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Editorial

We open this issue with a very important article by the well-known Indian theologian and Professor at the Madras University, Fr FELIX WILFRED. In *Religious Face to Face With Globalization*, he studies the interesting question of the relation between globalization and religious traditions. The author feels that religious traditions can challenge globalization and its presuppositions. He notes that all too often knowledge has become a means of power and not of freedom. Religious traditions can help to redeem 'knowledge' and guide it back to 'liberation'.

Sr MARIA KO HA-FONG, F.M.A., in *L'évangélisation comme inculturation, Vue par 'Ecclesia in Asia'*, elaborates on the role of inculturation in this recent pontifical document for Asia. Although she does not discover many excitingly new insights, she finds positive signs in a renewed consciousness of local cultures. *Ecclesia in Asia* advocates a model of inculturation which is not founded on opposition or confrontation, but on the Spirit of complementarity and harmony.

In his article *Towards a Buddhist Christian Dialogue — Some Bridges of Understanding*, Fr LEOPOLD RATNASEKERA, O.M.I., sees profound, shared intuitions which will be able to build bridges between these two mainstream religions: the fight against any violence against life, the fight against new egoism and greed in a consumer-oriented society and a common fight for justice and peace, in defence of the human person.

The second French contribution is by RAIMON PANIKKAR. *Le feu et le cristal — Dialogue humain et inter-indépendance religieuse* seems to be written for our desperate times, torn between peace and aggression. The author encourages us to opt 'for the straight door', for dialogue, which is much more demanding than destroying the other who thinks differently. Authentic religiosity believes in 'listening to the other'.

We conclude our Bulletin with a contribution of biblical-missionary spirituality. In fact, Fr WILFRID J. HARRINGTON, O.P., reminds us in his short study, *The Mysteries of Light*, that the new mysteries of the Rosary lead our prayer to the missionary life of Jesus, who was put to death precisely because of the witness he had borne during his life-time.

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Religions Face to Face With Globalization

– Some Reflections Against the Asian Background –

– Felix Wilfred –

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Individuation and functional differentiation are among the chief characteristics of modernity which is today being expanded world-wide through the process of globalization. Even as every segment of societal life is affected by this process, questions have been raised on the interplay between religion and globalization.¹ Are the religions losing out and remain only as remnants of a pre-modern society, as the thesis of secularization and privatization would have it? But if the revival of religion and cultivation of its various expressions are any indications, something else seems to be happening. In Asia, there is little sign of religions waning and withering away. On the contrary, they have become a new social force in interplay with other societal systems. Conflict among religions or harmony among them will also determine the future of Asian societies. This is particularly true of South Asia.

Critically thinking agents of religious institutions and religiously committed people, for their part, are concerned about the fate of religion, its role and public function. While in the traditional societies religion played various crucial roles such as integration of the community, the globalizing process, cutting across the borders of race, region and religion, seems to make such roles obsolete and redundant. If we surmise that there is more to religions, we may ask how they could re-think and re-fashion themselves in such a way that there results a correlation between them and the globalizing process; and how they could acquire a new role and perform a different function under the new circumstances. I think that such considerations — though important in themselves — are, however, quite inadequate, and we need to move to another level of reflection.

Implicit in the philosophy and practice of globalization is the assumption that it is a movement towards the unity of the whole of the human family. It claims to represent the infallible future historical trajectory of humankind, its ultimate unity and universality. Even more, with the supposed triumph of capitalism, the driving-force behind globalization, 'The End of His-

tory and the Last Man'² are being proclaimed. But we know that there is a deep contradiction between such claims and reality. The greatest harm globalization does is to delude us with a make-believe pseudo-unity and universality of humankind.

It is at this juncture of counterfeit unity and universality that we need to reflect on the critical contribution religions could make in today's world to the emergence of a genuine unity of the human family. This, in spite of the fact that religions are ambiguous and have been, as only too well known, sources of disunity, conflict and violence. We need to remind ourselves that the goal of unity is the fruit of struggle and not ready-made programmes to be enforced. It is a struggle because we are in the face of a very crucial and critical question. Technocratic modernity has boosted up the self-confidence of humanity by giving it the means and instruments to control nature. But there is one problem, which it is not able to resolve; what is more, it is itself an accomplice. It is the question of world-wide human solidarity, the creation of which presupposes the overcoming of the historical and contemporary sources of division and dissension. The globalizing process, far from being a movement towards this goal, is a part of the problem inasmuch as it has induced greater disintegration of the human family by its inherent tendency to progressively set aside peoples and groups from rightful participation in the resources of nature, and to exclude more and more people from community, power and freedom.

Against the background sketched above, we will look at some of the responses of religions to the question of unity and universality of humankind in these times of globalization. I shall analyze two models and expose their inadequacies, and conclude with a third model of universal human solidarity. Building further on this third model, we shall inquire, in the second part of the paper, into some important shifts religions can help to effect for the structural transformation of our societies into more humane and just ones.

Part I:
THREE RESPONSES TO GLOBALIZATION

1. Standardized global religion

Faced with globalization, the re-thinking of religion could go in the direction of creating a planetary religion and ethos that presumably would match the nature and demands of this process. In keeping with the process of homogenization, religions also would be metamorphized into an ideally conceived 'religion' coupled with a well-packaged 'global ethics' which everyone all over the world could consume as standard spiritual and moral goods. Humankind, equipped thus with an ideally shared religion and ethics, could expect, as a matter of course, that the long-cherished ideal of unity and peace would come its way.

To begin with, such a standardized global religion and ethics has an immense appeal to the palliatives of the pontiffs of capitalism. For such a conception of religion and ethics at global level comes in handy for capitalism to carry through its agenda also in the religious sphere. In this way, the intractable religious sphere itself — so it is believed — would be toned down and turned into something manageable in an 'administered world'. What is more, such a conception of religion associated with the unity and universality of humankind helps capitalism to wear a mask of humanness and philanthropy.

If we probe deeper into this model, we will find that there lurks behind it a very crucial philosophical question of the inter-relationship between the particular and the universal. In this model we could note that the dialectics between the particular and the universal is resolved in favour of the latter. We should not forget that the universal is an abstraction, and what really are, are the particular realities. The constant temptation of all idealism is to create a homogenized world of concepts as the common point of reference for the different particularities. A sign of this idealist religious and ethical universal is the amnesia of the hard fact that religious particularities are crucial in many cases in identity formation.³ As many cases in our contemporary world testify, there is a refusal to be uprooted from the particular religious soil, precisely because without such concreteness religion evaporates into thin air. We need also to take into account the fact that every religion seems to have in its very structure a two-fold tendency, one particularistic and the other universalistic. The universalistic openness of a religious tradition is real to the extent that it is rooted in its particularity. Every particularity adds a different tone and colour to the universal which can only be the fruit of constant search and dialogue. But the problem with this model is that it projects as an ideal something that could only laboriously develop through a difficult process of dia-

logue and consensus-building.

Finally, the religious standardization model ignores the difference in the religious experience stemming from the social location. That need not surprise us in a model which, as we saw, is attuned philosophically to idealism and socio-politically to capitalism. The religious experience and expressions of the victims, on the other hand, have important socio-political functions, something which is obvious to those who are engaged at the grassroots level.

A variation of this model would be one in which religions would follow the logic and processes as in other sub-systems, thus constituting a common global religious pattern. For example religions would function as providers of a wide variety of "spiritual goods", which the consumers could pick and choose, or make for themselves a religious *bricolage*. Such a pattern of religion unfortunately would get integrated within globalization. By acquiescing to the functioning of globalization, it will lose its critical voice.

2. Globalization and religious tribalism

At first sight globalization and religious tribalism may look opposed to each other. But if we scratch the surface and see in depth, we will note that there is much in common between them. Globalization is very deceptive inasmuch as it covers up the fact that it is a projection of a particular model of development and of being human (*homo oeconomicus*). Religious tribalism too is a projection of a particular religious identity which claims to be universal. Here religions vie with each other to catch the global religious market and sell their spiritual goods as the best, and even the only one. What appears to be a global outreach hides a power agenda which is behind such aspirations as to see the whole world as Islamic, Christian, Hindu, etc. The process of globalization has added fuel and supplied the instruments for the religions to compete, and indeed for religious conflicts.

Here again like the model of the standardization of religion, we have the dressing up of one's religion in its ideal grab, in which process it is denuded of its own real history. History cannot be brushed under the carpet, so to say. What is worse is that religious tribalism does not allow any room for self-critique. In fact with the general spirit of relativization consequent upon globalization, religious tribalism feels threatened and becomes aggressive. However, it does not take an antiglobalization posture, but rather fights (often very desperately!) for its particularity to determine the global.

The threat religious tribalism feels, coupled with the absence of self-critique, incapacitates it to revise its own traditional image of the other religious group. In this way, the insider/outsider polarity gets theologically, culturally and politically rooted at the expense of genu-

ine universality. The attitude is that of self-righteousness and exclusion. Religious nationalism is but a political expression of an ideologically oriented religious tribalism, whether it be the Zionism of Israel or the Hindutva of India.

Much like the process of globalization which 'progresses' by continuously excluding more and more people, so too religious tribalism excludes all those who do not belong to it. It can assume different forms and expressions from a theological re-assertion of 'no salvation outside the Church' to political and cultural exclusion of Christian and Muslim as aliens and as not belonging to the Indian nation, because they are not Hindus. It may find extreme expression, for example, in the attitude that Italy, Spain and Portugal should allow in their countries only Christian immigrants and not people of other religions! If this is not religious tribalism on a global scale, what else is it?

3. Religions and Struggles for Universal Community

I deliberately use the expression 'universal community' and not 'global community', so as not to give the impression that the global is equated with the universal. The universality globalization offers is the universality of capital; and the unity it projects is the unity of the *haves*. This type of universality and unity has economic interests as its end. Basically, here is a model of unity that is centripetal in its movement, and it is bound to crack when the self-interests clash. We move towards authentic unity and universality of the human family through a centrifugal movement and a non-instrumental approach to inter-human relationships. It is important to remember that this process towards universal community is a path of hard struggle.

Disintegration of community is one of the consequences of globalization. I do not simply mean that the traditional communities are challenged by the process of globalization. That is true. The call to community is not meant to re-establish the nostalgic model. But globalization, by its nature and trajectory, is opposed to the project of genuine universal community. The very fact that it creates deep divisions in the contemporary world and causes a chasm between the rich and the poor offers no prospect for any universal communion.

We noted how there is a close link between religion and community. Now in a situation of inherent disintegration of community through globalization, the religions could re-define their relationship to community in a new way and in new terms. In the first place, religions need to be aware of the fact that the reality of community does not end with those belonging to its fold. In other words, there is a legitimate place for a confessional community based on shared symbols, beliefs, rituals, etc. But there is also the larger com-

munity which goes beyond the confessional boundaries. Whereas most religious traditions have strong ways and means to reinforce their confessional identities, there is much to be done in terms of strengthening the larger community.⁴

The crucial question is to what extent the various religious traditions are capable of supporting the coming together of peoples, nations and cultures. The ambiguity of religions in this matter is all too evident. Religions are often the sources of division and violence. And yet, they contain resources and utopias for the larger unity of the whole human family, which cannot be said of globalization. This is explainable from the fact that every religious tradition, as we saw, has a universal vision of unity, while rooted in a determined socio-cultural particularity. In this connection it should be noted that globalization, contrary to what one might expect, has reinforced the particularistic trends in the religious traditions rather than bring out their universalistic dreams. Be that as it may, the disintegration inherent in the globalization process needs to be challenged by religious traditions, by their role in the public sphere to help transcend the identities based on language, ethnicity, culture and nation. Globalization is inherently incapable of any such thing. All that it is capable of is to transact the capital across the borders while leaving human groups and peoples to clash with each other.

The search for universal community takes place through the small steps we take towards that direction in daily life. In this regard we need to pay serious attention to the new social movements at the grassroots.⁵ They seem to achieve world-wide what religions and traditional ethics have not succeeded in doing, namely, to bring together in effective solidarity people across the borders of race, nation, culture, religion and so on. These could be movements for the liberation of women, protection of nature, defense of the dignity and rights of the indigenous peoples, and marginal groups like the dalits (so called 'untouchables' of India). Even more, these new social movements seem to embody some of the universalistic values and ethical concerns correctly. On the one hand they mirror the inner contradictions within society, and on the other, they also project an utopia.

These movements operate with an 'ethics of refusal' to accommodate to the prevailing order of things. Further, they are rooted in context and at the same time they open up the shape of the world the poor and the Marginalized hope for. The encounter of religions at this level of new social movements is bound to be a great activating force for the realization of a world that is more united and just. The synergy of the universalistic religious streams and the practice of new social movements can pave the way for greater unity of the human family.

If globalization had really been bringing the whole

world together, as claimed, by now it should have eliminated weapons of war from the earth. This is far from happening. Instead, conflicts and confrontations have escalated all over the world; small scale wars are fought everywhere; and there is a growing threat to the whole of humanity and to nature. The poor and the marginalized are more and more excluded from power, freedom, participation and community. All this only uncovers the lie of unity being trumpeted by the acolytes of globalization

Part II: RELIGIONS AT CROSS-ROADS

Face to face with globalization, religious traditions find themselves at a cross-roads. There seem to be three major options. As a system of symbols and codes, a particular religion could use globalization to its own advantage and seek to gain power. The power thus acquired is deployed to impose its confessional identity, beliefs, traditional moral codes and structures. The second option is to see what role religions could perform in the globalizing world. Here globalization is taken for granted as an irreversible process to which a religion needs to accommodate itself and play a functional role, just like all other sub-systems. The third option is to challenge globalization and its presuppositions. It is the third option to which we will pay attention in this second part of our paper, and shall inquire into the radical contribution religions could make by intervening in the existent structures and processes which keep globalization going. It should be noted that the challenge to globalization is not from fear of losing the old patterns of religious belonging and expressions, but rather for creating alternative trajectories and utopias, more humanizing in nature. The following reflections are prompted by this concern.

Since religions have a wholistic approach to reality, distinct from the specific functional role played by other systems in the global society, they (religions) have the potential to challenge some of the basic structures and dynamics operative in the process of globalization. I would like to highlight five such important issues.

1. Knowledge: From an Instrument of Power to a Means of Emancipation

The globalizing world is a world of knowledge and information, available abundantly and instantaneously. Technological know-how to manipulate the power of nature (bio-technology, for example) has reached new heights in our present world. With all the fund of knowledge at its disposal, humanity needs to ask some basic questions about the very role and purpose of

knowledge. For, what has happened in the modern world is a transition from the role of knowledge as a means of freedom to one of power. Globalization has taken to the extremes the pragmatism inherent in the project of modernity.

I think it is at this juncture that religious traditions are called upon to play a new and challenging role. They can help to redeem knowledge and help orientate it towards the wholistic liberation, specially in favour of the victims of our present world.

The first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, placed high hopes on scientific knowledge when he said in 1960:

It is science alone that can solve the problem of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people.... Who indeed could afford to ignore science today? At every turn we seek its aid.... The future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science.⁶

To what extent has science measured up to these high expectations? What is implied in these words is the expectation of an emancipative vision of scientific knowledge. But unfortunately, much of science and its application (technology) are employed for dehumanizing purposes, as amply testified by the global situation today. Much of the social sciences serve to maintain the *status quo*. One reason why this has happened is that the system of knowledge — which is science — has lost its connection with freedom. With the advent of modernity, there was the legitimate opposition to any unwarranted intervention from extraneous forces. In this sense, there was the process of secularization of knowledge. Unfortunately, this has come to mean in the course of time, a dissociation of knowledge from the project of emancipation. Knowledge was co-related to power as its instrument. That is how Roger Bacon at the beginning of the modern era saw the role of knowledge. Albert Einstein could see the consequences of this philosophy in the field of education. That is why he underlined the social responsibility which should accompany the acquisition of knowledge.

The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his [*sic*] own innate abilities, should attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and successes in our present society.⁷

The altruistic and service-oriented character of knowledge stems from a world-wide tradition which connects knowledge not with power, but with freedom. And whatever power there will be, is the result of freedom. Unredeemed power, as is often used in modern

science and technology, leads to domination, violence and destruction. On the other hand, a power redeemed through freedom leads to creative transformation. This is true both of the inner world and the outer world, of the microcosm as much as the macrocosm, both of which are so very much intertwined. In the Hindu classical tradition, it is knowledge or realization of truth (*gnana*) that leads to *moksha*, and in Buddhist tradition it is illumination or enlightenment (knowledge) which leads us to *Nirvana* — the state of total freedom. In Christian tradition, there is the famous axiom of Jesus: “The truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32). In our Asian traditions, the imparting of knowledge — whether the spiritual, or wordily knowledge like medicine, or technical knowledge in the case of crafts, etc., — has never been divorced from the ethical and liberative role it has. In addition to that, traditionally, the imparting of knowledge and its learning require both from the one who possesses knowledge and the one who acquires it, certain *liberative ethical prerequisites*.

In my view the *significance of liberation theology ultimately lies in its struggle to highlight the liberative role of knowledge over against its conceptual and epistemological dimension*. In fact, liberation theology bases itself on the Christian and Jewish Scriptures for which knowledge of God is not simply a cognitive activity. Those who experience freedom within and practice it in the outer world in terms of freeing the weaker ones, are those who know God, which is far from being a notional knowledge.

Social sciences, as much as natural sciences, need to regain and recover this connection between knowledge and freedom, which we find in many traditions, and which is strongly rooted in the Asian civilizations. We cannot subscribe today in Asia to a conception of science which would define itself in terms of knowledge without freedom. That would be to submit ourselves uncritically to the limited project of globalization. It is at the same time to compromise the cause of the poor and the exploited.

2. Governance: From an “Administered world” to Subjecthood and Human Agency

Globalization has also imperceptibly brought about a different mode of governance. It suits the general agenda of the vested interests that the world at all levels be administered by those who have knowledge and power. What it does to people is to make them simply objects divesting them of their subjecthood and agency. The signs of this change are visible everywhere. “Management” is the buzz-word most dear to the ideologues and advocates of globalization. The decisions are progressively confined to an ever smaller group of people. What we experience is a world that is ruled by the principles of what is fashionably masked and packaged as

“management”.

This amounts to a process of de-politicization with ever less participation of the people. The existent inequalities and injustices are covered up under the cloak of management. Political struggles, protests and contestations against the prevailing order have become anathema. In this way, the hard-won battles for democracy, political participation and rights are relegated to the past and are viewed as of no consequence for the present order of a globalizing world. To cite an example, we know that since the advent of the industrial revolution, humanity has passed through an arduous journey to claim and establish the basic rights of workers and their security. But these achievements are let go, and what we see in Asia, for example, is not a movement towards greater security for workers, but the progressive *casualization of labour*. The workers are, as we know, under constant threat of retrenchment with the loss of their livelihood.⁸

Against this background we realize the importance of new forces which would uphold the dignity and rights of the human person and struggle for his/her participation in shaping the world in the political, economic, cultural and other spheres. Could the religions be one such force? I think, in principle, no religion would go against the dignity of the human person. The important issue is to translate the theory into practice. The dignity of the human person is affirmed in practice when conditions are created for the flourishing and expression of his/her inherent capabilities. The mode of governance should be such that it allows room for individual and collective self-determination. Democratic forms of governance would approximate this goal, provided democracy is not formal but *substantive*. But the mode of governance globalization calls for is one which erodes all forms of self-determination. In other words, globalization goes against the practice of democracy, self-determination and true human freedom, contrary to the *façade* it presents.

Precisely here we detect yet another of globalization’s lies. It covers up its inherent coercive and hegemonic modes of governance by posing itself as an ally of freedom, democracy and sovereignty all of which it negates in practice. What is happening in the field of governance is but the reflection of what is happening in the economic field. One of the manifest objectives of the liberal economy was to do away with centralized economies. But in fact at the heart of global capitalism what is taking place is centralization, and that is evident in the concentration and consolidation of power over the market and technology. It is done by the mega-corporations through mergers, acquisition and strategic alliances. If such is the economic process, it is evident that it would call for a corresponding centralized mode of governance. No wonder then that global capitalism is at home with dictators and centralized forms of governance.

I think religions could play an important role by positively contributing to the building up of civil society as an important means for a participative governance. Civil society is the space where people interact and exchange views and opinions on a number of issues affecting society.⁹ In the age of manipulation, we see how even civil society is being exploited and coopted by global capitalism for its own ends. This needs to be kept in mind, and we need to be on guard, so that civil society functions in true freedom, unencumbered by the vested interests of the market. The challenging situation created by the process of globalization could be met by religions to the extent they play an active role in civil society. The religious traditions which refuse to be drawn into the debates of the broader civil society risk isolating themselves, and thus failing to make a timely contribution.

We just cannot presuppose that civil society is present everywhere. This is far from the truth. In situations where there is effectively no civil society, religions could assist in the creation of one as a forum where people interact and form public opinion. The relationship between religions can no longer be a matter for religions alone; since religions play as vital a role in creating peace as in causing violence in society, the very relationship between them becomes a matter of public interest, and therefore civil society needs to be viewed as an important forum for the encounter of religions themselves. This I would call *the secular dialogue of religions*. This environment of inter-religious relationships taking place through civil society will also help religions to grow beyond their limited confessional interests and to direct their attention to matters of public interest.

3. From Homogenization to Pluralism

Plurality has been the hallmark of Asian life, and without it Asia loses all hope for its future. On the contrary, the forms and modes globalization creates are homogeneous in character. This is observable in the strikingly common patterns of production, distribution (marketing) and consumption of goods and services all over the world. Underlying the homogenizing trend of globalization are two processes: *commodification* and *monetization*. By converting everything into objects of commerce for the market, and by ascribing to everything a monetary value, the grand project of homogenization is carried on by globalization. Commodification and monetization offer the key to understand the homogenizing process at work in globalization.

Under the aegis of globalization, homogenization has been extrapolated also to the realm of nature. Monoculture plantations ("ecological fascism") and cash crops are but a reflection of the efforts to homog-

enize society and culture. Further, globalization steamrolls all identities and differences. These have a place at most as folkloristic and as a residue from a past which, according to the ideologues of globalization, the world needs to outgrow.

If we translate all this in terms of power, it means that those who wield power and control society are distinctly on the side of homogenization, whereas the victims are on the side of pluralism. Pluralism is a call for decentralization and participation, whereas homogenization is a process of accumulating power. Pluralism expresses itself in different ways and at different levels. For the marginalized peoples and groups, one important way of challenging globalization and its ideology is to affirm their plural and different identities. The "*difference*" in the self-perception of the marginalized is the source of energy and dynamism to assert their identity and claim their rightful place. They seek to distinguish themselves from others, particularly when assimilationist policies are imposed on them as a solution to their problems. In this situation, the affirmation of difference is a weapon against facile integration. Difference also becomes the entitlement, especially when this difference is the result of a history of discrimination and disadvantages. More importantly, the assertion of difference is the way through which the marginal peoples come consciously to perceive and acknowledge their collective selves. In other words, the difference is crucial for the construction of their subjecthood as the principal agent of their emancipation.

The difference which the various identities and suppressed groups represent is something willed by God who also willed the bio-diversity in our world. Therefore, no religion could subscribe to a vision of reality that tends to abolish differences under the pretext of a pseudo-unity. Just as the difference between woman and man is precisely the basis for their intimate union and celebration of life, the differences in the human community becomes the basis for the true unity of the human. As Rajni Kothari rightly points out:

Diversity is not to be seen as a 'problem' to be managed but a resource to build upon, a basic resource emanating from the very nature of both human and natural orders. Diversity happens to be the essential 'nature of nature'; it also happens to be the essential characteristic of culture throughout human history. The same is the case with any lasting and self-sustaining polity.¹⁰

For the religions, the fostering of difference and pluralism entails also the obligation to involve themselves in the practice of justice, understood as caring for and being in solidarity with the weaker ones. Pluralism, I think, ultimately is a question of justice. Justice demands that we respect the other (individual and collective) in his/her/their "otherness". This is the foundation for any theory and praxis of justice. Denial of

pluralism kills justice before destroying unity. It is by affirming their difference that the poor have a chance to reclaim their very selves. Pluralism is a defence of the poor and hope of the poor in a homogenizing global world.

The challenge for religions is to give expression to this understanding of justice in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies by being one with the suppressed and marginalized identities. In sum, religions should not shy away from the thorny issues of ethnic, linguistic and regional identities, but should involve themselves in the issue of difference and everywhere give unambiguous support to any political, legal or social measure in favour of battered identities.

Pluralism concerns not only cultural, linguistic, regional and ethnic differences, but also difference in world-views and orientations. Different civilizations and cultures embody also difference in world-views, dominant values; root-paradigms, etc. Globalization tends to do away with this pluralism. It is important to maintain and cultivate these differences for the great enrichment they represent for the entire humanity.

The single and exclusive world-view globalization projects leads humanity to a dead-end without a future, without prospects and hope for the larger part of the human family. Pluralism of world-views has the resource to project alternatives and bring to the fore dimensions of life which get blurred or eclipsed in the mono-vision.

4. From a Centripetal to a Centrifugal Movement

Globalization is propelled by the swift movement of capital (not always labour) across nations and continents. This economic process needs to be understood also in its philosophical and ethical presuppositions and implications. It is here that we begin to realize the important role religions are called upon to play. Underlying globalization is the philosophy of neo-liberalism which **places the individual and his/her autonomy over the good and welfare of all** — specially the weaker ones. As David Korten tells us, “the first principle of the logical structure of neoclassical economics is that individuals are motivated by self-interest and, given maximum freedom from restraint, individual choices based on the pursuit of self-interest lead to socially optimal outcomes”.¹¹ Nobody has put the principle of self-interest as graphically and as plainly as the very father of economic liberalism. According to Adam Smith.

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.¹²

Let me illustrate the point with reference to the

present scenario of education. Education, like knowledge is a noble act. No wonder that in our Asian cultures, teachers or masters have been held in high esteem. There is something deeply spiritual and transforming in education. On the contrary, today, education is so commercialized and monetized that it has become more a means of enhancing the capacity of the individual to earn and to maximize profit. Often, even apparently “neutral” and “objective” research is conducted with commercial and profit intent. How otherwise are we to explain the millions of dollars spent on research on “viagra” and not on some of the lethal tropical diseases which kill thousands of humans everyday? In short, what is at work is profit and market-calculations.

Globalization by its process and its underlying philosophy creates an environment wherein the self-seeking or centripetal movement pervades. The winds of liberal capitalism by which globalization moves is but institutionalized greed. This is in keeping with the central tenet of liberalism for which everything will fall into place if everyone seeks his or her own interest. But this radically limits the capacity of human beings to love, serve and hope with and for others. When everything is enacted in the world in a centripetal movement, we naturally create a world of egoists. Christian tradition is a radical orientation to the other portrayed as the *neighbour*. Buddhism, the pan-Asian religious tradition underlines the importance of *prajna* (wisdom) and *karuna* (compassion) for the suffering of others. Here is a centrifugal movement that is elevating, ennobling and saving the world. We find similar orientations in other Asian religious traditions. Hinduism speaks of *lokasamgraha* (the welfare of all) as something to be constantly pursued. This is the antidote to the death-dealing centripetal movement. With such rich resources at their disposal, the religions are in a position to challenge the centripetal movement in the present-day globalization and contribute to create a culture and environment in which the centrifugal movement may flourish and blossom.

A danger lurks behind the neo-liberal economy and market, the motors of globalization. This is an ideology which has its roots in the biological Darwinism of the last century. According to Darwin, there is a process of natural selection by which out of innumerable species, plants and other living things, only some survive, while others perish. It is a question of the survival of the fittest; this is the order of nature. Such an ideology, when transferred to inter-human relationships, is known as *social Darwinism*. According to it, in the interaction in economy and market, a natural selection takes place resulting from competition. Those who are capable will survive; others will be left behind to perish. Thus, the evolutionary ideology of natural selection in the present global, market and trade economy forecloses humanistic prospects, and that is why it spells

catastrophe to the overwhelming majority of the poor on our globe. The ideology espoused by globalization is heading in this direction. That is why we witness increasing violation of human rights through globalization.¹³ At bottom, there will be no reason to challenge the violation of human rights, because the violence itself would be seen as part of the struggle and selection for the survival of the fittest. The victims are those who lose the battle and are destined to disappear. Hence it is important not only to bring empirical facts and data to counter the claims of capitalism and the market, but also to bring in humanistic and ethical principles to challenge such an insidious ideology.

This needs to happen today starting from the field of the economy, which is a net-work of relationships among people in the process of producing goods and services, and in the process of commercial exchange. We are facing a human issue. Economy loses its human potential for augmenting, enriching and enhancing relationships when it is objectified and allowed to overpower and even do away with relationships. Globalization precisely does this kind of mechanistic objectification in which the concern of human relationships seems to be positively excluded. In short, it is systemically impersonal. Any religious tradition committed to the cause of human promotion cannot be a silent spectator to what is happening in the economic sphere in terms of diminishing and corroding the human.

5. From Determinism to Utopia

There is something very dogmatic about the way globalization is presented by its ardent advocates. These advocates are, in the first place, the neo-liberal economists. The claim is that there is no other way than globalization. All peoples, nations and cultures have to be brought into its orbit. The future of the world and humanity is already irreversibly determined by globalization. The impression is evoked that we are in the final stage of human history and we have the definite trajectory for the future of humanity. The inevitability thesis is the undertone of the statement, for example, by Peter Martin when he argues there is the possibility “to opt out of globalization, but the price that is paid is not merely an economic one. It is also a political one, because the desire to repress globalization leads to an inevitable extension of the powers of the State and a loss of individual freedom”.¹⁴

Any such view of human history and its future is very deterministic. We have here, so to say, a *collective fatalism*. What globalization attempts to do in this way is to deprive people of the precious gift of freedom and stunt their capacity for imagining alternatives. I think it is here that the religions could play another important role. Oftentimes the religions, like in other areas, tend to accommodate themselves to globalization, quite

unaware of its implications for the future of humanity. Instead of succumbing to the pressures of globalization, the religions need to keep utopias alive. Utopias are visions about the future. They give hope to the victims of globalization that things could and will be different. Through the projection of utopias religions would reaffirm and vindicate the capacity inherent in humanity to seek new avenues and trajectories for human fulfillment. If globalization and economic liberalism are restrictive ideologies that enclose people within the narrow space of self-interest, utopias make us forward-looking by instilling confidence in the unexplored possibilities lurking behind the present. Thus utopias loosen the stranglehold of a determinism centred on self-interest. Though globalization speaks of freedom, in effect it goes counter to the true freedom which is the development of all.¹⁵

Precisely because utopias envision a different order of things they are critical of the present. Utopias may appear vague and undefined, and may not have the contours of an ideology. However, they help us to transcend the limitations of ideologies and systems — in our case globalization — and lead us to new and uncharted terrains with new possibilities.

Determinism fixes things and projects a future on the basis of present calculations. Religions could help project utopias that begin from the vision of a future that challenges the present and its calculations. It is an antidote to all kinds of determinism. However, the ability of the religions in this regard, will depend upon how utopia is conceptualised. Religions are prone to material-spiritual dualism, and hence there is the likelihood of utopias being envisioned as something which make people disengage themselves from history and the concerns of daily life. Therefore, religions in order to play a critical role *vis-à-vis* globalization need to undergo a self-critique. Only the religious traditions espousing a vision of matter-spirit continuum, will be able to project utopias that are historically rooted and capable of challenging the ideology of globalization.

Conclusion

Faced with globalization in all areas of life, one may envision a global religion or ethics valid for all and everywhere. This is neither feasible nor desirable. Globalization may provide a new opportunity and means for the re-assertion of religious tribalism which could prove very dangerous. The future of every true religious tradition lies, instead, in its quest for universal communion and community. This is the real challenge religions have to face. How are the religions to contribute to the creation of universal community?

Preaching noble truths and ethical ideals has been one of the principal modes by which religions sought to influence people and society. For many, it is still a

very important means. The complexities of the process of globalization tell us that religions, if they want to play an effective and transforming role today, need to address some of the basic structural questions behind the processes of globalization affecting every segment of life rapidly and massively.

There is no claim that religions could answer all the structural issues of globalization. Global society is made up of many functional sub-systems. The various sub-systems attend to the different aspects of life. The difficulty with religion is precisely that it does not represent any one particular sub-system performing a specific function. By its very nature religion is holistic, and religions address issues at a more comprehensive level. That is a disadvantage of course; but in another sense it is an advantage because religions can direct themselves to some basic issues which the various sub-systems fail to address. In this way, religions are able to take a distance from globalization and raise many critical questions about its underlying presuppositions and its mode of functioning.

Further, religious traditions, if they operate beyond the dualism of spirit-matter, will be able to help effect some saving shifts and direction required for the future of the human family. We saw five such shifts and transformations which religions could help effect. In the globalizing world of knowledge-explosion and expansion, religions could take us beyond the utilitarian and pragmatic use of knowledge. Today when globalization seeks to bypass democracy and democratic processes, it is important to highlight the subjecthood and human agency in determining the various aspects and realms of life through participation and solidarity. In these times of homogenization, religions could become defenders of pluralism which seems to be so very important for the cause of the marginalized. Religions could serve as a propeller that continues to create in all spheres of life a centrifugal movement. Finally, at a time when everything seems to be conditioned to proceed along a determined way, religions could perform a hope-giving role by triggering human imagination to project utopias and alternatives.

What is presented as possible avenues for an effective role for religions also challenges the religions face *vis-à-vis* globalization. This will be clear if we look at the present state of religions. They all require a profound internal transformation and a new hermeneutic to be able to come to terms with the challenges posed by globalization.

Notes

¹ Cf. Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, Sage Publications, London 1994. Reprinted 2000.

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London 1992.

³ Cf. Felix Wilfred, 'Identity: Suppressed, Alienated, Lost', *Concilium* 2000/ 2, pp. 31-38; *id.* (ed), Community and Identity-Consciousness', *Jeevadhara. A Journal of Christian Interpretation*, No. 181 (2001), pp. 69-85.

⁴ Cf. Wesley Ariarajah, *Asian Christian Theological Task in the Midst of Other Religious Traditions* (a paper presented at the Third Conference of Asian Theologians held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 6-11 August 2001). Cf. also Stanley Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue. Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious Relationships*, WCC, Geneva 1981, pp.121 ff.

⁵ Cf. Rajendra Singh, *Social Movements, Old and New. A Post-modern Critique*, Sage Publications, Delhi 2001; cf. also Peter Beyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 97ff.

⁶ *Proceedings of the National Institute of Sciences of India* 27 (1960), p. 564. As quoted in Tom Sorell, *Scientism. Philosophy and the Infatuation with Science*, Routledge, London – New York, 1991, p. 2.

⁷ As quoted by Vijay Prashad, "To 'get Einstein'", in *Frontline*, June 21, 2002, p. 73.

⁸ Cf. John R. Batter – Daniel A. Bell (eds), *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

⁹ Cf. Neera Chandhoke, *State and Civil Society. Explorations in Political Theory*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 1995.

¹⁰ Rajni Kothari, *Rethinking Development. In Search of Humane Alternatives*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1990, p. 224.

¹¹ David C. Korten, *When the Corporations Rule the World*, The Other India Press, Goa, 1998, p. 72.

¹² Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Modern Library, New York, 1937 (originally published in 1776), p. 14.

Ref.: *Info on Human Development*, Vol. 28, nn. 11-12, November-December 2002, pp. 2-10. (A paper presented at the Regional Consultation organized by PTCA on "Globalization in Asia and its Challenge to Doing Theology, Bali, Indonesia, July 4-7, 2002).

L'évangélisation comme inculturation

Vue par Ecclesia in Asia

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Nous, les peuples asiatiques sommes attachés aux symboles et aux images. Nous nous livrons peu aux spéculations et aux raisonnements analytiques, nous préférons l'évocation à la démonstration, l'intuition à l'argumentation, la sagesse à la science. Fidèle à cette forme de pensée, je commencerai ma réflexion en utilisant des images qui sont présentes ou inspirées de l'Eglise d'Asie.

1. La Grande Muraille et la Route de la Soie – Quel modèle pour l'inculturation ?

La première image est celle de la fameuse Grande Muraille de Chine. Construite il y a plus de 2000 ans, elle est, avec ses 6.000 km de longueur, la seule construction humaine visible de la lune. C'est un ouvrage d'art magnifique, symbole de la grandeur et de la puissance de l'Empire du Milieu, qui témoigne de l'intelligence et de la ténacité du peuple chinois. Mais, comme tout mur, la Grande Muraille signifie aussi la séparation, la division, l'autosuffisance, l'isolement et la défense. De fait, elle a été bâtie pour protéger la Chine d'une invasion des peuples du Nord.

La deuxième image contraste quelque peu avec la première. Elle a un nom poétique : la Route de la Soie. Quasi contemporaine de la Grande Muraille, la Route de la Soie s'est dessinée silencieusement pour unir l'Asie à l'Europe, l'Orient à l'Occident. Partant du cœur de la Chine, elle rejoint Rome, le cœur de l'Empire romain. Elle n'a pas été bâtie à la demande d'illustres rois, elle ne faisait pas non plus partie d'un projet militaire ; elle a été formée des pas de gens très ordinaires : marchands, explorateurs, missionnaires, moines, etc. ; ce sont eux qui l'ont faite naître. La Route de la Soie ap-

porte un témoignage fort de l'attraction mutuelle de l'Orient et de l'Occident, de ce désir de sortir de soi pour aller vers l'autre, vers la différence et le mystère. Sur la Route de la Soie, l'Orient et l'Occident se rencontrent dans une admiration réciproque, un échange culturel, religieux et artistique. Chacun apporte à l'autre ses meilleurs produits, les plus beaux et les plus originaux sans prétendre être le «*centre du monde*».

Aujourd'hui, alors qu'une grande partie de la Grande Muraille a traversé les siècles, la Route de la Soie a disparu depuis longtemps de notre paysage. Intimement, nous voulons tous démolir le mur qui divise et construire la route de la communion : une route sinueuse faite de petites marches, simple, humble, profondément creusée dans la terre, constamment foulée, délicate et solide comme la soie, étroite mais d'une portée considérable.

Involontairement, des murs ont été érigés dans l'histoire de l'évangélisation en Asie. On a trop accentué la différence entre la foi chrétienne et les autres religions et cultures, et l'identité chrétienne a été trop souvent fondée sur le principe d'identification, à tel point que la foi chrétienne est considérée comme une foi étrangère par tous les peuples d'Asie. Voyant que la foi chrétienne a suscité une réaction infime du continent le plus religieux du monde, un document récent du Conseil pontifical pour la Culture interroge : «*N'est-ce pas surtout parce que le christianisme est encore perçu comme une religion étrangère introduite par les Occidentaux, insuffisamment adaptée et qui n'a pas étudié avec précision les cultures asiatiques ?*» (Vers une approche pastorale de la culture, 1999, n. 20). Le Synode des évêques d'Asie insiste aussi sur ce point : «*Alors que l'Eglise est admirée*

pour son organisation, son administration, ses actions pour l'enseignement, la santé et le développement, souvent ces peuples (les croyants d'autres religions et les non-croyants d'Asie) ne considèrent pas l'Eglise comme totalement asiatique, non seulement parce que la plupart des aides financières viennent des pays occidentaux, mais aussi du fait du caractère occidental de sa théologie, son architecture, son art, etc. Craignant de perdre leur culture et leur identité nationale, certains peuples sont donc peu disposés à accepter le christianisme» (Instrumentum Laboris, n. 13).

Un sentiment complexe fait d'admiration et de crainte, de reconnaissance et de suspicion persiste encore dans la relation entre le christianisme et l'Asie. L'un et l'autre se connaissent de façon fragmentaire, superficielle et sélective, et ils s'acceptent non sans une certaine réserve. Il y a des murs d'autodéfense créés de part et d'autre, des murs qui restreignent les vues, masquent l'insécurité et nourrissent la méfiance. L'évangélisation ne devrait en aucun cas favoriser la construction de murs ou de barrières. Le Christ est venu pour détruire les murs qui séparent (Eph 2:14) et Il est le chemin pour la communion (Jn 14:6). En brisant les murs, le Christ crée en Lui une union de diversités. Il nous apprend que tous les êtres humains, quelles que soient leurs races et leurs cultures, sont en route vers la même destination. «*Au-delà de toutes les divisions, Jésus permet aux peuples de vivre en frères et sœurs, reconnaissant un seul Père qui est dans les cieux. En Lui est apparue une nouvelle harmonie*» (EA, n. 13). Il est le chemin, le lieu de la relation verticale avec le divin, de la communion horizontale avec le monde et avec les autres.

La Voie est l'une des métaphores les plus aimées de la pensée asiatique et on la retrouve fréquemment dans les religions et les philosophies orientales. Dans l'islam, la *charia*, «la voie», est le chemin extérieur à suivre. L'hindouisme parle des trois *margas*, les trois voies de libération et de rédemption. Pour les bouddhistes, la «Voie» qui mène à la libération totale et au *nirvana*, est la «Sainte Voie aux huit chemins». Le mot *tao* dans le taoïsme est précisément «la voie». Au Japon, le shintoïsme est la religion du *shintô* — la voie du divin. Il n'est donc pas surprenant qu'à la question posée pour réfléchir à la préparation de l'Assemblée du Synode pour l'Asie, de nombreuses Eglises aient répondu que la meilleure approche christologique pour l'Asie est de présenter le Christ comme la «Voie» du salut et de l'harmonie universelle.

De façon évidente lorsque l'on parle d'inculturation, *Ecclesia in Asia* a rejeté définitivement la mentalité du mur pour adopter de façon décisive celle du chemin. L'esprit de dialogue, de communion et le partage des dons déjà fortement soulignés dans des documents de Vatican II (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*,

22,53 ; *Ad Gentes*, 11,22) et de l'après Concile (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 20 ; *Redemptoris Missio* 52-54) pénètre l'exhortation apostolique. En fait, *Ecclesia in Asia* appelle la foi de l'Eglise en Jésus un «don reçu et un don à partager» (EA, n. 10) ; elle affirme que l'inculturation implique un enrichissement mutuel : «*Dans le processus de rencontre des différentes cultures du monde, non seulement l'Eglise transmet ses valeurs, ses vérités et renouvelle les cultures de l'intérieur, mais elle retire aussi de ces cultures les éléments positifs qu'elle y a déjà trouvés*» (EA, n. 21).

Le modèle d'inculturation choisi est clair : il ne devrait pas être fondé «sur la confrontation ou l'opposition mais sur l'esprit de complémentarité et d'harmonie. Dans ce cadre de complémentarité et d'harmonie, l'Eglise peut annoncer l'Evangile en respectant fidèlement sa tradition propre et l'âme asiatique» (EA, n. 6). La difficulté est de mettre cela en pratique. «*La grande question à laquelle doit faire face l'Eglise en Asie est comment partager avec nos frères et sœurs asiatiques ce que nous gardons précieusement comme le don contenant tous les dons, à savoir la Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ*» (EA, n. 12).

2. Près ou loin ? — Redécouvrir les racines asiatiques du christianisme

Une histoire est racontée dans la sagesse juive du «chassidim» : Benjamin apprend que Johannan partait. Il alla alors le voir et quand il apprit ses intentions, il lui demanda : «*Alors tu vas là-bas ? Combien tu seras loin !*» Yohanan lui répondit : «*Loin de qui ? Loin de quoi ?*»

Etre éloigné ou proche est relatif. Nommer les différentes zones géographiques de l'Orient par le «Proche-Orient», le «Moyen-Orient» et l'«Extrême-Orient» est euro-centrique. Même au sein de l'Eglise, les pays d'Asie ont été souvent considérés comme éloignés du Christ, loin de l'influence de la foi chrétienne. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes plus conscients de notre régionalisme culturel et religieux et nous savons que la terre est vraiment ronde, sans bouts de pyramide ni impasses pour arrêter le flux de la vie. Une vision globale et un sens accru du catholicisme dans l'Eglise accompagnent *de facto* la mondialisation. Il n'y a pas de «loin» ou de «près» au sens propre car il n'y a pas de «centre» du monde. Il y a un «Centre» mais ce n'est pas un lieu, c'est une personne : Jésus-Christ, à travers Lui ce qui est loin devient près. Paul, parlant aux chrétiens non hébreux, dit : «*Mais maintenant en Jésus-Christ, vous qui étiez loin êtes devenus proches par le sang du Christ*» (Eph 2:13). Le Christ en personne est cet espace où chacun se rapproche de Dieu et de son prochain. L'exhortation affirme : «*En Jésus-Christ, grâce à la puis-*

sance du Saint Esprit, nous apprenons que Dieu n'est pas distant, au-dessus ou à part, mais qu'Il est très proche, vraiment uni à chaque personne et dans toute l'humanité dans chacune de ses situations de vie. C'est le message que le christianisme offre au monde» (EA, n. 12).

Ecclesia in Asia parle clairement de la position centrale du Christ, le point de référence de toute tentative d'évangélisation et d'inculturation. «La contribution unique qu'apporte l'Eglise aux peuples du continent est la proclamation de Jésus Christ... L'Eglise veut offrir la vie nouvelle qu'elle a trouvée en Jésus-Christ à tous les peuples d'Asie qui cherchent la vie en abondance... La foi de l'Eglise en Jésus est un don que l'Eglise peut offrir à l'Asie» (EA, n. 10). En réalité, l'Asie n'est pas aussi loin du Christ qu'elle le paraît. C'est le continent sur lequel le Christ a choisi de naître, de vivre, de mourir et de ressusciter. C'est la terre sur laquelle s'est tissée l'histoire du peuple élu. «En fait, c'est en Asie que Dieu a révélé et accompli son œuvre de libération depuis le début... A «la plénitude du temps», il [Dieu] a envoyé son Fils unique, Jésus-Christ le Sauveur, qui prit chair en tant qu'Asiatique !» (EA, n. 1). «L'Asie n'est vraiment pas loin pour l'Eglise et la foi chrétienne n'est pas étrangère en Asie. L'Asie est le lieu de naissance de Jésus et de l'Eglise» (EA, n. 5). «C'est en Asie que Jésus envoya son Esprit-Saint sur ses disciples et qu'Il les envoya aux extrémités de la terre pour proclamer la Bonne Nouvelle et former des communautés de croyants» (EA, n. 9). L'Eglise d'Asie est en train de redécouvrir de façon plus consciente les «racines asiatiques du christianisme» (EA, n. 4). Cette prise de conscience la remplit d'une ineffable joie, d'une gratitude et d'une profonde admiration pour la sagesse avec laquelle Dieu réalise Son plan de salut. Dans le dessein de Dieu, non seulement Jésus a vécu sur ce continent mais toute la révélation de la Bible s'est accomplie sur ces territoires et tous les textes sacrés ont été écrits dans le contexte culturel et la mentalité de l'Orient. Les premiers voyages missionnaires, les premiers conciles œcuméniques, les premières expressions théologiques, les premières formes de spiritualité, les premières traditions de l'Eglise, etc., tous ont leurs origines ici en Asie. Toutefois, la sagesse divine voulut qu'après les premières heures, l'évangélisation se fasse en Occident. L'unité sociale et politique aussi bien que l'homogénéité de l'Empire romain ont contribué à ce que le nom de Dieu s'y répande rapidement (2 Th 3:1). La Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ pénétra profondément et à jamais la structure de la culture de l'Occident et à partir de là, elle se répand plus loin en Amérique et en Afrique. Alors qu'en Asie même, cela reste lent et difficile. La majorité de la population asiatique n'a été en contact avec le christianisme qu'à partir de la seconde moitié du deuxième millénaire.

Le message de l'Evangile a fait un aller et retour

très enrichissant. La foi que l'Asie a reçue ces derniers siècles est née en Orient mais elle a été enrichie par l'héritage culturel de l'Occident. Aujourd'hui, c'est au tour de l'Asie d'apporter à notre foi commune, et pour le bénéfice de tous les peuples, sa contribution particulière, faite de réflexions théologiques et de sainteté. C'est à son tour d'envoyer des missionnaires pour annoncer l'Evangile aux peuples du monde. «La Foi est renforcée quand elle est donnée aux autres» (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 2). Dans ce mouvement intéressant d'aller et retour, il n'existe pas de définition stricte du près, du loin, du premier, du dernier, des donneurs et des bénéficiaires. Et c'est ici que repose la beauté de la communion des saints et la vitalité de la mission chrétienne.

Après un voyage long et tortueux, la foi chrétienne est revenue en Asie au XVI^e siècle, alourdie d'un fardeau : une uniformité rigide, sur la défensive du fait de la Contre-réforme, avec le complexe de supériorité de la culture occidentale, un faible désir de comprendre les religions et les cultures traditionnelles de l'Orient, des liens avec le colonialisme, etc. Malgré tout, nous devons reconnaître que la foi chrétienne reçue par l'Asie est riche et fructueuse. Le passé est sans aucun doute un fardeau mais il a aussi des bienfaits. En programmant la mission en Asie, «l'Eglise ne peut pas abandonner ce qu'elle reçut grâce à son inculturation dans le monde de la pensée gréco-latine. Rejeter cet héritage serait nier le plan providentiel de Dieu qui guide son Eglise à travers les étapes du temps et de l'histoire» (*Fides et Ratio*, n. 72). La nouvelle évangélisation de l'Orient devrait être fondée sur le riche héritage de l'Eglise acquis pendant deux millénaires en Occident. L'Eglise d'Asie ne doit pas regarder son histoire en polémiquant ou avec du ressentiment mais avec gratitude et un esprit critique sain, avec la sagesse de celle qui sait reconnaître le plan de Dieu qui se réalise dans les événements humains.

Malgré le peu de fruits porté par l'évangélisation du passé, l'Eglise en Asie doit regarder l'avenir avec courage et espérance. Le pape voit «un nouveau printemps de vie chrétienne» en Asie (EA, n. 9) avec le commencement du nouveau millénaire et il est certain que l'Asie deviendra «la terre d'une récolte abondante» (EA, n. 4).

La redécouverte des racines asiatiques du christianisme mène à une conscience renouvelée de l'héritage religieux et culturel de l'Asie. *Ecclesia in Asia* reconnaît la richesse de ces valeurs et en énonce quelques-unes : «amour du silence et de la contemplation, simplicité, harmonie, détachement, non-violence, goût de l'effort, discipline, simplicité du mode de vie, soif d'apprendre et recherche philosophique, respect de la vie, compassion pour tous les êtres, proximité de la nature, piété filiale

de la famille», «un sens de la communauté très développé», «un sens puissant de la solidarité», «un esprit de tolérance religieuse et une coexistence paisible», «une capacité d'adaptation remarquable et une ouverture naturelle à l'enrichissement des peuples au milieu d'une pluralité de religions et de cultures» (EA, n. 6). L'Eglise considère ces valeurs de façon positive et rend grâce à Dieu : «Nous louons encore Dieu pour la richesse des cultures, langages, traditions et sensibilités religieuses de ce grand continent. Dieu soit béni pour les peuples d'Asie, aussi riches dans leur diversité que dans leur désir ardent pour la paix et la plénitude de la vie en Dieu» (EA, n. 50).

3. Satisfaire le désir ardent de «l'eau vive» — base théologique pour l'inculturation

L'esprit de partage des dons, la conscience de nos richesses, la proximité effective du Christ encourage l'Eglise d'Asie à renouveler son engagement pour l'inculturation. Le chapitre IV d'*Ecclesia in Asia* qui traite de l'inculturation est intitulé : «Jésus, le Sauveur : proclamer le Don».

Quel est le fondement théologique de l'inculturation ? Le document post-synodal traite de ce problème urgent et important comme on peut le voir dans l'intervention des Pères du Synode. Ce n'est pas fait systématiquement mais avec une approche riche en catégories théologiques, rappels bibliques et images éloquentes. L'idée principale est la suivante : l'Asie est un continent ouvert à la transcendance. Les peuples d'Asie ont soif de valeurs spirituelles et Dieu vient étancher cette soif avec le meilleur des cadeaux pour l'humanité : Jésus-Christ. «L'Eglise est convaincue que peuples, cultures et religions de l'Asie ont profondément soif d'eau vive (cf. Jn 4:10-15), une soif que l'Esprit a créée et que seul Jésus le Sauveur peut pleinement satisfaire» (EA, n. 18). «Les peuples d'Asie ont besoin de Jésus-Christ et de son Evangile. L'Asie a soif de l'eau vive que seul Jésus peut donner» (EA, n. 50).

Je vais maintenant l'expliquer à partir de trois points de vue différents.

- Du point de vue christologique :

On peut très bien conclure que le fondement théologique de l'inculturation dans *Ecclesia in Asia* réside dans le mystère «de l'unicité et de l'universalité du salut». «Comme manifestation définitive du mystère de l'amour du Père pour tous, Jésus est vraiment unique, et c'est précisément cette unicité du Christ qui lui donne une signification universelle et absolue» (EA, n. 14). Le plan de salut de Dieu qui a été accompli une fois, dans un espace et un temps précis, dans un contexte culturel déterminé, rejoint tous les peuples, tou-

tes les situations humaines, tous les âges, l'univers entier.

«En Jésus-Christ, Dieu a assumé les caractéristiques de la nature humaine, y compris son appartenance à un peuple et un lieu particuliers» (EA, n. 5) ; cependant «aucun individu, aucune culture n'est indifférent à l'appel de Jésus» (EA, n. 14). L'inculturation suit la logique de cet admirable plan du Salut de Dieu. Le processus d'inculturation est celui de l'incarnation du Fils de Dieu et de Son mystère pascal. L'«inculturation» est l'«incarnation» de la Bonne Nouvelle dans un contexte culturel particulier, de telle façon que ce message ne trouve pas seulement son expression à travers la richesse propre de cette culture, mais qu'il devient aussi un principe qui anime, unifie, purifie, transforme et régénère cette culture.

A partir de ce fondement christologique, les Pères du Synode en sont venus à une affirmation décisive et incisive : l'inculturation de la foi en Asie «nécessite de redécouvrir la face asiatique de Jésus et d'identifier des voies dans lesquelles les cultures asiatiques peuvent saisir le sens universel du salut du mystère de Jésus et de son Eglise» (EA, n. 20). Ils sont convaincus qu'en «contemplant Jésus dans sa nature humaine, les peuples d'Asie trouvent des réponses à leurs questions les plus profondes, voient leurs espoirs comblés, leur dignité élevée et leur désespoir vaincu» (EA, n. 14).

- D'un point de vue pneumatologique :

Ecclesia in Asia a affirmé sans hésitation que le «Saint Esprit est le premier représentant de l'inculturation de la foi chrétienne en Asie» (EA, nn. 21,17). Le chapitre III du document post-synodal sur l'Esprit Saint donne une belle description de la présence et du travail de l'Esprit dans la mission de l'Eglise en Asie. «L'Esprit qui est passé sur l'Asie au temps des patriarches et des prophètes, et plus puissamment encore à l'époque de Jésus-Christ et de l'Eglise primitive, passe aujourd'hui parmi les chrétiens d'Asie, renforçant le témoignage de leur foi parmi les peuples, les cultures et les religions du continent. De la même façon que le grand dialogue d'amour entre Dieu et l'homme a été préparé par l'Esprit et s'est accompli sur le sol asiatique dans le mystère du Christ, le dialogue entre le Sauveur et les peuples du continent se poursuit aujourd'hui grâce à la puissance de ce même Esprit Saint au travail dans l'Eglise» (EA, n. 18).

Ecclesia in Asia a perçu différentes voies par lesquelles l'Esprit est présent dans l'inculturation de l'Evangile en Asie. Il enseigne à l'Eglise la sagesse dans le discernement, la créativité pour trouver des voies adéquates et efficaces pour engager le dialogue avec les différentes cultures et religions, s'assurant «que le dia-

logue se déroule dans la vérité, l'honnêteté, l'humilité et le respect» (EA, n. 21). Il travaille dans le cœur des gens, crée un vif désir d'une vie en plénitude, «les guidant dans les chemins de vérité et de bonté» (EA, n. 15), les préparant «pour le dialogue du salut avec le Sauveur de tous» et «pour une pleine maturité dans le Christ» (EA, n. 17). De plus, l'Esprit apporte à l'Eglise le dynamisme et la créativité. Il la comble de cadeaux et de charismes, l'ouvre aux autres cultures et la fait grandir dans une vraie catholicité, la communion et l'harmonie. «L'Esprit rassemble dans l'unité toutes sortes de peuples, avec leurs différentes cultures, ressources et talents, faisant de l'Eglise un signe de communion de toute l'humanité sous la direction du Christ» (EA, n. 17).

L'inculturation en Asie réussira seulement si l'Eglise reste attentive et écoute ce que l'Eglise a dit au cours des décennies passées et dit aujourd'hui dans ce vaste continent.

- D'un point de vue ecclésiologique :

L'Eglise, en tant que sacrement du Christ, ayant reçu de Lui un mandat missionnaire, est convaincue d'être l'instrument du salut parmi les peuples. Elle peut leur offrir l'eau vive dont l'Asie a soif. Mais quels meilleurs canaux cette eau vive peut-elle emprunter pour atteindre sa destination ? *Ecclesia in Asia* affirme avec force : «La question n'est pas tant de savoir si l'Eglise a quelque chose d'essentiel à dire aux hommes et aux femmes de notre temps, mais comment elle peut le dire de façon claire et convaincante !» (EA, n. 29).

Il est évident que l'effort d'inculturation est une part essentielle de la mission de l'Eglise. C'est aujourd'hui une urgence et un devoir de première importance, surtout pour l'Eglise d'Asie. «A travers l'inculturation, l'Eglise devient un signe plus intelligible de ce qu'elle est, et un instrument de mission plus efficace» (EA, n. 21). «Les Pères du Synode avaient bien conscience du besoin pressant des Eglises locales d'Asie de présenter le mystère du Christ à leurs populations en respectant leurs modèles culturels et leurs façons de penser» (EA, n. 20).

Le salut doit être proposé et l'eau vive offerte. L'Eglise, sous les conseils de l'Esprit, devrait continuer à apprendre l'art de la proposition et de l'offrande, de l'invitation et de la fascination, de l'implication avec douceur et respect, avec une profonde compréhension et dans un esprit de dialogue. «En offrant aux autres la Bonne Nouvelle de la rédemption, l'Eglise s'efforce de comprendre leur culture. Elle cherche à connaître les esprits et les cœurs de ses auditeurs, leurs valeurs et coutumes, leurs problèmes et difficultés, leurs espoirs et leurs rêves. Dès qu'elle connaît et comprend les aspects variés de la culture,

elle peut alors offrir, respectueusement mais avec clarté et conviction, la Bonne Nouvelle de la rédemption à tous ceux qui veulent vraiment écouter et attendent une réponse» (EA, n. 21).

Naturellement, la tâche de l'inculturation «doit mobiliser le peuple entier de Dieu» (EA, n. 21), mais les Eglises locales ont un rôle spécial et une responsabilité plus directe. C'est essentiellement leur tâche de «présenter le mystère du Christ à leurs populations en respectant leurs modèles culturels et leurs façons de penser» (EA, n. 20). L'Eglise locale a été un sujet de réflexion fréquent dans la FABC. *Ecclesia in Asia* souligne l'importance de la communion et de la collaboration des Eglises locales et de l'Eglise universelle puisque «la communion et la mission vont de pair» (EA, n. 24). La foi héritée, dans une interaction dynamique avec les cultures locales, garantit l'authenticité de la communion. Une telle communion assure l'unité et l'universalité de l'Eglise. La communion universelle devrait être au service des Eglises locales et les Eglises locales inculturées peuvent de leur côté enrichir les autres Eglises.

4. Toucher le cœur — l'implication pastorale de l'inculturation

Des fondements théologiques, *Ecclesia in Asia* tire une riche série d'implications pastorales particulièrement applicables en Asie. Même si elles ne prétendent pas être exhaustives, ni systématiques, ni complètement élaborées, elles offrent cependant des suggestions précieuses qui invitent à une plus profonde inculturation.

Le fait douloureux que l'Evangile n'ait pas atteint le cœur des peuples en Asie revint plusieurs fois dans l'intervention des évêques dans le Synode. En parlant de l'inculturation dans la liturgie, les Pères du Synode disent dans les propositions que la liturgie de l'Eglise «doit toucher le cœur et être significative pour les gens de l'Eglise locale. Pour de nombreux catholiques asiatiques, la liturgie officielle est souvent considérée comme étrangère et elle ne touche pas leur cœur» (Proposition 43). Le «cœur» dans les cultures asiatiques ne se limite pas à indiquer des émotions, il est semblable à la signification du «cœur» dans la Bible : centre de l'existence, d'où jaillissent les pensées, les idées, les décisions et les orientations. *Ecclesia in Asia*, en présentant le Christ Sauveur dit qu'Il «parle à partir du cœur profond de la condition humaine», de telle façon qu'«aucun individu, aucune nation, aucune culture n'est sourd à l'appel de Jésus» (EA, n. 14). L'Esprit travaille au plus profond de la personne, il «prépare les cœurs des peuples asiatiques pour la vie en plénitude dans le Christ» (EA, n. 20). Et l'Eglise, qui vit en communion, devrait essayer de faire exister le «dialogue de la vie et du cœur» entre l'Eglise et ses membres, ou

hors de l'Eglise avec des gens d'autres confessions et religions. (EA, nn. 25, 30). La proclamation de l'Evangile devrait être faite en «témoignant de la vérité dans l'amour» (Eph 4:15 dans EA, n. 20). C'est seulement alors que nous pourrions dire que l'évangélisation est le travail du cœur, et par conséquent, si l'inculturation devait être radicale et durable, qu'elle atteindrait le cœur des asiatiques.

Ecclesia in Asia a donné un certain nombre d'indications sur les méthodes à utiliser dans ce domaine :

En accord avec les particularités de la communication religieuse et les méthodes d'apprentissage en Asie, *Ecclesia in Asia* a recommandé «une pédagogie évocatrice» qui fasse usage d'histoires, de paraboles et de symboles. On sait la plupart du temps que l'expérience asiatique de la réalité n'est pas principalement linéaire et conceptuelle, mais en spirale et symbolique, qu'elle est intuitive, attrayante, évocatrice, esthétique et intégrée.

- «Les méthodes narratives qui tiennent de l'expression culturelle asiatique doivent être préférées. En fait, la proclamation de Jésus-Christ peut être faite de façon plus efficace en racontant son histoire, comme le font les Evangiles». La notion ontologique, caractéristique de la pensée occidentale est nécessaire pour une compréhension systématique du message, «peut être complétée par des perspectives relationnelles, historiques et mêmes cosmiques», qui sont plus familières aux Asiatiques.

- Toutes les traditions philosophiques asiatiques accordent une importance particulière à l'expérience d'une relation immédiate avec la réalité. Ainsi l'expérience et la vie jouent un rôle prépondérant dans la communication de la foi. La proclamation de Jésus-Christ doit être adaptée au degré de maturité de son auditoire, à sa situation concrète et à ses questions vitales les plus profondes. «Le ministère de Jésus lui même montre clairement la valeur du contact personnel, ce qui demande à l'évangélisateur de prendre à cœur la situation du public». Dans cette perspective, les Pères du Synode ont souligné le besoin d'un sérieux effort pour découvrir des voies d'évangélisation «qui touchent les sensibilités des peuples asiatiques» et, à titre d'exemple, ils ont proposé une liste d'images de Jésus qui tout en respectant la Tradition et l'Ecriture Sacrée, seraient évocatrices pour les Asiatiques et leur permettraient de vivre une expérience personnelle.

- La présentation de Jésus a besoin de suivre une pédagogie graduelle, qui «conduise pas à pas à la pleine appropriation du mystère». «L'évangélisation initiale des non-chrétiens et la proclamation permanente de Jésus aux

croyants devront être différentes dans leurs approches». *Ecclesia in Asia* donne cet exemple : dans la proclamation initiale, «la présentation de Jésus-Christ pourrait venir comme la réponse aux aspirations exprimées dans les mythologies et le folklore des populations asiatiques».

- Une grande attention est consacrée à l'importance des médias modernes pour communiquer et inculturer la foi. Inévitablement, la mission d'évangélisation de l'Eglise est profondément affectée par l'impact de cette «nouvelle culture», cet «aréopage de l'âge moderne». «L'Eglise a besoin d'explorer les façons d'intégrer minutieusement les médias dans son planning et son activité pastorale» (EA, n. 48) et dans le processus d'inculturation.

A côté des indications méthodologiques, *Ecclesia in Asia* a identifié dans son paragraphe 22 des domaines clés dans lesquels l'effort d'inculturation devrait être concentré et renforcé.

- Domaine théologique :

En accord avec les Pères du Synode, le pape exprime son «encouragement aux théologiens dans leur tâche délicate de développer une théologie inculturée, surtout dans le domaine christologique». C'est nécessaire, car la foi chrétienne «ne peut pas se confiner dans les limites de la compréhension et de l'expression d'une seule culture humaine» (EA, n. 20). Déjà en 1975, Paul VI, dans son exhortation apostolique *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, engagea les Eglises locales à «traduire le trésor de la foi en une variété légitime d'expressions de la profession de foi». (EN, n. 6). Dans son encyclique *Fides et Ratio* (1998), Jean-Paul II a distingué l'Inde comme ayant une place spéciale parmi les pays orientaux qui sont riches en traditions religieuses et philosophiques. «En Inde particulièrement, c'est la responsabilité des chrétiens de tirer maintenant de ce riche héritage les éléments compatibles avec leur foi, de façon à enrichir la pensée chrétienne» (FR, n. 72).

La Bible est centrale dans l'inculturation de la foi. La parole de Dieu est effectivement une semence qui a besoin d'extraire de la terre dans laquelle elle est plantée les éléments utiles à sa croissance pour porter des fruits (cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 22). Les Pères du Synode reconnaissent que «la parole de Dieu a un pouvoir inhérent pour toucher le cœur des gens», ils soulignent particulièrement «l'importance de la parole biblique pour transmettre le message du salut aux peuples d'Asie, où la transmission des mots est si importante pour préserver et communiquer l'expérience religieuse». De plus, presque tous les textes bibliques ont été construits et écrits en Asie et «le style narratif que l'on trouve dans de nombreux livres de la Bible ressemble aux textes religieux typiques de l'Asie».

Aujourd'hui, la Bible a été traduite en diverses langues asiatiques. Cela peut être la première étape, cependant, la traduction ne peut pas assurer par elle-même une inculturation approfondie. Elle doit «être suivie par l'interprétation qui positionnerait le message biblique dans un rapport plus explicite avec les sentiments, les modes de pensée, de vie et d'expression propres à la culture locale. À partir de l'inter-prétation, on passe à d'autres étapes d'inculturation, ce qui mène à la formation d'une culture chrétienne qui s'étend à tous les aspects de la vie : la prière, le travail, la vie sociale, les coutumes, la législation, les arts et les sciences, la réflexion philosophique et théologique» (Commission biblique pontificale, *Interprétation de la Bible dans l'Eglise*, 1993, IV B).

- Domaine liturgique :

Ecclesia in Asia donne, bien que brièvement, des réflexions intéressantes sur ce sujet. Tout d'abord, on parle de l'urgence de l'inculturation à partir du pouvoir évangélisateur de la liturgie. C'est «un moyen d'évangélisation décisif, surtout en Asie, où les disciples des différentes religions sont si attirés par les cultes, les festivals religieux et les dévotions populaires». Mais ce n'est pas aussi simple que l'on pourrait l'imaginer. Une inculturation authentique demande plus qu'incorporer des éléments culturels traditionnels, des rites et des symboles dans un processus extérieur et artificiel. Elle devrait davantage provenir de la foi chrétienne pleinement vécue dans le contexte culturel et la vie quotidienne des gens ; pour cette raison, elle doit aussi «tenir compte des évolutions de conscience et d'attitudes causées par les cultures de consommation laïques qui affectent le sens asiatique du culte et de la prière».

Le sujet direct de ce processus est l'Eglise locale, mais la liturgie étant l'héritage et l'expression commune de la foi de l'Eglise entière, le pape recommande un rapport plus étroit entre les Conférences épiscopales et les dicastères romains concernés, «à la recherche de modes efficaces pour encourager des formes appropriées du culte dans le contexte asiatique».

- Domaine de la formation :

Faisant écho aux Pères du Synode, *Ecclesia in Asia* fait une critique justifiée de la formation des évangélisateurs en Asie : «Dans le passé, la formation suit souvent le style, les méthodes et les programmes importés d'Occident». D'où l'effort récemment fait pour adapter la formation au contexte culturel d'Asie qui devrait être reconnu comme une «évolution positive».

En plus de solides connaissances en études bibliques, théologiques et philosophiques, les séminaristes, les hommes et les femmes consacrés et tous les évan-

gélisateurs ont besoin d'avoir une connaissance approfondie des traditions philosophiques et religieuses. Leur spiritualité et leur style de vie doivent être sensibles à l'héritage culturel et religieux du peuple qu'ils servent et dont ils partagent la vie. À cette fin, les Pères du Synode mettent en évidence la nécessité que les équipes des séminaires soient inculturées. Ils recommandent que les professeurs et le personnel soient formés à leurs tâches et les encouragent à «s'impliquer plus profondément dans la recherche du peuple asiatique pour une vie en plénitude».

- Domaine de la spiritualité :

L'Asie est un continent où la spiritualité joue un grand rôle pour former les vies des gens. Des formes variées de contemplation et de sainteté ont existé sur ce continent depuis les temps immémoriaux. Le pape témoigne de ce fait par sa propre expérience : «Mon contact avec les représentants de traditions spirituelles non chrétiennes, particulièrement celles d'Asie, m'a confirmé dans le point de vue que l'avenir de la mission dépend en grande partie de la contemplation». Il met en valeur certaines particularités de la spiritualité asiatique, considérées comme des grandes valeurs par les disciples de toutes les religions : «la prière, le jeûne et différentes formes d'ascétisme», «la renonciation, le détachement, l'humilité, la simplicité et le silence» (EA, n. 23). Dans la mesure où ce riche héritage s'intègre dans son attachement au Christ, le chrétien asiatique peut être vraiment asiatique et authentiquement chrétien.

5. Allumer le feu — l'inculturation par le témoignage de vie

Avec le symbole très éloquent du «feu qui ne peut être allumé que par un objet déjà en feu», les Pères du Synode soulignent que pour faire fructifier l'inculturation, il n'est pas suffisant d'être convaincu de son urgence, ni d'avoir un fondement théologique solide, ni une stratégie pastorale précise. Ce qui est le plus important, ce sont «de saints hommes et de saintes femmes qui feront connaître et aimer le Sauveur au travers de leurs vies». En fait, l'inculturation ne traite pas d'un problème, elle ne développe pas une théorie, elle a quelque chose à faire avec la croissance des personnes et des communautés. Elle doit être réalisée par des gens «qui sont eux-mêmes enflammés par l'amour du Christ et brûlant de zèle pour Le faire connaître plus largement, Le faire aimer plus profondément et pour qu'Il soit davantage suivi» (EA, n. 23). Seuls ceux qui ont fait une synthèse personnelle entre leurs racines culturelles et leur foi chrétienne pourront communiquer aux autres une vision qui intègre les deux de façon authentique, sans tomber dans le syncrétisme, ni laisser l'un absorber l'autre.

L'Eglise est convaincue qu'«*aujourd'hui les gens accordent plus de confiance aux témoins qu'aux professeurs, à l'expérience qu'à l'enseignement, à la vie et l'action qu'aux théories*». Particulièrement dans le contexte asiatique, «*les gens sont davantage convaincus par une vie de sainteté que par des arguments intellectuels*» (EA, n. 42). C'est une «*personne authentiquement religieuse [qui] inspire facilement le respect, qui sera suivie en Asie*» (EA, n. 23). En d'autres termes, l'inculturation de l'Evangile a besoin de vrais Asiatiques et d'authentiques chrétiens, qui aiment profondément le Christ et qui aiment leur propre terre, leur culture et leur propre peuple, qui savent lire le travail de Dieu dans l'histoire humaine et découvrir les 'semences de la Parole' quels que soient leurs lieux et leurs formes.

Ici et là, *Ecclesia in Asia* esquisse les traits de ces personnes, capables d'allumer le feu et de conduire vers le Christ. A propos des prêtres, le document remarque : «*Le peuple asiatique a besoin de voir les prêtres non seulement comme des travailleurs caritatifs et des administrateurs institutionnels mais comme des hommes dont les esprits et les cœurs sont profondément ancrés dans l'Esprit*» (43) ; à propos des religieux : «*Tous ceux qui ont embrassé la vie consacrée sont appelés à devenir des guides dans la recherche de Dieu, une recherche qui a toujours stimulé le cœur humain et qui est particulièrement visible dans les différentes formes asiatiques de spiritualité et d'ascétisme*» (EA, n. 44). Mais pas seulement les prêtres et les religieux, même les laïcs, les femmes, les jeunes, les pauvres etc., chacun à sa place peut évangéliser par sa vie et contribuer à l'inculturation de l'Evangile dans son propre environnement.

Bien sûr, le témoignage de sainteté de vie n'est pas dissocié de la mission de «*service et d'amour*» et de la responsabilité de la promotion de l'homme. Le document post-synodal insiste sur le fait que «*le travail de justice, d'amour et de compassion est intimement lié à une authentique vie de prière et de contemplation, et c'est vraiment la même spiritualité qui sera le ressort de tout le travail d'évangélisation*» (EA, n. 23).

En conclusion, alors que l'Eglise en Asie cherche à «*redécouvrir la face asiatique de Jésus*» (EA, n. 20), elle devrait aussi souligner la face asiatique des disciples de Jésus, qui vivent sur ce même continent où Jésus est né, où Il a vécu, est mort et ressuscité.

Conclusion

Le pape qui écrit cette exhortation apostolique est comme quelqu'un qui tire du trésor de l'Eglise «*du neuf et du vieux*» (Mt 13:52). En réalité, sur l'inculturation, *Ecclesia in Asia* ne dit rien de fascinant

ni de résolument nouveau ; plus exactement, ce document en est dépourvu sous de nombreux aspects, surtout pour ceux qui attendent une réponse concrète et innovante dans le champ de la structure ecclésiale et la discipline de l'Eglise. Cependant, nous avons remarqué l'émergence d'une nouvelle prise de conscience, une conviction renouvelée et une nouvelle façon de lire l'histoire de l'évangélisation, une nouvelle approche, et un nouveau défi, une nouvelle façon d'être pour l'Eglise, de nouveaux signes d'espérance. Une ère nouvelle est en chemin, une ère dans laquelle «*une grande moisson de foi sera récoltée dans ce continent vaste et fondamental*» (EA, n. 1). C'est bien plus important que les seules déclarations ou résolutions de ce document.

La notion de «*don*» est particulièrement mise en valeur tout au long de ce document. C'est un point de vue nouveau et créatif, à partir duquel on voit tout le processus d'inculturation. «*Jésus le Sauveur est un don pour l'Asie*» (titre du chapitre 2), «*la foi de l'Eglise en Jésus est un don reçu et un don à partager ; c'est le plus grand don que l'Eglise peut offrir à l'Asie*» (EA, n. 10), «*c'est seulement si le peuple de Dieu reconnaît le Christ comme un don qu'il pourra communiquer ce don à autrui par la proclamation et le dialogue*» (EA, n. 31).

Du concept de «*don*» à celui d'échange de dons, on réalise que l'inculturation n'est pas conçue comme un processus à sens unique mais un enrichissement mutuel, un croisement de cultures dans la foi unique et dans l'harmonie des dons. Ceci contribue à rendre l'Eglise vraiment mondiale, vraiment catholique, unie dans le Christ, mais multiculturelle et multiethnique.

Il est vital pour l'inculturation de l'Evangile en Asie d'être conscient des racines asiatiques du christianisme. Après avoir accepté le fait douloureux que «*Jésus est souvent perçu comme étranger à l'Asie*» (EA, n. 20), le Saint-Père lance le défi d'un changement de vision. Il nous invite à redécouvrir la face asiatique de Jésus et l'identité asiatique de ses disciples qui vivent aussi dans ce continent qui est le Sien. Redécouvrir la face asiatique de Jésus implique de retirer le voile qui est mis par inadvertance sur ce visage, de revenir à la fraîcheur, la simplicité, le charme originel de cet Evangile, et de le laisser parler immédiatement aux cœurs des peuples.

Le ton d'*Ecclesia in Asia* est généralement optimiste ; un sentiment de reconnaissance et d'espérance pénètre ce document. Cela ne veut pas dire que l'Eglise ignore les difficultés de l'inculturation qui sont loin d'être simples. Déjà, dans l'encyclique *Redemptoris Missio*, le Saint-Père admet que l'inculturation est un «*lent voyage*» (RM, n. 52). C'est vrai partout, mais surtout en Asie, avec des situations politiques, économi-

ques, culturelles et religieuses très complexes. Alors qu'en Occident, la foi et la culture chrétiennes ont déjà atteint une certaine maturité, en Asie, le processus en est seulement à sa première étape. Mais l'Eglise en Asie est encore jeune et, elle a l'avantage de connaître les leçons apprises en Occident, où les jugements et les erreurs, les conflits et les tensions, les échecs et les réorientations ont joué un rôle significatif.

L'Eglise dans ce vaste continent asiatique est et restera encore longtemps le «*petit troupeau*» (Lc 12:32). Loin d'être une minorité fermée et timide, elle «*a une foi vigoureuse, elle est pleine d'espoir et de vitalité que seul l'amour peut apporter*» (EA, n. 50) ; elle avancera avec patience, sagesse, courage, confiance et réalisme, sans prétention ambitieuse, sans crainte excessive ni prudence exagérée. Elle n'attend pas de conversions massives mais elle voudrait être «*un signe prophétique*» qui transforme les cultures de l'intérieur, un feu qui éclaire de bon cœur, le sel qui donne du goût avec simplicité et la levure qui fait lever la pâte par surprise. L'insistance du Saint-Père sur la sainteté et sur la «*sagesse silencieuse de la vie*» (EA, n. 23) a dans l'inculturation une importance toute particulière qui ne peut être ignorée.

La prise de conscience de notre petitesse nous poussera à être unis et imaginatifs. Souhaitons que le nouveau millénaire permette à l'Eglise en Asie d'être ouverte et attachée aux «*voies nouvelles et surprenantes*» (EA, n. 20) avec lesquelles l'Esprit travaille et par lesquelles Jésus est présent dans son propre continent. (EDA, UCAN)

Réf. : *Dossiers et documents*, n. 2/2003, EDA, n. 369, Février 2003 – Dossier

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Towards a Buddhist Christian Dialogue *Some Bridges of Understanding*

– Fr Leopold Ratnasekera, O.M.I. –

It is said that religion is for man and not vice-versa. In that case both Buddhism and Christianity are religions true to their name for they strive to be a positive response to some deep-seated questions which from time immemorial stir the human heart. Eventually the texture of religious expression took on a social pattern and each grew into its particular religious history and cultural traditions embracing its doctrines, rituals and rites, celebrations and philosophies. It is the purpose of this article to identify some common ground for a unified vision of the two religious insights coming from Buddhism and Christianity, so that they are seen to converge on these as points of departure for dialogue, giving however divergent responses to the same problems that vex the human consciousness in the human struggle to live a contented life. Four such foundational themes can be detected:

1. The Human Condition

Both religions respond to two acute problems of human nature as experienced universally by mankind. Human nature is seen to be vitiated and engulfed in a web of contradictions. Buddhism identifies this radical experience as “suffering” (*dukkha*) understood in a deeper metaphysical sense beyond physical, emotional or psychological suffering. Christianity points to it as “sin” understood throughout the article in its profoundest biblical sense. However, both suffering and sin (identified as alienation from God with its integral repercussions both on the personal and social levels), deal with the instability of human nature, or simply the human condition that human beings experience and have to grapple with, if they desire a state of true liberation or salvation – a state of integrity. The state of suffering is comparable with the impact of the “Power of Sin” (Mystery of iniquity) advocated by Paul in Romans 5 that stains every person and indeed the whole of humankind. We are all under the power of sin and need the grace of God without exception. So we define both sin and *dukkha* as conditioning existence.

But how is liberation from suffering (*dukkha*) obtained in Buddhism? It is by sheer self will and determination in a committed and sustained effort to root

out the cause of suffering which is greed or devastating desire (*Tanha*) that cripples everything in man including his freedom. For this spirituality a very severe ethical and mental discipline is prescribed that leads to a gradual taming of bodily passions, cleaning up the states of mind and guards the sense of awareness. The interaction of these spiritual exercises would gradually bring a state of wisdom, understanding and enlightenment that helps a person to be sensitive to the passing fads of desire while never falling a victim to it. This is the triple-way namely of the mind, consciousness and ethics (*Pañña*, *Samadhi* and *Sila*) that sharpens the awareness (*viññana*) to detect reality as it is, namely that existence is suffering, that there is nothing permanent in our experience (all corporeal/mental phenomena) and that there is no such thing as what the Christians call a “soul”. These basic philosophical categories are named *dukkha* (suffering) *anicca* (impermanence) and *anatta* (soul-lessness) respectively. Until this awareness is reached a person only wallows in a most unreal thing called “I” (“Me”, “Self”), which is nothing but an expanded bundle of illusions. As long as a person is enmeshed in such illusions and desires, suffering and restlessness are inevitable of which the most pathetic one is rebirth. Once all illusions are shed and desire is cut off, liberation is attained. It is compared to a wick that ceases to burn, once the oil has run out.

However, at the level of discipline and mental health the top quality exercises are in the plain of the mind. This requires a high degree of concentration and meditation (*samadhi*) that leads to spiritual insights (*vipassana*) and illumination making people realize how illusory reality is, especially the empirical, bodily and mental layers of our phenomenological existence. This is the journey to holiness (*visuddhi*). In this self-discipline there is no external assistance from some divine source (*grace*) no intercession from a saint nor even from another enlightened person (not even Buddha). One is one’s own saviour. One has to put one’s hand to the plough and not look back. It is self-struggle.

Grace is from within; to be activated from liberative potentialities hidden within a person. It is self-redemption through one’s own efforts. There is no revelation from above but all is illumination and enlightenment

from within one's awareness. This is quite in contrast with the radical need of grace or of a saviour and redemption from without as Christianity envisages and the Bible attests. In Christian understanding, it is God who takes the initiative to bring healing to a wounded nature, restoring it to the grace of a wholesome existence in which a person feels in control and at peace within him/herself and enjoys intimacy with God or the Divine reality (the Indwelling). However, this intervention requires that a sinner respond with the right disposition of repentance and Metanoia which reveals the active participation of the sinner in his salvation – the human component. What is called suffering in Buddhism is really the sense of alienation that disorients a person from himself and from God as understood in Christianity. Conversely, what is sin in Buddhism is the permanent enslavement to desire (*Greed-Tanha*) that is the root of all suffering, including re-birth, for one reaps as one sows. Hence we see that the anthropological analysis though much in contrast, yet is rooted in the raw human experience of an unsatisfactory and disoriented state of a person's being — be it a state of sin or state of suffering. The Buddhist spiritual discipline could be seen as natural mysticism and as a means to self-discipline which is also emphasized in Christianity as the human component disposing a person to grace.

2. Detachment and the Spirit of Renunciation

A demanding practice of detachment from the pleasures of body, mind and consciousness is required for a person to reach some spiritual experience. Faithful to the common teaching of all religions, Buddhism teaches that revelling in a world of lust be it pride in the mind, or physical pleasure or a host of desires of all kinds is no way for a person to achieve some spiritual emancipation and liberation of the spirit. Such peace and contentment comes only when the mind is clean and the will is strong to ensure a stable state of tranquility without being disturbed by any anxiety.

And so, there is the discipline called "Sila". Every devout Buddhist lay person is expected to practise the "Pañcha-Sila" (the five-fold discipline) namely, *no killing* which includes violence of any kind, *no stealing* which includes all desires for things belonging to others, *no using intoxicants*, *no un-chastity* which includes impurity of all kinds both of body and mind (impurity, deranged sexuality, sexual misconduct and adultery) and finally, *no lying* which includes all forms of dishonesty, bearing false witness and character assassination. We see this resonating well with the major ethical component of the Decalogue. It is clear therefore that it is by practising these precepts that a Buddhist hopes to purify himself from the spirit of greed that leads to much suffering not only to oneself but also for others. The

Buddhist ethic can be viewed as the beginnings of the Christian way of life when appropriated and lived in daily discipline. It is impossible to live a life of faith without such basic discipline. In fact, in our traditional books of spirituality the first stage is called the "purgative way". Purged of these inordinate habits, a Christian's life is ready for higher spiritual experiences of faith, prayer and a vivid experience of God. The laity are expected to put the above into practice and constantly become aware of the need of these qualities by pronouncing them verbally. For those who desire higher spiritual states, there are five others which for example a full-fledged Buddhist, like a monk (Bhikku/Bhikkuni) would practice full time while living in the monastery. As long as a person is unable to detach him/herself from these inordinate states of lust, greed and violence and incapable of renouncing them, there is hardly any way out of his present deranged human predicament and its future consequences of more suffering to come, including the cycle of re-births.

3. The Monastic Tradition

The pre-eminent feature of Buddhism lies in its unique insistence on Monasticism. In fact, it is unanimously accepted that Buddhism is a monastic religion and that to pursue the Buddhist ideal of Enlightenment that leads to full liberation or *Nirvana* as it is called, a person has to enter the state of monkhood. The very earliest form of Buddhism at the time of the Buddha was clearly monastic. The earliest followers of the Buddha lived homeless, celibate lives and begged for their food. They were expected to be entirely dependent on the devout laity for their material sustenance and did nothing to earn their living as understood in the secular sense of today. They never married and lived in common abodes called "vihara" or monasteries. Their robe was very simple and made of yellow cloth used to wrap the bodies of the dead. The demands of chastity were so high that any serious violation of this virtue, like homosexuality or adultery resulted in being immediately expelled from the order of monks. This Order of monks is called the Sangha, the community of those desirous to enter the Buddha's discipline and live in community in daily meditation and in solitude. The Sangha community was also open to women, but as usual they had to live in separate monasteries. This female-Sangha or Bikkhuni-community too follow the same discipline as the male-sangha.

We know that the monastic tradition of spirituality dawned in the history of Christianity from very early times. Beginning with Anthony of the desert and later on many others who entered the cenobitic life, we see how this tradition got entrenched in the great Benedictine Monasticism as we know it. The monastic life-style and spirituality are very much at the core

of Christianity today and are a proud witness to the Gospel call to holiness which gives primacy to God and the spiritual, thereby witnessing to transcendence as part of human life and pointing to realities beyond the empirical and the phenomenal that are temporal in nature and are subject to change (*anicca*, as in Buddhism). It must be appreciated however that both Christianity and Buddhism even in their radical forms of life-style in search of spiritual liberation advocate the Middle-Way, the way of virtue. Only the extremes of our attitudes and values are evil, sinful and lead to suffering. Hence, both religions propound a Middle-Path, the “Majjhima Patipada” as Buddhism advocates and the path of Virtue (*Virtus est in medio*) as understood by Christianity. To explain it further, Buddhism denounces on the one hand extremes of asceticism (self-torture) that serve no purpose and condemns very clearly the way of relentless pleasure seeking (sensual lust) while proposing the way of moderation that helps the mind to remain restful and contented. Such a person can reach great spiritual and mystical heights.

Today, as we advocate inter-religious dialogue, an area that can help significantly in such conversations and common undertaking is the inter-monastic dialogue between the Buddhist Sangha and the Christian monks, for they at best highlight the radical commitment to their religious ideals with detachment, solitude, meditation, celibacy and community as basic ingredients of their life-styles.

4. Religions and Secularity

a) It is well known that both Buddhism and Christianity in their initial stages had the blessing of civil patronage. When the Buddha and his first sixty monks (sangha) launched this new way of life, the kings of their time received the message with devotion. But the biggest breakthrough for Buddhism came with its third council (236 years after the Buddha) with King Asoka zealously supporting a missionary drive that spread far and wide into all part of Asia. King Asoka can be identified as the Constantine of 4th century-Christianity. Both H.G.Wells and Jawaharlal Nehru have written memorable words about him. As such, Buddhism therefore became a powerfully cultural and political factor that integrated religious belief into civil life. Countries of South East Asia like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Laos, Vietnam and even Korea and China have experienced the inroads made by Buddhism into the fabric of their national life and eventual history. In the same way as Constantine unified his empire, so in Asia entire kingdoms were won over for Buddhism from their ancestral religions starting with Asoka. We can here think of the parallel of Christian influence in early and medieval Europe and later on in the last 500 years that mark the period of Western colonization and the period of the discovery of the New World.

However there is much more to the impact of these two religions as a matter of principle than just the political patronage they would have received. One should probe into their main teachings that, even today in a highly globalized world steeped in a secular culture, can be regenerated and kept rational and human with some of their religious values that are perennially valid and in fact transcend cultures and ideologies. Religions have always stabilized civilization and ensured the path of peace, prosperity and solidarity.

Some of the traits of modern civilization are plain to see.

a) *First*, everywhere there are threats to life, through medical experimentation, war, violence, abortion, etc. There is also manipulation of life and violation of human rights. Amidst such dangers that threaten to ruin life and its noble concept, Buddhism stands for safety, respect and non-violence to life in all its manifestations, even that of plants and animals. This is the first of the basic five precepts that all genuine Buddhists are expected to practice: “I shall do no violence to a living being”. Buddhist greetings always end with the words: “Let all beings be happy”. Similarly, the Christian pro-life stand remains non-negotiable even in the face of highly complicated issues such as medical ethics are raising today. Both religions therefore champion a culture of life and a civilization of love. In Buddhism it is called *Metta* (loving-kindness) and *Karuna* (compassion) showed to all. These two virtues are even referred to as “Brahma Vihara”, which means they are akin to divine qualities: what we in Christian theology and spirituality would refer to as a person practising the three theological virtues.

b) *Secondly*, we find today in the competitive and consumer-oriented society, that is almost a world-wide culture, an incredible sense of greed and spirit of acquisitiveness dehumanizing mankind in many ways. This desire, greed and relentless competition are fast becoming structural and institutional. There is hardly any area of commerce that is devoid of this sense of Greed, as a result of which the personal and social ego is expanded in all forms of selfishness and idolatry, whereby commodities are raised to the level of the divine and worshiped as the where-with-all of life. People live more for things than for their humanity. The cultural slogan seems more in favour of having more than of being more human. The worth of man is seen in what he possesses including money, wealth and power. These have become the idols of today’s secularity and give rise to a globalized culture with the electronic media diffusing it to the full.

Hence, some counter-offensive to eradicate the sense of personal and collective greed in today’s global culture is long overdue. Both Buddhism and Chris-

tianity point to greed (*Tanha*, in Buddhism) as the root cause of much misery in our world: persons who act out of greed, world structures which operate out of collective greed and institutions that are infested with greed. This has to be challenged by the core teachings of religions in order to put the direction of life on the right path, so that exploitation of people in the interest of things can be averted. Buddhism and Christianity are well equipped for this task.

c) *Thirdly*, society today is much preoccupied with questions of justice and peace. Religions have always expressed concern for these two issues of modern-day civilization. Religions can never be the cause of injustice or division in civilization. They have by their very nature to stand for peace and educate people in forming their consciences to act justly and peacefully. The social teachings of Buddhism (*Sigalovada Sutta*) given as a special discourse to a layman, the Buddha speaks about the real worship that involves six-levels of social relationships and in another teaching he has referred to ten virtues that is mandatory for a righteous ruler (*dasa-raja dhamma*).

In this respect both Buddhism and Christianity stand for justice and peace. The God of Christian faith always requires justice in all its rich biblical connotations. Peace is based on this justice where relationships are wholesome and salutary. Buddhism promises peace of mind to those who submit to its ethical and mental disciplines and such personal peace of mind contributes to the diffusion of social peace. Compassion for all beings and loving kindness leads to such a peaceful world. When all people are in control of themselves and are content, peace dawns naturally. Both Christianity and Buddhism condemn the spirit of violence that leads to violent deeds and calls people in conflict to reason out and avoid the irrationality of letting blood. Gestures of peace are always fostered by religions. In the name of Buddhist and Christian core teachings one can appeal for world peace. The enlightened Buddha and the Risen Christ always carried on their lips the gracious word of peace (“*nidhukkha*”—*Shalom*). In parenthesis, we begin to see how religious fundamentalism is a travesty of religion whose main mission is to foster a spirit of tolerance, conviviality and solidarity for peace.

The three roots of evil as presented by Buddhism, namely: greed, ignorance and hatred, called capital sins in Christian terminology, explain to the fullest extent the evil that fills the world today. In this triple light all that is sinful, oppressive and evil in present-day society could be explained either in individual experience or in their collective forms. These three however are interconnected and work in a spiral, with one leading to another. This leads us to think about: *war* as a result of hatred and expressed in systematic violence with frightening weaponry; the *drug trade* that is born of ignorance of its

devastating effects on life; the *hedonistic spirit* and *sexual perversion* that can result from a lack of healthy gender-awareness and the sublimity of human sexuality reducing it only to libido; and finally, *greed* perhaps is at the bottom of the entire world economic system that relentlessly pursues profit. When money becomes power (global capitalism), and not just a means to stabilize a financial system it has therefore to be named “*mammon*”, in the fullest sense of the term, since it is anti-kingdom.

The Christian understanding of the seven capital sins too, goes well with the above triple unwholesome roots. Hence, Christianity commends a good character formation, an effective process of conscientization aimed at the developing of mental attitudes and insight into reality and illusions. Both religions advocate a sound character formation based on personal discipline on the one hand and social structures based on just relationships, without which conflicts arise between persons and nations, which if not solved through dialogue would lead to violent situations.

Conclusion

In the light of the above considerations, both Buddhism and Christianity can be effective partners in dialogue in appreciating each other's finer insights and operating out of these common considerations be engaged in deepening man's self-understanding as one capable of overcoming his unsatisfactory condition by seriously committing himself to self-discipline. Both religions can mutually challenge a violent world to serious efforts toward peace based on a sense of justice and point to the modern evil of greed as the root cause of many an evil that besets contemporary society. They can positively diffuse the spirit of temperance that is an anti-dote to greed even as restraint and compassion would prove a way out to the spirit of violence. They can be a school for a wiser insight into the realities of the world and the inner spirit of man as a way out of ignorance and irresponsibility that it breeds. Thus, Buddhism and Christianity through inter-religious dialogue could raise the hope of a better world, a more human, just and peaceful one, based on a disciplined and contented existence as they to help one another to release the potential liberation hidden in their core-teachings.

Ref.: Article from the Author for SEDOS. [Fr Leopold Ratnasekera, O.M.I., S.T.L. (Rome: Gregorian University), Th.D. (Institut Catholique, Paris)].

Le feu et le cristal

Dialogue humain et inter-indépendance religieuse

– Raimon Panikkar –

Raimon Panikkar est Indien, prêtre, philosophe et théologien, professeur émérite de l'Université de Californie (USA). Il est l'auteur de plus de cinquante livres dont quelques-uns ont été traduits en français. Il a pris sa retraite en Catalogne (Espagne).

Dans cet exposé, j'essaierai de ne pas succomber à la tentation de parler en concepts, qui font à la fois la grandeur et la faiblesse de la pensée occidentale. Je parlerai plutôt en termes de symboles, précisant évidemment que chaque symbole a de multiples significations et peut, en conséquence, être interprété de diverses manières.

La véritable grandeur d'un peuple

Le premier symbole est le 11 septembre. Depuis plus de deux siècles à présent, dans une petite nation qui fait partie de l'Etat espagnol, la Catalogne, on célèbre à cette date, sous toutes sortes de festivités, non pas une victoire mais une défaite. Les Catalans ont, à l'époque, été vaincus par les Bourbons,¹ mais cette humiliation a été transformée en une fête nationale qui a permis au peuple de trouver sa cohésion et le sens de sa dignité.

Aurons-nous la sagesse de transformer l'attaque criminelle du 11 septembre 2001 aux Etats-Unis en une victoire qui nous fasse réfléchir, non seulement à la culpabilité des autres mais aussi à nos propres fautes ? Ce serait là une réaction qui fournirait la preuve de la véritable grandeur d'un peuple et ce serait la meilleure politique pour éviter l'engrenage d'actes de violences sans fin de part et d'autre.

Le deuxième symbole est le feu dans le cristal, qui fait l'objet de cette conférence. Le feu, *agni* dans la tradition indienne, est le père des dieux. Le feu est la force primitive, déposée dans la semence mâle, dans l'énergie, partout où on peut la trouver à des degrés divers. Et ce feu est la force vitale de la réalité. Nous parlons de la force du feu et de la perfection du cristal, un symbole parfait, mais auquel manque une troisième

composante : le temps.

Pour qu'un cristal puisse se former, il ne faut pas seulement du feu, il faut aussi du temps, de la patience, le respect des rythmes de la nature, de l'homme et de la réalité dans son ensemble. Une des plus grandes plaies de la vie moderne, ne serait-elle pas le manque de temps ? C'est une maladie qui ne peut être guérie ni dans la précipitation ni par l'accélération du cours des événements.

Le troisième symbole est donc le besoin de temps, le respect du temps, la prise de conscience que le temps fait aussi partie de la réalité et qu'il est un facteur essentiel, non seulement pour vivre bien mais aussi pour vivre en paix. Le monde sera-t-il capable de respecter les rythmes du temps avant de se précipiter dans la vengeance des événements survenus aux USA qui ont tant scandalisé tout un chacun ? Avec cette introduction, nous ne sommes pas hors du sujet ; nous entrons même au coeur de notre problématique, à savoir : nous sommes tous *inter-indépendants*.

Cet exposé n'avait pas pour titre premier : "*Dialogue humain et inter-dépendance religieuse*", comme l'ont présenté les organisateurs de la conférence mais : "*Dialogue humain et inter-indépendance religieuse*". Cette correction spontanée a mis en lumière ce qui constitue le quatrième symbole. Nous croyons que nous sommes interdépendants et, en effet, il est vrai que nous ne sommes pas seuls et que tout est inter-relié. Mais il faut aussi rappeler que ce sont les plus faibles, les plus pauvres ou les moins intelligents qui dépendent des plus forts, des plus riches et des plus intelligents. En Inde du Sud, nous disons que quand une fourmi est attachée par une corde à un éléphant, ce ne sera sûrement pas l'éléphant qui sera entraîné par la fourmi mais plutôt le contraire.

L'interdépendance n'a de sens que si elle peut être inter-indépendance et ceci n'est possible que si nous admettons l'existence d'un facteur religieux au-dessus de nous, un lien qui confère à chacun et à tous une liberté qui nous rend capables d'indépendance tout en restant liés les uns aux autres.

La religion n'est pas un médicament

Lorsque je dis religion, je ne pense pas à la religion comme à une aspirine, à un remède pour nos maux de tête, quelle qu'en soit la nature. La religion n'est pas un médicament : soit elle est nourriture de vie, soit elle n'est qu'un simple palliatif. Pour ne donner qu'un exemple, si nous considérons l'histoire à l'époque du duc de Modène,² les gens de la ville et les paysans dépendaient du duc. Ils vivaient donc sous un régime de dépendance, de domination que la religion, quelquefois à la manière d'une aspirine, s'efforçait de justifier ou de compenser, ce qui explique que beaucoup d'entre eux ont tourné le dos à une certaine pseudo-religiosité artificielle.

Nous pouvons être fiers d'avoir fait un pas en avant, un pas que pourtant je ne voudrais pas appeler "développement", car c'est pour moi un terme trop "mécaniste", trop anti-humain: l'homme ne se développe pas, il grandit et mûrit. Nous ne sommes pas des machines.

De toute évidence, nous avons grandi dans un cadre qui reconnaît l'interdépendance. La démocratie, au sens strict du terme, est un pas en avant vers la reconnaissance de cette interdépendance. Mais si une personne possède des bombes atomiques, mille alliés et mille dollars, et qu'une autre personne n'a qu'une épée, et qu'elle est seule et pauvre, l'interdépendance n'est alors qu'un euphémisme. Le Nicaragua, par exemple, n'ose pas défier son voisin, les Etats-Unis. Donc, reconnaître l'interdépendance est sans doute, au moins théoriquement, un pas positif. Mais nous ne pouvons pas pour autant prétendre avoir atteint notre but. Les hommes sont égaux en tant qu'entités numériques mais dans la réalité ils sont tous différents et uniques.

Ce caractère unique est la base de l'inter-indépendance. Si nous sommes uniques, nous ne pouvons pas être réduits à un quelconque dénominateur commun nous ne sommes pas quantifiables. L'inter-indépendance, c'est reconnaître que de la plus petite particule à la plus large expression de la réalité, il existe par dessus tout dans la sphère humaine une inter-indépendance au sein d'une dépendance mutuelle, que ce soit dans le cadre du

karma universel,³ du corps mystique du Christ,⁴ du *buddhakāya*,⁵ etc. Chaque être, comme chaque atome, dispose de son propre degré de liberté.

Chaque homme est non seulement dépendant des autres, de son destin ou d'une réalité objective, mais il est aussi lié, à travers une relation d'inter-indépendance, avec le genre humain et avec le cosmos tout entier. C'est cela qui constitue notre dignité et c'est l'origine de notre responsabilité. L'inter-indépendance reconnaît la dimension de liberté de toute réalité et donc le fait qu'aucun d'entre nous n'est l'arbitre absolu de quoi que ce soit. Nous pouvons peut-être manipuler les gènes, mais nous ne pouvons pas manipuler la réalité. Même ce qu'on appelle la "toute puissance divine" doit se confronter à la liberté humaine.

La reconnaissance de l'inter-indépendance implique clairement une nouvelle cosmologie et même une nouvelle vision du vrai sens de la religion. Si la religion signifie pour tout un chacun l'ouverture au mystère, il s'ensuit que personne n'en a le monopole, car le mystère est infini. Je ne peux donc pas croire, en vertu de ma foi, que seule ma vérité est valable et consigner les autres dans la sphère de l'erreur ou du mal.

Terrorisme et anti-terrorisme sont sur le même plan

Si le terrorisme est un mal, il ne peut pas être combattu par des bombes. Combattre le mal par le mal ne mène à aucune solution. En Inde, dont la population est plus importante que celle de l'Amérique du Nord, de l'Europe et de la Russie réunies, dans un pays qui se bat contre le fléau national du terrorisme, le président de la Cour suprême a déclaré au début de cette année qu'il y a pire que le terrorisme, à savoir l'antiterrorisme. Terrorisme et anti-terrorisme sont sur le même plan et ce d'autant plus que, si le dernier était sur un plan plus élevé, il ne s'abaisserait pas à combattre avec les mêmes armes que l'ennemi.

C'est la raison pour laquelle un nouveau type d'anthropologie est nécessaire, comme le croient de nombreux penseurs. Car si l'homme n'est qu'un singe bien développé, alors la loi de la jungle s'applique et le plus fort l'emportera. Dans ce cas cependant, il n'y aura ni paix, ni joie. Si j'exprime cela en termes de métaphore, je dirai que le diable, ange déchu, est plus intelligent et plus rusé que l'homme. Pour pouvoir cultiver le dialogue religieux, il faut reconnaître l'interindépendance de toutes les cultures et de tous les hommes, sinon il n'y aura pas de dialogue humain, mais seulement une lutte dialectique ou armée. Dialoguer est beaucoup plus exigeant qu'annihiler ceux qui pensent autrement

que nous, d'autant que cette annihilation est évidemment perverse.

Le mal fait partie intégrante de la réalité mais le mal, je le répète, ne peut être vaincu par une nouvelle forme de mal. Nos manuels scolaires citent une phrase, dont je ne pense pas qu'elle ait été inventée par Niccolò Machiaveli que je considère comme bien trop intelligent pour avoir formulé une déclaration aussi simpliste — raison pour laquelle précisément l'imagination populaire s'en est emparée et malheureusement aussi les hommes politiques "*La fin justifie les moyens*". Cette affirmation, en plus d'une aberration morale, est une idée mal conçue : si la fin justifie les moyens, cela implique que les moyens sont ou deviennent bons si la fin est bonne. Il est évident que ceci est une tautologie facile à comprendre. Des moyens qui deviennent bons parce qu'ils sont justifiés par une fin bonne servent alors à atteindre la fin supposée bonne. Si les moyens dépendent de la fin, il ne peut y avoir de mauvais moyens si la fin est bonne.

Ainsi, c'est la dépendance qui rend les moyens dépendants de la fin. Si la fin est de défendre son chez soi ou sa patrie, ou d'éliminer le terrorisme — une fin bonne en soi — alors tous les moyens qui contribuent à l'accomplissement de cette fin sont automatiquement bons. Ce qui reste à voir, c'est si les moyens sont réellement des moyens, c'est-à-dire s'ils permettent d'atteindre la fin. Et nous avons ainsi une situation dans laquelle seuls des moyens efficaces sont justifiés, ce qui nous enfonce dans la forme la plus sauvage du pragmatisme : « *Dieu est du côté de ceux qui frappent le plus fort* ».

Le grand défi du 3^{ème} millénaire

L'interdépendance n'est pas une tautologie mais un cercle vicieux. Si les moyens sont interdépendants, tout ce qui est relatif aux moyens se rapporte aux fins et vice versa. Les fins sont bonnes parce que les moyens sont bons et les moyens sont bons car la fin est bonne, et ce sont de vrais moyens quand ils servent le but. L'inter-indépendance est bien différente. Les moyens ne dépendent pas uniquement de la fin, mais ils possèdent aussi une dose d'indépendance par rapport à la fin qui permet de les définir comme bons ou mauvais.

C'est pourquoi ils ne sont pas seulement des moyens, mais ils ont leur autonomie propre. L'indépendance de l'inter-indépendance sous-entend que la construction de la réalité n'est pas une grille rigide dans laquelle tout est prédéterminé et mécanique, mais une relation entre des êtres qui ne

sont pas entièrement prédéterminés. Ce champ de liberté est le champ de la relation dans son sens le plus profond. Le grand défi de ce troisième millénaire est que nous ne pouvons continuer à vivre et à penser selon les anciennes catégories : ce qui est en jeu désormais, c'est la destruction de l'homme et de la nature.

Dans un discours prononcé à New York au cours du Forum mondial du millénaire 2000, l'ex Président Gorbatchev a dit à peu près littéralement ceci : "*Nous utilisons encore des outils obsolètes et des approches démodées.... Ceci est le drame des politiques globales*". Plusieurs dizaines d'années auparavant, Einstein avait dit quelque chose de semblable. C'est là le défi de la dimension religieuse inhérente à chaque homme, qu'il soit croyant ou non, car la foi n'est pas un héritage réservé à quelques-uns. Les croyances peuvent être différentes, mais la foi est partie constitutive de l'être humain.

Tout homme est ouvert à l'inconnu, au mystère, à ce qui lui est étranger, à ce sur quoi il n'a pas de prise, à ce qu'il estime être beau et par quoi il se sent attiré, même s'il est incapable de le nommer. Nous savons comment utiliser les choses, mais nous ne connaissons pas le mystère de leur réalité ; nous devons faire preuve d'humilité. La religion — et je comprends parfaitement l'allergie que ce terme peut provoquer compte tenu des usages et des abus qui ont été commis en son nom — est une dimension de l'homme. La vraie religiosité nous conduit à écouter les autres, car personne n'est autosuffisant. Ainsi émerge le dialogue religieux qui est échange en profondeur de l'expérience humaine en tant qu'être humain — et non pas en tant qu'expert spécialisé dans un domaine particulier.

Connaître l'homme, c'est connaître Dieu

C'est pourquoi beaucoup de religions (y compris l'islam) nous disent que se connaître soi-même, c'est connaître l'homme et connaître l'homme, c'est connaître Dieu. Cependant, pour atteindre la connaissance, il ne suffit pas de calculer ou de voir. Pour le génie grec, la métaphore principale est celle de la vue : voir, clarifier, révéler. Par contre, pour une civilisation aussi ancienne que la civilisation indienne, la métaphore principale n'est pas de voir mais d'écouter. Voir signifie juger, c'est-à-dire que dans un certain sens c'est moi qui suis le maître. Si je ferme les yeux, je ne peux plus voir. En revanche, fermer les oreilles n'est pas une tâche si facile et c'est indiscutablement un exercice plus artificiel.

Se connaître soi-même exige aussi d'être capable d'écouter, ce qui signifie ne pas juger tout de suite mais être patient et tolérant. Savoir écouter est un art qui peut

modifier notre vie, conduisant à ce changement majeur de mentalité qui prend sa source en nous mais s'étend à toute notre culture. Et chez les autres, ce changement de mentalité ou *metanoia*⁶ n'est ni un problème technique ni un problème politique. Les convictions profondes de l'homme ne peuvent être changées ni par des manipulations techniques ni par des dispositions politiques. La nécessité de se transformer est un problème religieux. D'où l'importance du dialogue intra-religieux qui requiert la reconnaissance de l'inter-indépendance de toute construction de la réalité.

Le cristal ne brûle pas dans un feu ordinaire. Il lui faut une haute température. Puissent mes paroles faire s'allumer ce "feu dans le cristal".

Notes

1. En 1640, la Catalogne se souleva contre la présence de troupes françaises sur son territoire ; après la proclamation d'une éphémère république, les insurgés firent serment d'allégeance à Louis XIII.

2. Les ducs de Modène, en Italie, régnèrent pendant plus de cinq siècles (de 1288 à 1796) sur cette ville d'Emilie-Romagne.

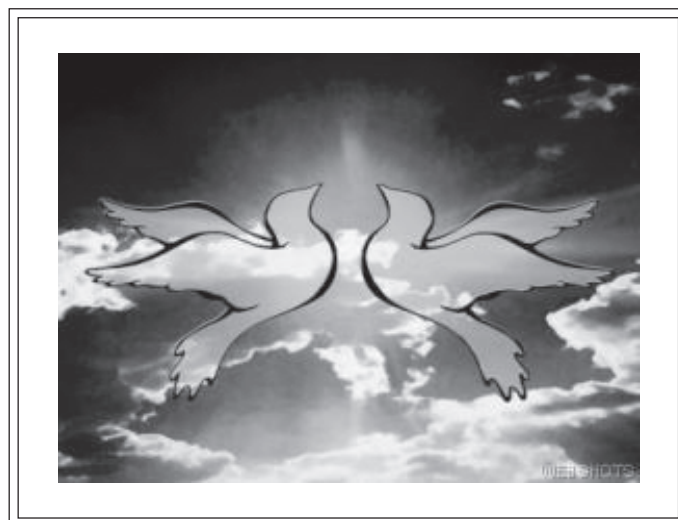
3. Dogme central de la religion hindouiste selon lequel la destinée de l'homme est déterminée par ses actions passées, ses vies antérieures.

4. Union symbolique de tous les chrétiens (morts et vivants) avec la personne divine du Christ.

5. Buddhakaya correspond au corps mystique de la réalité.

6. Mot grec signifiant "conversion" ou plutôt dépassement du mental.

Réf. : *Foi et développement*, n. 310, janvier 2003. (Traduit de l'anglais par Marlyse Thommen-Strasser à partir du texte original paru dans *Metanoia*).



The Mysteries of Light

– Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P. –

A Scripture scholar comments on the five mysteries added to the Rosary by Pope John Paul II: Baptism, Cana, Kingdom, Transfiguration, Supper. [The writer teaches Scripture at the Dominican Studium, Dublin, at Dublin University (Trinity College) and at the Kimmage Missionary Institute. The author of many books on Scripture, his next book, due in early summer, is an expanded version of this article. It will be published by Dominican publications].

The Rosary is a thoroughly biblical, a wholly Gospel prayer. The reason it is so is by no means only because the Lord's Prayer and the greater part of the Hail Mary come straight from the Gospels. It is because almost all of the 'mysteries' of the Rosary come straight from the Gospels. The Joyful Mysteries are taken from the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel — his infancy narrative.

The Sorrowful Mysteries are based on the passion narratives of the four Gospels. The Glorious Mysteries reflect the close of the Gospels and its overflow into the new age of the Spirit and the Church. The Rosary, however, has a serious lack. The Joyful Mysteries reach only to the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple.

The Sorrowful Mysteries begin with Gethsemane. Not a trace of the Jesus of the ministry! And the fact is: it is not possible *truly* to understand the death of Jesus except in the context of his life. Jesus did not die — Jesus was killed. He was put to death precisely because of the witness he had borne, in all that he was and in all that he had done, throughout his ministry. 'Who do you say that I am?' is the challenge of the Marcan Jesus (Mk 8:29).

The answer is not in his death alone but in what led to his death. The addition — more properly, insertion — by Pope John Paul II of the Mysteries of Light makes the Rosary a more balanced prayer.

In the Mysteries of Light — Baptism, Cana, Kingdom, Transfiguration, Supper — Jesus is central. While the presentation of him in the Gospels reflects encounter with him as risen Lord, he is, firmly, Jesus of Nazareth. He is the one 'born of a woman, born under the law' (Gal 4:4), the 'one like his brothers and sisters in every respect' (Heb 2:17). It is this truth one would emphasise here. It is vitally important for a balanced Christology, *The Mysteries of Light* reveal the Light that is light of the world, that is life of the world. They reveal the incarnate Word. The Rosary is, in essence, a meditation on the Son of Mary, the one who is revelation and presence of God.

MYSTERY

It is not irrelevant to consider the term 'mystery'. In common use, 'mystery' means hidden, not readily discernible — we speak of a detective-mystery. In older catechesis, 'mystery' was defined as 'revealed truth which we cannot comprehend'. In biblical usage — and this is our guide here — *mysterion* is no longer mysterious! A 'mystery' is a plan or purpose of God, hidden, true, in the past, but now *revealed* (see Rom 11:25-26). Colossians speaks of 'the mystery' long kept secret by God but now 'made manifest to his people' (Col 1:26). It emerges that the mystery is identified with the person of Jesus Christ. In short, mystery is revelatory. The mysteries of the Rosary reveal Christ to us, lead us to further understanding of him. We look, then, at these Mysteries of Light.

– BAPTISM –

**(Mk 1:9-11; Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21-22;
Jn 1:29-34)**

His baptism by John the Baptist marked the start of the short active ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. He began as disciple of John but, before long, launched his own distinctive mission. His goal was the renewal of Israel: to bring Israel to what God had wanted his people to be. At the baptism Jesus was solemnly proclaimed Son of God, leader of God's End-time people, Lord of his people.

The heading of his Gospel — 'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (I:I) — had already informed the reader of Mark's understanding of Jesus' identity. In the baptismal scene the heavenly voice (the voice of God) declared of Jesus, 'You are my Son, the Beloved' (I:II). As Jesus was about to embark on his public ministry, God solemnly affirmed both his status and his call. Similarly, at the transfiguration God declared (this time for the benefit of the three disciples): 'This is my Son, the Beloved: listen to him!' (9:7). Only at Baptism and

Transfiguration does God emerge as ‘actor’ in the story. And not alone did God, each time, declare that Jesus was ‘Son’, but the declaration served the purpose of confirmation. The baptism declaration confirmed the truth of the caption (I:I); the transfiguration declaration confirmed the truth of Peter’s confession of Jesus as ‘Messiah’ (8:29) — going beyond Peter’s misunderstanding (vv. 32-33). Finally, at the climactic moment of the death of Jesus the title was Son of God: ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’ (15:39).

The centurion was the first human in Mark’s Gospel to penetrate the secret of Jesus’ identity — because he was the first to come to terms with the cross.

In the Synoptics, the Baptism is immediately followed by testing: Mark 1:12-13; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13. Jesus was Son of God, yet like his brothers and sisters in every respect. He was tested — he had to make decisions throughout his life. Being Son did not spare him: ‘Although he was Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered’ (Heb 5:8). He had to learn how costly saying ‘Yes’ to God might be: his ‘Yes’ led him to the cross.

Paul had found inspiration and comfort in the faith of Jesus: ‘The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me’ (Gal 2:20). The faithful Son is our support in our testing.

– CANA – (John 2:1-12)

The passage 2:1-12 is a careful Johannine construct, rich in Johannine symbolism. The first character in the story, the Mother of Jesus, initiated the action with her implied request: ‘They have no wine’. The water ‘for the Jewish rites of purification’ (v. 6), turned into wine, symbolises the old order yielding place to the new. For the evangelist the episode is a symbol of something that occurs throughout the whole of Jesus’ ministry: the manifestation of the ‘glory’ of Jesus — John’s term for revelation. Revelation, in John, is self-revelation of Jesus — ultimately revelation of the Father. All the rest stems from this. Cana marked the first moment of *doxa*, ‘glory’. The fullness of revelation would be when the Son of Man was ‘lifted up’. He was the Sent One who spoke the I AM of the Father’s presence and authority. He spoke that Word on the Cross.

‘And blessed is she who believed’ (Lk 1:45) — Elizabeth had pinpointed the characteristic trait of Mary in the Gospels: she is woman of faith. This is especially so in the Fourth Gospel. At Cana she herself exemplified, and then demanded, total trust in the word of her Son. She became example for Christians and advocate for her Son. She pointed beyond herself. In her fash-

ion she endorsed the declaration of the Son: ‘I am the vine, you are the branches.... Apart from me you can do nothing’ (Jn 15:5). She continues to admonish us: ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (2:5).

Mary’s ongoing role was confirmed at the ‘hour’ of her Son. She and the Beloved Disciple are, in John’s theology, the believers *par excellence*. They are the nucleus of a new family of believers. They had been witnesses of the ‘hour’: the definitive revelation of God. Now they must bear witness. The Mother had been told, ‘Here is your son’ (19:26). Become Mother of the Beloved Disciple she is, thereby, Mother of all Christians.

KINGDOM

The basic sense of ‘kingdom of God’, as understood and meant by Jesus, was the End-time rule of God when, as Paul put it, God will be ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28). Then will the prayer of Jesus be fulfilled: ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ (Mt 6:10). Jesus, however, had insisted that, in his person and ministry, the rule of God had become a reality here and now (see Lk 11:20; 17:21). Indeed, the best way of understanding the nature of the kingdom, the rule of God, is by seeing it in action in the deeds and words of Jesus — in his very person.

In his proclamation of the Kingdom, Jesus’ presupposition was of God as Parent, with humankind, God’s children, as brothers and sisters. This is why he stood authority on its head. Because the community of his followers should be marked by *koinonia*, fellowship, the pattern of domination would have no place: ‘it is not so among you’ (Mk 10:43). Authority finds its expression in *service*.

In a world of stark inequality and injustice, Jesus had particular concern for the afflicted, the marginalised. ‘Outcast’ was not a category he could or would acknowledge. He displayed notable respect for women and children. He was sensitive to suffering and was prodigal in healing the ills of humankind. He had special concern for the destructive illness that is sin, so much so that he was known as ‘friend of sinners’. Following him was no soft option: his men and women disciples had left everything. His own way led to the Cross: ‘No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (Jn 15:13). The rule of God is the way of love.

– TRANSFIGURATION – (Mk 9:1-8; Mt 17:1-8; Lk 9:28-35)

The transfiguration was very likely a prayer experience in which Jesus came to terms with his *exodus*, his ‘departure’: his death. Evidently, the experience was so profound that it left an indelible impression on Disciples

who had witnessed it. Viewed in retrospect, in the light of the Resurrection, it was taken to have been an anticipated vision of Jesus in glory. Now it is recast as an episode for the benefit of the disciples, a revelation granted to them. And the climax is the word from heaven: 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' (Mk 9:7).

In the narrative, Moses and Elijah stand for the Law and the Prophets, the Scripture of Israel. Peter's proposal of three 'dwellings', one each for Jesus, Elijah and Moses, would put all three on an equal footing. Peter really 'did not know what to say'. The voice from heaven set the matter straight: the Son alone speaks the full word of God. In Matthew's version the disciples, overcome by fear, were reassured by Jesus: 'And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone' (Mt 17:8). Moses and Elijah still speak the word of God, but not the definitive word. Now God 'has spoken to us by a Son' (Heb 1:2).

– *SUPPER* –
(Mk 14:12-28; Mt 26:20-29; Lk 22:14-23;
1 Cor 11:17-33)

Mark's concern in 14:12-25 was to connect this farewell meal of Jesus with the Passover — in v. 14 he explicitly designates it a Passover meal. This means that, in his chronology, Jesus died on the feast of Passover, and in this he is followed by Matthew and Luke. The Fourth Gospel states with equal clarity (Jn 18:28; 19:14) that Jesus died on the eve of Passover. In reality it would seem that the Last Supper was a solemn farewell meal — not a traditional Passover meal. It was the culmination of a series of meals that Jesus had shared with his Disciples. What can be said without contest is that, whatever the precise nature of the Last Supper, the background for it was Passover. The evangelists exploit this factor.

Jesus followed the practice of a family head at a festive Jewish meal by breaking a loaf and passing around the pieces. He 'took bread', 'blessed', 'broke', 'gave', — the same actions and the very same words as in both feeding stories (6:41; 8:6). There is no doubt that the correspondence is intentional; the vocabulary there was prompted by the eucharistic language here. Then the disciples 'did not understand about the loaves' (6:52). Now the mystery is being revealed. Jesus is the 'one loaf' (see 8:14) for Jews and Gentiles because, as he tells them, his body is being given and his blood poured out for all (14:23-24).

Apart from two passages in I Corinthians (10:16-17; 11:17-34) it might have seemed that Paul knew nothing of the Eucharist. At any rate, I Cor 11:23-26 puts beyond doubt that the Lord's Supper had been part of Christian faith and practice from the start. The passage is the earliest reference in the New Testament to the Eucharist. The striking

point is that Paul does not think of the Eucharist and Christ's presence in it in a static manner. Instead the account is full of dynamic expressions. It is no mere making present of Christ's body and blood; it is a proclamation and a memorial of his death, of an event. Similarly, the cup is 'the new covenant in my blood', that is, an event, the making of a covenant that has lasting and definitive consequences for the life of the people of the covenant. The command to repeat the action of the Lord, 'Do this ...' not only binds the community to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly and thus keep alive the meaning of the death of Jesus, but places upon it the obligation to proclaim the redemptive meaning of his death.

'This is my body... this is my blood'. Body and blood, that is to say, the self, the person: Jesus is giving himself, and giving himself in death. Paul had grasped the significance of the gift: gift of 'the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal 1:20). The death of Jesus is 'for' us. And the command, 'Do this in remembrance of me': The Eucharistic is *anamnesis*, 'remembrance', a bringing to mind that is a form of presence. The Eucharistic fulfils the promise of the Lord: 'Remember, I am with you always, to the end of age' (Mt 28:20).

Paul has declared — 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?' (I Cor 10:16). His emphasis was not just on the one loaf and the one cup. But on the *sharing* of the one loaf and the one cup. It is because, in sharing mode, they partake on one loaf, that the celebrants become 'one body' — the body of Christ. 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (10:17). The Eucharist is meant to be a bond of unity. Eucharistic celebration ought to be a manifest witness to unity. Paul's view that, where this is not so, there is in fact no Eucharist (11:20) should make us ponder. Is our eucharistic celebration, our Mass, a manifest sign of unity? Is it, truly, the Lord's Supper?

Ref.: *Spirituality*, Vol. 9, n. 47, March/April 2003, pp. 80-85.

Coming Events ---

2003 SEDOS Open Seminar

The 2003 Seminar of SEDOS, co-sponsored by the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Union of Superiors General (USG), will take as its *motto*: “*Called to a new vision of others and of ourselves through interreligious dialogue: focused on Islam*”. This year’s Seminar will be an open seminar instead of the usual residential one at Ariccia. It will take place in Rome, in the Aula of the Augustinianum.

The dates are 19 to 23 May, each afternoon from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Dialogue is an important value in itself. It is a way of life. Dialogue between Christians and Muslims will run as a thread through the programme of the Seminar. Participants will be listening to experiences from representatives of Muslim and Christian communities, encountering one another in faith through dialogue and sharing of life. Among religious institutes and ecclesial movements there is a strong desire to grow in dialogue with other religions and spirituality in order to deepen one’s understanding of other faith traditions and indeed of one’s own. During the seminar, particular attention will be given to initiatives, taken by religious congregations and ecclesial movements, of sharing life and faith among and with the Muslim People. A Muslim and a Christian woman will be invited to reflect and dialogue from a woman’s perspective on the challenges of faith in our modern world. The seminar will also examine how the Catholic Church leadership and that of Islam practise interreligious dialogue on a global level. Moreover, the programme will offer theological reflections on religious pluralism and also on Muslim and Christian spirituality of dialogue.

In short, the 2003 SEDOS Seminar aims to be a life-giving interreligious encounter, offering to all participants, prospects and hopes for dialogue. More information will be available on the SEDOS website (www.sedos.org) and in the *SEDOS Bulletin*.

Working Groups

Monday, 31 March, **Debt Group** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**
Monday, 14 April, **Bible and Mission Group** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**
Monday, 26 May, **Bible and Mission Group** 15:00 hrs at **SEDOS**
Wednesday, 4 June, **China Group** 15:00 hrs at **SEDOS**