ressources disponibles, une instabilité politique et une désorientation sociale. Le résultat est sous nos yeux: misère, guerres, désespoir. Dans un nouveau monde contr"lé par les nations riches et puissantes, l'Afrique est pratiquement devenue un appendice sans importance, souvent oublié et négligé par tous..."

L'Afrique actuelle peut être comparée à l'homme qui descendait de Jérusalem à Jéricho; il tomba entre les mains de brigands qui le dépouillèrent, le rouèrent de coups et s'en allèrent, le laissant à demi mort... L'Afrique est un continent où d'innombrables êtres humains - hommes et femmes, enfants et jeunes - sont étendus, en quelque sorte, sur le bord de la route, malades, blessés, impotents, marginalisés et abandonnés. Ils ont un extrême besoin de Samaritains qui leur viennent en aide". Mgr. Zoa de Yaoundé, qui avait présenté cette parabole, avait ajouté: "Le Synode donnera-t-il l'occasion au 'prêtre' et au 'lévite' africains, guettés par l'enfermement cultuel et culturel, d'arriver près de l'homme, de le voir...et de prendre soin de lui?". Le pape, lui, ajoute: "Je souhaite que l'Église continue patiemment et inlassablement son oeuvre de bon Samaritain".

La question

D'où la question reprise encore par le Cardinal Thiandoum: "Au milieu d'un désespoir qui envahit tout, où sont l'espérance et l'optimisme qu'apporte l'Évangile?". La question est d'autant plus percutante que les drames se déroulent dans des pays largement christianisés, avec des chrétiens impliqués dans les conflits tribalistes et auteurs d'auteurs d'atrocités. Nous nous sommes sentis frappés de plein fouet: notre mission a-t-elle été un échec? Comment repartir après cela?

Comme le note EA, il serait faux et injuste de s'arrêter à ce tableau. Un seul petit exemple: au moment où le Zaïre paraissait être en plein chaos, j'ai visité une communauté

Les richesses humaines de l'Afrique: un capital non investi?

chrétienne de la banlieue de Lubumbashi. Elle venait de construire sa chapelle par ses propres moyens et commençait à construire de la même manière l'école primaire qu'elle attendait en vain de l'administration.

"Le Synode donnera-t-il l'occasion au 'prêtre' et au 'lévite' africains, guettés par l'enfermement culturel et culturel, d'arriver près de l'homme, de le voir...et de prendre soin de lui?"

Je me suis souvent posé la question: comment mobiliser l'immense richesse de qualités humaines rencontrées chez les gens? Comment faire émerger comme leaders politiques des personnalités compétentes et honnêtes, alors que les anciens au lourd passé reviennent toujours sur le devant de la scène? Je suis convaincu que le type de développement importé tout construit à partir de l'extérieur, le jeu d'une certaine classe politique qui gère les affaires du pays plus avec les relations extérieures qu'avec le peuple du pays, font que le meilleur des peuples d'Afrique n'a pas été vraiment investi dans l'entreprise de développement.

L'Église pourrait faire sien le mot d'ordre de la Conférence des Églises de Toute l'Afrique (CETA): "Reconstruire l'Afrique". Il faudrait aider à libérer la parole dans les sociétés africaines, permettre que l'Afrique puisse se ressourcer de l'intérieur (richesses humaines et naturelles) pour la sortir d'une situation humiliante de misère et de dépendance.

IV. POINT-CLE: L'INCULTURATION

Ce qu'elle est d'après EA

Pour que la Bonne Nouvelle touche l'Afrique et la renouvelle, le point-clé est l'inculturation. Le document la considère comme une priorité et une urgence, même si le plan fait peut-être moins ressortir son caractère central. D'après EA, elle comprend "une intime transformation des authentiques valeurs culturelles par leur intégration dans le christianisme" et "l'enracinement du christianisme dans les diverses cultures".

Ses fondements théologiques

C'est l'incarnation du Verbe dans une culture et une société particulières, jusqu'à la mort. Comme le grain de blé tombé en terre qui porte beaucoup de fruits, Jésus transforme les cultures. Notons qu'il commence par la sienne, et puis continue par ses témoins de peuple en peuple à travers l'histoire jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre. L'inculturation a aussi des liens profonds avec le mystère de la Pentecôte. L'Esprit qui est déjà à la source des valeurs des différentes cultures, conduit l'Église à accueillir la richesse variée des nations.

Processus. Critères

"Au regard des rapides changements culturels, sociaux, économiques et politiques, nos Églises locales devront travailler à un processus d'inculturation toujours renouvelé, en respectant les deux critères suivants: la compatibilité avec le message chrétien et la communion avec l'Église universelle... L'inculturation englobe tous les domaines de la vie de l'Église et de l'évangélisation" (EA 62)...

L'enjeu de l'inculturation

Les interventions des Pères avaient présenté plus concrètement l'enjeu de l'inculturation. Son besoin se fait sentir à partir de la dichotomie fréquente entre la foi professée et la pratique de la vie. Le chrétien doit vivre une double fidélité: être honnête vis-à-vis de sa famille, de son clan, et être honnête vis-à-vis de son Église. Cela comporte des perplexités, une souffrance. Mgr. Pengo, archevêque de Dar-es-Salaam avait dit à ce propos: la dichotomie entre vie et foi se révèle dans les situations où la vie humaine est menacée (maladie grave, mariage stérile). Elle se situe au niveau de l'option fondamentale des chrétiens et engendre ainsi de grandes souffrances. Il ne s'agit pas d'un zapping de curiosité ou d'envies épidermiques. L'inculturation devrait permettre aux chrétiens de reconnaître, dans le message chrétien qui les a attirés, le chemin de la vie même dans les situations les plus menaçantes pour un Africain.

Donnons encore quelques précisions. L'inculturation n'est pas simple adaptation, elle n'est pas un christianisme rendu plus facile. Elle exprime au contraire une plus grande radicalité. Elle dit une conversion plus profonde et plus réelle où l'être culturel de l'Africain et les décisions prises dans son milieu sont imprégnés par l'Évangile. Elle est chemin de sainteté (Mgr. Monsengwo, Zaïre)

L'inculturation est un processus vivant où chaque chrétien est acteur, et les communautés chrétiennes, les laïcs, les communautés religieuses, les prêtres. Mais l'inculturation demande aussi une recherche intellectuelle sérieuse, anthropologique et théologique, pour laquelle il faut faire confiance aux gens compétents. Tout cela sous la conduite des évêques, dans un esprit d'Église famille de Dieu.

Un exemple: l'Église comme Famille de Dieu

Le Synode a voulu pratiquer l'inculturation avec l'idée-force de "Église famille de Dieu". On construit l'Église à partir de la famille concrète, Église domestique. Celle-ci dépasse ses limites tout en gardant le style familial dans les "communautés ecclésiales vivantes" (EA 89) En partant de la famille africaine, on initie les chrétiens à un sens de l'Église Famille de Dieu qu'on élargit avec d'autres images bibliques.

Des réserves

Mgr. Albert Kanene Obiefuna, Pdt de la CE du Nigéria, avait dit: présenter l'Église comme une famille "est juste mais ne devrait pas être surestimé...L'Africain est généralement conditionné par les intérêts du clan et de la tribu... Cette mentalité domine à tel point que l'opinion des Africains, quand on en arrive aux faits, est que l'adage 'le sang est plus épais que l'eau' prévaut sur le concept chrétien de l'Église-famille. Et par 'eau' on peut entendre aussi celle du baptême par laquelle chacun naît dans la famille de l'Église...". Mgr. Obiefuna en avait donc appelé à une catéchèse approfondie sur l'Église comme famille, mais surtout au "témoignage de vie des évangélisateurs. Les chrétiens d'Afrique veulent se sentir à l'aise avec eux... La stratégie de l'évangélisation est claire... C'est l'amour. Ce que les Africains veulent, c'est une présence, une présence, une présence. La présence devient intimité, et l'intimité est amour".

Le symbole de l'alliance

La Bible a inculturé la relation des Israélites avec Dieu et entre eux par le symbole de l'alliance. L'alliance est très présente dans les cultures africaines et en particulier dans le mariage par lequel une

famille s'ouvre à une autre pour un accroissement de vie. Dans une célébration de profession religieuse au Nord-Cameroun, on avait repris un geste symbolique de mariage. Le jeune homme et la jeune fille prennent chacun dans la bouche un des bouts d'un morceau de viande. Celui qui préside coupe la viande et les deux la mangent. Pour la profession, la jeune novice et la Mère Supérieure prirent dans la bouche les bouts d'un morceau de viande, le prêtre coupa le morceau et elles avalèrent chacune sa part. Un tel geste peut faire rire un étranger, mais là-bas, il se fit dans l'assemblée un grand silence. Tous et toutes communiaient à l'événement. Le geste n'était pas l'illustration d'une idée. Le langage symbolique qui est celui de la foi n'informe pas, il met en rapport des gens en les ouvrant à un monde qui n'est pas tangible.

Le Synode a été ainsi vécu par nous comme, je cite: un événement de grâce, une grande profession de foi en Jésus-Christ Sauveur de l'Afrique, un Synode de Résurrection, un Synode d'espérance, une manifestation de collégialité affective et effective, en pleine communion avec l'Église universelle.

Dimensions de l'inculturation

Communication symbolique, une mise en rapport

La transmission de l'Évangile est une communication de l'invisible à travers un langage symbolique. Or la communication symbolique met en rapport plus qu'elle ne fait connaître. Dans le cas de la profession religieuse au Nord-Cameroun, le rite a mis en rapport l'univers de l'alliance matrimoniale avec l'univers ecclésial de la vie religieuse.

Parlant à des Foyers chrétiens en Centre-Afrique, je voyais bien que les femmes qui n'avaient pas l'habitude de suivre des conférences me regardaient avec des grands yeux. J'ai abandonné tout ce que j'avais préparé, et je leur ai parlé de ce que je savais du mariage chez eux, en particulier d'une alliance personnelle entre deux époux qui s'aiment beaucoup et s'engagent à rester ensemble jusqu'à la mort, en mangeant ensemble le cœur d'un certain serpent. A partir de ce moment, le groupe a commencé à parler. Je n'avais plus qu'à écouter et à dire que le mariage des chrétiens était quelque chose comme cela.

Aller chez les autres

Pour vraiment communiquer l'Évangile, il faut aller chez les autres et l'entendre en quelque sorte sous une forme inédite chez les autres. Dans ce sens, l'inculturation du mariage pour les chrétiens pourrait être non pas d'introduire quelques éléments coutumiers dans la célébration à l'Église, mais de prendre comme lieu du mariage des chrétiens le mariage coutumier, comme l'a proposé, à certaines conditions, Mgr. Ndingi de Nakuru (Kenya) pendant le Synode. Nous entrons ainsi dans l'univers propre des autres.

Découvrir l'univers intérieur, l'exceptionnel aussi

En nous rapprochant des autres, nous voyons mieux leurs qualités, les richesses de leur culture, et aussi la vie intérieure partagée dans leurs rites et symboles. Eux-mêmes nous découvrent aussi, et nous essayons de partager avec eux notre monde invisible. Nous entrons dans leurs "bosquets initiatiques" comme disait un théologien zaïrois, nous découvrons peu à peu les meilleurs témoignages de cette culture. Dans les cultures et les religions, tous ne sont pas au même niveau. Il ne faudrait pas comparer un chrétien saint avec un représentant un peu quelconque d'une autre religion. "Il ne faut pas tirer trop vite sur les pintades", dit-on en RCA, sous-entendu: sinon on n'aura pas la plus belle ou: on n'en aura qu'une. En vivant avec les autres, nous rencontrons ce qu'il y a d'exceptionnel. La coutume des Manjas admet une exception à la loi du lévirat quand une veuve, au nom de la qualité de sa relation avec son mari, demande de ne plus se remarier, même si elle est encore jeune et belle. On le lui accorde et elle s'engage à ne plus jamais aller avec un autre homme. «LS1.5»

Communion et discernement

L'inculturation ne démonte pas une culture pour en récupérer des morceaux et faire un bricolage. Elle est plutôt une oeuvre de communion entre deux mondes. Dans l'évangélisation, nous avons à pratiquer sans cesse la communion qui nous rattache à l'Évangile (lectio divina, liturgie, vie communautaire) et celle qui nous rattache à la vie des hommes. Nous aidons d'autres à faire le point dans cette entreprise. C'est une grande oeuvre d'interprétation et de discernement. Elle se fait dans la prière personnelle et la vie dans la famille de Dieu, avec les évêques et les théologiens.

Ce qui arrive au témoin de l'Évangile chez les autres

Perplexité

EA ne parle guère de la perplexité du témoin de l'Évangile qui entre dans une nouvelle culture, qui fait l'expérience des limites de la sienne propre. Nous rencontrons des gens que nous reconnaissons meilleurs que nous, plus sincères, plus humbles. Un de nos confrères écrivait déjà leurs règles de vie, leur religion; ils vivent bien; que venons-nous faire?". Des explorateurs venus en Oubangui Chari à la même époque ont trouvé des sociétés rurales paisibles, produisant en abondance tout ce qu'il leur fallait pour vivre. Il n'est pas toujours évident que nous soyons bénéfiques.

Réciprocité pour recevoir et pour perdre

En même temps que nous partageons nos trésors respectifs, nous devenons frères et soeurs par alliance. Si, dans ce processus, l'autre est évangélisé, nous le sommes aussi; si ses horizons s'ouvrent, l'espace de la tente de l'Église s'agrandit aussi; tous deux nous sommes amenés à mourir et à renaître pour une nouvelle plénitude. Car nous ne pouvons pas nous prendre pour le bon Dieu! Nous portons Celui que nous sommes loin de contenir.

Les différences invisibles

Un aspect très concret de cette expérience, c'est que les différences culturelles ne sont pas tant dans le contenu de nos paroles, de nos pensées, de nos actes que dans nos modes de fonctionnement. Elles ne sont pas tant du côté de l'objet que de côté du sujet, des lunettes avec lesquelles nous regardons, des logiciels avec lesquels nous travaillons la réalité. Ce sont des différences qui ne sont pas visibles. D'où les surprises et les perplexités: "ils sont fous ces Français" dira peut-être l'Anglais. Quand je suis parti en Afrique, le P.Michel de Certeau, grand expert des cultures et de "l'union dans la différence", m'avait dit: si quelque chose te choque, te paraît bizarre, incompréhensible, arrête-toi! C'est cela qui est important. C'est une clé pour entrer chez les autres. Car comme on dit en Centre-Afrique: "L'étranger ne sait pas ce qui est sous le couvercle de la marmite".

Un vertige

La rencontre inter-culturelle donne parfois une sorte de vertige que beaucoup de gens dans notre Église ne semblent avoir jamais éprouvé. Quand j'ai passé à des prêtres centrafricains diverses responsabilités que j'avais exercées, je me suis senti un peu comme un joueur de football pris à contrepied. Nous avons bien travaillé ensemble auparavant, mais quand ils ont pris la direction, je ne me sentais plus tout-à-fait à l'aise car ils réorganisaient les choses par un autre bout.

V. LE DIALOGUE, CONSTITUTIF DE L'EVANGELISATION

Un mode d'être du chrétien

Parfois le dialogue est un peu considéré comme une position d'attente pour le missionnaire là où il n'a pas de succès. En fait, dit EA, "l'attitude de dialogue est le mode d'être du chrétien à l'intérieur de sa communauté comme avec les autres croyants et les hommes et femmes de bonne volonté"; ce ne sont pas d'abord des activités qui s'ajoutent à d'autres. Le document appelle avec force au dialogue oecuménique, au dialogue inter-religieux - surtout avec les adeptes de l'Islam et de la Religion Traditionnelle Africaine (RTA) -, mais aussi au dialogue à l'intérieur de l'Église famille de Dieu. A notre dernier chapitre, un confrère avouait: "après avoir travaillé comme une sorte de franc-tireur du dialogue avec les Musulmans et les Hindous, je me suis rendu compte qu'il serait logique de déployer les mêmes efforts avec mes gens de mon Église".

Elément essentiel de la mission

Le cardinal E.I. Cassidy, Président du Conseil Pontifical pour la Promotion de L'Unité des chrétiens, avait dit: "Toute Église particulière, quel que soit son état ou son développement, ne saurait... négliger de jouer sa part pour la promotion de l'unité des chrétiens, car il ne s'agit pas là d'une option, mais d'un élément essentiel de la mission évangélisatrice de l'Église, pour que le monde croie". L'oecuménisme dans le monde entier dépendra fortement de l'engagement de l'Église en Afrique. L'engagement exceptionnel de certains confrères m'a fait prendre conscience qu'en beaucoup d'endroits l'oecuménisme "figure en bas de liste" des priorités (C.Cassidy). Le pape le considère comme une priorité de son pontificat. Ce n'est pas un problème pour Églises déjà bien constituées, qui peuvent se permettre d'y investir des comités, mais d'une question vitale pour l'évangélisation qui est une oeuvre de rassemblement. En se mettant en concurrence, les Églises détruisent d'une main ce qu'elles construisent de l'autre.

Une manière de vivre notre appartenance à l'Église

Le dialogue change chacune des parties engagées, il ne s'agit pas seulement d'organiser une collaboration plus efficace. Il élargit l'espace spirituel dans lequel l'Église se déploie. Par lui, l'Église est engagée en permanence dans la recherche, dans le débat entre les hommes. Elle témoigne du sérieux de sa foi, de son intérêt pour le Règne de Dieu, par le dialogue. Elle se présente comme une maison accueillante, pleine de portes et de vérandas.

Le dialogue signifie aussi que les différences demeurent dans le Royaume de Dieu. L'uniformité ne produit pas l'unité mais l'ennui et la superficialité. Le principe de l'union dans la différence, c'est la confiance. Nous restons différents, ce qui nous unit nous dépasse et ne se laisse pas expliciter totalement.

Tout homme porte en lui le sceau de ton Règne"

Notre foi ne serait pas authentique si son intérêt s'arrêtait aux membres de notre Église. Nous croyons que tous les hommes sont créés par Dieu, sont fils de Dieu. A ce titre, ils ont quelque chose à nous communiquer et nous n'avons pas tout à leur apporter. Comme le dit le chant italien: "Ogni uomo porta in se il sigillo del tuo Regno".

Au niveau international, EA souligne que les nations africaines sont les plus désavantagées dans la situation actuelle. Il appelle les pays riches à la solidarité, pour leur propre intérêt, car cela contribuera à la paix mondiale. Il interpelle aussi les Églises des pays riches. Il attire l'attention sur des domaines particulièrement importants de manque et de détresse.

Des confrères sont engagés avec l'Église orthodoxe éthiopienne. Ils ont du mal à faire comprendre leur approche. Allant au Sud de l'Éthiopie pour une première évangélisation, ils ont découvert cette Église soeur et ont commencé travailler avec elle. Ils ont été séduits par sa liturgie et sa spiritualité. Tout en restant catholiques et en ne faisant pas la "communicatio in sacris". ils sont entrés dans l'univers spirituel de cette Église. Ils se sentent enrichis. Une grande confiance est née; ils font une évangélisation conjointe.

VI. DEVELOPPEMENT HUMAIN INTEGRAL, LIBERATION, JUSTICE ET PAIX

Les principes fondamentaux

Entre évangélisation et promotion humaine - développement, libération - il y a des liens profonds...Comment proclamer le commandement nouveau sans promouvoir dans la justice et la paix la véritable, l'authentique croissance de l'homme? .. Annoncer le Christ, c'est révéler à l'homme sa dignité inaliénable...Parce qu'il a cette dignité... l'homme ne peut vivre dans des conditions de vie sociale, économique, culturelle et politique infra-humaines" (EA 69). De là l'engagement de l'Église pour contribuer au développement, pour défendre les droits des gens, pour dénoncer aussi et combattre les injustices.

Le témoignage ecclésial organisé

"L'annonce de la justice et de la paix doit faire partie du programme pastoral de chaque communauté chrétienne... La formation du clergé, des religieux et des laïcs, donnée dans les domaines propres de leur apostolat, mettra l'accent sur la doctrine sociale de l'Église... L'Église a le droit et le devoir de participer pleinement à l'édification d'une société juste et pacifique...De nos jours, dans une société pluraliste, c'est surtout grâce aux engagements des laïcs catholiques dans la vie publique que

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l'Église a le meilleur impact" (EA 107). Le document insiste sur la collaboration avec les autres croyants dans ce domaine.

Dénonciations - Responsabilités africaines

"Le plus grand défi pour réaliser la justice et la paix en Afrique consiste à bien gérer les affaires publiques dans les deux domaines connexes de la politique et de l'économie". Même si des problèmes ont leur source hors du continent, beaucoup "sont la conséquence d'une manière de gouverner souvent entachée de corruption" (EA 110). La construction des nations rencontre l'obstacle des animosités ethniques. "de nombreuses nations d'Afrique peinent sous des régimes autoritaires et oppressifs qui dénie à leurs membres la liberté personnelle et les droits humains fondamentaux" (EA 112). "Les problèmes économiques de l'Afrique sont aggravés par la malhonnêteté de certains gouvernements corrompus qui, de connivence avec des intérêts privés locaux ou étrangers, détournent les ressources nationales à leur profit" (EA 113). Le pape souhaite qu'on prépare les moyens juridiques de faire rentrer les fonds indûment détournés.

Responsabilités internationales

Au niveau international, EA souligne que les nations africaines sont les plus désavantagées dans la situation actuelle. Il appelle les pays riches à la solidarité, pour leur propre intérêt, car cela contribuera à la paix mondiale. Il interpelle aussi les Églises des pays riches. Il attire l'attention sur des domaines particulièrement importants de manque et de détresse.

Envisageant les problèmes les plus préoccupants, le pape lance entre autres un appel pressant "au Fonds monétaire international et à la Banque mondiale, ainsi qu'à tous les créanciers pour qu'ils allègent les dettes écrasantes des pays africains" (EA 120). Il demande aux conférences épiscopales des pays industrialisés de se faire les avocats de cette cause auprès de leurs gouvernements et des autres organismes impliqués.

Témoignage de solidarité

Dans la mission, l'engagement pour la justice et la paix est vécu le plus souvent comme une présence auprès de ceux qui souffrent, qui sont exploités, marginalisés ou en conflit. Le témoin du Christ vient, comme son Maître, se rendre solidaire, porter avec les gens le poids du malheur et de l'injustice. Il apporte ainsi à ceux qui sont accablés une espérance, la volonté de prendre leurs responsabilités. La présence fidèle, parfois jusqu'au don de la vie, est l'action fondamentale qui met les gens debout pour être les créateurs de leur propre libération et de la construction de leur nation. (Cf. Mgr. Obiefuna p.8).

Emergence de leaders

Par l'esprit qu'il communique, ce témoignage évangélique contribue aussi à créer un type de développement solidaire, une communauté humaine structurée à partir de ses propres possibilités et de sa propre inspiration. Elle contribue à faire émerger des leaders qui viennent du peuple et ont une autorité authentique par rapport à lui. D'ailleurs, contrairement à ce que l'on dit parfois, c'était là l'idéal du chef traditionnel. Dans les mythes manjas, le roi des animaux est le lapin, parce qu'il a de longues oreilles!

VII. MOYENS DE COMMUNICATION SOCIALE

Les nouveaux moyens sont à utiliser au service du message chrétien, sans oublier que "les formes traditionnelles de communication sociale... sont encore très utiles et efficaces dans de nombreux milieux". Le pape se fait l'écho des évêques du Synode pour exprimer son "inquiétude au sujet du contenu moral d'une grande partie des programmes dont les médias inondent le continent africain" (EA 124). Il lance un appel à la collaboration à tous les niveaux, y compris avec les Églises des pays plus avancés dans ce domaine.

Les médias ne sont pas seulement de nouveaux moyens, mais une nouvelle culture, un nouvel Aréopage comme dit Redemptoris Missio. Cet univers est à évangéliser. Comment y faire passer l'Évangile?

Ethique des médias: donner la parole

L'enjeu éthique des médias n'est pas seulement dans le contenu des programmes de radio et de télévision, mais dans la démarche de communication. S'agit-il d'endormir, de séduire, d'endoctriner les destinataires? Le caractère évangélique de la communication, dans la ligne des réflexions antérieures, consiste à ouvrir un nouvel espace pour que le plus grand nombre d'hommes, les pauvres en particulier, puissent exprimer la richesse de leur cœur et leurs appels à la fraternité humaine.

VIII. PERSPECTIVES MISSIONNAIRES

Le Synode a voulu donner un nouvel élan à la mission évangélisatrice de l'Église en Afrique, lui ouvrant même l'horizon des autres continents. L'Exhortation apostolique 'Ecclesia in Africa' est pleine de dynamisme missionnaire et, comme congrégation missionnaire, nous entrons de tout cœur dans le mouvement.

En même temps, nous ajoutons peut-être une note spécifique à partir de notre expérience et de notre vision propres de la mission. Nous partageons cette orientation avec les autres, nous essayons nous-

mêmes de la mettre en oeuvre. Elle est dans la ligne de nos fondateurs, de notre Règle de vie et de nos chapitres généraux.

Rejoindre les autres. Exemples

Des groupes de confrères sont partis au milieu de peuples d'Afrique qui n'avaient pas été touchés par le témoignage de l'Évangile. Ils ont vécu de longues années au milieu d'eux, avec pour principale occupation d'étudier leur langue et leurs coutumes, de créer des relations avec eux, de leur rendre les services qui pouvaient les aider (pour le développement, la défense de leurs droits, l'entente entre eux). Peu à peu, ils ont pu partager avec les gens leur foi. Dans un cas, l'évêque du secteur trouvait que cela n'allait pas assez vite, qu'il n'y avait guère de résultats, c'est-à-dire de baptêmes. Mais après 20 ans, un mouvement vers le christianisme se développe dans toute la région. La base en est, je crois, une très grande confiance née à travers une longue fréquentation et des épreuves vécues en commun.

Une communauté dans une banlieue de grande cité en Europe vit dans un Centre d'accueil pour clochards, alcooliques et autres gens marginaux. Les confrères considèrent le Centre comme leur communauté.

Les premiers missionnaires arrivés en Afrique ont eu à se faire accepter, à trouver leur place, à apprendre beaucoup de choses avant de pouvoir eux-mêmes annoncer leur message et proposer l'entrée dans la communauté chrétienne. Nous considérons comme premier mouvement de la mission celui d'aller vers les autres pour être avec eux, comme le Seigneur est venu sur terre pour être Dieu avec nous, jusqu'à en mourir.

Aujourd'hui, lorsque nous commençons un nouvel engagement, nous cherchons les moyens pour pouvoir être admis dans le pays, l'Église du lieu, le groupe humain au milieu duquel nous voudrions être témoins du Christ. Dans ces débuts, nous ne cherchons pas d'abord à communiquer un message et à proposer une autre vie. Nous sommes tout préoccupés par les gens qui sont là.

Humilité et pauvreté

Notre mission a souvent débuté très pauvrement. Le P. Libermann disait de sa première communauté: nous sommes un ensemble de pauvres gens.

Nos premières arrivées en Afrique n'ont pas été glorieuses. En 1778, deux prêtres du Saint-Esprit en route vers la Guyane font naufrage au large de la Mauritanie et sont faits prisonniers par les Maures. Rachetés, ils arrivent à Saint-Louis du Sénégal et peuvent y rester une fois que les Français ont repris cette ville aux Anglais. En 1843, le premier groupe de missionnaires de la Société du Saint-Coeur de Marie est décimé par la maladie sur les cotes d'Afrique de l'Ouest (Libéria, Côte d'Ivoire). Deux survivants prennent un bateau qui passe en allant vers le sud. Ils arrivent exténués au Gabon et décident d'y rester. On les croyait morts; ils avaient survécu contre toute attente. L'Église a commencé là-bas en 1844.

Notre fondateur nous a dit: Faites-vous aux Africains comme des serviteurs se font à leurs maîtres. Nous ne l'avons pas toujours vécu. Une fois que nous avons fait notre place et construit nos missions, nous y avons fait régner tout naturellement la loi des Pères. Les développements récents de la mission et notre diminution dans nos pays d'origine traditionnels ont été je crois pour nous une invitation à l'humilité des origines.

Pèlerinage à la découverte du Seigneur

Une des caractéristiques des confrères dans ces situations, c'est qu'ils sont en général très heureux. Dans ce qui parfois me paraît être des situations-limite, ils se sentent bien chez eux. A travers des relations simples, ils ont découvert chez les autres la générosité, les richesses de coeur et de culture. Ils ont entendu

eux-mêmes une Bonne Nouvelle. Saint Paul qui était venu à Corinthe tout tremblant, témoin du Christ crucifié, découvrait chez eux les profondeurs du mystère du salut.

La mission est une sorte de mouvement mystique où nous découvrons de nouvelles dimensions de notre foi. Les missionnaires irlandais qui ont évangélisé ma région se considéraient comme en pèlerinage pour le Christ.

Faire confiance

Les missionnaires découvrent que l'Esprit de Dieu est là à l'oeuvre avant eux. Ils peuvent moissonner avant d'avoir semé. Leur confiance amène les autres à montrer le meilleur d'eux-mêmes. Leur démarche même est le premier témoignage rendu à l'Évangile, le plus fort; à travers eux les gens comprennent que Dieu lui-même est avec eux en ce sens qu'il leur fait confiance.

Je pense à cette histoire d'un médecin généreux parti soigner les malades en Chine il y a longtemps. Il aurait voulu croire en Dieu et même après beaucoup d'années il n'y arrivait pas. Quand il a senti que l'heure de sa mort approchait, il a fait venir le prêtre pour lui dire: Je n'arrive toujours pas à croire en Dieu. Le prêtre lui dit: Vous croyez que cela a encore beaucoup d'importance maintenant? L'essentiel, c'est que Lui croit en vous.

Dans mon intervention au Synode j'avais souhaité "que cette assemblée se prononce pour une plus grande ouverture de l'Église à la réalité africaine, une plus grande liberté et une plus grande confiance accordées au peuple de Dieu en Afrique, à tous les niveaux. Ce dont le peuple de Dieu a besoin c'est sans doute moins de nouvelles directives que d'une nouvelle proximité et d'une nouvelle confiance de notre part".

Ecouter

Partout, et spécialement en Afrique, il y a des trésors cachés au coeur des gens qui attendent que quelqu'un vienne pour les écouter. Notre dernier chapitre, après la présentation d'expériences significatives, avait conclu: "Il semble que la mission d'aujourd'hui consiste plus à écouter qu'à parler". La mission nous purifie aussi. Elle nous remet en question en nous montrant nos étroitures. Nous ne pouvons pas nous identifier avec le Seigneur, il faut encore beaucoup écouter et apprendre pour annoncer un Message valable. "Auditus purificat visum", disait saint Bernard. Dans la démarche d'évangélisation aussi, l'écoute des autres purifie notre regard pour l'action.

Voilà quelques lignes de notre orientation missionnaire aujourd'hui. Nous sommes loin de vivre cela partout, mais nous y voyons notre route. Elle peut être instructive. Le P. Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, en proposant un Concile africain lors du Colloque organisé à Abidjan en 1977 par la Société Africaine de Culture, avait invité les chrétiens africains à s'inspirer de l'entreprise missionnaire pour chercher les voies d'une Église vraiment africaine. Je vous ai proposé ici une sorte de ressourcement dans la mission initiale.

La démarche de première évangélisation peut être complémentaire de celle qui est souvent présentée comme nouvelle évangélisation, où les témoins de l'Évangile se ressourcent chez eux pour porter aux autres la richesse de parole et d'oeuvres de l'Église. C'est la perspective qui domine dans *Ecclesia in Africa* et aussi dans d'autres documents officiels de l'Église.

Même dans une pastorale de paroisse et de communautés chrétiennes établies, il peut être bon, à certains moments, de reprendre les démarches de la première évangélisation, de repartir à la découverte des gens. Leur vie est comme un livre scellé. Après dix-sept ans de fréquentation d'un quartier de Bangui, j'avais l'impression de n'avoir même pas encore fini de lire la première page.

WOMEN ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE XXIst CENTURY: HOPES AND FEARS

Eleonora Barbieri Masini

(Talk given by Eleonora Barbieri Masini, at the SEDOS Seminar, held on 13th October 1995, at the Brothers of the Christian Schools).

Introduction

After forty years of efforts within the United Nations frame women have gone a long way. The awareness process - at the level of both Government and Non-Governmental Organisations - can be clearly traced from Mexico 1965 to Copenhagen 1975, and from Nairobi 1985 to Beijing 1995. This awareness and gradual recognition of women is evident in all nation States and societies. One need only recall the presence in Beijing of women from even the most traditional Islamic countries to visualise the importance of the long route traced by women and its achievements. The visibility of women can no longer be denied whatever the society and its principles, roles and value systems. Women are also more visible in the Catholic Church than they have ever been.

1. The Situation of Women at the End of the 20th Century

Over and beyond this affirmation and the fact that women can no longer be ignored (a trend that is also irreversible), the situation of women has not improved all that much in recent decades. Despite all the effort, we still know too little of the situation of women and how they live their everyday life. A few data may be useful in this regard.

Most of the women of the world are concentrated in the developing countries, as emerges clearly from data all over the world.

There is a general global trend for women to live longer than men, with a consequent increase in the number of older women (beyond 60). In some countries, this does not hold at present, but certainly in the long term we can see that female life expectancy is tending to grow more than that of men.

Female life expectancy exceeds that of males in many countries, with women living on average seven years longer than men (in Eastern Europe twelve years longer for reasons pertaining to men's health and wars and in other developed countries and Central Asia between six and eight years). In other parts of the world, for example, Latin America and the Caribbean region, Central, Eastern and Western Asia, male and female life expectancy is about the same. However, in many developing countries, life expectancy for both men and women is much lower than it is in the rest of the world. In Sub-Sahara, life expectancy is 54 years for women and 51 for men, and in countries such as Uganda and Zambia even below 50. There is also a very minor difference between the life expectancy of men and women in certain Asian countries, for example Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Female infant mortality continues to be higher in some countries, China and possibly others, although infant mortality has decreased virtually everywhere. In some cases maternal mortality is still high, due to the lack of maternity care. In 1988 it was 360 deaths per 100.000 births in Northern Africa, 690 in Sub-Sahara Africa and 570 in Southern Asia. Mortality related to child bearing is high: more than half a million women are estimated to die each year for lack of adequate reproductive health care. Added to this, the

high level of anaemia of women, and especially girls, in developing countries particularly in Northern Africa, Sub-Sahara Africa and Southern and South-Eastern Asia. The greatest risk is for adolescent girls for whom the maternal and infant mortality rate is higher than that of women over twenty.

In this very brief description of the situation of women and their health, reference must inevitably be made to AIDS and to the threat it represents for women's health.

The World Health Organisation estimates that 16 million adults and one million children have already been infected with HIV. In 1994, 40 per cent of the estimated cases of HIV infected were women. The same source estimates that, by the year 2000, the number of infected women will be equal to that of men, with 10-15 million newly infected expected mostly in developing countries. The main victims belong to the age cohorts between 15 and 49 and live in urban areas. This is indeed a serious situation for women however one looks at women's advancement in terms of recognised rights and accepted laws.

On the much debated issue of fertility, the total fertility rate is slowly declining all over the world. By total fertility rate we mean the estimated average number of children born to each woman in the fertility patterns of a given period. At the moment the fertility age of women is calculated between 15 and 49 years of age. Total fertility rates have declined in recent years in all developed and developing countries (significantly in Latin America) the exceptions being the Sub-Sahara region and less so Southern Asia. This applies even to India, where the total fertility rate dropped from 5.3 in 1970 to 3.6 in 1992. According to the Population Reference Bureau, in the period between 1980 and 1985, the total fertility rate in India decreased to 5.9 from 6.7 and in Mauritania from 6.1 to 5.4. There was also a decline in Zambia, and Zimbabwe but not in Nigeria, Zaire and Ethiopia. Generally speaking, the decline in the total fertility rate is visible, although slow, and can be expected to have a very important impact in the long term.

Women's literacy is an area, like infant mortality, where the most progress has been made at the world level. Improvement is particularly evident in Latin America which has developed extensive programmes (although more recently the debt crisis has provoked a reduction in the funds allocated to health and education). Wherever there is a high rate of illiteracy, there is a big gap between boys and girls, the rate of the latter being 25 per cent higher or more. Illiteracy is high for older women in all developing countries. The illiteracy of women over 25 years of age is usually twice or more that of younger women in the 15-24 years cohort; that of women over 40 usually 50 per cent and even 70 per cent higher than that of younger women in Africa and Asia. As a global data, it is sufficient to recall that 130 million children today do not have access to primary education and that, of these, a great number are girls.

In evaluating literacy it is important to distinguish between enrolment and attainment (completion of each level of education). This can be difficult, especially in developing countries. It is worrying to see that in some countries the number of illiterates, men and women, even increased between 1980 and 1995, due to wars, economic adjustment and declining international assistance. We see this in some Latin American and Eastern European countries.

These few data on education show how strong the needs are, and how certain groups, already suffering under the impact of other events, are also penalised in this area, in particular older women, women in situations of war, children.

2. Women and the Family

We have briefly described the situation of women at the end of the twentieth century. It is equally important to examine the situation of women at the level of the family, which is the main social unit within which women live.

There are some phenomena that are world-wide: smaller families, delayed child bearing, increasing numbers of women-headed households. The decrease in family size is naturally more marked in the developed regions where the average family size was as low as two and a half people in 1990 (with respect to more than three in 1970). In Latin America family size decreased from over five (1970) to 4.5 (1990), from over 5.5 to just under 5 in Southeast Asia, and from over 5 to 3.5 in Eastern Asia. The only regions in which there has been no decrease in family size are: Oceania, Southern and Western Asia and North Africa. There has been a very minor decrease in Sub-Sahara Africa, where average family size is still slightly over 5. Given the significant decrease in family size already in the period between 1970 and 1980, this is clearly a persistent trend.

Delay in the bearing of the first child may not appear statistically significant, but it is nonetheless another important long-term trend, that has been evident in the developed countries for some years. The same phenomenon is clearly now starting in the developing countries. Whereas the first child used to be born at around 18-19 years of age, women are now having their first child at 20-21. This applies less in some countries, for example in the Sub-Sahara region or Bangladesh, where girls marry as early as 15 years of age. In many Asian and also African countries, marriage and the first pregnancy are now occurring at a later age. As mentioned earlier, adolescent pregnancy is much more dangerous than later pregnancy and carries the greatest risk in terms of maternal and infant mortality.

The increase in the number of women-headed households is another important change in relation to the family. The trend is certainly evident in developed countries but also in developing countries, first and foremost Latin America and the Caribbean region. The dual change in these regions from extended to nuclear (and therefore more vulnerable) family, and from rural to urban environment, have further reinforced the trend toward women-headed households. In the developed countries the trend is due to marriage breakdowns and the increasing separation and divorce rate; in the developing world this is not necessarily the case, the major causes being migration and abandonment. The world trend in this area is towards 30 per cent of all households headed by women.

3. Women and Work

The number of women in the labour market has certainly increased in the last twenty years and the concentration of such women in Asia (about 60 per cent of all women in the world in the labour force) and specifically in Eastern Asia, is an important factor, due also to the rapid development of the newly industrialised countries in that region.

In addressing this issue it is important, however, to note that it is not easy to measure the rate of women's presence in work both in terms of participation and time. Systems for measuring participation in the labour force vary from country to country. As to measurement of time, I have found that the best approach - one that I have experimented personally - is the time budget approach, as measured by participatory observation. This is of course time-consuming and expensive but it appears to be the most accurate way of really understanding the time spent by women in work related activities, since women themselves tend to underestimate the value of their time. It is in any case now proven that women work more hours than men, if domestic work or other work connected to the household is counted. This is the first great difference between male and female work. It applies to most developed countries, including Italy and the United Kingdom (women work at least two hours more), and more dramatically so to developing countries.

It is important to note that there has been a small step also in the direction of considering female labour, the market-oriented work women do at home in household enterprises in which more than one member of the household provides unpaid work. This type of labour has also been included in the System of National Accounting but it still does not cover all the different household-based activities of women and certainly not domestic work.

What is still far from recognised is the work produced for the market by women in the so-called informal economy, work which is underpaid and lacking any form of social insurance. Many countries in the developing world but, more recently, also in the developed world are managing to ride their economic crisis thanks to such work. In developed countries the majority of part-time, underpaid and home-based workers are women.

Job segregation is another phenomenon that prevails more for women than for men. It concerns an area of labour that is mainly traditional and has yet to change: agriculture, mainly in Africa and Asia, and the service sector in developed countries, Latin America and, to some extent, Western Asia and Northern Africa. This is the area where there has been the greatest increase in women's labour, but it is limited to clerical and social activities and to catering.

Another major difference between male and female labour is related to wages. All over the world women earn less than men. In Japan and South Korea as much as 52 and 50 per cent respectively. In a few countries, for example Ireland, women earn 90 per cent of the male wage; in Australia 87 per cent, in Germany 73 per cent, in Sri Lanka 75 per cent.

Even in this area, which has been so much at the centre of debates and legislation, reality is still far from positive at the end of the 20th century.

4. Women and Media

The media are frequently challenged for their approach to women and women-related issues: it is claimed that women are represented either as victims or objects in the consumer society, that they are not sufficiently present in media programming etc. This may be the case, but it certainly does not apply to what we might call the 'underground' media, and especially the radio, that focus very much on women's interests and reach even the most remote rural areas. Dawn, ISIS and several other media networks are concentrated mostly in developing countries and are crucial in terms of their contributions to women's awareness. Were they not present the world over, the long process of awareness by women, culminating in Beijing and the Platform for Action, would have been impossible.

5. Women and the Environment

The important role played by women in relation to the environment emerged as a fact only or, rather, mainly with the Rio UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) Conference of 1992. Although women's role has always been crucial for survival, it tended to be the least visible of their activities. The preservation of trees in Nepal by the Chipko Movement, rendered visible by Vandana Shiva, is one important example. Wangari Mathai's 'crusade' in Kenya in relation to each woman planting one tree in her own courtyard to stop desertification has become emblematic of all that women do to preserve the environment. The knowledge about plants for food and medicine transmitted by women through generations has been crucial in regions such as the Amazons. The role of women in urban areas, trying to keep a small kitchen garden for their children, or the initiatives all over the world of women in urban areas in relation to waste, which is a threat to the health of their children, are some of the many examples of the important and positive action of women for the environment.

6. Women, Wars and Peace

It is especially important at this point in time, as we approach the turn of the century, to underline the suffering of women as a result of wars and revolutions and their role in coping with the hardship of such situations for their children.

The International Red Cross states that in 1992 there were 4.720 million refugees from Afghanistan, 1.730 million from Mozambique, 1.310 from Iraq, 876 thousand from Somalia, 870 thousand from

Ethiopia and many from Eastern and Central Europe. We do not have exact figures for women but there can be no doubt that they are particularly high for them as well as for children. Wars make victims of those who are already the more vulnerable members of society. In this context Elise Boulding, (*Building a Global Civic Society, Education for an Independent World*, Teachers College Columbia University, New York, 1988) has stressed the important capacity of women to build a culture of peace, to rebuild civil society from the ruins of war.

7. Women as Builders of Alternative Futures

I wish to conclude this paper by building on all that has been previously said: the situation of women at the beginning of the twenty-first century continues to be bad with the emergence of new problems, related also to family and health. Despite this, women I believe are building, often unawares, what we might call alternative societies, alternative futures.

They are building alternatives in extremely difficult situations, in the media, on environmental issues, in relation to emergencies of different origin. For this reason, I personally have set up - with the Italian Nobel Prize for neurobiology, Rita Levi Montalcini - a small network called WIN (Women's International Network) Emergency and Solidarity. The objective is to reveal how women in situations of disaster or emergency, man-made or natural, are capable, with hardly any means and no formal support, of recreating the social structures which have been destroyed, for the survival of their children. I believe that the same contribution is being made (and has been made over the generations) in silence by religious congregations all over the world. I believe that the time has come to give visibility to what women are doing in a positive and creating way for society. The discussion of rights is important but history has shown us that the results of such discussions need a good deal of time to be implemented. Hence, the importance of showing what is already being done by women for women, for children, for society as a whole. Women are marginal to decision-making. In my view, it is not even necessary to fight to change this situation. It is instead necessary to change the basic principles on which a competitive and violent society has been built. Without being noticed, and sometimes without even realising it themselves, women are undermining that society by rebuilding on the basis of principles of nurturing and solidarity.

This irreversible process is what has to be recognised. I believe this message emerged clearly in the Letter to Women by John Paul II in June 1995, prior to the Beijing Meeting.

MODERN RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS

Michael L. Fitzgerald, M.Afr.

(Talk given by Michael L. Fitzgerald, M.Afr., at the SEDOS Seminar, held on 7th November 1995, at the Brothers of the Christian Schools).

1. Introduction

The title for this contribution to the Seminar is taken from the introduction to the first volume of the Fundamentalism Project. The volume runs to almost 900 pages, and is only the first of a series of six! It is obvious then that this paper cannot hope to be complete. It can only suggest some points for reflection which may help towards a greater understanding of Islamic fundamentalism.

The directors of the Fundamentalism Project are aware that "fundamentalism" "is not always the first choice or even a congenial choice at all" as a term to describe the movements discussed. Yet it is adopted since it is convenient, and no other term has appeared to replace it. But how is "fundamentalism" to be defined? One could do worse than adopt the working definition used by Fr Arnulf Camps in Supplement n. 6 to *Among*: "In principle, fundamentalism is the action of bringing to the front 'the fundamentals' or the central and distinctive characteristics of a religious tradition, which are considered to be endangered by the change of modernistic relativisation of those values".

The editors of *Fundamentalisms Observed* present certain features of fundamentalism. They denote an active, not a passive, movement.

Fundamentalism fights back. It is militant, reacting to what is perceived as a threat to the core identity of the followers of the movement.

It fights for, defending a world view which it has inherited, by force of arms if necessary.

It fights with a certain number of key ideas which have been selected because they reinforce identity.

It fights against all opposition, whether without or within. It is therefore inclined to be impatient with compromising moderates ("wets" in the political terms of the Thatcher era in Britain).

It fights under a religious banner, i.e. under God or in the name of some transcendent reference. This is a source of great conviction in carrying out what is conceived to be a mission.

It will be noticed that "selectivity" is considered a mark of fundamentalism. It often includes an appeal to the past, as being the model for that which is genuine, but it is an idealized past. Another writer, Ashis Nandy, expresses the opinion that this return to the original core of religion is easier in the

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case of "prophetic" religions which can refer to a sacred text. In other religions, whether they are considered pantheistic or polytheistic (Hinduism) or a theistic (Buddhism) a much broader appeal has to be made in order to arouse a feeling of common commitment. Nandy insists on this because he sees as a common element in fundamentalisms the "misuse of religion in public life". This, of course, can be construed in a positive sense, as a refusal to see religion relegated to the private sphere with no impact on society. The question will be what constitutes "misuse".

A further general remark can usefully be made. Fundamentalism is not to be equated with archaism. Though some adherents to fundamentalist groups may adopt an archaic style of living, others are quite willing to use all the latest technologies. Radio and television, video-cassettes, computer programmes, will all be pressed into the service of their ideals. This also gives an international dimension to fundamentalist movements which was absent in the past.

2. Christian Fundamentalism

In considering modern religious fundamentalisms it may be best to start with Christianity, since this is where the term takes its origin. Curtis Lee Laws, the editor of a Northern-Baptist newspaper, *First The Watchman Examiner*, wrote in 1920: "A 'fundamentalist' is a person willing to 'do battle royal' for the fundamentals of the faith". Islam, the main focus of this Seminar, will be considered last, since this may facilitate the work of the discussion groups.

Nancy Ammerman discerns the following marks in North American Christian Fundamentalism. First evangelism, indicating an experience of being saved, of being 'born again'. It is on this basis that they try to make converts, to win over the 'lost'. Personal conversion is the main focus of the evangelistic message conveyed through the electronics media. The assurance for this religious experience is found in the Scriptures accepted with an unwavering faith in their inerrancy. The text, of course, has to be interpreted; hence the central role of Bible teachers and preachers who establish for the community authoritative meanings for different passages. "The more people are immersed in this fundamentalist community of discourse, the more easily they accept the Bible as completely accurate". A further feature of this fundamentalism is dispensationalism. By this is meant not only a strong expectancy for the End Times, and for the Rapture, that is the coming of Christ, but also an interest in discerning the signs of this coming. They divide history into clear-cut periods marked by climactic acts of God. The approach can be "pre-millennial", in which it is believed that Christ will come to inaugurate the struggle against evil and bring in a reign of goodness, or "post-millennial", according to which Christ will come at the end of the period of preparation, when the world is ready for him. Whatever approach is adopted, the preparation for the coming strengthens the sense of belonging to a specially chosen group and thus leads to the final characteristic of this fundamentalism, its separatist tendency. "Fundamentalists insist on uniformity of belief within the ranks and separation from others whose beliefs and lives are suspect".

Some confirmation of this analysis of Christian fundamentalism comes from a European source. Françoise Smyth-Florentin, a French Protestant biblical scholar, emphasises the importance of the 'identifying factor'. The Scripture text is deemed to produce a conversion which in turn confirms the text. Smyth-Florentin considers this a "vicious circle" in that it inhibits any exploration of the text in question. It thus contributes to another feature of fundamentalism, namely that it is characterised by a 'closed' mentality. "From the univocal nature of the text, accepted as dogma, corresponds the univocal nature of the Christian paradigm, evolving from the univocal nature of the reading".

Ammerman shows that there has been a revival of Christian fundamentalism on account of the social upheavals of the 1960's. This led on the one hand to increased organisation, to the founding of academies for teaching sound doctrine and training pastors, to developing television programmes in order to reach as many people as possible, and on the other hand to an involvement in politics. This was the time of the formation of the Moral Majority, giving its support to the New Right. Scott Appleby, in a paper read during the last Proceedings of the Asian Journey, draws attention to new alliances that have taken place in

this regard. Pentecostals and Evangelicals, who were separate, now make common cause for political ends. The movement needs a well-defined enemy. It is reactive, thriving on confrontation. Here again there is no room for compromise. "Their intolerance of tolerance is a pivotal strategy in demonstrating that their truth is absolute, self-contained, immune from error".

It will be understood that though the beliefs of Christian fundamentalists are specific to Christians, in particular their insistence on the experience of "being saved" by Christ, the way they live out and defend these beliefs is by no means peculiar to them. Some of the same characteristics of fundamentalism will be found in other religions.

3. Jewish Fundamentalism

The volume *Fundamentalisms Observed* gives two examples of Jewish fundamentalism which contrast quite starkly. One is Gush Emunim, the Bloc of the Faithful; the other is that of the Haredim, the ultra-Orthodox Jews whose name would appear to be taken from Es 66:5, "those who venerate - or tremble - at God's Word".

Gush Emunim was born at the time of the Six Days' War, either just before, in 1967, or slightly after, in 1968. The Haredim movement is older, being rooted in Hasidism but taking shape with the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union to Israel and the United States after the Second World War.

For Gush Emunim the State of Israel is a fulfilment of the messianic ideal. It is as yet only a partial fulfilment, since it has to be carried through to the establishment of the State of Israel in the whole of the Biblical Lands. For the Haredim the present State of Israel is illegitimate. Secular Zionism is completely rejected, for it is seen to compromise with modernity while the Jewish tradition is held to be far superior to anything that is non-Jewish.

Both movements are creative. The Haredim are engaged in remaking the world in defiance of the situation of modernity. They could be considered "contra-aculturative activists". Their activity is by nature "separatist", involving a considerable amount of "gate-keeping", keeping the outsiders out and the insiders in. It is remarked that this positive ignoring of the modern world is quite different from remaining ignorant of it. "The former requires a conscious choice as well as an effort and an outlay of cultural energy or resources and is only possible in the situation of modernity". Paradoxically, then, such a movement is "as dependent upon modernity as upon tradition. Modernity provides it with something to oppose and thus shapes its character".

Gush Emunim has endeavoured to forward the expansion and consolidation of the State of Israel through symbolic gestures and actions which commit the Government. It has been instrumental in the setting up of many of the settlements in the Territories. It has thus been trying to anticipate "the shape of things to come". Its activity is religiously motivated, and in this sense it competes with Zionism. Its radicalism can be seen at three levels. First, in working towards the Greater Land of Israel it disregards, as a matter of principle, Arab rights. Secondly, it too opposes secularism, trying to impose religious norms on society. Thirdly, it broadens the traditional definition of Judaism to include nationalism, so that there can be no true Jewish religion without Zionism, and no true Zionism without religion.

The Haredim tend to be a-political. They are nevertheless wooed by rival political parties and so can wield some influence, but generally they are not involved in the political arena. They stand for an absolute, and yet, existing in a pluralist world, their form of fundamentalism presents itself as an alternative. Gush Emunim, on the other hand, is political religion. It is constantly putting pressure on the Israeli Government, and yet, in a sense, it is a sep-aratist movement. With its own educational establishments, its own effective system of socialisation, it has created a counter society. It is said to operate alongside Israeli society, both dependent on it and independent of it, in fact competing with it and aspiring to lead it.

It may be that some aspects of these Jewish fundamentalist movements will have parallels in the Islamic world. But before turning to Islam some consideration could be given to Oriental religions.

4. Hindu Fundamentalism

Reference is frequently made to Hindu fundamentalism. Fr Camps took the example of India to illustrate his discussion of the phenomenon of fundamentalism. Yet one could ask whether Hindu fundamentalism, as advocated by the Viswa Hindu Panishad (VHP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is at all religious. It is much more of a nationalism appealing to religious sentiment. It can be seen as a reaction to Nehruvian secularism. This was not opposed to religion, but it included an agnostic streak: all religions should be allowed to exist side by side. Hinduism, the religion of the majority, was thus not favoured, and there developed a minority complex of the majority, a feeling of national inferiority. Further back is the historical memory of dominance by Muslims. Hence the emotive element in the broad appeal to Hinduism as the real cultural cement in India, the call for hindutva, devotion to Hinduism.

Ashis Nandy has some scathing comments on the politicisation of Hindu feeling by the VHP and BJP. Their leaders' doctrine is "third-rate Hinduism" permeated by 19th century colonial scholarship. Their type of Hindu fundamentalism, he says, avoids fundamentals! Where there is an insistence

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On texts one ends up with the formation of sects, such as Arya Samaj appealing to the Vedas, or Brahma Samaj concentrating on the Upanishads. So the BJP do not appeal to texts. Ram, for whom the destruction was carried out at Ayodyah, is presented not as a religious figure but as a national hero.

What can be noticed here is the instrumentalisation of religious motivation. Nor should one neglect the economic factor, the widening gap between rich and poor as India's industrial power develops. Political leaders are using religion to fight for a greater share of the wealth. The poor are being used as pawns, but the benefits go to the powerful.

5. Sikh Fundamentalism

Whereas religious minorities in India, in order to keep their identity, appeal to the secular character of the Constitution according to which the State should not favour one religion over another, Hindu nationalism would imply that the minorities would have to secularise, i.e. lose their religious identities. This conflict in outlook has helped to consolidate Sikh fundamentalism as a reactive phenomenon, a defence mechanism.

Sikh identity has both a doctrinal and a political dimension. Developing as an independent religion under the first guru, Guru Nanak (1469-1539), it established its own holy book, the Granth Sahib. For some Sikhs, after the death of the tenth guru the Granth remains the sole authority. Others recognise a living authority besides the holy book. Sikhs were able to establish their own State in the Punjab under Rajit Singh (1780-1839), but following the loss of power to the British many Sikhs became hinduised. This eventually brought about a reaction. In 1897 a book was written entitled Ham Hindu Nahin "We are not Hindus". Yet Hindus still do not wish to recognise Sikhs as belonging to something other than Hinduism. The political dimension has become evident in the call for a khalistan, or homeland, a "land of the pure", where Sikhs will be able to live out their corporate identity.

The Sikh religion is intrinsically pluralistic in outlook. It allows the validity of all revelations since it holds that the Divine cannot be exhausted in any single revelation. Yet Sikh fundamentalism tends to exclude this broad outlook. Dissent is not allowed. A single view representing the collective will must

prevail. For this to be achieved political power is necessary. "This implies that if Sikhs are not rulers, they must be rebels, but when they establish the "just order" and become rulers, they cannot be rebels against themselves". Fundamentalism becomes totalitarian.

Sikhs give much importance to the veneration of the Granth Sahib, and to its chant, but the fundamentalist trend appeals less to the scripture than to the traditions of the Gurus and the Martyrs. Sikhs have had to suffer much - one has only to see the gory pictures on the walls of some gurdwaras - and has had to fight for survival. It is this tradition which grounds the actions of the political activists. It has been upheld by charismatic leaders, seen in the image of the sixth and tenth gurus as saint-soldiers (sant-sipâhî). Such was Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (1947-1984), killed in the attack by the Indian military on the Golden Temple. He rallied his followers through speeches which were both revivalist - looking back in selective fashion to the teachings and practice of the Gurus - and futurist - looking forward to the establishment of a Sikh State. It is interesting to note that he had the support of the All India Sikh Students Federation and also received financial help from well-to-do Sikhs in India and abroad. This reminds me of the romantic appeal of a United Ireland which aroused support for the I.R.A. among Irish-Americans. It must be emphasised that not all Sikhs, as not all Irish, approved of the violent methods of the nationalist fundamentalists.

6. Buddhist Fundamentalism

According to Yukako Matsuoka, "if the term fundamentalism can be used at all in Buddhism, it might apply only to parts of Theravada Buddhism", that is to the Buddhism of the Ancients found in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. The reason for this is that Theravada Buddhism has a body of ancient texts, sutras and vinayas (precepts) to which to refer, whereas for Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddhism of the Greater Vehicle spread from China to Japan in particular, the early texts are not so important and have been supplemented by later compositions. There are, nevertheless, some groups that insist on the importance of certain sutras, for instance the Lotus Sutra. A further reason why the Zen form of Mahayana Buddhism should not be fundamentalist is its attitude towards truth. There can be no fundamental position to refer to, since truth is to be realised, not grasped. If Shinto is considered to be relativistic and tolerant, admitting both this and that, then Zen is beyond relativism, since it admits neither this nor that and relativism itself has to be relativised.

What is developed is a religious ideology. Buddhism as it has been lived in Sri Lanka is demythologised, purified of its Hindu elements except for those that can serve a purpose.

Turning then to Theravada Buddhism, an example of fundamentalism can be found in modern Sri Lanka. Several features already noticed in other forms of fundamentalism can be observed. There is the influence of a charismatic leader, David Hevavitarana (1864-1933). Taking the name of Anagarika Dharmapala (The homeless Guardian of the Dharma), he founded the Mahabodhi Society of Colombo in order to spread a knowledge of Buddhist texts. Anagarika Dharmapala was known in the West, since he took part in the first World Parliament of Religions, at Chicago, in 1893.

In the teachings of Dharmapala an ambivalent attitude to the West is noted. Its immorality is attacked while at the same time the morality of Christian missionaries is adopted. In fact the influence of Victorian missionary Protestantism is strongly evident. In fact it can be said that this modern Theravada Buddhism, a Buddhism of revival and reformation, is based on historical roots but has been fashioned within the context of the Westernisation of European colonialism.

What is developed is a religious ideology. Buddhism as it has been lived in Sri Lanka is demythologised, purified of its Hindu elements except for those that can serve a purpose. Thus Buddhist festivals and the pilgrimage to the Temple of the Tooth are maintained since they can help to reinforce the sense of Buddhist culture. Similarly the myth of Sri Lanka being the island of Dhamma is preserved

since this can serve a nationalistic goal. Here is the clue. This ideology, constructed through a selective simplification of rules and rites, has as its aim the restoration of Sinhalese national pride. It therefore leads to a drawing of lines, between Buddhist and non-Buddhist Sinhalese, between Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese.

The ideas developed by Dharmapala were used in the political sphere, in the post-colonial period, by Bandanaraika and by his wife after him. Buddhism was to be restored to its rightful place, being declared the State religion, while Sinhalese was declared the national language. This obviously aroused opposition from other Sri Lankans, Tamils and Muslims, an opposition aggravated by competition in the economic sphere. Here the explosive question of identity rears its head: Sinhalese Buddhists feel threatened by religious and ethnic differences, Christianity, considered as something foreign, and the Tamil Hindus. "The fundamentalistic response to the threat is couched in terms of a rhetoric of persecution aimed to produce a sense of unity against a common enemy". Sinhalese Buddhism has thus, to a certain extent, been transformed into a "civil religion". It has been shaped into a political tool. "The narrowly ideological nature of fundamentalism means that it is not religious in the classical sense of that term, but rather a variant of a secular faith couched in religious language". This severe statement of Swearer with regard to fundamentalism in Sri Lanka could perhaps be applied to other forms of fundamentalism.

7. Islamic Fundamentalism

Turning finally to Islamic fundamentalism, a few general remarks can first be made. First, the appeal to a past ideal as a model for the present ordering of society is nothing new in Islam. Throughout Islamic history there have been numerous examples of Islamic fundamentalism of this kind. One could think of the Almohads, the Fulani jihads in West Africa, the rise of Wahhabism, to mention only a few. What is new, I think, is what anthropologists would call "enlargement of scale". Whereas the movements mentioned were confined to particular areas and hardly impinged on the rest of the Islamic world, today we see an internationalisation and globalisation of fundamentalism. Networking is the order of the day.

Secondly the selective aspect of fundamentalism is apparent. There is a call for society to be regulated according to the shari'a without perhaps taking into account the complicated nature of the shari'a as a construction dating much later than the period set up as a model.

Thirdly, there is an evident anti-Western trend. The West is accused of corruption. It is held responsible for economic and political failures. Islam is hailed as the solution.

Yet, fourthly, modern Islamic fundamentalism is not primarily the accomplishment of those with little experience of the West. It has been shown that many activists within the jama'ât islamiyya in Egypt are science graduates, a number of whom have studied in the West. The Muslim Brothers have always been willing to use modern technology to further their aims.

In the fifth place, and finally, Islamic fundamentalist movements are concerned with Muslims rather than with non-Muslims. This was true in the past. The wars of the Almohads, the Fulani jihads, the puritanical drives of the Wahhabi, were all directed against Muslims considered not to be authentic Muslims. The same is true in modern times. To give just one example, the Society of Muslims formed by the Egyptian Shukri Mustafa in the wake of the Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb, applied the principle of al-takfir wa'l-hijra. It asserted the right to declare other Muslims unbelievers (kuffâr) and the need to withdraw (hijra) from Egyptian society considered as jâhiliyya, ignorance and barbarism.

Rather than try to present a panorama of Islamic fundamentalist movements it may be interesting to compare and contrast two movements that have arisen in this century and are still active, Tabligh and Jamaat-i-islam.

Tabligh was founded in the mid-1920's by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944), a graduate of Deoband. Jamaat-i-Islam was founded in 1941, before the partition of India, by Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1975), who was not a traditional religious scholar ('ālim) but who was well known as the editor of a monthly magazine dedicated to the exegesis of the Qur'an (Tarjuman al-Qur'an).

Both movements relied on a selective retrieval of the past, based on a literalist interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith. They both displayed hostility towards Islamic liberalism. Yet there was a difference in their goal. Maududi was working for a totally Islamic system of life and this he felt could only be attained with the establishment of an Islamic State. Ilyas aimed at the moral and spiritual uplift of individual believers so that they could live an integral Islamic life whether an Islamic State existed or not.

The difference in goal is reflected also in the organisation of the movements. Maududi's support came mainly from the educated middle classes. The Tabligh is much more of a grass-roots movement. The Jamaat-i-Islam has developed in Pakistan into a modern type political party, highly structured and hierarchical. It has links with similar groups in other Muslim countries, such as the Rifah Partesi in Turkey and with the Islamic National Front in Sudan. Tabligh has also international connections, indeed it is an international movement, but it is much more free-flowing and a-political. It is a da'wa movement which aims to purify Islam. In its first phase, in India, it could be considered a response to Hindu revivalist movements. It strove to strengthen Islamic identity by ridding Islamic practice of Hindu accretions. Later its activists would try to lead Muslims away from Westernised habits considered incompatible with Islam. It has operated with "light troops", groups of ten who would go out on missions and then come back and share their experiences. The mass gatherings of the Tabligh are important for motivating the members.

Thirdly, there is an evident anti-Western trend. The West is accused of corruption. It is held responsible for economic and political failures. Islam is hailed as the solution.

The Jamaat-i-Islam makes a distinction between Westernisation, which it opposes, and modernisation, held to be acceptable. By Westernisation is understood certain features of modern society in the West, the breakdown of the family, sexual laxity, but also the primacy of reason over revelation, and above all the marginalisation of religion. In the Islamic State, as advocated, religion plays a dominant role, but at a price. As Mumtaz Ahmad remarks, "one of the characteristics of 'political religion' is that although it retains religion as the basis of legitimacy, its religious content tends to become increasingly instrumental".

What characterises the Tabligh, and perhaps qualifies it to be considered as a fundamentalist movement, is that it represents a closed system. No encouragement is given to read any literature other than that of the movement itself, nor is there an openness to criticism from within. The original methods continue to be followed without change. Yet, because of its a-political stance, it can be said to have favoured secularism, for it has drained off energies which might otherwise have been channelled into political action. It might be interesting to examine whether the activities of the Tabligh among Muslims in the West will favour advocacy of the shari'a for Muslim communities or the acceptance of a pluralist society. In other words, will revived religious fervour create support for more militant fundamentalism?

8. Conclusion

This leads to a final quotation which can be taken as an open-ended conclusion since it contains an implicit question about the way to react to fundamentalism.

The sheer physical power of the modern State to suppress opposition assures that it has the ability to affect the development of fundamentalism and, under certain conditions, to curtail its effectiveness. However, a policy of suppression without nuance is less effective and perhaps even counter-productive in areas in which a generalised popular return to religion has forged a broad sympathy for even the most militant of fundamentalists. In addition, in instances in which non-violent expressions of fundamentalism

have been allowed to become a visible and credible part of the political system, the appeal of the violent marginal groups has been reduced.
