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Our February issue opens with a conference on Muslim-Christian Understanding given last summer by Cardinal FRANCIS ARINZE. In his excellent exposition, the Cardinal summarises the main principles that should guide such interreligious dialogue today. –

Fr MIKE HANN, CICM, a general councillor of the Congregation, is just back from a visit to their new mission in Mongolia. In his interesting report about this unknown country, Fr Mike tells us of the many difficulties that face the State and the very small missionary Church in a new, post-communist Mongolia. –

Fr JAMES CHUKWUMA OKOYE, CSSp, is a professor at the CTU in Chicago. He describes how Africa is awakening to a new and hopeful missionary consciousness. In the resulting, new, exchange of gifts and experiences, he believes, Africa has a great contribution to make to the Universal Church in Mission. The Dialogue between Churches will greatly benefit all engaged in it. –

The visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Cuba, was a historic experience for the Church in Cuba. Shortly before the visit, the EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF CUBA addressed the people, inviting them all to reconciliation and new hope for the future. –

The KYOTO CONFERENCE on Climate and Environment, held last December in Japan, focused once again our awareness on the issue of global warming. From his article it becomes evident, that a serious theology of the environment is necessary to awaken people to their own role in actively preserving. –

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CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Cardinal Francis Arinze

Talk given at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 5 June 1997).

Introduction: a theme very relevant

Christians form about 33 per cent of the total world population. Muslims number around 18 per cent. That means that Christians and Muslims are more than a half of humanity. Moreover, theirs are the two religions most widespread geographically.

It matters very much, not only to Islam and Christianity, but also to the world, how the followers of these two religions relate to one another and how they envisage these relationships at this turning point in history when the 21st century is almost at the door.

I am therefore very grateful to this renowned Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding for inviting me to propose to you some reflections on "Christian-Muslim Relations in the 21st Century".

What kind of relations do Muslims and Christians want in the next century? What are some of the obstacles and challenges to be reckoned with? And what steps can be taken to overcome the obstacles or meet the challenges? These will be the three steps in our reflections.

I. DESIRABLE RELATIONS

Christians and Muslims have in all sincerity to ask themselves what kind of relations they really want in the forthcoming century. A clear vision of the desirable target is necessary for an adequate assessment of how it can be reached. May I make five suggestions on the kind of Christian-Muslim relations to be hoped for and worked for.

1. Better Knowledge of the Other

Knowledge of the other is the first requirement if one is to hope to build up relationships that will be respectful and fruitful. Goodwill is necessary, but it is not enough. A planned study of the other religion is required if interreligious relationships are not to stagnate at the superficial level of generalizations and *clichés*. Those who are in positions of leadership or responsibility in each religion have a greater obliga-

tion than their co-religionists to undertake a deeper study of the other religion.

There are occasions or celebrations which favour mutual knowledge between Christians and Muslims. Examples are friendly visits and participation at celebrations that mark major events in one's life such as the birth of a child, marriage, religious initiation and death. It is instructive to listen to friends of the other religion explain the rites and cultural manifestations on these occasions. Christians and Muslims can inform one another how they approach their period of fasting and how they celebrate their major religious feasts.

The type of knowledge outlined in the preceding paragraph can be obtained simply through open-minded conversations. There is need also for more specialized study in the domains of history, sociology, politics and also the religious sciences. Such studies are not new. They have formed part of university curricula for decades. What is new is a greater spirit of collaboration between Christians and Muslims.

I want here to pay tribute to this Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. In a few years it has achieved much. I can also mention the academic exchanges which have been going on for nearly ten years between the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Ankara University and the exchanges recently inaugurated between Al Zitouna University in Tunis and the Gregorian and Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome.

2. Acceptance of the Other and Respect for Differences

Correct information about the other will show Christians and Muslims that their two religions do share many beliefs. Examples are belief in one God, mighty and merciful; acceptance of the role of prophets; belief in the eschatological realities of judgement, reward and punishment. There are nevertheless fundamental differences. For Christians belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation completely transform the relationships between God and humankind. For Muslims the

place given to the Qur'an as final revelation and the role given to Muhammad as the seal of the prophets puts a special stamp upon Islam.

Also in the moral sphere there are points of convergence and divergence. There is common concern that religion occupy an adequate place in society, that materialism be overcome, that the institution of the family be upheld, that sexual permissiveness be opposed. Yet the concepts of law and society, of marriage and the family do not fully coincide.

Authentic dialogue demands that Muslims and Christians accept one other with all their similarities and differences in matters theological, moral and cultural. And respect for the other should follow. "Only in mutual acceptance of the other and in the resulting mutual respect, made more profound by love, resides the secret of a humanity finally reconciled", said Pope John Paul II at a Prayer Vigil for Peace in Europe especially in the Balkans at Assisi on 9 January, 1993 (Address, n. 4, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly English edition 13 Jan. 1993, p. 2). The Catholic Bishops of the world, gathered at the Second Vatican Council in 1965, had earlier stressed the need to respect and love those who think differently from us, if we want to enter into dialogue with them. "Respect and love", they said, "ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political, and religious matters, too. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them" (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 28).

3. *Actual Engagement in Dialogue*

When Muslims and Christians come to know one another and learn to accept and respect one another, they are well poised to engage in one form of Christian-Muslim dialogue or the other. Four forms of interreligious relations are generally identified. There is first the whole area of relations across religious frontiers at the level of daily life in the family, in the workplace or in other social activities. Here there is opportunity for interaction without religion necessarily being discussed at all. Secondly, there is interreligious co-operation such as assistance for refugees or victims of disasters. Dialogue of theological discourse is a third form. Finally, there is the exchange of religious experience together with the meeting of spiritualities.

If Christian-Muslim relations are not to remain an academic exercise, openness to others and readiness to engage in one or other form of co-operation are expected of a sincere Muslim or Christian.

4. *Joint Witness to Shared Values*

There are some people who accuse the religions of being at the root of rivalries and conflicts all along the corridors of history. Often such people regard themselves as non-committed from the religious point of view, adopting what they would call a humanist position.

They are sceptical about any overall positive contributions which the religions may have made. They think that the more the religions are excluded from private or at least public life, the greater hope there will be for cohesion and harmony

No serious Christian or Muslim will accept such a view. But it is not enough to reject the accusation. It is also necessary for Muslims and Christians, and indeed other believers, to live and interact in such a way that every person of good will will see the falsity of such a deformation of the religions.

Christians and Muslims are called upon to develop such harmonious relations in the 21st century that while maintaining their differing religious identities, they can show the world that they share respect for God and that they believe that human conduct should follow God's will and law. Christianity and Islam both consider that they have a universal message, to be conveyed through Christian mission or Islamic *da'wah*. This right to spread one's religion should be upheld, as long as it is carried out with due respect for human dignity. No harm should be done to others in the name of religion. The Golden Rule which both religions teach instructs one to treat others as one would like to be treated.

Genuine religion is not the cause of hatred, tension or violence. Every religion worthy of the name teaches love of others. Christians and Muslims should not just coexist. They should also co-operate to build up society. If their leaders do not motivate them to collaborate, should we not admit that such leaders have failed?

5. *Joint Promotion of Peace*

Among the values shared between Christianity and Islam, peace deserves special mention. Both religions stress the pre-eminence of peace. "Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you" (Jn 14:27), said Jesus to his Apostles the night before he suffered and died. And after his Resurrection when he appeared to them he generally began with the greeting: "Peace be with you" (cf. Jn 20:19, 21, 26). St Paul calls Christ "our peace" (cf. Eph 2:14). For Muslims, Peace is one of the Beautiful Names of God. Does this fact not give added significance to the customary greeting among

Muslims: *al-salamu 'alaykum?*

Peace is necessary for individuals, within the same religious community, between two or more religions, between peoples and between States. Christians and Muslims have a duty to promote this tranquillity of order. No right-thinking Christian or Muslim today should support crusades or holy wars. Nor should they allow their conduct to be tainted by racist considerations or give way to discrimination on the basis of race, colour, condition of life or religion (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, n. 5).

The Second Vatican Council exhorts Muslims and Christians to “make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom” (*Nostra Aetate*, cf. n. 3). Pope John Paul II, addressing various representatives of the World Conference on Religion and Peace at the opening of their Sixth World Assembly in Rome on 3 November 1994, insisted on the necessity of a joint commitment to the promotion of peace: “Today, religious leaders must clearly show that they are pledged to the promotion of peace precisely because of their religious belief” (Address, n. 2, in *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 16 Nov. 1994, p. 2).

Christian and Muslim parents, leaders and educators should be so convinced of the necessity of a sincere commitment to peace, beginning with peace between Muslims and Christians, that they will be able to effectively share these convictions in the family, at school, over the mass media, and especially in mosques and churches. It is good to offer condolences to families which have lost some of their members through violence sometimes perpetrated in the name of religion. But this is not enough. It is above all necessary to educate one's coreligionists to accept and respect others and to co-operate with them to promote peace. This dimension of Christian-Muslim relations is most important for the century which humanity is about to enter.

II. OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

The road to the attainment of the above-mentioned objectives is neither easy nor smooth. There are indeed obstacles and challenges. Let us mention a few.

1. *The Weight of the Past*

The present and the future also depend to some extent on the past. A community without memory is a community without a future. Relations between Christians and Muslims have not always been peaceful and serene. Tension, conflicts, crusades and holy wars, have not been unknown. Nor should one forget the impact of colonialism or perceptions of it.

The Second Vatican Council admits this and pleads for a new spirit:

“Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding” (*Nostra Aetate*, n. 3). Pope John Paul II

speaking to 80,000 Muslim Youth in Casablanca stadium on 19 August 1985, made similar remarks and urged a healing of such historical memories.

“Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political, and religious matters, too. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them”
(*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 28).

2. *Lack of Self-criticism*

Christians are taught by their religion to examine their conscience each day, especially in the evening, to accept responsibility for any wrongs they may have done, and to repent and beg God for forgiveness. The supreme act of Christian worship, the Eucharistic sacrifice, always begins with such a penitential rite. In the sacrament of Penance the Christian who has sinned accepts responsibility, confesses and receives forgiveness. I would like to ask my Muslim friends whether in Islam there is a similar practice.

Self-criticism is not a sign of weakness. It is really a proof of maturity. It can help to consolidate and deepen relations between individuals and between communities. With regard to Muslim-Christian relations, where self-criticism is lacking, there is a tendency to be content with criticising the others. This is a real obstacle to constructive and lasting relations.

3. *Manipulation of Religion by Politics*

Occasionally, there is the temptation for religions to allow themselves to be used by politicians and even a greater temptation for politicians to manipulate reli-

gion for their own ends. Since religious convictions are among the strongest of motivations, an unscrupulous politician may be tempted to use religion to attain political goals. It has happened in history that religion has been abused to motivate people to fight wars which have as their real causes political, economic, or racial considerations. This is sad. It is deplorable. It does no service to either religion or politics.

It has also happened in some parts of the world that governments or political parties, in order to strengthen their influence or to weaken a particular religious or political group, have given encouragement to sectarian or extremist movements.

Reflection can make Christian and Muslim leaders agree that politicians have their own goals and their own methods of achieving them. It should be required of such politicians that they respect the freedom of religions to determine their own goals and their activities in both the sphere of worship and that of service of neighbour.

4. Religious Fanaticism or Extremism

Muslim-Christian relations are challenged and obstructed by religious fanaticism or extremism. The religious extremist or fanatic may be motivated by a desire to see his or her religion return to what is considered its original and pure state. But the extremist generally pursues this self-assigned goal by a rigid application to our times of practices and observances which were part and parcel of a different age and culture.

Extremism is often characterized by an intransigent attitude towards co-religionists and others who hold different views or who have another concept of society. This frequently leads to violence. Some extremists go further, denying the right to religious freedom to those whose religious convictions differ from their own, and even excluding them from salvation.

Who does not see that this is no way to promote Christian-Muslim relations?

5. Different Approaches to Human Rights and Especially to Religious Freedom

A difficulty in Christian-Muslim relations is constituted by different approaches to the theme of human rights and especially to freedom of religion.

Christians see human beings as having been created in God's image and likeness. They are brothers and sisters of Christ, the Son of God made man. The Incarnation has ennobled the whole of humanity. This is the real foundation of human dignity. Moreover, Christ died on the cross to redeem all humanity. So we

can say that love of God passes through love of neighbour.

The Muslim vision is different. The human person is the servant of God, and remains so even when receiving God's call to be caliph or God's vice-regent, among created things. This vision finds expression in the names used. Many Muslim names begin with 'Abd (servant) followed by one of the numerous names for God.

Christians see man as created by God with certain inalienable rights. Prominent among these is the right to religious freedom. "This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits" (*Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 2).

Again the Muslim perception is somewhat different. Indeed, some predominantly Muslim countries have their reservations regarding the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which they see as an expression of Western culture. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, proclaimed in Paris in 1981, does contain an article on the right to religious freedom (art.13). It is however very short, merely stating: "Every person has freedom of belief and freedom of worship in conformity with his belief: 'to you your religion, to me mine' (Q. 109:6)". The following article treats of the right to summons (*da 'wa*) and to proclamation (*balagh*), but the content of the article remains vague. It is not clear whether or not people of religions other than Islam have the right to propagate their religion. There is certainly no mention of a right to change one's religion.

So the question of human dignity and the rights which flow from it is one on which Christians and Muslims who have learned to know and trust one another can exchange views in the hope of greater service to the human person and therefore to the world.

6. Reciprocity

The right to religious freedom applies to individuals and also to religious communities. It includes both the right to practice a religion and the right to share that religion with others. The exercise of this right should have no territorial boundaries. It applies to all countries whether they are predominantly Christian or predominantly Muslim. A religion should not ask for religious freedom for its followers in one country while denying the same right to other believers in a

country where it is the religion of the majority. This is what reciprocity is all about.

On 21 June 1995, the day on which the first mosque was being inaugurated in Rome, Pope John Paul II spoke of the necessity of reciprocity in the General Audience. "A grand mosque is being inaugurated in Rome today. This event is an eloquent sign of the religious freedom recognized here for every believer. And it is significant that in Rome, the centre of Christianity and the See of Peter's Successor, Muslims should have their own place of worship with full respect for their freedom of conscience. On a significant occasion like this, it is unfortunately necessary to point out that in some Islamic countries similar signs of the recognition of religious freedom are lacking. And yet the world, on the threshold of the third millennium, is waiting for these signs! Religious freedom has now become part of many international documents and is one of the pillars of contemporary society" (in *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 28 June 1995, p. 11).

I have listed several obstacles to Christian-Muslim co-operation. Perhaps it is better and healthier to regard them as challenges, because this latter way of looking at them gives some hope that they can be overcome. This is going to be our third and final consideration.

III. WAYS OF MEETING THE CHALLENGES

1. *Healing of Historical Memories*

The history of Muslim-Christian relations should be studied in all sincerity and truth. Past wrongs should be accepted and regretted. Pardon should be sought and given. Only then will reconciliation be possible. As I wrote to Muslims at the end of Ramadan in 1995, without true reconciliation we cannot commit ourselves together for the good of our co-religionists and of the world.

Such a sincere study of the past also includes paying tribute to a religious community for its contribution to culture and science where that is the case. For example, Arabs, most of them Muslims, contributed to Western civilization. Christian communities were in the Middle East for centuries before the arrival of Islam and Arabic culture owes much to them. To accept the past is a condition for facing the future. An Institute such as this Center can promote studies to make all sides more aware of such co-operation in the past. Models for the future can thus be suggested.

2. *Learning to Exercise Self-criticism*

The difficult exercise of self-criticism has to be learned. Pope John Paul II wants the Catholic Church to examine her collective conscience on the failings of her children in this millennium, in preparation for the Year 2000. He says that the Church "should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness and scandal. Although she is holy because of her incorporation into Christ, the Church does not tire of doing penance: before God and man she always acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, n. 33).

If Muslims will perform a similar exercise, mutual relations between them and Christians will become less arduous. As has been said above, self-criticism is a sign of transparency and strength. It is encouraging that a liaison committee established two years ago between the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and four major world Islamic Organisations is able to help both sides to engage in such self-examination. This is to be recommended to other Christian-Muslim working groups.

3. *Liberate Religion from Political Manipulation*

Christian and Muslim leaders cannot remain indifferent in front of the manipulation of religion by politicians. Religion should be allowed necessary freedom to concentrate on beliefs, ritual and a rule of life. God is at the centre of all genuine religion. Politicians and governments should be impartial towards all religions. Religious leaders who succumb to the temptation of allowing their religion to be abused and made an instrument by a political party will have to reflect on the negative consequences, including the probability that that religion is likely to become a despised widow when that political party is no longer in power. At times it will be useful for religious and political leaders to meet and discuss such questions.

4. *Facing the Phenomenon of Religious Extremism and Promoting Religious Freedom*

Muslims and Christians have no choice but to accept that we are in a world in which religious plurality is a fact. "There is no compulsion in religion" as the Qur'an asserts (Q 2,256). Religion is therefore to be proposed, not imposed. Religious unity or compliance

arrived at as a result of force — physical, psychological, economic, social or otherwise — is not worthy of the human person. And it is not a fit offering to God. Religious fanatics absolutely need conversion.

As for those who engage in violence in the name of religion, this is a major insult to God and to religion. “No one can consider himself faithful to the great and merciful God who in the name of the same God dares to kill his brother. Religion and peace go together: to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction”, said Pope John Paul II to the World Conference on Religion and Peace (in *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, 16 Nov 1994, n. 2, p. 2).

Farseeing religious leaders and wise statesmen are needed to convince people that freedom of religion is one of the dearest of human rights and that no one should be prevented from exercising this right, provided that the just rights of other people are not violated.

5. *Promotion of Development and Justice*

Poverty, underdevelopment, justice and corruption are fertile grounds for the rise or growth of extremist religious tendencies. In such societies those who reject the present situation, or who oppose the government in power, may find it easy to get the support of the suffering poor who are the vast majority, by making appeal to extravagant religious claims. The temptation that the answer to these situations of suffering is a return to what is presented as an original or pure form of a certain religion — whether Christianity or Islam — is an easy one.

The effective response is not a crackdown on religious fanatics. It is rather a joint commitment of Christians and Muslims, and other citizens, to justice, development, sound economic programmes, honesty in private and public life, and willingness on the part of the rich to show serious solidarity with the poor. Peace stands on the pillars of love, truth, development, justice and solidarity.

6. *More Attention to the Spiritual Dimension*

Christian-Muslim relations will make more progress in the 21st century if there is increased attention on both sides to the spiritual dimension.

Knowledge of the other religion, religious freedom, meetings and common projects are good and important. But they are not enough. Greater attention to God

is necessary. The nearer a Muslim and a Christian are to God in prayer, in openness to God’s action in them and in readiness to do his will, the nearer they will get to each other. This is another way of saying that inter-religious relations are best promoted by believers who are deeply committed in matters religious.

This means that those who want to promote greater Muslim-Christian collaboration in the next century should encourage both sides to commit themselves to deeper spiritualities in attention to God, continued conversion of the heart in growing adherence to God’s will, prayer, asceticism, sincerity of heart and love of one’s neighbour. A Christian leader and a Muslim leader who are gifted with such high voltage of spirituality are more likely to understand each other and promote good relations, than two learned people from the two religions who practice little of what they preach.

7. *Joint Concern Over the Use of the Earth’s Resources*

The experts tell us that 20 per cent of humanity consumes 80 per cent of the earth’s resources, leaving only 20 per cent to four-fifths of humanity. Moreover, certain rich countries restrain food production for the sake of balancing market prices, while there are poor countries whose inhabitants do not have enough to eat. And no one needs the experts to know that the earth’s resources can be devastated or slowly depleted by greed, carelessness and war.

Here is a rich area for Christian-Muslim collaboration in the forthcoming century in a world in which people realise more and more their interdependence. That religious attitudes of Muslims and Christians should be formed on these matters was emphasized by a Christian-Muslim colloquium organized in Rome in April last year by the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research of Amman, Jordan, and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious

Dialogue.

Respected Ladies and Gentlemen,
I have done no more than touch with the finger tips some of the desirable directions which Christian-Muslim relations can take in the 21st century. May God give us the grace that both Muslims and Christians show themselves not unresponsive to this call.

Ref. *Encounter*,

PISAI, Nov. 1997, n. 239.

Knowledge of the other religion, religious freedom, meetings and common projects are good and important. But they are not enough. Greater attention to God is necessary.

ETRE EN MISSION EN MONGOLIE

Mike Hann, cism

La Mongolie est devenue un lieu touristique très populaire. Un vol de six heures en Aeroflot nous a conduits de Moscou à Ulaanbaatar en survolant les montagnes mongoles arides, qui descendent en pente pour se perdre en d'immenses vallées tapissées de verdure. Une vue fascinante. Les passagers furent cordialement accueillis aux services d'immigration et de douane. Quant à moi, j'ai été accueilli personnellement par nos confrères. Il faisait 35 degrés Celsius et le soleil était radieux.

Un week-end inoubliable

Le festival annuel de *Naadam* qui dure trois jours avait déjà commencé. Nous nous sommes donc rendus immédiatement à la première manifestation: la course de chevaux, une course éreintante de 30 kilomètres dans les steppes. *Naadam* signifie jeux, et se rapporte plus particulièrement aux trois « jeux virils »: la lutte, la course de chevaux et le tir à l'arc. "Ces jeux ont pour but de tester la volonté, le courage, la force, l'audace et la précision visuelle de l'individu."

Chaque année, quelques semaines avant le début des festivités les familles partent en direction d'Ulaanbaatar et campent dans les steppes près de la ville. À ce qu'il paraît, il y aurait eu 15.000 participants cette année.

Le dimanche après-midi, une cérémonie de clôture pittoresque avait lieu au stade en présence du nouveau président, N. Bagabandi, et de son cabinet. Ensuite, il y avait une soirée folklorique à l'opéra avec du théâtre et un orchestre d'une vingtaine de membres jouant sur des instruments nationaux. Un week-end de juillet inoubliable pour entamer ma visite de trois semaines en Mongolie.

Cette année, *Nadam* coïncidait avec le 791ème anniversaire de la fondation du premier empire de Mongolie uni sous Gengis Khan. Il y avait aussi 76 ans que la révolution populaire passe sous influence soviétique.

Des vallées verdoyantes

La Mongolie, à peu près quatre fois le Japon et trois

fois la France, est un grand pays renfermé entre la Russie et la Chine. Elle dépend du Transsibérien pour ses contacts avec le monde extérieur. Le désert du Gobi occupe pratiquement le tiers de la Mongolie méridionale. Le pays est essentiellement un plateau avec des collines onduyantes, des pics impressionnants et d'interminables vallées verdoyantes.

La capitale Ulaanbaatar (population: 600.000) est la plus grande ville. Darkhan, la deuxième ville en importance, se trouve à quelque 200 kilomètres vers le nord. À l'ouest se situe Erdenet, la troisième ville. On estime la population du pays à quelque 2.300.000 habitants.

Des températures extrêmes

La Mongolie est un pays aux températures extrêmes. Il fait très froid en hiver (-25° à -35° C.). Par contre, pendant l'été bien trop court il fait parfois torride, avec des températures dépassant les 30° C. durant les mois de juillet et d'août. D'octobre à mars la température moyenne est en dessous de zéro. L'air est très sec et les rayons de soleil sont vifs. On compte 260 jours de soleil par an. Une courte saison de pluies s'étale de la mi juillet à septembre. Les soirées sont fraîches même en été à cause de la haute altitude. La Mongolie est un pays venteux, surtout au printemps.

Gengis Khan

Des anciens manuscrits chinois des 5ème et 4ème siècles avant J.C. parlent de tribus nomades vivant dans ce qui est maintenant la Mongolie. La naissance de Temudjin en 1162 a été un événement capital pour ces tribus. A l'âge adulte, Temudjin réussit à mettre fin à une rivalité interne datant de plus de vingt ans. En 1205 on lui conféra le titre honorifique de Gengis Khan (souverain universel). Avec des ambitions de plus en plus grandes sa cavalerie légère attaqua contre la Russie et la Chine. À sa mort en 1248, l'empire s'étendait déjà de Beijing à la mer Caspienne. Le faste de la Mongolie fut de courte durée. L'empire mongol se corrompait de plus en plus et vers 1350 il se désagrégeait déjà. Au 17ème siècle, les Chinois conquièrent une Mongolie en ruine. Elle était prête pour la rébellion.

La République Populaire de Mongolie

L'occasion se présenta enfin en 1911 quand la dynastie chinoise des Qing fut renversée. Les princes mongols déclarèrent leur indépendance. La Chine chercha à reprendre le contrôle et obligea la Mongolie d'accepter une « requête » de reprise par la Chine. Une autre occasion se présenta lors de la révolution russe de 1917. Les révolutionnaires mongols demandèrent aux communistes de leur venir en aide. Des soldats mongols et russes s'emparèrent d'Ulaanbaatar en juillet 1921. La République Populaire de Mongolie fut proclamée le 26 novembre 1924, et devint ainsi le deuxième pays communiste du monde. Ceci ne vaut que pour la Mongolie-Extérieure. La partie méridionale du pays, la Mongolie-Intérieure appartient encore toujours à la Chine. Enfin libérée de ses maîtres chinois, la Mongolie « indépendante » se retrouva bien vite sous influence soviétique.

La Mongolie

Après plus de 65 ans de domination soviétique, c'est en 1990 que la Mongolie fit effectivement ses premiers pas vers l'indépendance. Tout comme en Europe orientale, les Russes lâchèrent prise. Il s'ensuivit d'énormes manifestations en faveur de la démocratie. Le gouvernement fut obligé de démissionner et d'organiser des élections multipartites. Une nouvelle constitution fut adoptée en janvier 1992. Le nom officiel du pays changea de République Populaire de Mongolie en Mongolie.

Selon les nouvelles constitutions, le président et les 76 membres du parlement sont élus pour un terme de quatre ans. Pendant les quatre premières années d'indépendance, le PRPM (Parti Révolutionnaire du Peuple Mongol) était au pouvoir avec 70 sièges (92%) au parlement. Lors des élections de juillet 1996 l'Union de la Coalition Démocratique gagna 50 sièges et l'emporta sur le PRPM qui en gagna 25. N. Bagabandi est le nouveau président élu.

Un pays pauvre

Aujourd'hui, la Mongolie fait face aux problèmes inhérents à un changement graduel de système

gouvernemental. En effet, elle a opté pour un changement progressif plutôt que pour une brusque rupture avec le système socialiste. La situation économique décourage beaucoup de gens. Malgré les nombreuses réformes démocratiques, la transition vers le marché libre entraîne de grosses difficultés socio-économiques. Le taux de pauvreté est élevé. Beaucoup de familles et de gens pauvres vivent dans la rue. Le nombre des enfants de rue et des orphelins est alarmant.

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Les queues pour le ravitaillement d'il y a quatre ans ont disparu. En ville, la plupart des biens de consommation sont en vente dans les magasins. Les paiements en dollars sont très avantageux. Dans un bon restaurant on peut avoir un repas complet avec une variété de menus pour moins de 10 US \$. Le salaire des ouvriers mongols est très bas: dans une école secondaire un instituteur gagne à peu près 50\$ par mois (1 dollar pour 800 Togrogs).

L'économie mongole dépend des moutons, des chèvres, du bétail, des chevaux et des chameaux. De toute première importance est l'élevage des moutons aux grosses queues comme celles des castors (un entrepôt pour une substance grasse ressemblant au beurre). Il constitue les deux tiers de tout l'élevage. Les immenses prairies facilitent l'élevage. Le climat rude et sec empêche la culture de la plupart des produits agricoles. On cultive surtout le froment et les pommes de terre sur les terres arables, qui n'occupent pas plus d'un pour cent de la superficie totale.

Des signes positifs

La Mongolie est pauvre mais elle inspire confiance. Les fonctionnaires d'état sont jeunes et se dévouent aux réformes démocratiques et à l'avenir de leur pays. Ils parlent franchement des nombreux problèmes auxquels ils doivent faire face. C'est une gageure d'équilibrer les nombreux aspects positifs de leur vie traditionnelle avec ce que la modernisation a de mieux à offrir. Ce n'est pas facile.

Un réveil religieux

Opprimée sous le régime communiste, la religion avait pour ainsi dire disparu. La plupart des monastères bouddhiques ont été détruits. Du point de vue religieux, la Mongolie était devenue une nation bouddhique fortement influencée par le lamaïsme. La démocratisation des années 90 a entraîné un réveil religieux phénoménal. Selon les derniers chiffres, le conseil municipal aurait autorisé ou recensé 33 groupes religieux, rien qu' à Ulaanbaatar: 15 Églises chrétiennes (entre autres, l'Église orthodoxe russe, la dernière en date), 16 monastères bouddhiques, une mosquée islamique, et un groupe Bahai.

Contacts antérieurs

Les chrétiens nestoriens venant de Perse pénétrèrent en Chine et dans certaines parties de la Mongolie au cours des 7ème et 8ème siècles. Toutefois, ils n'ont pas eu d' impact durable sur la population locale. Le premier effort prolongé pour propager le christianisme en Mongolie-Intérieure date du 19ème siècle. Nos propres confrères CICM ont travaillé parmi les Mongols au pays des Ordos. Le séjour du Père **Mostaert** à Boro-Balgason ainsi que son travail scientifique sur la langue et la littérature mongoles sont bien connus. En 1922 la *Propaganda Fide* avait demandé à notre Congrégation de se charger de l'évangélisation de la Mongolie-Extérieure. Mais suite aux développements politiques de cette époque la première équipe CICM n'a jamais su entrer dans le pays.

10 juillet 1992

En juin 1990, le nouveau gouvernement mongol contacta le Saint-Siège pour examiner la possibilité de nouer des relations diplomatiques. Le Saint-Siège rétablit la Mongolie comme *missio sui iuris* en mars 1992, un mois après la ratification de la nouvelle constitution mongole accordant la liberté de religion. En avril de la même année, la décision de nouer des relations diplomatiques entre la Mongolie et le Saint-Siège au niveau d'une nonciature fut annoncée officiellement.

Mgr Giovanni Bulaitis, nonce apostolique de Corée, devint aussi nonce apostolique de Mongolie.

Trois missionnaires CICM, Wens **Padilla**, Robert **Goessens** et Gilbert **Sales**, arrivèrent en Mongolie le 10 juillet 1992, la veille de *Naadam*, la fête rationnelle mongole.

Vision

Son Exc. Mgr Giovanni Bulaitis a décrit la vision de l'Église catholique en Mongolie lorsqu' il remit ses lettres de créance le 9 avril 1993 à son Exc. Punsalmaagyn Ochirbat, président de la République de Mongolie. Le nonce souligna les aspects suivants de la mission de l'Église:

“L'Église a une mission spirituelle spécifique... Elle annonce et proclame le message évangélique jusqu'aux confins de la terre..., elle stimule la justice et la dignité humaine et encourage la paix à tous les niveaux de la société... L'Église s'engage donc de différentes façons, mais surtout dans les oeuvres caritatives et l'éducation”.

Mgr Bulaitis ajouta que le Saint-Siège souhaite *“que l'Église puisse collaborer avec les différentes autorités mongoles:*

– pour rétablir les valeurs religieuses et culturelles;

– en participant à des activités sociales concrètes pour le bien de la population;

– en ayant des relations amicales et harmonieuses avec les autorités et le clergé de toutes les dénominations

religieuses en Mongolie”.

Présent

La hiérarchie ecclésiastique incombe à CICM en la personne de Wens **Padilla**. Il a été nommé Supérieur de la mission et est sous la juridiction directe du Saint-Siège (Sacree Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des Peuples). Le Supérieur de la mission est aussi le Supérieur religieux du District CICM de Mongolie.

Il est indispensable de connaître les gens, d'apprécier leur culture, leur religion et leur histoire pour proclamer et inculturer l'Évangile dans un pays où le Christianisme n'a pas encore d'histoire et où la population est essentiellement bouddhiste. Un dialogue de vie commence là où l'on se rencontre et travaille ensemble. Le dialogue interreligieux et la proclamation de l'Évangile évoluent simultanément. L'Esprit est à l'oeuvre à travers l'accueil de la communauté.

A l'heure actuelle (juillet 1997) 17 missionnaires catholiques de cinq congrégations/groupes différents sont à l'oeuvre dans le pays: six CICM, trois Soeurs Missionnaires du Coeur Immaculé de Marie (ICM), quatre Missionnaires de la Charité (MC) et un prêtre diocésain coréen. Il y a plusieurs Soeurs du groupe de Mgr Lefebvre mais elles souhaitent limiter leurs contacts avec la mission locale.

Après une présence de cinq ans, l'Église compte près de cent fidèles (étrangers et autochtones) qui assistent aux services religieux en semaine et le dimanche. Il y a 40 Mongols baptisés. D'autres, pour la plupart des jeunes adultes, s'intéressent à l'Église et se préparent au baptême.

Défis

Les missionnaires travaillent avec prudence, afin de trouver la bonne voie. L'Église est jeune, et il n'est que normal qu'elle doive faire face à de nombreux défis, par exemple:

- ❖ une population à conviction religieuse essentiellement bouddhiste;
- ❖ la présence de nombreuses dénominations chrétiennes (trente) pour une population si peu nombreuse;
- ❖ un grave problème linguistique: il n'y a pas d'écrits religieux;
- ❖ des hivers parfois très durs, entravant les activités paroissiales;
- ❖ des cas de pauvreté extrême, engendrant des maux sociaux et la criminalité;
- ❖ le manque de moralité dans la société;
- ❖ l'incertitude concernant les permis de séjour prolongé pour les missionnaires et le système de quota pour les visas;
- ❖ les structures bureaucratiques et communistes encore de rigueur;
- ❖ les motivations de plus en plus matérialistes de la population;
- ❖ la désintégration de la famille.

Déclaration missionnaire

La déclaration missionnaire CICM stipule qu'en tant que membres de notre Congrégation, une Congrégation religieuse missionnaire internationale, les missionnaires

s'engagent à vivre et à proclamer la Bonne Nouvelle de l'Évangile suivant l'inspiration de notre Fondateur le Père Théophile **Verbist** et la vision de l'Église mongole.

CICM-Mongolie désire témoigner de la communion universelle en Jésus-Christ en vivant dans une communauté internationale et en travaillant en équipe. Par leur communion et leur stabilité en tant que communauté, ils veulent être un signe face à des valeurs morales et des liens familiaux qui se détériorent. Par leur célibat ils veulent être un signe dans une société désordonnée, aux relations conjugales instables.

Ils ne souhaitent pas seulement être au service de la population mongole. Ils pensent aussi à la communauté étrangère en Mongolie, à tous ceux qui travaillent pour des organisations internationales.

Projet missionnaire

Se familiariser

Nos confrères accordent la priorité à un approfondissement poursuivi de la connaissance de la langue, de la culture et de l'histoire mongoles. À mesure

qu'ils se perfectionnent, leurs contacts avec les gens s'amélioreront. Plusieurs cours sont à leur disposition à l'Université de Mongolie ainsi qu'à d'autres instituts. C'est pour ainsi dire un stage permanent de pionniers.

Première évangélisation

La Mongolie est certainement un lieu de première évangélisation. La mission y est perçue comme un catalyseur pour l'inculturation de l'Évangile. Les missionnaires espèrent promouvoir le Règne de Dieu en proclamant

l'Évangile par la parole (ce qu'ils disent) et par les actes (comment ils vivent) dans un pays où le Christianisme n'a pas encore d'histoire.

Formation de laïcs

La formation qu'on donne à un groupe de jeunes gens sera capitale pour la mission. On poursuit des buts bien précis:

- former des communautés chrétiennes;
- édifier l'Église locale;
- donner une contribution valable à l'inculturation de

Opprimée sous le régime communiste, la religion avait pour ainsi dire disparu. La plupart des monastères bouddhiques ont été détruits. Du point de vue religieux, la Mongolie était devenue une nation bouddhique fortement influencée par le lamaïsme. La démocratisation des années 90 a entraîné un réveil religieux phénoménal.

l'Évangile, en formant des gens capables de reformuler le message dans leurs termes culturels propres;
- stimuler la vie et le dynamisme missionnaires de l'Église locale naissante.

Dialogue interreligieux et oecuménisme

Il est indispensable de connaître les gens, d'apprécier leur culture, leur religion et leur histoire pour proclamer et inculquer l'Évangile dans un pays où le Christianisme n'a pas encore d'histoire et où la population est essentiellement bouddhiste. Un dialogue de vie commence là où l'on se rencontre et travaille ensemble. Le dialogue interreligieux et la proclamation de l'Évangile évoluent simultanément. L'Esprit est à l'oeuvre à travers l'accueil de la communauté. Ce sera alors le moment propice pour parler de Jésus-Christ, de l'Évangile, de l'Église et du baptême.

Motivations pour adhérer à la communauté

L'Église est jeune et elle est souvent perçue comme étant riche et puissante. Beaucoup de gens n'ayant pas les moyens d'améliorer leurs conditions de vie sont tentés de devenir membres de la communauté pour profiter d'avantages éventuels. Leur motivation doit être purifiée. Ils doivent pouvoir rencontrer le Christ dans les membres de la communauté, et surtout dans les missionnaires. En Lui ils trouveront la plénitude, la joie et les valeurs qui les guideront vers une vie plus abondante.

Engagement social

Lorsque le nonce apostolique remit ses lettres de créance, il profita de l'occasion pour décrire le projet de l'Église et souligna que *"l'Église stimule la justice et la dignité humaine et encourage la paix à tous les niveaux de la société... L'Église s'engage donc de différentes façons, mais surtout dans ses oeuvres caritatives et l'éducation"*. Toutes les Congrégations missionnaires présentes participant à la mission et s'engagent dans différents projets. Il y a, par exemple, un centre pour les enfants de rue; des contacts avec les gens de rue pour les aider de différentes façons; des cours d'anglais pour faciliter le contact avec les gens. Un centre de formation technique professionnelle est en voie de réalisation. Un confrère s'occupe d'*Amnesty International*. On songe aussi à une aumônerie de prison et d'hôpital et à l'aide aux handicapés physiques.

Une occasion unique

L'Église s'établit en Mongolie. C'est une occasion unique pour la mission: la communauté elle-même peut devenir source d'inculturation de l'Évangile. La communauté paroissiale se laisse interpellée elle-même et son mode de vie par l'Évangile et permet ainsi à l'Esprit de se manifester dans la culture et la langue locales. Jésus-Christ et les principes évangéliques de paix, de fraternité, de justice et d'amour sont la raison d'être de la communauté. C'est à travers le témoignage, en paroles et en actes, et l'édification de la communauté qu'il sera le mieux proclamé. Il faudra du temps pour former pareille communauté, car elle est une réalité vivante, et c'est l'Esprit qui doit montrer le chemin.

Une prière en guise de conclusion
Esprit de Dieu, descends sur ce groupe de tes missionnaires avec la plénitude de ta puissance, de ta lumière, et de ta force, de sorte que leurs coeurs et leurs esprits soient remplis de ta sagesse et de ton amour. Que ton amour les amène à avoir confiance en ton dessein et à reconnaître tes appels.
Amen.

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“MUTUAL EXCHANGE OF ENERGIES” MISSION IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE AN AFRICAN POINT OF VIEW

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In the new context of mission, all have bread to give and to receive. Mission becomes a “mutual exchange of energies” (Ad Gentes, n. 19) among churches and groups. The growth of missionary consciousness in the “Third Church” is outlined, and the possible contribution of this church, particularly the Church of Africa, is detailed. For the first time in centuries, the Gospel is being transmitted without its Western cultural embodiment, making more urgent the demand that the Church become truly catholic, identified with no particular culture. The heart of mission is shown to be a humble and transforming dialogue of experiences of God and the Christ.

The growth of missionary consciousness in the areas formerly termed “mission lands” has necessitated a revision in the very concept of mission. Mission used to be a one-way street — from the older centres of Christianity in Europe to the areas of more recent evangelization in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America. In recent times the recognition has been growing that mission is in six continents. Although the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council declared that the Church was by its nature missionary (cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 2), there has not been significant reflection on the implications of this doctrine for the process of mission and the relationships among the churches. For one thing, it means that in the new context of mission, all have bread to give and to receive. The meaning of this metaphor will become clearer as the paper progresses. Mission becomes a “mutual exchange of energies” (*Ad Gentes*, n. 19) among churches and groups. Second, this transmission of the Gospel in religious and cultural embodiments other than Western is making more urgent the demand that the Church become truly catholic and unidentified with any particular culture. It is

also raising the question of the unity of faith in a plurality of expressions and what this means for the Church. Finally, the heart of mission is being shown to be a humble and transforming dialogue of experiences of God and the Christ.

Missionary Consciousness in the “Third Church”

The term “Third Church” is used in the sense employed by Walbert Bühlmann (1974) in his book *The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. It is a sociological term that designates the members of the younger Churches who now seem to have an edge in vocations and increasingly in mission. It is not a geographical concept and does not correspond with “Third World”. For example, Hispanics and Blacks in this country belong to the Third Church, even though they are in no sense Third World.

In *Princeps Pastorum*, Pope John XXIII articulated the new mission when he wrote:

Once upon a time it seemed as though the life of the church used to prosper and blossom chiefly in the regions of ancient Europe, whence it would flow like a majestic river through the remaining areas which, to use the Greek term, were considered almost the periphery of the world; today, however, the life of the church is shared as though by a *mutual irradiation of energies* among all individual members of the mystical body of Christ. Not a few countries on other continents . . . are now . . . liberally offering to other church communities those very gifts, spiritual and material which they formerly used to receive (John XXIII, 1959:838).

That was in 1959. Then came the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council which declared the Church missionary by its very nature (cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 2). Its teaching that the particular Church is “fashioned after the model of the universal Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 23) implied that every particular Church is both a receiving and a sending Church.

Latin American Bishops, meeting at Puebla, Mexico, took up the matter. Convinced that “the more alive a local Church is, the more it will render the universal Church visibly present and the stronger will be its missionary approach to other peoples” (Eagleson and Scharper 1984: n. 363), they declared:

The time has come for Latin America to intensify works of mutual service between local Churches and to extend them beyond their own frontiers *ad gentes*. True, we ourselves are in need of missionaries, but we must give from our own poverty. By the same token, our Churches have something original and important to offer all: their sense of salvation and liberation, the richness of their people’s religiosity, the experiences of the CEB’s [basic Christian communities], their flourishing diversity of ministries, and the hope and joy rooted in faith (Eagleson and Scharper 1984:175, n. 368).

A mission congress in Lima, Peru, 4-6 February 1981, reflected on Puebla and carried further the implications of a Latin American mission. It would be a mission from poor countries using poor means and would not be tied to colonialism and imperialism. There would be no display of power, superiority complex, or cultural domination. The missionaries would rely only on their Latin American experience of the faith and would bring with them their option for the poor, dedication to justice, liberation and fellowship; respect for a people’s culture; and their model of a popular church with its popular religiosity, in which culture and religion are closely interwoven (Degrijse, Omer, *Going Forth: Missionary Consciousness in the Third World Catholic Churches*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984:69). Areas of possible Latin American mission were designated as Asia,

Africa, and the Spanish-speaking parts of the United States. This has become fact. Brazil alone has sent over 600 missionaries.

As for Asia, the International Congress on Mission held in Manila, the Philippines, 2-7 December 1979, announced a new age of mission which moves beyond the vocabulary and the idea of “sending churches” and “receiving churches”:

mission is no longer and can no longer be a one-way movement from the “older churches” to the “younger churches”. . . . Every local church is “sent” by Christ and the Father to bring the Gospel to its surrounding milieu and to bear it also to all the world . . . Every local church, according to its possibilities, must share whatever its gifts are, for the needs of other churches, for mission throughout mankind, for the life of the world (Degrijse 1984:41).

There are in the United States at least 400 Vietnamese priests, 500 Filipino priests, and 200 Korean priests (Okure, Aniedi, Letter of January 30 in response to author’s query. Fr Okure is Co-ordinator, Ethnic Ministries, Migration and Refugee Services of the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996). The total Asian immigration for the decade 1981-1990 totalled 2,817,426. The immigrants are concentrated in the Far West.

In Africa in 1953, the Congregation of the Holy Ghost blazed a trail when it opened a house of formation for Africans at Ihiala (Nigeria); it was the first international missionary institute to do so. The Nigerian province now has missionaries in several countries of Africa and beyond, including 16 priests on mission in Europe, Canada, and the United States. Several international institutes have thriving African provinces whose members are on mission in Europe and America, for example, Divine Word Missionaries, Salesians, the Jesuits, and Dominicans,

etc.

Africa is witnessing the blossoming of religious institutes that take origin there. In 1968, Fr Marengoni and other Comboni missionaries founded the Apostles

With the shift in focus from salvation of individuals and planting of the church to the establishment of the kingdom, a two-way mission in six continents becomes indicated. No culture and no people will have attained the kingdom until the Lord comes. Besides, all are equidistant from the centre; all will continue to grapple with dialogue among faith, human values, and human systems.

of Jesus, whose members are currently on mission in several African countries. In 1976, the Nigerian Bishops founded the Missionary Society of St Paul. Its members now work in several African countries; eight of them are on mission in the Black Apostolate in the United States in partnership with the Josephite Fathers. African institutes for brothers count at least seven: Bayozefiti of Rwanda (Sons of St Joseph); the Josephite Brothers of Zaire (now Congo); the Brothers of St Stephen (Nigeria); the Sons of Mary, Mother of Mercy (Nigeria); the Bannakaroli Brothers of Uganda; the Bene-Paulo of Burundi; and the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Tanzania).

Many African Dioceses have begun sending *Fidei Donum* priests to Europe and America, as well as to other African Dioceses.

African institutes founded for women are more numerous. The International Union of Superiors General (Women) gave their number in 1994 as 127. Nigeria alone counts over ten institutes for women that started in that country, several of which have missionaries in many countries of Africa. Five of these institutes have missions in Europe and the United States.

Pope Paul VI acknowledged and confirmed this missionary consciousness when on his first visit to Africa he said at Kampala: “By now, you Africans are missionaries to yourselves. The Church of Christ is well and truly planted in this blessed soil” (Paul VI, 1969:575).

The African Bishops on the Council of the Synod for Africa declared as follows in the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod: “The church in Africa cannot limit herself to the horizons of the continent; she has values which she can offer to the entire church” (Synod of Bishops for Africa 1993: n. 16). Some of these values are outlined in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*:

Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world. The reality of sin, in its individual and social forms is very much present in the consciousness of these peoples, as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation (1995: n. 42).

Hence, as His Holiness notes with satisfaction in the same Exhortation (n. 56), “the church in Africa, having become ‘a homeland for Christ’ is now responsible for the evangelization of the continent and the

world”, “a church of mission which itself becomes missionary” (n. 8).

The Coming of the “Third Church”

The new shift in mission is fast changing the face of the church and of many institutes. A North American province of an international missionary institute received five candidates early this year. They were all Vietnamese. Candidates of international institutes are increasingly coming from the Third Church and are being missioned in Europe and North America. Bühlmann was convinced that the East, being the cradle of Christianity, had dominated the first millennium; the West, as the “Second Church”, had dominated the second millennium. Therefore, the churches of the South, who until recently have been the receivers of a one-way mission, would give the third millennium its drive and most important inspirations. This phenomenon he called *The Coming of the Third Church* (1974).

At least two factors have facilitated Third Church mission. The first was a shift in paradigms of mission. At the Vatican Council, two schools of mission confronted each other — mission as personal in character and directed toward the salvation of peoples who do not yet believe in Christ, and mission as ecclesiocentric in character and directed toward implanting the church (Brecht, Heinrich Suso, *Ad Gentes*. In *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. Vol. 4. H. Vorgrimler, ed. Pp. 87-181. London, UK: Burns and Oates, 1969:118). *Ad Gentes* combined both views in n. 6. However, it bypassed them in n. 9 when it described missionary activity in eschatological terms as follows: “missionary activity is nothing else, and nothing less, than a manifestation or epiphany of God’s will, and the fulfilment of that will in the world and in world history . . . [it] tends toward the fulfilment which will come at the end of time” (nn. 6, 9).

God’s goal is that “the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ” (Tutu, Desmond, “Mission in the 1990’s” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14(1):6-7, 1990:6). With the shift in focus from salvation of individuals and planting of the church to the establishment of the kingdom, a two-way mission in six continents becomes indicated. No culture and no people will have attained the kingdom until the Lord comes. Besides, all are equidistant from the center; all will continue to grapple with dialogue among faith, human values, and human systems.

The second factor was a re-imagining of the church.

If in 1959 there was still a centre and a periphery in the church, the church of the Second Vatican Council is constituted “in and from particular churches” (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 23) such that:

Each individual part of the church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole church Between all the parts there remains a bond of close communion with respect to *spiritual riches, apostolic workers* and *temporal resources*, following the injunction of the Apostle: “according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pt 4:10) (*Lumen Gentium*, n.13).

At the 1974 General Synod, the Latin American Church enriched the entire Church with its experience of a preferential option for the poor and basic Christian communities. Its Liberation Theology received many echoes throughout the Christian world, to the extent that between 1984 and 1986 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued two instructions on it, the first negative, the second accepting and integrating many of its features (*Instruction on Certain Aspects of the “Theology of Liberation”*, 6 August 1984; *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 14 April 1986). Asia is currently influencing spirituality with its ashrams, enneagrams, and its methods of meditation and mind control. Increasingly, the Third Church is featured at various levels of decision-making in the Church, including the Roman Offices, where they bring their personal and cultural contributions. We are witnessing an exchange of theologies (Bühlmann, *The Church of the Future*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986:181) to the extent that a complete theological education today necessarily includes some knowledge of the theologies and praxis of the Churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. With this goes an exchange of professors and, one hopes, of students, not only the hitherto one-way traffic of students to Europe and America, but also from these to institutes in the Third Church, especially for those intending to minister there. Returning missionaries are truly very effective cross-cultural agents: they carry values in both directions, between their areas of mission and their home churches.

Bread to Give and to Receive

In 1943 Henri Godin shocked the European world with his book *France, Pays de Mission?*, Paris, France: Les Editions Ouvrières. (Trans and adapt. into English as *France, A Missionary Land? Part 2 of France Pagan? The Mission of Abbé Godin* by Maisie Ward, pp. 65-191. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1949) calling attention to the need for a re-evangelization of large sectors of French society which had fallen away from faith and practice (Godin 1943). In 1963 the World Council of Churches meeting in Mexico City proclaimed “mission in six continents”. On 9 March 1983, meeting with the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Pope John Paul II proclaimed a “new evangelization”, an evangelization new in ardour, expression, and methods. It may be argued that the United States is not in need of re-evangelization. Weekly churchgoing, for example, is 12 per cent in France, 36 per cent in Italy, but 44 per cent in the United States (Gallen, Joseph, “Canon Law for Religious after the New Code”. *Review for Religious* 47(1):111-137, 1988:112), to use one of the ciphers of religious commitment. But every church stands in continual need of conversion until faith completely transforms culture. Besides, no place has been spared the erosions caused by “modernity”: violent and organized crime, the plague of drugs and other escape mechanisms, the mass disaffection of youth, unjust systems that hold many impoverished, and the stranglehold of corporations that operate solely for profit and ignore the well-being of society. Like every other church, the American Church must continue to seek a deeper transformation of society and culture by the Gospel. In this it stands to gain from the cooperation and the solidarity of the other churches.

The American Church too has bread to offer, and doubtless her missionaries are carrying this bread into many places. At the Vatican Council, she bequeathed religious freedom to the world church. Her struggle for inclusive language goes beyond questions of language to a vision of male-female relationships of equality and respect based on the Gospel. Correspondingly, she has championed “a church of equal discipleship” with shared responsibility for ministry and has perhaps the most extensive programmes of training for lay leaders. Consonant with the culture of religious individualism, American Catholics have strong personal relationships with Christ (Leege, David C., and Gremillon, Joseph, *The People, Their Pastors and the Church: Viewpoints of Church Policies and Positions*. Study of Catholic Parish Life, Report no. 7, March 1986. Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry and

The Center for the Study of Contemporary Society. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1986:4). They embrace the faith with personal commitment and passion, as seen for example in the abortion debate. They have been at the forefront in applying social research methods to pastoral issues as well as in integrating counselling services as part of parish pastoral services.

In the communion that is the Church, all have bread to give and to share. The mistake in the past was that many missionaries who went to the Third Church did not seem to believe that those to whom they went had some bread themselves which they were willing to share with the “strangers” (Gittins, 1993:56). The new mistake would be that an established community would feel it has all the bread it needs and nothing to receive. However, as the Mission Congress in Manila, the Philippines, 2-7 December 1979, stated: “every local church, because it is not ever on earth a total realization of the church, must also be a receiving church” (Degrijse 1984:41).

Considering the diversity of peoples in the United States, it may even be that in the providence of God this diversity is a kind of trial run for the coming reconciliation and interdependence of all peoples. In an epilogue to Bühlmann’s *The Church of the Future* (1986:185-197), Karl Rahner pointed to the “newly developed unity in human inter-relatedness worldwide” such that “the life and fate of every region of the earth is tangibly affected by everything that is happening everywhere in the world” (cited in Bühlmann 1986: 188-189). By reason of mutually conditioning relationships, “this humankind is *reflectively planning* its future, *compelled* to do so” (cited in Bühlmann 1986:189). Rahner considered that the emerging world strategy of the future called for a corresponding globalization of theology and evangelization (Bühlmann 1986:193).

The parish of the Most Precious Blood in Queens, New York, celebrates 11 Sunday masses in six languages; in the archdiocese itself, masses are held in 20 languages, in Los Angeles in 45 languages. Jay P. Dolan of Notre Dame comments: “There are really two Catholic churches, one suburban, White, and

middle class; the other urban, ethnically diverse, and economically precarious. Those two churches rarely talk to each other or even know that each other exists” (Dolan, Jay P., Article in *Daily Southtown*. Chicago, October 1:D-18). The early Catholic immigrants brought along their clergy and settled into “language parishes” or “national parishes”. These became transitional staging points into mainstream America. By the 1940’s, Catholics had become absorbed into the mainstream, sharing the American dream and ethos and moving into suburbia. The dominant value systems of the American Catholic Church became those of the White middle class.

In the decade 1980-1990, Hispanic immigration grew by 7.7 million to a total number of 22,354,059, according to 1991 Census Bureau data, (cited in National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1992:8). The projection for the end of the century is 25 million Hispanics. Since 80 per cent of Hispanics identify themselves as Catholic (Leege and Gremillon, *Post-Vatican II Parish Life in the United States: Review and Preview*. Study of Catholic Parish Life, Report no. 15, June 1989.

The Black experience reminds the entire church that the Gospel we preach is a gospel of freedom. Christ has made us free and sent us to proclaim and to effect liberation from all that oppresses humankind. The same Christ calls each one by name. He strengthens and nurtures one’s self-identity while drawing one from inside to become a better self. As such, he affirms Black self-identity as he does the identity of all peoples.

Istitute for Pastoral and Social Ministry and The Center for the Study of Contemporary Society. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1989:4), there are probably close to 20

million Hispanic Catholics. They concentrate in five areas: over 800,000 in Chicago; 1,500,000 in New York; 900,000 in Miami and environs; 3 million in Texas and 5 million in California; and about 2.5 million in Los Angeles and environs.

Hispanics will soon be the majority in many of these areas. With some 2,000 Hispanic deacons (Leege and Gremillon 1989:4) and an army of trained lay leaders, thousands of Spanish-speaking missionaries from the Third Church have been co-operating in the Hispanic ministry. The United States Bishops see the Hispanic presence as an opportunity to draw on varied religious and cultural traditions for the development of the community, to put different worldviews, philosophies of life, and expressions of faith at the service of the transformation of church and society (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Many Pilgrims, One Family of God: A Parish Multi-Cultural Resource Manual*.

Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1992:4,12). Hispanics can witness to the “experience of how faith in Christ generates a culture that protects, sustains, and promotes human dignity” and “how the preferential option for the poor, an essential aspect of the Catholic faith, becomes a cultural reality” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “The Hispanic Presence in the New Evangelization”, *Origins* 25 (26):433-440, 1995:435-436). Their presence becomes a further spur to the United States Church to strive more strenuously for freedom, personal growth, care for the weak and needy, and liberation from alienating economic, political, and religious structures of individual and social life. These are values already enshrined in the American ideal, but the new presence makes these values more urgent. The result will be a new American whose passion for individual freedom is tempered by the Hispanic concern for the relationships of *personalismo*.

There are some 30,000,000 Blacks in this country, just about 12 per cent of the population. In the decade 1981-1990, there were close to 900,000 immigrants from the Caribbean alone. Black Catholics are possibly now 3 million, that is, one in every 10 Blacks is Catholic. Only 4 per cent of Catholic sisters are African-American or Hispanic (Nygren, David and Ukeritis, Miriam, “The Future of Religious Orders in the United States”, *Origins*, 22, 1992:272) although African-Americans and Hispanics are approaching 40 per cent of the Catholic population; an estimate in the last decade put the number of African-American sisters at 700, and African-American priests at 300 (verbal estimate of Dr Jamie Phelps, OP, Associate Professor of Doctrinal Theology, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Illinois). In 1968, African-American priests and religious held a caucus to figure out their responsibilities in the context. Ten years later, in October 1978, they held the first Black Catholic Theological Symposium. A Black Catholic theology that reflects on the American Black experience in terms of the Gospel is emerging. Meantime, missionaries from other parts of the church, including Africa, are helping in the Black apostolate. About 110 African sisters are in full-time ministry in the United States. Their apostolates range from teaching in parochial schools and providing hospital ministry to the care of the handicapped and the aged. African priests in full-time ministry in the United States are about 120; another 200 serve part-time while completing graduate degrees.

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liberation from all that oppresses humankind. The same Christ calls each one by name. He strengthens and nurtures one’s self-identity while drawing one from inside to become a better self. As such, he affirms Black self-identity as he does the identity of all peoples. “Black spirituality teaches what it means to ‘let go’ and ‘to lean on God’” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization*. Black Bishops of the United States, 1984:8). “We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord, trusting in his holy word”, the Lord who confers dignity (Cone, James, *God of the oppressed*. San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1975:2). Black spirituality also shows how true joy comes from the Spirit of God who comforts us in all afflictions (Cone, 1975:9).

The first phase of inculturation would be completed when these various spiritualities have been shared; the final phase would be when their combined efforts have totally transformed all human relationships and institutions. By then the coming of the Lord would not be far away.

Religious and missionary institutes are in many ways a microcosm of the church as a whole; their experience of intercultural living reproduces and reinforces the problems and opportunities of the whole church (Shorter, Aylward, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994:69). On the question of formation, for example, divergent perspectives and attitudes can enrich the entire institute. In the case of Vietnamese candidates, the West focuses on the person as an individual and stresses personal commitment, internalisation of virtues, and the processes of formation. Asian cultures generally perceive the individual as taking identity from relationships within the group; loyalty to the ethos of the group looms large as a factor in one’s decisions. Asians have also an ancient and tested mystical tradition which needs to be given the right context to blossom, while the West has a predominantly scientific and theoretical approach. A mutual exchange of energies will produce persons in whom conceptual thought and processes of intuition are smoothly integrated, in whom the *yin* (passive element) and *yang* (active element) have merged. Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans must be enabled to bring their identities with them if they are to make their specific contributions in the intercultural setting. International institutes thus appear as a paradigm for the “exchange of energies” among the particular churches:

In bringing together members from different

countries, cultures and continents, international institutes enrich themselves. Members from North and South, East and West share their understanding and experience of the faith, their spirituality, their views on missionary methods, as well as their mentality, their traits, their work methods. In this way they can enrich one another and help one another with their shortcomings (Degrijse 1984:82).

What Can Africans Contribute?

Since culture is founded on human nature, it is likely that cultures share the same basic elements, but what is primary in one culture may be secondary or tertiary in another. It is a question of focus. The experience of Africans may help others to change focus on certain issues of life.

The heat wave of summer 1995 took a toll of 600 lives in Chicago. Most victims were poor and aged folk living on their own. The city mourned the dead and funerals were arranged. In the end, 47 bodies were unclaimed, people who belonged to no one. Compare that with the funeral of a mad person who died in a completely foreign village somewhere in Africa. The entire village arranged the funeral and turned out for it. African solidarity, love for community, and respect for the aged as the most honoured members of the family could be significant contributions. Family values can blossom only if people are willing to reorient their lives toward greater solidarity.

Africa loves life and prizes the gift of life as the greatest possession. *Mmadu ka uba* (possessions cannot be compared with people, life first) they say. The quality of life does not consist in having, but in harmony and concord among people and between them and the spirit world. The African puts a premium on spending time with others. Creating time for others involves a reordering of priorities, a focus on persons and not on things. The West seems to be in need of regaining the personal touch.

The modern person is in search of a soul. The enthronement of the goddess reason led to an over-concentration on the left hemisphere of the brain that controls reasoning and verbal skills. Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) defines the Western spirit. There is a split in the consciousness, such that one is no longer in touch with one's psychic being and the unconscious. The proliferation of techniques of health and wholeness and the quest of the feminine element illustrate the extent to which people are aware of the split. The West is becoming more

aware of the distinction between technical medicine and personal medicine, between sickness and illness. Even in medicine, technology is only part of the story. The West is also rediscovering the importance of symbols as a bridge between psyche and intellect. Wholeness requires the mutual interpenetration of two areas of being (reason and psyche) and the conscious assimilation of unconscious contents (Jung, Carl Gustav, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1933: 16). The West seems to have lost the sense of the social and metaphysical consequences of one's action. The African, always conscious of the links between the ground, creation, and the spirit world, knows that "an offense which disrupts the smooth running of one affects both the other phases of existence" (Babatunde, Emmanuel, "An African Concept of Penance". *Shalom* 3(3):131-137. (Onitsha, Nigeria) 1985: 135) and that the good one does has both personal and mystical dimensions. The African experience of the mutual exchange of energies in the communion of saints can be of benefit to others.

African spirituality is founded upon a lively sense of the presence of the spirit world and its interpenetration of the world of human beings. The African God is indeed the "one who sees me" (Gn 16:13), the God of the fathers "who walks with me" (cf. Gn 48:15). The very ground on which one walks is sacred and a guarantor of the mystical contract between human beings and the spirit world. The African can help bring back the sense of the sacred and of the presence of God in every domain of life.

For the first time in ten years, I was home in Nigeria for Christmas. Mass over, the young sisters, novices, and postulants barely grabbed their breakfast before breaking out into a spontaneous dance group. For drums they used their palms and feet. They carried fresh leaf branches (symbols of victory, joy, or celebration) and paraded around the entire place, stopping to greet and to dance before each one they met. Surprised, I asked the parish priest what was going on. Laughing, he said, "But is today not Christmas Day? Have ten years of private religion wiped out the memory of joy as communal and religion as eminently social?"

Finally, we come to the liturgy. It was a matter of wonder for many to see Cardinals and Bishops swaying to African rhythms at the opening liturgy of the Synod for Africa on 10 April 1994. It shows that all can appreciate liturgy as *community* and as *celebration*. Our African-American brothers and sisters have kept alive the tradition in this country; so have charismatic groups. Liturgy that is real community celebration strengthens the internal dynamic of liturgy itself

whereby it is oriented toward transforming social relationships.

The “Third Church” and the Transformation of Mission

The Third Church is transforming the very idea of mission. For a long time, mission went hand in hand with Western civilization. H.H. Johnston could in 1889 recommend Christian missions to the British Crown in the following words: “They [missionaries] strengthen our hold over the country; they spread the use of the English language; they induct the natives into the best kind of civilization and, in fact, each mission station is an essay in colonization” (cited in Oliver, Roland, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, London, UK: Longmans, 1952:128).

The belief that Western culture is or will become the world culture and that Western philosophy and ways of perceiving are the most appropriate forms in which to articulate the Gospel message can be said to be the most serious obstacle to inculturation in practice. It cannot be denied that there is a technological culture that is seeping into all nooks and corners of the globe and that engenders certain attitudes toward life. It is, nevertheless, also true that this does not always affect the deepest levels of culture. His Holiness John Paul II could therefore address the youth of Malawi as follows:

I put before you today a challenge — a challenge to reject a way of living which does not correspond to the best of your traditions and your Christian faith. Many people in Africa look beyond Africa for the so-called “freedom of the modern way of life”. Today I urge you to look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions, look to the faith which we are celebrating ... (*Homily in the airport of Lilongwe*, 6 May 1989:478, *Africa Pontificia*, vol. 2, Edizioni Dehoniane, Rome, 1993, pp. 477-479).

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Third Church mission assumes great significance since it is the first time in centuries that the Gospel is being preached without its Western cultural embodiment (Degrijse, 1984:73). People do not have to become Western or adopt Western ways of perceiving and behaving before they can become Christians. The import of this fact is far-reaching and is in the process of being worked out. Writing at the end of the last decade, Lesslie Newbigin expressed the hope that our decade would “witness a fresh and resolute attempt to clarify the content of the Christian mission from a perspective that is not wholly controlled by the assump-

tions of Western thought” (“Mission in the 1990’s”. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13(3):100-102, 1989:102). He hazarded a guess that the spread of the Gospel would be “in the unspectacular and unheralded growth of small congregations, especially in the non-Western world” (1989:102). This has become fact.

Through the centuries the church has found Western philosophy a fairly good channel for translating the Christian message. What happens when it does

the same through Indian philosophy? Should a missionary to India not first undergo this change of languages of the faith so as to present the faith within the Indian world of meanings? Inculturation is as much what happens to the message as to the recipients. It is also about “what happens to the messengers as they transmit and interpret, model and embody the good news of salvation” (Gittins, Anthony J. *Gifts and Strangers: Meeting the Challenge of Inculturation*, New York: Paulist Press, 1989:x). Taken seriously, this would demand a reprogramming of mission. It would probably demand that a prospective missionary to India receive his or her theological and pastoral training in India, or at least in some place well versed in Indian thought and theology. This requirement will become more evident as, hopefully, more and more Third Churches develop their own vernacular theological idiom, as is already the case in Madagascar. Mission would assume a more cross-cultural profile. Missionaries would not only be responding to an invitation in need, but would also be bearing a witness to, and challenge from, a different cultural appropriation

of the faith (Amaladoss, Michael, "Mission in the 1990's". *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13(1): 1989:10).

The coming of the Third Church has made the concept of the cultural patrimony of the church problematic. The church, like any society, has its symbols and shared meanings and, to a certain extent, these together form a cultural patrimony. Nevertheless, the link between the forms and functions of certain Christian symbols has come up for re-examination. For example, are wheat bread and wine from the grape universal symbols of the Last Supper, or are they symbols of food and drink which can be replaced by equivalents in different cultures? One of the principles of inculturation is that it must not prejudice church communion and unity. How is this unity to be conceived? Does it demand uniformity in the forms and functions of Christian symbols? The crucifix, for example, is a universal Christian symbol. It symbolizes Christ and points to his redeeming work. It may designate a Christian and the Christian belief itself. However, the Latin cross, the Greek cross, and the Ethiopian cross are three different forms. The functions (or meanings) and their depictions have altered in times and places. In one tradition, the cross may be a cosmic sign of Christ's universal dominion; in another, it may depict the agony and pain of Christ as being redemptive, present him as the king and priest who reigns from a tree, or as in the case of the Ethiopian cross, the very tree of life. To what extent may particular churches represent underlying meanings of faith in their own forms without harming unity? What is legitimate diversity in the unity of faith? The coming of the Third Church is forcing such deeper reflections on the reducible and irreducible elements of the church's cultural patrimony.

Because of the geopolitics in our world, the Third Church has been in a position to recover a necessary aspect of mission: her mission is carried out in humility, with no display of power or cultural domination. The missionary shares, but does not impose, his or her own worldview or religious values. The inner heart of mission is the spirit of dialogue, a dialogue of human experiences of God and the Christ. This dialogue begins in the heart of the missionary as he or she confronts the values of the other. In such a dialogue, both partners are enriched and transformed. This approach and spirituality of mission has been called mission-in-reverse which "teaches that the minister can and should learn from the people ministered to, including and perhaps especially, the poor and marginalized people . . . necessarily allowing them to be leaders in the relationship" (Barbour, Claude Marie, "Seeking Justice and Shalom in the City", *International*

Review of Mission 73(291):303-309, 1984:304).

Conclusion

I have depicted the rise of missionary consciousness in the Third Church as seen in the increasing proportion of Third Church membership of international institutes and the greater numbers of missionaries. This movement spotlights mission as a certain mutual exchange of energies (*Ad Gentes*, n.19) between churches and groups who share material resources, personnel, and spiritual gifts. A double shift has been made in the meaning of mission. From being just a geographical movement of one "sent out", it becomes also an internal process within the missionary who moves from himself or herself to dialogue with what is other; from being enclosed within the boundaries of the Church, the meaning of mission reaches out to offer basic orientations for what is human and true. In both senses, the Third Church is making its due contribution, sharing theologies, praxis, and spiritualities and, thus, preparing the Church to become the world Church in which "particular traditions, together with the individual patrimony of each family of nations, can be illumined by the light of the Gospel and then be taken up into Catholic unity" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 22).

If particular traditions are being taken up into Catholic unity, then the expression of the faith is being freed of undue identification with one particular tradition. This is the future task of the world church.

Ref. *Missiology*, An International Review, vol. XXV, n. 4. Oct. 1997

“DONNONS-NOUS FRATERNELLEMENT LA PAIX”

Document de la Conférence Episcopale Cubaine (Du texte original espagnol)

1. Alors qu’approche la date de la visite dans notre Patrie de Sa Sainteté le Pape Jean-Paul II, qui aura lieu, avec l’aide de Dieu, du 21 au 25 janvier 1998, il nous est apparu nécessaire, à nous évêques cubains, au terme de notre Assemblée plénière, de partager avec vous quelques réflexions sur le sens et l’extraordinaire portée de cette visite tant désirée.

2. Indiscutablement, la visite de Jean-Paul II à Cuba, au cours de la vingtième année de son pontificat, va se transformer en ce que beaucoup commencent à appeler, à l’intérieur comme à l’extérieur du pays, l’événement le plus important que notre pays vivra durant ces dernières années et un des plus significatifs de son histoire. Les attentes croissent à mesure que s’approche la date de l’arrivée chez nous du Pape missionnaire. Pour cette raison, les yeux du monde se portent sur cette île des Caraïbes et se feront plus attentifs encore durant les cinq jours de cette visite. Avec l’attente que suscite cet événement, les conjectures augmentent aussi. Que de Cubains et d’étrangers émettent des jugements divers sur le sens de la présence du Pape dans ce pays qui a des caractéristiques politiques, économiques et sociales bien marquées qui le distinguent du reste du continent américain! Que dira le Pape à Cuba? Cette question et d’autres encore, nous les entendons quotidiennement de toute part.

3. Depuis que cette visite a été annoncée, le contenu central de celle-ci est resté fixe: Jean-Paul II viendra comme messager de la Vérité et de l’Espérance. Tout ce qu’il nous enseignera, durant ces jours historiques qu’il passera avec nous, est justement contenu dans cette affirmation; sinon, nous nous trompons peut-être sur le motif de la visite du Souverain Pontife à Cuba, qui est de caractère éminemment religieux.

Un événement exceptionnel source d’espérance

4. Jean-Paul II arrivera à Cuba à un moment parmi les plus difficiles de notre histoire. La situation politique, économique et sociale, durant les dernières années du XXe siècle, telles que nous l’avons analysée

ces derniers temps de par notre magistère épiscopal, a des incidences sur les caractéristiques de la visite papale et sur le futur travail de l’Église catholique à Cuba. Justement, pour regarder l’avenir avec confiance, nous Cubains, nous nous apprêtons à recevoir celui qui vient comme un Messager de l’espérance.

5. L’espérance chrétienne n’est pas réservée exclusivement à l’au-delà. Elle commence à se construire ici, en cette vie et en ce monde, et s’épanouit quand les deux dernières vérités que nous professons dans le Credo deviennent des réalités: “J’attends la résurrection des morts et la vie du monde à venir”. Ces deux vérités se trouvent enracinées dans la cause qui les produit: la seconde venue de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ. Chrétiens, nous ne nous trouvons pas désorientés, puisque nous avons une espérance sûre vers laquelle nous dirigeons toute notre vie: “la rencontre courageuse avec le Christ qui vient, pour être placé ce jour-là à sa droite et mériter de posséder le Royaume éternel” (premier dimanche de l’Avent).

6. Cependant, même si nous attendons « des cieux nouveaux et une terre nouvelle » (Ap 21, 1), chrétiens, nous savons qu’il est nécessaire de commencer à bâtir l’espérance dans ce monde. Pour cela, les paroles de Jean-Paul II, prononcées au début de son pontificat, se font plus pressantes: “Ouvrez toutes grandes les portes à Jésus-Christ”. Pour vivre l’espérance chrétienne, il est nécessaire d’ouvrir les portes de nos cœurs à Jésus-Christ dans nos familles et dans tous les domaines où nous développons notre existence. Ouvrir les portes au Christ n’est pas un simple sentiment subjectif sans aucun engagement avec les réalités terrestres. “Ouvrir les portes”, cela signifie une conversion, c’est-à-dire une transformation de la vie, et cela doit être personnel et communautaire. Quand la conversion se fait seulement de façon individuelle, elle se trouve mutilée. L’espérance chrétienne et l’ouverture de toutes les portes au Christ sont unies de manière indissociable.

7. Cette réalité nous conduit au sujet de l’espérance: l’homme. Il est le seul être de la création capable d’espérer. Par le fait même que l’espérance commence à

se construire dans ce monde, on peut comprendre facilement la parole de Jean-Paul II dans son Encyclique *Redemptor hominis* (1979): "L'homme est la route de l'Église". Ainsi donc, l'homme devient la préoccupation constante de la mission de l'Église. Si l'Église ne prenait pas en compte cette vérité fondamentale, elle perdrait la raison de son existence qui est d'être Sacrement universel de salut pour les hommes.

8. Avec la vérité sur Jésus-Christ et sur elle-même, l'Église doit annoncer la vérité sur l'homme, laquelle ne se réduit pas à un ensemble de notions anthropologiques et théologiques, mais elle est, de plus, une action claire et soutenue pour la "promotion de tous les hommes et de tout l'homme" (*Populorum progressio*, n. 14). Par conséquent, dans l'homme comme mission de l'Église, s'articule le double message de Jean-Paul II pour Cuba: la Vérité et l'Espérance. Le Pape vient annoncer au Cubain d'aujourd'hui la vérité sur Jésus-Christ et sur l'homme même, afin qu'il puisse avoir une espérance.

9. L'Église bimillénaire de Jésus-Christ est "experte en humanité". Dans tous les lieux où elle accomplit son labeur, par le caractère même de sa mission, elle connaît le cœur de l'homme. Notre Église stapprête à terminer la mission d'évangélisation préparatoire à la visite du Pape Jean-Paul II, qui tend vers sa fin dans les dix diocèses de Cuba. La Vierge de la Charité a invité ses fils à écouter la Parole de Jésus-Christ. Ils accourent avec envie à l'appel de la Mère. Une fois de plus, comme cela a eu lieu depuis sa visite à sa cousine Élisabeth, la Vierge Marie, qui est la première chrétienne, est devenue la première missionnaire de l'Église.

La nécessité de moyens et d'espaces de liberté

10. De mille façons et par d'innombrables personnes, la mission de l'Église a été accueillie dans notre peuple qui professe, en sa majorité et de différentes manières, sa foi en Dieu et sa dévotion à la Vierge de la Charité. De nombreuses œuvres et initiatives dans les divers diocèses, paroisses et quartiers, nous ont montré durant ces jours l'estime que le peuple cubain éprouve envers la personne du Pape. De même, nous avons

éprouvé combien l'Église a une crédibilité et une capacité de rassemblement qui la maintient dans le cœur du peuple, dont elle fait intimement partie. Cela lui permet de mieux servir un plus grand nombre de fils, ce qui exige de nouveaux espaces et de nouveaux moyens pour réaliser sa mission.

11. Nous devons tirer plusieurs leçons de la récente mission. Tout d'abord, l'Église à Cuba est appelée à animer l'espérance du peuple devant l'avenir. Le dé-

Tout d'abord, l'Église à Cuba est appelée à animer l'espérance du peuple devant l'avenir. Le découragement dont témoignent de nombreuses personnes se transforme en un appel profond à l'évangélisation. L'homme qui s'efforce de vivre l'Évangile trouve des raisons, à partir de sa foi en Jésus-Christ, d'affronter la vie avec espérance.

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(*Saint-Domingue*, nn. 164-168). Si on ne travaille pas dans cette perspective, on ne peut pas parler correctement à l'homme de l'espérance. Comme l'a bien indiqué la IIe ENEC (1996) (*Rencontre ecclésiale cubaine*, DC 1996, n. 2135, pp. 306-307. NDLR), le but de l'évangélisation est la promotion intégrale de la personne humaine.

12. En effet, l'homme est une unité de corps et d'âme. Par son corps, il se met en relation avec le monde qui l'entoure et, de manière spécifique, avec les autres hommes. Cela rend évidente la dimension sociale de l'être humain (*Gaudium et spes*, nn. 34,39). Tout l'homme, corps et âme, dans sa dimension sociale, est appelé à la promotion humaine. Il s'ensuit qu'il serait erroné de penser une évangélisation seulement spirituelle, car elle n'embrasserait pas toute la réalité de l'être humain.

13. Par conséquent, l'évangélisation comprend la promotion humaine et la construction des réalités de ce monde. L'Église est appelée à se préoccuper de cet ordre des choses dans notre pays. Cela fait partie de sa mission. La vie personnelle, familiale, matrimoniale, de travail, scientifique, technique, économique, artistique, sportive et politique constitue l'ordre tem-

porel. Ces réalités ne s'édifient pas par des lois aveugles et exclusivement autonomes qui se développent en marge de l'éthique. Comme réalités humaines, elles ont l'homme pour sujet et pour objet et, par conséquent, elles ont besoin d'une orientation éthique. Si on fait abstraction de cela, l'homme peut en sortir diminué, manipulé et même déshumanisé. L'éthique assure aux différentes réalités temporelles la hiérarchie des valeurs selon laquelle l'homme est toujours une fin et jamais un moyen (cf. Mc 2,27).

14. Dans notre pays, on parle souvent de retrouver les valeurs éthiques du Cubain, de revenir à nos racines. Nous sommes heureux que cette constatation soit dans l'esprit de beaucoup. Cependant, il ne nous suffit pas de la dire, il est urgent de l'appliquer dans des formes réelles pour l'atteindre. L'Église, à partir de l'éthique chrétienne, est disposée à contribuer à cette œuvre de promotion du Cubain, parce qu'elle sait que quand elle évangélise, elle travaille à la défense de toute la vie humaine, de la liberté, de l'égalité, de la justice sociale et d'autres droits humains. De cette façon, elle promeut les valeurs éthiques qui facilitent l'amélioration de l'homme. Le Serviteur de Dieu, le P. Félix Varela, nous rappelle qui "l n'y a pas de patrie sans vertu".

15. Cependant, l'évangélisation ne se réduit pas à la promotion humaine et au développement de l'ordre temporel, puisque la vocation de l'homme est aussi surnaturelle. Nous sommes différents du reste des créatures parce que nous entrons en relation avec Dieu. Sur la terre, l'homme est l'unique créature que Dieu a voulue pour elle-même (*Centesimus Annus*, n. 11). La vocation surnaturelle de l'homme n'est pas un ajout à son être, et dans cette sphère l'Église exerce la mission qui lui est plus particulière. Pour accomplir cette mission à Cuba, il est nécessaire que l'Église compte sur les moyens et les espaces indispensables qui lui permettront de prêcher ouvertement Jésus-Christ. C'est une dimension essentielle de la liberté religieuse.

La foi chrétienne n'est pas une idéologie

16. On ne doit pas confondre liberté de culte et liberté religieuse. Celle-ci implique la reconnaissance de l'action de l'Église dans la société et ne se limite pas au libre exercice du culte. Avec l'activité culturelle, l'Église à Cuba a une mission prophétique et caritative. En accord avec cela, le document final de l'ENEC nous redit: "La foi chrétienne, qui n'est pas une idéologie en elle-même, peut se vivre dans n'importe quel système politique ou processus historique sans s'identifier nécessairement et totalement à aucun d'entre eux. L'Église ne peut pas renoncer à collaborer pour

améliorer les différents projets sociaux qui tendent au bien commun, comme elle ne renonce pas non plus à exercer sa mission critique, prophétique face aux réalisations historiques concrètes" (n. 419).

17. Dans la situation actuelle que vit la nation, l'Église perçoit, de façon particulière, sa vocation à la fraternité, afin de promouvoir la réconciliation entre tous les fils de la nation cubaine. À cela, elle invitera toujours tous les Cubains, sans aucune distinction.

18. Chers frères, nous avons partagé avec vous quelques-une de nos réflexions à l'approche de la visite du Pape Jean-Paul II. Nous savons que tous s'interrogent sur les fruits de cette visite. Nous sommes convaincus que la visite du Saint-Père sera comme le passage de Jésus-Christ pour l'histoire de notre Église et de notre Patrie. Elle sera le premier et le plus fondamental de tous les fruits. Mais ils pourront être récoltés complètement dans la mesure où l'Église pourra toujours d'avantage:

1. prêcher ouvertement Jésus-Christ,
2. animer l'espérance du peuple devant l'avenir,
3. aider à retrouver les valeurs éthiques personnelles, familiales et sociales,
4. voir reconnu son rôle positif dans la société avec sa triple mission culturelle, prophétique et de service de promotion,
5. promouvoir la réconciliation entre tous les Cubains.

19. Ces éléments pourront être compris par le peuple cubain comme des semences d'espérance dans l'avenir, en même temps qu'il les découvrira comme des réalités tangibles dans la mission de l'Église catholique à Cuba. Cela sera atteint dans la mesure où l'Église pourra compter sur un espace de plus grande liberté pour sa mission, et apporter ainsi sa contribution au progrès et au bien du peuple cubain, ce qui est un de ses plus grands désirs.

20. La Nativité nous amène cette année le don de la visite du Pape. Notre peuple a mis ses espérances dans cette visite. Que Dieu, par l'intercession de la Vierge de la Charité *del Cobre*, que Jean-Paul II couronnera comme Reine et Mère de Cuba, nous l'accorde! Prions pour que la visite du Saint-Père soit le début de ce qui est une des plus grandes espérances: que nous tous, Cubains, puissions nous donner fraternellement la paix.

Les évêques catholiques de Cuba

La Havane, le 1er novembre 1997, en la Solennité de tous les Saints.

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A THEOLOGY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

Thirty-four years ago Rachel Carson warned us that we were poisoning not only ourselves but also our whole environment (*Silent Spring*, Penguin, London, 1965). The situation has not improved. It is now much worse. In *The Gaia Atlas of Planet Management* Norman Myers says "the data are overwhelmingly clear in their import. Most devastating are those which show rates of soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, species loss, pollution Even if some estimates vary ... most of them are more likely to be under rather than over estimates" (quoted in Lovett, *Life*, 49). "What is happening in our times is not just another historical transition It is a change unparalleled in the four and a half billion years of earth history" (Berry and Clarke, 4, *Befriending the Earth*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, Connecticut, 1991). We have changed the very structure of our planet (*ibid.*, 5).

I think many people are overwhelmed by the litany of destruction. Many either cannot grasp the seriousness of the situation or refuse to. In Japan many people have sold themselves to their company and are not free to think, let alone act, for themselves.

The Problem

For the last few months parish council meetings here have centred on three topics: building, raising money for building and functions (the first communion party, etc.). And the biggest function in terms of the number of people who participate in preparation and the person-hours given to preparation is the bazaar. It is bigger than Easter and Christmas combined. The council does not discuss what the parish can do for the environment, youth, foreign workers (these three are among Bishop Hamao's four diocesan priorities), the poor, etc.

How could we be oblivious to this crisis? Maybe it is too much for many to take in, but it was not always this serious. Why were we not aware and concerned when it was still a 'small' problem ?

Causes

The Bible

One of the reasons is our attitude towards our environment, the earth. American historian Lynn White describes this attitude as one of "arrogance towards nature" (McDonagh, Sean, *The Greening of the Church*, 119 Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1990). Some scholars trace this arrogance to the Bible:

So God created humankind in his image ... and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and *subdue* it; and have *dominion* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gn 1: 27-28).

We have an ambivalent attitude towards the Bible. On the one hand, we believe it is the inspired Word of God. On the other hand, we do not have a tradition of reading and studying the Bible, and the reading we do is selective. We know Genesis 2: 18-22 (Adam was created before Eve) but not 1:27 (Adam and Eve were created together). So Thomas Berry can say that the Bible may be the most dangerous book in the world (Berry and Clarke, 118). I believe that we give it an unnecessarily high status. It may be one of the most sublime books in the world, but it is still no more than the record of where various Jewish and Christian communities were at particular points in history.

The communities existed before the record of their faith life was put down on paper, and they continued to exist and grow after the record was finished. Looking to the past can be a way of avoiding looking at the present.

Scholars looking for something positive in Genesis point out that in Genesis 1:24 (And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind"), for example, the earth is a co-creator with a positive role in creation. But this should be obvious to us. Needing scholars or the Bible to tell us this is an indication of the degree to which we are alienated from the earth.

While claiming that the Bible is important, most of us make no effort to study it. Some do not want to know about biblical criticism (source, form, etc.). As Basil Moore says, “in no other area of the curriculum world would we tolerate the indifference to scholarship and research as we do in teaching the Bible” (Biblical Studies and Teaching the Bible, pp 29-38 in *Readings: Part I*, URE 512, The University of South Australia, 1994). We prefer new cars to old. We buy the latest computers. We buy the newest fishing rods. But when it comes to the Bible, it seems that the older, the better.

Faith vs Beliefs

Perhaps this indicates that our faith is not that deep. Perhaps we are more insecure than we admit. Roger Haight talks about “beliefs masquerading as faith” (Dynamics of Theology, Paulist Press, New York, 1990, 36). Some of us claim to believe in God, in Jesus, that the Bible is inspired, etc.; but we also believe that the earth is round, that Shakespeare wrote Hamlet, that it is going to rain tomorrow. Our “faith” is mostly intellectual assent to propositions. I believe the old catechism approach to instruction contributed to this. Many of us have never actually encountered God. We have never set out on the kind of journey Abraham made. We have not heard Jesus’ call to follow him.

“The error begins with the social tendency of beliefs ... to take the place of the transcendent object of faith. This dynamism serves as a buttress against human insecurity, and it reinforces a kind of natural desire to grasp and control transcendent reality. The result is that the transcendent object of faith in the same measure ceases to be transcendent, to break in upon the passive dimension of faith, and to draw forth ever new commitment to the ever new exigencies of its cause. But beyond the theological confusion involved, this process also has disastrous consequences for the life of faith of ordinary people, especially in a time of radical pluralism when scientific knowledge, discovery and changing world views have a high profile. Members of such a community can only be confused and threatened by the

growing body of genuinely new knowledge human beings are generating about themselves and the world. These external forces drive a wedge between a community of beliefs taken as knowledge and the competing and seemingly contradictory knowledge of the rest of the world. The result is that many people leave the Church, and what is left is a community of closed, eviscerated and impoverished faith isolated from the world on the basis of archaic beliefs” (Haight, 36-37).

We have many pigeon holes in our mind. Hobbies are in one, work in another; politics in one, faith in another; and so on. Faith has little connection to this world, to everyday life. We forget that Judaism and Christianity began when some slaves managed to escape from their captors. We forget that Palestine in the time of Jesus was a Roman colony and that Jesus was executed by the Romans. A few months ago I asked the parish council here to send a letter of support to the Governor of Okinawa for his stand against the American military bases. Only two of the 15 councillors present responded, and both were against the idea. One said we should keep out of politics. (The other said that some Catholics in France were for the nuclear tests at Mururoa. And, in the same way, the bases were not completely bad: that there was something good to be said for them).

Our selectivity in our reading and our reluctance to accept the results of modern biblical studies mean that we have decided what we want to believe *before* we read the Bible. We choose passages that support our chosen way of life.

When did Christianity become di-

vorced from politics, economics, etc.? Joseph Martos, describing the early Church, writes that “the general population ... did not always share this interior appreciation of the liturgy. The wholesale conversion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the baptism of Christians from infancy in the fifth century, and the mass baptisms of the Germanic peoples beginning in the sixth century meant that many attended the liturgy because of custom rather than conviction” (Doors to the Sacred, Triumph, Liguori, 1991, 225). What he says about the liturgy probably applies to the faith in general. Christianity became the official religion of the Empire in 324 and “it was sometimes difficult to

Why do we want this kind of political system, this economic system? Why do we want to have more than others? Why do we refuse to share the world’s goods? Some psychologists believe that our grasping for more and more possessions arises primarily out of our anxieties in the face of death. By surrounding ourselves with more and more things we hope to avoid the reality of death and gain some measure of immortality, at least in the things that we own (McDonagh, Greening, 162).

tell whether those who wished to join the Church did so out of conviction or convenience. In the face of growing numbers of conversions, the lengthy catechumenate was retained but the period of immediate preparation and teaching was shortened ... “ (151-152). The Bible itself suffered as a result of Christianity being proclaimed the official religion. The copyists of the Byzantine texts seem to have been “more concerned to promote Constantinian orthodoxy through the text rather than faithfulness to the texts from which the copy was made” (Moore, Basil, *Biblical Criticism*, in *Readings Part I*, URE 512, The University of South Australia, 1994, p.162).

Theology has lost contact with our present story of the universe (Berry and Clarke, 28). Whatever pre-baptismal instruction, adult education, homilies, etc. the ordinary Catholic is exposed to, it obviously is not enabling her or him to grasp and respond to the present crisis. Nor does it encourage the ordinary Catholic to reflect on the place of the company in life. The vice-director of the Columbans in Japan suggested to me that some, perhaps many, people come to the Church seeking some kind of solace, that they prefer the “old” Church of certainty and uniformity. Apparently they have the impression before they come that this is what the Church will provide, i.e., this is the image the Church projects. If this is so, we need to let people know what the Gospel is about when they first come to the Church.

God

Berry believes that our idea of God is also part of the problem. “The divine, once perceived as a pervasive divine presence throughout the phenomenal world, was constellated in the Bible in a transcendent, monotheistic deity, a creator of the world with a covenant relationship with a special people ... we appear to give up that primordial, inherent relationship between the human and the divine within the natural order of things. To give up that immediacy in favour of a transcendent deity mediated by a covenant has done something profound to our relationship with the natural world, even when the natural world is explained as good and as created by the divine” (114).

The Human

Then there is “the exaltation of the human as a spiritual being to the exclusion of the spiritual dimension of earthly beings. In Western Christian thought, the human is so special that the human soul has to be created directly by the divine in every single case ... there is a feeling that the human is so special that it does not

really belong to the inherent processes of the natural world. This contributes to our sense of alienation from the natural world” (Berry and Clarke, 115).

Redemption

Our emphasis on the need for redemption/salvation has also contributed to our flight from the world. “The believing community put its emphasis on redemption. We are in the world but not of it The world, furthermore, is intransigent and irredeemable. We are stuck with earth for the present, but by being wary of it we can save ourselves for a better future life” (Farrell, 8). Christianity has indeed become “the opium of the people”.

Prayer

Our prayer also has failed us. People can say their morning and evening prayers, grace before and after meals, recite the rosary and go to Mass every day but still not advert to the environmental crisis. Can this really be prayer? Is it really God we are talking and listening to?

Science

Science also comes in for some of the blame. The discoveries of Francis Bacon, René Descartes and Isaac Newton undermined “the organic, holistic, though static and often erroneous, view of the world which had prevailed in the West for the previous thousand years. For the earth-centred and static universe they substituted an undoubtedly more scientific view of nature. However, because it failed to take into account a holistic view of all the living world, it contributed significantly to the development of the modern scientific and technological paradigm which regards the world as complex and intricate, but ultimately a lifeless machine” (McDonagh, *Greening*, 109-110).

Capitalism

Capitalism has played a large part in the destruction of our earth, and Christianity has to accept some of the responsibility for its emergence. “In the 14th and 15th centuries both ecclesial and social institutions were well and truly perverted into the apparently insatiable pursuit of wealth”. People “were exhorted to work, no longer just for a living, but for the sake of accumulation ... “. Moral teaching on killing mutated from the right of the poor person to kill in self defense into “a right to kill the poor in the interest of preserving things” (Lovett, Brendan, *Life Before Death*, 33,

Claretian Publications, Quezon City, 1986). "It is very hard for us to realize the historical negatives of the system with which we are so involved; to grasp, for example, the human cost of even the first century of this system. The population of Mexico was 16,871,408 in 1532: in 1580 it stood at 1,891,267".

"Hans-Guenther Prien gives the total population figures for the New World as 100 million in 1492: by 1570 his estimate for the total population was 10-12 million survivors". "This is genocide of unparalleled proportions" (Lovett, *Life*, 35).

If the system had such appalling results in terms of distribution, why did it begin in the first place? "Wallerstein suggests that the reason was to ensure precisely such bad distribution. He presents the following scenario. Economically, feudal Europe was cracking up; the pressure towards egalitarian distribution was strong; small peasant farmers were showing great efficiency as producers. Internecine strife was frequent within the ruling class, and the ideological cement of Catholicism was internally under strain from egalitarian movements. The direction of the change desired appalled the upper strata. The effectiveness of their response to this crisis is shown by Wallerstein in two sets of figures. Looking at the two hundred-year period between 1450 and 1650, he finds that by the end of this period the basic structures of our system as a viable social system had been established with a reasonably high level of continuity between the families who were the high strata in 1450 and those who occupied this position in 1650. Moving on to the period 1650 to 1900, he finds that most of the comparisons with 1450 still hold true. The trend towards egalitarianisation had been drastically reversed" (Lovett, *Life*, 36).

Imperialism

As Lovett stays, "it is very hard for us to realize the historical negatives of the system with which we are so involved". Most of us would not accept that the purpose of capitalism was to ensure unequal distribution. Yet the evidence is there. Noam Chomsky documents American interventions abroad. The number of military interventions alone is far higher than most people realize. It is hard to choose which examples to present. From 1849-1913 U.S. Navy ships entered Haitian waters 24 times to "protect American lives and property" (Chomsky, Noam, *Year 501*, Verso, London, 1993, 200). Perry forced Japan to trade with the West. Marines landed in Hawaii in 1873 and 1893. The Philippines was annexed. Troops were sent to intervene in the Boxer Rebellion. The U.S. pressured Panama to rebel against Colombia. Cuba, Dominican

Republic, Nicaragua, Korea, Iran, Guatemala, Lebanon, Vietnam, El Salvador, Chile, Angola, Grenada, Libya, Iraq, Panama. The list goes on.

People might still say that the U.S. (or in the past the U.K. or whichever colonial power) is doing all this to defend democracy. In the 1898 debate about whether or not the U.S. should claim the Philippines as a colony, Senator Albert Beveridge argued, "The power that rules the Pacific is the power that rules the world. And, with the Philippines, that power is and will forever be the American Republic" (Asia Link, p. 2) President Taft claimed that "The day is not far distant" when "the whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it is ours morally" (Chomsky, 158).

But perhaps the clearest statement of the U.S.'s motives came from George Kennan. In 1948 Kennan, head of the State Department's planning staff, stated the basic U.S. policy goals:

... We have about 50 per cent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 per cent of its populations ... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so we have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction ... We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards and democratisation. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better (Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack, *War Against The Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 5).

Politics

The U.S. and other First World countries are maintaining this position. During the period 1982 to 1990 there was a net transfer of \$418 billion from the poor South to the rich North (George, Susan, *The Debt Boomerang*, Pluto Press, London, 1992, xv). George shows how deforestation is directly linked to the debt crisis. Only by cutting down more trees and planting more cash crops can poor countries service their debts.

Economic interests have come to govern the legal and political order, and the political order has displaced the function of culture. The role of politics has be-

come repression and propaganda, convincing people that they needed what the economic system was supplying. The true role of politics should be to mediate cultural values to the shaping of economic institutions (Lovett, *Life*, 90).

Population

One final word about population and over-population. The proliferation of human population literally threatens planetary life itself (Rosemary Radford Reuther, inside the front cover of Berry and Clarke). (*Toward an Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature*, in Plant, Judith (ed.), *Healing the Wounds*, New Society, Philadelphia, 1989). The Church has an aversion to tackling this issue (McDonagh, *Greening*, 59-72). McDonagh asks, "What does pro-life really mean?" I believe it means putting our planet first.

These, briefly, are the main causes of our present crisis. It is, of course, possible to inquire further. Why do we want this kind of political system, this economic system? Why do we want to have more than others? Why do we refuse to share the world's goods? Some psychologists believe that our grasping for more and more possessions arises primarily out of our anxieties in the face of death. By surrounding ourselves with more and more things we hope to avoid the reality of death and gain some measure of immortality, at least in the things that we own (McDonagh, *Greening*, 162). If this is true, it means that we do not believe in God, that we do not believe that God loves us and will take care of us even after death. We have not yet heard the Gospel.

Hope

A New Story

Now for the good news. The situation is not hopeless. We can do something. The most important thing is to learn and tell others the story of the universe. Here I want to present a long quotation from Brian Swimme:

"... from a physical point of view ... Different ion flows would give you qualitatively different experiences; or, equally true, a qualitatively different mood would manifest as a different movement of ions in your nervous system. The question I want to ask is simply this. What enables the ions to move? Or what enables you to think? On what power do you rely for your thinking, feeling and wondering?

"Ions do not move by their own power A

close examination shows that an energy-soaked molecule in the brain is responsible for the ion movement. Closer examination shows that this molecule is able to push ions around because of energy it got, ultimately, from the food that you eat. The food got the energy from the sun; food traps a photon in the net of its molecular webbing, and this photonic energy pushes and pulls the ions in your brain, making possible your present moment of amazing human subjectivity. Right now, this moment, ions are flowing this way and that because of the manner in which you have organised energy from the sun.

"But we are not done yet. Where did the photon come from? We know that in the core of our sun, atomic fusion creates helium atoms out of hydrogen atoms, in the process releasing photons of sunlight. So, if photons come from hydrogen atoms, where did the hydrogen get the photons? This leads us to the edge of the primeval fireball, to the moment of creation itself.

"The primeval fireball was a vast gushing forth of light, first so powerful that it carried elementary particles about as if they were bits of bark on a tidal wave. But as the fireball continued to expand, the light calmed down until ... the energy level decreased to a point where it could be captured by electrons and protons in the community of the hydrogen atom.

"Hydrogen atoms rage with energy from the fireball, symphonic storms of energy held together in communities extremely reluctant to give this energy up. But in the cores of stars, hydrogen atoms are forced to release their energy in the form of photons, and this photonic shower from the beginning of time powers your thinking (quoted in Lovett, *Life*, 82-83)".

"So fires from the beginning of time fires us now: we are cosmic fire! We are the universe come to consciousness and the psychic energy by which we live is nothing other than the energy of the whole universe" (Lovett, *Life*, 84). The story of the universe is our story. If we do not know the story, we do not know anything (Berry and Clarke, 7). But it is also the story of God: "... attention needs to be paid to the extreme fineness — a matter of milliseconds — of the condition of emergence and survival of the universe. To grasp the emergent probability of the universe is to experience immanent Providence, revealed in the passionate finality of the process" (Lovett, *Life*, 82). The story of the universe is revelation. We need to see the religious value of the scientific explanation of creation (Berry and Clarke, 26-27). We are part of the universe. The universe is bigger than we. Its concerns are more im-

portant than ours. “The universe itself is the primary sacred community” (Berry and Clarke, 16). We have to change our way of thinking from human-centred to universe-centred.

Indigenous People

We can learn much from indigenous peoples. The aboriginal people of Australia understand their dependence on the land. Bill Neidjie says “Our story is in the land ...” (Plumwood, Val, Meanjin, 49, 1990, 531). The Navajo tell the story of the universe in their healing rituals (Berry and Clarke, 27). One of my favourites (even if its authenticity is disputed) is Chief Seattle’s letter to the President of the United States in 1854:

The Great Chief in Washington ... wishes to buy our land The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine-needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man This shining water that lives in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors The White man’s dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth, and it is part of us (Lovett, *Life*, 99-100).

Animals

Sometimes it seems that animals are more conscious of our mutual links than we are. In June 1991, Yvonne Vladislavich was aboard a yacht that exploded and sank in the Indian Ocean. Utterly terrified, she was thrown into shark-infested waters. Then three dolphins approached her. One of them proceeded to buoy her up, while the other two swam in circles around her and guarded her from sharks. The dolphins continued to take care of Yvonne, and protected her until she finally drifted to a marker in the sea and climbed on to it. When she was rescued from the marker, it was determined that the dolphins had stayed with her, kept her afloat and protected her across more than 300 kilometers of open sea (Robbins, John, *Diet for a New America*, Stillpoint Publishing, Walpole, 1987, 24).

Conclusion

Every Catholic, from the Pope to the individual lay person, as well as our structures — Bishops’ Conferences, parish councils and schools, etc. — has to make ecology a top priority. This will necessitate changes to the Church’s structures and way of operating. We need the latest information and ideas. We need people thinking and taking initiatives. So the Church must stop trying to control what people think. We need to promote Thomas Kuhn’s notions of paradigm and paradigm shift. Our people need to know that truth is not fixed and unchanging. Faith is not acceptance of a body of doctrine, but “a struggle which is complex and historically without end” (Lovett, *Earth*, 5). A large part of this struggle will be trying to persuade governments and industry that the needed changes are desirable.

The task is enormous but not impossible. Perhaps the biggest hurdle to be overcome is motivating and energizing people to tackle the problem. As mentioned in the introduction, mere knowledge of the situation can be paralysing. Jay Earley (*Inner Journeys*, Samuel Weiser, Inc., York Beach, Maine, 1990) has used Jean Houston’s work to develop exercises that can do this. But in the end it comes down to each of us. Are we prepared to join the struggle?

Ref. *The Japan Mission Journal*,
Autumn 1997, vol. 51, n. 3.

COMING EVENTS

WORKING GROUPS

Friday,	27 February	World Debt	15:30 hrs at SEDOS
Wednesday,	11 March	China	15:30 hrs at SEDOS
Friday,	3 April	Pacific	16:00 hrs at SEDOS

JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY of creation

Tuesday, March 31 (14:45h - 18:30h)

**CIVIL WAR AND CONFLICT
A TIME FOR RECONCILING PARTIES
HOW TO BUILD COMMUNITY AGAIN?**

Fr Brian Starcken, CSSp
(*Caritas* Sierra Leone)

SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR 1998

Tuesday, May 19 (17:00h) - Saturday, May 23 (13:00h)
Casa Divin Maestro, Ariccia

PROCLAMATION AND DIALOGUE IN MISSION TODAY

Msgr. Michael Fitzgerald, Mafr. (Rome)
(Pontif. Council for Interreligious Dialogue)

Sr Lucie Nzenzili, FMM (Zaire, USA)
(Ex-Provincial of Zaire, Lecturer in USA)

Br Edmund Chia, FSC (Malaysia)
(Secr. General of Department of Dialogue of FABC)