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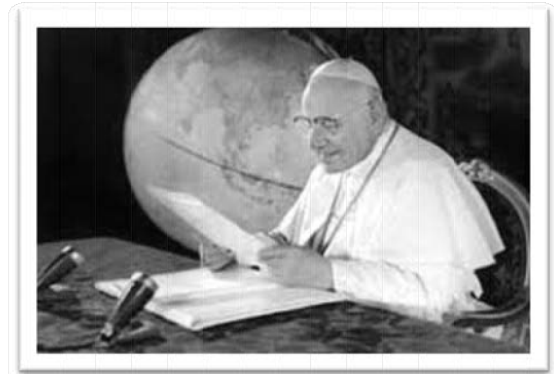
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EDITORIAL

*“The decision to hold an ecumenical council
came to Us in the first instance
in a sudden flash of inspiration” (Pope John XXIII)*

We are now in June and it is fitting to dedicate the first article of this issue to “Ecumenical Commitment as Mission: Spiritan Collaboration with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church”, by Fr. Brendan Cogavin, CSSp. Indeed, Fr. Cogavins says ecumenism is “at the heart of evangelization”. The Catholic Church and other Christian Churches are commemorating the **“Transitus” of Blessed Pope John XXIII which occurred in 3 June 1963.** John XXIII called an Ecumenical Council fewer than ninety years after the First Vatican Council. The decision to hold the Second Vatican Council was God’s plan for the Church: “As regards the immediate cause for this great event, which gathers you here together at Our bidding, it is sufficient for Us to put on record once more something which, though trifling in itself, made a deep impression on Us personally. The decision to hold an ecumenical council came to Us in the first instance in a sudden flash of inspiration. We communicated this decision, without elaboration, to the Sacred College of Cardinals on that memorable January 25, 1959, the feast of Saint Paul’s Conversion, in his patriarchal basilica in the Ostien Way. 4 The response was immediate. It was as though some ray of supernatural light had entered the minds of all present: it was reflected in their faces; it shone from their eyes. At once the world was swept by a wave of enthusiasm, and men everywhere began to wait eagerly for the celebration of this Council”. John XXIII’s courage showed that he was no mere “stop gap” Pope. And Cardinal Giovanni Battista MONTINI, later to be the Successor of John XXIII, recognized Pope John’s bold initiative when he asserted: “this holy old boy doesn’t realize what a hornet’s nest he’s stirring up!” (wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_XXIII). As we all now know the Second Vatican Council reshaped the face of Catholicism by putting great emphasis on *ecumenism*, which refers to the different initiatives taken for greater unity and cooperation. Pope John XXIII was a Champion of the unity of Christians: he stood for Peace. He was close to everyone which is why he is called “Le bon Pape Jean XXIII”.



Christian Unity has still a long way to go. This is due to the historical roots and factors involved in the separation of the Churches, as evidenced in this article by Fr. Brendan Cogavin, who also shows the progress made in terms of ecumenical collaboration. If the ecumenical movement also aims at the unity of the world, today it should employ the means of Communication and Information Technology which has achieved this in an overwhelming way. The geographical, ideological, religious, and cultural barriers have been broken down. Today we are living in an era of global cultural mediatization. Through Evangelization the Church has to bring the Gospel to the heart of each human being and every society. Fr. Madrapile Tanzi Dieudonné, a student in Missiology at the Urban University, is delving into the importance of the media in the evangelization of Africa: “L’Église en Afrique face au défi des medias”. Since the media are a precious tool for the in-depth process of evangelization, we have to become aware of the positive aspects as well as the pitfalls.

Secularization is all-encompassing and invasive in the West; more and more we meet people who declare they are believers yet without belonging to a particular religion, or they say they are outright atheists, either way they are indifferent. Asia too, while being the cradle/birthplace of the great religions of the world, is no exception to this phenomenon of secularization. Indeed, the media, education, emigration are spreading this trend with incredible rapidity. Archbishop Menampampil of Guwahati, India, describes its origin and historical development in the West very precisely.

The concept of reconciliation has “become more urgent with the sea change undergone in geopolitics since 1986” (Robert Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, Orbis Books, 2005, p. 2). We are now witnessing an awe-inspiring attempt to build peace through reconciliation. The Bishops of Ethiopia underlined that reconciliation is a source of peace. The central questions are: what is the relationship between violence and reconciliation? How do we understand the dynamics of reconciliation? What is the Church’s role in this process? Fr. Seyoum Fransua, pursuing his doctorate studies in Missiology at the Urbanian University, puts forward a meticulous approach to this issue.

The Church is calling us to give creative responses to the needs of our world. Here is an experience of woman religious who listened to stirrings of the Spirit calling her to care for the spiritual needs of the Army men and women and also of their respective families as their **Chaplain**. Sister Lucie has found peace and happiness in this pertinent and challenging new ministry.

Most of the participants at the SEDOS Residential Seminar 2012 are already in possession of its materials (cf. the SEDOS Web Site). Nevertheless we have the joy of inviting our Readers to wait for the next issue of the SEDOS Bulletin which will provide more details on the Journey of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean since the Second Vatican Council.

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Executive Director

Pictures are taken from the Internet.

Brendan Cogavin¹ Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

ECUMENICAL COMMITMENT AS MISSION: SPIRITAN COLLABORATION WITH ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

"Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God" (Ps 68: 31).

Introduction

In this article I will share the ecumenical experiences and reflections of a group of Spiritans who have been struggling to live out their missionary calling in Ethiopia, a country which has had a Christian presence since the time of St. Athanasius of Alexandria. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has taken root in African soil, developed its own character and traditions and flourished over a period of 1,600 years! It is astonishing that so few missionaries have heard about this ancient Ethiopian church, and that they show so little interest in getting to know it when they live alongside it in Ethiopia. Pope John Paul II in *Orientalis Lumen* 7b emphasized that *the experience of the individual Churches of the east are offered to us as an authoritative example of successful inculturation.*² I will illustrate the issues involved through some personal and group experiences and will give their historical background.



The history of Spiritan involvement in ecumenism in Ethiopia is linked to the general ecclesiological context of Ethiopia and needs to be understood in that context. This historical background is essential in order to understand the very practical difficulties which a commitment to ecumenical dialogue and action entails in the Ethiopian context. Experience leading to reflection and in turn leading to further experience and theological reflection is at the heart of the Spiritan missionary approach in Ethiopia, where we have been for over thirty years.

Personal Experience

I had had some previous experience of encountering Christians from other traditions. Christians from eastern churches used to study theology with us in the Spiritan Missionary College in Dublin. They also shared our daily lives since they lived in our community and took part in all community activities. This was the ecumenism of daily life and took place in an Irish Catholic context. My encounter with the Christian east at that stage was superficial.

When I arrived in Ethiopia thirteen years ago, the context changed. I found myself in a country which had different cultures, languages and of course Christian tradition and as such I had to prepare myself for this new and exciting context. To this end, the first year was dedicated to full-time learning of culture, language and religious tradition.

During the course of my language learning I realized that I could kill "two birds with one stone" so to speak. I began to attend the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church³ (EOC) services and daily catechetical programmes and did this on a regular basis — as a means to improve my linguistic skills and also to get to know the spirituality and the mechanics of the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgies. These activities were also supplemented with preparatory studies and debriefing sessions with my more experienced confreres.

Although at the beginning I was a bit passive in my learning and reticent in character and being a stranger, after some time people took the initiative to engage me in conversation because they were curious about this foreigner who was in their midst. My neighbours knew who I was because I used to try out my limited Amharic skills on them, much to their delight and amusement. However, the clergy of the Orthodox parish took more time to become acquainted with me and I with them.

My regular appearance at church on Saturdays and Sundays and my efforts to follow the liturgy in the traditional Ge'ez language (which I had studied for a year prior to coming to Ethiopia) overcame any reluctance on their part, when on one memorable Ascension Thursday I was invited by the parish priest to join him and the other clergy in the choir area. A space was found for me, I was handed the traditional prayer stick and sistrum and was shown how to use them. This experience remains a defining moment for me in my ecumenical journey. It encouraged me to participate more fully in the life of the local Orthodox Christians and make a deeper study of their traditions. The personal relationships and friendships which developed with the clergy of the local parish even developed to the extent that I was invited to join them in the sanctuary and take communion. Unfortunately, since our two churches are not in communion I was not able to accept this invitation. It would also have been dangerous for them. These positive experiences encouraged me to continue down the road of building up mutual understanding between our two ancient apostolic churches.

When I finished my year of language and culture studies, I was appointed to a small village in the far south of Ethiopia where Spiritans had been working for a number of years. There things were not so easy on the ecumenical front. The Orthodox clergy were welcoming but some of the local Orthodox parish council members were not and it was made clear that I wasn't really welcome to even enter the church compound.⁴ It also happened that on another occasion in another town I was not allowed to participate in the ceremony of the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday. Needless to say, this was a great disappointment for me, in the light of my previous positive experiences in Addis Ababa.

My commitment to ecumenism was not diminished, but rather it was enhanced. I realized that a very important component of any fruitful ecumenical endeavour involves personal contact on the grass-roots level. Also a commitment to study and appreciate the spiritual riches of the ancient Ethiopian Church is another essential component for any reconciliation and return to communion between our two sister churches. Despite the vicissitudes I am determined to continue down this path. But this is not just a personal commitment. It is a Spiritan commitment and it is part of our Christian calling to be one Church. The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa called "for the intensification of dialogue and ecumenical collaboration with our brethren of the two great African Churches of Egypt and Ethiopia [...] We wish together to bear witness to Christ and to proclaim the Gospel in all the languages of Africa."⁵

However, there are opponents and critics of the Spiritan commitment to ecumenism in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Catholic Church. The history of their relationship will give some indication as to their respective attitudes toward each other and the Spiritans.

Historical Roots and Factors in the Separation of the Churches

Chalcedon

At this point it is opportune to delve into the historical roots of the antagonism that exists in the relationships between Catholics and Orthodox in Ethiopia and which interfere in ecumenical activities and prevent a coming together of the two churches. We may also find ways of healing the wounds and the memories of them which we have inherited from our ancestors in the faith.

One point which needs to be cleared up before we can progress any further is that the EOC, while not in communion with the Church of Rome, never formally separated from the Roman communion on the occasion of the Council of Chalcedon is sometimes popularly assumed.⁶ It is one of the family of churches, called Oriental Orthodox⁷, which did not accept the Chalcedonian formula of the two natures in Christ. I do not intend to go into the details surrounding the historical background and reasons for their rejection of the formula. Suffice it to mention that the Church of Rome since Vatican II has concluded a series⁸ of formal Christological agreements with most of the Oriental Orthodox Churches which, although they are autonomous, are in communion with each other. The agreements clarify the reasons for which Catholic Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonian Orientals emphasize different aspects of the same mystery, and what they mean when they use a different vocabulary.⁹ But still a lot remains to be done to bring the churches closer to each other. Official declarations are not enough but they are a start and leave the door open for further initiatives.

16th to 17th Century Catholic Contacts¹⁰

The aforementioned dialogues took place in a time and religious climate vastly different from the one we will now consider. Portuguese maritime power was beginning to assert itself and it began to compete with the Ottoman Empire for the control of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade routes. Because of its strategic position in the Horn of the Africa region, the Christian kingdom of the Solomonic dynasty was a natural ally of Portugal, at least that was what the Portuguese thought.

Christians in medieval Europe had long been captivated by the story of the legendary priest-king, Prester John. He was supposed to live somewhere in the East and could be relied on to support Western Christians in their battles against the various Muslim forces. Prester John came to be associated with the Christian kingdom in Ethiopia.¹¹

In 1520, the Portuguese king sent a diplomatic mission to the court of the Christian kingdom to explore the possibilities of cooperation between their two kingdoms. This mission lasted for six years and was accompanied by a chaplain Fr. Francisco Alvares who has provided us with a wealth of information about medieval Ethiopia. His observations and attitudes are recounted in his *The Prester John of the Indies*.¹² It is an important description of the Christian kingdom before the ravages of the Muslim jihad initiated by Imam Ahmed Grañ, the 'left-handed', in 1529. Of particular note to us are Alvares's remarks about the religious culture he observed and his own reactions to differences from Roman Catholicism. What is remarkable is that in his

account he doesn't indicate any major antagonism between the beliefs of the Portuguese Catholics and the Ethiopian Orthodox. Ethiopians did not regard the Portuguese as being religious opponents and vice versa. When there were discussions about the early councils of the Church, it seems that both Alvares and the Ethiopians were not well versed¹³ in the theological niceties which more educated clergy might become embroiled in! This theological innocence was not to last.

Internal and external forces came together in the period following the departure of the Portuguese mission in 1526. Internally, the Christian kingdom faced; a major crisis. The centuries-long conflicts between the Christian emperors and the Muslim sultans over control of the long-distance trade routes usually ended in a victory for the Christian forces. Because the Muslim forces were never able to unite effectively, they eventually lost. However, a new Muslim leader, Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim, more popularly known as 'Ahmad Grañ took control of the Sultanate of Adal. He succeeded in uniting a major Muslim force whose goal was to gain salvation through jihad and material benefits through war booty. In 1529 his forces inflicted a major defeat on the Christian army which forced the retreat of Emperor Lebne Dengil. When Emperor Lebne Dengil died in 1540, his son Galawdewos (Claudius) succeeded him.

During the early part of Galawdewos' reign there was a more international dimension to the conflict. Portugal and the Ottoman Empire were vying with each other for control of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade routes. The romantic spiritual quest for Prester John now had a more secular dimension. The Portuguese sought an ally in their conflict with the Ottomans and the Ottomans sought an ally in their conflict with the Portuguese. The Portuguese sided with the Christian kingdom and the Ottomans with Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim. Both powers sent armed men and the imam was eventually defeated in 1543. Galawdewos was extremely grateful to King John III of Portugal for his military assistance and the soldiers became his trusted advisors.

There was, however, one sticking-point. A certain Bermudes claimed that he had been appointed patriarch of Ethiopia. Galawdewos had his doubts. By way of a series of machinations Bermudes tried to make the Portuguese soldiers mutiny against the emperor but he did not succeed. But the emperor, although he wished to punish Bermudes who was a Portuguese citizen, didn't want to offend King John III of Portugal. He complained to King John, who said he had no knowledge of Bermudes' consecration as patriarch. In his reply to Galawdewos, King John believed that Galawdewos was in favour of Catholicism.¹⁴

It was in this context that the Jesuits become involved.¹⁵ King John pressed for the appointment of a Jesuit as patriarch. Eventually, in 1554 Barreto was appointed with Oviedo as his successor. Barreto never reached Ethiopia and when he died in 1562, Oviedo became patriarch. But Oviedo's character was not conducive to good relations between Orthodox and Catholics. He became embroiled in the succession rebellions following the accession of Galawdewos' grandson Sarsa Dengel to the imperial throne in 1563. Oviedo wanted the Portuguese to send a military force to force the emperor to become Catholic but the Portuguese authorities did not acquiesce. Oviedo was ordered to go to China instead but he refused and eventually died of natural causes in 1577. A small Catholic community remained in Ethiopia, made up of some Portuguese soldiers, who remained behind in the service of the emperor, and their offspring. The first phase of the Jesuit presence in Ethiopia ended with the death of Oviedo's last companion in 1597.

In 1603, Fr. Pedro Paez came to Ethiopia with the purpose of looking after the

spiritual welfare of the remaining Catholics. Soon, however, he became concerned with the salvation from hell of those who were living in error and heresy, beginning with the emperor. Paez succeeded in converting Emperor Ze-Dengel and his successor Susenyos to Catholicism. He died soon afterwards and was succeeded by Mendez. In 1626 Susenyos declared Catholicism as the state religion and the Jesuits insisted on the re-baptism of the people, the re-ordination of the clergy and re-consecration of the churches. This did not go without protest. In fact, in his efforts to impose the new faith, the emperor provoked a widespread rebellion and responded with repression. Eventually, faced with so much bloodshed and opposition, he abdicated in favour of his son, Fasilades, in 1632. Fasilades expelled the Jesuits and any Ethiopians who continued to be Catholic were to be executed. Ethiopia severed all links with Western Europe and this persisted until the early 19th century.¹⁶ Thus was created a spirit of resentment, antagonism and misunderstanding between the two churches which has lasted up to today. A pre-Reformation Catholic Church might have been reconciled with Ethiopia a great deal more easily than could a post-Tridentine one.

19th Century—Lazarists and Capuchins

Although there were a number of sporadic contacts between Catholic missionaries and northern Ethiopia during the 18th century, their impact was negligible.¹⁷ Various Franciscan missions attempted to establish a new foothold, but they were unsuccessful. The basic approach taken by the Jesuits in Ethiopia in the 17th century with its focus on the royal court and the non-acceptance of indigenous forms of Christianity had not changed.

It wasn't until the 19th century that prolonged contacts between Ethiopia and Western Europe started again. This took place in the context of the colonial expansion into Africa. Europeans were searching for commercial, diplomatic and missionary opportunities in Africa and Ethiopia was no exception.

Whilst in the 16th and 17th centuries Catholics took the lead, in the 19th century it was the Protestants, in particular the Church Missionary Society of London.¹⁸ The Catholic Church soon followed, led by St. Justin de Jacobis (1839), founder of the Lazarist (Vincentian) mission, and the future Cardinal Massaja (1846), founder of the Capuchin mission in Ethiopia. While the missionaries were interested in religious matters, the Ethiopian rulers were more interested in commerce and Western technological advances which could be beneficial to their kingdom.¹⁹ The renewed interest of Ethiopians in European contacts came at a time when Ethiopia was still in the throes of a period of anarchy called the Zemene Mesafint, the 'era of the princes'. During this period, which stretched from the late 17th century to the middle of the 19th century, there was no strong central ruler. The real rulers of the kingdom were the local warlords who vied for control of the king. Chaos reigned until a powerful lord, Kassa Hailu, managed to seize power taking as throne name, Tewoderos II. During his reign and that of his successors, Ethiopia once again was united under a powerful single ruler who founded the Ethiopia that we know today. It was into this context that Western missionaries appeared.

The "success" of the work of the two afore-mentioned missionaries was based on the fact that in contrast to previous missionaries, they were more willing to adapt to or adopt the local Christian practices. Although St. Justin de Jacobis is seen as the apostle of the Ethiopian Rite Catholic Church, it still remains that he was a man of his time and ecclesiology. His mission was to bring the Church of Ethiopia back into what was thought of as being the one true Church. That was the ecclesiology of his time and the motivation behind his apostolate in Ethiopia.

Pope John Paul II in his *Oriente Lumen* (OL) 20b points out that: "Attempts [at unity] in the past had their limits, deriving from the mentality of the times and the very limited understanding of the truths about the Church." Also OL 21a refers to the Eastern Churches which entered into full communion with Rome and how this process reflected "the degree of maturity of the ecclesial awareness of the time." Roberson points out that "Roman Catholic theology of the Church vigorously emphasized the necessity of the direct jurisdiction of the Pope over all the local churches. This implied that churches not under the Pope's jurisdiction could be considered objects of missionary activity for the purpose of bringing them into communion with the Catholic Church."²⁰

Thus, we conclude the brief historical survey which forms the essential background to the discussion which is to follow. We will be able to understand the options taken and methodology followed plus the attitudes displayed by both the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Catholic Church.

Ecumenical Challenges in a New Missionary Era

Preconceptions overturned

In 1972 members of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) were sent to do evangelization in the Gamo Gofa province in south-west Ethiopia. Following on from an initial survey undertaken by others, the Spiritans came with the intention of establishing the Catholic Church in that region. It was understood that there was no other church presence there and so the 'traditional' missionary activities would be pursued, just as had been done in every other African country where the Spiritans were present. As recommended by their missionary tradition, they started learning the language and the culture. They did research. They listened to the people. Doing this can lead to surprises and can result in initial preconceptions and plans being called into question. This is in fact what happened.

Let us consider the words of Fr. Owen Lambert CSSp, one of the early Spiritans, who witnessed and was a participant in the Spiritan rethink:

A most significant experience for me was December 29th 1974, the feast of the Archangel Gabriel. I joined the thousands of Ethiopian Orthodox pilgrims from the Chenchä area, where I had been stationed since September, to walk deep into the mountains to the church of St. Gabriel, some 30 kms away. I estimated the number of pilgrims to be some 50,000 people. The objective of first evangelization for which I had arrived only four months before was being shaken and the mandate of our mission challenged to the point of being shattered. How can our mission here have relevance, I reflected, if it does not take into account this Ethiopian Christian tradition and presence into account?

This new and unexpected situation in Gamo Gofa and the challenges it gave rise to were agonized over by the Spiritan group during the following years. They had not initially understood well the hostility and fears which decades of un-ecumenical attitudes and mission practices had laid in Ethiopia.

New Orientations Sought

So what can be done? How can we be sure that we are on the right track? The Spiritans sought inspiration in the documents of Vatican II²¹ and other publications of

the magisterium which deal with the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches. The renewed vision of church expressed in the documents of Vatican II energized the Spiritans to learn more about the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, both intellectually and experientially.

The foundational theological principles and practical orientations which governed and continue to govern the Spiritan commitment to ecumenism are expressed very clearly in the Church documents (emphasis added).

In *Ut Unum Sint* (UtUS) 40 Pope John Paul II insists that:

Relations between Christians are not aimed merely at mutual knowledge, common prayer and dialogue. They presuppose and from now on call for every possible form of practical cooperation at all levels: pastoral, cultural and social, as well as that of witnessing to the Gospel message.

In a discourse to Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on 11 June 1993, Pope John Paul II indicated that because of the deep communion that exists between the two Churches, this should: "spur us on to seek new and suitable ways of fostering the rediscovery of our communion in the concrete daily life of the faithful of our two Churches."

Instead of the building of "parallel structures of evangelization" (Pro Russia II, 2)²² there are other alternatives. Pro Russia continues in II, 4:

Should circumstances permit, the pastors of the Catholic Church, out of missionary zeal and concern for the evangelization of millions of people who do not yet know Christ, should endeavour to cooperate with the Orthodox bishops in developing pastoral initiatives of the Orthodox Church. They should be pleased if by their contribution they can help train good Christians.

In the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism §§ 205-209 there is a discussion of ecumenical collaboration in missionary activity. It highlights in §207 that:

Catholics can join with other Churches and ecclesial Communities — provided there is nothing sectarian or deliberately anti-Catholic about their work of evangelization— in organizations and programs that give common support to the missionary activities of all the participating Churches. A special subject of such cooperation will be to insure that the human, cultural and political factors that were involved in the original divisions between the Churches, and have marked the historical tradition of separation, will not be transplanted into areas where the Gospel is being preached and Churches are being founded. Those who have been sent by missionary institutes to help in the foundation and growth of new Churches, will be especially sensitive to this need.[...]

In a letter of Cardinals Willebrands and Paul Philippe to the Coptic Catholic Patriarch Stephanos I Sidarouss, March 29th 1977, we read:

None of its [the Catholic Church's] activities should be used to create confusion among Orthodox faithful, nor open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. [...] we think it possible for members of religious congregations to work directly at the service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church. They could work according to the pastoral instructions of the Orthodox authorities in a manner analogous

to that in which they already follow the pastoral instructions of the Catholic authorities.²³

Practical Application of Theological Principles

As has been mentioned already, the Spiritans found themselves in a situation which they had not expected. They found that there had been a Christian presence since the 15th century in the area to which they were assigned. Even though there had been a long-lasting presence, in many places the religious formation and pastoral care of the local Christian population were neglected. Also, in the more remote areas, many nomadic populations had not yet heard the Gospel message. These two areas were identified as being the major priorities.

Having thought long and hard, in 1977 the Spiritans opted to collaborate with the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This was done with the agreement of then Catholic Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Jimma. And so they launched themselves into the 'unknown'. After many discussions and visits with the various Orthodox Church leaders, it was decided to collaborate in a number of different fields. The underlying idea was to support the EOC in its own God-given mandate to bring the Good News to the peoples of Gamo Gofa. The strengthening and renewal of the EOC was the aim and motivation of the Spiritan apostolate from that time forward. This orientation was and continues to be supported by the various General Chapters of the congregation. Let us now go on to explore some of the common activities of the Spiritans and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Gamo Gofa.

Clergy Training Centre

Priests and deacons in the EOC do not go through a formal seminary training prior to ordination. It is an apprenticeship system. Additionally, there is no formal curriculum and the training may be haphazard. For the celebration of the Eucharist five ministers are necessary — two priests and three deacons. Since non-ordained people are not allowed into the sanctuary, young boys are often ordained as deacons so that they can serve in the sanctuary. The liturgical ministry exercised by the priests and deacons is usually learned by heart. So the formation required is the memorization of the chants and prayers.

The diaconate is not a transitory stage on the way to priestly ordination. Some deacons may, after marriage, be called to be priests, others may decide to enter a monastery and the others remain as deacons. The role of deacon in a parish can be an important one, especially if the deacons concerned have had a good theological education and can serve as preachers in the Sunday schools. The deacons are a good resource for a parish if they are properly trained.

From experience and after numerous discussions with the local Orthodox archbishop, it was realized that there was an urgent need for a more systematic training and on-going formation for priests and deacons in the countryside parishes. This would ensure that the service given to the parishes would be improved. In 1978, it was decided to open a Clergy Training Centre (CTC) in the town of Chencha. Various types of courses of different durations have been offered by the centre. It is quite flexible in structure since the priests who attend it are mostly married with wives and children to take care of. The deacons are of school-going age and attend it after the normal classes in state schools. The church is rooted in the lives of the people and the clergy are not on a pedestal. They are on the same economic level as their neighbours. They earn most of their living from farming.

Since the archdiocese of Arba Minch is in a quite remote and poor part of Ethiopia, it has not had access to the same sources of funds available in a large city like Addis Ababa. For this reason, up to now the CTC has been supported financially by various foreign donors. But it is hoped that when the self-sufficiency level of the archdiocese increases it will become less and less dependent on outside aid.

As well as the financial aid channelled by the Spiritans, over the years some Spiritans were invited to give some informal input. This was not on a regular basis. However, there were regular meetings between the director of the CTC and the Spiritans with the aim of sharing ideas, following up the programmes offered and evaluating their impact. The CTC has had a marked effect on the life of the clergy and the parishes of the archdiocese of Arba Minch. The clergy and parishes are more dynamic.

As well as the well-established CTC in Chenchu, a new training centre operates on a more modest scale in the town of Jinka in the region now called South Omo (part of the former region of Gamo Gofa). What is special about this centre is that it trains young deacons who come from some of the nomadic populations. The young deacons live in the training centre and study in the state schools during the day. The plan is that when they have completed their education they will be able to return to their homes and be agents of evangelization. Already we are seeing the fruits of this initiative. Also worthy of note is the fact that this centre is a true partnership between the Spiritans and the local Orthodox bishop of Jinka. It is 50% funded by the Spiritans and 50% by the local Orthodox diocese. The centre will soon be upgraded to a full clergy training centre.

Catechetical Programmes and Parish Renewal

As mentioned in the previous section, the regular Sunday school programmes in the parishes are being animated and led by the priests and deacons who have been trained. This has had the effect of many Christians returning to the church on a regular basis. An active clergy stimulates the faithful to take part fully in parish life and build up a self-sufficient and self-sustaining community.

Part of the Spiritan support to the parishes is the financing of training seminars and workshops for the travelling preachers who are based in the archdiocesan offices. This training is necessary in order to present the Gospel message in a systematic and relevant way to the various ethnic groups in the archdiocese. This is because some of the preachers are not local to the area.

The preachers have had a marked impact on the Christian life in Gamo Gofa. Many new parishes have been established and older ones renewed as a result of the work of the preachers. In the past, the Spiritans helped the new churches with some building materials, but now this is rare because the local people manage to be largely self-sufficient. It has happened that some visitors to the Spiritan mission in Gamo Gofa have asked 'how many Christians are there in Gamo Gofa?' Of course in the back of their mind they meant how many Catholics. Rather mischievously, the Spiritans told them 1.5 million and naturally they were taken aback. The question illustrates how Catholics understand themselves and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The success of the Orthodox Church is not really seen as a Christian success!

Translation Work

A very important tool in parish renewal and evangelization is to have religious¹ materials and literature available in local languages. Since there had been little work done in this area, the Spiritans along with their local Orthodox collaborators

encouraged the Orthodox Church authorities to prepare materials for translation into the various local languages of Gamo Gofa—there are an estimated 15 different languages.

The list of translated texts is quite long. Some of the translation work in the past, has included the Bible into the Dorze, Gamo, Gofa and Hamar languages. Other works included the translation of prayer and liturgy books. Even though the languages are widely spoken, very little if any had been committed to paper and made available to local people. In some cases, the languages had never been written down before. The training of outside preachers in the use of local languages in the rural areas where Amharic, the working language of Ethiopia, is not widely used avails of the translations that have been done. This has had a positive effect on the pastoral outreach programmes.

Orthodox Nuns' Monastery

While Ethiopia is well endowed with monasteries for men, monasteries for women are few in number. In the popular mind old widows become nuns, so monastic life is not really an option for young women. However, over the past few decades this attitude has started to change. A number of monasteries have been built where young women can dedicate their lives to following Christ and doing some practical activities. In Sebata, a small town outside Addis Ababa, the monastery has a wide variety of income-generating activities as well as a school and orphanage. Some nuns from this monastery wished to establish a new foundation in Gamo Gofa and the Spiritans have actively encouraged them. The small group of four pioneers was housed in the vacant sisters' house in the Catholic mission compound while they were waiting for their monastery to be approved by the Holy Synod of the EOC. In the meantime, one senior nun worked as a health assistant in the health programme of the Catholic Church. The other younger nuns were given the opportunity of furthering their education to prepare them for the task of running their own monastery in a self-sufficient and self-sustainable way. They have trained as kindergarten teachers, sewing school trainers and in financial administration. This training was financed by the Catholic mission. The Spiritans were also instrumental in finding the finances necessary to build the monastery. The monastery was officially blessed and opened this year by members of the Holy Synod. It is hoped that this new foundation will flourish because many young women in the Gamo Gofa area have expressed a wish to participate in monastic life.

Evangelization of Nomads

In the previous paragraphs we have encountered a variety of activities which have involved the inner life of the EOC. Another important aspect is the outreach programme to the nomadic populations in the South Omo zone. Some background is important here in order to understand its significance. Traditionally, the EOC has not been known for evangelization work in the remote areas where the local population is looked down upon by the settled urban dwellers, who come from the northern 'civilized' highlands. The urban based EOC tended to cater only for the urban dwellers and saw the nomadic 'uncivilized' population as not being worthy of any attention. In the nineteenth century many of these nomadic populations were utilized as slaves. So, both they and the urban outsiders didn't look on one another favourably.

In this context, the Spiritans tried and continue to try to act as stimulants to the EOC hierarchy to turn their attention to evangelization amongst the nomadic populations. This was a slow process of advocacy. Eventually, Abune Zekarias, the EOC archbishop of Arba Minch, appointed an Orthodox priest to work in Dimeka amongst the Hamar population. He invited the Catholic Church to send a priest also and so the joint evangelization programme began. It was an historical moment.

Three EOC parishes were established as a result of the outreach programme and young deacons have been ordained from the nomadic populations. Others are being trained in Jinka as was mentioned in the section on CTCs. Progress is slow because of the lack of available personnel both on the Spiritan side and the EOC, but those who are involved are very committed. Still around 300 nomads have been baptized and a church is in the process of being built in the countryside, far away from the normal urban centres.

The willingness of the HOC to be flexible in its approach to the nomads is exemplified by the exemption from certain types of fasting which has been granted to them by a decision of the Holy Synod. This decision was taken as a result of many conversations with different Orthodox bishops. The diet of the nomadic peoples depends a lot on cattle—drinking blood and milk. These are normally forbidden during fasting time, but in the case of nomadic pastoralists they are the main diet. Nomads from the Hamar tribe are accepted into the church compound when they are wearing their own cultural clothes. This would not have happened a few years ago.

Reactions to the Spiritan Apostolate

As can be imagined, the approach taken by the Spiritans has had its supporters and its detractors. Positive and negative reactions have come from both the EOC and the Catholic Church, so let us take them in turn.

Ethiopian Orthodox Church

We have already outlined a brief history of the relations between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Ethiopia. Quite a number of Orthodox believe that the Catholic Church has not really changed its idea of converting Ethiopian Orthodox Christians into Catholics. They do not believe that the Catholic Church is really serious about respecting them as a sister church. All they have to do is point out the number of Catholic dioceses and vicariates where the majority of Catholics were originally Orthodox. Some Catholic missionaries, even in the 21st century, regard Orthodox Christians especially in the rural areas as being 'pagans'. Is it any wonder therefore, that the Orthodox look at the Spiritans with suspicion? The Spiritans, in their view, are no different from the other Catholic missionaries; they are only a bit more subtle in their approach. They warn others not to be fooled by the apparent altruism as they consider that Catholic missionaries want everybody to renounce their Orthodox faith.

This atmosphere of suspicion has ebbed and flowed over the years of the Spiritan presence in Gamo Gofa. It is not the only reaction. Suspicion is tempered by very warm collaborative relations between many faithful, deacons, priests and some bishops. Unfortunately, at the moment, it is a low point. But we are here for the long run. The healing of memories will take many generations and more consistency on the part of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Catholic Church - tragic wounds

From the point of view of Catholic reactions, things are far more complicated. Spiritans in Gamo Gofa have been the objects of both hostility and praise, both in official church circles and unofficial circles. There are emotions involved as well as differing ecclesiologies and missiologies.

On the local Ethiopian level, many Ethiopian Catholics who were or their families were originally Orthodox see the Spiritans as being traitors to their church. It is a question

of identity. How can you support a church which is not your own? Why are you not giving your resources and energy to support your own church? You are denying your Catholic identity. You are Orthodox. What is 'amusing' when you hear these types of remarks is that the Orthodox have no problem in identifying the Spiritans as Catholics! The Spiritans understand that precisely as Catholics they are engaged in ecumenism which is at the heart of evangelization.²⁴

Over the years Spiritans working in Gamo Gofa have not been encouraged to speak or write about their experiences because of the hostilities that could be provoked. Some religious support the Spiritans and others are very strongly against. The hostility is born out of emotion and has never been supported by a cool, reasoned argument. When efforts are made to engage in an open debate these generally descend into acrimony. The Spiritans are accused of intransigence when they present the Church principles which they are following and how they are supported by the official teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II reminds us in *Oriental Lumen* that the reality of the history of relations between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches cannot be ignored (OL 21a). However, there can be no room for "a prejudicial opposition or a defeatism which tends to see everything in negative terms."²⁵ This is part of the reality of the search for Christian unity. The difficulties are manifested in "...certain exclusions... certain refusals to forgive... a certain pride... of an unevangelical insistence on condemning the 'other side'... of a distain..."²⁶

We are dealing with human weakness, which seems to be resisting the Spirit of unity. John Paul II even goes as far to say that "Sometimes one even has the impression that there are forces ready to do anything in order to slow down, and even put an end to, the movement towards Christian unity."²⁷

The only solution to this is "a change of heart" (UR 7). "Each one therefore ought to be more radically converted to the Gospel [...] change his or her way of looking at things" (UtUS 15c and UR 7). In order to bring about the new beginning which is required we have to be aware of "the fundamental need for evangelization at every stage of the Church's journey of salvation" (UtUS 15a).

The Church context in which the Spiritans are working has to take into account the reality that the wider Ethiopian Catholic Church, which bears "a tragic wound, for they are still kept from full communion with the Eastern Orthodox Churches despite sharing in the heritage of their fathers."²⁸ Spiritans are trying to bridge the gap between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Catholic Church but are constantly aware of their precarious position because of the feelings on both sides. Shared conversion is necessary, which can only be promoted by removing the obstacles which in the past have caused bitterness and even violence.²⁹

The history of the relations between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Catholic Churches has been marked by persecutions and sufferings. Whatever may have been these sufferings and their causes, they do not justify any triumphalism; no-one can glorify in them or draw an argument from them to accuse or disparage the other Church [...] Whatever may have been the past, it must be left to the mercy of God, and all the energies of the Churches should be directed towards obtaining that the present and the future conform better to the will of Christ for his own.

One possible way of advancing the course of unity is in the area of pastoral

cooperation—"the intensification of dialogue and ecumenical collaboration" in order "to bear witness to Christ and to proclaim the Gospel in all the languages of Africa."³⁰ In a discourse .to His Holiness Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on 11 June 1993, Pope John Paul II indicated that because of the deep communion that exists between the two Churches, this should "spur us on to seek new and suitable ways of fostering the rediscovery of our communion in the concrete daily life of the faithful of our two Churches."³¹ Because of the present-day circumstances we are required to "work together in the pastoral domain [...] the liturgy [...] the evangelization of the young."³² On the occasion of the visit to Rome (ad limina Apostolorum) of the Bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea Pope John Paul II pointed out that the advancement of ecumenical relations is a "matter of particular urgency [...] The success of the dialogue of charity [...] requires an improvement in fraternal relationships on all levels."³³

The joint evangelization programme carried out by the Spiritans in Gamo Gofa is opposed by many because it favours the building up of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. They are Catholic missionaries who should be building up the Catholic Church. Any ecumenical activities, while good in themselves, should not get in the way of building up the Catholic Church. This is the crux of the tensions between the Ethiopian Catholic bishops and the Spiritans.

Even amongst Spiritans themselves, the issue of Catholic evangelization in Gamo Gofa has provoked much heated debate. Not all Spiritans have supported their approach. Nevertheless, successive Spiritan general chapters have sent messages of support. Parties to the debate have also included the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

One Church—Two Rites?

The complex self-identity of the Ethiopian Catholic Church plays a role in these tensions. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the result of the work of the Lazarists and Capuchins was the establishment of two Catholic Churches—Latin and Ethiopian. The division of the Ethiopian Catholic Church into two rites is an added complication in the cause of ecumenism.



The reality is that, even within the Ethiopian Catholic Church itself, there is no consensus as to what it means to be an Ethiopian Catholic. Whenever the question of rites comes up emotions come into play. Those who follow the Ethiopian rite³⁴ may regard those who follow the Latin rite as following something imported. The Latin rite supporters condemn the Ethiopian rite as being the rite of the Amhara colonizers. Politics and ethnicity come into the dispute and foreign missionaries have played a role in this, especially as they are more comfortable with importing their own Christian tradition and not learning about the Ethiopian one. As a result, there is no clear definition of what it means to be an Ethiopian

Catholic. The only consensus is that they are not Orthodox! A negative definition of oneself is not very conducive to ecumenism. In fact, there needs to be ecumenism practiced within the Catholic Church in Ethiopia!

The Spiritans in Gamo Gofa opted for the Ethiopian rite as the preferred vehicle of

evangelization and pastoral work. This option was chosen since the vast majority of Catholics there were from an Orthodox background and they must be taken care of in their own rite. But an added complication is that Gamo Gofa is in a Latin vicariate Which is allergic to the Ethiopian rite.

The option taken by the Spiritans has the support and encouragement of the; Ethiopian-rite Catholic bishops but is opposed by the Latin-rite vicars apostolic. Much scholarly research³⁵, study and publication of liturgical texts on the part of the Spiritans in partnership with the archdiocese of Addis Ababa³⁶ and the Episcopal Committee for the Liturgy on the national level has taken place and continues to take place.³⁷ This option was taken to facilitate the Ethiopian-rite Catholics to return to the ancient roots of their faith³⁸ and thus help build some foundations for an authentic Catholic identity based on the Ethiopian tradition. After all, Pope John Paul II pointed out to the Catholic bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea that:

Efforts to gain a deeper understanding of the history and development of the Alexandrian rite should continue, so that the common Christian tradition of the region can contribute to the journey to unity, both within the Catholic community and with the other Churches.³⁹

A key element in tackling present day issues and planning for the future is a study and revitalization of one's tradition. To find out where we are going we need to look at where we have come from in an honest and holistic way. As EO 2 says, "it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or rite retain its traditions whole and entire"? while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and space." John Paul II points out in SA 31b⁴⁰:

It is essential to go back to the past in order to understand, in the light of the past, the present reality and in order to discern tomorrow. For the mission of the Church is always oriented and directed with unfailing hope towards the future.

In the case of the Oriental-rite Catholic Churches this is not a luxury. It is not something simple. It is fraught with difficulty due to their origin and their history of relations with their Mother Churches. But it cannot be avoided.

All members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement. All these, then, must be observed by the members of the Eastern rites themselves. Besides, they should attain to on ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them, and, if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions. (OE 6a)

Part of the return to one's "ancestral traditions" involves the reform of a liturgy which because of its exposure to the Latin-rite has the appearance of a mixture of the two. There is the tacit belief that the Ethiopian Catholics, in order to be Catholic, must have some things that look Roman. They cannot be too Ethiopian because they will be "like the Orthodox." Again identity is split between Rome and Ethiopia.⁴¹

Speaking of the ancient Churches in Ethiopia and Eritrea, Cardinal Silvestrini said: "There were and are significant models of the incarnation of the Church in the local culture: the Alexandrian tradition, in its spreading to Ethiopia, took on its own

features, ever more deeply African."⁴² But even more importantly he continued:

For this reason one must look back at this liturgical and disciplinary tradition which more naturally can form even today those people who in neighbouring areas choose to embrace the Christian faith.⁴³

These ancient traditions, of which the Catholic Church is an heir, would seem to be the more natural way of evangelization, due to their deeply African character. The promotion of the authentic Ethiopian tradition is therefore essential for a fruitful work of evangelization—the Church is after all, missionary by its very nature. A revitalized and confident Ethiopian Catholic Church would be much more effective in its missionary nature.

Conclusions

As can be seen from our presentation, the ecclesial situation in Ethiopia is quite complex. Its very complexity means that there are no simplistic solutions to the disunity amongst Christians and especially between Orthodox and Catholics.

After the quick historical overview of the relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, we observed that time is needed to bring about healing and reconciliation. Time is not the only thing that is needed the will is needed also. We seem to have the time but not really the will! The leadership of the various dioceses and vicariates are much too preoccupied with their own internal difficulties to devote any time or effort to the commitment to ecumenism. This may sound pessimistic, but in fact there are signs of hope. Through the auspices of the Conference for Major Religious Superiors (CMRS), a number of seminars, workshops and study groups have been set up with the aim of reflecting on the identity of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia and its relationship with the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These are meant to stimulate members of religious congregations to action for ecumenism.

There is a need for more education about the Catholic Church's teaching on ecumenism on a number of different levels. An important factor in the disseminating of this teaching is a good formation of the clergy. Ecumenical studies, missiology, ecclesiology and church history should be given due attention in the seminaries. The laity practice an ecumenism of life on a daily basis with their neighbours. This needs to; be supplemented by a corresponding ecumenical activity between Catholic clergy, Ethiopian and expatriate, and the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It seems logical but we cannot forget the motions. We pray that the Holy Spirit will bring healing and that all Christians in Ethiopia will be able to stretch out their hands to God—together.

End Notes

¹Brendan Cogavin completed M.A. Missiology at the Institut Catholique de Paris and has been working in Ethiopia since 1995. He has taught in the major seminary in Addis Ababa and in the programmes of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors. He participated in a number of symposia organized by the Ethiopian Review of Cultures and published in that review. Currently he is working on the English translation of the new Ethiopian-rite missal, the Rite of Holy Week and a Daily Prayer of the Ethiopian tradition; and is also preparing an outline of a catechetical programme which is based on the Ethiopian tradition for the eparchy of Adigrat.

² See Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Raul II to the bishops, clergy and faithful to mark the centenary of Orientalium Dignitas of Pope Leo XIII. London: Catholic Truth Society, 1995.

³ It needs to be pointed out that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is not Coptic. It was under the Patriarchate of Alexandria until 1959, when its first Ethiopian Patriarch was elected, but its title even

before then did not include Coptic. This is a common misunderstanding.

⁴ Reconciliation took place later, initiated by the diocesan administrator.

⁵ Cf. The African Synod, Paulines Publications, 1994, p. 17, Message of the Synod no. 22.

⁶ Abba Ayala Takla-Haymanot, OFM Cap., reiterates that the faith received by Ethiopia predated the Council of Chalcedon and there is no evidence that the Ethiopian Church either formally or officially separated from the Catholic Church. Cf. The Ethiopian Church and its Christological Doctrine, Addis Ababa, revised English Edition 1981, p.51.

⁷ Coptic, Armenian, Indian, Syrian, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches, cf. Ronald Roberson, The Eastern Christian Churches. A brief survey. Rome: Edizioni «Orientalia Christiana» sixth edition, 1999.

⁸ The earliest was signed by Pope Paul VI and the Pope of Alexandria Shenouda III. in Rome on 10 May 1973. The most recent was signed by Pope John Paul II and the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians (Etchmiadzin) Karekin II, in Rome on 10 November 2000.

⁹ In the case of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a statement made by Pope John Paul II in his address to the Patriarch of Ethiopia H.H. Abuna Paulos, in Rome on 11 June 1993 was understood in *Ut unum sint* 62 as a joint understanding. Also cf. Jose L. Bandres and Ugo Zanetti, "Christology," in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, edited by Siegbert Uhlig, Volume 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, pp. 728-732.

¹⁰ For a brief summary of this period cf. John Baur, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, Paulines Publications Africa, 1994, pp. 51-54.

¹¹ For a brief outline of the history of European interest in Prester John see Girma Beshah and Merid Wolde Aregay, The Question of the Union of the Churches in Luso-Ethiopian Relations, Junta de Investigates do Ultramar and Centro de Estudos Historicos Ultraminos, Lisbon, 1964, p. 9-14.

12. It was first printed in Lisbon in 1540 and in a revised English edition in two volumes with additional material by C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B Huntingford, Cambridge University Press, 1961, published for the Hakluyt Society.

¹³ C. F. Beckingham, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁴ Cf. G. Beshah, op. cit. pp. 53-56

¹⁵ Cf. Merid Wolde Aregay, "The Legacy of Jesuit Missionary Activities in Ethiopia from 1555 to 1632," in Getachew Haile, Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson (eds.) The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia, Papers from a Symposium on the Impact of European Missions on Ethiopian Society, Lund University, August 1996. Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, Volume 110, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt am Main, 1998, pp. 31-56. Cf. also Peter Caraman, The Lost Empire: The Story of the Jesuits in Ethiopia, 1555-1634, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1985. Hervé Pennec, Des Jesuites au Royaume du Prêtre Jean, Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, June 2003.

¹⁶ A good general treatment of this period can be found in Adrian Hastings, The Church in Africa: 1450-1950, Oxford History of the Christian Church. Clarendon Paperbacks, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1996, pp. 130-156.

¹⁷ Cf. Donald Crummey, Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia, 1830-1868, Oxford Studies in African Affairs, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, pp. 7-10.

¹⁸ Cf. the various articles in Getachew Haile, Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson (eds.), op.cit.

¹⁹ Crummey, op. cit. p. 61.

²⁰ Roberson, op. cit., p. 139.

²¹ Cf. Unitatis Redintegratio (UR) §§ 14-19; Orientalium Ecclesiarum (OE) §§ 1-30 in Austin Flannery (ed). Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents Vol. 1, 1984; Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism §§ 205-209, March 25th 1993, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; *Ut Unum Sint*. Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995.

²² Pontifical Commission 'Pro Russia', General Principles and Practical Norms for Coordinating the Evangelizing Activity, and Ecumenical Commitment of the Catholic Church in Russia and Other Countries of the C.I.S., Information Service n. 81, 1992 III-IV, The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity pp. 104-108.

²³ "The Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church", Information Service n.76, 1991 (I), The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, pp 23-26

²⁴ Cf. Redemptoris Missio 50a.

²⁵ Cf. *UtUS* 79b.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15c.

²⁷ Cf. Apostolic Letter for the Fourth Centenary of the Union of Brest, in *Oss. Rom.*, No. 47, 22 November 1995, p. 7.

²⁸ Cf. *OL.2lb.*

²⁹ Cf. "Uniatism and the Present Search for Full Communion," (also known as the Balamand Document) resulting from the seventh plenary session of the Joint International Commission for the Theological

Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Catholic International Vol. 4, No. 9, September 1993, pp.441-444.

³⁰ Cf. The African Synod, Paulines Publications Africa, 1994, p. 17, Message of the Synod, no. 22.

³¹ Cf. Oss. Rom., No. 24, 16 June 1993, 3e. p. 5.

³² Ibid., 3f., p. 5.

³³ Cf. Oss. Rom., No. 41, 13 October 1993, 7a-b, p. 5.

³⁴ We must not forget that rite is not confined to 'how we say mass.' Canon 28 §1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) reminds us that 'A rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony, culture and circumstances of history of a distinct people, by which its own manner of living the faith is manifested in each Church sui iuris.'

³⁵ Cf. Fr. Emmanuel Fritsch CSSp., The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church, published under the auspices of the Ethiopian Review of Cultures, Addis Ababa 2001.

³⁶ Frs. Emmanuel Fritsch and Brendan Cogavin, CSSp., The Ethiopian-rite Missal in English for Weekday celebrations of the Eucharist, Addis Ababa, 2002

³⁷ A new Catholic Ethiopian rite missal is "in preparation for the use of Catholics in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Three-fold rites of Christian Initiation are also being prepared for publication.

³⁸ The benefits for the Roman Church from the encounter with the Christian East were mentioned in Unitatis Redintegratio 17: "What has just been said about the lawful variety that can exist in the Church must also be taken to apply to the differences in theological expression of doctrine. In the study of revelation East and West have followed different methods, and have developed differently their understanding and confession of God's truth. It is hardly surprising, then, if from time to time one tradition has come nearer in a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting."

³⁹ Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia and Eritrea, June 12th 1997, cf. no 5, Booklet p.22. Note that the Alexandrian-rite is the mother rite of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

⁴⁰ The Encyclical Slavus Apostoli of Pope John Paul II in commemoration of the eleventh centenary of the evangelizing work of Saints Cyril and Methodius, 2 June 1985.

⁴¹ Abba Ayele Teklehaymanot, "The Struggle for the 'Ethiopianization' of the Roman Catholic Tradition", in Getachew Haile, Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson (eds.) The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia, pp.135-154.

⁴² Cardinal Silvestrini was the then Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches. Cf. the Eighth General Congregation of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, L'Oss. Rom., No. 18, 4 May 1994, p.6.

⁴³ Art. cit., p. 6.

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L'EGLISE EN AFRIQUE FACE AU DEFI DES MEDIAS

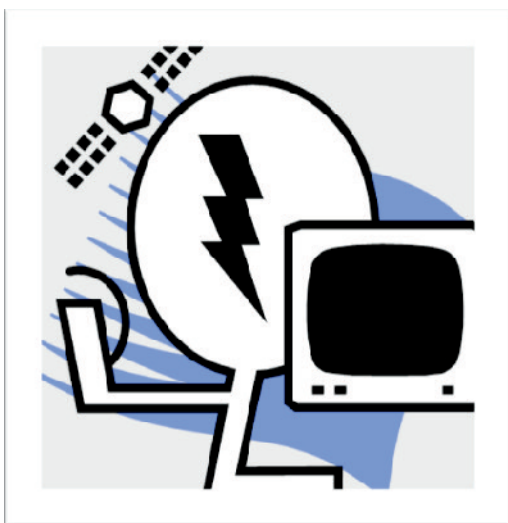
INTRODUCTION

Le présent article s'inscrit dans le souci pastoral de l'Eglise qui, depuis le Concile Vatican II, a pris une conscience renouvelée que sa mission est de permettre à l'Evangile d'arriver au cœur de la personne et de la société afin de les transformer du dedans et rendre neuve l'humanité elle-même, de construire une Eglise, une société fraternelle et solidaire. Pour pouvoir atteindre cet objectif : une évangélisation en profondeur en Afrique, les médias¹ constituent un outil plus que précieux. Toutefois, les médias présentent également quelques dangers et/ou défis. Voilà pourquoi une réflexion critique s'impose en cette matière et qu'il importe aussi une évangélisation de ces moyens de communications sociales.

L'article s'articulera autour de quatre points. Le premier relèvera l'importance de la nouvelle culture que sont les médias en général, et d'une façon spécifique dans le contexte de l'évangélisation en Afrique. Le second point épinglera les dangers et/ou les défis qu'ils comportent. Le troisième point traitera de l'urgence d'une évangélisation de cette culture et enfin le quatrième et dernier point parlera succinctement de la nécessité d'une théologie de communication.

Les médias : un nouvel espace pour l'évangélisation

La révolution technologique et les mécanismes de globalisation font du monde actuel comme une grande culture médiatique. L'espace de la communication entre les hommes se mondialise. Le rôle capital des nouvelles technologies de la communication n'est que trop visible pour en tenter une démonstration. Déjà Mc Luhan envisageait son village planétaire comme résultat d'une technologie capable d'opérer une transmission spontanée des informations aux quatre coins du monde, car cette ère de la communication réunit avantageusement des systèmes (lettre, son, image) qui autrefois n'avaient rien en commun. L'Internet intègre la radio, le journal, le téléphone, la télévision, la machine à écrire (l'ordinateur), la bibliothèque, la station radiotélévision, rendant possible la « mondovision » : un même événement suivi partout dans le monde au même moment ... C'est la véritable révolution du XXe siècle².



Avec cela, s'opère une suppression des frontières instituées entre les hommes et les continents, entre les sciences de la nature et les sciences sociales et humaines, une extension de l'éducation grâce à l'accès aux connaissances les plus diverses et les plus avancées. Nous sommes dans l'ère de la communication mondiale, qui est en train de façonner la société selon de nouveaux modèles culturels, plus ou moins étrangers aux modèles du passé. L'information précise et actualisée est, au moins en principe, pratiquement accessibles à quiconque, en n'importe quelle partie du monde. Le libre

afflux des images et des mots à l'échelle mondiale est en train de transformer non seulement les relations entre les peuples au niveau politique et économique, mais aussi la compréhension même du monde³. Bref, le tout se résume, comme le souligne L. Santedi Kinkupu en parlant de la mondialisation, dans l'heureuse expression : apprentissage d'une humanité aux visages multiples. L'on tisse de l'un avec le multiple⁴.

Il est dès lors insensé d'affecter de l'indifférence à une réalité (la culture médiatique) qui ne saurait être indifférente à notre égard. C'est même une tâche éthique, surtout pour cette Afrique dangereusement prise dans l'engrenage de cette civilisation⁵.

Pour l'Eglise en général et pour l'Eglise en Afrique en particulier, les médias sont une magnifique possibilité pour l'évangélisation. Le premier aréopage des temps modernes, comme le souligne le Pape Jean-Paul II, est le monde de la communication, qui donne une unité à l'humanité en faisant d'elle, comme on dit, « un grand village ». Les médias ont pris une telle importance qu'ils sont, pour beaucoup de gens, le moyen principal d'information et de formation ; ils guident et inspirent les comportements individuels, familiaux et sociaux. Ce sont surtout les nouvelles générations qui grandissent dans un monde conditionné par les médias⁶.

Dans une époque comme celle actuelle, tellement influencée par les médias ou moyens de communication sociale, la première annonce, la catéchèse ou l'approfondissement de la foi, la sollicitude pastorale, la nouvelle évangélisation ne peuvent faire abstraction de ces moyens. Mis au service de l'Evangile, ils offrent la possibilité, pratiquement sans limites, d'élargir le champ d'annonce de la Parole de Dieu, faisant parvenir la Bonne Nouvelle à des millions de personnes. L'Eglise se sentirait coupable devant Dieu, si elle n'employait pas ces puissants moyens, que l'intelligence humaine perfectionne chaque fois plus. Avec eux, l'Eglise « proclame sur les toits » (voir Mt 10, 27 ; Lc 12, 3) le message dont elle est dépositaire. En eux, elle trouve une version moderne et efficace de la « chaire ». Grâce à eux, elle peut s'adresser à la multitude⁷.

L'Internet, dans la panoplie des moyens de communication sociale, doit être considéré, dans la perspective déjà affirmée au Concile Vatican II, comme une des « merveilleuses inventions de la technique »⁸. Pour l'Eglise, le nouveau monde de l'espace cybernétique est une invitation à la grande aventure de l'utilisation de ses potentialités pour proclamer le message évangélique. Ce défi est au centre de ce que signifie, au commencement du millénaire, suivre le commandement du Seigneur, « d'avancer en eau profonde » : *Duc in altum !* (Lc 5, 4)⁹.

L'Eglise doit s'approcher de ce nouveau moyen avec réalisme et confiance. Au même titre que les autres moyens de communication, c'est un moyen, non une fin en soi. Internet peut offrir de magnifiques occasions pour l'évangélisation, si on l'utilise avec compétence et une claire conscience de ses possibilités et de ses dangers¹⁰. Les moyens de communication, en général, ne remplacent pas les relations personnelles ni la vie communautaire locale. Cependant, les sites peuvent renforcer et stimuler les échanges d'expériences et d'informations qui vont intensifier la pratique religieuse avec une fonction d'accompagnement et d'orientation¹¹.

Les formes traditionnelles de communication sociale ne doivent pas pour autant être sous-estimées. Elles sont encore très utiles et efficaces dans nombreux milieux africains. En outre, elles sont moins coûteuses et plus accessibles. Elles comprennent les chants et la musique, les mimes et le théâtre, les proverbes et les contes. En tant

que véhicules de la sagesse et de l'esprit populaires, elles constituent une source précieuse de thèmes et d'inspiration pour les moyens modernes¹².

Les moyens de communication sociale représentent donc une possibilité extraordinaire pour l'évangélisation. Il est du devoir de l'Eglise, d'une part, d'employer les instruments de communication sociale, d'en faire le meilleur usage pour annoncer le message du salut et, d'autre part, d'enseigner aux hommes le bon usage de ces moyens¹³. A travers eux, le message évangélique devrait arriver à des foules d'hommes, mais avec la capacité de percer la conscience de chacun, de se déposer dans le cœur de chacun comme s'il était unique, avec tout ce qu'il a de plus singulier et personnel, et de recueillir en sa faveur une adhésion, un engagement tout à fait personnels¹⁴.

Parlons à présent les dangers et/ou défis que présentent les médias en général et d'une façon spécifique pour l'Eglise en Afrique.

Dangers et/ou défis de médias

De nos jours, les médias constituent non seulement un monde, mais toute une culture et une civilisation. Il s'agit d'un phénomène qui offre des potentialités remarquables, mais il s'avère malheureusement que les moyens de communication comportent aussi des dangers et/ou défis. Essayons d'en relever quelques-uns.

De primo abord, il faut noter le fait que pour l'Eglise en Afrique, l'accès à ces moyens est rendu difficile par de nombreux obstacles, le moindre n'étant pas leur coût élevé. En de nombreux endroits également, des règlements gouvernementaux imposent un contrôle indu dans ces domaines. Tous les efforts possibles devraient être mis en œuvre pour lever ces obstacles : les médias, qu'ils soient privés ou publics, doivent être au service des personnes sans exception¹⁵.

Ensuite, les moyens de communication ne sont pas toujours utilisés conformément à leur fin première : celle d'unifier le monde, de construire une seule grande famille des enfants de Dieu. On s'en sert parfois – et même souvent - pour diviser les peuples, manipuler les opinions, falsifier la vérité et transmettre des antivaleurs des temps modernes¹⁶, pour envahir les nations pauvres par la pornographie et la violence, pour présenter très négativement l'Africain et l'Afrique, etc.¹⁷. On court ainsi le danger d'une uniformisation de la pensée, d'une massification des peuples, téléguidée par quelques puissants. C'est le danger de la mondialisation consistant en la domination de la majorité par une minorité¹⁸.

En outre, il faut noter que l'accès à la technologie n'implique pas automatiquement la libération des peuples de la périphérie car ils sont absents dans la gestion ; les nouveaux outils de la communication ne renforçant pas les courants d'échange, ils élargissent paradoxalement les distances, la capitalisation des connaissances scientifiques et techniques au profit des puissants... Les faits contredisent notoirement les nobles visées de la mondialisation qui recoupaient bien les transformations annoncées par Alvin et Heidi Toffler, les chantres de la « troisième vague »¹⁹. Pour ces deux futurologues, la première vague était caractérisée par « la révolution agricole », tandis que la « révolution industrielle » marqua la deuxième vague ; la troisième devait l'être par la magie de l'information ou la « civilisation des échanges, du management, de la technologie avancée... »²⁰.

Il faut également dire ici que la rencontre en cours met en présence des sociétés à différents niveaux de développement. Le déséquilibre est réel. L'embarras ou le

malheur pour les Etats africains est qu'ils doivent s'engager dans la « troisième vague » (celle de l'information) dominée totalement par les pays développés alors qu'ils initient encore la révolution de la terre. Le transfert de technologie, est loin d'apporter l'équilibre escompté, loin donc d'être profitable aux pays hôtes²¹. Le fait qu'un petit nombre de pays détiennent le monopole des industries culturelles et en distribuent les produits en tout point de la terre à un public toujours plus large peut constituer un puissant facteur d'érosion des spécificités culturelles, ce sont des produits qui contiennent et qui transmettent des systèmes implicites de valeur, et qui peuvent donc provoquer chez les destinataires des effets de désappropriation et de perte d'identité²². Les médias ne sont pas que des moyens, qu'ils sont surtout une culture, que les messages qu'ils véhiculent sont portés par des références et des modèles autonomes, à connaître, à comprendre dans leur contexte global. Il s'agit d'entrer dans cette culture de la communication médiatique. Il s'agit d'une réelle inculturation²³.

Les distorsions et asymétries sommairement évoquées nous persuadent que la communication, en dépit de discours laudatifs, demeure un pouvoir mal partagé. Cet égoïsme outré transforme la « communauté internationale » en une machine de destruction et nous amènerait à parler, comme le souligne L. Santedi Kinkupu, - à l'instar des anciens scolastiques - d'une communauté mondiale « in fieri, non in facto esse » (en devenir, et non déjà réalisée). Cela inaugure un réseau de dépendance technologique qui est au fait un sérieux handicap à tout élan vers l'autonomie, une érosion des identités, donc une funeste aliénation consacrant l'amnésie des peuples (en position de faiblesse) dont les modes de communication, l'ordre symbolique identitaire sont méconnus ; ce qui, par choc en retour, ne provoquerait qu'une perte mondiale à cause de l'entropie exacerbée par le manque d'écart différentiel suffisant. Peut-on vraiment construire une communauté mondiale sur les cendres des cultures ou des rationalités indigènes²⁴.

C'est de tous ces périls qu'il faudrait conscientiser toutes ces sociétés appelées à dialoguer au cours de ce qui doit être un cocktail des opinions, des vues... Malheureusement l'univers des médias est assiégé par les forces de l'argent qui se taillent des empires, qui développent en leur faveur toute sorte de message spéculatif. Avec le matraquage médiatique, le « message » devient un « massage ». Ainsi, embrigade-t-on des pays en développement dans une logique d'exploitation impitoyable qu'on couvre du voile pudique de transfert de procédés techniques. C'est un fait, ces moyens ont un avantage tel que leurs puissants messages peuvent nous poursuivre même dans les coins reculés, nous fasciner et arracher notre adhésion. Certes, entre la puissance (l'efficacité technologique) et la vérité, le rapport n'est pas d'identité ou d'équivalence. Les nouveaux médias constitués en réseaux mondiaux d'information tels que l'Internet, CNN, TV5, BBC... contribuent à la diffusion de modes d'expression culturelle de dimension universelle, comme l'affirment les auteurs de la revue Sciences humaines, mais en même temps posent un double problème qui reste insoluble : celui de l'appropriation de cette culture par les cultures locales ainsi que celui de l'exception culturelle. Au demeurant, comment rester soi-même tout en étant ouvert aux autres, tel est donc le pari auquel est confrontée l'Afrique, déjà réduite au statut de consommatrice des technologies importées, mais écartée du dialogue²⁵. Dans cette optique, la mondialisation n'est pas plus une chance qu'un danger pour les pays africains ; elle est surtout une interpellation²⁶.

Il ne s'agit pas de court-circuiter le processus de la civilisation des communications. Le mouvement est irréversible et irrésistible. Mais cela sollicite notre responsabilité éthique. Nous devons nous affirmer et nous assumer dans cette civilisation qui a l'air de nous enrôler et de nous marquer d'un numéro matricule malgré nous. Dans cette

interpellation, le rôle de l'Eglise se dessine. Elle ne saurait l'esquiver devant le sort de sociétés mutilées dans leur personnalité spécifique, dans leur configuration particulière et condamnées aux puissants mimétismes. Qu'il n'y ait plus de vraies traditions pour ces peuples, l'Evangile du Christ ne saurait être authentiquement inculturé !²⁷

Voilà pourquoi, non seulement une réflexion critique est urgente à ce niveau, il est également important d'évangéliser les moyens de communications sociales, surtout quand on vise l'édification de l'Eglise-Famille de Dieu en Afrique. Tout homme a droit à l'information, et à une information juste et objective. Pour ce faire, les messagers de l'Evangile sont exhortés à entrer dans ce monde de médias et à comprendre cette nouvelle civilisation, cette nouvelle culture, pour s'en servir à bon escient à propager ce qui est bon, vrai et beau. En effet, par-delà l'usage, les agents pastoraux sont invités à discerner les traits saillants de la culture médiatique, afin d'en assimiler les aspects positifs pour l'annonce de l'Evangile, et de projeter la lumière de la foi sur les points d'ombre²⁸.

Evangélisation du monde des medias

L'Exhortation apostolique *Ecclesia in Africa* considère les médias modernes comme un univers culturel nouveau qui se constitue et comme un ensemble de moyens au service de la communication. Ils représentent d'abord une culture nouvelle qui a son langage propre et surtout ses valeurs et contre-valeurs spécifiques. A ce titre, ils ont besoin, comme toute culture, d'être évangélisés²⁹.

La même Exhortation apostolique considère que les médias modernes ne sont pas seulement des instruments de communication, mais aussi un monde à évangéliser³⁰. C'est à ce monde aussi que l'Eglise est envoyée porter la Bonne Nouvelle du salut³¹. Les médias doivent servir une communication authentique qui est une priorité en Afrique, car ils sont un levier important pour le développement du continent et pour l'évangélisation. Ils peuvent constituer une aide puissante pour faire grandir la communion de la famille humaine et l'ethos des sociétés, quand ils deviennent des instruments de promotion de la participation de tous à la recherche commune de ce qui est juste³².



Toutefois, nous savons tous que les nouvelles techniques de l'information peuvent devenir, comme le souligne le pape Benoît XVI, de puissants instruments de cohésion et de paix ou bien des promoteurs efficaces de destruction et de division. Ils peuvent servir ou desservir sur le plan moral, propager le vrai comme le faux, proposer le laid comme le beau. La masse de nouvelles ou de contre-nouvelles, ainsi que celles d'images, peut être intéressante tout comme elle peut conduire à une forte manipulation. L'information peut très facilement devenir de la désinformation, et la formation de la déformation. Les médias peuvent promouvoir une humanisation authentique, mais ils peuvent tout autant entraîner une deshumanisation³³.

Les médias éviteront cet écueil s'ils « sont structurés et orientés à la lumière d'une image de la personne et du bien commun qui en respecte les valeurs universelles. Les moyens de communication sociale ne favorisent pas la liberté de tous et n'universalisent pas le développement et la démocratie pour tous simplement parce

qu'ils multiplient les possibilités d'interconnexion et de circulation des idées. Pour atteindre de tels objectifs, il faut qu'ils aient pour visée principale la promotion de la dignité des personnes et des peuples, qu'ils soient expressément animés par la charité et mis au service de la vérité, du bien et d'une fraternité naturelle et surnaturelle³⁴. Et à ce niveau, le rôle de l'Eglise est capital, elle doit relever le défi d'une « pastorale de communication » : évangéliser ce vaste monde-culture.

Pour que cette pastorale de la communication se réalise effectivement, il faut connaître et valoriser cette nouvelle culture de la communication. Il faut aussi promouvoir la formation professionnelle dans la culture de la communication en direction de tous les agents pastoraux et des croyants, former des professionnels de la communication, compétents et engagés en ce qui concerne les valeurs humaines et chrétiennes au service de la transformation évangélique de la société, avec une attention particulière aux propriétaires, aux directeurs, aux responsables de programmes, aux journalistes et présentateurs. La formation à l'utilisation des médias est une nécessité, non seulement pour le prédicateur de l'Evangile, qui doit, entre autres, maîtriser le genre littéraire médiatique, mais aussi pour le lecteur, l'auditeur et le téléspectateur qui, formés à l'intelligence du style médiatique, doivent en saisir les apports avec discernement et esprit critique. En Afrique, où la transmission orale est une des caractéristiques de la culture, cette formation revêt une importance capitale. Ce type de communication doit rappeler aux pasteurs que l'Eglise est envoyée pour parler, pour prêcher l'Evangile par la parole et par les actes³⁵.

L'Eglise doit être présente dans les moyens de communication sociale (la presse, la radio et la télévision, les forums et beaucoup d'autres systèmes) pour introduire en eux le mystère du Christ. Elle doit être davantage présente dans les médias afin d'en faire non seulement un instrument de diffusion de l'Evangile mais aussi un outil pour la formation des peuples africains à la réconciliation dans la vérité, à la promotion de la justice et à la paix. Pour cela, une solide formation des journalistes à l'éthique et au respect de la vérité, les aidera à éviter l'attrait du sensationnel, ainsi que la tentation de la manipulation de l'information et de l'argent vite gagné. Que les journalistes chrétiens n'aient pas peur de manifester leur foi ! Qu'ils en soient fiers ! Il est bon également d'encourager la présence et l'activité de fidèles laïcs compétents dans le monde des communications publiques et privées. Tel le levain dans la pâte, ils continueront à témoigner de l'apport positif et constructif que l'enseignement du Christ et de son Eglise apporte au monde³⁶.

L'Eglise doit relever ce défi d'une pastorale de communication entre autre en rassemblant des journalistes chrétiens pour des réflexions et actions communes, former les peuples à l'usage correct des outils de communication et développer l'instance critique (cela est important – pour ne citer que le seul cas du message religieux – quand de nos jours l'Evangile est offert comme tout produit commercial rentable et sert d'avant-garde ou d'étiquette à des idéologies suspectes, à des parties politiques pour la conquête ou la conservation du pouvoir), cibler et valoriser les facteurs (hommes et outils) de communication déjà au niveau des communautés paroissiales (combien de chrétiens s'intéressent sérieusement aux messages inscrits aux valves de leurs paroisses ? et combien de paroisses revalorisent leurs valves pour susciter l'intérêt ?...), etc.³⁷.

L'Eglise doit en outre susciter des lois afin de promouvoir une nouvelle culture qui protège les enfants, les jeunes et les personnes les plus vulnérables, pour que la communication ne porte pas atteinte aux valeurs, mais au contraire, qu'elle donne de solides repères de discernement³⁸.

Dans la famille, les parents devront veiller à ce que leurs enfants fassent un usage responsable des contenus disponibles sur Internet, pour compléter leur éducation et leur formation morale³⁹. On les éduquera par conséquent dans une atmosphère d'une juste appréciation des moyens de communication, à développer un esprit critique dès l'enfance dans l'usage des moyens de communication, à porter un jugement de valeur sur le contenu de ce qu'on leur transmet, notamment les contes, la musique, les chansons, les danses, l'art. On aidera les jeunes à ne pas se conformer au modèle de vie ou de personne que leur présentent certains moyens de communication. Autrement dit, qu'ils ne soient pas de simples consommateurs des idées, des pensées, des modes qu'on leur communique. Qu'ils veillent à ne point se laisser manipuler. Qu'à travers les médias on leur présente Jésus-Christ comme un grand-frère et ami, comme un guide et un modèle, à admirer et à imiter⁴⁰. Cette considération concerne aussi les adultes.

Les chrétiens qui travaillent professionnellement dans les médias ont un rôle spécial à jouer. Il est de leur devoir de faire en sorte que les principes chrétiens influent sur la pratique de leur profession, y compris dans les domaines techniques ou administratifs. Il est de leur devoir, avec la ferveur de la foi, de porter l'Evangile dans le monde des médias, afin de faire pénétrer la Bonne Nouvelle dans tous les secteurs de la vie. Qu'ils aient toujours présent à l'esprit que les consommateurs de leurs produits sont leurs propres frères et sœurs. Qu'ils ne leur présentent pas alors des produits mauvais ou mortifères⁴¹. Pour leur permettre de jouer ce rôle de manière adéquate, il faut qu'ils puissent recevoir une saine formation humaine, religieuse et spirituelle⁴².

Face au développement prodigieux des moyens de communication sociale, l'Eglise doit rappeler que les responsabilités des individus qui en font usage ne sont que plus importantes. De graves risques existent en effet. Ils ne concernent pas les techniques employées mais le contenu de ce qui est communiqué. Les responsables de l'information ne doivent pas oublier leurs devoirs à l'égard de l'ensemble de la société. Le premier d'entre eux est vis-à-vis du bien commun, car « la société a droit à une information fondée sur la vérité, la liberté, la justice et la solidarité ». Donc, un premier devoir de vérité dans la transmission de l'information ; mais un droit, corollaire, à la communication de la vérité qui n'est pas inconditionnel. N'étant pas une fin en soi, ce dernier doit être guidé par la charité : il doit respecter la vie privée, la réputation des personnes et le bien commun⁴³. Ils devront en particulier empêcher que, par l'intermédiaire de ces moyens, de graves préjudices soient portés aux mœurs publiques, notamment en véhiculant des messages racistes et discriminatoires, comme cela arrive, par exemple, sur les ondes de certaines radio, dans le réseau Internet⁴⁴.

Il est heureux de constater que dans certains diocèses en Afrique des efforts sont fournis par les uns et les autres à publier des périodiques ou revues à la portée du peuple. Dans d'autres, des Radios et Télévisions diocésaines, des sites sur le Net et des salles informatiques ont été érigées, des Facultés des Communications sociales au sein des Universités catholiques sont créés. Ceux qui ne l'ont pas encore fait ne peuvent qu'être encouragés à le faire. Il est du devoir de l'Eglise de proposer des alternatives aux différents programmes et matières que présentent les autres médias. Dans la plupart de ces derniers, il n'y a que trop de danses et de musiques, de théâtres sans aspect didactique, voire une pléthore des prédications faites par des Eglises de réveil et des Nouveaux mouvements religieux de tout bord ne permettant pas aux consommateurs de faire la part des choses. Il est par conséquent tout indiqué que soit organisé dans les Communautés Chrétiennes Vivantes un ministère susceptible d'aider les chrétiens à la lecture critique des programmes proposés par les

médias. La présence de l'Eglise dans le monde de la communication par les médias éduquera les uns et les autres à discerner et à apprécier ce qui est bon, beau et harmonieux. Il ne convient pas de laisser uniquement aux autres le monopole des médias des masses⁴⁵. L'Eglise doit infuser le modèle de médias où on y présente les faits que l'on analyse avec beaucoup d'objectivité, sans aucune volonté de manipulation des lecteurs ou des auditeurs⁴⁶.

Aussi, l'option prise par la première Assemblée Spéciale pour l'Afrique de considérer la communication comme un axe majeur de l'évangélisation s'est-elle avérée fructueuse pour le développement des médias catholiques. Il conviendrait, peut-être aussi, de coordonner les structures existantes comme cela se fait déjà dans certains endroits. Les médias, surtout dans leurs formes les plus modernes, ont un impact qui dépasse toutes les frontières ; une coordination plus étroite est nécessaire afin de permettre une collaboration plus efficace à tous les niveaux : diocésain, national, continental et universel. Améliorer de cette façon l'utilisation des médias contribuera à une plus grande promotion des valeurs défendues par le second Synode : la paix, la justice et la réconciliation en Afrique⁴⁷, et permettra à ce continent de participer au développement actuel du monde⁴⁸.

En Afrique même, des programmes de collaboration continentale déjà mis en œuvre, comme le « Comité épiscopal panafricain de Communications sociales », devraient être encouragés et redynamisés. Et comme le Synode l'a suggéré, il faudrait établir une plus grande collaboration dans d'autres secteurs, comme la formation professionnelle, les moyens de production de la radio et de la télévision et des stations émettrices à portée continentale⁴⁹.

En plus d'une pastorale de la communication, il faut ménager une place pour la philosophie et la théologie de la communication. Néanmoins, nous nous limiterons à faire ici uniquement une brève introduction à la problématique d'une théologie de la communication.

Théologie de la communication

En dépit de la fascination qu'exercent les médias modernes, l'Eglise ne peut s'engager la tête baissée et les yeux bandés. C'est en ce sens que certains préconisent l'urgence d'une théologie, d'une « théologie africaine » de la communication, à condition que l'inculturation ne demeure pas une entreprise « archéologique ». Mais qu'elle tienne aussi compte de la « néo-culture » secrétée par les médias électroniques, notamment le sens de la liberté, l'identité, les valeurs, mais aussi les questions liées au langage, entre autres les symboles. Donc, en plus de la Parole de Dieu comme repère pour une réflexion théologique sur les médias, le regard devra aussi être porté sur la réalité ecclésiale et la réalité sociale, comme l'a préconisé le professeur Henri Bourgeois⁵⁰.

Une solide réflexion théologique pourrait et devrait nous amener à comprendre la mission et le rôle spécifique de l'Eglise en matière de communication : participer à reformer le cœur de l'homme, puisque l'homme vaut ce que vaut son cœur⁵¹, et puisque toute la tâche de l'évangélisation vise à préparer le cœur de l'homme à la rencontre intime avec le Christ. C'est par le biais de l'intériorité que l'Africain sera plus qu'un « semi-converti », pour reprendre l'expression de l'abbé Buetubela⁵². Une solide réflexion théologique est également requise pour nous aider à articuler, comme Eglise, notre devoir de visibilité et celui d'effacement⁵³. C'est là une question de spiritualité. Et les communicateurs, les évangélistes pour l'Afrique du troisième millénaire en ont besoin.

La réalité ecclésiale ainsi que la réalité sociale sont des espaces de communications, la terre où tombe la graine de l'Evangile. D'après le schéma classique du processus de la communication, ces deux réalités peuvent être considérées comme des pôles de communication qui s'articulent mutuellement. Alternativement, « Emetteur » et « Récepteur ». Mais toutes les deux (réalités) sont des pôles « Récepteurs » par rapport à la Parole de Dieu. Dès lors, une théologie de la communication ne saurait faire l'économie d'une analyse sociale approfondie, mais aussi d'une analyse de différentes formes d'ecclésiologie⁵⁴. Il est temps de conclure.

CONCLUSION

En guise de conclusion à cet article, nous pouvons dire que de toute évidence, il y a le meilleur et le pire dans la civilisation des communications. Le meilleur, il faut le promouvoir jusqu'à permettre à tous les africains d'en tirer bénéfice. C'est la perspective de la vraie mondialisation. Et de la libération pour l'Eglise. Le pire, il convient de le dénoncer et de le combattre surtout pour ceux dont le « vraisemblable » endort la conscience et éloigne des véritables enjeux et mécanismes de la nouvelle civilisation. Cela ne fait que préciser les chemins scabreux et sinueux sur lesquels l'Eglise d'Afrique doit s'engager. Il n'en peut être autrement ! L'homme à évangéliser y demeure. C'est là qu'il faut le rencontrer. La maîtrise dans ce domaine rendra l'Eglise capable de transformer tous les peuples en « auditeurs » de l'Evangile. Nous nous y sommes lancés ; il nous faut, certes, davantage de planification et même de collaboration de grande envergure. Cela ouvre des perspectives œcuméniques. « S'il y a un terrain où l'œcuménisme s'impose impérieusement, c'est précisément celui de la rencontre avec la masse du monde. Dans les moyens de communication sociale, les bibliothèques, la diffusion de la Bible, la radio et la télévision, nous pouvons donner un témoignage commun pour le Christ »⁵⁵.

En définitive, l'examen initié de ce défi des médias ne réserve pas à son terme une recette brevetée comme solution finale. Et il est contre-indiqué de vouloir y trouver un plaisir narcissique favorisé par une propension à des critiques faciles et stériles. La conviction qui y a présidé est la suivante : tant qu'une analyse ne sera pas faite, il n'y aura pas de redressement en vue d'une évangélisation en profondeur à travers les médias. Les fruits n'ont pas encore tenu la promesse des fleurs. Le bonheur n'est pas encore une réalité pour la majorité des Africains. Certes, toute crise est une crise de croissance⁵⁶. Et nous sommes d'accord avec Eric Weil pour caractériser la « personnalité » par son aptitude à répondre à un défi perçu comme crise⁵⁷. C'est une question de responsabilité et de dignité pour les Africains. Nous espérons avoir discerné, même d'une façon non exhaustive, des signes qui authentifient l'appel à un travail de profondeur.

Monsieur l'Abbé MADRAPILE TANZI Dieudonné, étudiant en Missiologie à l'Université Urbanienne, Rome; est entrain de rédiger sa thèse de doctorat. Il nous a fait parvenir son texte par courrier électronique.

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¹ A l'origine, le mot latin « medium » (plur. media) signifie « moyen, milieu, lien ». Le terme mass-média apparaît dans les années 20 aux Etats-Unis employé par les sciences sociales et la publicité pour désigner la communication de masse, la radio et la presse d'abord, ensuite la télévision à partir des années 50. Son usage se généralisant, le mot devint couramment « média » (sing) et « médias » (plur.). Son sens actuel est : appareillage, ensemble de support à la communication (commerciale, pédagogique, etc.). Un média est une institution ou un moyen de communication qui permet d'adresser simultanément un message standardisé à un grand nombre de consommateurs différents ; ceux-ci en font un usage individualisé. Lire par exemple, F. MARIET, « Médias », in Dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'éducation et de la formation, Nathan, Paris 1994, 652. Les principaux supports de diffusion ou de transmission de l'information sont : les messages écrits (presse, édition, affichage publicitaire) ; la radiodiffusion hertzienne (radio) ; la télédiffusion hertzienne, câblée ou par satellite (télévision) ; la projection cinématographique (film, documentaire, publicité) ; le réseau Internet (sites d'information, de propagandes, spams).

² Cfr. L. SANTEDI KINKUPU, Les défis de l'évangélisation dans l'Afrique contemporaine, Karthala, Paris 2005, 78-79.

³ Cfr. JEAN-PAUL II, Message pour la Journée mondiale de la Paix, 1^{er} janvier 2001, n. 11, in DC 2239 (2001) 4.

⁴ Cfr. L. SANTEDI KINKUPU, Les défis de l'évangélisation, 79.

⁵ Cfr. ibidem, 80.

⁶ Cfr. JEAN-PAUL II, Lettre encycl. *Redemptoris missio* (7 décembre 1990), n. 37 : AAS 83 (1991) 282-286 ; cfr. CONGREGATION POUR L'EVANGELISATION DES PEUPLES, Saint Paul et les nouveaux aréopages, *Instrumentum Laboris*, Palazzo di Propaganda Fide, Città del Vaticano 2009, n. 3, 10.

⁷ Cfr. PAUL VI, Exhort. apost. *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 décembre 1975), n. 45 : AAS 68 (1976) 35-36.

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¹⁰ Ibidem, 202.

¹¹ Cfr. V^e CONFERENCE GENERALE DE L'EPISCOPAT LATINO-AMERICAIN ET DES CARAÏBES, Disciples et missionnaires de Jésus-Christ pour que nos peuples aient la vie en lui. « Je suis le chemin, la vérité et la vie » (Jn 14, 6), Aparecida, Bayard – Fleurus – Mame – Cerf, Paris 2008, 243.

¹² Cfr. JEAN-PAUL II, Exhort. apost. post-synodale *Ecclesia in Africa* (14 septembre 1995), n. 123 : AAS 88 (1996) 72.

¹³ Cfr. CONCILE ŒCUMENIQUE VATICAN II, IM, n. 3 ; cfr. CONGREGATION POUR L'EVANGELISATION DES PEUPLES, Saint Paul et les nouveaux aréopages, n. 3, 10 ; JEAN-PAUL II, EIA, n. 125.

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¹⁵ Cfr. JEAN-PAUL II, EIA, n. 125.

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¹⁷ Cfr. JEAN-PAUL II, EIA, n. 124.

¹⁸ Cfr. CONFERENCE EPISCOPALE NATIONALE DU CONGO, Nouvelle évangélisation et catéchèse, n. 193, 97.

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²⁵ Cfr. ibidem, 82.

²⁶ Cfr. C. MWABILA MALELA, « Mondialisation de l'économie des médias et de la culture. Chance ou danger pour l'Afrique », in *Perspectives* 2 (1994) 24.

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²⁹ Cfr. Message du Synode (6 mai 1994), in DC 91 (1994) 531 ; cfr. JEAN-PAUL II, EIA, n. 124.

³⁰ Cfr. ibidem ; cfr. DC 2123 (1995) 847.

³¹ Cfr. JEAN-PAUL II, EIA, n. 71.

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⁵⁵ W. BUHLMANN, La tierce Eglise est là, St Paul Afrique, Kinshasa 1978, 264.

⁵⁶ Cfr. L. SANTEDI KINKUPU, Les défis de l'évangélisation, 84-85.

⁵⁷ Cfr. E. WEIL, Logique de la philosophie, Vrin, Paris 1950. De même pour Emmanuel Mounier, la notion de crise est une composante permanente de la notion de personne, en conjonction avec celles d'affrontement et d'engagement.

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ENTRE SECULARIZACIÓN Y FUNDAMENTALISMO

El arzobispo de Guwahati presenta una excelente reflexión sobre la cuestión de las modernas formas de ateísmo tal y como es mencionado en *Gaudium et Spes* del Vaticano II. El arzobispo se sirve de estudios contemporáneos sobre la secularización de la sociedad. Localiza sus raíces y su evolución hacia las doctrinas liberales del Occidente y la ideología marxista y describe sus efectos en Asia.

Introducción

«La secularización es un esfuerzo, en sí mismo justo y legítimo, no incompatible con la fe y la religión, por descubrir en la creación, en cada cosa o en cada acontecimiento del universo, las leyes que los rigen con una cierta autonomía, con la convicción interior de que el Creador ha puesto en ellos sus leyes» (*Evangelií Nuntiandi*, 55). *Gaudium et Spes* afirma también la legitimidad y autonomía de lo secular.

Constatamos gradualmente que los espacios económico, político, educacional, profesional y recreativo de la sociedad se están vaciando rápidamente de Dios. La mayor parte de los hombres viven hoy guiados por el buen sentido en sus respectivos ámbitos de actividad. La vida pública apenas deja ver las convicciones religiosas o los principios morales que de ellas se derivan. La gente encuentra difícil «oír a los demás hablar de Dios» (*Lineamenta* 19). Todas las religiones están bajo stress, desafiadas seriamente por ideologías seculares. Las últimas reemplazan rápidamente a las primeras. Y se está consolidando una conciencia de que la tendencia actual de secularización es irreversible. Hay demasiados profetas del catastrofismo. Hace más de un siglo, Soren Kierkegaard había dicho que «el Cristianismo ha eliminado a la cristiandad, sin ser completamente consciente de ello. La consecuencia es que, si hay que hacer algo, se debe intentar una vez más introducir el cristianismo en la cristiandad» (Kierkegaard [1850], 1941,39). Ya no es la fe religiosa la que ofrece una visión del mundo a los más modernos sino las ideologías seculares. La increencia domina en muchas sociedades y controla la mayor parte de la vida intelectual. Incluso en un país religioso como la India hay gente que se siente como Satyajit, que dijo: «No soy un Hindú, soy un bengalí». La religión es marginal.

No es que el fenómeno de una perspectiva secular y materialista sea totalmente nuevo en la historia humana. En la India estuvieron los Charvacas, en Grecia los epicúreos. También en los primeros tiempos hubo varias versiones del racionalismo y del humanismo secular. Pero el humanismo de Platón, de los estoicos, de Aristóteles no era un tipo exclusivo de secularismo como lo es hoy (Taylor 2007, 27). En nuestros tiempos surgieron más dudas y se expresaron más incertezas que nunca antes. Hay intelectuales que creen firmemente que la religión no sobrevivirá al proceso de la modernidad: Muchos países desarrollados y subdesarrollados están sólo a tres generaciones de distancia del primer serio encuentro con lo moderno (Bruce 2011, 182). También a ellos les invadirá la modernidad en un corto período de tiempo y aprenderán a vivir sin religión. El cristianismo fue cuestionado por Galeno y Celsus en el siglo II, por Porfirio en el III y por Juliano en el IV, y sigue siendo discutido en nuestros mismos días. Otras religiones se enfrentan a retos semejantes.

Hay razones para preocuparse. La historia encontró frecuentemente a la humanidad a contrapié. Recordemos, por ejemplo, que en el año 650 había 440 diócesis en

Anatolia. ¿Dónde están ahora? En 1914 el 40% del área cubierta por Jordania, Palestina, Israel, Egipto, Líbano, Siria y Turquía eran cristianos; hoy lo son menos del 2%. Un tercio de palestinos desplazados eran cristianos (Bruce, 2011, 191). Pero ¿qué pasó con esas comunidades? ¿Sucederá con los cristianos de África y Asia lo que sucedió a los cristianos en el imperio otomano? (Elst 2001, 373). Ahora, con la creciente inmigración hacia el occidente, ¿sucederá algo parecido a los cristianos incluso en Occidente? Vivekananda solía indicar que los líderes de los turcos eran todos originalmente budistas. Los conquistados eran también budistas. Pero el budismo desapareció de entre ellos. (Elst 2001, 379). Los pueblos del área actual de Bangladesh practicaban un budismo primitivo. Pero hoy son todos musulmanes. (Elst 2001, 379). Mientras que el islam sigue extendiéndose, las fuerzas de secularización están demostrando su fuerza que socava todas las religiones. Los Lineamenta (n. 6) en preparación para el próximo Sínodo sobre «La Nueva Evangelización» describe la situación religiosa en los países tradicionalmente cristianos: la atmósfera predominante no puede llamarse anticristiana o anticlerical, pero se ha dejado a Dios parcial o totalmente fuera. El secularismo penetró en las comunidades cristianas y eclesiales; es una amenaza interna que lleva a la cultura del relativismo y a la superficialidad, al egocentrismo, a una mentalidad hedonista y consumista, a una actitud de «muerte de Dios» y al culto individualista. Sin embargo, no podemos negar la existencia de un vago sentido de lo espiritual detrás de todas estas cosas. Se necesita ayuda para dar una expresión de gozo a la experiencia cristiana.

Se conoce a los asiáticos como religiosos. Pero aún así las ideologías del materialismo dialéctico (de la izquierda) por una parte, y el materialismo consumista (de la derecha) dominaron el pensamiento asiático y controlaron amplias áreas de Asia durante el último medio siglo o más. Reaccionando contra esas formas de abandono de Dios algunos han cultivado variedades de fundamentalismo, de perspectiva ultraconservadora y radicalmente agresivo en las relaciones con los demás. Nuestros jóvenes estudiantes o empleados están expuestos a esas tendencias. Es en este contexto donde la Iglesia de Asia tendrá que buscar estrategias para llevar a cabo su misión. Estas reflexiones son una reflexión sobre la compleja realidad de la rápida secularización de las sociedades y del surgir del fundamentalismo.

1. Historia de la secularización

La secularización se debió a una multiplicidad de factores tales como la cada vez mayor prosperidad, la progresiva educación, la urbanización, los escándalos del clero, el rechazo de la ética sexual cristiana, la influencia de los medios de comunicación, el pluralismo, el movimiento de una religión institucional a una espiritualidad personal y la vida (Collins 2010, 9).

Los Lineamenta n. 20 dicen que las culturas dominadas por el relativismo consideran que hablar de verdad es demasiado oneroso y demasiado autoritario, que lleva a la cuestión ¿«es bueno vivir»? Hay incertidumbre acerca de los elementos que ofrecen estabilidad y certeza en la vida, de las reglas de vida, de su significado y finalidades. Cuando Pitágoras de Abdera (481-420) dijo que «el hombre era la medida de todas las cosas» expresó un punto de vista que iba a perdurar a través de los siglos. Puesto que las fuerzas de la secularización en Asia toman conceptos de reflexiones intelectuales del occidente, dedicaremos un breve espacio a esbozar sus orígenes en el occidente mismo. Muchos intelectuales mantienen que el actual empuje del occidente hacia la secularización procede del concepto de Aristóteles sobre la independencia de la razón humana, introducida en Europa mediante Tomás de Aquino, Averroes (Ibn Rush) que sirvieron de puente. La aserción de Tomás de que la

filosofía tiene su propia autonomía porque pertenece al orden natural puso en movimiento un cambio gradual de las abstracciones teológicas prevalecientes a lo creatural y empírico, al análisis racional, a la investigación científica. Su *Summa* contra Gentiles quiso basar los argumentos sobre la razón natural puramente. De estos comienzos surge la búsqueda intelectual de la Última Edad Media y del período del Renacimiento con la idea del «hombre natural y ciudadano libre» y el «impulso para la iniciativa técnica, la prosperidad material, la fuerza del comercio, inversiones, banca» (Küng 2007, 383). La sociedad moderna está orgullosa de esos avances a los que también contribuyó de manera notable la comunidad cristiana.

Una comprensión de la naturaleza humana es también el fundamento del humanismo en el arte del Renacimiento. Se inspiró en el concepto de autonomía humana del pensamiento griego y romano. Pintores como Giotto comenzaron a pintar a Cristo y a los santos como gente ordinaria no como los iconos estilizados de los primeros tiempos. Esta tendencia abrió nuevas visiones para el arte secular, con imágenes que habrían sido imposibles bajo el islam, como las de Donatello, Fra. Angélico, Botticelli, Leonardo de Vinci, Michelangelo y otros.

De hecho, incluso el judaísmo y cristianismo primitivos habían lanzado una campaña contra una religiosidad muy popular que creyeron supersticiosa, rechazando la creencia en varios dioses, las fuerzas naturales, los espíritus, el culto a las imágenes, las prácticas ocultas y la magia (ver 1 Re 18,1; 1S 28,3-25). Cuestionaron incluso expresiones religiosas legítimas como ayuno, sacrificios, holocaustos, cuando no eran auténticos. Había un esfuerzo para remover de la religión lo que no resistía el test del buen sentido y de la razón. Sin embargo, según se iba propagando la comunidad cristiana, nuevos conversos introdujeron en la Iglesia elementos cuestionables. Cuando las tribus germánicas abrazaron en número considerable la fe cristiana con sus tradiciones y prácticas, los misioneros lucharon enérgicamente para suprimir el uso de cosas como amuletos y campanas, magia y mitos, echadores de suertes y un lenguaje cuestionable (Taylor 2007, 28-29, 71, 110). Algunas tradiciones fueron transformadas dándoseles un significado aceptable.

Los reformadores fueron más lejos. Querían rechazar muchas prácticas tradicionales que tenían por supersticiosas. Rechazaron el respeto a las reliquias, la creencia en los milagros, la devoción a Mana, la oración por los muertos y la reverencia por los lugares sagrados (Taylor 2007, 63.69). Tenían razón en decir que Dios no puede ser captado en lugares, personas, cosas, tiempos y actos. Un diálogo entre personas de diferente fondo cultural y perspectivas teológicas habría ayudado; mas no fue el caso. En consecuencia sufrió el sentido de lo sagrado y siguió ganando terreno la perspectiva secular. La antropología actual reconoce la necesidad de símbolos para confrontar el Trascendente.

Según la visión de los Reformadores, Dios era glorificado no en un estilo monástico de separación y ascetismo sino en las tareas ordinarias de cada día, en el trabajo y en la familia. Según esta manera de pensar, una buena persona cambia el mundo para mejor, reforma la materia, impone la forma, y está ocupada en una actividad productiva. No es un simple siervo de la naturaleza sino un rival (Taylor 2007,233). Y así el ideal de los monjes fue remplazado por un modo disciplinado de vida secular.¹

Las realidades trascendentes y escatológicas comienzan a apagarse gradualmente (Taylor 2007, 223). Los militares que personalizaban la visión teológica reformada, como Gustavo Adolfo o Cromwell, impusieron normas de estricta austeridad y disciplina para sí mismos y para los demás. Según este modelo se desarrolló la espiritualidad protestante en la dirección de trabajo ético y ascetismo mundano.

Calvinistas y pietistas se convirtieron en abnegados empresarios de gran éxito (Taylor 2007, 118-119). Max Weber aboga por la estrecha relación entre los conceptos calvinistas de ética del trabajo y hábitos austeros, y el desarrollo del capitalismo. Pero fue de la Revolución francesa de donde iba a derivarse una visión secular plenamente desarrollada de los asuntos humanos. Tenemos que admitir que las ideas que nacieron de la Revolución contribuyeron en gran medida al fortalecimiento de la confianza en uno mismo en los seres humanos. La «Declaración de los Derechos Humanos y de los ciudadanos» del 26.8.1789 iba a ser la carta de la democracia moderna y la inspiradora de la mayor parte de movimientos modernos de libertad. Pero hubo también consecuencias negativas. El Estado secular, que se construyó a sí mismo sobre principios seculares, comenzó a pedir el monopolio sobre el poder político, y derechos exclusivos sobre todas las esferas de la vida social. Napoleón trasladó al extranjero los ideales revolucionarios, tanto el concepto de Estado secular como el modelo de su propio y apasionado nacionalismo francés. Una vez que se exportó una forma exagerada de nacionalismo como el más grande ideal para las naciones europeas, la consecuencia lógica fue el control del Estado sobre la economía, reclutamientos, planificación racionalizada de guerra, imperialismo y colonialismo. Las guerras democráticas se convirtieron en «guerras totales», no como el pasatiempo de los reyes en épocas pasadas. La secularización traspasó las viejas fronteras.

Lo que los franceses proponían como modelo en los ámbitos político y sociológico, los ingleses lo impusieron en las campos económico e industrial es decir máquinas de vapor, ferrocarriles, fábricas. Aunque el movimiento romántico criticó enérgicamente las filosofías materialistas de aquel tiempo, y llamó la atención sobre la importancia del sentimiento, la imaginación, lo místico y lo mítico y los cuentos de hadas, al final no logró imponerse. Las ventajas económicas derivadas del avance de la ciencia y la tecnología, la división del trabajo, la especialización, mecanización, racionalización y automatismo no corrieron ni de lejos el peligro de ser rechazados. Esos procesos dieron un impulso a la producción en gran escala y trajeron al mercado bienes más baratos, haciendo la vida más confortable. Las consideraciones religiosas y románticas contaban poco. No obstante, la rápida expansión de la industria y del mercado tuvo también sus consecuencias negativas: explotación de los trabajadores, conflicto de clases y revoluciones comunistas y socialistas violentas. Los líderes religiosos parecían impotentes ante esos cambios tan rápidos. La ineficacia del cristianismo para oponerse a esas tendencias anuló sus ataques para criticar el significado de la religión: la religión era una alienación, un instinto natural para suavizar las realidades penosas, el opio del pueblo oprimido, un claro escapismo, una ilusión y en el mejor de los casos una emoción útil, una búsqueda de consuelo e interioridad. Estaba naciendo un nuevo mundo donde la religión debería ser totalmente privatizada y marginada. La teología fue remplazada por un mesianismo político, la organización de la Iglesia por un partido totalitario, y el culto religioso desembocó en un modo de adoración del consumidor a sus bienes. La moralidad fue considerada como un residuo burgués.

Hablando de capitalismo y de obtener provecho, es útil escuchar las distinciones que hace Parkin de sus varias formas: hay un capitalismo del botín, un capitalismo paria (la actividad de supervivencia de los marginados), el capitalismo tradicional (actividad económica a larga escala), el capitalismo racional moderno (prosecución sistemática del provecho con una disciplinada mano de obra, leyes, contabilidad exacta, etc.) (Frank Parkin en Aldridge 2007,77).

2. La secularización desde otros puntos de vista

Peter Berger dice que lo sobrenatural partió del mundo moderno, retrocedió hasta el fondo de la inquietud y conciencia humanas, los creyentes son una minoría (Berger

1970,1). Los Lineamenta n. 9 dicen que la Fe es presentada en caricatura, tratada con indiferencia u hostilidad. Lo que se ve frecuentemente es el signo chocante del bienestar económico y consumismo por una parte, y de miseria por la otra, como si Dios no existiera. No es que las viejas verdades sean rechazadas, se desplazaron desde el centro filosófico a la periferia, o dejaron de ser inspiradoras (Edwards 1997,607).

La Reforma enfatizó la dimensión subjetiva de la religión, especialmente la responsabilidad de cada uno con respecto a su propia conciencia y no a una autoridad externa, devaluando con ello las estructuras actuales de la Iglesia. Fue especialmente fácil para los adeptos de la «tradición pietista» suscitar entusiasmo por la razón. Es interesante notar, por ejemplo, que muchos de los altavoces de la Ilustración, Lessing, Kant, Schiller, Goethe, Fichte, Schleiermacher, tuvieron una educación pietista. El padre y el abuelo de Nietzsche eran pastores. De modo semejante, muchos agnósticos victorianos procedían de familias evangélicas (Taylor 2007,564).

Una vez que se acepta cómo criterio en materias religiosas la opción personal, el culto de la comunidad pierde importancia. Y cuando se renuncia a la Iglesia misma, los conceptos teológicos que definían cada una de sus identidades pasan a ser una cuestión marginal. Comienza un declinar de la ortodoxia doctrinal en todas las Iglesias (Bruce 2001,14). La evolución del pensamiento tuvo su influencia decisiva en la sociedad. Ludwig Feuerbach enseñó que Dios era una proyección humana, un reflejo glorificado de los seres humanos. Para Marx la religión era el opio del pueblo, para Freud una ilusión psicológica. Comprendemos que hay una dimensión patológica en la apropiación personal de la fe; pero cuando reducimos la religión a una mera proyección psicológica estamos pisando un terreno falso. Fue Descartes el que introdujo una especie de pensamiento dualístico (res extensa vs res cogitans) que dio un marco teórico al modelo mecanicista del mundo de Newton.² La creencia en un progreso ilimitado en los campos científico, técnico, industrial, político y social fue primero una ideología y después? gradualmente una religión por sí mismo. Se le atribuían al progreso los mismos atributos de los seres divinos. Voltaire habló de humanos convertidos en maestros por naturaleza. La lógica llevó aún más adelante: Los seres humanos son maestros del mundo, forjadores de sus propios destinos, la autoridad final en todos los aspectos de la vida incluida la ciencia, la economía, la política, la ley, el estado, la cultura, la educación, la medicina, el bienestar social. La imagen de Dios fue cambiando a un ritmo constante: es una realidad! distante que interviene en el mundo mediante un orden impersonal: él mismo es ese orden impersonal; y finalmente el orden natural no necesita a Dios (Taylor 2007, 281). Según iban avanzando las cosas en esta dirección, la mayor parte de los creyentes cristianos no sabía cómo manejar la situación y se iban convirtiendo en conservadores sin esperanza. Pocos se decidieron a dialogar con las nuevas ideas producidas por la expansión de las creencias ateístas, las ciencias, la tecnología, la industria, la libertad, la autonomía, la razón y el progreso. Los líderes de la Iglesia en particular tenían la preocupación de captar a las masas de creyentes menos iluminados y más conservadores. Su cauto acercamiento al nuevo pensamiento los hizo aparecer más tradicionales de lo que eran en realidad. Pero el aparente conservadurismo del clero fue interpretado por el resto de la sociedad como resistencia a las ideas progresivas y poco dispuestos al cambio. Esta percepción hizo pasar a gran número de laicos al campo de progresistas, liberales y anticlericales. Además, dondequiera que los líderes de la Iglesia se inclinaban demasiado al régimen dominante, los progresistas eran aún más hostiles. Una vez más, las iglesias patrocinadas por el Estado se enajenaron la lealtad personal de muchos fieles, que se limitaron a mostrar una conformidad meramente externa (Bruce 2011, 7). Y finalmente, la pérdida de la clase trabajadora, hizo llegar la tragedia a su punto álgido (Taylor 2007,467). En un esfuerzo desesperado por salvar cosas en un mundo rápidamente secularizado, los ministros de

la iglesia se pasaron a nuevos tipos de ministerios. Pero algunos de esos ministerios pedían dotes técnicas y profesionales para las que los tradicionales ministros de la Iglesia no estaban preparados. Cayeron en manos de expertos seculares que se preocuparon poco por conocer la doctrina cristiana o la ortodoxia, y fueron remplazados por ellos (McManners 1993, 600). Del mismo modo, la competencia profesional de sacerdotes y religiosos se esfumó tras la de los colegas seculares en instituciones como escuelas, hospitales, centros de asesoramiento e instituciones de asistencia social. La consecuencia fue un cambio rápido en la visión del mundo y en los principios orientadores.

Algo semejante sucedió con las diversas iniciativas de la Iglesia para la justicia social. Los críticos exageran cuando dicen que el apoyo oficial de la teología de la liberación apareció finalmente como una «contribución clerical» al proceso de descristianización (Taylor 2007, 503). Arguyen que el esfuerzo por universalizar las ideas de la teología de la liberación era un caso generalizado de la experiencia de América Latina, siendo los pobres idealizados, convirtiendo en doctrinarias perspectivas valiosas, pasando por alto experiencias en otras situaciones culturales y de otros grupos étnicos. El concepto contemporáneo de la lucha de clases volvió a leerse en las narraciones bíblicas (McManners 1993, 661-2). La fe se transformó en mesianismo político. «Convertir la fe en un mesianismo terrenal», dice Ratzinger, es una traición al cristianismo (Jankunas 2011, 82). Aún siendo importante el trabajo por la justicia ¿puede el cristianismo reducirse meramente a esfuerzos de liberación, o luchas por la justicia y los derechos humanos?

Mientras tanto el porcentaje de los que negaron toda afiliación religiosa fue aumentando rápidamente (Bruce 2011, 14-5). La increencia ocupó cada vez más el lugar de la fe, la razón el lugar de la Escrituras, la política el lugar de la religión y de la Iglesia, la tierra el lugar del cielo. Y por último, hemos llegado a un punto en el que se ataca directamente a la religión, se proclama el ateísmo y se pronostica la eventual desaparición de la religión de la manera más solemne. Personas como el recientemente fallecido Christopher Hitchens y Richard Dawkins son ardientes evangelistas del ateísmo. Atribuyen erróneamente el abuso de la religión a la religión misma, es decir, los fatwa del Ayatola Komeini contra Salman Rushdi (Hitchens 2007, 28), la destrucción talibana de los gemelos Buda en Bamiyan (Hitchens 2007, 31), la creencia en el karma y Kismet (destino), (Hitchens 2007, 59), la lucha hutu-tutsi a pesar de la fe cristiana (2007, 191), cruzadas, persecución de los judíos, etc. todo esto lleva al declive de la fe (Hitchens 2007, 16), Hitchens arguye que la religión inspira aún el mal en Belfast, Bombay, Belgrado, Belén, Bagdad, y es cuestionada en Serbia (Hitchens 2007, 18). Cita el dicho de Lucrecio «Tantum religio potuit sudadera malorum».³

Steve Bruce señala que Inglaterra vio al menos 150 años de un fuerte descenso de la religión, a pesar de los movimientos pentecostales del 1920ss, los movimientos carismáticos del 1960 ss., los nuevos movimientos religiosos de 1970ss, y la espiritualidad del New Age del 1990ss. (Bruce 2011, 54). Esta pequeña información puede ser alarmante.

3. Consecuencias de la secularización total

Juan Pablo II: «Entre las indicaciones inquietantes de la pérdida de la memoria cristiana está el vacío interior que paraliza a mucha gente y la pérdida de sentido en la vida» (Collins 2010, 143). Según la visión de Weber, la modernidad trae el gobierno de los expertos, «especialistas sin espíritu, sensuales sin corazón; estas imágenes de nulidad que llegó a un nivel de civilización nunca antes conseguido» (citado por Aldridge, 2007, 71). Se acabaron los días de los reyes filósofos, sabios, gurús o

asesores religiosamente inspirados. Están doblemente atrapados en las organizaciones Macdonalizadas, tanto sus seducidos consumistas como sus alienados empleados. La deshumanización de las relaciones sociales — la última irracionalidad de la racionalidad — es la esencia de la Macdonalización. Nosotros colaboramos como víctimas tuyas (Ritzer citado por Aldridge, 2007,73). Los pensadores de la Ilustración están resentidos no sólo contra las tradiciones católicas que rechazó la Reforma, sino también contra el énfasis protestante en el pecado original, el estilo jurídico penal, la expiación, la predestinación, la salvación de los elegidos, el Dios celoso y tirano (Taylor, 2007. 262). Como ellos mismos no reconocen ninguna autoridad, se abrió la puerta a «cualquier viento de doctrina» (Ef 4,14). No sólo se desecharon una a una las enseñanzas de la Iglesia, sino que se aceptaba con prisa cualquier nueva idea que surgía en la mente de los seres humanos, aceptada sin reflexión y llevada hasta los extremos: marxismo, liberalismo, libertarismo, colectivismo, individualismo, ateísmo, formas raras de misticismo, agnosticismo, sincretismo, fundamentalismo y relativismo (Jankunas 2011, 190). Puesto que ahora la sociedad no aceptaba puntos máximos de referencia, como lo había sido el Papa para los católicos, la Biblia para los protestantes, la antigüedad para la sociedad renacentista o la razón para los modernos, mucha gente cambió casi inconscientemente de un Dios personal a una realidad impersonal, más tarde a un humanismo exclusivo (Taylor 2007, 257) y finalmente a un burdo materialismo.

Lo mismo que los defensores de los conceptos modernistas habían puesto en tela de juicio las autoridades religiosas y las certezas en una fase de la historia, los Postmodernos comenzaron a cuestionar la razón misma en fase la siguiente. Las limitaciones de una aproximación puramente racional al pensamiento social y a la planificación del estado resultaron evidentes-durante las grandes tragedias del siglo pasado: revoluciones, guerras mundiales, holocaustos, Hiroshimas, alzamientos étnicos. Resultó evidente que la «razón sola» no podía ser digna de confianza igual que la «Biblia sola». Finalmente cuando todas las autoridades parecían fallar, una tras otra, la última autoridad llegó a ser el «yo» mismo. Toda persona es la ley para sí misma. Las verdades intelectuales y los principios éticos son verdaderos mientras le convengan a uno. La renuncia y benevolencia cristianamente inspiradas dejaron gradualmente el lugar a la conveniencia de «uno mismo». Las cautelas cristianas contra pasiones difíciles de controlar vino a ser considerada como una interferencia en la libertad personal (Taylor 2007, 253). Nadie tendría derecho a decir a nadie qué pensar ni cómo comportarse. El pecado no es personal sino social (Taylor 2007, 479). «La pagana autoafirmación es mejor que la abnegación cristiana», dijo J. S. Mili (Taylor 2007, 492). Nadie necesita preguntarse cómo desapareció el heroísmo en tan afeminada y corrupta sociedad o por qué la gente optó prontamente por volver a lo salvaje con Nietzsche o soportar íntegramente el fascismo y el totalitarismo (Taylor 2007,184.85). Otro desastre fue el derrumbamiento de las comunidades, la erosión de las culturas y, como consecuencia, la pérdida de valores éticos. A causa de la movilidad de la gente durante la revolución industrial, de las guerras mundiales y de los recientes procesos de globalización, se alteraron estructuras sociales como una familia amplia, escuela, vecindad, los modelos tradicionales de formación social que habían ayudado a transmitir las convicciones religiosas de una generación a la siguiente. Hubo una violenta interrupción en el manejo de la fe. Los valores que generan comunidades no pueden construirse meramente mediante los conceptos de relación contractual entre individuos atomizados. Los valores se generan en comunidades orgánicas basadas en etnicidad, cultura y religión. En la sociedad moderna los individuos se ven forzados a entrar en entidades sociales impersonales: estado, partido, clase, movimientos individuales, redes económicas y mundo globalizado. Para Marx, los trabajadores eran meros individuos atómicos que vendían su trabajo (Taylor 2007, 221). Se tiene hoy nostalgia de las comunidades originales promotoras de vida que existieron en los orígenes de las grandes civilizaciones. Hay

nostalgia por valores compartidos y vida de comunidad. La mezcla de culturas hizo que la perseverancia de cada uno en su propia tradición fuese difícil, casi imposible (Bruce 2011, 74). Los Lineamenta, no 6 dicen que hay un desgaste de referencias fundamentales a la vida que socava los valores. Las tradiciones religiosas se están perdiendo, el sentido de la historia y de la identidad de las personas se está debilitando... lo que surge es una cultura de novedades pasajeras y de interés por sólo el momento presente y las apariencias externas; no hay memoria del pasado, no hay sentido del futuro. En tal situación los cristianos deben ser audaces para introducirse en nuevos areópagos con su mensaje. El entusiasmo religioso que generó la Reforma fue una entrega personal que suscitó asistencia a la Iglesia en un primer momento; sin embargo en un estadio posterior la naturaleza opcional de las prácticas religiosas redujo esa asistencia. Y dado que los modelos que proponía esta visión eran voluntarios, se relativizó la fe misma. El bautismo decayó, los matrimonios se convirtieron en acontecimientos meramente civiles. La individualización excesiva llevó a cuestionar el verdadero significado de la vida, creando un sentido de alienación, inseguridad, inutilidad e incluso nihilismo. Los valores de la familia se debilitaron. Cuando las mujeres fueron asalariadas cada vez más cualificadas e independientes se elevó el nivel de vida de la familia, pero las relaciones familiares estuvieron frecuentemente en tensión. No obstante, lo que fue verdaderamente ruinoso fue la revolución contraceptiva que desafió a todos los principios de moralidad sexual, llevando al divorcio, aborto, pornografía, homosexualidad (Taylor 2007, 485). Experiencias de vida en común llevaron a la ruptura de la familia y a la dependencia sin ningún sentido de responsabilidad hacia el compañero concernido. ¿Cómo se las arreglará la humanidad por sí misma in un mundo sin objetivos?

Un vehemente consumismo ocupó el lugar de la fe ferviente. Activistas en Francia, Bélgica, USA y Gran Bretaña comenzaron una campaña contra los símbolos cristianos en los lugares públicos (Elst 2001, 575). La gente que tenía hambre de Dios se separó de los contenidos cristianos de la fe y fue en busca de cultos curiosos, religiones orientales, terapias inauditas, formas de sincretismo (Taylor 2007, 513). Después de las aventuras del colonialismo y las guerras mundiales, había un sentido colectivo de culpa en los países cristianos. Ratzinger se refiere al «odio occidental de sí mismo que no es sólo patológico», viendo «en su propia historia lo despreciable y destructivo». Algunos siguieron caminos menos dramáticos para distanciarse de la Iglesia. Prefirieron decir que eran espirituales en vez de decir que pertenecían a una Iglesia, lo cual significa que querían ser ahora éticos, honrados, respetables, cariñosos y atentos (Bruce 2011, 105), no religiosos. Los que querían creer no querían siempre pertenecer a la Iglesia. ¿Puede negarse absolutamente que el papel de las Iglesias es el de ser como un organismo que garantiza una continuidad histórico-cultural?

4. La secularización en Asia

¿Es la secularización una tesis meramente egocéntrica, un fenómeno del mundo occidental dónde la sociedad misma, se apartó de sus raíces? Sea cual sea su origen, Asia está también afectada por ella a través de Meducación, los media, el comercio global, la falsa, manera de entender la modernidad y los conceptos erróneos de desarrollo que nos vendieron. Las artes locales, los productos locales, las costumbres locales, los dialectos ellos una rápida disminución en nuestros días (Wilson 1982, 154). La economía global crea víctimas en todo el mundo: la confianza personal cede el paso a abstractos sistemas de expertos, y la buena voluntad se rinde ante derechos y deberes formalmente codificados. Se juzga a la gente por sus logros seculares. La moralidad es remplazada por el cálculo, de modo que la virtud personal cuenta poco, resultando con frecuencia ser una responsabilidad más bien que una ventaja. La socialización implica que las actividades humanas están cada vez más coordinadas por controles meramente técnicos más bien que por vínculos llenos de moralidad. Esto

significa desmoralización, siendo remplazado el juicio moral por explicaciones causales (Aldridge, 85-6).

Hemos hablado ampliamente del fenómeno de la secularización en Occidente. La mayor parte se desarrolló durante el periodo colonial y, por tanto, causó un impacto también en Asia. El doloroso enfrentamiento a sus jefes coloniales fue el primer encuentro de asiáticos con gente que tenía otros modos de pensar distintos del suyo. Aunque en las primeras fases los aventureros coloniales decían estar consagrados a la expansión del cristianismo, de hecho estaban siempre subordinados a los intereses materiales de su propia nación. Muchos de ellos eran individuos anticlericales y secularizados. En una etapa posterior la finalidad proclamada era la de una «misión civilizadora». Todo el esfuerzo era manejado por agentes imperiales que estaban con frecuencia muy secularizados. Incluso cuando parecían favorecer a la religión cristiana, ésta era para ellos un instrumento político. Dicho esto, debemos admitir que la exposición de Asia al comercio occidental, los estilos políticos, las habilidades económicas y el pensamiento moderno ayudaron a las naciones de este continente a modernizarse ellas mismas. La democracia, igualdad ante la ley, la separación de Iglesia y Estado, el derecho a participar en la toma de decisiones, la libertad de expresión, los derechos básicos, el igual acceso a las oportunidades económicas... estos conceptos probaron ser de un gran valor para las sociedades asiáticas que suspiraban por libertad y desarrollo. La educación occidental fue recibida con entusiasmo y se formó un liderazgo en la mayor parte de los países asiáticos capacitado para tomar en sus manos el destino de sus países.

Sin embargo, la educación trajo también ideologías occidentales que ignoraban o incluso negaban los valores espirituales y profesaban el materialismo dialéctico o capitalista, ocasionalmente de tipo extremo. Hoy en día, con la economía global que reduce la mayor parte de los miembros de la sociedad al rango de productores y consumidores, la visión global de las masas asiáticas cambió radicalmente. Con la educación y los medios de comunicación, que se ponen ellos mismos al servicio de esta forma de economía, los valores éticos y religiosos que caracterizaban a las sociedades asiáticas fueron sometidos a una fuerte presión. No podemos negar que una gran parte de la gente permaneció leal a sus culturas y religiones, pero la generación joven está en peligro de caer bajo la influencia de las tendencias actuales de secularización o, por reacción, bajo el fundamentalismo. Se dice que algunos jóvenes cristianos han olvidado incluso lo básico del catolicismo y otros adhirieron al pentecostalismo. Antes de terminar esta sección afirmemos el valor de una política laica. Nos hemos referido a una comprensión positiva de los valores e instituciones laicos. En Asia, la minoría cristiana pidió siempre un gobierno laico, lo cual no quiere decir un gobierno que niegue los valores espirituales o que persiga a los creyentes religiosos, sino un gobierno que trate a todas las comunidades religiosas con igual respeto y proteja incluso a las comunidades minoritarias. Varios gobiernos en Asia proclaman que son laicos pero no todos ellos lo son actualmente. Algunos son declaradamente sectarios y otros incluso niegan la libertad religiosa a las minorías.

Incluso bajo presión del exterior, no podemos negar que los valores de religiosidad, el sentido comunitario, el respeto de la autoridad y la tradición, el apego a la cultura y a la familia son aún evidentes en Asia. Si están destinados a desaparecer de la sociedad humana un día, Asia será el último continente extinguido.

5. Respuesta a la secularización

Según la Ilustración, sería una ceguera total si hubiera que asumir que con unos pocos siglos de criticismo del contenido de la religión se destruiría un anhelo que dominó a la humanidad desde los primeros pasos de su historia, desde el más

primitivo pueblo indígena hasta las cumbres supremas de la cultura (Simmel 1997, 9). Hay algo eterno en la religión que está destinado a sobrevivir a todos los símbolos religiosos particulares en los que el pensamiento religioso se envolvió tan exitosamente a sí mismo (Durkheim 1915, 427).

El choque que conmovió al mundo en septiembre 2009 removió un instinto religioso que estuvo muerto en Occidente por largo tiempo. Le gente de todo el mundo se despertó de repente a la conciencia de lo que significa la religión para una significativa sección de la humanidad: la sección escéptica se enfrentó ahora con la sección creyente. Habermas, un elocuente portavoz del pensamiento laico, admitió esto: «La sociedad laica adquiere una nueva comprensión de las convicciones religiosas...» (Ratzinger & Habermas, 111-12). El rumano americano Virgil Nemoianu señalaba: «Habermas no fue el único intelectual en el que pueden reconocerse algunos signos de un «punto de inflexión». Varias figuras europeas prominentes enviaron señales semejantes». Nemoianu menciona a personas como Norberto Bobbio, Jacques Derrida y Manuel Levinas.

(Jankunas 2011,318). Si esta cambiada comprensión hubiese sido obtenida sin la tragedia del 11 de septiembre, nuestro mundo habría sido un poco mejor. No, la religión no está muerta. Está viva. Mueve aún a millones. Es conveniente despertarnos a la conciencia de que una visión del mundo laica tiene sus propias limitaciones. Habermas admite francamente que puede necesitarse la ayuda de la religión como motivación para observar las normas sociales saludables. Concede que la sociedad laica puede aprender mucho de la religión, especialmente en lo concerniente a los conceptos del bien y del mal. (Jankunas 2011, 184-185).

Ante la creciente violencia en la sociedad, sus actitudes agresivas, la perspectiva materialista, el egoísmo, el crimen, la ruptura de familias, el divorcio, las enfermedades venéreas y las drogas, la gente espera respuestas (Edwards 1997, 595). Es verdad que la generación emergente encuentra difícil aceptar posturas! dogmáticas sobre nada, tanto en el campo de la filosofía como en el de la religión o la ideología. Se indignan ante códigos impuestos de conducta y no quieren escuchar respuestas preparadas para cuestiones complejas. No ven fácilmente un propósito o diseño en la historia humana. Viven en una atmósfera donde cada uno interpreta los textos; y principios de autoridad según sus propias necesidades, sentimientos o caprichos. La gran ventaja es que en tal caso toda opinión tiene su oportunidad. También la verdad tiene posibilidad de haberse oír. Los conceptos sobre la promoción de la vida al lado de ideologías que amenazan la vida y los valores. Mientras que la gente pregona qué el individualismo absoluto está en alza, en la práctica incluso los individuos más individualistas no pueden permitirse ignorar los supuestos básicos de la cultura y de la comunidad a la que pertenecen, o el grupo paritario del que forman parte (Edwards 1997, 593-94. Esto es, por tanto, un punto de partida.

Benedicto XVI habla de una «ecología de la persona humana». Lineamenta n. 1 dice que cuando sufre el tenor moral general de una sociedad hay falta de respeto por la vida; la gente no encuentra dificultad en aventurarse en procesos de vida artificiales, gestación y nacimiento; los embriones y los embriones humanos se usan para la investigación. Las leyes no ayudan a las personas a respetarse a sí mismas. Debemos recordar que el libro de la vida es uno e indivisible: ambiente, sexualidad, matrimonio, familia, relaciones sociales, desarrollo humano íntegro. Degradar a las personas es trastocar el ambiente y dañar a la sociedad. La fe nos ayuda a reconstruir el equilibrio de la historia en todo lo existente, dirige hacia el bienestar de la humanidad y del cosmos, promueve la investigación en las Universidades para el discernimiento de lo que es bueno para el individuo y para la humanidad.

Después del colapso de la gran sociedad romana, se rechazaron los valores que habían construido la civilización en un primer momento. Pero un pasado profundo no puede desaparecer fácilmente sin más, porque las culturas se aferran a nosotros como nuestra identidad más profunda. El reto de reconstruir una sociedad fragmentada fue asumido por los discípulos de San Benito. Formaron una minoría creativa para dedicarse a la misión de salvar con la firmeza que les daba su fe lo que era precioso en la civilización que se esfumaba. Lo que fue posible para ellos debería ser posible hoy para la minoría creativa de los creyentes cristianos (Edwards 1997,595).

Razonemos con nosotros mismos de esta manera. Después de todo, nadie piensa que todo sea negociable siempre. Hay algunas verdades y derechos básicos que todo el mundo tiene por no negociables. Incluso el más aguerrido defensor del relativismo, por ejemplo, insistirá en que su propia opinión es absoluta; ¡lo cual significa que admite que hay verdades que no son relativas! ¿Podrían pertenecer a esta categoría las verdades religiosas y los principios éticos? Basados en una cuidadosa reflexión, percibimos que la mayor parte de nuestra vida diaria y de nuestras relaciones están construidas sobre la confianza mutua. Nos es imposible verificar cada acontecimiento en nuestra vida ni cada afirmación que oímos en cada caso. La vida sería impensable sin la confianza y dependencia mutuas. Creer en Dios no es diferente. Todo camino, incluido el de la razón, pide a un cierto punto «un salto de fe» (Taylor 2007,550). La teoría de la relatividad o quantum mecánico no apunta a certezas sino a un asombro. No es diferente de un salto de fe.

Pero lo que es más interesante es el hecho que no hay argumento contra la realidad. Esto es lo que hace a los ateístas francos maravillarse indefensos cuando aparecen nuevas formas de fe (Taylor 2007,529). Olvidaron que ni los estudios históricos ni los antropológicos descubrieron ninguna sociedad sin religión. Los únicos períodos conocidos de ateísmo en cualquier sociedad han sido breves hechizos de una ilusión voluntaria. Creencia e increencia coexisten con frecuencia y compiten durante un cierto tiempo (Taylor 2007, 295). Un vacuum religioso crea un hambre escondida de Dios al que sigue un período de fervor religioso. Las formas religiosas vacías y sin vida llevan a un cansancio de la fe, a un intenso interrogatorio, dudas, rechazo aparente... y finalmente a redescubrir la religión, a una comprensión más profunda de verdades religiosas y a la vuelta a un fervor renovado. La adolescencia pasa y llega la edad adulta

La evidencia empírica muestra hoy que las experiencias religiosas que se consideran pesadas, aburridas y no inspiradoras en una parte del mundo se consideran algo excitante en la otra parte. Hay siempre admiración por lo que es genuinamente bueno. Las jóvenes Iglesias en Asia y África están creciendo a pesar de la oposición y de la persecución. Debe haber algo atractivo en una religión que se descubre en situaciones provocadoras. No hay que maravillarse si las iglesias profundamente ancladas en los valores tradicionales de la fe siguen creciendo (McManners 1993,613). Por el contrario, las que se adaptan a los estándares del mundo secularizado seguirán perdiendo seguidores. La gente se da cuenta de que los valores superficiales trivializan la vida: no experimentan profundidad, ni grandeza ni desafío. (Taylor 318). Según caminamos hacia una sociedad post ateísta muchas cosas que se habían soñado pueden resultar posibles. La gente comienza a ver que el relativismo ético lleva sólo a un mundo caótico, que la «corrección política» sola no puede ofrecer las últimas respuestas. El hecho que Dios sigue invisible no es el gran problema. Después de todo, incluso los creyentes fervorosos hablan de un «Dios escondido». Más bien, el reto está en redescubrir una nueva profundidad escondida en la persona humana, y esto es posible. De hecho, es alcanzable. Matthew Arnold acostumbraba a decir que al moderno «yo» le falta totalidad (Taylor 2011, 380). Para él la solución era la

cultura. Para nosotros la respuesta es la fe. La minoría creativa tendrá que tomarlo como misión suya para mostrar que el modelo cristiano no debilita la «alegría de vivir» (Ratzinger y Pera, *Without roots*, 2006,125). Debe haber alguna razón para que las comunidades cristianas en el Tercer Mundo estén creciendo y para que los nuevos creyentes muestren un tenaz apego a su fe. La gente está suspirando por lo sagrado (Taylor 2007, 506). Los valores que aprecian pueden contener un mensaje también para los viejos creyentes. La reflexión teológica entre ellos puede estimular al resto de la Iglesia. Pero la información más relevante de Steve Bruce es el hecho que las sociedades secularizadas tienen menos hijos y sin embargo la proporción de gente religiosa sigue creciendo (Bruce 2011,195). ¿Es la secularización típica de comunidades que son felices optando por la decadencia? El odio de sí mismo tiene sus consecuencias. Nos lleva a la cuestión del fundamentalismo, que estudiaremos el próximo mes.

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NOTAS

¹ La espiritualidad de la Reforma puede describirse así: Las buenas personas muestran constancia, paciencia, resolución; no son sacudidos por el caos, el desorden, la violencia; no son trastornados, no son fácilmente disturbados. El resultado es una forma moderna de estoicismo, inspirado originariamente por el Calvinismo (Taylor 2007,116.7), Los calvinistas aceptan las buenas obras como signos de la elección de Dios. En el orden de cada día, se requiere un autocontrol racional; y eso implica un ascetismo mundano. Los creyentes deben llevar una vida activa y dedicada, meditar y orar en el mundo (Küng 12995, 577).

². Es interesante señalar que todos los primeros dentistas representaban a la modernidad y enfatizaban la razón era creyentes genuínos: Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Spinoza, Leibniz, Huygens, Boyle y Newton. Pero el escenario siguió cambiando.

³. ¡Tanto mal inspira la religión!

Padre Seyoum Fransua

PEACE-BUILDING THROUGH RECONCILIATION

1. Peace-building

Peace is not merely something that we as creatures can achieve or accomplish fully on our own with all the human effort involved, because, in the ultimate analysis, it is a gift and a grace from God. Cardinal Francis Arinze underlined that: “before being a product of human activity, peace is first of all a gift that we may request of God”.¹



The human being receives many gifts and blessings from God. The Ethiopian Catholic Bishops (ECB) stated that peace is one of the precious gifts of God and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.² It is a gift with responsibility on the part of the receiver. It needs due handling and the willingness to build up a peaceful community as an ambassador of peace.³ Similarly, Pope Benedict XVI has said that “peace is both gift and task”. He stated that “peace is a gift from God. Peace is an aspect of God's activity, made manifest both in the creation of an orderly and harmonious universe and also in the redemption of humanity that needs to be rescued from the disorder of sin”.⁴ It is the belief of the Church that true peace comes from God the Father

of Jesus Christ.⁵ The African Bishops identified God as Peace (I Cor 14:33) and Christ as our Peace (Gal 5:22) and the source of true peace.⁶

The understanding of peace as a gift of God does not mean that a person may be passive or neglect his/her human or Christian duty of peace-building. Instead, it empowers each member of society to be an artisan of peace. More than forty years ago Pope Paul VI stressed the need for peace-building based on justice among men according to God's will.⁷ Similarly the Latin American Bishops' Conference stated that “peace is not found, but it is built. The Christian man is an artisan of peace”.⁸ The act of peace-building leaves no one indifferent in society regardless of religious, ethnic or political differences.

Unstable circumstances, human needs and the limited resources available, oblige everyone to be a responsible promoter of peace in her/ his day to day life according to each one's gifts,⁹ since “peace will never be achieved once and for all, but must be built up continuously”.¹⁰ Hence, peace-building is the common duty of everyone who is a good and responsible citizen of society. Accordingly, peace-building is part of the ministry of the Church and it “suggests the priority of pastoral ministry, that is to say, the community's capacity to care for people, nurture relationships, build supportive networks, empower people to take on their responsibilities as free men and women, which are critical ministries in the living church”.¹¹ It involves “its ubiquitous presence”,¹² and coordinated activities, institutions, hierarchical extensions, resources, its witness in building relationships within its own community and creating communion on the model of the Trinity.¹³

But what does peace-building mean? Since the end of the 20th century there have been several attempts to define what peace-building is in the context of rebuilding a society ruined by war. Dr Boutros Boutros Ghali, the former United Nations Secretary General (1991-1996), held peace-building to be any reconstruction of a society ruined by war, which also included Agreements made by the groups in conflict, the diplomatic efforts involved and so forth.¹⁴ In this definition the focus of attention is on the period following the war and the emergency intervention by external groups after the disaster in order to rebuild a society. It is a very important undertaking to re-build a society devastated by war. *Caritas Internationalis* defines peace-building as “the long-term project of building peaceful and stable communities and societies. This requires building on a firm foundation of justice and reconciliation”.¹⁵ This definition underlines some elements of peace-building such as reconciliation and justice in building a good relationship among the communities.

John Paul Lederach, peace researcher, and expert, defines peace-building as “a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable peaceful relationships”.¹⁶ The last two definitions of peace-building not only involve rebuilding a society devastated by war but entail multi-faceted activities before, and after war; and constantly building up the capacity of the community at different levels. In this regard, peace-building refers to: “the conscious moulding of people in communities, nation States and the world to live in peace. This moulding builds on the cultures and religions of societies and should begin at the earliest stage in a person’s life, to become his or her way of life...”.¹⁷ It is a multi-faceted approach of constructing a peaceful society, which begins by moulding the cultures and religions of societies at the earliest stage possible, finally to become their way of life/culture of peace. It needs to be supported by education for the culture of peace and other human skills which bring radical conversion of heart to God and his creatures and makes peace a personal value.¹⁸

The various definitions of peace which we have indicated above: the uncontrolled demand for resources and the terrible, violent experience of armed conflict in most parts of the world prevent peace from being an overnight action, to be achieved anywhere. It needs to be constantly built up by the sharing of resources among the parties concerned and by overcoming the sin of exclusion. Peace flourishes when all the members of society hold it to be a personal value and commit themselves to promoting and being responsible for it.¹⁹ Peace-building calls for the common effort of each and every one “to produce a common conscience which makes peace possible”.²⁰ It will be difficult to build peace unless it is considered to be a value in each person’s life which then radiates to other social institutions including the family. If peace becomes a value in the heart of each and every person it will be a guarantee for peace in the world.²¹

The various institutions, whether religious or civil and governmental, need to bring together all the dimensions of the human experience of, and efforts at, peace-building; that of religious bodies especially who, with their experience and resources, can contribute to social interaction and the building of harmony in a given society provided that they dedicate themselves to promoting human rights, social justice, and economic empowerment, freedom and so on.²² Effective peace-building demands forgiveness, acceptance, and support of the groups in conflict whether religious or ethnic, the victims and the wrongdoers. Such acts require a real conversion of heart and mind of each and every member so as to give self in love and service to others,

including enemies as the Children of the same Father who loves each and every person unconditionally. Actually, these are the core values of our Christian faith.²³

In the effort of peace-building, the Church as a family has a mission which should “primarily be one of condemning injustice, exploitation and violence, hostilities and conflicts within and between clans, village communities, ethnic groups and nations”.²⁴ In a situation where State and religion are separate, the religious leaders and religious institutions can play a significant role in peace-building and reconciliation by cultivating harmonious and just relationships among the people. The long years of charitable services and socio-development activities help the people to trust them and uphold their good reputation provided that they have acted with commitment and good will.²⁵ Most of the time, the Church with her institutions has been working to alleviate the suffering of society as a witness of love and reconciliation in different parts of the world. It is part of her commitment to peace and sharing peace. In fact, the peace that Christians witness to, is not peace only for them but peace also directed towards other members as their duty. It embraces all humankind near and far. It reaches beyond the Church and her institutions as an expression of love among brethren (Eph 2:13-17). This peace also goes beyond humankind since it includes the entire cosmos as St. Paul states: He “reconciled all things by making peace”, (Col 1:20).²⁶ Peace-building has a multi-faceted approach for its sustainability. And below we discuss one of its elements: the Christian view of reconciliation.

2. Reconciliation as Means of Peace-building

Peace-building, through reconciliation is becoming a concern of many experts in the fields of human science though mostly emphasized in the religious sphere.²⁷ The Church’s participation in the ministry of reconciliation, in the process of building up broken relationships in society, is part of its integral entrusted mission (II Cor 5:18) provided that the Church takes a neutral position during and after the conflict/s and preaches “the gospel of peace” (Eph 2:17; Mk 16:15).²⁸ In fact, the Second Special Assembly for Africa stressed that the Church’s role is one of reconciliation, justice and peace in society by tackling the misery of Africans affected by international and internal violence and the reconstruction of the continent’s lost image through reconciliation.²⁹ As a matter of fact, unresolved issues in life, including life itself and its ultimate aim, suffering, the question of evil and its effects, misery, death and so on, are expected to be answered sincerely and profoundly by religions if possible including Christianity.³⁰ The African Bishops stated that the mission of the Church, “like its Founder’s is to gather into one the scattered children of God (Jn 11:52). All the more so because it is the fundamental sacrament of forgiveness, the natural place of reconciliation and peace between men”.³¹ The Church through her ministers administers the sacraments, in this case, the Sacrament of Reconciliation which is a vital means for building up the broken personal relationship with God and the fellow community as Christian Tradition and theology depict.³² Peace-building through reconciliation is an integrated role of the Church in society. It refers to “a corporate activity of the Church in society, an activity that shares in Christ’s atoning and reconciling work, and hopes to restore the goodness of creation”.³³ It is about progressively rebuilding relationships and constructing the future by healing past wounds.

2.1 Meaning and Dimensions of Reconciliation

In the peace-building process, reconciliation refers to “the peaceful restoration of broken relationships or the coming together of those who have been alienated and

separated from each other by conflict".³⁴ The quarreling ethnic groups, religious or parties are led from opposition and mutual destruction to agreement, collaboration, restoration and reconstruction. It is an act of reuniting the separated groups or people by addressing the cause of exclusion.³⁵ The Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia underlined that reconciliation is a source of peace; embracing one another as the children of the same Father, the Supreme God.³⁶ Similarly, the African Bishops defined reconciliation as a virtue which heals and restores unity at the individual, societal, national and inter-national levels for those who have been ruined by hatred, conflicts, and wars. It restores not only the broken unity but also restores the peoples' lost dignity. Reconciliation enables the groups in conflict to live in harmony in spite of harm committed in the past by creating mutual trust among them.³⁷ Peace without reconciliation is not expected from a society ruined by war. R. Panikkar, one of the Catholic theologians, wrote on the derivation of word reconciliation: "reconciliation, comes from *concilium*, and is associated with ecclesia, denoting the convocation of others. Reconciliation means convoking everyone, speaking with others".³⁸ In the process of reconciliation, identifying the groups or parties of any kind in conflict, and identifying the cause/s of dispute (the bone of contention: economic resource, person, political power, religion) and addressing the matter justly are essential in order to build a durable peace.³⁹ Blessed John Paul II stated that true and durable peace cannot be obtained by military victory or revenge but by addressing the root causes of conflicts and by healing the wounds of the past through forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴⁰

In the Christian view, reconciliation is initiated by God and He is the one who fulfills it through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ who reconciled the world to God by destroying hostility (Eph 2:14-18) and entrusted this mission to the Church (cf. II Cor 5:19- 20), in spite of some doctrinal differences among the Christian denominations.⁴¹ Reconciliation by the Cross of Christ needs to be understood as God's love towards a sinful humanity, not as God's anger towards sinful man that required the blood of an innocent. The Cross is not the result of God's anger. For peace-building, the Cross and its impact of reconciliation is "God's willingness to enter into the human condition of guilt as well as of innocent suffering in order to restore relationships and communities that have been perverted by sin".⁴²

The Christian view of reconciliation comprises vertical and horizontal dimensions in building harmony between God and man; man and the rest of Creation at different levels as follows:

a) **Reconciliation of individual with God.** It is a process of "creating harmony with God by amending the conflict that separates the individual from God".⁴³ It mainly entails the following steps in rebuilding the harmony broken by sin: a sinner



acknowledges his/her state of alienation from God; confesses and repents of his/her sins, or the misdeeds committed to a mediator, a Priest who represents God; with the proper disposition to ask for forgiveness and affirms the determination not to commit such sins again; penance and absolution of her/his sins even though the kind of penance to be given is not consistent and sometimes even has been for promoting war rather than reconciliation.⁴⁴ The broken harmony is re-established between the parties

and God's grace of forgiveness is poured out upon the sinner. A new way of life begins.⁴⁵

b) Reconciliation with oneself. This dimension of reconciliation is a fruit of the reconciliation of the individual with God. The grace of forgiveness that a sinner receives from God gives him/her internal peace. "The feeling of being forgiven from past guilt to start out afresh is expected to generate tranquility, peace, and harmony within the individual".⁴⁶ This reconciliation only happens when a person returns to God through prayer which leads to conversion of heart (Rom 7:15-25) and the individual is at peace and an instrument of peace.⁴⁷ Personal conversion and peace are indispensable factors in making peace at community and societal levels if one experiences it in one's own life. In fact, the experience of individual reconciliation enables a person to undertake the reconciling mission of Jesus. It is the experience of peace to the point of loving one's enemies and persecutors (Mt 5:39, 43-45; Lk 6:27). It is a kind of rebirth of the individual from the deadly condition of life (Jn 20:17-18).⁴⁸

c) Reconciliation with one's neighbour. Reconciliation with God and with oneself radiates in reconciliation with one's neighbour. Receiving God's grace of forgiveness unconditionally, urges a reconciled sinner to be reconciled to fellow human beings. It becomes a duty of a reconciled person to practise it in life (Mt 6:12-15; 18:21-35) for others. This incorporates the act of love which is the real reconciliation.⁴⁹ It is about building up relationships and lasting peace between individuals in conflict for various reasons. It involves progressive and total sacrifice in building up the victim/wrongdoer relationship which will be the object of our discussion later in this article.

d) Reconciliation with the physical environment. This dimension of reconciliation deals with the conciliation of man with nature. The Christian faith states that the earth and all it contains belong to God (Ps 24[23]:1; Lv 25:23-24). Peace embraces the reconciliation of the whole nature. Man himself is part and parcel of the earth (Gn 2:8).⁵⁰ God, without discrimination, has given human being the earth to work and to make it a better place for him/her (Gn 1:15) and get his/her sustenance. He has given the earth to the human being in order to utilize it properly with responsibility and not to abuse it.⁵¹ The Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia in their Pastoral Letter stressed and called for the planting of trees as a sign of reparation and act of reconciliation with nature throughout the country which also forms part of the Government's programme.⁵² It is a practical measure to repair deforestation and the abuse of the earth of Ethiopia, and it also enhances peace in the long run by protecting the environment as part of peace-building. This dimension of reconciliation for practical reasons demands that everyone, especially the people of powerful countries, including religious followers and institutions avoid an extravagant way of life, while others live in destitution, and to live in simplicity. Every person has to accept his/her responsibility to respect creatures as inhabitants on our planet.⁵³ Respect and love for other creatures has to be part and parcel of human life. It needs to be an extension of the new Commandment of Jesus Christ: "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 19:19).

Is the Christian view of reconciliation applicable in the political and practical life of a society? In other words, can this view of reconciliation be a source of building up peace in a society ruined by war? Whether the implementation of the Christian view of reconciliation, and its elements to the political sphere would make it possible to achieve the intended goal in a society devastated by war, is still under discussion.⁵⁴ Does reconciliation mean no conflict in the future? Does it indicate that there will be

no more need for a Police Force because peace has been achieved? These questions indicate that there is no universal definition of reconciliation to be applied.⁵⁵ And still, some would reject national healing by reconciliation arguing that “nations do not have collective psyches which can be healed, nor do whole nations suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and that to assert otherwise is not to psychologize an abstract entity which exists primarily in the minds of nation-building politicians”.⁵⁶ In reality, it would not be easy to deal with reconciliation in situations where for example, one ethnic or religious group perceives itself as oppressed by another. There is always a continuous tension and struggle for liberation that mostly resorts to vengeance. It would also be very difficult to state which side is in the wrong or right. The other problem to solve, is how could they live together, that is, the oppressors and the oppressed?⁵⁷

Though we admit that reconciliation is a long and difficult process especially when dealing with a painful crime or harm done to victims,⁵⁸ it is a real means of healing for the victims of oppression in the process of peace-building as “mutual forgiveness is offered”. Blessed John Paul II underlined that the Christian view of reconciliation is an important factor in peace-building⁵⁹ and applicable to a society in conflict even though it is a difficult challenge to practical and socio-political life. The following are some of the challenges to the victim/harm-doer relationship in the process of reconciliation which will lead to durable peace in a war torn society.

2.2 The Need to Acknowledge the Truth

The facts, abuses, oppressive suffering, exclusion, and the structure of denial,⁶⁰ need to be revealed to show what happened and was committed by the victim/wrong doers. It is impossible to resolve a conflict and build up relationships without revealing the facts.⁶¹ For effective reconciliation to happen the acknowledgment of the wrongs done to the victims, addressing the cause/s of conflict and the injustices are absolutely essential; otherwise, reconciliation becomes void. True reconciliation comprises the willingness to admit the truth, the injustices, discrimination, the denied humanity of the victims, wrongs done against one another in order to start the healing journey.⁶² We can recall the approach of Jesus toward the alienated, the suffering and despised people by recognizing the denial of their humanity in front of the powerful in reviving their common humanity and faith.⁶³ In this regard, the Church plays its role proclaiming Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6) in whom men find the fullness of religious faith, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (II Cor 5:18ff.). Similarly, the Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia stated that the truth sets free both the victims and the wrong doers being the principle of life (Jn 8:32).⁶⁴ Pope Benedict XVI also underlined that truth is a corner-stone for making the world a safe place for humanity, for human development and building a just society in charity. Building a relationship without truth is void and irrelevant.⁶⁵ Sometimes, admitting the truth might also aggravate hatred and revenge among conflicting groups, unless it is accompanied by justice and love.⁶⁶ A resulting conflict could be worse than the previous one. It is in fact, up to the parties in conflict to build their future based on truth or to consume one another based on acknowledged facts,⁶⁷ since reconciliation is something internal and cannot be imposed externally to bring about a lasting peace between any groups in conflict.

2.3 Reconciliation through love & forgiveness

As a matter of fact, willingness and readiness for dialogue between the warring parties of any kind is a precondition for reconciliation and leads to mutual understanding. It is

a dialogue that helps to build a bridge “for reconciliation to happen, we must embrace a way of understanding differences that does not focus on what separates, excludes and sets us in opposition, but rather recognizes that differences presume boundaries that enable people to make connections and come together”.⁶⁸ Ignoring dialogue would be a mistake in the whole process of reconciliation/ peacemaking and would ultimately lead to failure and death as R. Panikkar held.⁶⁹ In the process of peace building, there must be a place for revealing the truth, readiness to forgive, reparation of the deeds or the harm committed. Dialogue is a means of building right and mutual relationships by healing the various forms of wounds, ethnic group’s conflicts, hostility among the ethnic groups, religious divisions, and so on. “The Church in Africa feels challenged by the specific responsibility to heal these divisions”. That is why the African Fathers insist on the urgency and indispensable responsibility to heal these divisions which have disastrous effects on the continent.⁷⁰

Dealing with reconciliation through forgiveness and love is not only focusing to heal wrong relationship that happened in historical journey among conflicting groups but aiming at constructing the better future together.⁷¹ Forgiveness is one of the prerequisites for peace-building in reconciliation at personal and community levels in a society where its history is marked by prolonged armed conflicts, tribal rivalries, revenge, and hatred like that of Ethiopian society. It is “the foundation of the Church’s ability, through her members, to promote peace and reconciliation in the world”⁷² while taking into account the concrete situations of the people. It is impossible to construct a better future without forgiveness of the past ill deeds. It is a real love which enables victim-wrong doers to begin constructing a new life.⁷³

Forgiveness is God’s gift of love (Lk 7:36ff) to wounded humanity without our merit. Forgiveness without love, as St Paul highlights, is a “noisy gong and clanging cymbal” (1 Cor 13:1).⁷⁴ In fact, the model of forgiveness is Jesus who forgave those who were killing him and prayed for them (Lk 23:34). In this regard, forgiveness is one’s personal decision against the evil doers motivated by the love of God who loves all irrespective of their sins. Unless there is a supernatural power, the Holy Spirit,⁷⁵ forgiveness is beyond the fragile human capability in the face of the dehumanizing experiences in life. Forgiveness aims at building a new relationship and trust in constructing the future among the conflicting groups or nations. It is not one sided but bi-dimensional with God and with fellow human being. Forgiveness does not mean that the perpetrators will continue with their injustices as before; it is not also a weakness on the side of the victim but building mutual relationship based on justice and equality. It is a permanent journey of building relationship victim-wrong doers by transforming bitter hatred and violent conflicts into constructing a new life together.⁷⁶ In this regard, both victims and wrong doers need to repent and forgive. It is an act of love that comes first (Lk 15); love is a real forgiveness⁷⁷ as that of Jesus’ action on the cross. A real forgiveness is a true love; “love your enemies, do good to those who curse you; pray for those who treat you badly” (Lk 6: 27-28). In this case, forgiveness refers to “love given before, ‘love’ being understood in the entirely unsentimental sense of willing, seeking and extending oneself for the good of other.”⁷⁸ A true forgiveness leads to a true reconciliation, to a new transformed beginning of life and peace of mind. Forgiveness is a real love which enables victim-wrong doers to begin constructing a new life.⁷⁹ Blessed John Paul II underlined that “true peace is made possible only through forgiveness and reconciliation.”⁸⁰ And David J. Bosch held that the cross of Christ is the point of departure for true reconciliation in love and forgiveness. He stated that:

“The Cross also stands for reconciliation between estranged individuals and groups, between oppressors and oppressed. Reconciliation does not, of course, mean a mere sentimental harmonizing of conflicting groups. It demands sacrifice, in very different but in very real ways, from both oppressor and oppressed. It demands the end to oppression and injustice and commitment to a new life of mutuality, justice and peace”.⁸¹

We need to keep in mind that forgiveness is not to be understood as forgetting the wounds, and the abuses suffered by the victims including the dead, but is rather to remember differently and forgive evildoers even though the Ethiopian Catholic Bishops have been underlining “erasing all unhappy remembrance of the past, all resentment, every feeling of revenge for what has been undergone or lost in the past”.⁸² Erasing and forgetting past wounds is not so easy⁸³ but “to remember in a different way because in forgiving the balance of power has shifted from the oppressor to the victim; it is the victim, and the victim alone who has the power to forgive. In forgiving the victim breaks loose from the oppressor’s hold, becomes free of the power of the past and is able live free of fear and suffering”.⁸⁴ In reconciliation no one is a winner or loser of the dehumanizing game but it is a mutual source to rebuild a new future since its source is divine not international package groups or peacekeeping force. Only forgiveness can recompense the victims of war especially those who have lost their dear ones, and make them into peace builders in society. Punishing the guilty without forgiveness is not a remedy and it cannot change the situation.⁸⁵ Also reconciliation is not to be taken as a simple technical human skill in the conflict resolution mechanism with a prefixed formula to be applied. Rather it is the heart of genuine Christian practice with a transcendent origin. It means a change of mind through learning to know the other, a change of heart by trusting in and building up a relationship that is manifested in practical life.⁸⁶

2.4 Reconciliation through Justice

An ethno-religious society ruined by war must commit itself to a journey of reconciliation and cooperation in order to build up the right relationship. Each conflicting group needs to see itself critically since reconciliation really begins by realizing one’s own weakness and faults; outlining wrong actions against each other. Committing themselves to reconciliation is an indispensable aspect of rebuilding relationships to heal the wounds of the past and constructing the future of conflicting groups.⁸⁷ In the process of rebuilding a society and building durable peace through reconciliation, justice is one of the many prerequisites. A superficial reconciliation, without tackling the root cause of conflict/s, will face obstacles and vengeance sooner or later. Vengeance can never be a means for building peace. If justice is violated, it needs to be restored not by punishment and vengeance which also violate justice.⁸⁸ But it is impossible to construct the future, to re-build the distorted relationship of groups in conflict only by recommending them to forget the suffering endured in the past without justice. Justice enhances reconciliation in a society ruined by war.⁸⁹ If justice is neglected in the reconciliation process “the brokenness continues and festers”.⁹⁰ Reconciliation through justice refers to reconciliation as “a process through which equilibrium and harmony are established among people in a situation where there are imbalances and injustices, so that individuals and groups can live fully as human beings”.⁹¹ A personality dehumanized by violence and injustice has to be restored to its human dignity. Justice is not only pursuing human rights and severely punishing those who committed crimes. It is not a one-sided approach, because it is about building relationship, making peace by addressing the unjust cause/s of conflict. In other words “it is by removing the barriers that divide people (cultural, social, and

material) that reconciliation can realistically take place between the former oppressed and the former oppressor".⁹²

The Church as a member of society has been engaging in transforming society with all the means available. Traditionally the Church has been rendering charitable services throughout history depending on the cultural and historical contexts. Its charitable services throughout history have taken different forms and approaches such as: almsgiving, fraternal solidarity, fasting and prayer which are also very necessary in different circumstances to tackle existing challenges. This is also true for the Local Churches of Ethiopia. During and after the long Civil War in the country, the Church was active in providing assistance to the victims of war and of the recurring droughts through its social institutions following the example of Jesus Christ who was concerned with both the material and spiritual needs of the people (Mk 6: 35-44) as the Bishops stated.⁹³ But such multiple activities have not been without limits. Since such activities have been "immediate remedies to the needs of the people, without probing into the structural and social causes of such a situation. These works of assistance and beneficence did not effect a transformation of society and the oppressed were not liberated".⁹⁴ In fact such assistance has been an occasion for manipulating the beneficiaries. The Bishops stated that the example of Jesus was not only a matter of food distribution and a mere spiritualistic concern without stating his prophetic role. Jesus was preaching the liberating Good News, against a background of structural injustices which made people blind and captive. In other words, justice is part and parcel of Jesus' message (Lk. 4:16-18). The duty to promote justice and peace is to make Jesus' mission present through the Church's evangelizing mission. It is the duty of every member of the Church in any sphere and according to each one's ministry in society which also includes the ministry of reconciliation based on justice in order to build harmony among people.⁹⁵

The need of justice for reconciliation in a society ruined by war is evident within certain limits, but the challenge is: what kind of justice brings reconciliation? Robert J. Schreiter, a professor of theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, outlined the following forms of justice which are applicable and on which the researcher also agrees:

- *Punitive justice*: is a kind of justice which entails proper punishment to wrongdoers in society. Its purpose is to educate the wrongdoers and others not to repeat similar misdeeds against their fellow human beings in the future, within the proper limits of justice. If it goes beyond the proper measure in its application, it turns into injustice or vengeance which leads to endless conflict/s.⁹⁶ This kind of justice focuses on restoring justice, without the use of too much force against the one who caused the damage.
- *Restorative Justice* which has a connotation of distributive and reparative justice. Distributive justice concerns the distribution of resources and other facilities equally among the interested groups and whereas reparative justice regards the restoration of the victim's lost human dignity and practical rehabilitation.
- *Structural justice*. This regards addressing the structural injustices which caused the conflict/s such as discrimination of any kind, economic inequality, denying equal opportunities and basic needs assisted by the system and so on.⁹⁷ Reconciliation through justice has also to deal with unjust structural oppression which continually and systematically dehumanize the powerless. It seeks to empower the victims.

2.5 Reconciliation through Eucharistic Celebration

The encounter with Christ through the evangelizing mission of the church and sacramental ministry⁹⁸ is to transform a person and incorporate him/ her in the family of God⁹⁹ which goes beyond ethnocentrism and geographical borders. Celebrating sacraments and rituals in the secular society, is a means of peace-building by expressing symbolically unspeakable human sufferings and a moment of purification. In celebrating the sacraments properly without discrimination of the oppressors and oppressed especially the dead ones where



they did get a proper funeral and proper burial places, the Church can render its faithfulness to the Lord and credibility to a community as well in becoming a source of healing and reconciliation.¹⁰⁰ The sacraments not only restore the lost human dignity of the victims but also relate humanity to divine relationship. S/he regains her/his human dignity and gains ones' identity as the image of God.¹⁰¹ In fact, "The Church carries out her priestly mission by celebrating the sacraments, wherein the fruits of redemption are available through the personal encounter with God's love. The sacraments are the principal means by which humanity is restored to divine life."¹⁰² In this process, the symbol of the cross reminds us of unforgettable cruelty of oppressors both in body and spirit while building the hope of the victim in the reconciling power of it (God with humanity).¹⁰³ The Eucharist has both horizontal and vertical dimension of relationships. There is no Eucharistic celebration as such which does not take into consideration communion with God fellow human being and physical environments.¹⁰⁴ These are the dimensions of true reconciliation which is directed to God, fellow human beings and natural environment.

The Eucharist not only discourages any violence against others but it also obliges one to consider the other as him/ herself. In fact, any crime against fellow human being is against oneself and Christ.¹⁰⁵ It is beyond repeating mechanical liturgical formulas and celebrating only the past event but it is the celebrating of our life for others including our enemies remembering the event of self-giving love of Christ for each person and every person. It is the celebration of the paschal mystery of Christ.¹⁰⁶ Eucharistic celebration/liturgical celebration is a symbolic activity that forms the individuals in certain virtues which help them to live together in the society. It plays formative roles in the lives of the people who are gathered. Liturgical celebration is not a matter of repeating the rubrics and the formulas from the first page of the books to the end. It is the celebration of the victory of life over death; celebrating the rites in proclaiming the rights of those who are participating and transforming them for the mission. From this celebration comes a transforming power for individual persons who are participating and through them into the whole society.¹⁰⁷ God the Father...(2Cor 5:18) has reconciled the world to himself by the blood poured on the cross and calling everyone to conversion; freed his people from sins and also through the sacrament of Baptism in which the old man is crucified with Christ (Rm 6:6-7,18) in which we live for God. The sacrifice of the mass, which is the celebration of the passion and resurrection of Christ and other sacraments are moments of reconciliation with God and with fellow human being. Even the whole liturgical year is a moment of reflection on the whole life of Jesus which can be a source of reconciliation if it goes beyond rubrics and formulas.¹⁰⁸

In the liturgical celebration, we need also to emphasize the aspect of prayers together with other Christians and non-Christian religious followers for peace. The aspect of prayer for peace is very important as Blessed John Paul II invited world religions followers to pray for peace. It was not a matter of discussing prayer together but praying together according to one's faith expressing human dependency on God and a shared commitment for peace by the believers.¹⁰⁹ Peace is a shared value for all believers and religions in their varied forms unite believers to the Ultimate Reality that is why the celebrations and prayers are directed to Him. And at the same time, praying together creates an atmosphere of fraternity among those who pray and empowers individuals to commit themselves for peace.¹¹⁰

The Church has the internal resources to undertake the Ministry of Reconciliation within the community as well as the society celebrating the sacraments which reveal the inner feelings of those who are affected by violence and conflicts, especially the victims. The celebration of the Eucharist in Public where everything: joy, suffering and thanksgiving come together in sacrifice to God through Jesus the Lord. In fact, "gathering around the Eucharistic Table, the broken, damaged, and abused bodies of individual victims and the broken body of the Church are taken up into the Body of Christ. Christ's Body has known torture; has known shame. In his complete solidarity with victims, he has gone to the limits of violent death. And so his Body becomes a holy medicine to heal those broken bodies of today"¹¹¹ (I Cor 10:16). The Readings of the word of God and the whole ceremony would be a means of reconciliation within the community which is affected by violence.

As a matter of fact, the torture, physical and psychological suffering experienced remains in the life of the victims. In one way or another, the victims of war are disabled (Jn 20:19-29) as when Jesus showed his wounds of torture. The Eucharistic celebration is a means of healing and reshaping and rebuilding relationships, their journey, and their identity by the power of the Word of God and this is pastoral accompaniment (Lk 24:13-35).¹¹² In fact, Pope Benedict XVI has written that "by its nature the Eucharist is the sacrament of Peace".¹¹³ In the Eucharistic celebration, we celebrate the Incarnation, the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Celebrating the resurrection is the celebration of hope for those who have lost their hope like the Apostles did when Jesus died on the Cross. They felt sorrowful even though they were also guilty of betraying and denying Him which led Jesus to execution. But, immediately after his Resurrection, Jesus greeted them with "peace". This is total forgiveness, and total love by the Victim, who suffered the ultimate violence, (i.e. death to the Apostles).¹¹⁴ The Eucharistic celebration is a means of healing for a community affected by war, despite religious differences. It does not matter to which religious confession one belongs. In this regard, the neutrality of the Church is very important in order to play her role. The focus is not on such and such a group but on the person, as Blessed John Paul II held: "Man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission",¹¹⁵ in her mission of reconciliation. This is not an overnight action but a lifelong action through the constant education of all citizens, especially of the religious and political leaders, through genuine dialogue based on love. It is love that unites all people in spite of cultural, political, religious, gender, or ethnic differences. Love goes beyond any geographical, ethnic, religious or political barrier.¹¹⁶ And Pope Benedict XVI calls love "the Spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper" to make communion grow among persons, races and peoples to which everyone aspires.¹¹⁷

Article forwarded by Fr. Fr Seyoum Fransua who is writing his doctorate thesis at the Urban University, Rome.

End Notes

¹ F. ARINZE, *Religions for Peace, A Call for Solidarity to the Religions of the World*, Daron, Longman & Todd, London 2002, 91.

² Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA, *Pastoral Letter, The Spirit of Vengeance Leaves place for Forgiveness, ECS*, Addis Ababa (November 1991, hereafter referred to as SVL), no. 2.

³ Cf. ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ETHIOPIA, *Ethiopian Catholic Church Education Policy*, ECS, Addis Ababa 2006, article 3, 2.

⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace*, no. 3 in AAS 99 (2007), 933-935.

⁵ Cf. C. TOOLIN., "Educating Men in Peace", in *Social Justice Review*, 101, 5&6 (Acme Printers & Lithographers, St. Luis 2010), 82.

⁶ Cf. SECAM, *Pastoral Letter of the XII Plenary Assembly of SECAM*, "Christ Our Peace (Eph 2:14):The Church- as-Family of God, Place and Sacrament of pardon, Reconciliation and Peace in Africa", Mondo Migliore, Rome, 30 September - 9 October, SECAM publication Accra, 2001 (hereafter referred to as SECAM 2001), no. 48.

⁷ Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples, *Populorum Progressio*, 26 March 1967 (hereafter referred to as PP) no. 76: AAS 59 (1967), 257-299.

⁸ <http://www.providence.edu/las/documents.thm#Textsonline>, *Medellín Conference Documents: Justice and Peace*, no.14 (accessed 20/01/2012).

⁹ Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2004 (hereafter referred to as CSDC), nos. 494-495.

¹⁰ VATICAN II COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965 (hereafter referred to as GS), no.78: AAS 58 (1966) 1025-1115.

¹¹ D.J. O'BRIEN, "Stories of Solidarity: The Challenges of Catholic Peace-building", in R.S. APPLEBY - R.J. SCHREITER - G.F. POWERS (eds), *Peace-Building: Catholic Theology, Ethics and Praxis*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll (NY) 2010, 406.

¹² Cf. J.P. LEDERACH "The Long Journey Back to Humanity: Catholic Peace-building with Armed Actors", in R.J. SCHREITER - R.S. APPLEBY, *et al* (eds.), *Peace-building: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, 27.

¹³ Cf. D.J. O'Brien, "Stories of Solidarity: The Challenges of Catholic Peace-building", in R.S. APPLEBY - R. J. SCHREITER - G.F. POWERS (eds), *Peace-Building: Catholic Theology, Ethics and Praxis*, 103, 406.

¹⁴ Cf. J. P. LEDERACH, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C. 1997, 20.

¹⁵ CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS, *Peace-building: Caritas Training Manual*, Caritas Internationalis, Vatican City 2002 & 2007, 84.

¹⁶ J.P. LEDERACH, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, 20.

¹⁷ E.C. ROMANUS, *Religions, Peace-building and Conflict Transformation in Africa*, Madonna University Press, Enugu 2009, 35.

¹⁸ Cf. E.C. ROMANUS, *Religions Peace-Building and Conflict Transformation in Africa*, 34-35. 56-57.

¹⁹ Cf. GS, nos. 77-78; PP, no. 76.

²⁰ V.C. ONUNKWO, *Peace in the Social Teaching of Pope John Paul II: Its Relevance to the Igbo of Southern Nigeria*, PETER LANG, Frankfurt 2006, 233

²¹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano/ Pauline Publication, Nairobi 1994 (hereafter referred to as CCC), no. 2317; *Pacem in Terris*, no.165.

²² Cf. T. AQUILINE, "The Role of Religion in Peace Building", in *AFER*, 51, 4 (AMCEA Gaba Publications, Eldoret, Dec. 2009), 385-387.

²³ Cf. P. KANYANDOGO P., "Rethinking African Ecclesiology Challenges from People's Rights and Participation", in MCGARRY C. - RYAN P. (eds.), *Inculturating the Church in Africa: Theological and Practical Perspectives with the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium*, Pauline Publication, Nairobi 2001, 203-204.

²⁴ L.E. LINGONEGE, "As the Family of God: A Guide to the Praxis and Ethics of Reconciliation and Peace-making in the Democratic Republic of Congo", Xulon Press (USA), 2004, xxi.

²⁵ Cf. R. SCOTT APPLEBY, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred. Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC(NY)2000,6-8.

²⁶ Cf. M. BARTH, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*, Doubleday & Company, INC. Garden City, New York, 1981, 461-462.

²⁷ Cf. A. HIZKIAS, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and Its Implications on Conflict, Governance, and Economic Growth in Africa*, Acis, Nairobi 1993, 8.

²⁸ Cf. P. KANYANDOGO, "Rethinking African Ecclesiology Challenges from People's Rights and Participation", in C. MCGARRY - P. RYAN, *Inculturating the Church in Africa: Theological and Practical Perspectives with the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 116; IL 2009, no. 42.

²⁹ Cf. B.A. JOHN, "Reconciliation and the Church in Africa: A Reflection on the Second Synod for Africa", in *AFER*, 51, 4 (December, 2009) and 52, 1 (March 2010), 406; E.C.C. ROMANUS, *Religions, Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation in Africa*, 46.

³⁰ Cf. J.H. KROEGER (ed.), *Interreligious Dialogue: Catholic Perspectives*, Mission Studies Institute Davao City, the Philippines 1990, 34-35.

³¹ SECAM 2001, no.5.

³² Cf. GUNDRY-VOLF J. - M. VOLF., *A Spacious Heart: Essays on Identity and Belonging (Christian Mission and Modern Culture)*, Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 1997, 117-118; A. HIZKIAS, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and Its Implications on Conflict, Governance, and Economic Growth in Africa*, 9-10.

³³ L.S. CAHILL, "A Theology of Peace-Building", in R.J. SCHREITER - R.S. APPLEBY - G.F. POWERS (eds.), *Peace-Building: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, 300.

³⁴ Cf. C.C.A. MAJAWA, *African Christian Reconciliation in the Light of Yao Traditions*, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi 2009, 211, 302.

³⁵ Cf. E.C. ROMANUS, *Conflict Transformation, Justice and Peace in Africa*, Madonna University Press, Nigeria, 2010, 117.

³⁶ Cf. SVL, nos. 7, 11.

³⁷ Cf. J.J. CARNEY, "Waters of Baptism, Blood of Tribalism?" in *AFER*, 50, 1&2 (AMECEA Gaba Publications, Eldoret, Kenya 2008), 20-21.

³⁸ PANIKKAR R., *Cultural Disarmament: the Way to Peace*, John Knox Press, Westminster 1995, 97-98; A. HIZKIAS, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and Its Implications on Conflict, Governance, and Economic Growth in Africa*, 9.

³⁹ Cf. M. A. BARK (ed.), *Conflict, Violence, and Peace*, World Council of Churches, Geneva 1970, 78.

⁴⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter, *Centesimus Annus*, on the Hundredth Anniversary of "*Rerum Novarum*" 1 May 1991 (hereafter referred to as CA), no. 18: AAS 83 (1991), 793-867.

⁴¹ Cf. C.C.A. MAJAWA, *African Christian Reconciliation in the Light of Yao Traditions*, 213-214; R. J. SCHREITER, *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll (NY) 1992, 51-52.

⁴² L.S. CAHILL, "A Theology of Peace-Building," in R.S. APPLEBY - R.J. SCHREITER - G.F. POWERS (eds), *Peace-Building: Catholic Theology, Ethics and Praxis*, 315.

⁴³ A. HIZKIAS, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and Its Implications on Conflict, Governance, and Economic Growth in Africa*, 10.

⁴⁴ Cf. J.O. McTERNAN, *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll (NY), 2003, 60-61. Here we are specifically interested to learn how it would be possible to apply the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the reconciliation of a society ruined by war. Penance was serving as a means of waging war against enemies for the sake of God in order to inherit paradise during the Crusades. Muslims, Byzantine rite Christians and Jews were suffering indiscriminately.

⁴⁵ Cf. R. J. SCHREITER, "The Catholic Social Imaginary and Peacebuilding: Ritual, Sacrament, and Spirituality," in R. J. SCHREITER - R. S. APPLEBY - G. F. POWERS (eds.), *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics and Praxis*, 228-229; A. HIZKIAS, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and its Implications on Conflict, Governance, and Economic Growth in Africa*, 9-10.

⁴⁶ A. HIZKIAS, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and its Implications on Conflict, Governance, and Economic Growth in Africa*, 10-11.

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⁵⁶ L. GRAYBILL - K. LANERGAN, "Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in Africa: Issues and Cases" in *African Studies Quarterly*, 8, 1 (Fall 2004), 4; Cf. <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i1a1.htm> [accessed 06/01/2012].

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Sister Lucy Valookararen, FMM

PREMIERE RELIGIEUSE CATHOLIQUE AU CANADA DANS L'UNIFORME MILITAIRE



Je suis arrivée à la Base des Forces Canadienne/Unité de support Wainwright un jour froid de l'hiver avec plusieurs appréhensions dans mon cœur. Comme religieuse et nouvel aumônier militaire, j'avais des réserves sur la manière de réaliser mon ministère, tout en m'ajustant à un environnement nouveau et peu familier. Mais la chaude bienvenue de l'équipe des aumôniers, des familles des militaires et des amis, a grandement adouci mes craintes. Mais par-dessus tout, j'avais remis ma vie aux mains de la Providence. Et Dieu a murmuré dans la profondeur de mon silence : « *N'aie pas peur ! Je suis avec toi.* »

Je suis née au Kerala en Inde australe dans une famille de forte tradition catholique Syro-Malabar remontant à St. Thomas, un des douze Apôtres de

Jésus, qui a prêché l'Evangile sur la côte Malabar des Indes. J'ai toujours eu le désir de consacrer ma vie à Dieu et de la passer à son service. A l'âge de dix-sept ans je suis entrée, comme candidate, dans la congrégation religieuse internationale des Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie (FMM) qui vivent ensemble en communautés internationales et essaient de vivre l'Evangile comme Marie, Mère de Jésus, selon la spiritualité de Saint François d'Assise. Ma formation terminée je suis devenue membre à part entière en 1977. J'ai d'abord enseigné, puis je suis devenue directrice d'une école dans le Nord de l'Inde. En 1988, j'ai été envoyée dans la province canadienne des FMM.

Pendant un temps je priais et je cherchais un ministère significatif et pertinent. C'est à ce moment, alors que j'allais à l'Université St-Paul à Ottawa pour des études en Counseling Pastoral, que j'ai songé à la possibilité de travailler comme Aumônier Militaire.

Mon expérience comme aumônier civil des Cadets pendant cinq ans à Trenton a été mon premier contact avec l'Armée. J'ai beaucoup aimé mon ministère travaillant avec les militaires et les autres membres de religions si diversifiées comme aussi d'âges différents. J'ai expérimenté un sens plus profond de ma vocation et j'ai considéré une implication plus poussée dans le ministère avec l'armée. J'ai consulté mes aumôniers supérieurs et mes Supérieures Religieuses pour explorer les possibilités, puisque je serais la première religieuse à joindre l'Armée. Je me suis enrôlée dans le 34ème Régiment des Signaux à Montréal en 2010 et j'ai travaillé comme Aumônier de l'Unité. J'ai passé par l'entraînement de base des Forces Régulières et quand ce fut terminé, j'ai reçu un appel pour Wainwright. Je travaille dans la Force Régulière, un contrat de Classe B, en équipe avec trois autres aumôniers. Mes devoirs sont de conduire des services religieux et d'y participer, d'offrir du counseling aux militaires et aux membres de leurs familles, de répondre aux besoins après les heures de travail, de participer aux exercices et à l'entraînement physique de l'Unité; et simplement d'être là pour aider ceux qui en ont besoin.

Les Membres me posent souvent des questions sur notre manière de vivre dans le couvent et sur le travail que font les religieuses dans les endroits différents. Pour quelques-uns je suis la première religieuse qu'ils ont rencontrée. J'ai alors l'occasion de leur partager mon histoire. Le service militaire est souvent associé avec le conflit et la violence, opposé diamétralement à la paix et à l'harmonie. Ceci peut conduire à un conflit de valeurs pour une religieuse. Toutefois, je réponds à la souffrance et à la douleur des militaires au service de leur pays. Comme aumônier, j'offre ma compréhension empathique, le support de ma compassion et la direction religieuse. Une des joies de servir dans l'armée a été de rencontrer des membres de différentes orientations religieuses et même non-religieuses et d'offrir une aide spirituelle dans ce contexte. Je dois admettre, qu'étant loin des exercices spirituels et de la vie quotidienne du couvent, cela été un vrai défi. J'en viens à bout en essayant de nourrir ma vie spirituelle par la prière personnelle et la méditation quotidienne, garder un contact avec ma communauté de Montréal aussi souvent que je le peux. Je considère que mon ministère est à la fois un privilège et une bénédiction. Je suis très reconnaissante au Seigneur et à ma congrégation de m'avoir donné cette occasion de servir comme membre de la famille militaire. L'expérience a amélioré la qualité de ma propre vie.

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Sœur Patricia de Saint-Cyr. F.M.M.

NEXT SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR

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