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Interculturality: Living and Mission

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Diana de Vallescar Palanca

Context and Concerns of Cultural Interactions

Mons. Melchor Sanchez de Toca

Theological Reflection on Interculturality

John Kirby

Intercultural Competence Scale

Prof. Martin Nkafu Nkemkia

East-West, South-North Interactions

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EDITORIAL

In the first place we take pleasure in introducing Father Peter Baekelmans, CICM, SEDOS' new Executive Director.

This issue of the Bulletin contains the following articles:

Christina KHENG is from Singapore. She holds a Theological Studies Degree from the Australian Catholic University (ACU), and a Master's in Public Administration from Harvard University, USA. Her research focuses on theological approaches to management and organization in the Church. In her essay on **"Paradigm Shifts in Ministry: Insights from the Resurgence of Trinitarian Theology"**, she "looks at how Trinitarian faith enlightens Ministry by considering the current reflections emerging from the field of Trinitarian Theology and Ministry". Ministry has been defined as "service on behalf of the common good" ... because, "in reflecting the mutuality of the Trinity, it is necessarily two-way".

Ernest JUSTIN, SJ, is from Indonesia. He studied at Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines. He had previously taught at the Catechetical School, Sanata Dharma University. Writing on **"Dialogue between Creation and Evolution"**, he asks whether these two concepts are compatible? However, since evolution "has the character of a journey rather than of a random walk", it is consistent with the Teleological view.

Nicole MAYINGA and **Baudouin MUBESALA**, in their French article entitled: **"Les enjeux de la réconciliation en milieu Mbala"**, consider the Rite of Reconciliation practiced by the *Mbala* Tribe in Africa. They realize the need to study the wisdom and practices of other cultures in an effort to promote peace. The Rite of Reconciliation closes with a glass of palm wine.

Paul KALLUVEETT, CM, is a Biblical Professor, with a doctorate in Sacred Scripture. In **"Formation in the Third Millennium"**, he seeks to re-read the biblical text in an effort to find some insights and values to strengthen the young people in formation and the Consecrated Life. Fr Paul thinks that the approach to FORMATION should be re-formulated in the context of India.

Sister **Josefa CORDOVILLA PÉREZ**, Sisters of Divine Love, comes from Salamanca. She taught in Mozambique from 1975 – 1993, where she was in charge of training leaders to head the Christian Communities and of coordinating Social Christian formation. In her article entitled: **"La misión y la vida consagrada"** she explains that Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of Consecrated Life to mark the 50th anniversary of *Lumen Gentium* with the intention of renewing religious life and mission. Missionaries must go out to meet others while respecting their respective forms of culture. Sister Josefa reviews Pope Francis' *Letter* and recalls that Christ's call to the Apostles was to spread His Message and to respond to the needs of the Church (n.1).

per pro Sr Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM

*The front cover image comes from <http://dailystorm.it/2014/11/08/>

Christina Kheng
Paradigm Shifts in Ministry:
Insights From the Resurgence of Trinitarian Theology

Introduction

It has become a common observation that since the Second Vatican Council, a wide array of ministries has emerged in the Church. A more recent development, however, is that an increasing trend of corporate business principles are influencing the practice of ministry.¹ Nevertheless, without denying its practical wisdom, there is potential conflict between the business world's profit-driven logic and the Church's mission. This tension, coupled with significant challenges in the field of ministry today, some of which are reflected in Pope Francis' list of the "temptations faced by pastoral workers",² warrants a return to the basics about ministry. To this end, the Trinity, as the core of Christian faith, is a vital starting point.

There is much consensus on the integral connection between the Trinity and the Church's mission and ministry. Thomas O'Meara declares that "ministry and Trinity come together. They mirror each other". Likewise, Stephen Seamands from the Protestant tradition, asserts that "no doctrine is, in fact, more relevant to our identity and calling as ministers than the Trinity".³ This essay looks at how Trinitarian faith enlightens ministry by considering the current reflections emerging from the field of Trinitarian Theology and Ministry. It will be seen that a renewed grounding in the Trinity leads to a more robust and balanced view of ministry and that ministry can be defined as participation in the dynamic self-giving interaction of the Triune God. This in turn calls for several important paradigm shifts in the goal of ministry and its way of procedure.

Towards an Appropriate Application of Trinitarian Theology

Although the resurgence of Trinitarian Theology in recent decades offers many implications for Christian practice and ministry, inevitably this connection presents limitations. The first is the attempt to treat the Trinity as programmatic which often involves circular arguments. For example human analogies are employed to describe God which are then used as models for human living.⁴ In such instances, one needs to bear in mind the *via negativa* of the analogical process and be wary of overly-prescriptive conclusions. A second limitation is the tendency to emphasize one aspect of the Trinity over the others, which leads to a distorted and unbalanced view of the Trinity and thus of ministry. For example, Hunt observed that the conflicting conclusions drawn from the Trinity, about the primacy of the universal Church and local Church, depended on whether the One Godhead or the Three Persons in the Trinity was emphasized.⁵ A related third precaution is against "dissecting" the Trinity to apply one aspect of Trinitarian doctrine to one part of the Church or ministry and another aspect to other parts. As will be seen later in this essay, some examples include comparing the mission of the Son to the hierarchy and the mission of the Spirit to the laity, and associating the One Godhead with the universal Church and the Three Persons in the Trinity with the local Churches. This approach is also flawed because the Trinity must be considered as a whole, just as the Church or ministry should be considered in its entirety.

In order to avoid these tendencies, this essay on the Trinity and Ministry will seek to approach the Trinitarian doctrine more holistically and to focus on its implications for ministry in general. The Trinitarian doctrine is not a detailed practical manual for Church ministry but it provides the general principles on which there is actually much consensus. As Henri de Lubac remarked, one cannot be impatient for practical implications from the Trinity but one must simply let oneself "be grasped and modeled by it".⁶

Ministry from the Perspective of Trinitarian Faith

The definition of ministry varies widely according to the way its scope is delineated. In contrast with the pre-Vatican II concept of ministry as the sole realm of the ordained, O'Meara has defined Christian ministry as "the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve and realize the Kingdom of God".⁷ Despite the obvious Trinitarian structure of this definition, there are others who advocate an even more universal view of ministry on similar Trinitarian grounds. Peter Drilling sees ministry as the "action of service on behalf of the common good, whether of the Church or the wider society" and includes all Christian service, from the sacramental ministry of the priest to the self-giving of married couples.⁸ Kenan B. Osborne, echoing this has a similarly broad view of the ministry based on Vatican II's emphasis on the threefold responsibility of all the baptized as prophet, priest, and king. Osborne defines these roles as the *tria munera* (triple task) of the ministry of all Christians.⁹ Do these definitions put the ministry in the proper perspective? This essay proposes that an even more comprehensive view is possible, one that captures the dynamism, universality, and mystery of the Trinity.



The Church believes that God the Father, the Source of life and love, begets the Word who is sent into the world for its salvation, incarnate as Jesus in history, and from this begetting also proceeds the Spirit, who animates the mission of Jesus and of those who have been gathered to continue this mission and be a sign of God's Kingdom on earth.¹⁰ On one level, this belief highlights the firm Trinitarian foundations of the Church: her formation, sustenance, mission, unity, and sacramental value.¹¹ On another level, this belief indicates something of the inner life of God, analogous to an eternal processional motion; a self-giving exchange

among persons distinct yet having the same essence in the One Godhead, ever-reaching out to enfold the universe into this dynamic loving communion.¹²

Far from being passive spectators, Christian disciples are immediately caught up in this "whirlwind" of Trinitarian interaction: an unceasing processional movement in self-giving exchange, constantly sending forth and drawing all into communion in God. Paul Fiddes speaks of "a God who is always in the movement of sending" and that Christians do not merely imitate the Trinity but rather, *participate* in this divine interaction because "it is into these interweaving currents of mission that the disciples are drawn".¹³ This is precisely what ministry is. Yet, the Triune God remains the primary mover in the economy of salvation. Christians — and indeed the whole Church — serve this *Missio Dei* as but humble participants through their *diakonia*.¹⁴ Hence, from this Trinitarian perspective, ministry can be defined as participation in the dynamic self-giving interaction of the Trinity drawing all creation towards loving union in the divine life.

What difference does such a view of ministry make? The following chapter discusses the various paradigm shifts implied.

From Institutional to Universal: The Place of Ministry

Since the Trinity reaches out and draws all Creation into divine communion, no realm of life is untouched by the *Missio Dei*. Hence, ministry as participation in this Trinitarian mission has arguably a wider scope than that delineated by O'Meara; since it embraces actions beyond the public and official ministries of the Church. This view is echoed by Michael Downey, who emphasizes the need to recover a baptismal spirituality that sees ministry as "explicitly Trinitarian in its origins and exercise" and points out that the common right and responsibility to ministry of all the Baptized precedes particular forms of expressing this calling.¹⁵ One practical implication of this view of ministry is that priority must be given to the training and formation of all the Baptized to participate in the mission of the Triune God and influence

people of all walks of life as "salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13). This is especially urgent in an age of increasing secularization and the decreasing global influence of the institutional Church.

In fact, Downey also critiques an older understanding of divine mission which associated the institutional Church with the band of apostles established by Christ, thus implying that the hierarchy's mission comes directly from Christ. At the same time, the mission to the world was seen as established by the Spirit at Pentecost and associated with the laity working in the world. This was exacerbated by a tendency to subordinate the Spirit to the Son and thus reinforce the clergy-laity, institution-charism, and Church-world dichotomy. Downey points out that such thinking ignores the cooperation and *perichorèsis* of all Three Persons in the Trinity at work in every aspect of the divine mission.¹⁶

A Trinitarian view of ministry also counters the tendency to associate ministry with a narrow or solely *ad intra* notion of tasks which reflect "mere administration" or "ecclesial introversion".¹⁷ Instead, ministry as participation in the Trinitarian mission is also continually turned outward to all Creation, including its social and ecological realms. In ministry, the Church continues the work of Christ to proclaim the Kingdom of God animated by the Spirit — the same Christ who reaches beyond institutions and taboos to touch those on the margins and the same Spirit who moved the early Church beyond the Jewish community into the Gentile world. Bevans and Schroeder stress the universality of the *Missio Dei* even further by rightly pointing out that the Church's work alone does not constitute all of *Missio Dei*, since the Triune God also works outside the Church.¹⁸

From Results to Reconciliation: The Goal of Ministry

A second implication of the Trinitarian perspective has to do with the goal of ministry. In this age of secularization, the worldly standards of performance and success easily creep into Church ministry. To counter this, a perspective of ministry as participation in the Trinitarian interaction helps to provide a reminder of the *direction* of this interaction, which is to draw all Creation into the Trinity's loving communion. For Catherine LaCugna, this means "to bring peace and concord, to justify hope in the final return of all things to God".¹⁹

This has important implications for evaluation and decision-making in ministry. One might see whether tangible success in ministry has been pursued at all costs or whether decisions and actions in ministry have led to greater reconciliation, peace, and deepening of life in God. Losing sight of this goal leads to the slippery slope of self-promotion and organizational self-preservation for its own sake, as well as exploitation and abuse. In fact, LaCugna's reminder about the ultimate eschatological nature of Christian mission provides a helpful view that ministry does not necessarily solve every problem in this world, much less result in measurable success. The more important aspect is that it serves to sustain hope in God even in the midst of insurmountable difficulties and apparent failure.²⁰

Walter Kasper rightly highlights that the answer to the "atheism of the masses" is to proclaim the Triune God who brings life, freedom, reconciliation, and peace.²¹ Nevertheless this life is paid with the price of death. For Hans Urs von Balthasar, the Paschal Mystery is central to understanding the Trinity. Humankind's salvation and union with the Triune God comes about only through the "primordial separation of God from God".²² Here, in this dramatic expression, Balthasar speaks of the kenosis of Christ, in which God experiences God-forsakenness in solidarity with people in their darkest hour of sin and alienation from God. Ministry as participation in the Trinitarian life is thus a continuation of God's self-giving. This highlights two important dimensions of the goal of ministry. First, it reveals that reconciliation is not with a distant God but with an actively compassionate God — a reconciliation made possible by both the descent of the Son as well as by the eternal bond with the Father which the Spirit maintains. Secondly, it also emphasizes that the goal of reconciliation is reached not without suffering but through the inevitable path of "suffering with" others as one enters into the mystery of the Triune God.

Finally, viewing the aim of ministry as drawing all Creation into the Trinitarian communion implies a constant reaching out, without remaining in the *status quo*. It means to allow oneself to be continually moved by the dynamic Triune God, ever-processing, ever-sending and ever-seeking to draw all Creation in love. Indeed the work of reconciliation is never completed till the end of time. This requires a certain openness to new frontiers and to

leaving one's "comfort zone" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 20) — in the pattern of the Trinity — so as to lead others to the loving embrace of God.

From Individual to Communal: The Process of Ministry

Since the goal of the Trinitarian economy is the communion of all Creation in God, from the moment one participates in this economy, the dynamic of the Trinity immediately draws one into communion with others. Ministry is thus necessarily communal; the means and ends converge. In fact, the *process* of ministry itself, especially our actions and interactions in ministry, is where the Kingdom of God is manifest (or not!).

This has several implications. Firstly, that ministry is primarily carried out in a communal way underscores the centrality of cooperation. This includes cooperation among people, organizations, local Churches, between the universal Church and local Church and indeed with those outside the Church. All are interconnected in a profound way, as each one only has "a piece of the puzzle" so to speak. In line with this, Bevans and Schroeder have highlighted that "Trinitarian faith calls us to recognize the interconnectedness of everything in the universe".²³ Similarly, Stephen Pickard points to the work of Edward Hahnenberg and his emphasis on how a Trinitarian perspective "is fundamentally about interconnectivity, about thinking together rather than apart, about living and acting mindful of the other, indeed bent towards the other".²⁴ For Downey, collaborative ministry is not just to counter the dwindling number of clergy and religious but is essential "if the Church is to be an icon of the Trinity".²⁵ Hence, the attitude of always wanting to "do it alone" or work in isolation apart from the wider community is not consistent with ministry as participation in the Trinity. David Cunningham speaks of the "polyphony" of the Triune God and points out that ministry necessarily includes a great diversity of charisma respecting each one's particularity and in the spirit of plurality.²⁶ Employing Karl Rahner's theology of symbol. Drilling emphasizes the infinite ways of expressing the inexhaustible richness of God in ministry. Moreover, all charisms are equal in dignity and interdependent, just as the Three Persons in the One Godhead are co-equal yet distinct persons in eternal *perichorèsis*.²⁷

This communal character of ministry also highlights the importance of the quality of relationships in ministry. Unfortunately much debate about the Church as a Sacrament of Trinitarian Communion has occurred around structures and organization.²⁸ As mentioned earlier, since the Church's understanding of the Trinity is essentially analogical, it cannot be directly translated into precise structures and ways of organizing ministry and the Church.²⁹ What is central about the Doctrine of the Trinity — and a point on which there is actually much consensus — is that the Three Persons in the One Godhead work not through domination and competition but through reciprocity, love, and unity-in-diversity. This general thesis is enough to provide a broad principle for Christian ministry. It highlights that what makes a difference is not so much the structures themselves but the attitude and behaviour of people within those structures. Downey emphasizes that from a Trinitarian perspective, the quality of interaction among those in ministry is what brings divine life into the world.³⁰

From Substance to Relation: The Distinction of Ministry

A common characteristic of modern Trinitarian Theology is its recovery of the Cappadocian Tradition, which emphasized **the relational character of the Trinity**. God the Father, Son, and Spirit are defined according to their relationship and do not exist outside of that relationship. In fact each Person in the Trinity is being-in-relationship, in dynamic mutual exchange, *perichorèsis*, and self-giving and receiving. John Zizioulas identifies such communion with the very being of God while others like Boff and LaCugna similarly emphasize this mutual interrelation among co-equals as the core of the Trinity.³¹ Fiddes even asserts that Father, Son, and Spirit are not "persons-in-relationship" but "persons-as-relationship" in God.³² Similarly for Cunningham, the Triune God is "relation without remainder".³³

This emphasis on a relational ontology of the Trinity has been applied to ministry. Theologians point out that when a person enters a ministry — and particularly the ordained ministry — it is not so much that that person becomes a different or superior being, so to speak. Rather, the main change is that the person's relationship with the community undergoes a shift or re-ordering. Hence, **the distinction between the minister and the community is essentially relational** and lies not in any innate superiority of either party.

Among those who strongly emphasize the relational character of ministry, particularly for the ordained, Zizoulas points out that the early Church regarded ordination always in relation to a particular community and forbade an "absolute" ordination. This was because ordination was not conferral of power in itself but a re-ordering of the ecclesial relationship between the ordained and the community.³⁴

Attractive as these arguments may sound, it should be pointed out that the methodological rigour of extrapolating the Trinity's relational ontology to ministry leaves much room for improvement. Even one of its prominent proponents, Edward P. Hahnenberg, admits that the personhood of human beings is not the same as that of God and that the Trinity "is not an ideal type or a template that can be simply applied to interpersonal relationships, human society or even the Church".³⁵ Nevertheless, he stresses that the Church as an image of God does reveal something about the mystery of God. A relational view of ministry is more consonant with an understanding of the Triune God as Persons defined by their relationship to one another.³⁶

In terms of pastoral practice such a relational view of ministry strengthens the connection between ministry, charism, and community. It shows that the particular ministry of a person is to be found in the person's response to the community's real needs and the person's charism. Moreover, a relational view supports the reality of a person's multiple roles in the Christian community. It also paves the way for greater flexibility in ministry so that relationships can be realigned where appropriate to realize the Church's mission in different contexts better.³⁷

From Power to Participation: The Leadership of Ministry

Given the communal and relational character of ministry, leadership from a Trinitarian perspective is participative, collaborative, and facilitative. Modern theologians have noted a development in Trinitarian thought especially in the West which emphasizes the oneness of the Godhead to justify a hierarchical, dominating form of leadership.³⁸ Recovering the Tradition of the Cappadocians, LaCugna proposes a "communionarchy" model in light of the Triune monarchism of God.³⁹ No one person dominates the others in the Trinity, whose work is accomplished through mutual interaction among co-equals. Ministry thus involves a more communal exercise of power and authority and more participative decision-making and direction-setting. Bevans and Schroeder insist, in the light of the Trinity, that all authority must be grounded in dialogue, participation, subsidiarity, and collegiality.⁴⁰ For Cunningham, the exercise of authority and decision-making in the Church should resemble the process of "persuasion": an "empathetic mutual process of listening, speaking and acting".⁴¹

Since the Trinity vivifies the whole Church and distributes grace and power among all its members, the leader's role should include helping members to discover, develop, and exercise their charisms.⁴² Fiddes highlights that pastoral overseers must encourage participation since all are called to participate in the relational movements of the Triune God, which opens up ever-new horizons towards the Kingdom of God.⁴³ Going further, Edward J. Kilmartin points to the diversity of charisms with which the Spirit gifts the Church and asserts that this does not preclude the charism of leadership from being given to the laity. He highlights the laity's legitimate role in leadership, decision-making, and "power of jurisdiction" in the Church in the light of the Trinitarian economy.⁴⁴

These views about leadership in ministry from a Trinitarian Theology are helpful in dispelling any claim to justify a single-person, dictatorial top-down style of exercising the ministry. However, one must be cautious not to over-emphasize the co-equal mutuality of the Trinity at the expense of the distinctiveness of each Person in the Trinity — a distinctiveness which is defined in terms of relationship. It is precisely because of this distinct relationship that leaders shoulder particular responsibilities to meet the expectations of the community, which are different from those of other members. A wrong understanding of co-equal mutuality runs the risk of a *laissez faire* situation where there is simply no leadership at all.

From Desolation to Doxology: The Spirituality of Ministry

Since ministry is participation in the dynamic outreach, and self-giving interaction of the Triune God, it needs to be rooted in prayerful discernment of the presence and action of the

Trinity in the world.⁴⁵ By being steeped in the Word, especially through the Scriptures, and energized by the Spirit, especially through the sacraments, a person is helped to cooperate more effectively with the divine missions of Word and Spirit.⁴⁶ Those who are busy in their ministry often complain of lack of time for prayer and reflection. However, a prolonged neglect of personal prayer can eventually lead to desolation in life. Bevans and Schroeder point to the eschatological nature of the Church's mission which exists "between the times" and in the tension of achievement/failure, and the yet-to-be-achieved.⁴⁷ Prayer and worship help one to remember this so that discouragement and burn-out can be transformed into hope, perseverance, and praise. To this end, the Eucharist and ministry are two sides of the same coin. Those who worship and take part in the life of the Trinity in the Eucharist are then sent in ministry as channels of the Trinity's self-giving activity in the world.⁴⁸

From Service to Interaction: The Ontology of Ministry

Peter Drilling has defined ministry as "service on behalf of the common good".⁴⁹ While "service" captures the meaning of *diakonia*, a Trinitarian perspective warrants a more dialogical view of ministry. Bevans and Schroeder point out that Ministry, in reflecting the mutuality of the Trinity, is necessarily two-way: it is "giving and receiving, proclaiming and learning, speaking out prophetically and opening oneself to criticism".⁵⁰ Hence, a view of ministry as participation in the dynamic self-giving interaction of the Triune God calls for a recasting of the essential role of ministry, not so much as service, but as *interaction* — dialogical interaction principled by love. Ministry is a coming together of co-equal unique persons, to be with one another and interact in Trinitarian love. Through this interaction, the Triune God produces the fruit of life, love, and communion. Interestingly, this mutual and interactive Trinitarian view of ministry would seem to be more vividly reflected by the institution of marriage than by the priesthood, which has been the traditional icon of ministry.

This recasting of the role of ministry as **dialogical interaction** helps to counter any tendency to "perform", or the need to "have all the answers". It enables one to accept one's own limitations and engage honestly in mutual interaction with others, such that the ministry itself becomes mutual. It also means that ministry does not start with pastoral planning but with interaction. In fact it is only from such interaction that better plans are made. At the same time, Neil Pembroke highlights that in the *perichorèsis* of the Persons in the Trinity, personal distinction is not lost. This "closeness-with-space" provides a model for mutual interaction in ministry as hospitality without violating boundaries.⁵¹

On a broader level, to view ministry as interaction encourages the Church to engage the world more actively. Moreover, it highlights that the manner of this interaction is respectful dialogue with culture, thus reflecting the Trinitarian *perichorèsis*, even as the Church seeks to permeate the earth as salt and light. Bevans and Schroeder recall the potential of the whole universe to reveal the presence of God and hence the need for the Church not merely to preach but to proceed through mutual dialogue and inculturation.⁵² To this end, James McEvoy provides a view of Christian life as a Trinitarian dialogue which involves discerning the presence of the Spirit in concrete reality, interpreting this presence through the Word, responding accordingly and thus moving together with all Creation towards the Father.⁵³

The Trinitarian theologies of von Balthasar and Jürgen Moltmann point out that the Paschal Mystery highlights an important dimension of ministry as interaction — interaction not without pain and suffering. Just as "divine being is ruptured on the cross"⁵⁴ and death was the consequence of the Son's interaction with humanity, so too, dying to self is the central passage in the interaction of ministry. Seamands points out that ministry requires total self-surrender along with the self-surrender of the Persons in the Trinity. Yet in the Triune God, death is concurrent with life, just as separation is concurrent with unity. This gives a person much hope and encouragement in wholehearted participation in the interaction and kenosis of the Trinitarian ministry for "as bearers of the divine image, we too find our life by losing it."⁵⁵

Revisiting the Psychological Analogy

These paradigm shifts in ministry which have been prompted by a renewed Trinitarian perspective can be greatly helped by revisiting a classic thesis in Trinitarian Theology — psychological analogy. Neil Ormerod, countering its dismissal by modern theologians as outmoded and having no pragmatic value, points out that the analogy itself teaches something

about the human being: the grace-enabled ability to perceive, understand, and know something of God and of reality and to make value judgments with some objectivity.⁵⁶ This is essential in ministry. Hunt similarly points out the enduring value of psychological analogy, stressing that human consciousness made in God's image and receiving grace to participate in the divine nature does reflect the Trinitarian consciousness to some extent.⁵⁷

In this light, ministry can be seen as the sacrament of the divine knowing and loving. If the ontology of ministry requires a shift from service to interaction, then psychological analogy highlights that this interaction is quite simply all about knowing and loving. Ministry engages the whole person: intellect, affectivity, and will. Both *Veritas* (truth) and *caritas* (charity, love) are inseparable signposts for ministry. Moreover, knowing and loving interpenetrate each other such that knowing leads to loving and loving also opens a person up to know more deeply. This paves the way for right action in ministry.

Similarly, the Church's dialogical mission-through-inculturation is essentially knowing and loving God and all Creation, even as it strives to be known and loved. In prayer, one is immersed in the Trinitarian dynamic of grace which conforms one's knowing and loving to the divine knowing and loving.⁵⁸ Leadership and the communal character of ministry is all about knowing and loving those with whom one works, guided by the truth of love and animated by the gift of love. Finally the goal and place of ministry is the enfolding of all Creation into this divine knowing and loving, "so that God may be all in all" (I Cor 15:28).

Conclusion

It has been shown that a Trinitarian orientation of ministry leads to the principles of universality, reconciliation, cooperation, relationality, participatory leadership, Trinitarian worship, and dialogical interaction. Thus, a fruitful perspective unfolds from redefining ministry as participation in the dynamic self-giving interaction of the Triune God, drawing all Creation towards loving union in the divine life. This view places God at the center of ministry rather than the participants themselves. Ultimately, this may be the key to living the Mystery of the Trinity more fully and to tackling the many challenges of ministry today.

NOTES

1. For example, see Charles E. Zech, ed., *Best Practices in Catholic Church Ministry Performance Management* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).
2. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 76-109 (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2013).
3. Thomas F. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 180; Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2005), 11.
4. The obvious limitations of such circular arguments have been pointed out in Anne Hunt, "The Trinity and the Church: Explorations in Ecclesiology from a Trinitarian Perspective", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2005): 233, and Karen Kilby, "Perichorèsis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity", *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 957 (2000): 432-445.
5. See Hunt, 215-216.
6. Cited in Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 379.
7. O'Meara, 142.
8. Peter Drilling, *Trinity and Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 23-25.
9. See Kenan B. Osborne, *Orders and Ministry: Leadership in the World Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 84-86.
10. See *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 2-4, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Mumbai, India: St Pauls, 2004), 320-322.
11. Hunt highlights the strong Trinitarian links which Vatican II has recovered in the Church's origins, unity, source of mission, and eschatological end. See Anne Hunt, "The Trinitarian Depths of Vatican II", *Theological Studies* 74, no. 1 (2013): 3-19.
12. Theologians such as Karl Rahner have pointed out the correspondence between human experience of the external processions or missions of the Trinity and what can be inferred about the internal processions of the Trinity. For Rahner, the economic Trinity reflects the inner life of God since God communicates and reveals God's true self. See Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 38-39. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder venture that this divine self is akin to an "ec-static communion", always inviting Creation to share in the Triune life of communion-in-mission. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 294.
13. Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Theology of the Trinity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 51.
14. Karl Barth has been among those who stress that it is primarily not the Church's mission but God's mission in which the Church participates. See Bevans and Schroeder, 289-290. Moreover, scholars point out that the word

- in Scripture commonly associated with ministry, *diakonia*, means not just "service" in the modern understanding of the word but connotes the lowly status of a slave, a "*minus*". Drilling, 24.
15. See Michael Downey, "Participating in the Mission of Word and Spirit", *Church* (Winter 2005): 7, 11.
 16. See Michael Downey, *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 93-94. The word *perichorêsis*, of Greek origin, indicates an intimate interpenetration, a mutual abiding in one another — an aspect of the Trinity emphasized by the Cappadocian Fathers, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 25 and 17.
 17. Bevens and Schroeder, 295.
 18. LaCugna, 402.
 19. See *ibid*
 20. Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 7-8, 315-316.
 21. Cited in Anne Hunt, *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 52.
 22. Bevens and Schroeder, 301.
 23. Cited in Stephen Pickard, "A Christian Future for the Church's Ministry: Some Critical Moves", *Ecclesiology* 8, no. 1 (2012): 45.
 24. Downey, "Participating in the Mission of Word and Spirit", 11.
 25. See David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Maiden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 127-128. Cunningham further explains that oneness does not imply homogeneity. In fact tendencies towards homogeneity lead to violence against those who are different, seeking to destroy them. In contrast, an attitude that embraces unity-in-diversity encourages people to be peacemakers, *ibid.*, 234-235.
 26. See Drilling, 34-39. Drilling draws parallels between the *perichorêsis* or interpenetration of the Trinity and the constant mutual exchange, interdependence, and self-giving which is the reality of ministry. Richard R. Gaillardetz even asserts that since the Trinitarian mission involves a plurality of charisms, the term "lay ministry" should be done away with and replaced with other more appropriate terms since the word "lay" connotes non-specialization and non-qualification. Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry Within an Ordered Communion", in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 44-45.
 28. For example, Hunt notes the exchanges between Walter Kasper and the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church from a Trinitarian perspective. While Ratzinger emphasized the oneness of the divine essence and hence the primacy of the universal Church, Kasper stresses the mutual relations among the Three Persons in the Trinity and hence the mutuality between the universal Church and the local Church. Besides this debate, there are also differing views about the extent to which the Church should reflect the Trinity. For Leonardo Boff, the mutual co-equality of the Trinity provides a "social programme" for the structure and organization of Church and society. In contrast, Miroslav Volf points out that the "vast divide" between God and human beings necessitate that Trinitarian communion offer just a general "social vision", without prescriptive details which should depend on each specific context. Hunt, "Trinity and the Church", 228-229, 218-223.
 29. See Hunt, "Trinity and the Church", 222-223.
 30. See Downey, "Participating in the Mission of Word and Spirit", 11. Such relationships are marked by love, self-giving, mutuality, respect for diversity, and reciprocity in the image of the Trinity. At the same time, Pickard offers a realistic precaution by sounding out that this Trinitarian and relational view of ministry can also lead to an overly-idealistic and rosy attitude that ultimately avoids conflict and the confrontation of difficult issues. To this end, he stresses the need to learn from Scripture regarding how challenges were confronted by Jesus, in the power of the Spirit. See Pickard, 46.
 31. See Sally A. Brown, "Speaking Again of the Trinity", *Theology Today* 64, no. 2 (2007): 145-158. For Leonardo Boff, "communion is the first and last word about the mystery of the Trinity", in *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 16.
 32. Fiddes, 50. Fiddes sees God as an "event of relationships" and the Three Persons in God as three "movements of relationships" in the same event, asserting that "there are no persons at each end of a relation but the persons are simply the relations"; see Fiddes, 34-36. Fiddes' main objective for this theory of the Divine Persons as relationships is that it draws humans into participation in God. Though views differ among theologians about whether the Trinitarian Persons are "pure relationship" or beings-in-relationship, what is unanimously emphasized is the centrality of relationships in the Trinity.
 33. See Cunningham, 165-169. Cunningham highlights the profound "participation" in the Trinity which he describes as a total mutual indwelling and interpenetration. Likewise humans take part in and shape each other's life and identity in a profound way. This again emphasizes the generality of relationships in the Trinity and among people.
 34. See Gaillardetz, 38-39. This view of the ordained ministry as essentially a relational re-ordering has been a major theme that emerged in the exploration of connections between Trinitarian Theology and ministry. Apart from Gaillardetz, this theme is also highlighted in the works of Edward Hahnenberg in *Ministries: A Relational Approach* (2003) and Robin Greenwood in *Transforming Priesthood: A New Theology of Mission and Ministry* (1994). See Pickard, 37.
 35. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2003), 88-89.
 36. See *ibid*.
 37. These views are concurred with, in Gaillardetz, 48.
 38. For example, see Joy Ann McDougall, "The Return of Trinitarian Praxis? Moltmann on the Trinity and the Christian Life", *Journal of Religion* 83, no. 2 (2003): 178-179 and Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 21.
 39. LaCugna, 391.
 40. See Bevens and Schroeder, 299.
 41. See Cunningham, 304-310. Cunningham holds that since God does not "need" the world and instead created it out of gratuitousness, God's will is not forced upon human beings; God only "persuades". In line with the polyphony, participation and particularity in the Trinity, the approach thus proper to God is persuasion and not compulsion.
 42. See LaCugna, 402.
 43. See Fiddes, 100.

44. See Edward J. Kilmartin, "Lay Participation in the Apostolate of the Hierarchy", in *Official Ministry in a New Age*, ed. James H. Provost (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1981), 112-114. .
45. This point is also highlighted by Bevens and Schroeder, 293.
46. See Downey, 12. Downey highlights a stance of "active receptivity" in prayer.
47. Bevens and Schroeder, 293.
48. See Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy: Worshipping the Trinitarian God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 205-206.
49. Drilling, 24.
50. Bevens and Schroeder, 293.
51. See Neil Pembroke, *Renewing Pastoral Practice: Trinitarian Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counselling* (Abingdon, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 2. Similarly, Kasper points out that the unity in the Triune God "neither absorbs nor dissolves" the person and there remains an "abiding distinction", Kasper, 284.
52. See Bevens and Schroeder, 302-303.
53. See James G. McEvoy, "Dialogue: Drawn into the Life of the Trinity", *Pacifica* 25, no. 3 (Oct 2012): 256-257.
54. Hunt, *Trinity*, 53.
55. Seamands, 81.
56. See Neil Ormerod, "The Psychological Analogy for the Trinity: At Odds with Modernity", *Pacifica* 14, no. 3 (October 2001): 288-293.
57. See Hunt, "Trinity and the Church", 234-235.
58. See Hunt, *Trinity*, 173-174.

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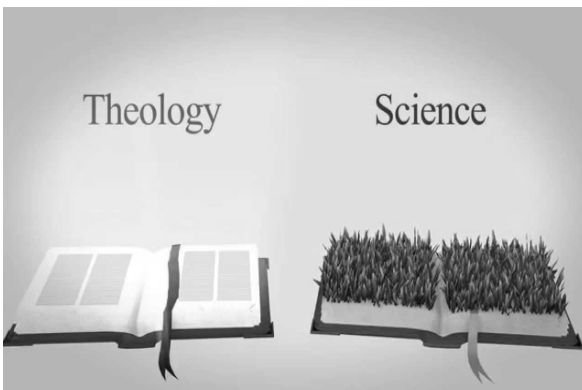
Dialogue Between Creation and Evolution

Introduction

Theology and science are often portrayed in conflict. One occurrence that can represent that conflict is the ongoing controversy on the origin of humankind from the perspective of the account in Genesis and the theory of evolution. Are these two standpoints really in disagreement? Is it possible to show a meeting point between the two?

Evolution and Theology: A Current Understanding

In the theory of evolution, Darwin introduced the concept of natural selection. There are three things related to that concept: (1) random variation; this is "occurrence and inheritability of small variations among the individual members of a species"; (2) the struggle for survival; (3) the survival of the fittest: an adaptable individual will live longer and can reproduce. Functional change can precede structural change. Through natural selection, there is a decrease in the species which failed to adapt.¹



There are some objections to the theory of evolution, as some physiological structures seem to have no adequate function.² Some biologists also assume that the growth of organisms is affected not only by natural selection, but also by an internally programmed plan. There is an "internal predisposition of the organism to change in a particular direction".³ There is stress in the "directional and progressive character of evolution".⁴

In understanding evolution, we often see a dichotomy between design and chance. When adaptation is accepted because of its benefit in the past, we do not need any providential design. However, Darwin accepted "general providence in the *design of the laws* through which evolution occurs".⁵ Design can bring us into determinism. On the other hand, when an individual is given a space in the framework of general law, it can guard the concept of freedom.⁶

The theory of evolution perceives a dynamic universe, a complex of interacting forces, in organic interdependence.⁷ Interdependence affects survival. In the dynamic of the universe, we find chance which seems to limit the domain of law. However, chance must be put in the framework of law.⁸ Chance can be a sign of spontaneity, novelty, and creativity, which leads to purpose. Evolution shows a subtle interplay between chance and law.⁹ Chance and law are complementary. Random events in the "higher level of aggregation" can show statistic regularity. Therefore, chance becomes a part of design.¹⁰ Evolution is an ongoing dialectic, not a finished process. Natural selection does not promise perfection. It imposes no unilinear scheme.¹¹

In comprehending design and chance, it is more appropriate to say that God creates the system of law and chance rather than that God controls all subatomic indeterminacies and random events.¹² Design is applied to "the systematic conditions that made life and consciousness possible". God creates a system where law and chance can bring the creatures into life, thinking, and dimensions of human experience. God influences events without controlling them. We are rejecting predestination and acknowledging the role of chance. God's continuing active role manifests itself "in relation to changing situations and patterns". God gives freedom and spontaneity; God gets involved in the world and participates in a slow development.¹³

Theology, on the other hand, has its own language. Originally, evolution was perceived as a threat to Scripture's inerrancy.¹⁴ Genesis was assumed to be the only credible narrative. However, some accepted the possibility of evolution because they perceived the Genesis

narrative as "a symbolic and poetic rendition of affirmations about the dependence of the world on God".¹⁵ Evolution is considered to be the way God created the universe.

A theology that tries to accept evolution would see the idea of a Creator who worked through evolution to reveal the design gradually.¹⁶ The act of creation sets the organism in an environment where the purpose (its good) can be sought. The divine impulse works as an immanent and eminent cause.¹⁷ Created nature offers "the matter and milieu and engine of ongoing creation".¹⁸

Theology pays special attention to human beings. A person has uniqueness: rationality, moral sense, and immortal soul. This provides a clue to the nature of, and relationship with, God. Is a person merely a result of accidental variations and the struggle for survival? ¹⁹ Other experts argue that natural selection cannot be applied to the higher human faculties. We can see the tension between continuity and discontinuity of humans and animals.²⁰

Regarding the human soul, the Catholic faith explains that the spiritual element does not seem to leave an imprint on the morphological characteristics that would be clear enough to enable the scientist to prove empirically that a given bodily structure is necessarily human. All the attempts to derive abstract, conceptual thought by a continuous evolution from animal "intelligence" have failed.²¹ The conscious, reflective understanding and judgment carried out by human beings are too different from even the cleverest animal behaviour. We encounter a qualitative discontinuity when attempting to reconstruct the transition from a creature without culture to human beings with their culture and social structure.²²

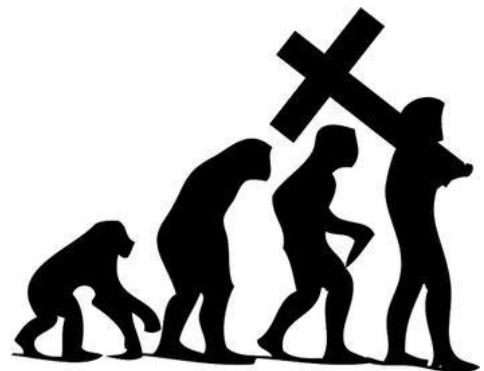
The Catholic Church can accept the development of the human body according to the theory of evolution; yet the Church firmly holds that the human soul is directly created by God.²³ Through his work, *In the Beginning ...*, " Ratzinger shows the difference between the scientific realm and the theological realm. The theological realm deals with a description of the deepest origin of the human being. The scientific realm explains evolution in terms of biology. Nevertheless, Ratzinger explains the complementarity between them as, "the inner unity of creation and evolution and of faith and reason."²⁴ Ratzinger acknowledges the reality of process.²⁵ On the other hand, Ratzinger questioned Monod's assumption which perceived human beings merely as a result of chance and evolution as a mistake in the act of transmission.²⁶ Ratzinger rejects Monod's assumption by stressing that the human project shows the existence of "creating Reason". A person is not created from a mistake; a person is a creature that is wanted and "the fruit of love".²⁷

Reinterpreting Creation and Evolution

We need to weigh the interpretation of evolution proportionally. First of all, a certain kind of disposition is needed when we talk about science and faith: "In every true searcher of nature there is a kind of religious reverence. For he finds it impossible to imagine that he is the first to have thought out the exceedingly delicate threads that connect his perceptions" (Einstein). A scientific theory ... does not have to be repeated twice a day. Insights of wonder must be constantly kept alive" (Heschel).²⁸ The sense of wonder should be kept alive if the human person is "to remain true to the dignity of God's creation". However the sense of wonder and transcendence must not become a substitute for analysis; it must not suppress doubt where doubt is legitimate.²⁹

"Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind" (Einstein). Defenders of science should give up their positivist pretensions and acknowledge the teleological aspect in biology; defenders of creation need to recognize that randomness has been and remains critical in the emergence of life. Proximate and ultimate causes need not be rivals. The cosmos is comprehensible because it is coherent (the interplay between purpose and chance). Evolution can show "a critical modality in God's creative work".³⁰

Augustine, in reading the Genesis account, showed us that "the second account must refer to a later stage in God's creative action when the individual kinds of things gradually

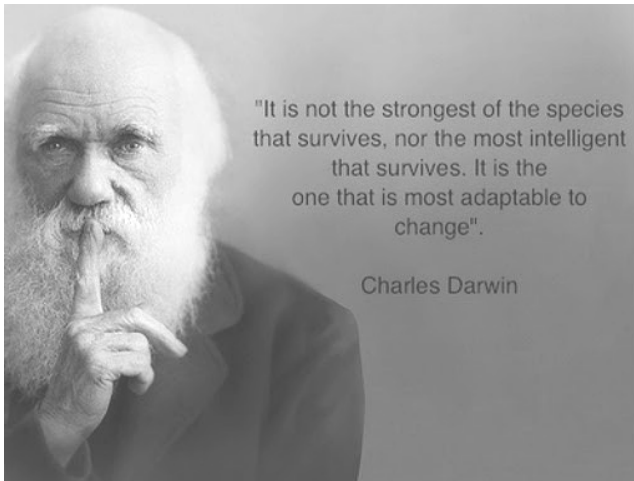


made their appearance ... what were present at first were only the "seed principles" (*rationes seminales*) of the different kinds".³¹ The function of the seed-principle is to explain how one can say that God made all things at the beginning and that the various kinds of things made their appearance gradually over the path of historic time.³²

Augustine envisaged a Creator who could bring things into being in two different ways: either by an original miraculous intervention in each case, or by the use of the natural order to develop the various kinds in a gradual way. All Augustine wanted to communicate was that Scripture is open to either interpretation.³³

Natural selection does not eliminate teleology.³⁴ It is presupposed in the Darwinian concept of adaptation.³⁵ Chance (randomness) becomes a resource, not a threat.³⁶ On the other hand, the purpose (*telos*) of an organism is not constant, purpose is emergent. It evolves.³⁷ We perceive the universe as a contingent possibility. It leaves room for change and progress. Conversely, we realize the aspect of necessity (law) in the universe. Human understanding involves two aspects: necessity and possibility.³⁸

Even though there is an element of contingency in evolution, Darwin did not eliminate value, human dignity, and freedom from nature. Living beings have merit when "values are chosen and projects devised with conscious intent".³⁹ The emergence of purpose and subject-hood make evolution a powerful argument for creation.⁴⁰ The intrinsic value of being is supported by its project; the instrumental value is sustained by the project of others.⁴¹



It is a false assumption that Darwin eliminated teleology from his theory.⁴² Purpose is often questioned as invisible, the stuff of metaphysics. Eliminating purpose would unpin our understanding of the universe. Teleology and naturalism do not need to compete. Change (adaptation) should be adequately explained by "how the innumerable species inhabiting this world have been modified, so as to acquire that perfection of structure and co-adaptation". Purpose is not visible. It is not a mechanism even though it is served by mechanisms. Purposes are ends/goods sought

by individuals: "a fluid natural line, persistent by its stability ... also by its plasticity".⁴³ We cannot reduce all events to mechanism. It is inconsistent with evolution. Purpose evolves but does not become irrelevant. "Teleology is immanent, but insistent".⁴⁴ The teleological explanation is the evolutionary account.

Evolution presupposes value in survival. The struggle for survival must be seen in two perspectives. Externally, it means natural selection. Internally, it is the pursuit of a good.⁴⁵ Survival can be seen when species expand their interest, "finding the openings to transgenerational change that a dynamic environment demands".⁴⁶ Survival is a process in the context of history.

Genesis and evolution meet in upholding the idea of the good. There is uniqueness in the human capacity for choice. We can choose our purpose. We shape our goals and forge our own character. Intentions are of the essence. When we study evolution, we will find intrinsic value and "aims not reducible to utility, objects not in subservient to reproductive ends".⁴⁷ We all pursue intrinsic values. Evolution is not reductionism that perceives our ends as merely dictated by our genes.⁴⁸ Both in nature and evolution, we can see emergent goods of many kinds. It is consistent with the creation account.

I prefer to understand evolution as something that "has the character of a journey rather than of a random walk". If we perceive evolution as a journey, we can understand it completely when we know its purpose. Revelation has communicated the end as the "union of humanity and of restored creation with God". Nevertheless it is a journey full of tragedy. We as Christians have the Truth and can make sense of this paradoxical evolutionary history, because

theologically, "the suffering and death, and subsequent creative transcendence of evolutionary history has the same pattern that is manifested in the life and death of Jesus".⁴⁹

NOTES

1. Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science; Historical and Contemporary Issues* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 52.
2. "Many variations neither foster nor hinder survival, and their perpetuation seems to have been a matter of chance", *ibid.*, 224.
3. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 54, 223. "Internal behavioral selection is now seen to be a most powerful creative element in evolution".
4. *Ibid.*, 55. Here we can see the concept of purpose (teleology) in evolution.
5. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 58, 238. "Evolution suggests another understanding of design in which there are general directions but no detailed plan".
6. We need to discern Darwin's thinking impartially. "Darwin held that a world 'so marvelously ordered', however imperfect in the details, could not be the result of blind chance. God as designer of laws must have provided the overarching pattern and progressive direction", *ibid.*, 58.
7. See *ibid.*, 56.
8. "Variations arise accidentally, but they are preserved lawfully according to the advantage they confer", *ibid.*, 56.
9. Darwin argued: "I cannot anyhow be content to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance", Lenn E. Goodman, *Creation and Evolution* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 158.
10. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 238.
11. See Goodman, *Creation and Evolution*, 100.
12. See John Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science, and Understanding* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 108. Polkinghorne explains that "so total a degree of divine immanence is theologically unacceptable, for it would imply that God is in thrall to the history of the universe". He continues: "If the world is an evolving process still *in via*, then God may be expected to be in interactive relationship with its unfolding history. There is no need, however, for the Creator to be a Cosmic Tyrant, in total control of all that is happening. Indeed, the play of creation, as we perceive it, has more the appearance of an improvisation than the appearance of the performance of a predetermined script", *ibid.*, 110. Keith Ward supports this understanding by stating: "One must therefore look for a design that is not all-determining, that gives a sort of general blueprint, but leaves many details to be filled in later, in many different ways. The system could be set up so that physical structures inevitably in the long run give rise to organised complexity, without laying down exactly how this is to be accomplished", in, *God, Faith, and the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 109-110.
13. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 239-240. Polkinghorne suggests that "divine kenosis was involved in the act of creation. The Creator self-limits divine power in allowing the created-other to be truly itself, in its God-given freedom of being", in, *Faith, Science, and Understanding*, 111. In other words, "the picture of the invulnerable, all-powerful God of classical theology has given way to the picture of the God who interacts within creaturely history but does not overrule the acts of creatures", *ibid.*, 127.
14. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 57. Evolution is considered to be a threat to "the purposefulness of the world, human dignity".
15. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 58. The Genesis narrative is not a history of our natural origin. It is a drama of human condition. The Genesis narrative tells us that: (1) the whole world owes its being entirely to the free, sovereign action of God; (2) the world is "good". All things correspond to the divine will. It is impossible for our faith to see the world as a hostile power. Creation embraces the whole reality of the world; not just its beginning but its whole existence; not just its static being, but its dynamism and activity.
16. See Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 65-67. The modernists saw God as influencing the process of evolution. Divine creative activity worked within the process continuously. There is unity among God, humanity, and nature. God is immanent in us as well as in nature.
17. Eminent in the sense of "adequacy to the effect out of the richness of a fuller reality", Goodman, *Creation and Evolution*, 134.
18. See *ibid.*
19. Darwin took natural selection's position even for morality. "If morality conferred survival value, standards of conscience would have tended to rise", in Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 60.
20. There is a radical difference when the basic principle of development is not merely understood within a genetical framework, but within a culture where conscious choice can change the future. See *ibid.*, 61.
21. It is a theologically false evolutionism to claim that the categories of biological evolution can be transferred in the same sense to the "evolution" of a person. It would deny that a person is essentially distinguished from all other things in the empirical world by a direct relation to God in spirituality and freedom. Rejecting the uniqueness of personhood would imply that what a person is and what a person signifies amounts to nothing more than a momentary existence in the biological sphere. See Karl Rahner *et al.* *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of*

- Theology*, Vol. 2 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 289. Polkinghorne states that: "No one denies a role for historical contingency. However anthropically pregnant the universe may have been, it was not uniquely destined to produce *homo sapiens*, in all man's anatomical and physiological specificity. The strongest assertion anyone has made is that being as we are in complexity and capacity presented a realizable potentiality, present from the start, and expected to evolve somewhere", in *Faith, Science, and Understanding*, 73.
22. See *ibid.*, 287-288. A vast area is thus opened up to free speculation about the origin and cause of behaviour patterns and their evolution. It does not seem to be possible to reach, by scientific methods alone, an exhaustive explanation of hominization.
 23. John Paul II had a positive appreciation of evolution. However, he affirmed that "each human soul is immediately created by God", Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 66.
 24. Joseph Ratzinger. *"In the Beginning...": A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 50.
 25. "... things that we used to consider as unchanging and immutable were the product of a long process of becoming ... the universe was not like a huge box into which everything was put in a finished state", Ratzinger, 50-51.
 26. "... if it were merely blind chance that threw us into the ocean of nothingness, then there would be sufficient reason for considering ourselves unfortunate", Ratzinger, 53; see 55-56.
 27. See Ratzinger, *"In the Beginning ..."* 56-57.
 28. Cited in Goodman, *Creation and Evolution*, 131.
 29. *Ibid.*, 132.
 30. See *ibid.*, 1-3. Polkinghorne suggests that "Creation is not to be so distanced from its Creator that the character of its history and process afford no clue to the nature of God's interaction with it", in *Faith, Science, and Understanding*, 117.
 31. Cited by Ernan McMullin, *Evolution and Creation* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 12. The natural kinds were created in the first instant of time and made their appearance gradually over time.
 32. McMullin, *Evolution and Creation*, 15. Each species arose at the proper time out of its own seed-principle.
 33. *Ibid.*, 17.
 34. Every created being is in a state of becoming; changing is part of the unity of the world which is directed towards a single goal of full accomplishment. The concept of evolution has the advantage of bringing out more clearly the directional progression of change.
 35. Darwin's theory does not see that "mechanism implies that ... mind must be derivative and phantasmal, rather than directive and real", Goodman, *Creation and Evolution*, 23.
 36. Many still assume that evolution means erasing moral agency and freedom because humanity is inseparable from its animal roots. See *ibid.*, 15.
 37. Autonomy and community emerge as evolution develops, bearing consciousness and caring.
 38. "We see the necessary through the contingent, just as we see the contingent in the factitious", *ibid.*, 39.
 39. See *ibid.*, 135.
 40. Augustine says, "Latent in the seed was all that would in time become a tree". God imparts the capacity to develop, the potential of species to adapt, *ibid.*, 136.
 41. See *ibid.*, 137.
 42. "The evolutionist studies the purpose or meaning of organs with the zeal of older teleologists, but with a far wider and more coherent purpose", *ibid.*, 138.
 43. *Ibid.*, 140. "Human life is a key part in the glorious realization of rich and complex patterns of beauty and intelligibility. It has a purpose, and it is part of a cosmic purpose, to fashion the universe into a temporal image of the divine life", Ward, *God, Faith, and the New Millennium*, 121.
 44. *Ibid.*, 141. Discussing purpose, "God's purposes will eventually be fulfilled. The precariousness involved in the Creator's sharing of causality with creatures may imply that this fulfillment will be attained along contingent paths, as God responds to the free actions of others, but the God who is the ground of a true and everlasting hope will work ceaselessly to bring salvation to creation", Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science, and Understanding*, 128.
 45. See *ibid.*, 144.
 46. *Ibid.*, 145.
 47. *Ibid.*, 151.
 48. We are "who we make ourselves, reaching for a good defined in part by our own efforts", *ibid.*, 155. Ward states that: "God is the ultimate basis of the structure itself, so that the directing of its progress to consciousness can truly be seen as an internal constraint or set of constraints on the physical system". Ward, *God, Faith, and the New Millennium*, 122.
 49. Terence Nichols, "Revelation and Evolution: The Journey of Creation into God", in *Revelation and the Church: Vatican II in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Raymond A. Lucker (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 23-25

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Les enjeux de la réconciliation en milieu *Mbala*

Summary

This article considers the Rite of Reconciliation practised by the Mbala Tribe, because for this people any breach of harmony through wrong-doing concerns the well-being of the whole clan. The Mbala Chieftain seeks to reconcile the person or parties concerned by performing some ritual gestures with reference to the Ancestors. The Rite concludes with a ceremonial meal. The symbolic action of eating together proves that people are in communion with each other.

Il existe des valeurs fondamentales sur lesquelles la société africaine est bâtie: la vie, la paix, la joie, la convivialité, le partage, la solidarité, la communion, etc.¹ Le manque de respect des valeurs introduit un dysfonctionnement qui perturbe et amène du désordre dans la société ou la famille. Pour restaurer l'«ordre perdu», l'homme africain a imaginé des procédés. Le rite de la réconciliation en est un, comme processus qui aide les individus ou groupes.



La réconciliation suppose des éléments suivants: l'unité *prélapsaire* (avant la faute) du groupe, la faute/querelle ou raison qui a séparé, les motivations de revenir à cette unité, un médiateur capable de ramener les parties lésées en relation. Quelles que soient les actions menées pour réussir cette réconciliation, si la cause qui est à la racine de la haine n'est pas prise en juste considération et que les personnes n'ont pas appris à vivre dans l'acceptation réciproque,

le conflit perdurera.²

Nous avons choisi d'étudier le phénomène de la réconciliation chez le peuple *Mbala* puisque ce peuple est doté d'un sens aigu de la fraternité et de la solidarité.

Une entrave à ces vertus est vécue avec beaucoup de souffrance et on recherche sans trop tarder comment réparer pour remettre les personnes en communion. Puisque la vie est d'un grand prix, pour la maintenir, il ne suffit pas d'engendrer; encore faut-il vivre en harmonie avec tous les membres du clan et même avec les éléments de la nature. D'où, chez les Mbala, une série de rites de réconciliation afin de rétablir la cohésion fraternelle et la solidarité déconstruites.³ [2] «Tout système culturel prévoit les dispositions à prendre pour remédier à l'anomie», écrivait Louis Vincent Thomas.⁴

Dans les limites de cet article, nous parlerons de l'éthique *Mbala* dont les règles indiquent les pistes possibles pour la résolution du mal avant de faire ressortir les enjeux de la réconciliation sur le plan socio-culturel.

1. L'éthique *Mbala*

Dans la tribu Mbala, la faute est perçue comme une brisure de l'harmonie avec soi-même, avec son semblable, avec la nature et l'Absolu. Il y a des fautes graves qui peuvent engendrer des conséquences imprévisibles, notamment des maladies graves ou épidémiques causant de nombreux décès, l'infécondité chez les jeunes filles, les conflits ouverts entre différents membres de la tribu, etc. La faute apparaît ainsi non seulement comme une entorse au précepte moral mais aussi comme une atteinte grave à l'épanouissement de la vie; d'autant

plus qu'en milieu mbala les critères du bien et du mal sont définis en fonction de l'accroissement de la vie humaine ou de son contraire.

Il s'agit là d'une morale essentiellement anthropocentrique, son point de départ et son point de mire étant l'homme à sauver et à épanouir.⁵ De ce fait, la gravité de la faute dépend du degré d'atteinte à la vie, de la position sociale de l'auteur et de la victime, et des circonstances privées ou publiques dans lesquelles la faute a été commise. La faute commise par un aîné ou un ancien est plus sévèrement sanctionnée que celle d'un plus jeune; le tort d'un oncle est plus durement puni que celui d'un neveu; un chef maladroît est plus coupable qu'un simple sujet, etc.

En fonction de l'acte et de l'intention de son auteur, on distingue trois catégories de fautes. La première, *Kifu*, désigne une faute au sens de l'erreur. Elle est qualifiée de nécessairement involontaire. La seconde, *Mbi*, est une action mauvaise et préjudiciable à autrui. Elle est cependant définie comme involontaire bien qu'ayant des implications morales négatives à cause du tort fait à autrui. La troisième est le *Nsoki*. Elle est une action mauvaise, «très méchante». Elle est nécessairement volontaire parce qu'elle présuppose une intention préméditée dans le seul but de nuire gravement à autrui. Elle est commise en toute connaissance de cause, en toute conscience et en toute liberté. Ainsi, un adultère, par exemple, un viol, un vol, une bagarre, une grossesse extraconjugale, la sorcellerie.

En plus de ces trois catégories, il y a la faute dite *Tupu*. C'est la récidive. Elle est ainsi appelée parce qu'on croit, chez les Mbala, que son auteur est comme aveuglé, égaré, conduit et poussé par les esprits *simbi* (génies) à récidiver sans cesse. L'auteur, étant possédé par des *simbi*, n'est pas pleinement conscient de ce qu'il fait, et par conséquent, sa faute bénéficie de circonstances atténuantes.

La sanction des fautes chez les Mbala vise ou entend corriger et rétablir l'ordre et l'harmonie qui ont été brisés. C'est dans ce sens que «le rite de réparation n'est pas une séance de tribunal. Aussi les pourparlers qui servent à l'établissement et à la détermination des culpabilités et responsabilités d'un chacun sont-elles dû précéder».⁶ Pour y arriver, les us et coutumes Mbala proposent des rites, paroles et lieux indiqués pour dialoguer et rechercher l'équilibre social et vital de la collectivité.

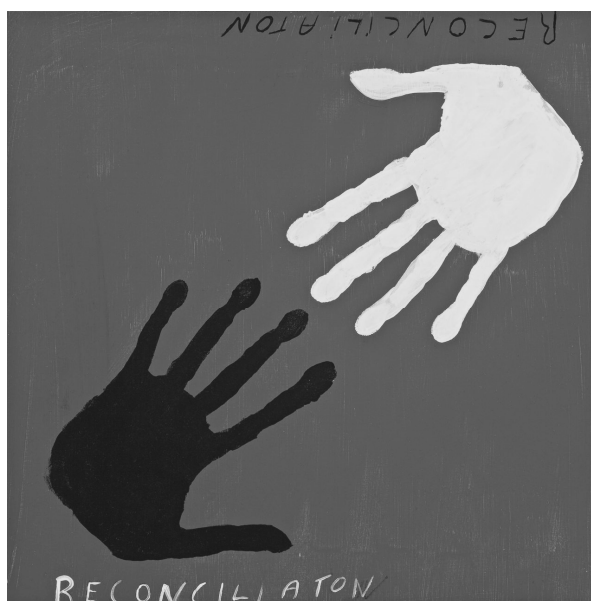
2. La réconciliation

Chez les Mbala, le lieu du rite et la forme verbale du processus ont un sens et une portée singulière.

L'arbre à palabre et la forme du discours

C'est sous l'arbre à palabre que s'effectuent des séances de réconciliation. L'arbre à palabre n'est pas seulement l'arbre des vérités autour duquel les aveux sont prononcés, c'est aussi l'arbre de vie, lieu par excellence et indiqué pour la régularisation des tensions sociales. Car, après tout, c'est le rétablissement de l'unité perdue et le renforcement de la vie qui sont visés dans tout acte de réconciliation. La forme verbale utilisée pour procéder à la réconciliation relève de la palabre, qui est définie comme «un débat qui rapproche les hommes aplanissant leurs dissensions et jouant le rôle de purification ou encore de régularisation».⁷

F. Kabasele va dans le même sens en ajoutant plus de détails: «La palabre est un discours et une manière de procéder pour débattre d'un sujet; elle consiste à ne pas aller droit au but, déblayer longuement le terrain, en



épluchant toutes les circonstances du problème, donner la parole à tous, laisser au chef ou à celui qui préside le soin de tirer des conclusions qui reflètent le 'consensus'.»⁸

Dans la tribu Mbala, la palabre peut être publique ou privée selon la gravité de la faute. Elle est dite privée quand elle n'engage que des membres d'une même parenté familiale ou clanique. Elle est publique quand les membres d'autres familles ou clans sont impliqués. Contrairement à la palabre privée, la palabre publique met en œuvre un rituel et une procédure plus solennelle qu'un règlement pacifique.

Les sortes de réconciliation⁹

Dans la pratique traditionnelle, plusieurs sortes de réconciliation *étaient* proposées suivant l'ampleur de la faute ou du conflit des protagonistes. En voici quelques illustrations.

a) Réconciliation par le sang

Elle a lieu dans le cas de l'inceste ou d'un meurtre commis au sein de la même famille ou du même clan. Le chef du clan rassemble tous les membres, car c'est l'unité et l'équilibre internes qui sont ici menacés et mis en cause. Le rite consiste ici à immoler une chèvre, en enterrer le sang et partager la viande à tous les membres du clan présents. Le symbole est parlant: tuer une chèvre signifie qu'il y a eu versement du sang (dans le cas du meurtre) ou pour exprimer que le sang clanique a été offensé (cas d'inceste). L'enterrement du sang signifie que le crime a été enterré une fois pour toutes, que personne ne pourra plus y revenir sous peine de malédiction ou de mort. Ce rite est célébré par l'oncle maternel qui représente les ancêtres et en qui le pouvoir de ces derniers réside.

b) La réconciliation à travers la maladie

Quand un membre d'une famille ou d'un clan est gravement malade avec probabilité d'une mort certaine, tous les membres du clan se trouvent dans le devoir de lui rendre visite et, à l'occasion, de se réconcilier avec lui. La mort étant considérée chez les Mbala comme un voyage vers le pays des ancêtres, ces derniers n'accueillent pas de gens non réconciliés qui risqueraient de l'aigreur dans ce pays de la joie et du bonheur. Ne meurent dans la paix que des gens réconciliés avec eux-mêmes et avec les autres.

Ce rite traditionnel peut bien se comprendre aujourd'hui avec la pratique chrétienne de l'accompagnement des malades. La maladie ne se comprend pas seulement comme un état diminué de la personne humaine, elle est cet instant décisif qui invite le malade à se situer face à lui-même, aux autres et à Dieu. C'est un éveil à la conscience, une relecture de sa propre histoire. Ainsi, les sacrements de la réconciliation et des malades trouvent leur pertinence dans la mesure où le malade se réconcilie avec lui-même et avec les siens pour préparer dans la paix du cœur son voyage vers l'au-delà,

c) La réconciliation à l'occasion de la mort

Un conflit interne peut facilement diviser les membres d'un même clan. Mais, dès qu'il y a un cas de mort dans le clan, personne ne peut se permettre de rester indifférent. Chacun vient au lieu du deuil et ne manque pas de présenter à la famille en deuil qui est aussi sa propre famille ses condoléances pour lui signifier combien il partage cette souffrance. On va au-delà des différends habituels et ordinaires pour ne considérer que la valeur du clan. C'est pour cette raison que nous disons que la mort peut être une occasion de rapprochement ou même de la réconciliation comme telle des membres du clan. Dans ce cas, la réconciliation se fait sans rite ni solennité: il suffit que celui qui était en brouille vienne présenter ses condoléances et participer au deuil pour que le rapprochement se fasse et, parfois, que la cause du conflit soit résorbée. La personne éprouvée étant en état de vulnérabilité, la présence de l'autre, ennemi soit-il, est une preuve de compassion. Par conséquent, on pardonne du fond de son cœur à cause de cette marque de proximité dans la souffrance.

Il existe plusieurs occasions de réconciliation. Nous n'avons sélectionné que quelques types en guise d'illustration. Pour l'instant, voyons comment se déroule le rite.

Bien qu'il existe quelques particularités (selon les circonstances des temps et des lieux), le déroulé conserve un caractère plus au moins constant pour une réconciliation de haute portée. Les débats se tiennent sous l'arbre à palabre du clan en présence des membres du village, des sages, des notables et dignitaires de la cour du chef, et selon le cas, on peut y inviter des chefs des clans voisins. Le jury est composé des notables et dignitaires de la cour vêtus de leurs insignes du pouvoir (canne et chasse-mouche). Ils sont supposés être d'une intégrité de vie, d'une loyauté irréprochable et d'une sagesse confirmée, connaisseurs de la tradition du clan.

Le langage de la palabre est un langage de sagesse qui sollicite le discours parémiologique (proverbes, énigmes, métaphores et métonymies) et le rythme (chants, danses, gestes, battements de mains, et aussi le silence). La cérémonie est ordinairement présidée par le chef du clan ou l'oncle maternel, selon que la palabre est privée ou publique. Il introduit la palabre en rappelant l'histoire du clan (dans le cas d'une palabre privée, c'est-à-dire entre membres du clan, et dans le cas où la palabre implique les membres d'un autre clan, le chef rappelle les relations qui unissent les deux clans), les normes ancestrales dont la transgression pourrait amener à un déséquilibre familial et social, les obligations de chaque membre quant à la recherche de la paix, de la réconciliation pour une vie harmonieuse dans le clan ou avec d'autres clans. C'est après que le chef a énoncé ces principes, et avec sa permission, que les parties en présence peuvent alors prendre la parole avec respect, pour regretter leurs fautes et se demander mutuellement pardon.

L'objectif premier de la palabre est de retrouver l'équilibre perdu, l'unité des membres dans le clan. Ce n'est pas d'abord de punir, de sanctionner, mais de rendre le « coupable » conscient de son méfait. Cette prise de conscience l'aide à s'amender. C'est quand le conflit est dirimé et le consensus trouvé qu'un repas est servi en guise de communion, de rétablissement des liens rompus.

Le repas de communion

La palabre, chez les Mbala, se termine toujours par un repas de communion, qui est la dernière étape dans le rite de la réconciliation. La particularité de ce repas réside dans le fait qu'il est accompagné de gestes et paroles porteurs de sens. Il se déroule en deux étapes.

Premièrement, les antagonistes se lavent les mains dans un même bassin (symbole d'une origine commune et de recours à la même tradition, aux mêmes ancêtres), partagent une noix de kola et du vin de palme en signe de restauration des liens. Ils se tendent ensuite la main, après que le chef du clan a prononcé la parole d'autorité en ces termes: *«Moi, je suis votre chef de clan, vos pères m'ont investi et légué le pouvoir de vous unir et de vous séparer. Nous sommes des enfants du même père, nous avons un ancêtre commun. Pourquoi ce mauvais vent a-t-il soufflé ainsi? Il nous a divisés! Aujourd'hui, nous tous avons tort, devant nos ancêtres; mais comme je suis chef, je fais disparaître ce mauvais esprit»*.

Le chef se place ensuite au pied de l'arbre à palabre, verse le vin dans un verre et creuse un petit trou dans le sol et y verse son vin. Il croque ensuite une tranche de noix de kola et place le reste dans le trou où il avait versé le vin, et il s'adresse aux ancêtres en ces mots: *«Vous, nos ancêtres, nous avons oublié le chemin que vous nous aviez montré; le clan s'était divisé par mégarde. En ce jour, nous avons retrouvé notre route, pardonnez-nous et recevez notre consentement»*. Puis, il boit le vin et crache sur le sol (signe de rejet et de déracinement du mal). Et tous les membres peuvent ensuite toucher le vin qui est versé dans le trou. Le chef distribue ensuite des arachides. A la fin de ce partage, en communion avec les ancêtres, il les bénit tous, achevant ainsi la première étape de la réconciliation.

Deuxièmement, un bon repas de communion est servi et partagé. Les mets qui composent ce repas sont aussi symboles de la réconciliation. En effet, les belligérants apportent, sur l'ordre du chef, les produits de leur chasse (civette, chat sauvage, antilope, qui symbolise la chèvre pour la fête, ou une gazelle, une pintade, une vipère ou un boa). S'il arrive que les chasseurs ne tuent pas de gibier, ils peuvent apporter du champignon blanc *«Kasangu sangu* (qui donne la joie), ou *«Upemba»* (blanc). Lorsque les chasseurs apportent l'un de ces éléments, c'est la preuve que les ancêtres sont favorables et le repas peut alors commencer. Au cas contraire, les ancêtres sont

supposés défavorables. Le chef de clan ordonne alors qu'on abatte une chèvre ou un mouton. On n'abat jamais un porc, parce qu'il ne symbolise pas la communion.

La bête est égorgée sous l'arbre à palabre par *Gapungu*, le délégué du chef. Puis, le chef fait de nouvelles incantations et prononce des paroles mettant en valeur l'unité du clan. Il asperge de sang l'arbre à palabre ainsi que les autres membres du village. A la fin de ces incantations, la viande est donnée aux femmes pour la cuisson. Cette viande appelée «viande interdite ou *média ma shiku*», n'est mangée que par les membres du clan ou des deux *clans* en phase de réconciliation. Avant d'entamer le repas, les paroles du chef sonnent comme un bénédicité: *«Ce repas que nous prenons ensemble est le signe d'unité de notre clan, de notre famille, nous sommes les enfants d'un même ancêtre. Cette bête que les ancêtres nous ont donnée symbolise notre sang, nous sommes des enfants du même sang, du même cordon ombilical, mangeons-la dans la joie et la paix. Celui qui ne sera pas rassasié, demain, il pourra revenir me voir, encore que la chefferie, c'est votre maison»*. Il conclut: *«Gi yendianga, ye mana»* (Ce que j'avais à dire est fini).

Le chef prend alors un morceau de viande et le *mange* devant tous les membres du clan. Il fait de même pour le vin de palme. Le repas peut commencer pour tous, les femmes d'un côté, les hommes de l'autre, et dehors. Le partage d'un verre de vin de palme clôt la *cérémonie*.



3. Conclusion et enjeux

A travers la faute, la réconciliation et le repas de communion chez les Mbala, plusieurs enjeux peuvent être tirés.

Pour le peuple *Mbala*, la vie est sacrée, par conséquent, il faut l'aimer, la protéger et chercher à la développer. Tout ce qui est susceptible de la diminuer doit être combattu. Le Mbala ne se conçoit pas comme une monade, ni un électron libre, il est membre d'une communauté qui l'enfante et le porte au monde. Il en dépend pour s'épanouir et exister. Il n'est rien sans la communauté. Son influence sur la communauté est considérable, ce qui fait que sa faute peut facilement en perturber l'équilibre et la bonne marche. C'est pour cette raison que chaque famille est appelée à inculquer à ses enfants l'éthique de la communauté mbala.

Le rite de réconciliation exprime clairement que le Mbala en tant qu'humain est bel et bien faillible, capable du meilleur comme du pire. Le Mbala aime la vie, mais il peut aussi l'endommager. En se réconciliant, le Mbala prouve aussi sa force et sa capacité de dépassement. Il ne tourne pas en rond, enfermé dans sa faute, il n'est jamais la somme de ses péchés. Par la réconciliation, il se place face à lui-même et aux autres et peut ainsi se transcender. La réconciliation nous fait comprendre que chez les Mbala comme chez d'autres peuples, la vie n'est pas que rose. Elle est faite de hauts et de bas, de chutes et de relèvements, d'ombres et de lumières. Hommes comme les autres, les Mbala sont capables de la brouille mais celle-ci n'a pas le dernier mot, la réconciliation a priorité, grâce à la palabre et au respect de chacun.

Quant au repas de communion, il traduit le fait que l'harmonie et la paix sont le seul but recherché par la réconciliation. Chez les Mbala, les ennemis ne mangent pas ensemble. Manger dans le même plat signifie que les belligérants sont redevenus comme frères et sœurs d'une même famille. L'entente et la concorde sont retrouvées. Il est intéressant de savoir qu'un repas peut avoir d'autres valeurs sociales que la seule valeur manducative. A table, on n'est pas que pour manger et se rassasier, c'est le lieu et l'heure du partage et de la convivialité. Un proverbe dit: *«Quand les frères sont réunis, s'ils ne mangent pas, ils palabrent»*. Si nous mangeons chaque jour, c'est que nous sommes ou pouvons être en communion chaque jour les uns avec les autres. Voilà un sens fort que nous devons chercher à retrouver à travers ce geste quotidien et simple de déjeuner.

NOTES

1. B. MUBESALA, *La religion traditionnelle africaine. Permanences et mutations*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2006, p. 177.
2. Cf. M. ROY, « Réseaux de réconciliation en Afrique », dans *Mission de l'Église*, n° 160 HS (Juillet-Septembre 2009), p. 14.
3. Cf. MUTONKOLE Mpiana Wa Kabole, *Chrétiens africains appelés à la plénitude de la vie*, Kinshasa, 1987, p. 45s.
4. L.-V. THOMAS, p. 65.
5. Cf. KABASELE Lumbala, *Liturgies africaines. L'enjeu culturel, ecclésial et théologique*, Kinshasa, Facultés catholiques, 1996, p. 106.
6. KABASELE Lumbala, *Liturgies africaines*, p. 107.
7. O. SEMBENE, cité par K. NKULU, *Etude logico-sémantique de la palabre dans la société traditionnelle Ngongo*, mémoire de maîtrise, Université du Zaïre, inédit, p. 12.
8. F. KABASELE, *Catéchiser en Afrique aujourd'hui. Apport des traditions orales*, Kinshasa, Baobab, 1995, p. 73-74.
9. Cf. MUTONKOLE MPIANA WA KABOLE, *Chrétiens africains appelés à la plénitude de la vie*, Kinshasa, Filles de Saint Paul, 1990, p. 45-61.

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Formation in The Third Millennium

1. Introduction

Everywhere we hear the religious lamenting that the values of consecrated life and formation are undergoing a crisis. The younger generation does not have supernatural faith and values. The present style and method of formation do not penetrate their inner being. What to do in this situation? The senior members of the congregations find fault with those Superiors, who, according to them, do not impose strict discipline and punishment nor expel the frequent transgressors. Only uncompromising adherence to the Traditions and rules can save religious life today. The solution to the present crisis is to persistently and firmly *repeat* the rules and regulations of yesterday. However this may not bring any substantial change, and will create tension and rebellion in the community. Another trend among young religious is to *reject* the Traditions and rules, which they maintain are irrelevant today. This, however, is suicidal, since religious life would lose its firm foundations, and the words of Christ concerning the foolish builders who built the house on sand (Mt 7:26-27) will be fulfilled. What can be done then? Does the Bible provide us with any insights? These reflections are a humble attempt to re-read the Bible from this perspective.

2. Covenant Theology in Israel

2.1. *From Slavery to Sonship*

Yahweh liberated the People of Israel from Egypt where they were oppressed and exploited as slaves. The Empires like Egypt and Assyria were following a capitalistic ideology based on the economics of affluence, policies of oppression and exploitation and a static and triumphant religion. In such a system might was right, and the minority became richer and richer at the expense of the common folk who were condemned to lead a poor and wretched life. Power was in the hands of the king and the priests who, so to speak, held the gods prisoner in the temple so that the deities had no contact with the common/miserable folk. As the desperate Hebrews groaned in their slavery they cried out to Yahweh (Ex 2:23), who heard their cry, revealed himself to them, and came down to set them free. He led them to Mount Sinai and entered into a Covenant relationship with them (Ex 24:1 -11), became their God and elevated them to the status of adopted children. God called them to embrace a new structure of society based on the economics of equality, policies of justice and compassion, and a religion of God's freedom. Yahweh was the head of the Israelite family, and the members enjoyed equal rights and duties, so that no one could exercise lordship over others.

2.2. *Life in the Lord*

Yahweh's design was to lead the People of the Covenant to the Promised Land where they could live a life of celebration and bliss, praising and singing the glory of God in the Temple of Jerusalem. The journey to the Promised Land lasted for forty years, during which time the Lord tried to teach his Chosen People to be totally dependent upon Him, so as to become a model for other nations with a radically new ideology and structure of society. Their Kings were meant to be shepherds, leading the people to green pastures and still waters, restoring their soul and giving rest (Ps 23[22]). The Israelites were not totally faithful to their special call. The Lord disciplined them through the Prophets, who taught them to live the motto "in God we trust". Yahweh made Israel into a great and prosperous nation. During the time of King Solomon Israel became politically and economically influential, and Jerusalem grew into a cosmopolitan city where people of different faiths and cultures lived together.

2.3. *Disintegration of the Covenant Ideal*

New power, new affluence and new contacts with people of other religions and civilisations brought radical changes to Israel in thought, speech and behaviour. They became secularized. Now, the point of reference was no longer faith in Yahweh and religious institutions, but other more prosperous, powerful and learned nations. They wanted to become more wealthy and renowned. Thus, they were inclined to embrace a non-covenant ideology and the structures of worldly societies, with their economics of affluence, policies of oppression and exploitation, and a static, triumphant religion. So Faith and Tradition based on Moses and the Covenant now seemed irrelevant and embarrassing. Israel tended to be rationalistic and utilitarian. Avarice and pride reigned: we owe no one anything; therefore we are free to do what we want with all that we have and all that we can get. The motto, "in God we trust", lost its attraction and appeal. Although the Prophets tried their best to turn the People back to the Lord of the Covenant by means of threats and judgements, the People were not willing to listen to them.

3. *Creation Ideal as a Theological Re-formulation*

When the Prophets attempts to *repeat* the traditional theology failed, and the trend to *reject* orthodox religion was evolving in Israel, the Wisdom theologians appeared with their re-formulated concept of religion which was intended to attract the secularised people. "In man we trust" — exclaimed the wisdom teachers. On first sight this might be misinterpreted as an ungodly outlook, but a deep theological insight was inherent in this slogan. The reason for trusting in man is because God has trusted him, although often untrustworthy, and entrusted him with life. He/she is supposed to receive the divine gift of life as a task. It is each person's sacred duty to accept the "talent" of life, increase it and use it for the welfare of the human race.

3.1. *Towards a Humanistic Religion*

Israel's prophetic religion, based on the Covenant, had an exclusive and parochial perspective. It was meant neither for the international community nor for the whole of humanity. Yahweh, the revealed name of God, was the exclusive God of Israel. Now, the wisdom teachers came forward with the concept of a religion which appealed to the whole of humanity and the contemporary world which had become both secular and pragmatic. Instead of religion being rooted in Revelation, the wisdom teachers based it on Creation Theology, which could be accepted by all. They stood for the celebration of Creation. In Genesis 1:28 the creator God blessed human beings and said to them: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground". The human being has to endeavour to obey this order of blessing. Thus the vision of wisdom is related to the Word of God. The wisdom outlook is focused on earthly life, on the here and now. These theologians taught the people how to build up this earthly life, make it grow, sustain it and enjoy it. They invited human beings to celebrate life in the company of the whole of creation. Thereby human beings were asked to engage in continuing God's act of creation by spreading order, rhythm, harmony and beauty everywhere, to make earth the face of heaven, so that people may deserve the divine rest (Gen 2:2-3).

3.2. *Theology of Creation*

Psalm 104[103] brings out the creation vision of the wisdom teachers. Verse 24 presents its focal point: "How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all!". God has arranged the sphere of life and action of everything. He stretches out the heavens like a tent, sets the earth on its foundations, makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate — bringing forth food from the earth. The moon marks the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. God brings darkness, it becomes night. He has made the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond

number — living things both large and small.... These all look to God to give them food at the proper time. When he gives it to them they gather it up; when he opens his hand, they are satisfied with good things. God has made the night the time for lions to hunt for their food. He arranged day-time for man to do work until evening. Thus the wise Creator has organized and regulated everything making it orderly and beautiful. He has even given the tiny creatures their task and relevance on earth. Nothing can be considered insignificant and out of place. The Creator has made human beings the crown of creation, for whom everything is ordained. He has entrusted them to be his representatives in order to continue the task of making earth and heaven more orderly, harmonious and beautiful.

Eight Beatitudes for Man

The wisdom theologians set forth for the secular people of their time the principles for creating life on earth, increasing it, sustaining it and enjoying it.

3.3.1. Blessed are those who make life the goal and meaning of human existence. Life does not mean mere survival, but totality and fullness in every sphere, which provides happiness, security and integrity.

3.3.2. Blessed are those who discern the authority for life in the common experience of past generations. The ancestors have taught us to practise liberalness, graciousness, diligence, discipline for children and tranquility. These are bold affirmations about life, not based on the instructions of the religious authorities or divine revelation.

3.3.3. Blessed are those who affirm that each person is primarily responsible for his/her destiny. Human choices fix human destiny. Hence people have to assume responsibility for their lives and the life of their community. This Beatitude is an affirmative summons to human beings to recognize the tremendous opportunities which lie before them if only they will seize them.

3.3.4. Blessed are those who believe in the human ability to choose wisely and decide responsibly. Human beings do not have to be wicked or foolish. There is an option.

3.3.5. Blessed are those who understand the necessity and duty to engage in the act of choice in every situation. Being human means that a person is continually placed in situations where he/she must exercise his/her humanness through responsible decision-making.

3.3.6. Blessed are those who firmly believe that reversals and inversions in life have a human explanation. They are not written in the stars nor willed by the gods, but depend on responsible human action or negative action. Here the wisdom teachers do not deny the limitations of human insight and capability. But within these limits people have great expectations. Humanness is seen here in its exalted role from which much is expected. Thus it is foolish to have recourse to the habit of finding excuses, saying: "After all I am only human".

3.3.7. Blessed are those who understand that this world is created in an orderly way and that human beings have a definite role in promoting that planning and organization. Each person should discern that order and find his/her responsible share in it. This Beatitude is an authentic confession of faith in the benevolence of life, in the staying power of our world, in the possibility of wholeness, in the health of right relations in right community and in the security of life. This orderliness is not an accident, but is the result of the conscious arrangement of a generous and benevolent God. Life is meant to be stable and orderly; God has willed it so. The maintenance of the order is related to the quality of our choices, such as honesty, justice, integrity, legality, faithfulness and insight. A person should not find his/her well-being at the expense of another; each person has a legitimate share.

3.3.8. Blessed are those who make this life a celebration of the loftiness of man who is made by God as king and priest of creation. Human beings are relational beings, related to creation. They are the crown and leaders of creation. As kings they have the duty to rule over the cosmos, lead and control everything, which may provide rest for the whole of creation. At the same time human beings as priests are bound to fill the universe with the divine blessing.

Human life is intimately related to the earth; hence each person's God-realization and self-realization is intimately connected with the earth. He/she is destined to transform the cosmos into the earthly dwelling-place of God. This is how the wisdom teachers reflected on the splendour, order, beauty and goodness of creation.

4. Man as a Wise Being

Who is a human being? He is part of the divine plan and destined to be a wise person, who lives out his call as a trusted creature, one who is entrusted with life, which he has to make prosper and increase so that the community can enjoy life to the full. Those who fail to live up to this call are fools, who do not deserve the name of man. Such wicked and slothful people will meet a tragic end (Prov 10:7, 25; 11:8; 12:28; 13:9) and make the lives of others miserable. Instead of making the earth orderly and harmonious they will create chaos. It is not God but man who is responsible for such a fate.

5. Jesus, the Authentic Human Being

The Wisdom vision would prefer to present Jesus, the Incarnate Word, as a paradigm and pattern of an authentic human person. His total reverence and commitment to the Father made him a fully liberated and free being. He knew that everything was entrusted to his hands, since the Father is well pleased with him (Mt 3:17). "I am yours and you are mine"/"all I have is yours and all you have is mine" (cf. Jn 17:10) — this was the motto and maxim of his action. It made him a daring creature who could proclaim at the tomb of Lazarus: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me" (Jn 11:42). Because of such self-confidence he could do wonders, even raise the dead to life (Mk 5:41; Lk 7:14; Jn 11:43). This authentic human being fearlessly and valorously traded with the talent of life and increased it a hundred-fold (Mt 25:14-21). Jesus taught others by word and example how to make life a celebration. He never ran away from responsibility, and spent his time, abilities and health to further *shalom* (integrity, welfare, and auspiciousness) in the community. One may say, the Son of Man lived the Eight Beatitudes of the wisdom vision. This made his life blessed, meaningful and relevant. As a wise being he fully practised liberalness, graciousness, diligence and tranquility (Mk 2:1-5; Lk 7:37-38; Mt 11:29). Christ irradiated the attributes of the king and priest of the new creation. He, through his Resurrection, inaugurated the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1). The Son of Man could experience the goodness and beauty of the Creator and was engaged in praising Him. "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children" (Lk 10:21). He asked others to be like the wise virgins and warned them against the danger of following the behaviour of the foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-13). Also we find in Jesus the commitment for the poor in society, which the Wisdom Literature promoted. To sum up, in Jesus we can see the true portrait of a real human being as presented in the Wisdom Theology.

6. Conclusion

The present crisis in the formation field may be compared to the critical situation which came about in the society of Israel when it became more prosperous, secularized, sophisticated and self-sufficient. The theologians of that period wisely met that critical situation by a *reformulation* of the religious Traditions, values and beliefs. Instead of succumbing to the natural instinct to *repeat* the old laws and regulations, or to the reactionary tendency to *reject* all the basics of religion, they had the courage to delve into the hidden vision of Creation Theology and tried to build up a new *reformulation* in which man became the centre, which appealed to their contemporaries. It was not a mere secular theology; at its root it stood for a richer and deeper sacred vision.

In imitating this daring venture, we, CMIs, should come forward with bold attempts to *reformulate* the ideal of formation, which may help others to follow in our footsteps. This will be a great service not only for the Churches in Kerala and India, but also for those of the whole world.

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La misión y la vida consagrada

INTRODUCCIÓN

El año de la Vida Consagrada ha sido proclamado por el papa Francisco con motivo del 50 aniversario de la *Lumen Gentium*, que en el capítulo VI trata de los religiosos, y del *Perfectae Caritatis*, sobre la renovación de la Vida Religiosa. Este año jubilar es una ocasión para dar gracias por este don de Dios a su Iglesia y al mundo, para ahondar en su sentido más profundo y, viendo el camino recorrido, coger nuevas fuerzas para continuar la misión por los senderos de la historia.

En la Carta apostólica a todos los Consagrados, con ocasión del Año de la Vida Consagrada, el papa afirma que la Vida Consagrada es un elemento decisivo de la misión de la Iglesia: «La Vida Consagrada es un don para la Iglesia, nace en la Iglesia, crece en la Iglesia y está totalmente orientada a ella. De aquí que, como don a la Iglesia no es una realidad aislada o marginal, sino que pertenece íntimamente a ella, está en el corazón de la Iglesia como elemento decisivo de su misión»¹.

En esta reflexión partiremos del origen de la misión en la Iglesia y, dentro de ella, en la Vida Consagrada. En un segundo momento haremos un breve recorrido por la historia de la misión de los consagrados y terminaremos con algunas constantes de la misión que son paradigma ineludible para la Vida Consagrada actual.

1. Origen de la misión

La VIDA CONSAGRADA desde sus inicios surge por el deseo de seguir a Cristo más de cerca, para traducir el evangelio en una forma particular de vida y para responder creativamente a las necesidades de la Iglesia².

Cristo es el origen de la misión. Él ha sido enviado por el Padre a nosotros para ponernos en camino hacia él. Desde la creación Dios destinó al hombre a entrar en su comunión, sin embargo el hombre da la espalda a este amor y vaga por el mundo buscando la felicidad donde no la puede encontrar. Dios, fiel a sí mismo, envía a su Hijo para salvar al hombre de su egoísmo y su vacío. El misterio de Dios Amor se ha revelado en la persona de su Hijo, que desvela a la humanidad su dignidad de hijos de Dios y la grandeza de su llamada a la vida, una vida que es comunión con Dios y constituye a la humanidad en la gran familia que vive en el amor, a imagen de Dios que es Amor.

Jesús proclamó que vino para que los hombres tengan Vida y vida en plenitud. En Cristo el hombre es nuevamente creado. Él revela a los hombres la identidad del propio hombre³. Donde abundó el pecado, sobreabundó la gracia (dice el apóstol). Donde abundó el egoísmo, Jesús puso el don, el servicio, el amor. Don y entrega hasta el fin en la cruz. Él es el nuevo Adán y la revelación al mismo tiempo, del rostro de Dios.

Jesús, enviado del Padre, realiza su misión en la tierra y llama a los discípulos para comunicarles su obra, para hacerles partícipes de su misión. A ellos les enviará su Espíritu, que les dará fuerza, les recordará todo lo que Él enseñó, les hará comprender el sentido de su vida, para que sean sus testigos delante de todas las gentes⁴.

Discípulos, compañeros de camino, amigos, a ellos reveló todo lo que sabía del Padre (Jn 17), a ellos reveló su misión en el mundo y a ellos confió la tarea de continuarla. «Como el Padre me envió, así os envío yo a vosotros» (Jn 20,21). Y para cumplir esta misión los constituyó en comunidad⁵: «Donde estéis dos o más reunidos en mi nombre, yo estaré entre vosotros» (Mt 18,20).

Los discípulos eran conscientes de esta misión, por eso decían: «*no podemos dejar de hablar de lo que hemos visto y oído*» (Hch 4, 18). La comunidad, al redactar los evangelios, recuerda el mandato de Jesús: «*Id por todo el mundo, haced discípulos de todas las gentes... Yo estoy con vosotros todos los días hasta el fin*» (Mt 28, 18.20). La misión del Hijo no puede ser comprendida sin su comunidad, sin discípulos que respondieran a su convocatoria, sin una Iglesia que prolongara su misión. Los doce habían significado en torno a Jesús la comunidad que, después de la Pascua, asumirá la responsabilidad del universalismo de la historia de la salvación. Comunidad enviada como testigo de lo acontecido en Pascua y en Pentecostés⁶. La misión es la clave de comprensión de la comunidad eclesial: del acto misionero (del anuncio) brota la Iglesia, que a su vez lleva adelante la misión del Hijo con la fuerza del Espíritu.

El consagrado es un seguidor de Jesús que, como los primeros discípulos, ha sido llamado para estar con Él y para ser enviado a anunciar la buena nueva. La misión es la clave de la VIDA CONSAGRADA porque seguir a Cristo significa ser enviados como Él al mundo. Por eso la misión hace parte integrante de la identidad de la VIDA CONSAGRADA. La exhortación apostólica *Vita consecrata* pone el fundamento y dice⁷ que el seguimiento de Cristo solo es posible gracias a una especial vocación y el don del Espíritu que lleva a una respuesta radical por medio de los consejos evangélicos para que el llamado convierta su existencia en "cristiforme", por lo que, «*haciendo de Cristo el "todo" de su existencia, se dedique totalmente a la misión*»⁸.

2. LA VIDA CONSAGRADA A LO LARGO DE LA HISTORIA

La Vida Consagrada es apostólica por su propia naturaleza. Sus miembros son elegidos para ser enviados porque «*en su llamada está incluida la tarea de dedicarse totalmente a la misión*»⁹, más aún, la misma Vida Consagrada se hace misión, como lo fue la vida entera de Jesús. Esta afirmación ha sido una convicción profunda de los consagrados desde el inicio de las primeras comunidades monacales. La misión ha configurado la Vida Consagrada, no solo su trabajo, sino también su forma de vida.

Desde los inicios en la vida cenobítica el seguimiento de Cristo tiene como modelo el estilo de los Doce. Los apóstoles fueron llamados para estar con Cristo y para ser sus testigos y anunciadores del Reino de Dios. Los cenobitas abandonan todo para vivir una vida evangélica radical en comunidad. Su misma vida se torna anuncio y testimonio del evangelio y su comunidad es la imagen de la comunidad ideal propuesta en los Hechos de los Apóstoles. Su actividad misionera ha sido más espiritual que ministerial. Sus monasterios se convirtieron en centros de asistencia social, de caridad, de educación y de cultura¹⁰. Juan Pablo II corrobora su papel en la construcción de una identidad cristiana en Europa: «*El testimonio de las personas consagradas es particularmente elocuente. A este propósito, se ha de reconocer, ante todo, el papel fundamental que ha tenido el monacato y la Vida Consagrada en la evangelización de Europa y en la construcción de su identidad cristiana*»¹¹.

En Occidente la vida monástica se comprometió en la evangelización de los pueblos no cristianos, y realizó, al mismo tiempo, una obra de civilización que fue formando lo que constituye las raíces de Europa. Toda la cultura de la era medieval lleva el sello monástico. Los monjes, sobre todo los benedictinos, transmitieron, junto con el evangelio, los ideales de paz, fraternidad y trabajo en diálogo con la sociedad de su tiempo.

El cambio de época en el s. XIII, que supuso la aparición de la vida en las ciudades, fue un nuevo desafío para la evangelización y la vida cristiana. En este contexto nacen la órdenes mendicantes que se entregan a la evangelización de las ciudades. Tienen un nuevo dinamismo más carismático y profético. Esta nueva forma de VIDA CONSAGRADA sigue la vida apostólica e itinerante de Jesús. Las órdenes mendicantes convergen en la vivencia de una pobreza evangélica radical y en la predicación del evangelio. Viven en disponibilidad total a la misión. También realizaron una importante labor universitaria, demostrando la compatibilidad entre ciencia y fe. Los mendicantes consiguieron las

cátedras más importantes de las universidades europeas (París, Bologna, Cambridge, Oxford, la Sorbona)¹².

A partir del s. XVI la Vida Consagrada abre Su misión evangelizadora al nuevo mundo. La urgencia de evangelizar a todos los pueblos tiene respuesta especialmente de los religiosos que realizan el mandato de Jesús y van "*ad gentes*" a llevar el mensaje evangélico a las tierras de América y Asia, ocupándose también en la educación y promoción humana de los habitantes de aquellos lugares. Hubo además un maravilloso florecimiento de la VIDA CONSAGRADA apostólica, especialmente la femenina. En su empeño evangelizados la Vida Consagrada del Renacimiento, trató de responder a las necesidades sociales urgentes, principalmente de los más pobres, en el campo de la educación y de la beneficencia. Era como la emergencia de un humanismo alternativo orientado hacia los pobres, los enfermos, los inválidos, los marginados del proyecto renacentista, desarrollando además actividades misioneras y de promoción humana¹³.

En el s. XIX se da un verdadero florecimiento de los Institutos de Vida Apostólica y, entre ellos algunos con una característica propia de misión "*ad gentes*". Sin embargo, todos en su mayoría compaginaban la misión en los países de origen y la salida a los países tradicionalmente llamados "tierras de misión". Cada una de las formas de Vida Consagrada realiza la misión evangelizadora a partir de la propia misión carismática, encarnado un aspecto del mensaje de Jesús en su vida y en su trabajo apostólico.

Este rápido recorrido por la historia de la Vida Consagrada nos da testimonio de que la Vida Consagrada intentó siempre tener presente el compromiso por la misión, porque toda VIDA CONSAGRADA es misión y la «misión está inscrita en el corazón mismo de cada forma de Vida Consagrada».

En este camino de misión, desde los inicios hasta hoy, encontramos unas constantes que, serán más o menos marcadas, pero siempre están presentes en la vivencia de la misión de la Vida Consagrada:

- LA MISIÓN es única en la Iglesia
- Es seguimiento de Cristo
- Es testimonio del misterio de Dios
- Es servicio
- Es escucha de los clamores del mundo
- Es salida a las fronteras
- Es opción por los pobres
- Es pasión por la humanidad
- Es crear comunidad
- Es encarnación e inculturación
- Es interpelante y contracultural
- Es defensa de la vida y la creación
- Es la clave de la VIDA CONSAGRADA

3. LA VIDA CONSAGRADA HOY DESDE LA MISIÓN

Hoy toman especial relevancia algunas características de la misión a lo largo de la historia que, a mi parecer, son fuente de revitalización de la Vida Consagrada y camino para responder a la realidad que vivimos.

3.1. Seguidores de Cristo

El seguimiento de Jesús ha dado lugar a la aparición de la Vida Consagrada en la Iglesia, por eso el criterio último de toda Vida Consagrada será siempre la referencia a Cristo y la identificación con Él. Un seguimiento de Jesús que implique la donación total de sí mismo.

El consagrado no puede comprender y vivir su misión si no es en referencia a Cristo, a quien se consagra y a quien anuncia. El consagrado quiere seguir a Cristo radicalmente, se identifica con Él, con su propia persona y así hace presente ante los hombres el misterio de Dios. Esta es su primera misión. Ninguna actividad apostólica es fin en sí misma. Los hombres necesitan a los religiosos, no tanto por lo que hacen, sino como presencia espiritual y sacramental del Trascendente, como colaboradores de la *Missio Dei* por la humanidad y por la Iglesia.

Nuestra época, sobre todo en occidente, se caracteriza por un rechazo de lo religioso, o mejor dicho, un rechazo de las instituciones religiosas, pero al mismo tiempo se manifiesta una apertura a lo trascendente, al misterio, a lo espiritual. A veces buscan experiencias trascendentes por medio de lo bello, o de encuentros interpersonales, de experiencias humanas o de técnicas orientales de meditación. El consagrado es la persona de la oración cristiana, es centro espiritual de la comunidad, enseña a orar a la comunidad a la que lleva a decir: Abba, Padre. Hoy necesitamos con fuerza recuperar la dimensión teologal de la Trascendencia.

La pasión por Cristo debe llevar cada día más a la lectura orante de la Palabra de Dios, una lectura que encienda nuestro corazón, como a los discípulos de Emaús, que llene de fuego nuestra existencia y nos lleve a la misión. La consagración hace al religioso memoria viviente de la manera de actuar de Jesús. La Vida Consagrada es signo del amor de Dios a la humanidad. Ser signo de Dios es la primera misión que la vida religiosa puede ser para los hombres y para ello hay que recuperar la pasión por la persona de Jesucristo y su evangelio. El papa Francisco recuerda a todos los cristianos: «No nos dejemos robar el evangelio»¹⁴, cuanto más a los que optan por seguir a Jesús más de cerca.

El secreto de la vocación y la misión es solo uno: permanecer en Cristo: «si permanecéis en mí, daréis mucho fruto» (Jn 15,15).

3.2. Vida Consagrada en salida, enviados al mundo

El Papa ha marcado para la iglesia un nuevo dinamismo y una actitud fundamental: la salida de sí misma, el éxodo. Ha dicho que la Iglesia debe ser una Iglesia valiente «que encuentra nuevos caminos, que es capaz de salir de sí misma e ir hacia el que no la frecuenta, hacia el que se marchó de ella, hacia el indiferente. Es necesario tener audacia y valor»¹⁵. Porque una Iglesia cerrada es una Iglesia «enferma por el encierro y la comodidad de aferrarse a las propias seguridades. No quiero una Iglesia preocupada por ser el centro y que termine clausurada en una maraña de obsesiones y procedimientos»¹⁶.

Esta misma actitud de salida es esencial para la misión ad gentes, para ello la Vida Consagrada debe estar siempre abierta a los signos de los tiempos. El papa invita a «abandonar el cómodo criterio pastoral del 'siempre se ha hecho así'. Invito a todos a ser audaces y creativos en esta tarea de repensar los objetivos, las estructuras, el estilo y los métodos evangelizadores de las propias comunidades»¹⁷. Todo esto exige la conversión que coloque a todos los agentes pastorales en constante actitud de salida. Resume este programa, al que invita a todos, con una sencilla expresión: «La Iglesia 'en salida' es una Iglesia con las puertas abiertas»¹⁸.

Para salir es necesario ir ligeros de equipaje, dejar las cosas que nos impiden caminar. El éxodo comporta en primer lugar dejar lo anterior, la tierra, la casa, las personas, nuestras seguridades. Sabiendo quién somos, quién nos guía y marchar unidos, pero desprendernos de todo lo que pesa para el viaje y, caminar y confiar, como el pueblo de Israel.

«Significa salir de nosotros mismos para ir al encuentro de los demás, para ir a las periferias de la existencia, hacia aquellos que son olvidados, que tienen más necesidad de comprensión, de consuelo, de ayuda, es entrar cada vez más en la lógica de Dios, en la lógica de la Cruz, del Evangelio. Seguir, acompañar a Cristo, permanecer con Él exige un 'salir'. Dios salió de sí mismo para venir en medio de nosotros, puso su tienda entre nosotros para traernos su misericordia que salva y da esperanza»¹⁹.

Claro que esta salida no debe ser solo una actitud interior o una meditación piadosa, sino concreta, realizada en actos sencillos, pero reales; pequeños, pero decisivos. Significa no aferrarnos al pasado, no aferrarnos a la autoreferencia o al principio de conservación de nuestra institución, o — lo que es peor — de las obras y presencias que fueron abiertas en décadas anteriores, con las que identificamos nuestro carisma, cuando hoy no responden a las realidades para las que surgieron. Es urgente no gastar la entrega de las personas y la fuerza de las comunidades en mantener estructuras que hoy no son proféticas.

Ser Vida Consagrada en salida trae sufrimiento, es también un momento pascual, porque «algo ciertamente muere, pero, al mismo tiempo, algo renace en la continuidad de aquello, que en la Vida Religiosa, es fundamental»²⁰. Este momento «exige personas dispuestas a la provisionalidad y a ir por delante sin el condicionamiento de lo que dejan atrás»²¹. La Vida Consagrada no está preparada para comprender la amplitud y la profundidad del cambio. Lo nuevo desconcierta y, en esta nueva realidad, es difícil reconocer lo positivo. Sin embargo, a la Vida Consagrada se le pide dar una respuesta evangélica, también hoy, como siempre lo ha hecho, a las necesidades de una sociedad en transformación.

3.3. En las fronteras de la humanidad

En el mandato de Jesús: "id" están presentes los escenarios y los desafíos siempre nuevos de la misión evangelizadora de la Iglesia. En ella todos están llamados a anunciar el Evangelio a través del testimonio de la vida; y de forma especial se pide a los consagrados que escuchen la voz del Espíritu, que los llama a ir a las grandes periferias de la misión, entre las personas a las que aún no ha llegado todavía el Evangelio²².

El propio Jesús nos da la orientación de la misión: «El Espíritu me ha ungido para llevar la buena noticia a los pobres» (Le 4,4). La predilección de Dios desde siempre por los pobres, como proclamaron los profetas: los pobres, el pueblo pequeño y oprimido y dentro de él, los marginados, los enfermos y excluidos.

La evangelización a favor de los pobres hoy tiene límites nuevos. Las injusticias creadas por un mundo globalizado son escandalosas. En estos días existen nuevas pobreza que son el grito de los pobres. No olvidamos que trabajar por el verdadero desarrollo humano es parte integrante de la misión (RM 59), es un nuevo lenguaje del anuncio de Jesús, como dijo Pablo VI en la *Evangelii nuntiandi* (EN 30-36) hace ya 30 años, porque «el hombre que hay que evangelizar no es un ser abstracto, sino un ser sujeto a problemas sociales y económicos», «No es posible que la obra de la evangelización pueda olvidar las cuestiones extremadamente graves, tan agitadas hoy día, que atañen a la justicia, a la liberación, al desarrollo y a la paz en el mundo»²³.

Seguir el estilo de Cristo siervo, ponerse con los propios dones al servicio de los más pobres, especialmente en los lugares de frontera donde la comunidad internacional no interviene, es la característica de la misión «ad gentes», ir hacia donde el amor de Dios revelado en Cristo no es conocido o reconocido.

El religioso es anunciador cuando es signo de servicio y entrega, cuando es pan partido para cada hombre, cuando es el rostro concreto de Cristo que ama a cada persona en el servicio concreto al que es llamado desde su carisma específico. La frontera ha configurado la forma de la Vida Consagrada. Casi todos los Institutos nacieron en lugares de frontera, entre los últimos de la sociedad o allí donde la vida era amenazada. Por eso el papa Francisco nos pide hoy que revisemos nuestras obras, nuestro estilo de vida, no sea que estén caducos e instalados. Urge salir hacia las pobreza de los hombres de hoy y ponerse en servicio sin miedo al futuro, porque lo estéril es la auto-conservación. La identidad de la Vida Consagrada es la medida de su misión.

3.4. Comunión y misión en un mundo multicolor

Desde los inicios del cristianismo la misión va unida a la comunidad y busca formar comunidad. En estos últimos tiempos el mundo se caracteriza por vivir en red y, sin

embargo, nunca como hoy ha habido más fragmentación. En este escenario se nos pide a los consagrados ser «casa y escuela de comunión»²⁴. La vida de comunión representa un primer anuncio, porque es signo eficaz que lleva a creer en Cristo. La comunión, entonces, se hace ella misma misión, más aún, «la comunión genera comunión y se configura esencialmente como comunión misionera»²⁵.

Hoy nuestras comunidades religiosas son cada vez más multiculturales y, viviendo una real fraternidad desde esta realidad, pueden ser profecía de comunión en el contexto de una sociedad que, a veces, sin darse cuenta, tiene un «profundo anhelo de una fraternidad sin fronteras»²⁶. Por eso, debemos pensar si vivimos en nuestras comunidades una fraternidad intercultural real o si nuestra vida comunitaria no está marcada solamente por el pluralismo, donde unas culturas viven al lado de las otras, con tensiones y dificultades; o si la cultura congregacional dominante llega a la aceptación de lo diferente. Para que haya esta aceptación es necesario vivir una comunión abierta a otras formas de vida y superar el llamado "mito de occidente" que está presente siempre que se defiende la uniformidad del Instituto, sea cual sea la persona y el lugar.

Las comunidades religiosas internacionales, a veces también inter-congregacionales, son signo vivo de la fraternidad evangélica y la comunión universal de la que la Iglesia es sacramento para el mundo. La comunidad religiosa puede servir de referencia para caminar hacia una humanidad cada vez más intercultural en la convivencia real.

3.5. Testigos contra-culturales

Forma parte de la misión la fidelidad al mensaje y esto conlleva anunciar a un Dios que defiende ante todo la vida del hombre. La misión debe denunciar todo lo que pisotea y aniquila al hombre. Más todavía, debe renunciar a todo lo que contradice el mensaje y proponer unos valores alternativos a la cultura dominante, apostar por una cultura donde la persona sea el centro.

Un reto irrenunciable hoy para la misión es la inculturación del mensaje en todos los pueblos y culturas. Para que se dé una verdadera inculturación es necesario ser fiel al evangelio, no acomodarse a la cultura, sino transformarla desde dentro, desde la vida de los que siguen a Jesús. En este sentido las comunidades religiosas pueden ser laboratorios vivos de inculturación. El encuentro de las culturas, también la europea hoy, con el evangelio, exige una gran creatividad y al mismo tiempo discernimiento.

«Hoy, la misión se enfrenta al reto de respetar la necesidad de todos los pueblos de partir de sus propias raíces y de salvaguardar los valores de las respectivas culturas. Se trata de conocer y respetar otras tradiciones y sistemas filosóficos, y reconocer a cada pueblo y cultura el derecho de hacerse ayudar por su propia tradición en la inteligencia del misterio de Dios y en la acogida del Evangelio de Jesús, que es luz para las culturas y fuerza transformadora de las mismas»²⁷.

La Vida Consagrada debe procurar vivir los valores del Evangelio en su tiempo, pero sabiendo que el Evangelio siempre es una presencia que interpela, una fuerza que no es domesticada, es contracultural, y así, la comunidad cristiana, y más la comunidad religiosa, se presentan como una propuesta alternativa a la cultura dominante. Es más, es una propuesta transcultural, que no se identifica con ninguna cultura²⁸, pues el Espíritu ayuda a mirar la realidad y el momento histórico con ojos de sabiduría y abrir las culturas al horizonte de las bienaventuranzas, la vida nueva que ofrece Jesús.

Notes

*Josefa Cordovilla Pérez es natural de Salamanca y es religiosa del Amor de Dios. Vivió en Mozambique desde 1975 a 1993, dedicándose a preparar líderes de las comunidades cristianas y a la coordinación de la formación social cristiana en Quelimane. Es Dra. en Misionología.

1. FRANCISCO, *Carta apostólica a todos los consagrados con ocasión del año de la Vida Consagrada*, 2014, nº5

2. Id., nº 1.
3. Cf. JUAN PABLO II, *Redemptor hominis*, 1979, 10.
4. Cf. JUAN PABLO II, *Redemptoris missio*, 1990, 5.
5. Id., 26.
6. Cf., *Ad Gentes*, 2.
7. JUAN PABLO II, *Vita consecrata*, 1996, 14.
8. Id., 77.
9. Id., 72.
10. Cf. GARCÍA PAREDES, J. C. R., *Misión de la Vida Religiosa*, 1982 pp. 215-221.
11. JUAN PABLO II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, 2003, 37.
12. Cf. GARCÍA PAREDES, J. C. R., *Misión... op.cit.*, pp. 215-221.
13. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 221-248.
14. FRANCISCO., *Evangelii gaudium*, 97.
15. P. ANTONIO SPADARO, "Entrevista al papa Francisco": Razón y fe, nº 1.380 (2013) 262.
16. *Evangelii gaudium*, 49.
17. *Evangelii gaudium*, 33.
18. *Evangelii gaudium*, 46.
19. PAPA FRANCISCO, *Audiencia general*, 27 Marzo 2013.
20. E. BIANCHI, "Memoria viviente del Vangelo", en: *Testimoni* 34/3 (2011) 22.
21. L.A. GONZALO DIEZ, "La vida religiosa en 'operación salida'": *Vida Religiosa* 116/2 (2014) 126.
22. Cf., FRANCISCO, *Mensaje para La Jornada Mundial de las Misiones 2015*.
23. PABLO VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975,31.
24. JUAN PABLO II, *Novo mileni ineunte*, 2001, 43.
25. JUAN PABLO II, *Chistifidelis Laici*, 1988, 31
26. *Vita Consecrata*, 85.
27. FRANCISCO, *Mensaje para La Jornada Mundial de las Misiones 2015*.
28. *Evangelii gaudium* 117.

Ref.: Misiones Extranjeras, Mayo-Agosto 2015, pp. 295-304.

