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Editorial

We open the last issue of this year with a contribution from East Africa. Fr CECIL McGARRY, SJ, gave a keynote address on the formation of pastoral agents to the AMECEA Plenary Assembly this summer. In his talk he explains that what is needed is not so much new programmes, but new models of formation which concentrate on human and spiritual formation and correspond to a Church that wants to be communion at all levels.

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PATRICK SIMONNIN, OFM, offers a very interesting reflection on the Theology of Liberation and the well-known tensions between representatives of this theology and Rome. With insight and clarity he describes the difficulties that arose by studying the personal theological thinking of Cardinal Ratzinger. —

In his article Fr L. STANISLAUS, SVD, shows how mission concerns must cover the whole cosmos as revelation of God. Mission is establishing a new type of relationship among people and with creation. Christian communities are also called to take care of their environment so that the environment can take care of them. —

As usual in our December issue, we publish the Annual Report of Fr WALTER von HOLZEN, SVD, the Executive Director of SEDOS, given at the Annual General Assembly in December to the SEDOS member congregations here in Rome. He explains the different services the Secretariat, the documentation centre, publications and talks have been offering to our members. —

Once again, we have tried to compile a useful Author and Thematic Index, reviewing all the articles of the '99 SEDOS Bulletin. —

I would like to take this opportunity to greet you, wherever you are working in mission in the world. We want to wish you a very Happy Christmas and may the Lord's blessing accompany you in the New Year, the beginning of a new millennium.

Books

Alvarez Ricart, M. Carmen,
Ruanda: Un camino de esperanza.
Edicep., Valencia, 1998.

Mbuy-Beya, Bernadette,
Woman, Who Are You? A Challenge.
Paulines Publications, Nairobi, 1998.

Moltmann, Jürgen,
Dio nel progetto del mondo moderno.
Queriniana, Brescia, 1999.

Vermander, Benoît, (ed.)
Le Christ chinois.
DDB/Bellarmin, coll. Chistus, 1998.

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SEDOS

Secretariat wishes
all its readers a
Happy christmas and
many Blessings
IN the New Year.

Cecil McGarry, SJ

Formation of the Agents of Evangelisation for the Realities of Africa Today: Its Urgency and Importance

Fr Cecil McGarry, SJ, gave a much appreciated key-note address to the AMACEA Plenary. He outlined the features of the 'new world culture' and how it effects our lives and what implications it has for our programmes of formation.

I would like to begin this presentation by attending in particular to one aspect of the realities of Africa today which I believe underlines the urgency and importance of the formation of the agents of evangelisation, from leaders and members of the small Christian communities to the clergy and the Bishops themselves. It is a reality that we are all aware of but that is difficult to deal with. I refer to the new world culture that is spreading everywhere so rapidly. I will then say something about the kind of formation that can meet this reality.

A new world culture

For many decades now we have spoken of the world as a global village. For the past two or three years everyone speaks of globalisation to express the rapidity with which a new reality is emerging and perhaps beginning to engulf us. The word is used to express the fact that we are living in a world of immense changes affecting almost every aspect of what we do. We are being moved forward in a world order that nobody fully understands but that is affecting all of us, even in rural Africa, though less markedly there as yet than in our towns and cities. This world order is not only new; it is revolutionary. It is political, technological and cultural as well as economic. The chief influence that is bringing about this new world order has been and still is the rapid developments in systems of communications, which are affecting how we live, think, feel, organise ourselves and celebrate and share life. It is affecting our way of being. That is why I want to dwell briefly on the cultural effects of the phenomenon that we are experiencing, which provide a strong argument for the urgency and importance of formation at every level in the Church.

As these changes take place and gather momentum, they are creating something that has never existed before, a global cosmopolitan society. We are the first generation to live in this society. It is changing our existing ways of life, our expectations, the focus of our attention, how we think and how we feel. It is important that we realise that this phenomenon is not something 'out there', distant from us as individuals; it is about what is 'in here'. Because it changes people's ways of thinking, feeling and being, it affects their grasp of and adherence to the Gospel and its values. Today the boundary line between the

Gospel and modern or post-modern global secular culture passes through the heart of each of us. Every agent of evangelisation feels the impulse to unbelief and to embracing secular values first of all within himself or herself — and I do not exclude priests, men and women religious or Bishops.

What is most significant is that this new global order is not being planned either by individuals or by collective human will. It is coming about in a haphazard way through a mixture of economic, technological and cultural developments and is driven largely by the motive of financial profit. In the first of the 1999 Reith Lectures on the World Service of the BBC, Professor Anthony Giddens did not hesitate to speak of "our runaway world" to describe our present global cultural reality.¹

The family in a global cosmopolitan society

Let me take an example of what I am referring to which should be familiar to all, the family. The family is the place in which the struggle between tradition and present day global culture is most in evidence. The African Synod said that the family is "the sacred place where all the riches of our tradition converge" (*Message*, n. 27). And, "in African culture and tradition the role of the family is everywhere held to be fundamental" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 43). Yet even in the five years since the Synod, have we not experienced world-wide and in Africa increasing strains and rapid change in traditional family life and values due to many causes, but particularly to the continuing sexual revolution and the world-wide transition from the family understood as a basic social and economic entity, to the family seen as a union based on romantic love. In the traditional family the mother was a full time housewife and frequently also a provider of food, the father was the undisputed authority and chief provider, while the children and other relatives were equally or even more important than the married couple, which was only one part of the marriage. With the rise of romantic love, the couple, married or unmarried, has been placed at the heart of family life. When love and sexual attraction fade, the couple may feel free to dissolve the relationship, in spite of how this will affect the children and other family members. Until today, in the whole of human history there has never been a society in which women have claimed equality with men, in which hu-

man sexuality has been exercised so widely outside marriage and so regularly separated from reproduction, and in which romantic love was commonly accepted as the central constituent of married life. The family at the end of the 20th century has become something different, even if superficially it may frequently look the same.

As I have said, the chief influence in world cultural changes has been and is the staggering and rapid developments that are taking place in systems of satellite communications. When the images of Nelson Mandela and Slobodan Milošević are more familiar to us than the faces of the people who live in our apartment building or on our street, and attend our parishes on Sunday, something has changed in our everyday experience. The global image of Mandela and Milošević is itself to a great extent the result of new communications technology. A world culture is created and images that come to us via satellite are changing our world. The 1989 revolutions in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries have been called the first 'television revolutions'. Western television could not be kept out of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries. Democratic ideas and a desire for greater freedom and the fruits of a global electronic economy took hold. Street protests taking place in one country were watched by television audiences in other countries, large numbers of whom took to the streets themselves. The communist regimes, symbolised by the Berlin Wall, collapsed in a matter of weeks. The seemingly impregnable *apartheid* regime in South Africa disappeared almost as if it had never been. Here we are touching one of the chief results of the new world culture: its power to sweep away what is not acceptable to it.

The disappearance of traditions

The new world culture that is constantly coming into being radically changes and even sweeps aside world, continental, national and local traditions. Traditions guided people in what they ought to do in almost every imaginable circumstance; people were not really called upon to make decisions, for only the traditional ways were socially acceptable. All that is rapidly changing. One of the most pernicious effects of the de-traditionalising of societies is what happens to people's sense of self-identity. As the influence of tradition and custom grows less on a world-wide level, the very basis of people's self-identity is seriously undermined. In traditional societies, a sense of self-identity was formed and sustained through the security of knowing what to do and the stability of people's actions in the community, whether family, school, parish, village, town or city. Self-identity was formed and supported through people fulfilling the actions and roles that were expected of them. Each one had his or her own place.

Those who have been given sound guiding principles of action and have interiorised them may flourish in this new climate. They find themselves living in a more open and reflexive way, in open discussion and dialogue

leading to personal decisions by which they guide their lives. But how many of our people have been given such principles of action either in a close-knit family, in a school where good discipline reigns and where children are respected, assimilate shared values and act according to them, or in a committed faith community where beliefs and values are strong? To judge by some of the very disturbing incidents that have taken place in recent months in some of our schools in Kenya, there is reason to be seriously disturbed about what is happening to our young people in the vacuum of values and guidelines for conduct that prevails in this new global society to which they in a special way are heirs and in which they are so vulnerable. Young people have no guiding principles in a detraditionalising society. They can be swept away and lose themselves, taking the line of least resistance or being moved here and there according to the dictates of current fashion, often coming from abroad. When levels of frustration are high, violence is the almost inevitable result.

Addictions

Nor should we be surprised at the rise of addictions in societies that are losing their traditions. Both tradition and addiction are concerned with the influence of the past on the present. Tradition guided people about what to do in the present situation. Addiction does just the same. When people, especially young people, are unsure how to act in the present, they allow themselves to be guided by how they have already coped with their decision-making in a situation of anxiety, uncertainty or stress in the past. It is true that addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, violence, crime, etc., often begin out of curiosity, bravado or a 'let me try it once' attitude. But addiction can take hold when a person, whose choice should be guided by tradition or by an educated freedom, finds himself or herself confused or uncertain about how to act. He or she got relief or pleasure or money through alcohol, drugs, sex or crime the last time, and allows the choice to be guided again this time by what gave relief before. People of an earlier generation guided their choices by tradition which took away anxiety about the decision to be made. Addictions flourish where there is lack of clearly taught and accepted principles to guide decision. Sometimes they are also the fruit of inherited characteristics. If we are in touch with our youth in and outside schools today, we know that many of them have acquired addictions of various kinds — to a very worrying degree.

Fundamentalism

Closely connected also with the global decline of the power of tradition to guide people in their decisions is the rise of fundamentalisms of all kinds. Fundamentalism is a return to basic scriptures or texts of another age which are read and lived literally today. Fundamentalism is tradition unable to deal with the uncertainties of new situations and taking refuge in literalism. It refuses to accept differences of context and tries to exclude all am-

biguity for the sake of security in a time of uncertainty. Who is not aware of the havoc caused among Christians of the mainline Churches in Africa by 'the saved' and other forms of fundamentalism in our places of work, schools and parishes?

Since tradition is so central to the Catholic Church we, too, can easily fall into fundamentalism at a time like this, and we are not without evidence of it in various Catholic groups throughout the world. One thinks of the Latin Mass Society, or Mother Angelica and other very conservative Catholics in the United States of America and Australia, who conduct witch hunts and then delate to higher authorities, pastors or authors who are struggling to present the Gospel in a way that can touch the lives of modern people and be relevant and credible to them. But tradition is not static; it is the living experience of Christians in each age who try to live their faith in ever new historical situations. We Catholics can also be in danger of repeating the answers of the past to new questions which cause uncertainty and even confusion among us. We can seek to have the security of 'definitive' solutions to questions that have not yet sufficiently matured to be decided. That is not the kind of certainty that the Catholic faith calls for or promises to provide. We may be called to walk in great uncertainty over a period of time, as Abraham, our father in faith, did — our only security being God's fidelity to his promise to be with us all days until the end of time.

What kind of formation do agents of evangelisation need in this context?

What resources does the Catholic Church have to meet the very real difficulties to which I have been referring? My answer is the same as that of the African Synod: after the grace of Christ, *the people*. But a people well formed to live and witness as Christians in this new situation. The Synod saw that the key to the new evangelisation, for which Pope John Paul II calls without ceasing, is formation. "The whole People of God ... needs to be trained, motivated and empowered for evangelisation, each according to his or her specific role within the Church" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 53). I believe that the context to which I have referred above also gives some guidance on the kind of formation that will be needed for all our agents of evangelisation. The undermining of a sense of self identity, with its consequent feelings of uncertainty and confusion in the modern global culture, indicates the need for a strong *human formation*; the expanding secular materialism and the lack of consensus on what are true human values, calls for a deep *spiritual formation*. These will be the foundation on which all professional and pastoral formation must be based.

In the new cultural context to which I have alluded, a committed Christian life is possible only if we can form our people, our priests and our religious to make freely motivated Christian choices and decisions based on Christian values that have been personally and freely chosen

as the guiding principles of life. This will be achieved by a deep formation of the human person to freedom and maturity based on Christian principles. We have to help all our agents of evangelisation not only to understand but to live their Christian faith freely and with conviction, with the help of God's grace. Here we rejoin the African Synod, which insists that the life of every Christian should be the result of "a transforming encounter with the living person of Christ" ... an 'overwhelming and exhilarating experience of Jesus Christ who calls each one to follow him in an adventure of faith'" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 57). This calls for a change of approach in our way of thinking about and practising our Christian faith, which is not in the first place a body of doctrines and laws to be known and obeyed, but the following of Jesus Christ known personally and intimately, because he calls each one by name to follow him. People are changed and develop living convictions not through instruction but through experience. It is one thing to know about the personal love of Jesus Christ for each and every one of his followers, it is another thing to experience it. There is, I think, little doubt that the formation we have given to agents of evangelisation in the past has been largely intellectual. Now we must provide a formation that is experiential. Experience will be able to generate the personal convictions necessary to be a follower of Christ in a world so influenced and formed by a global secular culture.

Inculturation of the Gospel in a new global culture

I recall here that inculturation was the central theme and thrust of the African Synod. *Ecclesia in Africa* insists that: "... the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, must *take root in the life situation of the hearers of the Word*. Inculturation is precisely the insertion of the Gospel message into cultures" (n. 60). The Synod itself concentrated on inserting the Gospel message into the cultures of Africa. But day by day in the years since the Synod we are becoming aware of how the emergence of a global information society is rapidly transforming *the life situation of the hearers of the Word* in our countries, and indeed the people themselves. We must hold on to the best values and expressions of African cultures but we must also take serious account of the de-traditionalising of all our societies, North and South, East and West, and of the relentless propagation of a world culture of freedom without any norms — which is, of course, a culture of licence. Our question as evangelisers is: how do we insert the Gospel message into this new life situation of our hearers? My response is: give our people, and especially all agents of evangelisation, a deep human and spiritual formation imbued with the values of the Gospel and of our African cultures. Incidentally, one of the effects already apparent all over the world of the spread of a common world culture is the felt need to support a weakening self-identity through fostering and strengthening regional and local cultures. This should make easier the task of a specifi-

cally African inculturation of the faith and life of the Church.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ also promotes a culture of freedom, but a freedom that finds its norms in the person of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. It is not an easy project, as Paul reminds us: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). Our Christian people are sons and daughters of the age of universal communication and will be affected by the kind of freedom propagated by the new world culture. This means that the seed of the Gospel may fall on hard ground beside the path, on rocky ground or among thorns and will not take root or will grow up quickly but, not having sufficient soil, will wither and die. In spite of many years of ‘education’ and ‘formation’ that has been largely intellectual and confined to the class-room, some of our clergy, religious and laity, through no fault of their own, can resemble fields in which the seed sprang up quickly and died, or a field with many weeds that are choking the good plants. Without solid *human formation* laity, priests and religious can go through even extended courses of formation as if going through a tunnel, from which they can emerge largely unchanged and without having interiorised Gospel values. The values are known in the mind but have not taken root in the heart and are not lived. How else do you explain the painful relations of conflict that exist between priests in some of our Dioceses, between religious in their communities, and between priests and people in the parishes? Spiritual values can only take root in well tilled human soil. When people cannot communicate on the human level, they cannot live in spiritual communion. Much effort and finances go into schools, catechetical centres, religious formation programmes and seminaries. Are we satisfied with the results? Are we satisfied with the yield we are receiving from so much effort, time and money? If not, what must we do?

What model of Church community do we wish to build?

It is not so much new programmes of formation that are needed as new *models* that will give priority to *human formation* in order to produce mature people capable of respecting one another and relating and communicating with one another at depth, and a *spiritual formation* that will produce disciples of Jesus Christ committed to living and proclaiming his Gospel out of personal conversion resulting in deep Christian convictions. But even before thinking of models of formation, the Bishops must ask themselves what model of Church community they wish to build in the Diocese, and what is their model of Bishop and priest and other agents of evangelisation in that Church? Is it a Church that will be family, and in which the laity are adults whose contribution is sought and received as *partners* in evangelisation? Is it a model of Church that is communion, in which priests, religious and lay people are truly the brothers and sisters of the Bishop and of one another, and work together, sharing responsibility for decision making? If it is, the present

model of formation is quite inadequate; for it remains substantially the model of formation that was used before Vatican II, which aimed at forming men and women for a Church that was seen primarily as Institution, and in which the key concept was authority. Those in formation were taught to obey and to depend on higher authority; they were not encouraged to question or take initiatives in order to take their place as mature sons and daughters in the household of faith. Formation was something they received, not a process of growth to which they committed themselves in order to be responsible for the life and mission of the Church, each according to his or her particular state and gifts.

It is well-known that education and formation can be used to tame and domesticate people or to liberate them. If one looks at current Church institutions in our AMECEA region that are engaged in formation of agents of evangelisation, it is difficult not to conclude that in quite a number of them, education is primarily aimed at domestication. I do not exclude our seminaries. A formation for a Church that is family/communion, in which the central concept and agent is the Holy Spirit, who gives gifts to each one for the building up of the body of the Church, must be a formation that liberates. St Paul insists that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). I think it can also be said that where there is no freedom, there the Spirit of the Lord is not present, at least in the structures. *If* we desire to form a Church that is communion, as Vatican II desired; *if* we want to build a Church that is family, which was the fundamental option of the African Synod, then we must change our *model of formation* and seek one that will aim in the first place at forming men and women who are maturely free, in whom the Gospel has been interiorised, who can communicate and collaborate freely, and who can recognise and accept authority as the gift of God to his Church, without which unity cannot be maintained.

Even if someone does not want to promote a Church that is communion and family, it will be good to recognise that the present world culture will make a Church/institution based primarily on authority increasingly difficult to maintain — something you may be experiencing already. In a world so affected by universal communication, power that comes from the top down does not easily prevail any more. Witness the fall of so many dictators in the past few years in the world of statecraft. Dictators fall because the new world culture favours democratic ideals and people see that absolute power is no longer acceptable. We are witnessing this already in family life in Africa, where the father’s authority was once absolute. Some submit out of fear, but they are no longer engaged. Today, authority in every sphere has lost its monopoly of information in an intrinsically open framework of global communications, which have spread a climate of democracy. Our Christian people are part of this world, even when they are trying to live by faith and recognise that the Church is not a democracy. They know, however, that if the Church is not a democracy, neither should it be

authoritarian, and that Jesus himself is the model for the exercise of authority in the Church.

A new model of formation for a Church that is communion

A model of formation for a Church that is family/communion will not begin with intellectual content but with *human and spiritual experience*. Moreover it will recognise that, after the Holy Spirit, the primary agent of formation is the person being formed. The person will be helped in the first place to know self and what it means to be a human person. Christ (and the holy people who have gone before us, our elder brothers and sisters in faith) will be presented as the models of what the human person should aim to become, each in his or her own way. The one being formed commits all his/her energies to become like Christ and the Christian ancestors. The formators are there to provide the means to be used and the skills necessary to progress. They should also, to the extent possible, be role models for those in formation. Those in formation must first aim to become better men and women and better followers of Christ, to whom each one responds in freedom. In this way a strong sense of self-identity will be formed as human person and as Christian, which will enable our agents of evangelisation to have a clear identity and clear principles of action in the present state of confusion.

Emphasis on human and spiritual formation

Human and spiritual formation cannot rightly be separated; for the human person is spiritual and transcendent by nature. If some of our spiritual formation has not been as effective as we would have hoped, it is usually because the soil of our humanity has not been adequately prepared to receive the transforming word of God. Grace and nature work hand in hand. By human formation I mean an adequate level of self knowledge and self acceptance, some understanding of how human growth takes place, some grasp of what is moving us at the deeper levels of our being, what conflicts and unsatisfied desires exist at that level and how we may acknowledge and deal with them, rather than project them onto others in inappropriate conduct. Also an ability to communicate with others in simplicity and truth, to confront others when necessary, to deal reasonably with conflict, and to accept others as they are in their difference from ourselves. We can be helped by instruction in these areas, but growth takes place not through study and thinking, but through learning to know and handle ourselves in the encounters and experiences of daily life. The dynamic of formation, therefore, will be personal reflection on one's daily human experiences, understanding of how one has acted, evaluating this in the light of the Gospel, and decision for the future. A necessary condition is that a person is growing in self awareness. This process will be greatly aided and supported, if a person periodically shares his/her experiences and reflection with a skilled guide.

Because of the incarnation of the Word, we know that what is most fully Christian is most fully human and *vice versa*. Therefore in the Gospel of Jesus Christ we find all the human and Christian principles to guide our lives. But what is most important in spiritual formation is that the one in formation has a deep *experience* of Jesus Christ as creator, merciful saviour, the one who walks with him/her every day and by whom he/she is totally accepted and unconditionally loved. Such an *experience* provides sufficient motivation for all the sacrifices that will be called for in living a full Christian life and making choices that reflect Gospel values. In a word, the basis of life becomes the following of Jesus Christ, who has the words of eternal life, by whom one knows one is loved

If all Christians need this kind of formation, how much more necessary it is for those who lead Christian communities, whether as lay leaders, catechists, priests, or religious men and women? We can only lead others to what we have experienced as valuable in our own lives. If we want to form our children in this way so that they may be able to cope with the modern world, we must first form their parents, their catechists and their teachers. In order to achieve this, we must form our seminarians, our priests and our religious women and men by a deep human and spiritual formation. If we do so, those who will be chosen as Bishops will also be well prepared for leadership.

Human and spiritual formation in the seminary

The priest is a key person in the life of the Christian community. What new structures are needed in our seminaries to provide the kind of human and spiritual formation I have described, which will enable future priests to be leaders of the community in a Church-as-family and to involve as many Christians as possible to participate actively and responsibly in the life and mission of the community? I have no blueprint to offer. What is clear is that our model and structures of formation must be very different from the largely academically oriented formation of our present seminaries. There will have to be life-groups in which the skills and arts of human communication are learned, in which trust is built up, in which accountability and responsibility for many aspects of seminary life are assumed by the seminarians themselves. They must become the agents of their own formation — which is formation to be leaders of a community, not strong individualists who have learned the art of survival. They must become good men and good Christians before they can become good priests. Would it not be possible for seminarians to take much more responsibility in groups and in turn for many aspects of seminary life that are presently managed for them, depriving them of the possibility of creating their own climate of formation, preventing them from making a home in the seminary to the extent that this is possible? I think of their taking responsibility for overseeing such material areas of their life as

kitchen, dining-room, grounds, cleaning, repairs, buying, budgeting, etc. If we train our seminarians to be served and not to serve, are we surprised if later they have difficulty in becoming servants of their communities? We have given them no *experience* of service. Also, could they not take responsibility for seminary discipline, recreation, liturgy, prayer, their retreats and recollections, faith-sharing and real communication between themselves about their ideals, their hopes and dreams, their fears, loneliness and disappointments? It is *they themselves* who must be responsible and accountable, in the first place, for seeking and using appropriate means of human and spiritual growth, without which they cannot be good priests. In all this, of course, they would be accompanied by the seminary authorities and staff.

During seminary years those who are preparing to commit themselves to celibate chastity should be helped to face in open discussion and sharing the meaning and difficulties as well as the happiness of such a life. They should know that celibacy brings a loneliness with it, which can give rise to all kinds of emotional problems and mental stresses unless a man has grown in affective maturity, in a deep love of Jesus Christ, and a life of prayer. We know the problems of alcoholism, sexual addiction, and over-work used as compensations and escape mechanisms. We also know that it need not be so. It is only so because we do not sufficiently accompany seminarians in their human, affective and spiritual growth. Celibate chastity can lead to maturity and warm pastoral relations between priest and people, and to holiness; it can also lead to disaster and great unhappiness. The result in each case is determined to a great extent by the quality of seminary formation and the real involvement of seminarians in their own formation. If seminarians never speak of these matters among themselves and with their formators in an open way and in an appropriate climate of trust, if they never share together their *experience* as men living a celibate life, if they do not in the seminary *experience* relationships of trust and real communication among themselves, how can they support one another later in the stresses of priestly life?

The first reaction of many may be to say: impossible! If you believe it is impossible, then of course it will be impossible. What you have to ask then is: do I really desire the end? If I do, I must also desire the means — and this requires much change. Another change must be in the relationship between authorities, teachers and other officials of the seminary and the seminarians, and between the seminarians and the priests and Bishop of their Diocese. It must be a relationship of elder to younger brothers, in which friendship, encouragement and trust are the dominant features, and fear is reduced to a minimum. This will not happen overnight and can only be worked out in fraternal dialogue. There must be an atmosphere in which questioning and dialogue are encouraged and not seen as signs of subversion to be suppressed or strongly discouraged. If their seminary *experience* has

been the discouragement of questioning and open dialogue, we cannot be surprised if they adopt this way of acting with the faithful in their parishes in later years.

All of the above would help to create a climate in which vocational motivation could be more easily discerned; and if there were authentic spiritual direction, not as a duty but as a desire of each seminarian to be accompanied in growth and in discernment of vocation, seminarians would be on the road to human and spiritual maturity. We probably have only a few seminary formators at present who could handle a programme on the lines suggested above. They will have to be prepared. I will conclude now, because the topic of priestly formation will be treated fully later during this study session, but first I just wish to add my conviction that seminary staff should be chosen in the first place for their *human qualities*, and secondarily for spiritual, intellectual and pedagogical gifts, which of course are also necessary.

My concern has been to focus on two central elements — the human and the spiritual — in the formation of all agents of evangelisation, which will prepare them to deal successfully both with the increasingly secular global culture which is transforming the world and our African continent and with the demands of ministry, lay and clerical, in a Church which is family and communion.

Notes

¹ Professor Giddens broadcast five lectures on the theme of Globalisation in April and May 1999. I am indebted to these lectures in tracing some of the characteristics of global culture in the first part of this presentation.

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Théologie de la libération et modernité — controverse et débat

Franciscain, Patrick Simonnin est aumônier d'étudiants à Paris. Il est également enseignant à l'Institut Catholique de Paris et prépare un doctorat de théologie sur les christologies latino-américaines de la libération.

Cet article a pour objectif de faire apparaître ce qui est fondamentalement en cause dans la controverse romaine avec la théologie de la libération (dorénavant notée TL). Après un bref rappel historique des années 70-80, nous partirons de la controverse avec Rome, en présupposant qu'il ne s'agissait pas seulement en cette affaire d'une mauvaise compréhension, mais qu'il s'y jouait quelque chose de beaucoup plus décisif, que les seuls textes officiels ne permettent pas de mettre en évidence : le recours à la pensée théologique personnelle du Cardinal Ratzinger nous aidera à percevoir ce dont il s'agit.

RAPPEL HISTORIQUE

Les années 70-80

Dans les années 70-80, la TL et le courant ecclésial dont elle est l'expression vont rapidement susciter des inquiétudes et des oppositions. Le contexte général devient plus difficile, les rêves de libération facile s'évanouissent. Cette période est marquée en Amérique Latine par une cascade de coups d'état militaires (Brésil, 1964 ; Argentine, 1966 ; Pérou, 1968 ; Bolivie, 1971 ; Uruguay, 1971 ; Équateur, 1972 ; Chili, 1973 ; etc.) La plupart du temps, les militaires font référence à l'idéologie de la sécurité nationale, une doctrine forgée aux États-Unis après la seconde guerre mondiale (1947), qui justifie la présence croissante des militaires dans la politique et dans l'économie. Il s'instaure une véritable " guerre intérieure " contre toutes les forces qui s'opposent au développement du capitalisme sauvage, une guerre dans laquelle tous les moyens sont permis (tortures, assassinats, disparitions, etc.) sous prétexte de défense de la " civilisation chrétienne " et de lutte contre la " subversion communiste ". Des centaines de prêtres, de religieux et religieuses, de catéchistes sont éliminés; en 1976, c'est même un groupe de 17 évêques qui se retrouve en prison en Équateur !

Dans cette ambiance, la TL, quelques années après sa naissance, ne peut plus se montrer aussi euphorique qu'aux origines : c'est ainsi que le paradigme biblique de l'Exode, qui faisait rêver à une Terre Promise, laisse place à un autre thème biblique, plus " désenchanté ", celui de la Captivité et de l'Exil.

La réaction de Sucre (Bolivie), 1972

Au plan ecclésial, la réaction ne se fait pas

attendre : elle se produit dès 1972, à l'occasion de la quatorzième conférence ordinaire du Celam (Conférence Épiscopale Latino-américaine), tenue à Sucre (Bolivie). C'est l'occasion d'un remaniement de la structure du Celam, permettant le remplacement des hommes qui avaient fait Medellín. Le nom du nouveau secrétaire général du Celam, Mgr Alfonso López Trujillo est resté dans de nombreuses mémoires.

Mexico, 1975

Très représentatif de cette période, également, est le congrès théologique qui se tient à Mexico en août 1975,¹ rassemblant quelque 700 personnes, dont l'ensemble des théologiens du courant de la libération. Le thème de ce congrès, *Libération et captivité*, est par lui-même éloquent quant à l'état d'esprit qui caractérise cette nouvelle époque de la TL. La même année, Leonardo BOFF publie un livre au titre voisin de celui du congrès de Mexico : *Théologie de la captivité et de la libération*.²

Dans l'introduction, l'auteur définit ainsi la tâche de la TL : " En régime de captivité, la théologie de la libération a d'autres tâches qu'en des temps où l'on jouit des libertés que l'on a conquises. Elle doit semer, préparer le terrain, maintenir ferme l'espérance, consoler les victimes, soulager les douleurs et lutter en faveur des droits de l'homme qui sont violés ".

Puebla, 1979

Ouverte par le pape Jean-Paul II, la Troisième Conférence Générale de l'Épiscopat Latino-américain se tient à Puebla, au cœur du Mexique, quelque dix ans³ après celle de Medellín. L'enjeu de cette Conférence est de taille : dans la situation politique et socio-économique que connaît le continent, la ligne pastorale et théologique de la TL va-t-elle être

confirmée ou abandonnée? On peut d'autant plus se le demander que le document préparatoire (1977) reflétait essentiellement les vues conservatrices du secrétaire général du Celam, Mgr López Trujillo, ne disant mot sur les atteintes au droits de l'homme et sur les régimes de sécurité nationale ; ce document fera en fait l'objet d'une large réprobation de la part des évêques. D'autre part, aucun des théologiens de la libération ne fait partie des experts théologiques officiels ; ils seront toutefois présents dans les coulisses, effectuant un important travail de conseil théologique auprès d'un bon nombre d'évêques.

Pourtant, le document final de la Conférence, bien que moins original et créatif que celui de Medellín et plus soucieux d'une identité chrétienne que l'on sent menacée par la sécularisation, affirmera et maintiendra les grandes lignes de Medellín ; sa grande référence est l'encyclique *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) de Paul VI. C'est même cette Conférence de Puebla qui donne ses lettres de noblesse à l'option (préférentielle) pour les pauvres (cf. n° 1134), en osant donner des visages concrets aux différentes catégories de pauvres. On prend toutefois bien soin de préciser, lorsqu'il est question de libération, qu'il s'agit de promouvoir une libération intégrale, pour souligner que celle-ci doit inclure l'aspect intérieur et individuel (libération du péché personnel), et ne peut se limiter à l'aspect historique (n° 480-490). Celui-ci n'en est pas minoré pour autant : en effet, le texte emploie explicitement le terme de péché social (n° 28), et comporte de vigoureuses dénonciations de la dramatique situation économique, sociale et politique du continent.

LE DÉBAT AVEC ROME

Les deux Instructions de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi à propos de la TL (respectivement datées de 1984 et 1986)⁴ ont suscité un grand écho, bien au-delà des frontières ecclésiales. Elles avaient été précédées d'autres interventions publiques des instances romaines : on citera par exemple, le texte de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi adressé en mars 1983 à l'évêque du Pérou par le Cardinal Ratzinger, intitulé : " Dix observations sur la théologie de Gustavo Gutiérrez ",⁵ un ensemble d'observations très sévères, faisant de cette théologie un marxisme déguisé ayant pour objectif de faire du christianisme un facteur de mobilisation au service de la révolution.

Première Instruction de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi (1984)

Les médias ont souvent entendu cette première Instruction comme une condamnation sans appel de la TL dans son ensemble. Pourtant, tenant à affirmer

tout de suite que l'idée même de théologie de la libération est parfaitement recevable, car elle rejoint des aspirations tout à fait légitimes d'hommes qui ressentent leur " misère comme une intolérable violation de leur dignité native ",⁶ l'Instruction se proposait, sur un ton relativement mesuré, d'opérer un " discernement ". Il est vrai cependant, que tout en précisant que le courant dit de la théologie de la libération regroupe plusieurs entreprises d'orientations passablement différentes, l'Instruction évoque parfois de manière globale les théologies de la libération, portant ainsi le lecteur à généraliser le propos (critique) tenu ; et que de même, ce qui est présenté d'abord comme une " tentation " ou un " risque " apparaît peu à peu comme une franche perversion de la foi.

Cette Instruction soulève des questions réelles et fondamentales : en particulier celle de l'utilisation de catégories marxistes pour l'analyse de la réalité et celle de l'interprétation des Écritures avec des outils marqués par la modernité critique. Les autres griefs soulevés, pour spectaculaires qu'ils soient (le prétendu encouragement à la violence, le concept d'Église populaire, l'abandon de la dimension personnelle du péché, etc.), sont d'envergure secondaire par rapport aux précédents, et ont été de fait assez facilement éclaircis par les théologiens de la libération.

Le problème de l'emprunt d'outils d'analyse sociale au marxisme a soulevé de nombreuses et violentes passions ; il ne faut pas oublier qu'à cette époque, la chute des régimes des pays de l'Est de l'Europe ne s'était pas encore produite, et que le système de pensée marxiste jouissait encore d'une aura certaine. Le reproche de l'Instruction peut se résumer ainsi : le marxisme se présentant comme une conception totalisante du monde, l'utilisation de certains de ses éléments, même si elle se veut déliée de la référence athée et déshumanisante, conduit nécessairement à adopter cette dernière (alors même qu'on prétend faire de la théologie !).

La seconde Instruction de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi (1986)

La première instruction n'avait pas pour but de " traiter pour lui-même le vaste thème de la liberté chrétienne et de la libération " ; elle annonçait la publication ultérieure d'une seconde instruction, " qui mettrait en évidence, d'une façon positive, toutes les richesses tant pour la doctrine que pour la pratique ". Celle-ci allait effectivement paraître un an et demi plus tard, avec pour titre les mots mêmes qui l'avaient annoncée : Instruction sur la liberté chrétienne et la libération. Son ton nettement plus serein que la précédente a pu faire dire à certains médias qu'elle

reflétait un total changement de cap de l'autorité romaine : c'est là une interprétation par trop simpliste, puisque cette seconde instruction insiste sur le " rapport organique " qui existe entre les deux documents.

S'appuyant sur un véritable petit traité de la liberté, l'instruction ne répugne pas à employer le terme de libération qui court tout au long du document (sans que soit pour autant explicitement mentionnée la théologie du même nom). Affirmant clairement que " la libération la plus radicale, qui est libération du péché et de la mort, est celle accomplie par la mort et la résurrection du Christ ", le texte n'oublie pas de préciser que la promesse du Royaume " concerne directement notre vie en ce monde ". Au fond, c'est la liberté qui met en route un processus de libération, en vue d'une réalisation des conditions - politiques, sociales, économiques et culturelles - pour l'exercice de cette liberté. Une libération intégrale présente donc deux dimensions inséparables : la première est la dimension sotériologique, et elle fonde la seconde, la dimension socio-éthique, comme une tâche et une exigence.

Tout en se situant dans la suite de celle qui l'avait précédée, cette seconde Instruction fait donc preuve d'un état d'esprit assez nettement différent. Faisant référence au Concile Vatican II et à la Doctrine Sociale de l'Église, elle dépasse la tentation dualiste, pour tenir un discours sur la libération qui, sans manquer d'en dessiner les mé-compréhensions et les impasses, laisse ouverte la possibilité du dialogue, ainsi que celle d'une application des principes généraux aux situations locales, souvent hélas rien moins qu'iréniques.

Toutefois, il est aisé de percevoir dans cette seconde Instruction une irréductible différence de point de vue d'avec celui des théologiens de la libération : prétendant d'une certaine manière se situer " au-dessus de la mêlée ", dans un idéal unanimiste, ce document préfère parler d'amour de préférence pour les pauvres que d'option pour les pauvres, qui risque toujours d'être entendue comme un choix " partisan et de nature conflictuelle ".

En outre, faire découler la libération socio-économique de la libération sotériologique comme une pure tâche éthique, ne fait pas véritablement droit à la particularité théologique de la TL, qui consiste à faire œuvre théologique à *partir de*⁷ l'expérience de libération " mondaine ". On peut développer le même genre de remarque à propos du thème fondamental de cette Instruction, le rapport liberté / libération : si le raisonnement n'est plus véritablement dualiste, ainsi qu'il l'était clairement dans la première Instruction, il n'en est pas moins clairement " descendant " et déductif, faisant procéder la liberté de la vérité, et la libération de la liberté (selon le schéma : vérité -> liberté -> libération). Il reste dans ce texte une méfiance

viscérale par rapport à tout mouvement de libération " purement humain " : " Parce qu'il a été contaminé par des erreurs mortelles sur la condition de l'homme et de sa liberté, le profond mouvement moderne de libération demeure ambigu " : il peut toujours être suspecté de s'appuyer sur l'idée que " entre l'affirmation de Dieu et la liberté humaine, il y aurait une radicale incompatibilité " (n° 18).

RECOURS AU Cardinal RATZINGER

L'examen des deux Instructions ne permet donc pas à lui seul de faire clairement apparaître l'enjeu véritablement décisif dans la TL. Nous aurons donc recours à la pensée théologique personnelle du Cardinal Ratzinger,⁸ qui s'est montré durement critique du courant de la TL. Notre idée est que le Cardinal Ratzinger a fondamentalement bien perçu ce qui était en jeu dans ce courant théologique, même si c'est pour s'y opposer de manière décidée. Pour tenter de saisir cet enjeu, nous ferons d'abord un saut dans le " futur " par rapport à 1984 (date de la première Instruction), pour ensuite faire retour à cette année-là.

En 1996 : le " relativisme "

Dans une conférence donnée en mai 1996, à Guadalajara (Mexique), aux présidents des Commissions pour la Doctrine de la Foi des conférences épiscopales d'Amérique Latine,⁹ le Cardinal affirme que le danger que représente la TL, tout en n'ayant pas totalement disparu, est moins grand qu'il y a quelques années, car elle est désormais moins à la mode. Le danger vient, dit-il, du relativisme, qui serait maintenant le ressort du dialogue interreligieux. Il dit exactement ceci : " La TL avait tenté de donner au christianisme, fatigué de ses dogmes, un nouvel ordre pratique grâce auquel la Rédemption devait devenir événement. Mais cette praxis a laissé des ruines derrière elle au lieu de construire la liberté. Il n'est donc resté que le relativisme et la tentation de s'y conformer. " (p.133). Cette phrase peut s'entendre à première écoute comme l'affirmation que la TL est elle-même la cause de ce relativisme : à avoir incorporé dans le christianisme la vision messianique de l'histoire propre au marxisme, elle serait responsable de ce que la désillusion provoquée par l'échec de ce dernier n'ait pas épargné le christianisme.

Il est cependant une autre manière d'entendre cette affirmation du Cardinal Ratzinger : la TL serait une fille du relativisme, elle en serait l'ultime masque, avant qu'il n'apparaisse sans fard. Sous des allures de messianisme politico-religieux, ce serait déjà le relativisme qui serait à l'œuvre. Le recours de la TL au marxisme, certes très grave, ne serait au fond

qu'une conséquence conjoncturelle : celle de la séduction qu'exerçait cette idéologie dans les années de naissance de la TL, sur des esprits déjà débilisés par le relativisme.

Le document de travail de 1984

L'intuition qui vient d'être développée est corroborée par les réflexions que déployait le Cardinal dans un document de travail de 1984.¹⁰ Il nous semble que ce texte - qui, pour n'être pas destiné à la publication, ne fut néanmoins jamais désavoué - expose sans détour la pensée du Cardinal quant à la TL, et permet de mieux comprendre les tenants et aboutissants du discours malgré tout plus mesuré de la première Instruction. On retrouve d'ailleurs dans cette Instruction un bon nombre des affirmations présentes dans ce document de travail, dont la conviction centrale qui suit : " On se trouve devant un véritable système, alors même que certains hésitent à en suivre la logique jusqu'au bout. Comme tel, ce système est une perversion du message chrétien tel que Dieu l'a confié à son Église. Ce message se trouve donc remis en cause dans sa globalité par les 'théologies de la libération' " (IX, 1).

Le marxisme ?

On a souvent focalisé l'attention sur la question du marxisme. De fait, dès les premières lignes du document, le Cardinal parle d'une " option marxiste fondamentale ". Il nous semble pourtant qu'il s'agit là d'un arbre médiatique cachant la forêt théologique. L'opposition décidée du Cardinal à la TL procède, nous semble-t-il, de racines théologiques beaucoup plus profondes qu'une simple allergie politico-philosophique. Cela d'autant plus qu'en 1984, date de rédaction de ce document et de la première Instruction de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi, la TL avait déjà notablement modifié son positionnement par rapport au marxisme : même si elle restait encore sensible aux instruments d'analyse " marxienne ", elle avait déjà depuis quelques années (sur une histoire encore courte) renoncé aux visions messianiques de l'histoire, passant du paradigme de l'Exode à celui de l'Exil (cf. supra). La question du marxisme était donc en 1984 beaucoup moins d'actualité qu'à l'époque des premiers vagissements de la TL.¹¹ Il nous semble donc que le motif de la persistance de l'opposition du cardinal Ratzinger à la TL doit être recherché ailleurs, ou plus profondément.

Ce qui est en cause: une nouvelle herméneutique

Dès l'introduction du même document de travail de 1984, il est dit que la TL se conçoit elle-même " comme une nouvelle herméneutique de la foi chrétienne, autrement dit comme une nouvelle forme de compréhension et de réalisation du christianisme dans sa totalité ".¹² Et un peu plus loin, il est précisé que ce qui rend si difficile le combat contre cette théologie, c'est précisément " qu'elle n'entre dans aucun schéma d'hérésie ayant existé à ce jour : sa position de départ se trouve en dehors de ce qui peut être saisi par les schémas traditionnels de discussion ". Il est donc clair que l'un des principaux reproches adressés à la TL, c'est sa nouveauté et son caractère non traditionnel.

Ensuite, cherchant à retracer l'étiologie de " cette orientation complètement nouvelle de la pensée théologique qui trouve son expression dans la théologie de la libération ", le Cardinal avance un faisceau de trois causes : la première étant la situation théologique nouvelle consécutive au Concile Vatican II ; la seconde, le " vide sensible de signification " qui affecte le monde occidental à la même période, un tel vide constituant comme un appel d'air destiné à être comblé par la fascination des diverses formes du néo-marxisme ; et la troisième résidant dans le " défi moral constitué par la pauvreté et l'oppression ".¹³

Il reste à expliquer la convergence de ces trois causes : comment a-t-il été possible que l'on aille " chercher la réponse (à ce défi de la pauvreté et de l'oppression) dans un christianisme qui se laisserait guider par les modèles d'espérance, fondés scientifiquement en apparence, des philosophies marxistes " ? Pour quelle(s) raison(s) la pensée théologique de cette époque a-t-elle pu céder au chant des sirènes ? Quels liens, tels ceux qui attachaient Ulysse au mât de son navire, avaient donc été dénoués ou dissous, et comment ?

L'héritage de Bultmann

La réponse se trouve dans la partie II du document, intitulée : La structure gnoséologique fondamentale de la théologie de la libération.¹⁴ Il va donc y être question, comme l'annonce le texte, des " éléments structuraux qui portent la théologie de la libération ". Une telle analyse n'apparaissait d'ailleurs pas véritablement dans la première Instruction. Or,

ce dont il est question dans cette deuxième partie, ce n'est pas de Marx, mais de Bultmann ! Pour le dire en quelques mots, selon le Cardinal Ratzinger, la TL a pu se développer parce que Bultmann avait préparé le terrain. La critique bultmannienne avait creusé un abîme entre le " Jésus historique " et le " Christ de la foi ", et avait eu pour effet que " la crédibilité historique des Évangiles se trouvait ébranlée ". Conséquence: " il fallait chercher pour la figure de Jésus une nouvelle interprétation et une nouvelle signification ". On retrouve ici la qualité de nouveauté, qui constitue, on l'a vu, l'un des reproches adressés à la TL.

Mais un autre terme important apparaît également dans ce texte: " interprétation ", qui va faire l'objet d'un développement important. L'entreprise bultmannienne a produit " la dissociation entre la figure de Jésus et la tradition classique " et, conséquence logiquement nécessaire, " l'idée que l'on puisse et doive transférer cette figure dans le présent à travers une nouvelle herméneutique ",¹⁵ idée qui ne peut produire que des errements, ainsi que l'illustrerait dramatiquement la TL.

Tout le reste découle de ce point capital. La conjoncture philosophique et politique des années soixante, constituant de manière inévitable l'aujourd'hui dans lequel il fallait effectuer cette herméneutique, conduisait immanquablement à adopter l'analyse marxiste comme cadre de pensée, d'autant que la " confusion entre l'image biblique de l'histoire et la dialectique marxiste " était facilitée par l'interprétation du concept biblique du " pauvre " à travers l'idée du prolétariat au sens marxiste. Autre conséquence : l'intervention du magistère est d'avance disqualifiée, puisque " au cas où il s'opposerait à une telle interprétation du christianisme, il démontrerait seulement qu'il est du côté des riches et des dominateurs, et contre les pauvres et ceux qui souffrent, autant dire contre Jésus lui-même, et dans la dialectique de l'histoire, il se rangerait du côté du négatif ".¹⁶

La TL, une théologie herméneutique

Le raisonnement semble imparable. On peut cependant émettre une première remarque assez fondamentale : en restant dans la logique de l'analyse déployée par le Cardinal Ratzinger, on voit mal comment des théologiens, s'ils ont vraiment pris la leçon de Bultmann au sérieux, continueraient à s'intéresser à la figure de Jésus, ce que fait précisément le volet christologique de la TL ; ils devraient plutôt être définitivement prémunis contre cette tentation. À moins de supposer qu'ils n'aient pas véritablement mesuré la portée de l'entreprise de Bultmann, on doit donc

envisager la possibilité qu'une autre manière de comprendre la postérité de celle-ci soit à l'œuvre dans la TL, et même dans une bonne partie de la théologie post-conciliaire.

Car depuis Bultmann, les choses ont évolué; ainsi que l'écrit Joseph Doré : " L'époque n'est plus où l'on se déclarait soit impuissant soit méfiant en ce domaine. Depuis les contestations bultmaniennes, la recherche exégétique a beaucoup progressé (E. Käsemann, E. Fuchs, G. Ebeling, H. Schlier, H. Schürmann...). Et, si les théologiens s'accordent à considérer que ne peut être tenu pour christologie authentique que ce qui peut valoir du Jésus de l'histoire, événement pascal compris, ils tendent aussi à admettre que ce que la science historique peut établir par elle-même a suffisamment de consistance pour faire apparaître la base, historique elle aussi, à partir de laquelle les disciples ont pu en venir (et être fondés) à professer (dans une foi où ils peuvent toujours être suivis) résurrection, rôle salvifique et divinité de Jésus-Christ ".¹⁷

L'irrecevabilité de la TL, aux yeux du Préfet de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi, réside précisément dans son identité de théologie herméneutique. Or, la réflexion théologique des trois dernières décades l'a amplement mis en évidence, ce caractère herméneutique de la théologie constitue la marque au fer rouge que la modernité a imprimée sur la pensée croyante. L'opposition à la TL, tout du moins chez le Cardinal Ratzinger, semble au bout du compte procéder d'une fin foncière de non-recevoir opposée à la modernité.

Une telle interprétation trouve un appui dans l'ouvrage que René Marlé a consacré à la TL.¹⁸ Dans le dernier chapitre intitulé : " La théologie de la libération en face des instances officielles de l'Église catholique ", il relève explicitement le caractère de nouveauté que revêt la TL et pose la question de savoir s'il ne faudrait pas de préférence mettre l'accent sur la " nouveauté de la situation à l'intérieur de laquelle il est parlé de la foi aujourd'hui " – cette nouveauté résidant bien sûr dans le contexte latino-américain, mais plus encore dans celui de la modernité : " N'est-ce pas cette modernité, avec sa double composante de critique et d'insistance sur la pratique, sur le 'faire de l'homme et de l'histoire, sur le principe de vérification, qui rend inopérants, parce que décalés, les critères classiques de l'orthodoxie? " ¹⁹

Cette mise en évidence du problème du rapport à la modernité, René Marlé n'en a pas fait le centre de son plaidoyer en faveur de la TL: sans doute par prudence, il faisait cette remarque " comme en passant ", au milieu d'une argumentation plutôt axée sur l'idée d'une caricature que dessineraient de la TL les textes du Préfet de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi.

Juan Luis Segundo, par contre, a de son côté pris moins de précautions, consacrant tout un livre à la question de la critique développée à l'encontre de la TL par le Cardinal Ratzinger.²⁰ Dans le troisième chapitre (sur quatre qui constituent l'ouvrage) intitulé "Libération et herméneutique",²¹ il affirme nettement qu'il s'agit de la mise en cause de "toute l'histoire de la théologie de ces derniers temps, celle de la période post-conciliaire".²² Et d'entrée, en première page de ce chapitre, afin que l'enjeu soit bien clair, il précise que seraient bien ingénus les théologiens européens et nord-américains qui ne se croiraient pas concernés par cette Instruction : "La majorité des théologiens nord-atlantiques pourront lire cette Instruction tranquillement, comme quelque chose de lointain et qui ne les concerne pas... Ils peuvent la lire ainsi, mais je crois qu'au fond ils commettraient une erreur. (...) Tout ce document constitue un 'avis à l'Église' tout entière".²³

Une thologie aux prises avec la modernité

Il semble donc bien que ce qui apparaît comme inacceptable dans la TL pour le Cardinal Ratzinger, c'est le fait qu'elle soit fondamentalement une herméneutique, une herméneutique de la figure de Jésus dira le Cardinal, herméneutique de la foi disent plus globalement les théologiens de la libération. Et un tel caractère herméneutique serait à comprendre comme l'empreinte de la modernité sur ce courant théologique. Cette influence décisive de la modernité sur la TL est à vrai dire très plausible, et cela pour deux raisons complémentaires. Premièrement, on doit se rappeler que la plupart des grands noms de la TL ont fait leurs études en Europe, et que d'autre part l'Amérique Latine elle-même, dans ses élites intellectuelles, a toujours été profondément influencée par la pensée européenne.

Au bout du compte, c'est donc bien le caractère herméneutique de la TL qui rend raison de son "desde América Latina" et également de son "desde los pobres", ou même de son "desde la liberación",²⁴ et non pas purement la revendication plus ou moins anti-occidentale d'une identité latino-américaine ayant quelque difficulté à se trouver.

Il est ainsi envisageable de comprendre l'entreprise de la TL (en diversifiant les compréhensions que l'on peut avoir de "l'homme moderne" en fonction des différents contextes) selon ce que dit Claude Geffré de la tâche de la théologie: "On peut définir la tâche de toute théologie, à chaque époque de l'histoire de l'Église, comme l'effort pour rendre plus intelligible et plus parlant le langage déjà constitué de la révélation. Ce langage est privilégié et normatif pour la foi de l'Église, mais il doit être assimilé de façon

vivante en fonction d'une situation historique nouvelle et selon des catégories culturelles différentes. La théologie assume donc une fonction herméneutique, mesurée à la fois par la fidélité au témoignage scripturaire et par la nécessité de rendre parlante pour aujourd'hui la Parole de Dieu".²⁵

Reste alors la question fondamentale : toute entreprise herméneutique est-elle immanquablement vouée à faire de l'Évangile la force d'appoint, l'otage ou le masque de telle ou telle idéologie du moment ? Pourtant, dans un article datant de 1989 intitulé "L'interprétation de la Bible en conflit",²⁶ le Cardinal reconnaît qu'il est impossible de revenir en deçà de Bultmann et que la théologie est pour ainsi parler "condamnée" à l'herméneutique. À quelles conditions une nouvelle herméneutique de la foi chrétienne, c'est ainsi que Ratzinger qualifiait de manière très négative la TL dans le document de travail de 1984, sera-t-elle alors recevable ? Comment allier nouveauté de l'interprétation et fidélité à la Tradition ?

L'entreprise herméneutique peut-elle être une ré-interrogation de l'héritage de sens que recèle la tradition chrétienne, à partir de la nouvelle compréhension du monde et de l'histoire se faisant jour dans une époque donnée ? La TL répond-elle en fin de compte en contexte latino-américain au cahier des charges que dressait Georges Kowalski: "Mettre en évidence les possibles réels ouverts par la foi à la vie humaine. [...] Utilisation non utopique de l'utopie chrétienne",²⁷ mais sans prétendre réduire un jour l'horizon du Mystère par une thématization achevée des champs possibles de la praxis humaine".²⁸

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1 Encuentro Latinoamericano de Teología : Liberación y cautiverio - Debates entorno al método de la teología en América Latina, México, 11-15 agosto 1975.

2 Teologia do cativo e da libertação, Vozes, Petrópolis, 1975

3 Du 27 janvier au 13 février 1979.

4 "Instruction sur quelques aspects de la théologie de la libération" (connue également sous le titre latin "Libertatis nuntius"), Documentation Catholique n° 1881 (1984), 890-900, et "Instruction sur la liberté chrétienne et la libération", Documentation Catholique n° 1916 (1986), 393-411.

5 Texte reproduit dans la revue DIAL, n° 925 (1984); également dans Théologies de la libération. Documents et débats (Cerf/Centurion, 1985), [ouvrage désormais noté : TLDD] pp. 117-120.

6 in TLDD, p. 157.

7 C'est le fameux desde español, qui court comme un leitmotiv dans toute la TL.

8 On y fera donc référence, non pas en tant que Préfet de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi, mais en tant qu'individu, et théologien de grande perspicacité.

9 Ratzinger J., "La foi et la théologie aujourd'hui", *Esprit et Vie*, 107/6 (1997), 128-136.

10 Ratzinger J., "Les conséquences fondamentales d'une option marxiste", *Documentation Catholique* 1881, 1984, 902-917. Bien que certains observateurs parlent de ce texte comme d'une interview accordée à la revue italienne *Trenta Giorni*, la plupart d'entre eux tiennent ce texte pour un document de travail (qui aurait été publié sans l'assentiment du Cardinal), en préparation de la Première Instruction de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi, qui serait publiée le 3 septembre 1984. On considère souvent que la première publication de ce document de travail a été le fait de la revue *Trenta Giorni* dans sa livraison de mars 1984. Il a été également publié à la même période sous forme plus condensée dans un autre journal italien, *La Vanguardia* (édition du 28 mars 1984). Ce sont certainement ces deux publications qui ont donné au texte sa notoriété. Cependant, Norbert Greinacher, dans la présentation de la traduction allemande de ce document, en fait remonter la première apparition publique au 23 janvier 1984, dans la revue péruvienne *Oiga*: il s'agissait effectivement là d'un texte signé par le Cardinal lui-même, intitulé "Presupuestos, problemas y desafíos de la Teología de la Liberación". Cf. la présentation de: Ratzinger J., "Die Theologie der Befreiung", Greinacher N. (éd.), *Konflikt um die Theologie der Befreiung - Diskussion und Dokumentation*, Zürich, Benziger, 1985, 133-145; p. 133.

11 Dans l'interview donnée en septembre 1984 à la revue italienne *Trenta Giorni*, Jon Sobrino faisait remarquer que "si l'on examine dans l'ordre chronologique les écrits des théologiens que j'ai cités (Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Ignacio Ellacuría, Ronaldo Muñoz), on constate que ce type de références au marxisme se fait de plus en plus rare". Texte français: Sobrino J., "L'irruption des pauvres dans l'Église", Chenu B., Laurent B. (éds.), *Théologies de la libération. Documents et débats*, Paris, Cerf/Centurion, 1985, 209-217; p. 213.

12 Ratzinger J., "Les conséquences fondamentales d'une option marxiste", p. 902.

13 On doit accorder ce point au Cardinal, contrairement aux caricatures un peu faciles qui en ont été parfois dessinées, que son opposition à la TL ne relève pas d'un cynisme politico-religieux s'accommodant facilement de la misère du monde.

14 Ratzinger J., *ibid.*, pp. 904-905.

15 Ratzinger J., *ibid.*, p. 904.

16 Ratzinger J., *ibid.*, p. 904.

17 Doré J., art. "Christologie", *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (CD ROM, v. 3), 1997.

18 Marlé R., *Introduction à la théologie de la libération*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1988.

19 Marlé R., *ibid.*, p. 153.

20 Segundo J.L., *Teología de la liberación - Respuesta al Cardenal Ratzinger*, Madrid, Ediciones Cristiandad, 1985.

21 Segundo J.L., *ibid.*, pp. 113-174.

22 Segundo J.L., *ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

23 Segundo J.L., *ibid.*, p. 113 (corps du texte et note n° 1).

24 "à partir de l'Amérique Latine", contexte géographique ; "à partir des pauvres", contexte social, ce qui sous-entend, davantage qu'une situation, une prise de parti, traduite dans l'expression option pour les pauvres ; "à partir de la libération".

25 Geffré C., § 2: "La théologie, science de la foi", in Dumery H., Geffré C., Poulain J., art. "Théologie", *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, CD-ROM v. 3, 1997.

26 Ratzinger J., "Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit", *Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit. Zur Frage nach Grundlagen und Weg der Exegese heute*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien, Herder, 1989, 15-44.

27 Si l'on arrêta ici la citation, l'accusation de réductionnisme serait sans doute justifiée; c'est la seconde partie de la phrase, centrée sur le principe théologique de la "réserve eschatologique", qui fait la différence avec une instrumentalisation de l'Évangile.

28 Kowalski G., *Et la scientificité?*, Doré J., (dir.), *Introduction à l'étude de la théologie*, Paris, Desclée, coll. "Manuel de théologie", t.2, 1992, 620-634.

Ref.: *SPIRITUS*, September 1999, n. 156.

Fr Stanislaus, SVD

Ecology: An Awareness for Mission

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On 5 June, the world observes Environment Day to remind people of the earth, from which we come, on which we depend, for which we begin to feel responsible. The awareness of nature, world, cosmos, etc., is evident now and one needs to look at the world in a wholistic sense taking everything in profound eco-awareness. This paper first presents the recent scientific approach to ecology and it tries to understand the theology of ecology starting from the 'body' concept. At the end it considers what our mission is today in this context. This article does not go into the detailed analytical study on different theories, it only underlines the importance of ecology.

1. The Gaia Hypothesis

The earth is seen today more and more like a living being. An increasingly popular scientific hypothesis suggests that the most satisfactory way of understanding the planet's chemistry, ecology and biology is to view the planet as a single living system. Today, there are many explanations for this new development. The rhythm of day and night might be considered the pulse of the planet. The enormous liquid rock flowing within the planet provide the minerals essential for life.

James Lovelock sees that in the atmosphere of chemistry, biology and ecology, there is a unpredictable disequilibrium. He comes to the conclusion that the atmosphere is being shaped every day by many living processes on Earth. He explains:

The entire range of living matter on Earth, from viruses to whales, from algae to oaks, plus the air, the oceans and the land surface all appear to be part of a giant system able to control the temperature and the composition of the air, sea and soil so as to maintain the optimum condi-

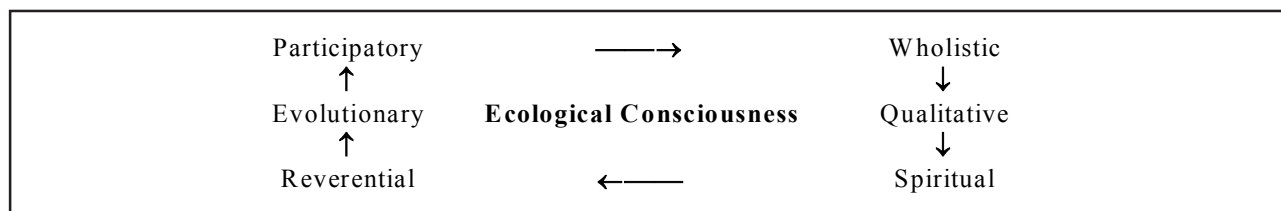
tions for the survival of life on the planet.¹

He calls this concept the *Gaia Hypothesis*, in honour of the ancient Greek 'Earth Mother' goddess, *Gaia* (from the Greek word *ge*, meaning earth). *Gaia* signifies the entire biosystem — all the plants, animals and birds living on the planet, in its atmosphere, oceans and soil.

Gaia appears to maintain planetary homeostasis in a variety of ways, monitoring and modifying many key components in the atmosphere, oceans and soil. The data that Lovelock amasses in support of this contention are quite fascinating.² On the basis of these and other patterns of 'homeostatic' behaviour, Lovelock concludes that the climate and chemical properties of the earth seem to have always an optimal condition for life. One branch of *General Systems' Theory* deals with living system. James Miller identified 19 critical subsystems that seem to characterise living systems.³ Gaia appears to satisfy all these systems and to be self-organising. So Lovelock holds that Gaia should be considered as *a living system in its own right*.

2. Ecological Consciousness

Ecological consciousness, in its very radical form, runs counter to the technological consciousness of today. It challenges the rationality of mechanistic systems. But at the same time, ecological consciousness emphasizes economic equity and the irreducibility of large complex wholes to their underpinning components: ecological habits and human persons. Skolimowski enumerates six characteristics by which we can define the scope and nature of ecological consciousness. A diagrammatic presentation of those six would be through a mandala, where all its characteristics are feeding into each other, and feeding on each



other; co-define each other.⁴

As is clear from the mandala, ecological consciousness reaffirms the wholeness and unity of it all, and reassures us that we are legitimate dwellers of the cosmos, not some kind of cosmic freaks. In this way, ecological consciousness is a synthesis that marks a return to the spiritual without submitting to religious orthodoxies and religious dogma, and seeks social amelioration and justice for all without worshipping physical power and without celebrating the aggressive nature of the human person.⁵

Russel describes four stages of evolution: Energy, Matter, Life and Consciousness. With the development of the large human brain and context there was an emergence of self-reflective consciousness. Humans are not only conscious; they are conscious of being conscious. One of the things we notice in the four pattern of evolution is that there was void in the beginning. He says,

Immediately after the Big Bang, there was only *energy*. Out of this developed a whole new order of existence: physical *matter*. For eons, this matter was inanimate, yet out of it emerged a new order: *life*. Life persisted and flourished and from living organisms emerged another new order: self-reflective *consciousness*.⁶

To understand the consciousness we must have recourse to 'complexity' which is inherent in the life potential. The concept of complexity could be explained in terms of three basic characteristics: *diversity; organization; connectivity*.⁷

2.1 The Global Brain

Evolution is developing fast. Never before has a product of evolution participated so actively in accelerating the evolutionary process itself as humanity today. Human society is like our brain, it can be seen as one enormous data collection, communication and memory system. We have grouped ourselves into clusters of cities and towns rather like the way nerve cells cluster into 'ganglia' in a vast nervous system. Linking the 'ganglia' and the individual 'nerve cells' are vast information networks. The faster electronically based communication networks are like the billions of tiny fibres linking the nerve cells in the brain. In these changes, "no longer will we perceive ourselves as isolated individuals; we will know ourselves to be part of a rapidly integrating global network, the nerve cells of an awakening global brain".⁸

3. Fifth and Sixth Evolution

Teilhard de Chardin developed a general theory of evolution, which he believed would apply not only

to the human species but also to the human mind, and the relationship of religious experience to the facts of natural science. The fulfilment of the process of noogenesis (the genesis of mind) was referred to by Teilhard as the *Omega Point*, the culmination of the evolutionary process, the end point towards which we are all converging. Sri Aurobindo saw evolution as the 'Divine Reality' expressing itself in ever higher forms of existence. Having passed from energy through matter and life, to consciousness, evolution was now passing through the transformation from consciousness to what he called *Supermind*.⁹

Russel sees something beyond a planetary consciousness or Supermind or Teilhard's view, a new evolution as different from consciousness as consciousness is from life, and life is from matter. He calls it the 'Gaiafield', the fifth evolution.

The Gaiafield will not be the property of individual human beings, any more than consciousness is the property of individual cells. The Gaiafield will occur at the *planetary* level, emerging from the combined interactions of all the minds within the social super-organism.¹⁰

Russel's explanation does not stop with the fifth evolution. He also says that there will be a sixth evolution:

... this next evolutionary step would signify the transition to a galactic super-organism. The Galaxy would become her equivalent of conscious. With this would come the emergence of a sixth level of evolution; one as different from the Gaiafield as the Gaiafield is from consciousness, consciousness from life, and life from matter.¹¹

Russel warns that in this process of evolution, humanity is in a time of severe crisis and cannot continue on the present path for long. The present system should make the necessary adaptations to survive the crisis. We need more insight to adapt to this present crisis. The Universe will carry on evolving towards higher levels of integration and complexity. Thus we are now in the deepest crisis. Russel thinks that, "we may have reached the final test of our viability for further evolution". He explains:

This test is not a physical test; it is a test of our consciousness. It is a test of whether or not humanity is psychologically and spiritually fit to live on planet Earth; a test of whether we can change at a very fundamental level the way *we relate to others and the environment*, whether we can work in harmony rather than conflict; whether we can balance centuries of material progress with an equal inner growth; whether we can connect that level of unity that we know theoretically (and, in those privileged,

magical moments, know experientially) lies at our core.¹²

The task of the viability rests with humanity, which alone can make a deliberate choice for the future. We are the custodians of the evolutionary process on Earth. What is our choice? As Christians this concept takes us to see what is our relation with God and what is the meaning of Jesus Christ who redeemed the whole world. What is the responsibility of Christ today with regard to environmental concerns?

4. Bible and Ecology

In Genesis, God said “till it and keep it”, (Gn 2:15) this should be understood not as dominion over the whole world, but as the ‘stewardship’ of human beings over the creatures. We must have a relationship of mutuality with other creatures and we must empathise and participate with, delight in, and accompany the creatures to bring about a communion of all sections of creation whose head is God himself.¹³ Genesis teaches us that the Lord God formed us “out of the dust of the ground” (Gn 2:7; 3:19). Psalm 139 thanks God for fashioning us fearfully and wonderfully “in secret”, “in the depths of the earth”. The Psalms delight at and are full of awe over the mystery of our intimacy with the earth, our intimacy with “fire and hail, snow and mist”, “mountains and all hills”, “sea monsters and all depths” (Ps 148). Psalm 104, one of the most lyrical praises, sings the glory of God “robed in light as with a cloak”, who “spread out the heavens like a tent cloth” and “made the moon to mark the seasons”.

The Bible shows nature’s link with God who created it, blessed it, and shows himself through it. He appears in fire, in wind, and in water. God also uses nature to bring humans closer to him and to punish them when they go astray. Everything in the world, therefore, remains sacred since it is linked with God and leads to him. Various texts in the Psalms (Ps 19:1-7; 98:7-9; 104:1-5, 13-25; 148:3-13) show that all things on earth are seen as God’s handiwork which bring him honour and praise by their very existence. However, there is also the perception that creatures can really praise God only through human beings.¹⁴

The prophet Daniel in a canticle calls on all the “works of the Lord” to bless him: “Let the earth bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Mountains and hills, bless the Lord, everything growing from the earth bless the Lord” (Dn 3:74-76). The last chapters of the Book of Job call upon the animals, nature, birds, etc., and praise God for their presence. Chapter 12 urges humans to learn humbly from the earth: “But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or the plants of the

earth, and they will teach you “ (Jb 12:7,8).¹⁵ The Bible is concerned with salvation or life-giving blessings not only in the afterlife but also within this world and within present history, individual and collective. It envisions a new world and a new history. Its salvific concern embraces nature, that is, the earth, air, trees, seas and birds.¹⁶

The cosmos is God’s ‘womb’, as it were. The intimate relationship between God and the cosmos explodes with seminal energy that generates and regenerates life. God, as it were, energises the cosmos and the cosmos in return dances with the creator.¹⁷

In Jesus’ teaching, one can see his ecological concern in his language. He used ordinary creatures such as birds, lilies, grass, etc., to help to put his message of concern for the world across.

He also shared his experience of a loving God dynamically present in the world. He is encouraging his listeners to have eyes that see and ears that hear the movement of God in the world. Jesus was passing on to his listeners what he had discovered about God’s reign in the natural things around him.¹⁸

The miracles of Jesus (37 of them in the Synoptic Gospels and seven in John) form a major section of the Gospels and reveal Jesus’ concern for the world as such. Through the miracles Jesus destroys the “domination” of Satan over the created realities and establishes the “dominion” of God which is liberating. In this sense all the miracles have ecological resonance. The *nature miracles* (Mk 4:35-41; 6:45-62, etc.) invite us to trust in the absolute power of God in the midst of ecological disasters. The *feeding miracles* (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10) tell us about the abundant resources of nature, which provide us with food and drink, and which need to be evenly distributed according to the needs of the people. The miracles of *exorcism* (Mk 5:2-20; Lk 4:35-41, etc.) reveal that cosmic ecological harmony is on the agenda of God who directs the forces of ecocide. The *healing miracles* (Mk 5:25-34, etc.) call us to be God’s stewards in the restoration of the disfigured images of God in creation, especially, human beings. The *resuscitation miracles* (Mk 5:21-21, 35-43, etc.) challenge us not to be silent spectators of the world-wide ecological holocaust that is taking place, but to be active agents in the creation of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rv 21:1-4).¹⁹

A serious reflection on the life-events of Jesus Christ, his teaching and his miracles from an ecological point of view is very inspiring. Today, if one reads the Gospel from an ecological perspective one can see Jesus of the Gospel as an ‘Ecologist.’ In today’s context of the Gaia or Gaiafield, this re-reading of the Gospel helps us to see the eco-crisis in the right per-

spective.

5. Body of Christ

Lovelock's hypothesis is a modern scientific description of the orthodox Catholic doctrine of the Mystical body of Christ. As Christians, we refer to the earth as the Body of Christ, rather than the body of an earth mother goddess.²⁰ McFague says,

Body, then, is the model I suggest we investigate as thoroughly as possible for an ecological theology. If what we need is a planetary rather than a parochial perspective, a broad rather than a narrow context, the model of body is one worth paying attention to.²¹

He holds that this model is more advantageous for ecological theology. He explains:

... it allows us to think of God as immanent in our world while retaining, indeed, magnifying God's body unites immanence and transcendence. At once a powerful image of divine immanence, for everyone and everything becomes potentially a sacrament of God, it is also, though perhaps not as obviously, an image of divine transcendence.²²

The body model gives us both an ecological and a justice context for theology, for it involves a planetary perspective while focusing on the most basic needs of human beings. The model of the universe as God's body suggests both anthropology and theology. This theology is so prevalent in Paul, all the people who ever lived, who live now, and who will live in the future, in some mysterious way make up the Body of Christ. In a sense, the Gaia theory simply expands the membership in the Mystical Body to include everything that has emerged from God's creative act. God's Word has been in the process of becoming the Cosmic Christ so wonderfully proclaimed by John and Paul.²³ Jesus rose from the dead as believed in a new body, the spirit-body, which transcends the corruptible dimensions of this earth. The risen Jesus thus stands as the goal and model of a new earth and a new humanity, and invites all to share in his glory.

The metaphor of the cosmic Christ suggests that the cosmos is moving toward salvation and that this salvation is taking place in creation. The other dimension is that God's presence in the form of Jesus' paradigmatic ministry is available not only in the Church as his mystical body, but everywhere, in the cosmic body of the Christ. Both of these dimensions of the metaphor of the cosmic Christ are concerned with *place* and *space*, where God's body is present in its Christic shape.²⁴

In the Gaian phase of the human adventure, we recognize that we are made out of the very stuff of the

earth. And we say, "This is my body". That makes the Gaian phase Eucharistic. We give thanks as we celebrate our oneness, since Eucharist means "thanksgiving". The Gaian phase is not only eucharistic but 'edenistic'. We recognize the earth as a garden, a garden of Paradise, a Garden of Eden.

6. Concern for Mission

Before going into the concern for mission, let us identify the crisis which the world is in. The cosmos is in a critical situation of decay and its continued destruction by selfish humans for profit poses serious problems for the universe and thus for human beings too. Our mission and commitment to God should find ways and means to face the eco-crisis effectively.

Eco-crisis

The Founding Fathers of modern science (the 17th century onwards) described the universe as a well organized machine; their paradigm expressed the world in mathematical terms. To Galileo, nature spoke in quantifiables; Newton could explain all in fundamental measurables; Descartes' philosophy was mathematical in its essential nature. The laws of the physical sciences were extended to developing the laws of society and so only that which could be quantified, measured and empirically determined was of any value and consequence. This tendency to base theories on Newtonian physics has created a serious problem in many fields, but perhaps more than anywhere else in the social sciences.²⁵ By adopting this Cartesian framework, the social sciences have reduced human phenomena to collectable, manageable, and more important, controllable data, developing a 'whole vocabulary of power, purposes, values and identity which could be rammed into measurable forms.

Marx and Engels extended Darwin's law of evolution to the law of evolution of society and of human history. Darwin, Marx and Engels and all the other 'Fathers' shared the same cosmology: Man was the centre of the cosmos; they acknowledged the same theory of nature as the basic premise of the industrial mode. Nature was to be used. Utilitarianism was its idiom; they were convinced that the universe worked according to definite laws; and so too society. A cosmology that exalted competition, power and violence over convention, ethics and religion. A scientific world view that has become the universal. At this juncture every person has to acknowledge that there is an eco-crisis. This crisis should be studied, researched and the eco-consciousness should enter into everyone's life.

The universe vibrates with life. We, today, have become completely detached from this feeling. After

our initial moment of admiration, mostly rain puts us in a bad mood, we can no longer appreciate it, and it becomes a nuisance. Mostly we are incapable of feeling or of listening to the wind and the animals and birds become disturbing elements in our routine life.

The respect for all living things is replaced by the arrogant wish to eliminate and use other things or beings for the purpose of human beings' security and the development of an artificial human beings' ego-centric world. The consequence of this 'anthropo-centred' process is an eco-crisis which is marked by atomisation and quantification.

In such a mechanical world-view, the universe ceases to be a universe of the human community, or, as some call it a humiverse. Thus any crisis in ecology affects nature: any manipulation of ecology will threaten the very biosphere itself; any insane movements against ecology will also be an attempt to desecrate the ecological consciousness. The severity of the crisis people are faced with today draws attention to the danger of ecological imbalance.

All beings in nature are citizens, have rights, and deserve respect and reverence, human beings must feel that they are sons and daughters of the rainbow, those who translate this divine covenant with Gaia, the living superorganism, and with all the beings existing and living on it, with new relationships of kindness, compassion, cosmic, solidarity, and deep reverence for the mystery that each one bears and reveals. Only then will there be integral liberation of the human being and of Earth, and rather than the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth there will be common celebration of the redeemed and the freed, human beings in our own house, on our good, great and bountiful Mother Earth.²⁶

The lack of this eco-consciousness and its penetration in daily life in the society is a serious phenomena in realization of our mission and actualisation of the Kingdom of God.

A human stewardship of the reality of fellowship is essential. In the two creation stories in Genesis (Gn 1:1-4 and 2:4-25) besides the theme of dominion on which the 'stewardship' ideal is based, there is also the idea of relationship on which companionship can be founded. As stewards and trustees, it is our duty to work towards an equitable distribution of the land and also to sustain, safeguard and salvage it for future generations. For the ecological problem, there needs to be attitudinal and structural changes in all spheres, especially in areas actively involved in the problem of pollution on the earth. Concern must be shown, a) on renunciation of greed and b) fulfilment in the minimum needed for life. Religion demands a simple way

of life which gives content with fewer needs. Pope John Paul II states:

Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle.... Simplicity, moderation and discipline ... must become part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.²⁷

The Constitution on the Church, when treating the role of the laity, states: "The faithful, therefore, must learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation".²⁸ The Decree on the Laity expresses the same ideal from the opposite viewpoint: "Pastors must clearly state the principles concerning the purpose of creation and the use of temporal things".²⁹ The annual liturgical feast could be an occasion for Christians to enter into the mystery of creation. This would stress understanding the environment, the mystery of creation and our role in the ecological crisis and the responsibility to see the Gaia as the gift of God and see the mystery of God in all things.³⁰

This is possible in an atmosphere of conversion from self-centredness to an other-centred life, what one calls a movement "from an egological to an ecological consciousness". For this an awareness is to be created in all people so that a hatred of eco-devastation and a liking for eco-restoration may be created. An education on ecological responsibility is urgent. Awareness is not familiarity with some dry statistics. It is a realization that comes from an inner light. Eco-awareness in its depth is possible only in the realization of one's mystical identity with God, with the environment, an interior solidarity with nature. It is a religious mystical experience rather than an intellectual exercise. This calls for a new spirituality — eco-spirituality.³¹ McNamara insists that our pastoral care "cannot merely include the people in our domain but must extend to the animals, trees, flowers, parks, ponds and air". We must celebrate our "significantly profound relationship with all levels of life — animals, vegetables, and mineral as well as human — affirming and consecrating our solidarity with all creation".³² This is not the heresy of pantheism but the orthodoxy of panentheism. Christian mysticism is in the earth, in the world and in flesh, hence

authentic Christian mystics are notoriously earthy. They love the earth and take good care of it.... They recognize how sacramental the earth is. In this they resemble the North American Indian. They enjoy the earth and find their delight in it, without being inordinately attached to it.... They see everything as a sign, sample or symbol of god and therefore affirm the totality of being.³³

Primarily our mission concerns human history and

not the history of nature. In the popular mind, there appears to be an alienation from the natural environment and this mind-set is expressed in the mass media and the lifestyle itself. Thus mission concern now mostly focuses on human beings and fulfilling their goals and aspirations. But this should go beyond human beings and mission concern should cover the whole cosmos. God is present in every created reality and he takes care of all creatures. R.J. Raja says, "The fact that God not only creates, protects and perfects all the creatures but also indwells, accompanies, participates and delights in them, calls for a relationship of mutuality between creatures and us humans".³⁴

The new order, "a new heaven and a new earth", which is a semitic way of describing the whole creation, is on a cosmic scale including all mineral, vegetable and animal creation, since God makes "all things new" (Rv 21:5), and at the same time it is a counter part to the transformation of believers (2 Cor 3:18; 4:16-18; 5:16-17). When we understand the fulfilment of the Kingdom towards a new heaven and new earth, and our mission is in realizing this new heaven and new earth, then our commitment is to the whole of creation. Christian mission cannot turn a deaf ear to the groans of creation resulting from the greed of some. In this aspect, sensitivity to creation is important. Insensitivity is a killer disease in human life, then one builds his/her kingdom and not the new heaven and new earth. We are intricately related to the other elements of creation and we depend on their survival. Everything is inter-dependent.

Barry Commoner has stated four laws of ecology: 1. Everything is connected to everything else. 2. Everything must go somewhere. 3. Nature knows best. 4. There is no such thing as a free lunch.³⁵ These laws are a clear indication that human beings are not free from creation. The result of a good relationship between human beings and all other beings, animate or inanimate objects, would lead to a good environment. That should bring about a change in fundamental human behaviour and it would mean that we have no escape from relationship, from involvement, and from responsibility.

In India mission is mostly accompanied by good education, medical help, the introduction of Western technology, projects of developmental work, giving financial aid to build houses, in some cases building roads, providing drinking water and implementing irrigation projects. Mission has also comprised community building, and liberating the oppressed from the chains imposed by the dominant castes and the rich. In this context, responsibility towards the cosmos cannot be ignored. Mostly, environmental concerns are also anthropocentric. We have to take care of the environment so that the environment may take

care of us. When the balance of the ecosystem is disturbed, it disturbs human beings. Human happiness should not be the central motive behind environmental concern, but a holistic attitude towards the ecosystem and its order should be the great reason for praising God, the Creator. God's word created not only humans, but the whole universe.

God is present everywhere, and his spirit is present everywhere, then we should read chapter 25 of Matthew in a new light. Jesus says, "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (25:40). Thus the other creatures should be considered as our family members and whatever we do to assert their rights, to care for them lovingly, and to look after them tenderly would amount to doing good to God, who is present in them.

The indigenous people of India are generally related more closely to Mother Earth. For example one can observe that the *Juangs* of Orissa, *Muria Gonds* of Bastar, *Munda* of Jharkhand all have reverence for Mother Earth. In fact, the whole of a life cycle — birth, growth, occupation, marriage, death — all are related to the earth. Since tribal life revolves around the Earth Mother, they treat her as their own preserver, protector, progenitor and above all the most revered and respected Mother.³⁶ Their consideration of the earth is: "Our territories and forests are to us more than an economic resource. For us, they are life itself and have an integral and spiritual value for our communities".³⁷ This concept of treating the earth as our Mother should be in our spiritual depth and in our conscious living, so that our life has respect and veneration towards this Mother, through whom we cherish the love of the Divine.

Practical steps

Today, many are aware of environmental problems, but there is a lack of will to set them right. Our society is organized in such a way that hardly any concrete measure is taken to challenge the eco-crisis or recreate an environment for a just cosmos. The following are some of the concrete ways in a parish or in a community to realize our mission today.

A Celebration on Ecology

In each culture, one can identify a feastday on which to reflect meaningfully on ecology. Such a feast should be incorporated in the liturgical celebration of a parish. This motivates the people to be conscious that God is the creator of the universe and that he is the Lord and Master of it and that it is human beings' duty to see the good in the land, nature, animals, birds, earth, etc., and to seek harmony with them and with

other human beings. A special Eucharist or para-liturgies emphasising eco-consciousness and man's duty could be a meaningful celebration for the people, thus these celebrations could become a day of thanksgiving as well as a day of creating eco-consciousness among the people.

We must solemnise the cycles of the day and the year and the seasons, but caution has to be observed not to fall into the trap of superstition, as we seek the meaning of the cycles by worshipping the Creator. Celebrations like World Earth Day on 22 April, World Environment Day on 5 June, the feasts like Pongal, the Onam, Karam, etc., should be celebrated in a meaningful way. Earth-friendly liturgies need to be created, with songs, dance and prayer to appreciate the beauty of the earth and all its mystery.³⁸

Compost and the Pascal Mystery

Parishes could be instrumental in helping people understand Easter in a refreshing new way by having workshops on making compost, teaching everyone to enter into the mystery of recycling. Families living in cities can have a compost bin. A Saturday workshop on composting, cleaning and recycling can teach a lot of people to understand the process of life and death. The workshop on making compost should deal with the proper use of common places, cleanliness, the use and misuse of plastics and how to get rid of waste, etc. Small Christian Communities should play an active role on this aspect of re-cycling and renewal to realize the richness of the earth.

Significance of Water

Water is life for all creatures. Without water there is death. Water gives the people joy. Water is the source of production, source of income for agriculturists, source of green environments. It is given freely by God. But this free gift is given to all in the same measure. Some have this source abundantly, some have just enough to survive, for some others it is a rare commodity. In India, it is not preserved well and also not available in plenty. Thus each person has to be aware of this gift and use it properly. Water-saving projects and the use of water in a responsible way is important to understand our Christian commitment.

Protection of forests

The drive to accumulate firewood and to extend land for crops results in an excessive loss of forests. Multinational companies seek land to fulfil their appetite for their ever increasing commercial endeavours. This has led to extensive deforestation and it

causes a lot of problems of eco-imbalance. In the parish people need to be made aware that forests have to be preserved and they need to take a firm united stand against deforestation in their vicinity. The Church needs to support social forestry approaches to stimulate assumption of responsibility for the usage and protection of forests by the people. The planting and taking care of trees reflects respect for the earth and respect for its Creator.

Interfaith eco-projects

Inter-faith dialogue can be an occasion to show our concern for the earth in a realistic way. The Parliament of World Religions (1993) has made a statement on: Towards a Global Ethic. This document, signed by 99 per cent of the Assembly, represents a consensus on human values to guide action from the different perspectives of the various religions. This interreligious ethic also incorporates the ecological dimension into the moral sphere and declares: "We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of the earth, the air, water and soil".³⁹ Protecting the earth and promoting eco-consciousness should be part of inter-faith projects, which would create an atmosphere of unity as well as challenge the eco-crisis and would serve to recreate the environment towards a new heaven and new earth.

Conclusion

The Churches in India can develop the potential creatively to meet the ecological challenge in a positive way. We can be more sensitive to at least three factors: (i) our firm commitment to justice for the marginalized and oppressed and to work for their human dignity taking an integral approach to life on earth; (ii) our concern for God's love for the whole cosmos should be expressed in our spirituality — our way of life, prayers, liturgical celebration, approach and attitude to nature, animals, birds, etc.; (iii) our concern for the cosmos should become a societal structure which would indicate each one's responsibility towards a *just cosmos*.

In the context of the impending eco-crisis we see in Jesus a champion of restoration, re-recreation, reformation and transformation of the universe. *In him* we are invited to take a new look at creatures; *with him* we called to commit ourselves to their defence; *through him* we are empowered to work for their growth and welfare; *for him* we are challenged to accept their sacredness, "since he partakes of the same

nature" (Heb 2:14).⁴⁰ The Jesus of the Gospels must become for us not merely an ecologist but an ecological prophet who leads us to "a global awakening of consciousness which will generate, guarantee a rational loyalty to our planet as a whole and to its infinite variety of live species and material things in particular".⁴¹

Notes

¹P. Russell, *The Awakening Earth: The Global Brain* (London: ARK, 1982, reprinted 1985), 9.

²*Ibid.*, 10-11. Some of the indications of Gaia's homeostatic mechanisms are: The steadiness of the Earth's surface temperature (the optimum range between 15 and 35 degrees centigrade); the regulation of the amount of salt in the oceans; the stabilisation of the oxygen concentration of the atmosphere at 21 per cent; the presence of a small quantity of ammonia in the atmosphere; the existence of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere.

³See *Ibid.*, 14-16.

⁴Henry Skolimowski, "Ecological Consciousness as the next stage of Evolution" in *The Theihard Review*, 24 (Summer 1989), 43, quoted in Oliver Inchody, "Eco-Harmony: An Answer to Ecological Consciousness", *Journal of Dharma*, 18 (1993) 335.

⁵*Ibid.*, 336.

⁶See P. Russell, *The Awakening Earth*, 41.

⁷See *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸*Ibid.*, 79.

⁹*Ibid.*, 84. Sri Aurobindo explains that *Supermind* is, "... something so far above consciousness as to be beyond our present dreams of perfection — the ultimate evolution of 'Spirit.' This new level he saw as coming through the increasing spiritual development of individual consciousness towards a final, complete, all-embracing consciousness, which would occur on both the individual and collective levels".

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 215.

¹²*Ibid.*, 207.

¹³R.J. Raja, "Wisdom Psalms and Environmental Concerns", *Vidyajyoti*, 57 (1993) 205.

¹⁴T.A. Mathias, "The Bible, Ecology and the Environment", *Indian Theological Studies*, 22, no. 1 (1995) 11-12.

¹⁵Tessa Bielecki, "Gaia—Samsara—Narnia", in *Embracing Earth, Catholic Approaches to Ecology*, LaChance, A.J. and Carroll, J.E., eds. (New York: Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 193.

¹⁶Desmond De Sousa, "Towards a Christian Perspective on Environment and Ecology", *Vidyajyoti*, 58 (1994) 587-88.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 589.

¹⁸B. Hill, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspectives* (Connecticut: 1991), 135, quoted in R.J. Raja, "Jesus the Ecologist" *Vidyajyoti*, 58 (1994) 67.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 282-83. Only the examples of Markan Gospel is given to illustrate the point.

²⁰T. Bielecki, "Gaia—Samsara—Narnia", 192.

²¹Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 17.

²²*Ibid.*, 20.

²³Paula Gonzalez, "An Eco-Prophetic Parish?" in *Embracing Earth*, 220.

²⁴S. McFague, *The Body of God*, 180.

²⁵Corinne Kumar D'Souza, "The South Wind: Towards New Cosmologies", *Journal of Dharma*, 18, no. 3 (1993) 201.

²⁶L. Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (New York, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1997), 114.

²⁷Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1990, n. 13.

²⁸Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, cf. n. 36.

²⁹Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam actuositatem*, cf. n. 7.

³⁰See Francis X. Clark, "Could there be a Feast of Creation in Liturgy?" *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 4 (1980) 372-374.

³¹See John Kulandai, "Basics in Eco-Spirituality", *Vidyajyoti*, 56 (1992) 488-501.

³²William McNamara, *Earthy Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 103.

³³William McNamara, *Earthy Mysticism*, ix-x.

³⁴R.J. Raja, "Eco-challenges from the Bible", *Word & Worship*, 30 (1997) 321.

³⁵See Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).

³⁶See Johnson Vadakumchery, "The Earth Mother and the Indigenous People of India", *Journal of Dharma*, 18, 1 (1993) 85-97.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 97.

³⁸Statement of the Indian Theological Association, *Ecological Crisis: An Indian Christian Response*, Aluva, April 1997, 26.D.

³⁹*Towards a Global Ethic* (An Initial Declaration). 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions (Chicago: Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993), 1.

⁴⁰R.J. Raja, "Jesus the Ecologist", 283.

⁴¹R.J. Raja, "Eco-Spirituality", *Vidyajyoti*, 53 (1989) 637-638.

Source: From the Author.

Also in *Vidyajyoti*, Vol. 63, n. 8, August 1999.

Fr Walter von Holzen, SVD - Executive Director SEDOS

ANNUAL REPORT To the SEDOS 1999 General Assembly

I. INTRODUCTION

We at the SEDOS Secretariat are glad to be able to present to you once again a short report on SEDOS' activities during the year 1999 to be concluded with the Annual General Assembly. This report will also be published in the December issue of the SEDOS Bulletin. This gives me the opportunity to greet you all, in whatever country and mission you may be working and receiving our publication. We thank you for your fidelity to our publication and for your letters of encouragement.

The year was marked by two major events:

After considerable planning with the World Council of Churches, we were able to invite to the 1999 Residential Seminar in Ariccia the General Secretary of the WCC, Dr Konrad Raiser. This enabled us to concentrate on a theme we were eager to study in preparation for the Jubilee Year: *Mission in the Context of Ecumenism*;

The second major event was the Special Synod of Bishops for Europe. The Synod, held in October, offered SEDOS the framework for a series of nine conferences on Europe — our Fourth Symposium — which we spread out over the whole year. Together with speakers from all corners of Europe we wanted to reflect on how the Church and our congregations can take up the challenge of mission in the different local Churches of Europe.

II. STRUCTURE

1. MEMBERSHIP

With the Annual General Assembly of '98, the number of member congregations of SEDOS reached 100, most with their Generalate in Rome, but 18 are in other countries of Europe and six are in Colombia, Mexico, United States, Canada and Uganda. Their membership and their contributions from outside Rome are especially significant for our international organisation.

2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The members of our Executive Committee for the year 1999 were:

President:	Bernardine Mullaveetil , RNDM, Superior General of the Religious of Our Lady of the Missions. Elected to the Executive in 1997.
Vice-President:	Piero Trabucco , ICM, Superior General of the Consolata Missionaries. Elected to the Executive in 1997. He was re-elected as Superior General during this year.
Treasurer:	Anne Quinn , SMSM, General Bursar of the Marist Missionary Sisters. Elected to the Executive in 1995.
	Filo Hirota , MMB, Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz since 1997
	Ursula Bugembe , RSCJ, Rel. of the Sacred Heart since 1997
	Michael Hann , CICM, Congr. Imc. Heart of Mary since 1997
	Eileen Cummins , OLA, Our Lady of the Apostles since 1998
	Míceál O'Neill , OCarm, Order of Carmelites since 1998
Executive Director:	Walter von Holzen , SVD, Divine Word Missionaries since 1992

3. CHANGES IN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

During their General Chapter in August '99, Fr **Mike Hann**, CICM, completed his term as General Councillor of his Congregation here in Rome. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Fr Mike and his Congregation in the name of all our members for his joyful and dedicated service to our Executive Committee. At this General Assembly we shall try to replace Fr Mike with a new representative from the Americas.

4. SEDOS SECRETARIAT STAFF

Many of you had the opportunity to meet our two secretaries, either at one of our activities or maybe at our Documentation Centre. — **Ms Margherita Lofthouse** continues to be in charge of subscriptions, the office finances and the incoming reviews. — **Ms Emanuela Gismondi** works on the publication and layout of the SEDOS Bulletin. She also prepares all the texts for our homepage and over the last few months she has compiled a new edition of our statistics by country. — During the first part of the year, until she finished her service of J/P at their Generalate, **Sr Christel Daun**, SSsP, again volunteered to help us in the Documentation Centre with the key-wording. — **Ms Philippa Wooldridge** continues with us as the proof-reader of the English part of the Bulletin. — **Mr Stefano Cacace**, a young computer and Internet expert, joined us as a part-time assistant, programming our homepage with great enthusiasm.

III. ACTIVITIES OF SEDOS

A. SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

1. MORNING CONFERENCES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1 December 1998

After several years of personal contact, we were able to invite Fr **Ignacio Harding**, OFM, the Director of FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL in New York. In his lecture he explained to us the possibilities and difficulties of International Advocacy work at the United Nations in New York.

Sr **Brigid Reynolds**, SM and Fr **Seán J. Healy**, SMA, shared their long and rich experience of Advocacy work in Ireland, as an effective means for change. The two speakers made it very clear that advocacy has become a missionary apostolate — with a difference — but one our missionary congregations and Generalates must consider.

2. MS MARY McALLESE, THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND, OPENED THE SEDOS SYMPOSIUM FOR EUROPE

On 12 February, our SEDOS Congregations were able to celebrate a joyful encounter with the President of Ireland, Ms Mary McAleese. She came to give the opening address at our SEDOS Symposium for the 'Year of Europe'. — Being in Rome for a few days on an Official Visit, she reserved an hour for our organisation and gave us an excellent talk on: *EUROPE: SOLIDARITY AND DIALOGUE AGAINST CONFLICTS AND SEPARATIONS*. It became clear that Christian politicians stand at the very heart of the mission of a testimonial Church today.

3. THE CHURCH IN A POLITICALLY CHANGING EUROPE

On 13 April we held our second day on Europe. We wanted to start with a contribution from Brussels and the EU, so SEDOS invited Dr **Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli**, the Italian President of the Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. She spoke on "Beyond Economy, a Human Face for Europe", about the effort the European community and politicians are making to listen to the voices of the different representatives of civil society in Brussels. — The second speaker, Dr **Ian Linden**, Director of CIIR (Catholic Institute for International Relations), elaborated on the need for more creativity and flexibility in the Church's dialogue with the reality of a modern, secular Europe.

4. THE CHALLENGES FOR THE CHURCH IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The third day of our Symposium for Europe we dedicated to the study of Central and Eastern Europe. On the morning of 4 May, Fr **Tomás Halík**, the President of the Catholic Academy in Prague, a psychotherapist by formation, gave us a brilliant introduction to the religious situation in Central and Eastern Europe a decade

after Communism.

The second contribution came from Russia. The Rector of the Catholic Seminary of St Petersburg spoke about the difficulties and hopes of the Catholic Church in Russia — challenged into a fruitful co-existence with Russian orthodoxy.

5. RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN WESTERN EUROPE

The fourth day of our SEDOS Symposium for Europe, held on 12 October, was dedicated to studying the religious situation in Western Europe. Ms **Mary Grey**, a theologian from England, gave a much appreciated lecture on *WOMEN AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION — RE-DISCOVERING THE HEART OF ECCLESIA*.

Fr **Jean Joncheray**, the Vice-Rector of the Institut Catholique, Paris, took a more sociological approach to the religious situation in Europe: *L'EUROPE DE DEMAIN: TRANSFORMATION DU PAYSAGE RELIGIEUX*. A big audience enjoyed a really enriching afternoon.

6. THE MORNING CONFERENCES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF '99

With two more lectures on 7 December, the symposium on the Church's mission in Europe came to its conclusion. The day was dedicated to the study of the religious situation of Youth in Europe.

Sr **Grazyna Mech**, FMM, a Polish Sister doing pastoral work among the young in Ljubljana, Slovenia, spoke about the religious experience of youth in the Post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In the contribution from Western Europe, Dr **Gerhard Kruij**, from Germany, studied the situation of youth in Western Europe. What role should and can the Church assume in order to make a contribution to a more and more secularized youth.

All the nine papers of the Symposium for Europe will be published in book form. The secretariat hopes to be ready with the publication for the opening of the Missionary Congress in April 2000.

B. SEDOS WORKING GROUPS

1. CHINA

The lively interest taken by some of our member congregations keeps our **China** group active as it starts its fourth year.

Fr **James Perluzzi**, OFM, is a convinced and dedicated animator of the group. By inviting experts and visitors from China to address the group, it is able to receive constant new in-put on Continental China. In other meetings, articles on different aspects of society, economics and religion are studied and shared.

2. WORLD DEBT

Our **Debt Group** is entering its fifth year. Fr **Mick Seigel**, SVD, is the generous animator of the working group. The group continued to evaluate the debt problem and creatively produced some worthwhile documents, all of them handed out to interested congregations and also published on our homepage. The group sent a representative to the G 8 meeting in Cologne in June, where long lists of signatures, mostly collected by religious of our member congregations, were handed over to **Jubilee-2000**. During the summer and early autumn, the group made a remarkable 30 page study on the situation after Cologne: "Cologne and Beyond"... (also on the SEDOS homepage).

3. FOOD, LAND AND HUNGER

The small but very specialized group on food and land issues is at times almost an Internet Group, because of the members' many other duties at their Generalates. The group launched a Questionnaire which was sent out to SEDOS missionaries working in direct contact with land issues and who have confronted cases, possibilities and failures of land distribution in different parts of the world where we are working. The next step will be the evaluation of our experiences with land issues in the field. Why they did or did not work.

4. MISSION IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

The group, under the generous co-ordination of Fr **Frans Thoolen**, SMA, is already going into its third year. It is determined to continue to work on this more and more important dimension of mission: situations of

conflict are often the context of our missionary work and the reason for many painful experiences. During the past year the group wanted to listen to concrete experiences, and see how different congregations face the issue of violence in mission and the consequences (trauma, healing) for their missionaries. Two Superiors General and more Councillors spoke about their congregations and the ways they accompany missionaries who are or have been in situations of violence.

C. BULLETIN — INTERNET SERVICES

1. SEDOS BULLETIN

Our SEDOS Bulletin has a long tradition. The first Bulletins were published in 1965. We continue to prepare about 320 pages of material in English and French a year. Of the 1,100 copies printed monthly, about 300 go to the member generalates and the rest are sent out to the missions. Our sources are: our own lectures which are usually published in the Bulletin. From the over 200 reviews and documentation we get “in exchange”, the best material is printed in the Bulletin. We intend to give a service of ongoing reflection on all new horizons of mission. Our articles are often reprinted by other reviews and also translated into other languages. A growing network of direct contacts via *e-mail* with theologians on all the continents allows a closer and more effective collaboration between them and the Bulletin. The printing and the mailing costs of the Bulletin remain a major item in our budget.

2. SEDOS HOMEPAGE ON THE INTERNET: <http://www.sedos.org>

As we can see from the letters we receive from all over the world, our homepage has become an important source of good articles on mission. At the moment we have over 200 articles in the language menus of English, French and Spanish-Portuguese. Material produced by the working groups (especially the Debt Group) is made available on the homepage. More and more missionaries in the field and professors of mission and collateral disciplines are sending us the articles directly *via e-mail*, either for the Bulletin or the homepage. We are trying to put **up to 10 new articles** every month on the homepage. Mostly they are not those in the Bulletin, but an additional selection of useful material. The responses we get encourage us to give our full attention to this new form of missionary publication and service, a direct expression of SEDOS' founding idea, to be a cooperative missionary effort at the service of all.

3. NEW EDITION OF THE 1993 SEDOS STATISTICS BY COUNTRY

Since our first letter to all the members in the spring, we have been working on the new results of the country statistics as your cooperation was excellent. We would like to thank all the people responsible, mainly the Secretaries General, for replying quickly. Although never perfect, the Statistics will once again offer quick information on our congregations' presence in the countries of the world.

IV. LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

SEDOS MISSIONARY CONGRESS FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR (3-8 April 2000)

The Executive Committee decided two years ago, to organise an open missionary week as our **Jubilee 2000** contribution. During six afternoons, well-known theologians — three men and three women — will offer their reflections. To enable more lay people and non-member congregations to take part, the sessions will be held in a bigger hall in Rome. Every afternoon there will be a key talk by one of the theologians, then there will be a prepared response to it by one of the other five theologians — followed by group reflection and conclusions. We hope to publish all the papers and responses in our Fifth Symposium book, which will conclude this series of publications.

Greetings and thanks: Through this Report given in Rome, and especially through the Bulletin sent out to you, we at the Secretariat in Rome want to greet you in the whole world. We would like to thank you for all the friendly feedback we receive from you: readers, writers and collaborators of many kinds. It is your help that makes our service possible.

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SEDOS "WORLD DEBT" WORKING GROUP Fr Mick SEIGEL, SVD

COLOGNE (G 8) AND SEATTLE (WTO): THE FUTURE OF DEBT?

Tuesday, 15 February 2000
Brothers of the Christian Schools, 16.00 hrs
Lire 5000 — Trad. It/Fr/Sp

SEDOS MISSIONARY CONGRESS FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR (3-8 April 2000)

(To be held in Rome – instead of the Annual Ariccia Seminar)

6 Afternoon sessions with 6 well-known theologians

ASIA (3.4)

Sr Kim Sung-hae, SCD, South Korea

***Dialogue with Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism
Inculturated Christianity among World Religions***

ASIA (4.4)

Fr M. Amaladoss, SJ, India

***Mission and the Local Church —
Point of View of Theology of Harmony***

AFRICA (5.4)

Ms Mercy Oduyoye, Ghana

***The Church and Islam in Africa —
A Christ-centred Mission and Women of Africa***

EUROPE (6.4)

Fr Peter Huenermann, Germany

***New Expression of Church and the Creative Word —
Church in Modern European Society***

LATIN AMERICA (7.4)

Sr Maria de Freitas, FI, Brazil

***Misión y Fe carismática-pentecostal —
Misión liberadora en un Mundo neoliberal***

NORTH AMERICA (8.4)

Fr R. Schreiter, CPPS, USA, (Moderator)

***Mission — Globalization — Reconciliation
Is a New Catholicity Possible in Mission?***