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## CHRISTIAN ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

I read once a remark – I believe it had been made by Bishop Fulton Sheen – that in our times we are witnessing the end of Christendom and the renaissance of Christianity. If by Christendom we mean the sum-total of institutions, laws, customs and civil practices inspired by the message of the Gospel and therefore serving as protection and help to christian living, then it is not hard to see how this is truly happening in our day and age. There was a time in certain countries, and for that we do not need to go very far back, when it was anathema to speak of separation of Church and State. It was taken for granted in the so-called Catholic nations that the civil constitution should recognise the Roman Catholic religion as the State religion, and that therefore the latter should enjoy a privileged position *vis à vis* the State, whose duty it was to protect and defend the Church in every possible way.

It is very doubtful, as we know, whether such a state of affairs really helped the Catholic religion after all. One thing we know: today Christianity does not need such a State protection, in fact it can do better without it. This has been clearly recognised officially by the Catholic Church today, as we read in the *Declaration on Religious Liberty* issued by the Second Vatican Council.<sup>1</sup> The same point is made even more eloquently by the present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in his first encyclical called 'Redemptor Hominis', addressed to all men and women of good will. In the third part of this important document the Holy Father writes: 'I appeal in the name of all believers throughout the world, to those on whom the organization of social and public life in some way depends, earnestly requesting them to respect the rights of religion and of the Church's activity. No privilege is asked for, but only

<sup>1</sup>Vatican II, *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, n. 2.

respect for an elementary right. Actuation of this right is one of the fundamental tests of man's authentic progress in any regime, in any society, system or milieu'.<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not we are prepared to accept it as a fact that to the crumbling of Christendom there corresponds in our age a renaissance of Christianity, there can be no doubt that our world of today is different from that of our fathers and grandfathers. At times we do have a feeling, if I am not mistaken, that we have been brought up and prepared for a world which no longer exists. We are somehow feeling as misfits, lacking at times the ability to adapt ourselves to the needs of the times, and that is precisely because we are unable to detect the signs of the times.<sup>3</sup>

In dealing with the whole subject of christian ethical behaviour, which when all is said and done is the ultimate goal of the christian education we are expected to impart to the young students entrusted to our care in our schools and universities, we cannot prescind from the signs of the times. True, there are ethical principles which must form the basis of any ethical behaviour, especially if this behaviour is going to be truly christian; these principles, in their turn, are in themselves unchangeable, being logically derived from the very nature of man as redeemed by Christ. But the ethical behaviour of an individual human person will be also determined by his particular situation and by the special circumstances of time and place, as well as by the needs and rights of other people who live with him and around him. Christ has redeemed all men. But Christ has also redeemed the world in which man lives and which has been entrusted from the beginning by the Creator to man, that he might dominate it, 'work' it and thereby continue God's plan of creation. In the light of all this we can understand what christian ethical behaviour means in the concrete, in this world of ours, today.

What first of all characterizes this modern world of ours is change. We are living in a rapidly changing world. Nothing seems to be stable any more. Before us lies the whole spectacle of a world of men and things, pulsating with life, thought, activity and achievement perhaps more than ever before. As *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, of Vatican II, puts it, today 'profound and rapid changes are spread-

<sup>2</sup>*Redemptor Hominis*, n. 17.

<sup>3</sup>See *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4.

ing by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well'.<sup>4</sup>

History itself speeds along on so rapid a course, than an individual person can scarcely keep abreast of it. Thus the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality, to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence there has arisen a new series of problems, a series as important as can be, calling for new efforts of analysis and synthesis.

As a result of the above, deep changes in the social order have also taken place in recent times. The traditional local communities, for example, such as father-centred families, tribes, villages, various groups and associations stemming from social contacts, are resenting more and more from such rapid changes. It is also noteworthy how many men and women are being induced by circumstances and need to migrate, to settle down in a far-off country and thereby to change altogether their manner of life. This phenomenon, as we know, is taking place in central Europe on a scale hitherto unknown, creating new and untold problems to hosts and guests alike and bringing about the formation of what is today called the 'Fourth World'.

Every change implies a crisis, although not every crisis necessarily leads to disaster. For change implies life, and life is the negation of death. Therefore change is in itself a good thing, provided it is not made for its own sake, but for the sake of something better. Unfortunately this is not always the case with the changes we are witnessing in our times. As we know, the change of attitudes and in social structures has frequently led to calling accepted values into question. This has been and still is especially true of young people, who often become impatient of their seniors and of what they stand for and thus render still wider the generation gap. As a result, parents and educators frequently experience great difficulties in discharging their task.

Such changing conditions are bound to exert a strong influence on religious convictions and moral behaviour. On the one hand, a

<sup>4</sup>*Gaudium et Spes, ibid.*

more critical ability to distinguish religion from a magical view of the world and from the superstitions which still circulate, purifies religion, makes it more personal and leads to a more vivid and committed sense of God. On the other hand, growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice, limiting themselves, if at all, to practices in which the service of others is involved, but shunning any so called 'church activities and practices' out of mistrust for the institutional Church. Within the individual person, too, there often develops an imbalance between a concern for practicality and efficiency and the demands of moral conscience based on fixed moral norms.

Another characteristic of the world today, influencing the ethical behaviour of the Christian, is technology. We are living in a technical age. We know well enough what a technical age is, what are its characteristics, its benefits, its dangers, its illusions. We have heard much about the technical progress which has been registered in our age, even in our lifetime. The man of today is absorbed in scientific research, in new technical ventures and interests, in machines and gadgets, and his mind has become coldly calculating, wrapped in his work and technical achievement, absorbed by the thought of his past successes and by fresh hopes of never-ending progress in his control of inert matter. The immediate reality enthalls him. His hopes often have no inspiration beyond the present life.

For a Christian, this extraordinary technical advancement is a good thing, for he sees in it man's response to his Creator's command to dominate the earth and continue God's creation. But the Christian is also aware that such a technical progress was not meant by the Creator to be an end in itself, nor was it intended to render man himself less of a master and more of a slave.

On this subject, again, the present Holy Father makes some pointed remarks in his already mentioned encyclical letter 'Redemptor Hominis'. 'The essential meaning of this kingship and dominion of man over the visible world, which the creator himself gave man for his task, consists in the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter'.<sup>5</sup> Indeed there is already a perceptible danger that, while man's dominion over the powers of nature is making enormous advances, man himself should gradually and in

<sup>5</sup> *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 16.

various ways let his humanity be subjected to the world and become himself subject to manipulation by the production system, by his environment, by the impact of publicity and by the means of social communication.

The man of today, therefore, seems to be threatened by the very things he produces. This is the drama, which can easily develop into a tragedy, of present-day human existence. Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid of not being able to control altogether the tremendous forces of nature which he is beginning to discover within matter itself; he is afraid that it can become the instrument of a self-destruction, compared with which all the cataclysms and catastrophes of history known to us seems to fade away. And we know very well that such fear is not unfounded: we can only think of the destructive power of the atomic and hydrogen bombs, or of the atomic plant in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which only recently almost spelled disaster to many thousands of human things over a wide area.

Such a situation, created by the technical age, gives rise to a fundamental question. In the Pope's own words, the question is: 'Does this progress, which has man for its author and promoter, make human life on earth more human in every aspect of that life? ... Do all the conquests attained until now and those projected for the future for technology accord with man's moral and spiritual progress? ... In men and among men is there a growth of social love, of respect for the rights of others, for every man, nation and people, or on the contrary is there an increase of various degrees of selfishness, exaggerated nationalism instead of authentic love of country?'<sup>6</sup> These and similar questions we must ask ourselves today, with absolute honesty, objectivity and a sense of moral responsibility, before we can decide what our behaviour should be as human persons and as committed Christians in face of the present situation.

A third characteristic of our time is that we are living in a secularist society. It is not simply a matter of decline in religious practices and moral standards, but rather a radical change of attitude in regard to matters religious as such and the whole institutional status of religion in society.

As we have pointed out above, separation between Church and State has come to stay in almost every country of the world.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 15.

Christianity has lost the protected position it enjoyed in many countries of Europe. But also on the level of the individual, the same trend is apparent. The Christian code of conduct is no longer regarded as the unquestioned norm which, though often transgressed, is still valid. Very many people, perhaps, the majority even in the so-called Christian countries, no longer believe in an objective moral code. A person's behaviour is his own affair.

Inevitably this rejection of the institutional Church is interpreted by many as a rejection of religion. This is however not necessarily the case. Many things around us, in fact, show that mankind is in many ways becoming more humane, more concerned about values, and man is becoming more concerned about his fellow-men. Perhaps we can even say that the man of today is becoming more and more religious, in that he is responding more generously to the insights of his own nature, fashioned in the image of God. And if he is becoming more religious, we should perhaps also say that he is becoming more Christian, even if anonymously so, to use here the concept of 'anonymous christianity' developed by the theologian Karl Rahner and others after him.<sup>7</sup>

The crisis facing Christianity today is, therefore, very different from previous crises which revolved around individual points of disputed doctrine. The new challenge poses more fundamental questions. What is the function of religion? What is the Church's role in society? How should ecclesial institutions change to serve man's changing insights and needs? This was indeed the problematic facing the Second Vatican Council, concerning itself as it did with the erosion of the whole religious foundation of society, with the growing divorce of the Church and the world.

The secularist movement, which is still growing in strength, panicked at first the Christian Churches. In an attempt to keep up with the secularising trend, some sought an uneasy compromise at all levels, from an overemphasis on the primacy of conscience to going dangerously close to taking God out of religion. Others have retreated into their ecclesiastical fortresses, dismissing the new thinking as entirely bad and without trying to sort out the wheat from the chaff. What is needed is a new understanding of the relationship between religion and society, between the Church and the world.

In the foregoing first part of my paper I have tried to give a pic-

<sup>7</sup> Anita Röper, *The Anonymous Christian* (Sheed & Ward, New York, 1966).

ture of the kind of world that we see emerging today and of the kind of society that is being conditioned by it. In the rapidly changing world of ours, fertilized so to say by the seed of a technical age, we are witnessing the birth of a secularist society. What sort of a creature this new society will be as it grows, develops and reaches adult age, it is for the future to tell. One thing is certain: man is the protagonist of this evolving drama. But the question is: will he be the hero thereof? or the victim? When all is said and done, the answer to such a question will depend on man himself, to the extent that he will play his role responsibly and maturely as befits a creature endowed with intellect and free will and crowned with a God-given human dignity. As for the Christian, his divine call is to be not only the protagonist of history, but its maker. His vocation is to be the architect of the new world of tomorrow and to shape its destiny through his own christian ethical behaviour.

What does Christian Ethical Behaviour spell in this world of ours such as we know it to be today? The broad lines of the answer to this question already emerge, I think from the first part. In a more systematic way, however, the answer can be drawn up as follows: christian ethical behaviour today means living a life of faith, hope and charity in the context of, and according to the demands of today's world. These are, as we know, the three theological virtues which, in the traditional teaching of the Church, sum up man's commitment to God as a Christian, implying that christian moral behaviour consists primarily in positive action, and not in the avoidance of evil.

The Christian of today must be first of all a man of faith. The world of today is torn, as it were, between the two polarising forces of liberty and slavery. Never was man so eager for his own freedom, so thirsty for self-assertion and so adamant on fighting for his own rights as today. As a result of this we can also say that man was never so free as he is today, both as individual, and as the member of a nation. Colonialism is a thing of the past and few are the countries, even in the Third World, which have not attained at least a measure of political independence. The past generation has seen all kinds of unions and associations taking shape for the purpose of safeguarding the rights of workers. Women have gained their full civic emancipation in most countries, and their social emancipation, if not yet perfect in every respect, has no doubt made great strides in our own generation.

But can we say that the man of today is altogether free as a person? In many ways he is still enslaved by such dominating forces as pressure groups, political manouwerings, ideologies which present alluring pictures of a paradise on earth that will never be attained, the mass-media with the impact of its distorted information and the alienating force of its propaganda.

The Christian must be a man of faith: he must have more faith in himself and in his fellow human beings, and he must give witness to such a faith by his very behaviour, always uncompromising and motivated by a singleness of purpose which should be so typical of the Christian, believing as he does in God's overruling presence in the world and in the heart of man. He must have faith in the moral values which are proper to him as man and as Christian and which alone are of lasting significance. It is in these values that he sees the foundation of true human liberation, because it is above all these values that satisfy the needs of the spirit. For such values the Christian is always ready to struggle, for them he is always ready to pay a price: he owes it to himself, to his children, to his country. Compromising on this level could mean immediate freedom from annoyances and repercussions, but would invariably lead to further subjection and lasting tyranny.

The Christian, properly enlightened by the tenets of his faith, knows very well where true freedom lies. For him freedom is not the right to do what one wills, but the will to do what is right. True freedom, hence, is not curtailed by the acknowledgement of a moral code, but on the contrary it is enhanced by it; for the moral order, rendered easier if not always more attractive by the light of the Gospel, is based on what is good for man himself and according to his nature.

The man of faith is also the lover of truth. Without truth there can be no real freedom. 'You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free', we read in the Bible.<sup>8</sup> On these words Pope John Paul II comments as follows in his encyclical: 'These words contain both a fundamental requirement and a warning: the requirement of an honest relationship with regard to truth as a condition for authentic freedom, and the warning to avoid every kind of illusory freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about man and the world. . . . What a stupendous confirmation of this has been given

<sup>8</sup> John 8, 32.



and is still being given by those who, thanks to Christ and in Christ, have reached true freedom and have manifested it even in situations of external constraint!'<sup>9</sup>

Hence freedom is a condition of the spirit rather than of the body or of its environment. And the man of faith, by his uncompromising behaviour, gives witness to this: his body may be enslaved, but his spirit is free. He is free to follow the dictates of his conscience, properly informed and gradually formed by honest behaviour in all circumstances and persevering loyalty to the Spirit of Christ living within him.

Men of such faith, especially among the laity, are needed more than ever today; it is their proper task as lay people to sanctify the world from within and to make the Church present in the world: in the family, at work, in the marketplace, in social and cultural life. 'The layman', as Vatican II says in *Lumen Gentium*, 'is closely involved in temporal affairs of every sort. It is therefore his special task to illumine and organize these affairs in such a way, that they may always start out, develop and persist according to Christ's mind to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer'.<sup>10</sup>

The Christian of today must be a man of hope, of great hope. Hope breeds optimism and joy. He must be a living witness of all three qualities, which are so needed in a world that is so short of them. Our technical age has excelled in the production of material wealth and in the creation of things meant to add to man's pleasures and to make his life ever more easy and comfortable.

If we are not cautious, however, this wealth will increasingly become concentrated in the hands of a few, leaving the majority of human beings in the world without sufficient means of subsistence. If there has never been so much material wealth in the world, there has never been either so much poverty and hunger, leaving many millions, especially children, an easy prey to disease and immature death.

In such a situation of great tension between wealth and poverty, between extreme comfort and untold suffering, the Christian's ethical behaviour should have a cathalizing effect, helping to narrow the widening gap and to bring closer together the two extremes. He should resist today's attitude among many of his contemporaries, of regarding work as an absolute value. The increasing pressure on the part of governments, to work more in order to

<sup>9</sup> *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, n. 32.

produce more and so to help improving the nation's economy has created an 'idolatry of work' mentality. Because of work, man has no time left to enjoy the fruit of his own work, to take adequate rest and to cater for the needs of the spirit.

Because of such an attitude, man's main concern today is not his own person, but the things he uses, or rather the ever new demands he creates; his main efforts are not directed towards 'being more', but towards 'having more'. The Christian's detachment from earthly goods for their own sake, his following of Christ the poor in the spirit of the beatitudes taught us by Jesus Christ, 'blessed are the poor in spirit',<sup>11</sup> his readiness to share what is superfluous with those who have less than he has and what is necessary with those who have nothing, all this will make him a living witness of his interior conviction that spiritual goods are superior to the material ones, that man does not live by bread alone, that the values really worthy of attainment are the lasting ones and not the ones that perish.

The Christian places his hope on an eschatological kingdom, a kingdom which for him is already here in anticipation, and not altogether in the future. Hence there is always joy in his attitude rather than sadness and despair, his efforts are imbued by a spirit of optimism rather than by a sense of frustration and anguish. By his very presence among his fellow men, irradiating joy around him as a spontaneous outburst of his inner fulfillment and deep satisfaction, he tells everyone that honesty is always the best policy and that behaving at all times according to the dictates of one's christian conscience is always a reward in itself. Here again, as when dealing with faith, we cannot forget that a high price must often be paid, that sacrifice and even suffering are often inseparable from christian behaviour. But the Christian also knows that Someone, upon whom all christian hopes rest, has walked the same way and has made it worthwhile.

In this regard it must be emphatically stated that much of the despair and unhappiness of today's world has resulted in a widespread disregard for human life in all its manifestations. Violence, terrorism and destruction of human life are today a matter of every day occurrence. Innocent people are often the victim of greed and exploitation, and their lives are sacrificed for the sake of contentions between groups or factions. And what about the millions of

<sup>11</sup>Matthew 5, 3.

innocent human beings who are killed every year, nay every month, even in the so-called civilized countries, before they are even given the chance of being born into this world of men? This 'abominable' crime of abortion, as *Gaudium et Spes* calls it,<sup>12</sup> is the best proof, if such were needed, that modern society has reached the point of utter moral bankruptcy and spiritual dejection.

The ethical behaviour of the Christian must be one of clear and uncompromising opposition to all such hypocrisy. Human life is sacred, for it is God's gift. The unborn has an absolute right to life, and this right is fundamental and independent on any situation or circumstance, whether or not this proceeds from man's free choice. Every Christian worthy of the name must stand for life. He is pro-life person, and this conviction he is ready to manifest without fear and at all times, whether that be in his immediate surroundings, in his political decisions or in his own profession. As a man of hope he believes in life and in all its manifestations, and as such he is against any attempt to destroy or endanger life, whether such an attempt be called abortion, euthanasia, genetic manipulation or test-tube babies, or even for that matter capital punishment.

The Christian finally is a man who inspires love. His whole behaviour must be impregnated with love and motivated by an ardent desire to bring his fellow men closer together. This is what Christ has done, and this is his fundamental precept to his followers: 'Love one another as I have loved you'.<sup>13</sup> He has saved us by an act of supreme love, and He wants his followers to continue by loving his saving mission in the world.

What would the world be without Christianity and the 'love' element that it has injected into it? There has never been an end to this process of growing in love and unity since the coming of Jesus Christ. Both the social trends of today and the extraordinary means of communication, such as the mass-media and the means of travel in our jet age, have made the human race more concretely one than ever before. All barriers of time and space have now been almost entirely eliminated. And yet we know that man's egoism and the resulting injustices are still causing racial, political and social blocks opposed to one another. Hence wars, great or small, are not yet a matter of the past.

<sup>12</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51.

<sup>13</sup> John 15, 12.

The ethical behaviour of the Christian makes him an instrument of peace, bridging the gap between whoever and whatever is divided by hatred, suspicion and egoism. The Christian is a peacemaker, here again in the spirit of Him who said: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God'.<sup>14</sup> He is happy to be an instrument of God's love in a troubled and divided world, in a divided Christianity, in a divided nation, in a divided family. He is happy when called upon to act as intermediary where there is dispute and to help starting a dialogue where there is suspicion and mistrust. By means of a loving and sympathizing attitude the Christian overcomes every barrier and undergoes every sacrifice for the sake of others. When one loves, one tends to give what one has, and if necessary even what one is.

It is love more than anything else that makes the Christian authentically sensitive to the demands of justice. He knows that, so long as there is rampant injustice causing social disorder of every kind, there can be no possibility of peace and harmony between opposing sides. While he therefore strives with all his might to restore justice where this is violated, he is always the first one to stand for justice and to practice it wherever he is concerned, and this he does with a sense of utter devotion to duty and self dedication, knowing well enough that, while many indeed are aware of their own rights and are not prepared to give them up, very few are those who give a thought to their own duties viz a vis their neighbours.

Justice, honesty and fair play are the characteristics of the ethical behaviour of the authentic Christian, in a world in which such values are very loudly spoken of but very little practiced. And the Christian may very well feel isolated at times in his struggle for justice; the indifference of most people where the rights of others are concerned does not deter him, for he knows too well that what most people do and what is right are two different things.

In another context, the ethical behaviour of the Christian is not less illuminating where his personal relationship to another human being is concerned. It has been remarked that in the world of today there is a veritable inflation of the word 'love'. This most beautiful and most divine of all words was never used so much and has never meant so little. We know very well how frequently today

<sup>14</sup>Matthew 5, 9.

is the misuse of sex in the name of love, to what extent has gone the exploitation of sex for self-gratification, how widespread has become the commercialization of sex in all its manifestation, what low levels has reached the debasement of the human person, and especially of the female body, in this regard.

The authentic Christian cannot remain a silent spectator before such a degree of permissiveness and promiscuity in an area which in itself, and in God's plan, is so sacred. Here too his ethical behaviour must be in accord with the teaching of the Gospel as proposed by the Church, considering all sexual activity only in function of marriage, understanding by this an exclusive and permanent relationship based on mutual dedication in love and giving rise to the family.

Faith, hope and charity: the three characteristic marks of a Christian. They stand for all together. No human behaviour can be truly ethical and truly christian without them. It has always been so, it is so today, and will ever remain so, especially during this generation of ours when the christian era is fast approaching the close of its second millenium. The challenge facing the Christian is enormous, just as enormous is the opportunity which he and his fellow Christians have in common of becoming the architects of a new world, of a world that will be more inhabitable and more worthy of man to the extent that its inhabitants will be more ethical in their behaviour and more christian in their ideals. Man alone, however, will not do it, God can do it and will do it through man, or rather with man.

G.K. Chesterton, the great English essayist of a generation ago, was a convinced Catholic if there ever was one. He would be a great European if he lived today. He once wrote: 'We must begin to live as we think, lest we begin to think as we live'. The man whose ethical behaviour is truly christian has too well understood this saying: for he both thinks and lives as a Christian.

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# JERUSALEM – IN MEDIEVAL FAḌĀ'IL LITERATURE

(from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries)

## INTRODUCTION

'The term *Faḍīla* (Arab., pl. *Faḍā'il*) means an excellence or excellent quality. The plural *Faḍā'il* indicates a definite category of literature.'<sup>1</sup> This literature exposes the excellencies of things, individuals, groups, places and regions.

The *Faḍā'il* literature includes among other things the merits or virtues glorifying the sanctity of Sham and that of Jerusalem. This essay will limit itself to the *Faḍā'il* literature concerned with Jerusalem.

The term *Faḍā'il* were first used by a few tenth century geographers, as al-Muqaddasī (d. 375/985), who as his name indicates originated in Jerusalem, and al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1004) who dedicated some chapters in their works about the sanctity of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

A large collection of works called *Kutub al-Faḍā'il* (Books of virtues) were devoted among other places, to *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) and which developed in the eleventh century. They were based mainly on *Ḥadīths* (traditions), legends and folk literature. Among the treatises written at this time, there were a few extracts issued from *Khuṭab* (orations) and conferences which were delivered in Jerusalem, Damascus and Baghdad around the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup>

The theme of the *Faḍā'il* aimed at encouraging people to visit Jerusalem in order to gain certain spiritual rewards. This aspect of the *Faḍā'il* literature, emphasizing the visit or even the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and its advantages thereof was written and

<sup>1</sup>*Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd. ed., s.v. 'Fadīla' by R. Sellheim.

<sup>2</sup>Shams ad-Dīn Abū Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rīfat al-Aqlām (Descriptio Imperii Moslemici)*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, 2nd. ed., (Leiden: Brill, 1906) pp. 165-173. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Hamadhānī, *Mukhtasar Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1885) pp. 93-97.

<sup>3</sup>Emmanuel Sivan, 'The Beginnings of the Faḍā'il al-Quds Literature', *Israel Oriental Studies*, vol. I (1971): 263-271.

compiled in works called *Kutub al-Ziyārāt* (Books of pilgrimage).

Another collection of books related to the *Faḏā'il* was *Kutub al-Jihād* (Books of Holy War) concerning the concept of Holy War to recapture Jerusalem and the conquered areas from the enemy. They were written largely in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The present essay intends to serve as a modest contribution to the development of the Medieval *Faḏā'il* literature from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries.

Some modern Arab scholars as A.S. Atiya,<sup>4</sup> Ṣ al-Munajjid<sup>5</sup> and A.L. Tibawi<sup>6</sup> have contributed to the study of the *Faḏā'il* literature, as well as other non-Arab scholars who have added valuable observations in this field namely, C.D. Matthews,<sup>7</sup> S.D. Goitein,<sup>8</sup> J.W. Hirschberg,<sup>9</sup> G. Vajda,<sup>10</sup> E. Ashtor,<sup>11</sup> E. Sivan<sup>12</sup> and H. Büsse.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Aziz Suryal Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Munajjid, *Ar-Rab'a-i-Faḏā'il Dimashq*, (Damascus: Al-Maṭba'at al-Hāshimiyya, 1950); 'Tashīh al-Shām li l-Raba'i', *Majallat Ma'had al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 2 (1956): 382-396; 'Qit'a min Kitāb Mafqūd al-Masālik wa l-Mamālik li l-Muhallabī', *Majallat Ma'had al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 4 (1958): 49-55.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Laṭif Tibāwi, *Jerusalem: Its Place in Islam and Arab History*, (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1969).

<sup>7</sup> Charles D. Matthews, 'Kitab Ba'ithu n-Nufus', *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. 14 (1934): 284-293; vol. 15 (1935): 51-87 (arabic text); 'Ibn Taymiyya - Qa'ida fi Ziyarat al-Quds', *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, vol. 56 (1936): 1-21.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon Dob Fritz, 'The Sacred Character of Palestine in the Muslim Piety', *Yedi'ot Haḥevra Līdi'at Eretz Israel*, vol. 12 (1945/6): 119-126 (in Hebrew); 'The Historical Background of the Erection of the Dome of the Rock', *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, vol. 70 (1950): 62-66; 'The Sanctity of Jerusalem and Palestine in Early Islam', *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, (Leiden: Brill, 1966): 135-148; 'Les Noms Arabes de Jerusalem', *Minḥa Līhūda*, (Jerusalem, 1950): 62-66.

<sup>9</sup> Joachim Wielhelm Hirschberg, 'The Sources of Moslem Traditions Concerning Jerusalem', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, vol. 17 (1951/2): 314-350.

<sup>10</sup> George Vajda, 'La Description du Temple de Jérusalem d'après Kitāb al-Masālik wa l-Mamālik, ses éléments Bibliques et Rabbiniques', *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 247 (1959): 193-202.

<sup>11</sup> Eliyahu Ashtor, 'Un Ouvrage Arabe sur Les Titres de Gloire de Jérusalem', *Tarbitz*, vol. 30 (1961): 209-214.

<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel Sivan, 'La Genèse de la Contre-Croisade: Un traité Damas-

Yet, I believe there still remains an open field for future systematic researches for there is a considerable lack of material which may throw light on the idea of the *Faḍā'il* as to when they originated and how they developed in the subsequent centuries.

#### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SANCTITY OF JERUSALEM

For long centuries, Jerusalem had been an important trade centre as the cities of Antioch and Alexandria. They were the centres where the intellectuals, religious and merchants met. There, the Arabs met to exchange goods, customs and ideas.

But Jerusalem had developed a distinguishable character which the Jews and Christians had ever since honoured. It was characterized holy by its many prophets who preached the commandments of God and guided the people in the right path.

The sanctity of Jerusalem must have been known to Muḥammad in his early youth, when he was engaged in commerce and visited al-Shām, (Syria). Later on, he became more and more interested in the Holy city of the Jews and Christians as he became more conscious of his *Risāla* (mission), as the prophet of God.

In his early mission, Muḥammad had formulated the precept of turning towards Jerusalem for prayers.<sup>14</sup> But this lasted only for a period of eighteen months.<sup>15</sup> Muḥammad then ordered the *Qibla* (direction of prayers) towards Makka.<sup>16</sup> J.W. Hirschberg and M. Rodinson are of the opinion that since Muḥammad could not win

quin du Début du XIIe Siècle', *Journal Asiatique*, (1966): 197-224; 'Le Caractère Sacré de Jérusalem dans l'Islam aux XIIe-XIIIe Siècles', *Studia Islamica*, vol. 27 (1967): 149-182; 'The Beginnings of the Faḍā'il, al-Quds Literature', *Israel Oriental Studies*, (1971): 263-271.

<sup>13</sup> Herbert Büsse, 'Der Islam und Die Biblischen Kultstätten', *Der Islam*, vol. 42 (1966): 113-147.

<sup>14</sup> It was a custom that both the Jews and Christians turned towards Jerusalem for their prayers. 'As in the Nestorian church, these exercises were to be carried out at sunset and sunrise and also during the night'; Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, (Middlesex: Richard Clay 'The Chaucer Press' Ltd., 1971).

<sup>15</sup> Muslim tradition is divided as to whether, in the pre-Hijra days Muhammad turned towards Jerusalem or towards the Ka'aba of Makka. But it is generally agreed that during the first eighteen months of Muhammed's stay at Madina, he and his adherents followed the Jewish custom of turning towards Jerusalem; Hirschberg, art. cit., p. 315.

<sup>16</sup> *The Qur'ān*, Sūra II, 136-139.



the Jews on his side, he therefore changed the direction of the *Qibla* to Makka, stressing the importance of the latter being an Arab centre.<sup>17</sup> Hirschberg then commented that Muḥammad, 'by this step (he) of course diminished the importance of Jerusalem.'<sup>18</sup> Hirschberg's statement is too hasty for a conclusion and for this reason it demands some further considerations.

Jerusalem still remained (and remains) sacred in the eyes of Islām on account of its past, being the holy place where God's revelation took place. But the *Ka'aba* was established as a *Qibla*, thus going back to the early times of Abraham and traditionally also connected to the name of Adam. Some Quranic verses throw some light on God's desire to turn towards Makka for prayer rather than Jerusalem. Though it is not stated specifically, we can always follow some interpretations which could lead us to some conclusions.

To start with, one may ask the question, why did Makka take the place of Jerusalem? Quoting the Qur'an: 'The Fools among the people will say: "What hath turned them from the *Qibla* to which they were used?"...' <sup>19</sup> The 'Fools' here are interpreted to be 'the people who do not think' and are often referred to as the Jews.<sup>20</sup> They were constantly seeking to 'entangle in their talk' the followers of the prophet.<sup>21</sup> Another verse reads: 'And we appointed the *Qibla* to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the apostle from those who would turn to their heels (from the Faith). Indeed it was (a change) momentous, except to those guided by God and never would God make your faith of no effect...' <sup>22</sup> The words 'the *Qibla* to which thou wast used', are referred, according to al-Suyūṭī to the *Ka'aba*.<sup>23</sup> He then directed the prayer to *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Holy city). Thereafter changed to Mak-

<sup>17</sup> Hirschberg, p. 135. Rodinson, op. cit., pp. 126-128.

<sup>18</sup> Hirschberg, p. 135.

<sup>19</sup> *The Qur'ān*, Sūra 2, 142.

<sup>20</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Abū Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Qur'ān Karīm bi Tafsīr*, (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-Mallāḥ, 1969)p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur-an, Text, Translation and Commentary*, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Murray Printing Company, 1938) p. 57, no. 140.

<sup>22</sup> *The Qur'ān*, Sūra 2, 143.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., p. 29.

القبلة التي كنت عليها: أي \* أولا، وهي الكعبة وكان صلى الله عليه وسلم يصلي اليها فلما هاجر امر  
باعتقال بيت المقدس قال لليهود صلى اليه سنة او سبعة عشر شهرا ثم حول \* .

ka. Another verse is interpreted as an evidence of the truth in the desire shown by God that all believers should turn their face towards the sacred mosque, that is the *Ka'aba*: '... Now shall we turn thee to a Qibla that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the sacred mosque; wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction...' <sup>24</sup> Furtheron, the people of the Book (*al-ladhīna 'utū al-Kitāb*) that is the Jews and Christians, '...know well that that is the truth from their Lord ...' <sup>25</sup>

An interesting episode is related by Al-Ṭabarī, concerning the Caliph 'Umar (634-644) on his visit to Jerusalem in 636. When 'Umar asked Ka'b: <sup>26</sup> 'Where do you think we should put the place of prayers?' He answered: 'By the Rock.' 'By God, Ka'b' said 'Umar, 'you are following Judaism'. Then 'Umar continued: 'We were not commanded concerning the Rock, but we were commanded concerning the Ka'aba!' <sup>27</sup>

Besides being the direction for prayer Makka was to become the centre for pilgrimage. God has revealed to Muḥammad that Ibrahīm had, 'settled some of (his) offspring in a barren valley' near a temple of God which he and his son Isma'il had built. <sup>28</sup> They had purified it and made it a place of pilgrimage and asylum.

But according to Goldziher, there was a time when the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (65-86/685-705) had erected the Dome of the Rock (mosque) in Jerusalem with the intention of diverting the Muslim pilgrimage from the Ka'aba in Makka to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> 'Abd al-Malik's intention was to outdo his rival 'Abdallah b. Zubayr, (d. 72/692) who exploited the holiness of Makka, his capital, for his political ends. This theory was challenged by S.D. Goitein. <sup>30</sup> He commented that the great Muslim historians of the ninth cen-

<sup>24</sup> *The Qur'ān*, Sūra 2, 144; Al-Suyuti, op. cit., p. 30; Ali, op. cit., p. 58, no. 148.

<sup>25</sup> *The Qur'ān*, Sūra 2, 144.

<sup>26</sup> Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 652 or 654 a.d. in Ḥims). He was a Yamanite Jew who accepted Islam under one of the first two Caliphs and acted as teacher and counsellor to the court of Mu'awiyah (d. 680). Ka'b is held responsible for introducing a number of Jewish beliefs and practices into Islam.

<sup>27</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh ar-Rusul wa l-Mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje et al., vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 1879-1901) pp. 2408-1409.

<sup>28</sup> *The Qur'ān*, Sūra 14, 40.

<sup>29</sup> Ignacz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern, tr. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, vol. 2 (London: Allen & Urwin, 1971) pp. 35-37.

<sup>30</sup> Goitein, op. cit., (Leiden: Brill, 1966) pp. 137-139.

tury, who dealt with the conflict between the 'Umayyads and Ibn Zubayr,<sup>31</sup> as well as the earlier geographers, including Al-Maqdisī (or al-Muqaddasī, d. 375/985), a native of Jerusalem never made an allusion to 'Abd al-Malik's intention to divert the pilgrimage from Makka to Jerusalem. One of Goitein's considerations was that 'Abd al-Malik, himself an Orthodox and observant Muslim could have never violated such a basic commandment, being one of the five pillars of Islām for, 'he would have marked himself as a Kafir (unbeliever) against whom Holy war was obligatory.'<sup>32</sup> This is only a general historic consideration which we can reasonably accept.

After Makka and Madina, Jerusalem became to be honoured as the third Holy city in Islam. This tradition was collected in treatises called *Faḏā'il* literature. In a general sense, the term denoted laudatory works and in a stricter one, it indicated works expounding the merits of Muslim countries, towns and holy places. In fact we know of the existence of a *Faḏā'il* literature in treatises dedicated to Makka, Madina, Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and Merv dating ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>33</sup> Strangely enough, there was hardly any mention of the merits of Jerusalem (or Shām) as early as the ninth century except for Taḅarī (d. 310/923) in the early tenth century. It was only in the late tenth century that geographers as al-Muqaddasī (d. 375/985), al-Muhallabī (d. 352/963) and al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1004) started to devote detailed chapters to Jerusalem, describing also its merits.<sup>34</sup> Other classical geographers dedicated only a few chapters to Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup>

Jerusalem was exalted by a number of *Hadīths* which referred to it as *Bayt al-Maqdis*.<sup>36</sup> Other *Hadīths* dealt with worshipping in

<sup>31</sup> Aḥmad ibn Yahya Al-Baladhūri, *Anṣab al-Ashrāf*, ed. S.D. Goitein, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: University Press, 1936) pp. 255-378. There is a detailed account about the conflict between Ibn Zubayr and the Umayyads.

<sup>32</sup> Goitein, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>33</sup> Carl Bröckelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 1942) pp. 137, 138, 149. (Hereafter cited as Gal., and S for Supplement); Gal (S), vol. I, pp. 138, 139, 209, 230.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Muqaddasī, op. cit., pp. 165-173; Al-Munajjid, art. cit., vol. 4 (1958) pp. 49-55; Al-Hamadhānī, op. cit., pp. 93-97.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Khurdadhbih (d. 280/893), Al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897), Iṣṭakhrī (d. 341/957) and ibn Ḥawqal (d. 367/977).

<sup>36</sup> Mujir al-Din, *Al-Uns al-Jalil*, (Cairo: Matba'at al-Sa'ada, 1861) pp. 213-214.

Jerusalem, which we likened to worshipping in Heaven.<sup>37</sup> One particular *Ḥadīth* considered al-Aqsa mosque of Jerusalem as one of the oldest after that of Makka.<sup>38</sup>

A number of traditions concerning Jerusalem was handed to us through the Arab geographer of the tenth century, al-Hamadhānī: 'Visiting the Holy city was as noble an act as visiting the mosques of Makka and Madina.'<sup>39</sup> 'One prayer in Jerusalem outweighed a thousand prayers elsewhere... If a muslim fasted in Jerusalem for one day he would save himself from Hell.'<sup>40</sup>

In Hamadhānī's book, there are some Qur'anic interpretations concerning Jerusalem which are quite significant. The Holy city was the abode of the children of Israel.<sup>41</sup> It was referred to as the refuge on a height where there were watersprings and pasturage.<sup>42</sup> Jerusalem was inherited by whoever God pleased.<sup>43</sup> It was the city: (a) where God had announced the birth of Isaac to Abraham, (b) the angels had appeared to David ascending the Wall of *Mihrab*, (c) the good tidings of John's (the Baptist) birth was announced. Jerusalem is the site of the *Ṣirāṭ* (the bridge which all mankind must cross on Judgement Day).<sup>44</sup>

An interesting point regarding the *Ḥadīths* attributed to Holy places in Jerusalem was issued by J.W.Hirschberg saying: 'The Koran, though devoting a great deal of space to this subject, (re-

<sup>37</sup> Al-Hamadhānī, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>38</sup> The Dome is the shrine of which the Aqṣā Mosque is the sanctuary. Strictly, the word Aqṣā is applied to the mosque built by 'Abd al-Malik not far from the Dome. The Aqṣā was rebuilt about 155/771 by the Caliph al-Manṣūr following an earthquake and was later modified by the Crusaders. Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn restored it later to Islām. Our earliest description of it dates from Ibn al-Faḡh al-Hamadhānī (op. cit. pp. 100-101) and Al-Muqaddasī (op. cit., pp. 168-171).

<sup>39</sup> A tradition included in all collections of *Ḥadīths*: Muwatta', Bukhārī, Muslim, Abu Daūd, Nasa'i, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal & Tayalisi.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Hamadhānī, op. cit. pp. 95, 96; Shihāb al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al Arab*, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1925) pp. 316-323; Matthews, art. cit., *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. 14 (1934) p. 54; Mujir ad-Din, op. cit., pp. 203.

<sup>41</sup> *The Qur'ān*, Sūra 10, 93.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, Sūra 23, 52.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, Sūra 7, 125.

<sup>44</sup> Matthews, art. cit., *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. 14 (1934) pp. 72, 80.

ferring mainly to eschatological descriptions of sacred sites) never mentions any definite locality.<sup>45</sup> This is true to a certain respect, but one perhaps should not exclude the fact that though the Qur'an does not refer to any definite locality yet an interpretation of certain verses of the Qur'an could be considered. The 'Holy Land' in the following verses was interpreted as being Palestine: 'Remember Moses said to his people . . . "O my people. Enter thy Holy Land which God hath assigned to you . . ."<sup>46</sup>' and the "Temple" was referred to Jerusalem in another verse: "And to enter your people as they had entered it before, and to visit with destruction as that fell into their power."<sup>47</sup> The first interpretation is quite important on considering the fact that Palestine was always considered to be Holy in Judaism and Christianity for it was the homeland of prophecy and of God's revelation.<sup>48</sup>

These traditions and legends have come down to us in two possible ways. There is a strong possibility that behind the recorded *Ḥadīths* and legends there was a pre-existing influence of Jewish or Christian legends. The second possibility is that they were handed to us through a legend-creating faculty of Muslim writers. A conjecture which is hard to prove though attempts to derive certain legends from a Judaistic background have been already tentatively done by J.W. Hirschberg and S.D. Goitein.<sup>49</sup> Though parallel studies between Judaism and Islām can always lead us to some positive results, yet the tendency would be to derive any possible doubts of the origin of a tradition from one source. This is where I find a weakness in Hirschberg and Goitein's works. They tend quite often to originate many traditions regarding Jerusalem from a Jewish background leaving hardly any margin for some possible Muslim originality.

However in view of the close connections between certain circles of the early Muslim pietists with their Jewish counter parts,

<sup>45</sup> Hirschberg, art. cit., p. 344.

<sup>46</sup> *The Qur'an*, Sūra 5, 20-21; Al-Suyuti, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

التفسير: المقدسة، المطهرة، التي كتب الله لكم - امركم بدخولها وفي الشام

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, Sūra 17, 7; Al-Suyuti, op. cit., p. 371.

التفسير: المسجد، بيت المقدس

<sup>48</sup> Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn 'Asākir al-Dimashqī ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Ṣ. al-Munajjid, vol. 10 (Damascus: Al-Maṭba'at al-Hāshimiyya, 1951) p. 172.

<sup>49</sup> Hirschberg, art. cit., pp. 314-350; Goitein, op. cit., (Leiden, Brill, 1966) pp. 135-148.

which in fact had already existed in the early days of Islām, it is quite possible then that some ideas about the sanctity of Jerusalem attested in Jewish sources found their way into Islām. I would also add that some other influence was exercised in this respect by the Christian monks and hermits. Mujīr al-Dīn has often quoted teachings about the Holy city which were heard by pious Muslims from Christian monks.<sup>50</sup>

What kept these traditions alive was through the many pious Muslims who visited Jerusalem and honoured its sanctity. Mujīr al-Dīn mentioned some ascetics and mystics (known as *Ṣūfīs*) of the ninth and tenth centuries who have been reported to have visited and stayed in it,<sup>51</sup> as Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibrahīm ibn Adham, Bayazīd Bistāmi, Bishr al-Ḥafi, Ṣarī al-Saqatī who came from Iran or other Eastern countries. The example of the early mystics was followed by their pupils, above all al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) whose seclusion in the sanctuary of Jerusalem in the year 488/1095, described by himself in his book was reported by the chronicles as a remarkable historical event.<sup>52</sup> 'I went to Bayt al-Maqdis', said he 'and everyday I used to visit the Temple Rock, (then) I used to close the door for meditation.'<sup>53</sup> In Jerusalem, al-Ghazālī wrote a part of his classic '*lḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* at least the epitome of the Muslim creed, called *Al-Risāla al-Qudsīyya* (The Epitome from Jerusalem) included in first section of the book.<sup>54</sup>

#### FADĀ'IL AL-QUDS (MERITS OF JERUSALEM)

From the *Ḥadīths* and legends dating back from the tenth century, one gets the impression that Jerusalem commanded such a paramount place in the consciousness of the world of Islām.<sup>55</sup> This impression is wrong, for one has to consider that the belief in the sanctity of Jerusalem was common mainly among the inhabitants of the city itself and perhaps of its surroundings. Two reasons bring me to this conclusion. The first is the observation of the Persian traveller Nāsir-i-Khurasaw (d. 437/1046) about the

<sup>50</sup> Mujīr ad-Din, op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 251-258.

<sup>52</sup> 'Izz al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Abi l-Karm Muhammad ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fi al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 10 (Cairo: Maḡba' at al-Istiḡamat, 1929) p. 172.

<sup>53</sup> Abu Muḡammad ibn Muḡammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, ed. F. Jabre, (Beyrouth: Impremerie Catholique, 1969) p. 38.

<sup>54</sup> Vol. I, p. 93, (ed. 1933).

<sup>55</sup> Sivan, art. cit., *Israel Oriental Society*, vol. I (1971) p. 265.

origin of the pilgrims to Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> The second one is the lack of the reaction in the Sunnī countries, to the liberation of the city from the Fāṭimid heretical occupation (462/1070) and that of the Frankish infidel conquest (492/1099).<sup>57</sup>

In the eleventh century we find some scattered material about the *Faḏā'il*. E. Sivan has laid some important foundation on one of the treatises regarding *Faḏā'il al-Quds*.<sup>58</sup> Other *Faḏā'il* literature was partially examined and edited by C.D. Matthews who wrote about Ibn al-Firkah's work on *Kitāb Bā'ithu al-Nufūs* and Ibn Taymiyya's treatise on *Qā'ida fi Ziyārāt al-Quds*. Also A.S. Khalidi who compiled the work of Shihab al-Dīn al-Maḡdisī on *Muthīr al-Gharām fi Ziyārat al-Quds wa al-Sham*.<sup>59</sup>

The most ancient *Faḏā'il al-Quds* tract seems to have been composed in Jerusalem around 410/1019-1020 by Abu Bakr Muḡammad ibn Aḡmad al-Wāsiṭī.<sup>60</sup> He was a Khaṭīb (orator) at the Aqṣā mosque of Jerusalem. Until the arrival of the first Crusade, two other treatises of this genre were written. One is by Abū l-Ma'ālī al-Musharraf ibn al-Murajja ibn Ibrahīm al-Maḡdisī. He was a *Faqīh* (legist) who lived in Jerusalem in the middle of the eleventh century. Abu Ma'ālī composed a book entitled *Faḏā'il al-Quds wa l-Shām*.<sup>61</sup> The other was composed by Abu Ma'ālī's disciple, Abū l-Qāsim Makkī ibn 'Abd al-Salām al-Rumaylī al-Maḡdisī. He was the celebrated Palestinian *Muḡaddith* and *Muḡtī* in the late eleventh century. His work was not complete for he was taken prisoner and finally executed by the Crusades during the conquest of Jerusalem (492/1099).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Sefer Nameh; Relation du Voyage*, tr. C. Schefer, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1881) p. 67.

<sup>57</sup> Abu Ya'īḤ Hamzat ibn 'Asad al-Qalānisī ibn al-Qalānisi, *Dhayl Ta'rikh Dimashq*, ed. H.F. Amedroz, (Beyrouth: Impremerie Catholique, 1908) pp. 99-134; Claude Cahen, 'La Chronique Abrégée d'al-'Azimi', *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 230 (1938) p. 373.

<sup>58</sup> Sivan, art. cit., *Israel Oriental Society*, vol. I (1971) pp. 263-271.

<sup>59</sup> Matthews, art. cit., *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. 14 (1935) pp. 57-81; *ibid.*, *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, vol. 56 (1936) pp. 1-21; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḡdisī, *Muthīr al-Gharām fi Ziyārat al-Quds wa l-Shām*, ed. A.S. Khalidi (Jaffa, 1946).

<sup>60</sup> Al-Maḡdisī, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> Brockelmann, *Gal (S)* vol. I, p. 567; Mujir al-Din, op. cit., p. 264.

<sup>62</sup> Taj al-Dīn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 4 (Cairo: Matba'at al-Hashimiyya, 1948) p. 20; Mujīr al-Dīn, op. cit.,

What is important about these three writers is that they all have been inhabitants of Jerusalem. Two of them bore the name 'al-Maqdisī' which means a native of Jerusalem or even Palestine. The three of them had high functions in Jerusalem and consequently they must have been somewhat influential. Their works must have created some interest within the faithful to honour the sanctity of Jerusalem. But what were the principal motives behind these new awakening treatises of the *Faḍā'il al-Quds*?

Both al-Wāsiṭī and Abū l-Ma'ālī expounded four major merits of the Holy city about: (1) the three monotheistic religions,<sup>63</sup> (2) the hour of the resurrection and the last Judgement, (3) the sacred sites within and around the city,<sup>64</sup> (4) attracting pilgrims to settle in Jerusalem. The last major merit was divided into three other sub-divisions: (a) the importance of Pilgrimage to *al-Quds* and the prayers said in it,<sup>65</sup> (b) the protection and reward given to the faithful, (c) the call to set out for pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Makka.<sup>66</sup> Al-Wāsiṭī based his treatise mainly on a number of *Ḥadīths* most probably copied from the tenth century geographers, whereas al-Ma'ālī wrote a most detailed manual of worship to be used by the Muslim on visiting Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup>

#### THE FAḌĀ'IL AFTER THE CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM

When Jerusalem was taken by the Franks on 15th, July 1099 (492a.h.) the Muslim reaction was not so strong as it is expected to be. With those many traditions and legends dealing with the sanctity of Jerusalem and its merits, one would get the impression that the conquest of Jerusalem by the Franks had to produce a 'chaotic situation' on the Muslim side. And yet information is so scarce.

The twelfth century chronicles left much to be desired in their accounts and sometimes were even too general. Ibn al-Qalānisi (d. 555/1160) in his account gave the impression that the conquest of Jerusalem by the crusaders was nothing else but like that of

pp. 264-265; Franz Rosenthal, *History of Moslem Historiography*, (Leiden: Brill, 1952) p. 388.

<sup>63</sup> Sivan, art. cit., *Israel Oriental Society*, vol. I (1971) pp. 266-271.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> For the abridged version of this manual, see Matthews, art. cit., *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. 15 (1935) pp. 64-69.



any other town.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the sad poems of the Muslim refugees from the conquered territories seemed to have made no mention of the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>69</sup> How could one explain this phenomenon, considering the fact that the occupied city was in Islam the third rank in sanctity?

E. Sivan remarked that the Muslims did not understand the religious meaning of the Frankish occupation in Jerusalem.<sup>70</sup> This statement does not seem to be quite correct. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and the surroundings may have been so much shocked at the Crusade's invasion and the result thereafter that for some time they could hardly react to it. This may explain the 'silence' of *Faḏā'il* literature at least for a period of time. Another reason is possible, that the sanctity of Jerusalem could only be gradually felt by the Muslims after the infidels (i.e. the Crusaders) had cruelly massacred and desecrated the Muslim image of Jerusalem.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps an appropriate word would be that the Muslims (certain Muslims, probably peasants) did not 'fully evaluate' the sanctity of Jerusalem before the Franks' invasion. After all this seems to be quite common. Man only appreciates things, when after he possessed them, loses them.

S.D. Goitein tried to explain that this Muslim indifference was due to the fact that the little importance which the city of Jerusalem had as a demographic, administrative and intellectual centre could have lowered its prestige in the Muslim world.<sup>72</sup> If this is true then al-Ghazālī would have not stayed in Jerusalem for some time to preach.

But there were certain Muslim milieus, who considered the Franks from the very beginning as infidels, and exhorted their compatriots to wage Holy war. However it seems that these militants of *Jihād* did not make allusion to Jerusalem.<sup>73</sup> There was

<sup>68</sup> Al-Qalanīsī, op. cit., p. 134; Cahen, art. cit., p. 373.

<sup>69</sup> Imād al-Dīn al-Kātib Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamīd al-Isfahānī, *Kbarīdat al-Qaṣr wa Jarīdat al-'Aṣr*, ed. M.B. al-Athīrī-J. al-Sa'īd, vol. 2 (Baghdad: Matba'at al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Iraqī, 1955).

<sup>70</sup> Sivan, art. cit., *Studia Islamica*, vol. 27 (1967) p. 151.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Qalanīsī, op. cit., p. 171; Cahen, art. cit., p. 369; Ibn Munqidh ibn Murshid Usāma, *Kitāb al-'Itīḫār*, ed. P.K. Hitt, (Princeton: University Press, 1930) pp. 69, 139.

<sup>72</sup> Goitein, art. cit., *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, vol. 70 (1950) pp. 104-108; *ibid.*, op. cit., (Leiden: Brill, 1966) pp. 140-145.

<sup>73</sup> Sivan, art. cit., *Studia Islamica*, vol. 27 (1967) p. 152.

one exception. The Damascene, jurisconsult 'Ali ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī did in fact make mention of Jerusalem.

On the other hand, there is a record of two authors who prophesied in their dreams the fall of Jerusalem. They are important because they show a religious consciousness of Jerusalem in Islam within certain milieus. The first one is found in a necrological note by the chronicler Sibṭ al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256) on Abū l-Qāsim Samarqandī, a Damascene learner living in Baghdad. According to Samarqandī, Muḥammad had announced to him in a dream (before 489/1096) that a great calamity would come over Islam. Sometime after Jerusalem was captured.<sup>74</sup> The second one is the Sevillian judge, Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī who described the fall of the third Holy city in Islām.<sup>75</sup>

Though al-Sulamī had remarked in his *Kitāb al-Jihād* (c. 499/1105) that Jerusalem for the Franks was the summit of their hopes, yet it seems that he was not so much surprised by its fall and if he had expressed his wish to see Jerusalem returned back to Islām, he did not consider its conquest as the supreme ideal of a future *Jihād*.

It was only in 538/1144, after the Frankish capture of Edessa that 'Imād ad-Dīn Zankī (521-542/1127-1146), sovereign of Mosul and Ḥalab, had decided to wage war against the Franks. Thereafter, Jerusalem becomes Zankī's ultimate aim in his *Jihād*. One of the poets said:

'He (Zanki) will turn tomorrow towards Jerusalem'.

Another poet wrote:

'If the conquest of Edessa is the plain sea,  
Jerusalem and the Sāhil are its coasts.'<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps Zankī may have been motivated to turn towards Jerusalem as his objective end of the *Jihād*, just as the Franks made Jerusalem the capital of the Latin Kingdom. But on the other hand, Zankī must have been stimulated to wage war, solely for Jerusalem's

<sup>74</sup> Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Muzfar Yūsuf ibn Qazawaghī Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī *Mir'at al-Zamān*, (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Dā'rat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmāniyya, 1952) p. 181.

<sup>75</sup> *Kitāb al-'Awāṣim min al-Qawāṣim*; ed. Constantine (1928) pp. 212-213. Quoted in E. Sivan, art. cit., *Studi a Islamica*, vol. 27 (1967) p. 153.

<sup>76</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Isma'īl Abu Shāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn fi Akhbār al-Dawlatayn*, ed. M. Ḥilmī-M. Aḥmad, vol. I (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'lif, 1962) p. 40; Al-Iṣfahāni, op. cit., vol. I, p. 110.

religious character. If so, where did this idea originate from? Either the two propagandists, both of them Sāhil refugees, Ibn Munīr and Ibn al-Qaysarānī may have influenced Zanki or else he may have been motivated through ideas propagated by Sulamī and Samarqandī. Both theories are difficult to prove. Whatever the case may be Zankī became increasingly interested in Jerusalem and made enormous efforts to propagate the idea of *Jihād*.

Nūr ad-Dīn (511/1117-569/1174) followed his father's ambitions and made successive calls to reconquer Jerusalem not only for its religious character but also for Al-Aqṣā mosque, by tradition being the 'umbilicus of the earth', and the site where Muḥammad ascended to heaven.<sup>77</sup> Ibn al-Qalānisī proclaimed:

'Let the town of Jerusalem be purified by the shedding of blood;  
Let the Sahil be purified for prayer by the sword.

(Indeed) Nūr ad-Dīn's decision is strong  
and the steel of the lance is directed to al-Aqṣā.'<sup>78</sup>

In order to succeed in his campaigns against the Franks, Nūr ad-Dīn called for 'Unity' in Islām. This unity was a striking force which brought the Muslim together to fight for one cause - Jerusalem and its sacred sites.

Nūr ad-Dīn was enlightened by Tiqat al-Dīn ibn 'Asākir's (d. 571/1176) religious ideas on the *Jihād*. As a matter of fact, Ibn 'Asākir composed the first treatise of this genre (i.e. Jihād).<sup>79</sup> He had already lectured about the *Jihād* in Damascus in 545/1150. The title of the (lost) treatise was *Glory Titles in Makka, Madina and Jerusalem*. The part which dealt with the merits of Jerusalem was contained in *Ta'riḫ Dimashq*. This part of the book was highly praised in Damascus 560/1164 by quite a large audience.<sup>80</sup> From scattered notes, we learn that there was in Jerusalem quite a good number of pilgrims, learned men and *Ṣūfīs*.<sup>81</sup> Most probably the Muslims who participated in these conferences could have transmitted the ideas to others. This fact also proved that partici-

<sup>77</sup> Hirschberg, art. cit., pp. 324-325.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Iṣfahānī, op. cit., vol. I, p. 158.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn 'Asākir, op. cit., vol. I, p. 62.

<sup>81</sup> Abū Shāma, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 13-14; Abī Ḥasan ibn Abī Bakr Al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ila Ma'rifat al-Ziyārāt*, ed. J. Sourdel - Thomine (Damascus, Institut Français, 1953) p. 24; Arthur John Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Sufism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944) p. 68.

pation in these conferences was to create a certain 'awakening consciousness' in the religious value of the city.

Moreover the *Faḍā'il* propaganda expanded through the famous Egyptian traditionalist al-Silafi, who left a complete treatise written in 575/1180 entitled *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis al-Shāmi*.<sup>82</sup> Contemporary poets equally contributed to this glory of the 'virtues' of Jerusalem, frequently evoking the mosques of al-Aqṣā and al-Sakhra.<sup>83</sup>

When Nūr al-Dīn died (570/1174), Jerusalem became the focus point in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's campaigns, who by now had taken possession of Egypt. When he marched on to Syria he sent a letter to the Caliph (571/1175) implying the idea that 'Syria cannot restore order with its present government; there is no man (who is) able to pursue the conquest of Jerusalem up till the end.'<sup>84</sup> He also underlined the fact that Syria could be used as a base for future military operations. The Caliph agreed on his demand and encouraged him to proceed with his military plan towards the conquest of Jerusalem.

But in order to fulfill his ambitions, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn had to lead campaigns against the Lords of the Zangid kingdom who were hindering the 'Unity' for the *Jibād*. Once the Islamic unity could be realized, there was no doubt that Jerusalem could be taken. When Mosul was conquered in 582/1186, Jerusalem became an immediate step and all efforts were being done to prepare for the great exploit. A letter sent by 'Imād ad-Dīn (d. 598/1201) at the end of 582/1186 declared that: 'The swords of Jihād stir with cheerfulness in their sheaths, the cavalry of God is ready to charge. The Dome of the Rock rejoices in these tidings that the Qur'an, which was deprived, will come back to it.'<sup>85</sup> Soon after the battle of Ḥiṭṭīn on 3rd July 1187 (584), the letters relating to this victory announced: 'We will soon march on to Jerusalem ... for a long time the night of error has enveloped this city; here comes the dawn of salvation which will shine over it.'<sup>86</sup>

Finally, it was the reconquest of Jerusalem by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn on

<sup>82</sup> Brockelmann, Gal (S) vol. I, p. 624.

<sup>83</sup> Abū Shāma, op. cit., vol. I, p. 254; *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 59, 116.

<sup>84</sup> Abū Shāma, op. cit., vol. I, p. 243; Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fi Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'*, vol. 10 (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'at al-Amīriyya, 1916) p. 146.

<sup>85</sup> Abū Shāma, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 66.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 85-87.

2nd October 1187 (583), that led its importance to its climax. More than seventy letters were sent all over the kingdom and the Muslim world to announce the great event and at least twelve poems and two *Khuṭab* (orations) were devoted to Jerusalem.

It was the religious importance of the Holy city which the Sultan decided to concentrate his efforts on the propaganda of Jerusalem.<sup>87</sup> What characterized this religious propaganda, was not the thematic embellishment but the solemn atmosphere which reigned in Jerusalem. Moreover the historic character of the event coincided with another important event, that of the commemoration day of Muhammad's ascent into heaven from Jerusalem.<sup>88</sup>

The *Faḏā'il* literature did not terminate after the reconquest of Jerusalem. A treatise was written by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 655/1257) on *Faḏā'il al-Quds al-Sharīf* (The Virtues of Noble Jerusalem). This treatise rendered homage to the Ayyubid exploit as well as the idea of *Jihād* in general.<sup>89</sup> A whole movement of poets, authors and religious people encouraged by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn were stimulating the faithful with a religious propaganda campaign on the sacred character of the city. Ibn al-Jawzī and Bahā'al-Dīn ibn 'Asākir (d. 632/1234) read in public the writings of the latter's father, the renovator of the *Faḏā'il*.<sup>90</sup> Bahā'al-Dīn had compiled an exhaustive collection on the *Merits of Glory of al-Aqsa Mosque*.<sup>91</sup>

In an effort to defend and preserve Jerusalem, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn had initiated three important steps: (a) The fortification of the city at the end of 587/1191; (b) The inhabiting of Jerusalem following the *Ḥadīth*: 'He who lives in Jerusalem is considered as a warrior for the cause of God ... to die in Jerusalem is to die almost next to heaven';<sup>92</sup> (c) The encouraging of pilgrimage into Jerusalem: 'He who visits Jerusalem ... will enter Paradise,' said one *Ḥadīth*.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 206.

<sup>88</sup> Abū Shāma, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 97-99, 101, 105; Al-Qalqashandī, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 500.

<sup>89</sup> Abū Shāma, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 66.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn 'Asākir, op. cit., vol. I, p. 629.

<sup>91</sup> Though the book was lost, a good part of it was reconstructed. It constituted one of the sources of *Bā'ithu al-Nufūs ilā Ziyārāt l-Quds al-Maḥrūs* compiled at the beginning of the 14th century by the Damascene Ibn al-Firkāh, ed. C.D. Matthews, *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. 15 (1936) pp. 57-81.

<sup>92</sup> Matthews, art. cit., pp. 79-80.

<sup>93</sup> Abū Shāma, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 94.

Another *Ḥadīth* claimed that, 'he who performs the ritual ablutions and prays in Jerusalem, obtains forgiveness of his sins'.<sup>94</sup>

Visiting and honouring Jerusalem as the Holy city was the theme of a number of books called *Kutub al-Ziyārāt*. This is the third and last classification of the *Faḍā'il* literature. These books were written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries namely by Abū Bakr al-Herawī (d. 611/1214), Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 765/1363) and Muwaffaq al-Dīn al-Khazrajī (d. 780/1378). What is interesting about these works is that they deal not only with visiting the Holy places of Jerusalem but also incite the Muslims to preserve them within the Islamic empire and defend them against infidels whose presence would pollute the shrines. Finally, one has to note that these authors as well as orators who encouraged the pilgrimage to Jerusalem never diminished in glory the two Hejaz cities of Makka and Madīna, the first two Holy cities of Islām.<sup>95</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

No complete work has yet been concluded on the history of the *Faḍā'il* literature. There has been quite a good number of material studied but much is left obscured. The *Faḍā'il* literature comprises the virtues or merits of Jerusalem, its sacred sites and the Holy land (Palestine/Shām). The merits quoted in traditions and legends were compiled by illustrious Muslim authors to propagate the sanctity of the Muslim sacred places.

There were three reasons in order to propagate the merits attributed to Jerusalem: (a) To increase the devotion and honour of the sacred places; (b) To focus the idea of the *Jihād* by the importance of the Holy city (third rank in Islam); (c) To encourage the faithful to visit and stay in Jerusalem.

In the first instance the *Faḍā'il* literature developed in the early ninth and tenth centuries. In the eleventh century only a few treatises of *Faḍā'il al-Quds* were written. They were in a way a reminiscence of the traditions and legends propagated earlier. Then with the capture of Jerusalem by the Franks, there was a 'pause' for some period of time. Eventually, Jerusalem became the main

<sup>94</sup> Matthews, art. cit., p. 80.

<sup>95</sup> Goitein, art. cit., *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, vol. 70 (1950) pp. 104-108; Abu Bakr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Walid al-Fabri al-Ṭartūshī, *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith wa l-Bid'a*, ed. M. Ṭalbi, (Tunis: Impremerie de Tunisie, 1959) pp. 100, 116-7.

objective end of the *Jihād*, as a conscientious duty to liberate Jerusalem from the infidels. Finally, when Jerusalem was recaptured new treatises were compiled. These treatises encouraged the faithful to visit and stay in Jerusalem.

The patriotic consciousness of Jerusalem became very important during the Crusade period. The efforts by Ṣalāḥ to unite the Muslims for the Jihad was praiseworthy and the recapture of Jerusalem has by far reached the zenith of the *Faḏā'il*. Now, Jerusalem became increasingly strengthened by its own identity of sanctity and its recapture not only symbolized an Islamic victory but it unified all the traditions and legends that for long years have been established. If these traditions and legends in the early centuries had a fade or no meaning at all to the people, with the recapture of Jerusalem the *Faḏā'il* marked a significant importance which is indelible to Islām.

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## BARTHOLOME DE LAS CASAS

### *Universalité d'un Message Missionnaire*

Père Bartolomé, merci pour ce soutien  
Aux sombres heures de la nuit ...  
Aux limites de l'agonie,  
Tu fondes l'espérance ...

A travers les siècles, au-delà des croyances, le poète chilien Pablo Neruda a ainsi rendu hommage au dominicain passionné dont la voix s'éleva au XVIème siècle contre le génocide des Indiens d'Amérique du Sud, contre les spoliations de la première colonisation.

#### UNE CONVERSION PROGRESSIVE

Rien dans la première partie de la vie de Las Casas ne laisse prévoir une telle vocation. Né en 1474 (ou en 1484, on en discute encore), il est issu d'une famille qui a le goût de l'aventure et de la réussite puisque son père et ses oncles embarquent avec Christophe Colomb dans le second voyage qui va aboutir à la colonisation définitive d'Hispaniola, cette île que se partagent actuellement Haïti et Saint-Domingue. Lui-même tente le grand voyage et, s'il est en 1512 le premier prêtre à être ordonné au Nouveau Monde il n'en reste pas moins aussi aveugle que les autres sur la désolation que vient d'instaurer une colonisation dénuée de scrupules.

Qu'on en juge plutôt: malgré les précautions à prendre en matière quantitative dans les documents de cette époque, il doit y avoir une réalité quand on estimait alors que la population autochtones d'Hispaniola s'élevait à plus d'un million à l'arrivée des Espagnols, dont il restait à peine 15.000 en 1519. Sauf exceptions, il n'y eut pas de massacres; plus simplement on demandait un travail au-dessus de ses forces à une population gravement sous-alimentés. La mine, car le but ultime de la venue des Espagnols est bien la découverte et l'exploitation des métaux précieux, décime ceux qu'on appelle par une curieuse méprise les Indiens.

A Cuba, où il s'est ensuite installé, Bartolomé de Las Casas n'est pas un plus mauvais 'encomendero' que les autres même s'il passe pour un prêtre attaché aux biens de ce monde et font avisé pour les garantir. Il ne se pose nullement de questions sur la



légitimité du système, sur son injustice profonde, sur la méconnaissance des intentions et des déclarations des papes et des souverains espagnols qui entendaient promouvoir *d'abord* une évangélisation.

Un dimanche de la fin de 1511 pourtant 'une voix s'est élevée dans le desert', celle d'un dominicain, Antonio de Montesinos, qui ne mâche pas ses mots: 'Vous êtes en état de péché mortel et vous y mourrez à cause de votre cruauté envers uen race innocente'. Le scandale est grand; tous ces colons qui se croyaient de bons chrétiens se voient brutalement exclus du sacrement de pénitence pour avoir refusé de libérer leurs esclaves. C'est ce qui arrive un jour à Las Casas. L'incident le fait réfléchir; peu après, la vision d'une sanglante échauffourée l'entraîne vers une conversion. Las Casas découvre l'injustice d'une situation dont il est le bénéficiaire. A la stupeur de ses amis, en 1514, le colon Las Casas renonce aux Indiens qu'il possédait pour l'exploitation de ses mines et s'embarque pour l'Espagne avec Montesinos.

A partir de ce moment Las Casas va consacrer sa vie au service des Indiens et se battre pour eux. Il va plaider leur cause, exhorter le gouvernement espagnol et dans une certaine mesure, il réussira. Dès 1515 le cardinal d'Espagne, régent du royaume de Castille, lui octroie le titre officiel de 'Protecteur des Indiens'. Mais le Nouveau Monde est si loin de Madrid! 6000kms. Un aller et retour peuvent prendre jusqu'à quinze mois en raison de la navigation par convois. Les ordres de l'administration centrale peuvent tout-à-fait rester lettre morte si la mauvaise volonté s'en mêle. Et Las Casas lui-même dans son ardeur toute nouvelle commet des erreurs dont il se repent amèrement. C'est ce qui à nos yeux le rend si humain, si vulnérable aussi en face de ses détracteurs, ceux de son époque et ceux d'aujourd'hui.

Premier échec, cette 'réserve' évangélique qu'il veut constituer à Cumana, au Nord-Ouest du Vénézuéla. Son but est de constituer des communautés hispano-indiennes sous la direction de religieux. Des paysans de Castille et d'ailleurs viendront apprendre les techniques agricoles aux Indiens et vivront avec eux dans la paix. Un naufrage, un contrat trop fait pour contenter l'appétit de gain des nouveaux émigrants, une révolte due à la boisson: l'idéaliste se heurte à la cupidité et à l'égoïsme. 'Dieu m'avait affligé', dit-il, 'parce que je m'étais associé à des gens qui n'étaient nullement désireux de gagner des âmes et qui n'étaient mus que par le désir de s'enrichir.

Deuxième faute que l'histoire n'a eu garde d'oublier: en 1516,

en présentant des projets de réforme, Las Casas propose d'importer d'Afrique des esclaves noirs pour servir de main d'oeuvre. De là, à faire de Las Casas le promoteur de la traite des noirs, il n'y eut qu'un pas, tout franchi par une partie de ses biographes. Peut-être trompé par un réflexe espagnol contre l'Islam, Las Casas s'est repenti de son idée malencontreuse et a écrit ces mots dans son 'Histoire des Indes': 'je ne fus jamais certain que l'ignorance où j'étais de la manière dont étaient asservis ces Noirs, me servirait d'excuse suffisante devant le tribunal de Dieu'. Cette ignorance et cette faute ont suffi en tout cas pour l'exclure, au moins pour le moment, du tribunal des canonisations de l'Eglise.

Avec cet échec doublé d'une erreur de jugement moral, Las Casas entre dans un silence d'une dizaine d'années. Il se joint aux dominicains en 1522 et se prépare par l'étude et la prière à un nouveau combat: c'est une deuxième conversion. Mais à partir de 1531, avec une plus grande prudence mais une véhémence renouvelée, il utilise toutes les occasions de faire entendre la voix de la justice. C'est pour lui désormais une activité de tous les instants, avec une ténacité qui, à la fin de sa vie surtout, se teintera d'une telle intransigeance que l'historien Menendez Pidal qui éprouve peu de sympathie pour le héros de son livre, a pu l'accuser d'une 'pathologique passion accusatrice'. Il est vrai que Las Casas est souvent proche de l'indignation mais sa vie se passe désormais à convaincre les adversaires, à protéger efficacement ceux dont il a toujours la charge, et enfin à construire pour eux une oeuvre durable.

\* \* \*

#### L'OEUVRE DE LA TENACITE

Il fallait d'abord convaincre les adversaires, tâche d'intellectuel. Car il s'agissait de répondre à une question simple mais fondamentale: les Indiens sont-ils des êtres libres? Las Casas dut lutter contre l'interprétation d'un texte obscur d'Aristote dans la 'Politique', qui parle des 'esclaves par nature'. Des commentateurs imbus d'une Renaissance paganisante avaient cru pouvoir l'appliquer aux Indiens du Nouveau Monde. Une première fois devant Charles-Quint, Las Casas avait presque convaincu son adversaire, un évêque d'un des nouveaux diocèses d'Amérique centrale. Mais en 1550 dans une dispute publique il doit se heurter à un redoutable polémiste, Sepulveda, chanoine de Cordoue, lui-même traducteur d'Aristote. Las Casas dans une énorme *Apologia*

imprimée il y a quelques années seulement, réfute point par point l'argumentation de son adversaire et prouve que les Indiens ne rentreraient pas dans la catégorie prévue par Aristote . . .

Ainsi admis dans la communauté des humains, les Indiens devaient être protégés. Par des mémoires, des rapports aux pouvoirs publics des adjurations au Conseil des Indes, Las Casas ne cesse de montrer que les Indiens ont été et restent soumis à une double violence: celle qui les a assujettis illégitimement lors de la Conquête par la force, mais aussi la domination sociale qui a suivi. Lorsque à la demande des dominicains, le pape Paul III publie en 1537 sa Bulle *Sublimis Deus*, Las Casas en fait un large commentaire dans son *De unico modo . . .*: 'De l'unique moyen d'amener à la foi tout le genre humain'. Ce moyen n'est autre que la charité, et il n'y en a pas d'autre. Notions que ces textes sont contemporains de l'épopée d'un Pizarre et sa brutale prise de possession de l'Empire des Incas.

En 1542 Las Casas obtient de l'Empereur les 'Lois nouvelles': aucune concession d'Indiens ne sera plus possible; celles qui existent s'éteindront progressivement. Une nouvelle fois, car les textes officiels n'ont cassé de la répéter, l'esclavage est aboli. Bien que Charles-Quint en ait ensuite tempéré l'application, ces 'Lois nouvelles' sont accueillies très violemment par les colons qui haïssent ce Las Casas protégé par les pouvoirs publics. L'année suivante Las Casas est nommé évêque de Chiapa, un immense diocèse dans l'actuel Guatémala, qui joint l'Atlantique au Pacifique.

C'est là qu'enfin Las Casas va essayer de construire pour 'ses' Indiens une oeuvre plus durable. Après l'échec de Cumana, Las Casas agit avec la plus grande circonspection et même dans le secret. Quoiqu'il en soit des enjolivements de la légende qui ont été démasqués par le grand historien français, disparu il y a peu de temps, Marcel Bataillon, Las Casas a été l'artisan, le plus souvent à partir de la métropole, d'une belle oeuvre d'évangélisation pacifique. En quelques années une contrée très dangereuse, dite pour cette raison 'Terre de guerre' a pu être transformée en la Terre de la vraie paix (*Vera Paz*). Une pénétration lente, sans colons, mais par l'intermédiaire d'Indiens déjà convertis, une caréchèse rythmée à la manière et dans la langue des plaintes indigènes ont permis une réussite totale vers 1545. Las Casas a eu essentiellement un rôle politique tandis que ses compagnons agissaient sur le terrain. Toujours sans recours aux armes, l'oeuvre de la *Vera Paz* put se poursuivre sans trop de vicissi-

tudes jusque dans les années 1560.

Très âgé, se jugeant plus utile à Valladolid ou à Madrid au Conseil des Indes où il a été nommé en 1543, Las Casas ne cesse d'écrire. En 1547 il quitte définitivement le Nouveau Monde et compose une grande 'Histoire des Indes', oeuvre de toute sa vie, qui ne sera d'ailleurs publiée qu'après lui. Mais le voilà saisi de derniers 'doutes'. Certes il faut libérer les esclaves, les protéger, les accueillir dans des terres de tranquillité, mais après la sanglante guerre du Pérou, ne doit-on pas aller plus loin? Le chrétien a le devoir de restituer aux Indiens ce qu'il leur a pris par la force. Les recommandations de Las Casas aux confesseurs enjoignent de tout ce qu'il a acquis injustement. Et le vieillard sans grand souci de compromis ni, il faut l'avouer, de réalisme, écrit: 'Le roi catholique de Castille, notre souverain, est obligé, *sous peine de damnation*, de restituer les royaumes du Pérou à l'Inca, petit-fils de Guainacpac'. Le fameux Trésor des Incas devra aussi leur être rendu.

D'une manière émouvante le dernier écrit que nous ayons de Las Casas, en 1566, est une lettre adressée au pape Pie V, qui supplie une fois encore: 'dans les nouvelles chrétiétés, que les clercs restituent tout l'or, l'argent et les pierres précieuses qui sont venus en leur possession car ils les ont pris à des hommes qui souffraient une extrême nécessité et continuent à vivre misérablement'. Cette lettre est restée inachevée. Las Casas est mort dans ce dernier, et vain, combat.

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#### LA MODERNITE DE LAS CASAS

Comment se fait-il que la figure de Las Casas, cet homme du XVIème siècle, nous apparaisse si moderne? Comment peut-il se faire, même s'il y a quelques exceptions, qu'il soit exalté par les voix mêlées de la gauche et de la droite, quitte même à être parfois 'récupéré'? Pourquoi a-t-il été célébré en Amérique latine par d'aussi grands auteurs que Gabriela Mistral, Miguel Angel Asturias, Pablo Neruda...?

C'est que Las Casas, plus passionné, moins rigoureux aussi que son confrère Vitoria par exemple, propose la seule théologie de la mission qui ne puisse se démoder, la seule aussi qui soit irréfutable et acceptable par tous dans son fondement, son préalable et sa mise en oeuvre. Le fondement de l'évangélisation est à trouver dans une conception proprement théologique de la liberté.

Si Las Casas a pu affirmer un jour, et il pensait alors aux droits positifs et aux situations concrètes: 'Lorsqu'il y a doute sur la liberté, de quelqu'un, il y a lieu de trancher en faveur de la liberté, car c'est pour l'homme après la vie, le bien le plus précieux', il s'agit bien pour lui, en définitive, de la liberté de l'homme crée par Dieu à son image et racheté par Lui.

Le préalable que Las Casas entend instaurer nous est plus sensible encore: sans faire d'abord la justice, il n'y a pas, affirme-t-il, d'annonce possible de la foi. Il faut en effet 'garder les sentiers de la justice si les chrétiens ne veulent pas que leurs actes apparaissent comme des 'contre-témoignages' comme on dit aujourd'hui. En une formulation très forte Las Casas s'exclame: les Indiens en arrivent à *détester le vrai Dieu lui-même* puisque c'est en raison ou sous couleur de la foi en lui que tant de calamités les accablent tandis que les responsables de leurs souffrances se vantent d'être ses dévots.

Une seule voie reste donc ouverte: celle de la douceur et de la persuasion, qui se lit à livre ouvert dans la vie du Christ. On est bien loin de l'exégèse superficielle, qu'on prétendait lire chez un Augustin en lutte contre les donatistes, du *Compelle intrars*: 'Forcez-les à entrer' de la parabole de *Luc* 14, 23.

Un dernier trait enfin est particulièrement proche de notre sensibilité contemporaine: la volonté et la nécessité d'un engagement personnel. Nous l'avons vu, c'est la clef de la vie de Las Casas. Mais c'est aussi pour lui l'ultime témoignage que l'évangéliste doit donner ou être prêt à donner lorsque toute discussion, toute confrontation s'avèrent impossibles. C'est le fier langage qu'il adresse à ses confrères dans l'épiscopat: 'les évêques des Indes sont obligés par précepte divin de plaider devant l'Empereur, au besoin avec importunité pour délivrer les Indiens de l'oppression et pour les remettre dans leur liberté antérieure, et cela au besoin en exposant leur propre vie'.

Ce message de Las Casas reste à méditer dans sa dimension universelle. Mais plutôt que de sa l'appropriier hâtivement dans de nouvelles idéologies qui en fait recourent à cette violence que lui-même détestait tant, il faut lui donner toute sa profondeur qui est à trouver dans la cohérence théologique de l'histoire du salut.

GUY-THOMAS BEDOUELLE O.P.

## ST AMBROSE – DOCTRINE AND IMPORTANCE

The doctrine of St Ambrose centres around three main themes: the Church, morality, dogmatic questions.

### INDEPENDENCE AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH

St Ambrose is the Doctor of the Independence and the Unity of the Church. In his time the question of relations of Church and State was particularly acute. His activity in this field was very successful. The Church's independence from the state may be summarised, according to his teaching, in three main principles.

The Church is independent of the State in its own domain. Ambrose made the Emperors, particularly Theodosius, accept this principle. He made a clear distinction between 'respublica' and 'religio'. The former is the State, the latter possesses the right to liberty, especially questions of faith ('in causa fidei'). This liberty undoubtedly implied that the Church be emancipated in her representatives, i.e. the bishops ('sacerdotium') and the hierarchy ('ordo ecclesiasticus'), from State supervision and secular authority. He claimed for the Church the authority of the 'ius ecclesiasticum', the 'ius sacerdotale', i.e. the bishops' right to be judged exclusively by their fellow bishops. He even said that the Emperors are subject to the bishops in matters of faith. Finally, churches and ecclesiastical buildings are not subject to the Emperors' authority: Emperors cannot dispose of them freely as if they were public buildings. 'Ea quae sunt divina Imperatoriae potestati non sunt subjecta' (*Ep.* 20, 8; *P.L.* 16, 997). 'Ad Imperatorem palatia pertinent, ad sacerdotem ecclesiae' (*Ep.* 20, 19; *P.L.* 16, 999).

The Church is the guardian of the moral law. It is the right and the duty of the Church to make everyone, including princes, submit to this law. There was an incident at Thessalonica; its consequences showed that it was not useless that the Church used the spiritual weapon of excommunication, even in a matter not specifically religious, but moral in nature. This indirect authority of the Church over the Emperors was not intended to lessen their political rights. Ambrose aptly remarks that the Emperors envy the priestly body far more than the bishops envy the State. 'Vulgo dici quod Imperatores sacerdotium magis optaverint, quam Imperium

sacerdotes.' (*Ep.* 20, 23; *P.L.* 16, 1001) This whole question may be summarised by the famous expression: 'Imperator enim intra Ecclesiam non supra Ecclesiam est' (*Sermo contr. Aux.* 36; *P.L.* 16, 1018). This should be taken as applying to the religious and moral context in which it was conceived.

The Church has the right to be protected by the State. Ambrose obtained for the Church privileges which were refused to other churches. He blamed the violent treatment imposed on Priscillianus at the request of the Spanish bishops, even though this was legal. He surely was against shedding blood in religious quarrels. (*Ep.* 26, 3; *P.L.* 16, 1042) As regards the conversion of the Arians, his trust was in the intellectual and moral influence of the Catholics. (*De fide* III, xi, 89; *P.L.* 16, 579). He kept on friendly terms with the pagans, several of whom remained in Roman administration.

Having seen three of the important aspects of Ambrose's teaching on the independence of the Church, I shall now turn my attention to the unity of the Church. The one was as dear to him as the other. The centre of this unity was found in the Roman Apostolic See. 'Ubi ergo Petrus, ibi Ecclesia; ubi Ecclesia, nulla mors, sed vita aeterna' (*In Psalm.* XL, 30). The Novitian schismatics, separated from the Church and the See of Peter, have no part in its patrimony. The Christians who possess 'the grace of the true faith' are in communion 'with the Catholic bishops, that is with the Church of Rome' (*De Excessu fratris sui Satyri* I, 47; *P.L.* 16, 1306). In a letter to the Emperors he declares:

Totius orbis Romani caput Romanam Ecclesiam atque illam sacrosanctam, Apostolicam (Apostolorum) fidem, ne turbari sineret, obsecranda fuit clementia vestra: inde enim in omnes venerandae communionis iura dimanarunt.

(*Ep.* 11, 4; *P.L.* 16, 946)

The Roman Church is the centre of Christian unity.

Theodosius was in agreement with Ambrose in his ideas on the independence and unity of the Church. What was wrong was that the Eastern bishops who worked with Theodosius had different ideas. The Church was losing its unity. Nectarius of Constantinople was not strong enough. After him came Chrysostom, who was a man of ideas as well as of practice, but the Emperor's court was not as well disposed as that of Theodosius. Ambrose's labour did not produce in the East the good results it did in the West. But his ideas were an example and an inspiration to many,

especially to the Popes, like St Leo and St Gelasius in the fifth century. The revival of the ideal of Christian society in the Middle Ages derived from Ambrose's teaching.

#### AMBROSE THE MORALIST

It is very difficult to decide whether Ambrose wanted to give the literal meaning of the Biblical passages he chose for his teaching. In any case, his exegesis, so heavy with its allegories, is weak. What is valuable in his Scriptural works is the explanation of Christian morality. This is generally based on an event or a person in the Biblical narrative.

The principles of his moral teaching are found in *De Officiis*. In this work Ambrose quotes the philosophers, and more often the Scriptures, quotations from which are found in every page. He retained the general outline of Cicero and he adopted several ideas of the early schools, particularly Stoicism, such as sovereign good, distinction of reason and the passions, classification of the four moral virtues. However, he was far more astonished by their deficiencies than by the inspiration he found in them.

The religious character of Ambrose's morality is evident throughout. Its foundation is in the faith which is expressed in Christ, on Whom the Church is founded. In brief, for Ambrose, morality is based on the one hand of God, whose will is the criterion of duty, and on the other hand on the Church, which is the social form of justice since in the Church rights, prayer, work and trials are shared together.

Ambrose often worked on and perfected what the philosophers had said. Like the Stoics he made a difference between relative duty (καθήκον) and absolute duty (κατόρθωμα). He gave to these an entirely Christian meaning. The teaching of the last end or sovereign good was known to all philosophers. Cicero in *De Officiis* Book II says that the best means to obtain happiness in this world is virtue which is the means to obtain men's respect as well as their assistance. St Ambrose corrected and perfected this. He based his argument on the Gospel saying that no happiness can exist except in eternal life. Thus the things of this world which lead to happiness often act as a hindrance. Moreover, life of blessedness partly begins in this world with peace of conscience.

The bishop of Milan shows the superiority of Christ's teaching over the philosophers' in explaining special virtues. First of all, he explains the four fundamental virtues which are the sources of morality: wisdom, justice, fortitude, temperance. Wisdom or pru-



dence seeks truth. Justice plans the duties towards God, the State, parents and towards all men. Fortitude, Ambrose explains, makes one condemn exteriority and aids one accomplish great undertakings. Temperance is 'tranquillitas animi, studium mansuetudinis, moderationis gratia, honesti cura, decoris consideratio'. To each of these virtues Ambrose dedicates a chapter in *De Officiis*.

St Ambrose exhorts the clergy to particularly chastity and to youth modesty. To Christian preachers he gives some wise counsels on exterior behaviour.

But he particularly surpasses the pagan philosophers when he speaks of the duties towards God and one's neighbour. Cicero never mentions the duties of religion; for the Christian these are fundamental. 'Neighbour' for Cicero meant little except the high Roman aristocracy. On the contrary St Ambrose dealt at length in Book II with the duties of charity, beneficence and hospitality.

Ambrose's moral doctrine was connected with asceticism, the means which are adapted to the attainment of holiness. He never denied that marriage is good, but virginity is superior to marriage. Virginity leads the soul to the mystical marriage with Christ and it makes angels of souls. He exhorts virgins to seek Christ, to strive to know Him, which is an effect of prayer, so necessary to virgins (cf. *De virginibus, De virginitate, Exhort. Virg.*). Virginity is a heavenly gift; it is a pilgrim in this world; its true home is heaven: 'Si enim ibi est patria, ubi genitale domicilium, in caelo profecto est patria castitatis. Itaque hic advena, ibi incola est' (*De virginibus, I, v, 20*).

The state of virginity is in some way a divine institution; it was founded by Mary. She is the model of purity, because she remained a virgin, even in the divine birth and until the end of her life. At that time this was being discussed: Ambrose deals with this controversy with tender piety. His treatise, *De institutione Virginis*, is one of the early writings which spread the devotion to Mary in the Church.

The ascetism of St Ambrose, especially his teaching on virginity, is inspired by a true mysticism. This is particularly true when one meditates on the thoughts of Our Lord which he scatters everywhere in his works. I quote an example from *De Virginitate* (XVI, 96):

Si vulnus curare desideras, medicus est; si febris aestuas, fons est; si gravis iniquitate, iustitia est; si auxilio indiges,

virtus est; si mortem times, vita est; si caelus desideras, via est; si tenebras fugis, lux est; si cibum quaesis, alimentum est. Gustate igitur et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus: beatus vir qui sperat in eo (Ps. 33, 9).

#### AMBROSE THE THEOLOGIAN

Ambrose was not a theologian in the strict sense: no elaboration of an original idea accompanied by philosophical speculation on one of the mysteries proposed by faith can be found in his works. What he required was a theology which would serve his moral teaching. He dealt explicitly with four special aspects: the Trinity, Christology, the Sacraments, Eschatology.

The Trinity. The bishop of Milan conceives the mystery of the Trinity in the Oriental manner. He puts Persons before Nature. The Father is the principle of the other Persons. The Father is the 'source', the 'root' of the Son. The Second Person is the Son since He is 'engendered', and the Word since He is 'spiritually' produced. He is born by reason of a natural necessity. The Son is the 'source' of the Holy Ghost. There is no inequality between the Persons.

Christology. Ambrose sees in Christ the existence of two truly distinct natures and two wills. But he affirms that Christ is really one: in Him may not be distinguished He who is 'from the Father' and He who is born 'of the Virgin' (*De Incarn. Dom. Sac.* 35). St Ambrose explains the Redemption by the realist theory of expiation and satisfaction. Christ offered Himself to the Father of his free will in order to ransom us superabundantly by his blood.

The Sacraments. Ambrose developed his teaching on the sacraments in *De mysteriis*. He distinguishes between the rite and the grace produced in the person who receives the sacrament. He says that the Eucharist is the conversion of the nature of the bread and of the nature of the wine; this conversion is produced by the words of Christ at the Last Supper. He wrote on the sacrament of Penance in *De Paenitentia*. He says that this is necessary not for *delicta leviora*, which may be removed by good works, but it is necessary for *delicta graviora*, for which public penance is done and which can be received only once. It consists of three parts: (a) secret confession to the bishop or a priest, who gives the penance to be done; (b) exomologesis or public expiation by which satisfaction is given by the sinner to God before the Church; (c) solemn reconciliation by the laying on of hands by the bishop on Holy Saturday. Ambrose at the beginning of his work strongly

affirms against the Novatians, the efficacy of the pardon accorded by the priests in the name of God.

Eschatology. Ambrose thinks that not all the just will be given the beatific vision before the resurrection; this privilege is granted only to a few great saints of the two Testaments, patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs. Ambrose distinguishes four or five degrees in the resurrection until souls are perfectly purified by passing through fire. The elect enter eternal happiness only by degrees. He exaggerated the efficacy of faith when he said that all Christians, including infidels and apostates, will finally be saved by their faith. Apart from this, his teaching contains the gist of the present teaching of the Church on purgatory. It was the genius of St Augustine who clarified these principles based on Scripture and tradition.

St Ambrose is remembered for his holy life. This did not prevent him from taking an active part in the life of the Church. He did this partly by his preaching, partly by his writings. His writings, as we saw, centre round three main themes: the Church, morality, theology.

JOHN AZZOPARDI, S.J.

## ARE THERE ABSOLUTELY BINDING MORAL NORMS?

Today teachers of moral theology pay much attention to the problem, how the validity of moral norms can be proved. The question does not only mean how generally acknowledged norms can be made understandable, but also whether or not and how far a pretended norm can claim to be binding at all. Therefore the problem is not only to make it understandable, why the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' is valid, but also whether or not it is valid in fact, or at least, whether it is valid to that extent, as it has been supposed hitherto.

What is the way, in which the validity of norms can be established? Why is the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' to be obeyed? Frequently the answer runs: It is God's commandment, and we are obliged to fulfill God's will. The German Bible scholar Josef Schreiner<sup>1</sup> points to the fact, that in the Old Testament frequently the argument for moral demands is: 'I am the Lord (Lev 19, 12-18). 'You are a people sacred to the Lord, your God' (Dt 14, 21). 'That would be an abomination to the Lord, your God' (Dt 17, 1; 22, 5; 23, 19; 25, 16).

These demands are to be fulfilled, because they are words of God, the unique Lord, whom Israel has to serve. Today such a way of establishing the validity of moral norms is termed as *deontological* (derived from the Greek δέω to bind).

But even in the Old Testament man is told in another way, why he has to obey moral norms: He is told that they are necessary, meaningful, useful, helpful.<sup>2</sup> The so-called Sapiential Literature of the Old Testament often describes behaviour patterns which by human experience have proved fitting.<sup>3</sup> When in order to establish moral norms we point to the good or bad experiences, which man has undergone by these behaviour patterns, we could summarize this way of establishing also in the proposition: Consider the con-

<sup>1</sup> J. Schreiner, Die bleibende Bedeutung der sittlichen Forderungen des Alten Testaments, in: G. Teichtweier-W. Dreier, Herausforderung und Kritik der Moraltheologie. Würzburg 1971, p. 151-171, 158f.

<sup>2</sup> cf. J. Schreiner l.c.

<sup>3</sup> cf. J. Schreiner l.c. 169.

sequences of your activities; consider the *τέλος* (finis, effect)! Hence the term 'teleological' way of establishing norms.

During the last few years the German moral theologian Bruno Schüller has represented in detail both ways of establishing moral norms, the deontological and the teleological one.<sup>4</sup> He shows, that moral theologians argue either teleologically or deontologically; teleologically, i.e. they judge whether or not the consequences of a behaviour are defensible; or deontologically, they insist on the obligation of certain moral norms, whatever the consequences may be; e.g. Schüller is of the opinion, that a person deliberating teleologically possibly can come to the result, that, in order to prevent certain unfavourable consequences, it could be morally lawful directly (i.e. on purpose) to kill an innocent person, whilst a person thinking deontologically is of the opinion that such killing is not lawful in any case.<sup>5</sup> Schüller himself has a clear tendency to prefer the teleological argumentation. Another German moral theologian, Franz Böckle,<sup>6</sup> thinks, that an increasing number of Catholic moral theologians favours the conviction: 'Moral norms for the relations between human persons cannot be established without having regard to all the foreseeable consequences of the action'. In a recent essay<sup>7</sup> Schüller states correctly, that teleological thinking is much more than the deontological one referred to experience, and he conjectures, that the claim today sometimes emphatical of a more solid foundation of moral norms in experience in fact means a criticism of the traditional deontological norms themselves. We have to pay attention to Schüller's warning: Who adheres to one of these ways of establishing norms, must not reproach the adherents of the other one with evil will, i.e. mark simply on the one hand the deontologists as adorers of the law or on the other hand the teleologists as opportunists or laxists.<sup>8</sup>

Bernhard Häring<sup>9</sup> acknowledges, that there are everlasting es-

<sup>4</sup> B. Schüller, *Die Begründung sittlicher Urteile. Typen ethischer Argumentation in der katholischen Moraltheologie*. Düsseldorf 1973.

<sup>5</sup> cf. l.c. 197f.

<sup>6</sup> F. Böckle, *Fundamental-moral*. München 1977, 306.

<sup>7</sup> B. Schüller, *Die Bedeutung der Erfahrung für die Rechtfertigung sittlicher Verhaltensregeln*, in: K. Demmer-B. Schüller, *Christlich glauben und handeln. Fragen einer fundamentalen Moraltheologie in der Diskussion*. Düsseldorf 1977, 261-286, 283.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* 271.

<sup>9</sup> B. Häring, *Norm und Freiheit*, in: K. Demmer-B. Schüller, *Christlich glauben und handeln* 171-194, 182.

sential truths, which coincide with the fundamental principles of natural moral law. 'But from them you cannot conclude by mere deduction (merely deontologically) the solution of complicated new problems. At all events you need also a teleological proceeding, which by common experience and deliberation thoroughly takes account of the foreseeable consequences.' Pretended natural moral norms cannot stand against the knowledge found by teleological proceeding. Häring is of the opinion, that possibly the prohibition of some concrete actions is valid without exception (e.g. violence done to a woman, or torture), because these actions in all thinkable circumstances contain that moral disorder, which makes the act simply unlawful; but he inclines to admitting this absolute unlawfulness only to a few concrete prohibitions.<sup>10</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas, when discussing the moral judging of a behaviour, already pointed to the necessity of considering the result; that to which the action according to its quality leads;<sup>11</sup> its natural effect<sup>12</sup> or the end, to which the action is directed by its nature,<sup>13</sup> the natural end,<sup>14</sup> the 'finis operis'.<sup>15</sup> Because of the importance of the finis operis for the Opus, it is possible, from the moral point of view, to conceive both of them as a unit, though physically they differ from one another. Thomas Aquinas, as to the moral judgment, repeatedly identifies the action with its natural end or effect.<sup>16</sup> The acting person, who conscious of the natural direction of an action decides to do it, in a certain degree is willing also its natural end.<sup>17</sup>

Helmut Weber,<sup>18</sup> another German moral theologian, proves, that ethics (the philosophers of the antiquity, the Bible, Christian theologians) at all times have argued by utility, i.e. for the evalua-

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 190-193.

<sup>11</sup> 'quid fecit' S.Th. 1, 2 q. 7 a. 4 c.

<sup>12</sup> 'effectus per se' *ibid.* q. 20 a. 5.

<sup>13</sup> 'in quem tendit naturaliter' Sent. 2 d. 1 q. 2 a. 3 c.

<sup>14</sup> 'finis naturalis' S.Th. 1, 2 q. 1 a. 3 ad 3.

<sup>15</sup> 'finis operis' S.Th. 2, 2 q. 141 a. 6 ad 1; cf. Sent. 2 d. 1 q. 1 a. 1 c; 4 d. 16 q. 3 a. 1; a. 2 ad 3.

<sup>16</sup> 'Finis proximus est idem quod obiectum' Sent. 2 d. 36 q. 1 a. 5 ad 5; S.Th. 2, 2 q. 11 a. 1 ad 2.

<sup>17</sup> cf. K. Hörmann, Die Bedeutung der konkreten Wirklichkeit für das sittliche Tun nach Thomas von Aquin, *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift* (Linz) 123 (1975) 118-129, 124f.

<sup>18</sup> H. Weber, Historisches zum Utilitarismus, in: K. Demmer-B. Schüller, *Christlich glauben und handeln* 223-242.

tion of an action they wondered, what is the effect, to what is it useful.

For my behaviour, therefore, I have to consider, what is the consequence. Whether or not my action (behaviour) is defensible, depends on that, whether or not its effects or consequences are defensible. Unavoidably, therefore, I meet with the question, what kind of effect ought to arise, and what not. As H. Weber<sup>19</sup> points to, it is not sufficient to know the consequences of an action; decisively it depends on the end, to which the consequences are referred and by which they are measured. Whether or not the consequences of an action, and with them the action itself, which leads to them, are defensible, is decided by the anthropology, by the conception of man, by that, namely, for what man is destined, by the end of man. Everything depends on that, whether or not man is destined for an end, to which he has to direct his behaviour.

If there is not such an end, considering the consequences of an action cannot give complete security, whether or not an action is defensible. A few years ago, a biography of the Russian revolutionary Trotzki has been published;<sup>20</sup> from which it results, that Trotzki thought to be innocent many persons, whom Stalin had declared guilty and made them to be killed; what were the criteria used by the former and by the latter? Just as Stalin, Trotzki did not acknowledge any absolute moral principle, any absolute moral norm, because he was feeling, that with it he would have had to acknowledge God. When declining Stalin's proceeding, he appealed to the utility for the socialist revolution on the progress of mankind or the progress of the working class. Stalin however appealed for his proceeding even to the same 'moral principles', which, indeed, are so vague, that they admit, according to one's pleasure, this or that conclusion. For the rest, Trotzki himself justified by them the merciless treatment of White-Guardists.<sup>21</sup>

Moral theology cannot forgo teleological thinking. In order to judge the lawfulness and the defensibility of an action, moral theologians have always to wonder, whether or not the action has such effects, that it leads to the end. To what kind of end? All considering the consequences of an action does not answer the question, whether or not I may cause these consequences. I can

<sup>19</sup> l.c. 241f.

<sup>20</sup> I. Deutscher, Naoruzani prorok. Razoruzani prorok. Prognani prorok. Biografija Lava Davidovica Trockog, Zagreb 1976.

<sup>21</sup> cf. the review of Frane Franic, Crkva u svijetu (Split) 13 (1978) 279-282.

find the answer only by referring the action with its consequences to the end, which I learn to know by another way and with regard to which I have to decide my behaviour.<sup>22</sup> 'One has to decide, whether one considers financial' safety or sexuality as the supreme value in life, from which everything is to be judged, or whether one prefers a higher esteem of man, and beyond it accepts also an existence, which transcends the world. The Christian believer possesses by far another conception of man than the usual representatives of the utilitarianism of the last centuries, and from that necessarily results another opinion and judgment of what is useful.'<sup>23</sup>

The conception of man or the end, to which all the teleological considerations must be referred, for its part cannot be found by teleological considerations. It is ordered to man and is to be acknowledged by him, in other words it has deontological character.

What does result from there for the judgment of a concrete behaviour? If all kinds of behaviour are to be put into the light of the ultimate consequences, i.e. into the light of the destination of man, into the light of the end, it must be possible to distinguish between such kinds of behaviour, which according to their quality lead man to the end, and otherones, which prevent him from attaining the end. The question is, whether or not there are kinds of behaviour, that with regard to the end of man shown by Christian moral doctrine have the one or the other character; or, viceversa, whether or not one can justify every action by the fact, that one wants to direct it to an end to be attained, as Stalin the same actions, which Trotzki condemned in him, tried to justify by the appeal to ends to be attained, ends acknowledged also by Trotzki; or whether or not always the moral quality of every behaviour depends only on the circumstances, which make it good or evil, as Trotzki the same treatment which he condemned with regard to other persons, wanted to be applied to White-Guardists. Some moral theologians have started the question, whether or not there are actions, which at any case contradict the orientation of man to his ultimate end and in this sense are intrinsically evil and therefore absolutely forbidden.

B. Häring says: 'A prohibition without exception can be stated only, when an action in any thinkable case shows forth that moral disorder, which causes the act to be simply unlawful. I am ab-

<sup>22</sup> cf. H. Weber l.c. 241.

<sup>23</sup> H. Weber l.c. 241f.



solutely of the opinion, that this is cogently possible with regard to the prohibition of some actions.' As instances he quotes violence done to a woman and torture, whilst he is not so resolute, e.g. with regard to direct killing of an innocent person.<sup>24</sup>

As Böckle declares, for those, who establish norms exclusively teleologically, there cannot be actions, which independently of any conditions (circumstances, motives) can be said evil a priori in themselves always and without exception.<sup>25</sup>

Josef Fuchs explains, that not the 'action merely in itself' (e.g. killing a human person) can be morally judged, but only the 'action with circumstances and intention' (e.g. killing a person ill to death in order to get his organs for a transplantation).<sup>26</sup> Fuchs appears sceptical as to norms alleged generally valid. As circumstances and intentions differ from various persons, and even for the same person in his alternate situations, a generally valid norm could be founded exclusively on the judgment of the action merely in itself. The action merely in itself or the materiality of the action, however, is according to Fuchs just a basis too narrow for the judgment; rather one has to pay attention also to circumstances and intention. The knowledge of the action merely in itself is not sufficient for the establishment of a commandment or a prohibition (e.g. killing a human person is good and generally obligatory or evil and generally forbidden). Though in one kind of circumstances and with one intention the action appears good and obligatory, one cannot be sure, that in other circumstances and with another intention it is evil and forbidden; and though in one kind of circumstances and with one intention it proves evil and forbidden, one cannot exclude, that after change of circumstances and intention it can become lawful.<sup>27</sup> It is difficult to prove intrinsically evil, i.e. never lawful, an action merely in itself,<sup>28</sup> because one cannot survey, with what circumstances and intentions it can be combined. So far J. Fuchs.<sup>29</sup>

Bruno Schüller<sup>30</sup> thinks, that to directly killing a human person

<sup>24</sup> cf. Norm und Freiheit 190-193.

<sup>25</sup> F. Böckle l.c. 308.

<sup>26</sup> J. Fuchs, Der Absolutheitscharakter sittlicher Normen, in: H. Wolter, Testimonium Veritati. Frankfurt am Main 1971, 232.234.

<sup>27</sup> l.c. 230.

<sup>28</sup> ibid. 230.

<sup>29</sup> ibid. 232.234.

<sup>30</sup> B. Schüller, Die Begründung sittlicher Urteile 182-188.

could be applied the principle of preference of values and that by this sometimes it could be proved lawful.

Peter Knauer<sup>31</sup> terms as murder, intrinsically evil and therefore forbidden only killing a human person without due reason, but not, when a due reason does exist.

The problem runs to the point, whether or not there are actions merely in themselves, which in their own contents, in their whole quality contradict the vocation of man in such a way, that they never can be lawful. To some extent the question seems to be, how the limits of the action merely in itself (strictly speaking: the object of the moral act) and of the circumstances can be fixed: 'Killing a person' can be regarded as action merely in itself which according to traditional doctrine dependently on the circumstances can be lawful or unlawful (lawful with the necessary suppositions as selfdefence, capital punishment or defence in war, furthermore in many a case of indirect killing; unlawful as direct killing an innocent person); or I can regard 'secretly taking away other people's property' as action merely in itself, which dependently on the circumstances can be lawful or unlawful (lawful for saving life in extreme need or with the necessary precaution as secret indemnification; unlawful, when one can say that it is performed against the reasonable will of the proprietor). The matter gets another facet, when one terms as action merely in itself direct killing an innocent person or secretly taking away other people's property against the reasonable will of the proprietors; is it possible, that even such actions are, according to circumstances, sometimes lawful and sometimes unlawful? Does their justification depend only on the fact, that by teleological consideration one can find for them a due reason, i.e. that for somebody by them one can get a considerable advantage or avert a considerable disadvantage?

Thomas Aquinas, when analysing the moral act, thinks, that one has to include into the action merely in itself (the object, strictly speaking) those circumstances, which have a special relation to the moral order.<sup>32</sup> If the action merely in itself is termed as 'killing an innocent person', according to Thomas it contains such moral disorder, that it cannot be lawful in any case.<sup>33</sup> Such an

<sup>31</sup> P. Knauer, Das recht verstandene Prinzip von der Doppelwirkung als Grundnorm jeder Gewissensentscheidung, *Theologie und Glaube* (Paderborn) 57 (1967) 107-133, 114f.

<sup>32</sup> S.Th. 1, 2 q.18 a.10 c. ad 1. ad 2; a.11 c.

<sup>33</sup> 'Homicidium autem est occisio innocentis; et hoc nullo modo bene fieri potest' S.Th. 2, 2 q.88 a.6 ad 3.

action, which in its materiality is stated as unlawful, cannot be made lawful by striving after a good end, i.e. by teleological consideration.

Thomas Aquinas in his analysis of the moral act distinguishes between the action merely in itself (the object, strictly speaking), the circumstances and the end of the action.<sup>34</sup> In order that the action can be said simply good, none of these elements must contradict the moral order.<sup>35</sup> When one of these elements contradicts the moral order, it causes the moral defectiveness (unlawfulness) of the action.<sup>36</sup> One cannot see, why the contradiction to moral order could be situated only in the intention and the circumstances and not also in the action merely in itself.

Rudolf Ginters, stimulated by B. Schüller, analysed anew the kinds of establishing moral norms, both teleological and deontological.<sup>37</sup> He thinks, that the traditional teleological theory needs completion: When this theory fixes itself exclusively to the question, what results from an action or an omission, and when it says morally correct that behaviour, from which results more good or less evil than from any possible alternative action, it commits the mistake of pretending, that man has no other possibility of acting with regard to value or evil than causing or preventing them. In fact, however, besides the actions of causing (preventing) do exist also actions of expression, the primary meaning of which is expressing an interior attitude (towards values and evils) without effecting anything. There are numerous values (evils), which we cannot effect at all or not in given circumstances (e.g. God; moral dignity of man; values or evils which transcend the actual ability of a person), and nevertheless it seems suitable to express one's attitude towards them (towards God by prayer; towards moral dignity of man e.g. by rehabilitation of a late person). Ginters calls special attention to the fundamental moral norm of right attitude towards values and evils; the moral justification of expressional actions even there, where they do not cause values or prevent evils, consists in the fact, that they do concretely shape interior (affective) attitudes towards values, that they give affective at-

<sup>34</sup> cf. K. Hörmann, Die Bedeutung der konkreten Wirklichkeit 122-126.

<sup>35</sup> 'Non tamen est actio bona simpliciter, nisi omnes bonitates concurrant; ... bonum autem causatur ex integra causa' S.Th. 1,2 q.18 a.4 ad 3.

<sup>36</sup> 'Quilibet singularis defectus causat malum' S.Th. 1,2 q.18 a.4 ad 3.

<sup>37</sup> R. Ginters, Die Ausdruckshandlungen. Eine Untersuchung ihrer sittlichen Bedeutsamkeit. Düsseldorf 1976.

titudes their full realization and bring them to the culminating point of their execution. 'Even such actions are actions of love, indeed not of effecting, but of expressing love.'<sup>38</sup> When Ginters as the ultimate criterion for the rightness of such expressional actions regards values or evils themselves, to which man is behaving affectively, he does not use the teleological argumentation (what is the result?), but the deontological one (what are given values or evils?).

The very difficulties in Ginters' treatise arise there, where he occupies himself with the conflict, into which a person falls, when he feels himself obliged to expressing an interior attitude towards a value and sees, that this expression would evoke evil consequences (for him or for other ones). A person conscious of his responsibility cannot overlook this fact. The problem runs to the question: In order to avoid evil consequences may one renounce the confession of a moral conviction (including religious belief)? By renouncing one could understand concealing the expression of a conviction. The reason for the lawfulness of renunciation in this sense is, that the evil, which would be evoked by the expression, causes a moral impossibility of expression, which justifies its omission. It seems to be, however, another case, when one, as Ginters does, understands by renunciation a conscious action in contradiction to one's own moral conviction, and thinks it to be sometimes defensible (e.g. one is convinced, that killing on purpose an innocent person is morally evil, and nevertheless consents to do it, in order to prevent evil consequences for other ones, e.g. the killing of a bigger number of innocent persons, which would be loosened by refusing to kill the former). I cannot help being very much disturbed in front of Ginters' opinion, that because of the consequences, which an expression conformable to one's conviction would cause, denying one's own conviction could be morally right; and in order to avoid evil consequences a person could be allowed to take to be obligatory, what otherwise would be forbidden, and to be forbidden, what otherwise would be obligatory. This seems to me to be a very dangerous victory of teleological thinking over the deontological one.

When Ginters justifies himself by the reason, that moral conviction is not completely identical with its application in the concrete, and therefore it could be lawful sometimes to perform an action, which contradicts one's own conviction, without giving up

<sup>38</sup> l.c. 99.

by this even this conviction and losing moral dignity, it is to be asked: Isn't it a diminution of the moral personality, when one's moral conviction does not attain its full realization and the culminating point of its execution? Furthermore, isn't the moral personality splitted and the dignity of man injured, when his exterior and his interior contradict one another.

A better solution seems to be hinted at by H. Weber, who, though acknowledging the legitimacy of utilitarian (teleological) thinking, in order to judge the defensibility of an action with its consequences widens his view much further than the usual utilitarianism: 'An action is good, when and as far as it furthers man – seen in all his dimensions – and is of use for him'.<sup>39</sup>

Here the question is, whether or not a behaviour helps to make of man a personality according to the Christian conception of man, according to the essential end, to which man is called. This vocation man cannot find by teleological consideration, but only by God's call, and man cannot but accept or decline it.

DR. KARL HORMAN

<sup>39</sup> H. Weber l.c. 242.

# METZ'S FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

## INTRODUCTION

A basic orientation and context must be provided for the theological thought of J.B. Metz. This is necessary to understand both the scope and direction of his theological reflection. Metz is a fundamental theologian. In this light, he must be viewed as a thinker who is involved with the core of theology: a core which touches all the different branches of theology. Metz's perspective embraces questions concerning hermeneutics, apologetics, ecclesiology, and the very theory about the possibility of theology itself.

A dynamic tension grounds fundamental theology, i.e., the tension between reason and revelation, reason and faith. In neo-scholasticism, fundamental theology was concerned with the apologetics about the preambles of faith: God, revelation, revelation by Christ, the church established by Christ, and the Catholic Church as the true church. Fundamental theology was a

discipline, according to most theological textbooks, that investigates the basic elements of Christian Revelation. Fundamental theology consequently, has traditionally concerned itself with the two great Christian facts: God has revealed Himself to men, and this revelation was climaxed in Christ, who founded a church that transmits the Christian revelation.<sup>1</sup>

This traditional approach to fundamentals has changed. This change can be seen in Metz's article on 'Apologetics' in *Sacramentum Mundi*:

Apologetics first addressed itself in its defense of its hope to the pagan world of the Roman Empire ... In the Middle Ages, Islam was in particular envisaged ... After the Reformation, it was primarily non Catholic Christianity, and after the Enlightenment, the critics of religion who based themselves on philosophical, scientific or socio-political grounds. In any case, the audience envisaged was the outsider from the point of view of church theology, the unbeliever or heterodox. Hence apologetics

<sup>1</sup>*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6. New York: McGraw Hill, 1967, p. 222.

mainly took the form of an *apologia ad extra*. Today, apologetics is more and more an *apologia ad intra*, the account of the believers hope given to the believer himself.<sup>2</sup>

Metz has rejected the neo-scholastic view of fundamental theology, which he understands to be a 'timeless apologetic'. He turns to the biblical command of 1 Peter 3: 15 to initiate his theological enterprise. 'Always be prepared to make a defense (*apologia*) to anyone who calls upon you to account for the hope that is in you.' Christians, in Metz's view, must be able to offer a justification for hope and faith, not hope and faith conceived as timeless realities, but hope and faith as they appear in concrete situations. Metz writes:

The universal conquest Christianity aims at cannot be attained by any power except that of love and truth. It must be a responsible account of the faith to all who ask to know the grounds of its hope. This calls for complete mental integrity and unmasks the 'blind faith', which refused to reflect and see clearly as a lower and defective form. Christian theology must be the account (*logos*) of a faith which knows it must answer for its hope or for the universal divine promise which that hope accepts. Hence it cannot but try to explain itself in the terms relevant to its given historical situation.<sup>3</sup>

In this approach then, Metz envisions fundamental theology as bringing the Christian message into the concrete situation of human society. Christian existence is characterized by hope, while being without hope is characteristic of existence apart from Christ. The account given of hope to one who asks for it should be so revealing that the questioner can be 'gripped, moved and perhaps won by this hope and its setting'.<sup>4</sup>

The area then of Metz's theology is fundamental theology, the motivating force or question is the command of 1 Peter 3:15, his personal synthesis remains to be seen.

#### PLACE OF THEOLOGY AND THEORY OF THEOLOGICAL THINKING TODAY

We mentioned before that against the neo-scholastics Metz be-

<sup>2</sup>J.B. Metz, 'Apologetics', *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 1. New York: Herder & Herder, 1968, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>H. Fries, 'Fundamental Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 2. New York: Herder & Herder, 1968, p. 371.

believes that reason-revelation: reason-faith are not timeless realities, but have meaning from the concrete situation and sphere where they are present. The uniqueness of our age, according to Metz, is the growth in reason: Enlightenment.

Enlightenment can be understood in two ways: first, Enlightenment can be understood as a historical period in the history of human civilization and culture. In this sense, the Enlightenment would be a historical period reaching its high point in the 18th century: second, the Enlightenment can refer to a historical process, a process which is not finished but continuing, and which in fact is still in its infancy and beginnings. Metz understands Enlightenment in this second sense of historical process.

Enlightenment as a historical process has the meaning of liberation and emancipation discovered in the freeing of human beings and the individual and society who is Enlightened. In Enlightenment reason is so triumphant that man experiences and realizes freedom and autonomy. The emancipation and autonomy of man is discovered in the very freeing and freedom Enlightenment brings. Enlightenment is then the triumph of reason at the service of mankind.

Metz takes this new understanding and power of reason into account in his theological perspective. He writes:

I shall explain the situation from which today's theological reflection takes its starting point, by referring to a problem raised by the enlightenment and which at least since Marx, has become unavoidable ... according to Kant, a man is enlightened only when he has the freedom to make public use of his reason in all his affairs. Hence the realization of this enlightenment is never a merely theoretical problem, but essentially a political one, a problem of societal conduct.<sup>5</sup>

Reason can never be viewed abstractly when it becomes an element in fundamental theology. Reason must always be treated as enlightenment, with its societal and political overtones and consequences.

Revelation in the fundamental theology of Metz is also conceived differently than in the neo-scholastic tradition. Revelation for Metz is an eschatological message. Fundamental theology attempts to explain and ground the possibility of this revelation or

<sup>5</sup>J.B. Metz, *Theology of the World*. Herder & Herder: New York, 1969, p. 111.



eschatological message. Metz calls his apologetics for the eschatological message Political theology. He writes:

political theology claims to be not a marginal but a central task of every contemporary theology. It does not offer frustrated Christians a new area to occupy themselves with, i.e. politics. It seeks, rather, to give attention to Christian theology's ancient task which always remains the same, to speak of the God of Jesus, inasmuch as it seeks to make the connection of the Christian message with the present world perceptibility and to bring the Christian tradition to the expression in this world as a still valid and dangerous remembrance.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore Metz, in an attempt to answer the command of 1 Peter 3:15 in our world situation reformulates the theological understanding of reason and revelation along the lines of the contemporary notions. Reason is understood as enlightenment and consequently practical and critical; revelation is understood as eschatological and consequently directed toward the future which is an open reality. The *ratio* is the enlightenment as a historical process of our time with its practical and critical function; the *revelatio* is the eschatological acceptance of the world by God in His Son Jesus Christ. Metz himself writes about this change in perspective:

A new relation between theory and practise, between knowledge and morality, between reflection and revolution, will have to be worked out, and it will have to determine theological thought, if theological thought is not to be left at a pre-critical stage. Hence forth practical and, in the widest sense of the word, political reason must take part in all critical reflections of theology. More and more, practical political reason will be the center of the classical discussion of the relation between *fides* and *ratio* and the problem of the responsibility of faith will find the key to its solution, again, in practical public reason. Properly speaking, the so called fundamental hermeneutical problem of theology is not the problem of how systematic theology stands in relation to historical theology, how dogma stands in relation to history, but what is the relation between theory and practice, between understanding the faith and social practice.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> J.B. Metz, 'Toward the Presence of the Church in Society,' text of a talk at the World Congress of Concilium, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Metz, *Theology of . . .*, p. 112.

Metz identifies three possible answers to the relation of *fides* to *ratio* or *revelatio* to *ratio*, three attempts to relate the *symbola fidei* to the concrete order of contemporary man: Theology of Secularization, a new 'Liberal Theology', and an Eschatological Political Theology. A subtle shift in the theological perspective of Metz can be detected in an examination of these three attempts. The Metz of 1970-72 is different and more developed than the Metz of *Theology of the World*.

#### THEOLOGY OF SECULARIZATION

Secularization is a process that has entered the consciousness of all critical thinkers. The sphere of the religious or the sacred has been in flux *vis à vis* the secular or the profane. As the enlightened mind discovers deeper levels of meaning and truth that which was formerly in principle beyond the control of man becomes in principle within his power. (Note that we have used the word in principle which means that a reality is within the horizon of man, although to this point there may not be an actual realization.) Since secularization is a constitutive part of man's current condition and history, it is a question to which fundamental theology must address itself. When we examine Metz's attitude toward the theology of secularization we notice a shift in thinking. In 1968 in the *Theology of the World* he writes:

Let us accordingly consider the theological basis of secularization, so that we can use it to orientate our understanding of the world in faith. We can formulate this intention in a preliminary way through a proposition that shows the limits within which we express our attitude to the more universal theme of 'how faith sees the world', and the manner in which we do this – that is, essentially in terms of the theology of history. This formation might be as follows: *The secularity of the world, as it has emerged in the modern process of secularization and as we see it today in a globally heightened form, has fundamentally, though not in its individual historical forms, arisen not against Christianity, but through it. It is originally a Christian event and hence testifies in our world situation to the power of the 'hour of Christ' at work within history.*<sup>8</sup>

Two points emerge from the perspective Metz assumes. First, the secularization of the world is not anti-Christian, but in fact a result of Christian faith. Faith gives the world a freedom *in itself*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

and by this the world becomes secular. Metz writes:

What happens in the modern world is not fundamentally a 'de-secularization of faith because of the superior power of a world that is inimical to faith, but the secularization of the world because of the power of the Christian faith, which accepts the world and sets it free.'<sup>9</sup>

Second, there is a genuine Christian impulse present in the depths of the secularization process, 'and since we see this process the historical power of the Christian Spirit, secularization itself appears by no means an expression of the impotence or even the indifference of Christianity in relation to the world.'<sup>10</sup> The purpose and meaning of Christianity in relation to the world is to make the world world, and fundamentally this means to secularize it.<sup>11</sup> Metz writes:

For in view of all that we have said, 'the Christianization of the world' must not mean to make anything else of it but simply the world. It does not mean that we throw over it something un- or supraworldly, attach a new dimension to it or, as people are fond of saying, 'fetch it' out of its worldliness into a luminously shimmering divinity.

He continues:

Hence we may say that to *Christianize the World* means fundamentally to *secularize it* – to bring it into its own, bestowing on it the scarcely conceived heights or depths of its own worldly being, made possible by grace, but destroyed or burned in sin.<sup>12</sup>

[I believe that Metz, in this approach to the relationship of faith and grace to the world, is appealing to the principle *gratia perficit naturam*. With this understanding, the more grace is released into the world, the more the world would be world.]

The theological basis for Metz's thesis concerning the secularization of the world and its theological significance is to be discovered in his view of the Incarnation. He formulates the Christ event in this manner: 'In His Son, Jesus Christ, God accepted the world with eschatological definitiveness.'<sup>13</sup>

There is a formal and a factual statement about God and the

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

world to be found in this formulation. Formally, God Himself does something for the world in an historical action. From this we learn that God is a God of history, who is in history or rather in front of history. God is not an abstract force, but a person in relation with the world. Formally, the world is a world of men, not things; and God has revealed to men the eschatological character of the world, which could not be known in itself. In fact, it was in a man of the world, that God freely chose to make this eschatological end and meaning present and known.

Factually, the statement says that God accepts the world, not by making it by Himself, but by accepting it as different and distinct from Himself and thereby recognizing its freedom. The truth of the enfleshment of God in the person of Jesus, the Christ, makes the world appear as fully world and God appear as fully God, and radically other than the world. Metz writes:

This multifarious truth of the event of Christ, according to which the Incarnation of God makes the flesh appear as wholly flesh, as earth, as secular world, and God appear wholly as God in his transcendent superiority to the world, now becomes operative in the economy of the movement of history which stands beneath the 'law of Christ' 1 Cor 9:21; it becomes the framework of a genuinely Christian view of the world.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps a summary of Metz former view of the theology of secularization would include the following points: (1) Christianity has been the occasion through which the secularization of the world becomes possible; (2) Christian faith adds nothing to the world, but uncovers what is already there but is not clearly realized because of the reality of sin in the world; (3) to Christianize the world is to 'secularize the world,' to affirm and support the worldliness of world; (4) the theological basis for the theology of secularization is grounded in the Incarnation, which is the eschatological, definitive acceptance of the world by God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Metz has recently shifted his thinking on the question of the theology of secularization.<sup>15</sup> He believes that to pursue the path of a theology of secularization is ultimately to pursue a dissolution of theological thinking. In the situation and context of sec-

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> J.B. Metz, 'Grond en functie van de politieke theologie', *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*, No. 2, 1972, pp. 159-170.

ularization theology, theology becomes a play, but a play without social relevance. The reason for this affirmation of the inconsequentialness of theology in light of a theology of secularization is the freedom of the world *in itself*. The corollary of this statement is: the critical liberating force of Christianity in the world is finished, because faith is in another sphere than the world. Faith, if it is to have any meaning in the contemporary world, will become that of a private preoccupation.<sup>16</sup> Metz portrays the anthropological model of the theology of secularization in the following way:

The anthropological model which the theology of the world attempts to portray fixes itself within a given 'new time' background and stands on a foundation separated from history, and this eschatological judgment is of no consequence.<sup>17</sup>

Metz believes that the anthropological model of the theology of secularization is an anthropology separated from history with its future eschatological perspective. In its concrete expression, secularization theology articulates the difference between two kingdoms, *twee-rijken-leer*: the Church vs. the State. [In this case, Metz is close to the thinking of F. Gogarten. The difference between the two is that Metz comes to the secularization and freedom of the world vis the Incarnation, and Gogarten comes to the freedom and secularization of the world via a theology of creation.]

#### SUMMARY

What is important to note in this section of the article is the change that Metz has gone through *re* theology of Secularization. It should be noted that the reason for his rejection of his own former position, or rather than rejection, perhaps a critical correction through expansion of theological thinking, lies within the approach he has to fundamental theology. Secularization theology ultimately leads to the separation and non-interrelation of *revelatio* and *ratio*, *fides* and *ratio*. Metz cannot accept this exclusion. The *revelatio* of Christianity is a *revelatio* of *Deus*, and as such must have importance for the world. This rejection of his former position does not mean that Metz has changed his attitude toward the

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160. 'Het antropologisch model dat bepalend is deze poging om een theologie van de wereld' binnen de nieuwe tijd gestalte te geven, staat in de grond van de zaak los van de geschiedenis, en is dus wezenlijk ook niet eschatologisch gericht.

world. He still believes, as will be shown in the third answer proposed to the question of fundamental theology, that the world is a world. What has changed is a more complete understanding of the *symbola fidei* in relation to the world, which Metz characterizes as a dangerous memory. This will be explained in the section dealing with the new 'Eschatological Political Theology'.

#### LIBERAL THEOLOGY

The second possible answer Metz poses for an answer to the quest of fundamental theology is liberal theology, or more correctly, a new version of liberal theology.<sup>18</sup> Metz sees liberal in this 'liberal theology' as an openness to the tendencies of the times and its enlightenment. He writes:

This theology of the World applies Christianity in such a way that it is connected with the traces of the enlightenment and the time period of criticism to the extent that it has reasonable application.<sup>19</sup>

Enlightenment is seen as a continuous process which produces emancipation and autonomy. However, the autonomy and emancipation which materialize in liberal theology arise only with what Metz calls an adaptation of Christian revelation. On this point he writes:

This positive outlook is externally but another form of louder apologetical adaptation through which Christianity becomes the sacrificial offering in light of an uncritical judgment of progress.<sup>20</sup>

Liberal theology places the emphasis of its system more on enlightenment than on Christian revelation. Metz believes that this approach betrays a lack of critical perspective regarding enlightenment, and *uncritical* acceptance of enlightenment. This prejudice of liberal theology reveals itself in its anthropological model: *dat de mens ziet als heerser over de natuur*, that man is the ruler over nature. In this view of man dominating creation, man can be seen

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61. 'Voor deze "theologie van de wereld" geldt als christelijk datgene wat in het spoor van de Verlichting en het tijdperk van kritiek dat er mee samenhangt, als redelijk geldt.'

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160. 'Deze positie blijkt m.i. uiteindelijk niets anders te zijn dan een vorm van louter apologetische aanpassing, waarvan een onkritisch "progressief" gericht christendom het slacht-offer wordt.'

as nothing other than a worker and his task is to put everything in creation at the use and disposal of mankind.

Metz believes that this approach to man in the thought of liberal theology is 'eendimensionale': one dimensional. Man is seen only as a worker, and only those things that man creates have meaning. [This objection by Metz against the one-dimensional view of liberal theology finds support in the thinking of Herbert Marcuse.] If man is only a worker, then Christian faith has nothing to say about: play, spirituality, pain, suffering, joy, etc. [Here Metz appears to be headed in the direction of Cox who in the beginning also turned his attention to the theology of secularization, but in two recent books: *The Feast of Fools* and *On Not Leaving it to the Snake*, shifted his reflection to spirituality, play, joy, suffering, etc.]

Metz sees no real theology in the theology of liberation. He believes that emancipation in light of Enlightenment is to narrow a view or horizon for fundamental theology, it is too one-dimensional. Again, it is important to realize that Metz rejects the position of liberal theology from his understanding of the scope and purpose of fundamental theology. Liberal theology as he sees it destroys the *revelatio* or *fides* by adapting it to enlightenment. Christian faith again, as in the case of the theology of secularization, has nothing to bring to the world. To admit this premise of liberal theology is to destroy theology and faith for Metz.

#### ESCHATOLOGICAL POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Metz now offers his solution to the questions posed to fundamental theology, the question of *revelatio* in relation to *ratio*. He entitles his answer: Eschatological Political Theology. The following is the position that Metz presently holds, and as it has been pointed out, there has been a change in Metz's thinking. By adding the word Eschatological to the idea of political theology a hint is given to the reader that there has been a change in perspective from the Metz of *Theology of the World*. To say that there has been a change in the thinking of Metz is not to say that he recants all he said previously. What it does say is that there has been a deepening in his thought, a broadening of his perspective. It is true to say that there have been some things left behind in the past, i.e. theology of secularization, but Metz still maintains that theology is political and now adds his new idea of eschatological. First, a summary of the familiar idea of political theology will be presented, and then an attempt will be made to expose the

meaning of eschatological.

Metz ascribes two forces to be at work in political theology:

I understand political theology to be a critical correction of present-day theology inasmuch as this theology shows an extreme privatizing tendency (a tendency, that is, to center on the private person rather than 'public' 'political' society). At the same time, I understand this political theology to be a positive attempt to formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of our present society.<sup>21</sup>

The first force in political theology is negative. It seeks to negate the over emphasis on the individual brought about by an existential theology. It also seeks to have the future accepted as a real dimension of time against an existential view which makes the present the sole important time dimension. Metz's break with existential theology arose from a concern for history and the acceptance of the secular world and its confrontation by the Christian faith.<sup>22</sup>

Metz explains the positive task of political theology in the following way:

It is to determine anew the relation between religion and society, between the church and societal 'publicness', between eschatological faith and societal life . . . Theology, in so far as it is political theology, is obliged to establish this second degree reflection when it comes to formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of the present situation of society.<sup>23</sup>

Political theology is then at the heart of Metz's fundamental theology if not identical with fundamental theology. One tends toward the latter when he reads Metz's article, 'Toward the Presence of the Church in Society'. He writes:

A theology which desires the critical responsibility of Christian faith and of its traditions in this sense cannot neglect in its core this social and 'practical' relation; its theory does not allow abstraction from the problems of publicness, justice, freedom, etc. It must take into account the consequences which arise when in a particular situation God is spoken of — or there

<sup>21</sup> Metz, *Theology of . . .*, p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> F. Fiorenza, 'The Thought of J.B. Metz', *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 10, 1966, p. 249.

<sup>23</sup> Metz, *Theology of . . .*, p. 111.



is silence about God. In this sense it can and must be a political theology – even independently of the question of how political themes in particular should be considered under the determination of the eschatological hope of the Christian.<sup>24</sup>

Metz goes further and says regarding the command of 1 Peter 3:15:

In doing this (meeting the responsibility of 1 Peter 3:15), it (the church) cannot uncritically ignore or minimize the historical distance separating our present modern times from the irrevocable situation of the biblical testimonies, i.e. it cannot simply presume that the content and intention of these biblical testimonies are known and simply ask about their contemporary application. Rather, it must take into account that this historical and social difference makes what the content and intention of the biblical testimonies themselves are a topic for discussion over and over again. In this sense, 'political theology' is not simply a theory of the delayed application of the Christian message to our present but a theory of the truth of this message as practically and critically intended for our present.<sup>25</sup>

This briefly is Metz's understanding of political theology in the concept of eschatological political theology. Now the idea of eschatology must be explored especially in light of the dangerous memory.

During the Concilium World Congress in Brussels in 1970, Metz delivered a talk entitled 'Toward the Presence of the Church in Society'. He sought to describe the theological basis for the topic in the following manner:

I would like to present the thesis that the *Church must understand and verify herself in the 'systems' of our emancipatory society as the public witness to and bearer of a dangerous remembrance of freedom.*<sup>26</sup>

Metz seeks to place the whole content of the Christian tradition and revelation as an object of a dangerous memory. He wishes to interpret the traditional content of Christianity as a critical liberating memory. He calls for the whole of the *symbola fidei* to be preached in a critical and dangerous way. Metz believes that *memoria* is a fundamental form of expressing the Christian faith. He writes:

<sup>24</sup> Metz, *Concilium Congress . . .*, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

We Christians carry out the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi* in faith. In believing we remind ourselves of the testament of his love in which the dominion of God appeared among men precisely inasmuch as dominion among men began to be put aside because Jesus embraced the insignificant, rejected and repressed, thereby proclaiming this coming dominion of God precisely as the liberating power of an unreserved love.<sup>27</sup>

It is in the *memoria Christianorum* that the anticipation for the future resides and grows strong, for they hope in the promises which have been given to them, live in a joy of what has already entered the human sphere, and yearn for the fullness which is to come, the eschatological reign and kingdom of God: the absolute future of man.

The *memoria Metz* speaks of is both dangerous and liberating. This *memoria* does not dispense the Christian from the hazards of the future, but propels the Christian into the future. The *memoria* directs the Christian away from any future which does not have God as its center, be this ecclesial or societal. Such a definitive remembrance

breaks out of the magic circle of the dominant consciousness. It does not claim history only as a screen on which to project present interests. It mobilizes tradition as a dangerous tradition and, thus, as a critical and liberating power opposed to the one-dimensionality of the predominant consciousness and to the security of those 'whose hour is always there.'<sup>28</sup>

Not only is the *memoria* of the Christian directing him toward the future, but it also acts as a source of critical correction on the existing structure of society and the church insofar as they do not reflect, or to the extent that they hold back the activity of God in bringing about His kingdom. In this sense, Metz also sees the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi* as a subversive memory. He writes:

In my opinion, Christian faith can and must be seen as such a subversive *memoria*, and the church is to an extent the form of its public being. The church's credal and doctrinal formulae are formulae in which this dangerous memory is spelled out publicly. The criterion of their being genuinely Christian is the liberating,

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

but also the saving, dangerousness with which they realize the remembered freedom of Jesus in the present society and its way of thinking and living.<sup>29</sup>

In a real sense then, the *memoria passionis, mortis and resurrectionis Jesu Christi* is a critical corrective of contemporary society and its structure and life. However, the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis* is also the heart of the Christian faith and as such is the definitive eschatological action of God toward men and the world. Metz therefore stands on firm ground in calling his fundamental theology: Eschatological Political Theology.

Unlike the theology of secularization and liberal theology, eschatological political theology envisages an intimacy and interrelation between *ratio* and *fides*, *ratio* and *revelatio*. In opposition to the theology of secularization, eschatological political theology holds for the interrelation of faith and the world. They are not totally distinct and separate realities. In opposition to the theology of liberation, eschatological political theology does not accept the movement of enlightenment as one-dimensional or always in the direction of progress which is viewed as always toward the good. Rather, enlightenment is seen as dialectical: both good and bad. Eschatological political theology has a critical apparatus for dealing with the contemporary world: the whole content of Christian faith, which is a dangerous memory that always aims for the liberation of men.

In a special way, the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi* moves the church to care for and direct itself to the 'little ones': the poor as they are found in the beatitudes, for these are the ones who will inherit the kingdom of God. Metz writes:

This *memoria* of Jesus Christ is not a remembrance that deceptively dispenses from the hazards of the future. It is not a kind of bourgeois counterpart to hope. On the contrary, it contains a definite anticipation of the future as a future for the hopeless, broken and oppressed.<sup>30</sup>

Metz's understanding of the dangerous memory also broadens the values that are important for Christianity. In the *Theology of the World* criticism stood out as the greatest Christian value. Metz has gone beyond his former thinking again. Some of the Christian values awakened by the dangerous memory can be seen in ques-

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

tions he asked during his talk in Brussels at the Concilium World Congress.

But where is this eschatological remembrance of freedom alive to overwhelm our systems of thought and action with its questions? Who can lead us to the freedom to suffer at the sufferings of others and to heed the prophecy of their sufferings, even though the negativity of suffering seems to be less expected of one and even frankly improper; to the freedom to become old, even though our public seems to be defined by a denial of age which it actually finds a secret shame; to the freedom of contemplation, even though we seem to be under the hypnosis of work, achievement and planning right into the chambers of our consciousness; to the freedom finally, to take into consideration our own finiteness and questionableness, even though our public exists with the supposition of an even more healthy and harmonious life? Who answers the claim to freedom in past sufferings and hopes? Who answers the challenge of the dead and makes conscience sensitive to their freedom? Who cultivates solidarity with the dead to whom we shall belong someday after tomorrow? Finally, who can share his understanding of freedom even with those who do not die an emphatic death but who die a terribly banal and fatal everyday death?<sup>31</sup>

Finally, the eschatological political theology gives spirituality its proper place in the Christian life of hope. In prayer the Christian seeks to gain the power to be free, the power of selflessness which is required by a liberating stance toward others. There is not a dichotomy between prayer and *praxis* in eschatological political theology, each is at the same time the complement and verifiable principle of the other.<sup>32</sup>

Metz himself gives the best summary of his thinking:

Political Theology is the attempt to incorporate the eschatological message of Christendom within the proportions of contemporary times inasmuch as it takes the form of critical, practical thinking.<sup>33</sup>

In the *Theology of the World*, Metz sees contemporary man as

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Metz, 'Ground en ...', De politieke theologie is de poging om de eschatologische boodschap van het christendom binnen de verhoudingen van de nieuwe tijd uit te drukken als vorm van kritisch-praktisch denken.'

directed toward the future.<sup>34</sup> In fundamental theology the question therefore arises: Who is the subject of history, who is the subject of the future of man? Metz addresses himself to three possible contemporary answers, rejects them, and then offers his own answer in light of eschatological political theology.

The first school Metz treats is positivism and neo-positivism. Positivism does not speak of a universal sense or subject of history. This is due to their empirical bent, with its insistence on the verification principle. It is impossible to speak of an absolute future in this system. The question itself has no meaning since it cannot be verified. Positivism, *ipso facto*, surrenders the most important parts of social life to irrationality. If you cannot say anything without verification, you can only speak of impersonal things (since the affairs of the heart, emotions, and feelings cannot be placed under a microscope; and even if the sensual reactions could be measured electronically, the meanings of these reactions would still fall outside the principles of verification.) Metz quotes J. Habermas who says that there is a validity to the technical instrumental thinking of positive science, but if you limit rationality to this level, the most important part of human existence is excluded. Communication between human beings is a big if not essential part of social life. There can be constraints in power through communication for emancipation, liberation and enlightenment.<sup>35</sup>

Metz also rejects the approach of classical Marxism to the question of: Who is the subject of universal history? Unlike the positivists who can make no meaning of the question, the question in classical Marxism is of great importance.

The Marxists speak of an absolute future, i.e. the realization of communist society. They also speak of the subject of history who will realize this future, i.e., the proletariat without alienation. There is, however, within Marxism today a breakdown of the certitude of this process. This can be seen in the thought of H. Marcuse and E. Bloch. Marcuse says that the subject of classical Marxism, the proletariat, has been absorbed in society. For him, the proletariat is no longer the subject of moving force of universal history. Marcuse has turned to the students, the third world, and the marginal groups of society. Bloch, who is a metaphysician sees an intrinsic problem which Marxism has not answered to

<sup>34</sup> Metz, *Theology of . . .*, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> Metz, *Ground en . . .*, p. 162-63.

date: the perfect state will become a boredom and the question of death will not as yet be answered. The answer of classical Marxism is not complete, even though it speaks of an absolute future and a subject to universal world history.

Metz also rejects the answer of the classical Ideologist who come off of Hegel. Politics is not dealt with in a pragmatic way in this system, and therefore is not in the service of the real.

Finally, Metz presents the answer of eschatological political theology to the question: Who is the subject of universal history? God is the subject of universal world history, and also the full meaning of this history, for Metz.<sup>36</sup> God is not the *futurum*, the actualization of primordial matter in categories of being. God is the *adventus*, the coming and arrival of a person and event. *Zukunft*, the future, is expected from the coming God. Since the future is not a simple evolution from the past and the present, the being of God does not lie in the process of the world's becoming. If God was contingent on the evolution of the world and perfection of the present then He would be the *finis ultimus*, point omega. But God is not a god with *futurum* as His mode of being, *Zukunft* is the mode by which He acts upon the past and the present. It is in this sense that God is the initiator and the end of universal history. God is the possibility of man hoping for the future and also the very future man can hope for. As Rahner says: God is the absolute future of man.<sup>37</sup>

The certainty of the absolute future hinges on the distinction and difference between the *adventus Dei* vs. the *futurum*. The *futurum* is extrapolated from the factors and processes of the past and present. Prediction and futurology mark this methodology. On the other hand, the future as *adventus Dei* cannot be extrapolated from history, but is historically anticipated insofar as it announces itself.<sup>38</sup> Because the God of eschatological political theology is not an extrapolation, real newness can be brought into reality. The *adventus Dei* draws out possibilities for freedom and transcendence which have never been before.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>37</sup> Gerald McCool, 'Rahner's Anthropology', *America*, Vol. 123, 1970, p. 343ff.

<sup>38</sup> This idea is expounded by Moltmann in the *Theology of Hope* and by Pannenburg in Vol. II of *Basic Questions in Theology*.

<sup>39</sup> Metz, 'God before us instead of a Theological Argument', *Cross Currents*, Vol. 18, 1968, pp. 296-306.

In the creation of the new and the future, the past is contradicted by the *Adventus Dei*. This does not mean that the past is merely cast aside; the past attains a new meaning in this process. In light of fulfillment announcing itself in a new way, the past again becomes present. In the appearance of the new, the past which was once itself future and present, is reborn as a sign that the new does come into being. The *Adventus Dei* is not only the future of the present, but also of the past. A continuity is therefore established between the past, present and future. The God of hope reaches from the future into the present and creates history through His word of promise and mode of existence.<sup>40</sup>

The power of the future, God, brings newness into reality. In the experience of the 'novum', man is pointed back to the eschatologically new, and anticipate more newness. Also, the past again comes to life in the experience of the new, it is revived by the power of the future (God). The future is the not yet – but what can be or become. The power and force of history in this system is not an organic development from the past, but a luring from the power of the future (God) which is always ahead of man and calling man into the fullness of the future through the revelation of its power in the present, which is the horizon or frontline of this future.

History, man, and the church therefore exist under what Metz calls God's eschatological provisio. He writes:

Today more than ever, when the church is faced with the modern political systems, she must emphasize her critical, liberating function again and again, to make it clear that man's history as a whole stands under God's eschatological provisio. She must stress the truth that history as a whole can never be a political notion in the strict sense of the word, that for this reason, it can never be made an object of a particular political action. There is no subject of universal history one can point in this world, and whenever a party, a group, a nation, or a class sought to see itself as such a subject, thereby making the whole of history to be the scope of its political action, it inevitably grew into a totalitarian state.<sup>41</sup>

No one group or party can claim to be the subject of history, only God is the subject. Two things should be connected to the idea of

<sup>40</sup> Metz, *Theology of . . .*, p. 118.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

God as the subject of universal history. First, the critical role of eschatological political theology becomes clarified. In *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesus Christi*, the church knows the meaning of history and the end of history: in Jesus the end of history has become present. As critic, the church must call men to turn away from any institution, movement, or subject which would proclaim another than God as the meaning and subject of Universal history. (Again we see that Metz is dealing with a question of *ratio-revelatio, ratio-fides*, the starting point of fundamental theology.) It is the dangerous *memoria* which enables the church not to deviate from the faith and revelation which is the ground of her critical function. Second, the subject of this universal history, God: the absolute future of man, is in a special way concerned with the 'little ones', the poor and suffering of this world, as they are singled out in the beatitudes. The church as a critic, in light of its responsibility to the dangerous memory which has been given to her, must have a preoccupation for the poor and suffering of this world. For as the poor and suffering are close to Christ in his *passionis* and *mortis*, they will be close to him in his *resurrectionis*.

The eschatological accomplishment of the kingdom of God will not arise from our meager efforts. Its completion, just as its initiation, depend on the infinite love, mercy and faithfulness of God. As long as the eschatological end is not finalized our world is in a dialectic: Christian faith knowing the meaning of history and experiencing the first fruits of the kingdom vs. that which has not been made free and still remains bound by sin.

Briefly, it might be beneficial to see how Metz answers objections to his theological system. Four objections will be presented.

First, eschatological political theology is merely an expression. In this sense, it is no different than classical theology. Metz responds that in eschatological political theology a *critical* attitude *will be* expressed. The power and perseverance of this criticism will come from the proper place and force given to eschatology. (Here eschatology is conceived in the scope which has been presented earlier in this paper, i.e. including the notion of *memoria*, God as subject of universal history, and concern for the little ones.)

Second, eschatological political theology is a new form of clericalism, an attempt on the part of religion and theology to dominate the state. Metz responds that we do not want to dominate the state, but to wake up its conscience, the conscience of people.



Third, eschatological political theology will lead to the politicalization of the church. Metz responds that the church must deal with politics and political questions, since these are part of the present contemporary structure of man's world, but the church itself will not be a political party, but political as a critical body. He writes:

The church is a particular institution in society, yet presents a universal claim; if this claim is not to be an ideology, it can only be formulated and urged as criticism. Two important aspects may be pointed out on this basis. In the first place, it is clear now why the church, being a social critical institution, will not, in the end, come out with a political ideology. No political party can establish itself merely as a criticism; no political party can take as its object of political action that which the scope of the ecclesiastical criticism of society, namely, the whole of history standing under God's eschatological provisio.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, Metz must answer the objection that his theological perspective is merely an adaptation of the Christian message to contemporary times, and in the process becomes absorbed into enlightenment in much the same way that 'liberal theology' was an adaptation. Metz points out that the critique of society comes out so much from the historical process of enlightenment, but from the *memoria Christi* and the content of the eschatological message of Christianity. Metz points out that a distinction must be made between *ungleichzeitig* (non-contemporaneousness) and *unzeitgemass* (untimely or timeless). Although the church must adapt herself to the questions and problems she finds in any particular age or culture, the content of her faith has an aspect and reality of timelessness: a validity for all ages, i.e., the *memoria passionis, mortis, et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*, the dangerous memory which serves a critical function of calling men to accept the Father of Jesus as the subject of all history and the absolute future of man.

GEORGE S. WORGUL

<sup>42</sup> Metz, *Concilium Congress*, p. 7.

## L'ÉGLISE ET L'AVENIR DU MONDE

### ÉGLISE, AVENIR ET MONDE

L'Église a-t-elle quelque chose à apporter dans la construction du monde contemporain? Telle est bien la question, abrupte dans sa formulation, radicale dans son soupçon, que recouvre le sujet de notre entretien d'aujourd'hui, et qui aurait sans nul doute beaucoup surpris Saint Thomas d'Aquin que nous célébrons aujourd'hui. Et pourtant, pour beaucoup, et à l'intérieur même de l'Église, sans en exclure les clercs, c'est une interrogation lancinante qui est devenue de plus en plus consistante depuis le récent Concile oecuménique voulu par le Pape Jean XXIII comme une nouvelle Pentecôte, dont les effets bénéfiques se répandraient sur toute la société.

Je n'entends pas me dérober à cette interrogation drastique, logiquement issue du fameux schéma XIII, *Gaudium et Spes* sur l'Église dans le monde de ce temps, dont j'ai suivi l'élaboration quotidienne et les avatars, lorsque j'étais à la Secrétairerie d'Etat, et auquel a tant travaillé mon prédécesseur comme Recteur à l'Institut Catholique de Paris, Monseigneur Pierre HAUBTMANN.<sup>1</sup>

Église, avenir et monde. Qui ne voit, sans être structuraliste, tout l'imaginaire porté par la conjonction de ces trois termes! Tout d'abord parler de l'Église, c'est, selon le mot du théologien allemand Jean-Baptiste METZ, que je rencontrais dans un récent Symposium à Paris, affirmer que 'l'Église n'est pas purement et simplement le but de son cheminement. L'espérance qu'elle annonce n'est pas l'espérance dans le Royaume de Dieu comme avenir du monde, qui en Jésus a fait définitivement irruption'.<sup>2</sup>

Ensuite parler d'avenir du monde, c'est, selon le mot du même théologien, reconnaître que 'l'avenir n'est plus ce qu'il était.' Triomphante ces dernières années, désabusée depuis quelque temps, l'affirmation prend figure de manifeste. Il n'est pas d'homme

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Paul POUPARD, *L'Institut Catholique de Paris à la veille de son Centenaire*, Association des Amis de l'Institut, 21, rue d'Assas, Paris 6ème - 1974. Et, Institut Catholique de Paris, *Le Livre du Centenaire 1875-1975*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>Jean-Baptiste METZ, *Pour une théologie du monde*, Cerf. col. *Cogitatio fidei* 57, 1971, p. 107-108.

en effet sans projet d'avenir, ni d'avenir sans vision de l'homme. Et c'est pourquoy les expressions de nouvelle société et monde nouveau, fleurissant aujourd'hui à la fois comme l'expression d'un rejet d'un modèle qui a épuisé toutes ses virtualités et laisse l'homme spirituellement démuné au coeur même de ses promesses techniques et de l'élévation matérielle de son niveau de vie chez les peuples nantis;<sup>3</sup> et à la fois comme l'attente d'un je ne sais quoi de nouveau qui surgit du plus profond du coeur de l'homme, de ces jeunes en particulier, garçons et filles, dont le désintéret croissant pour ce qui nous a trop souvent tenu de raison de vivre est prodigieux: 'Je ne refuse pas, je ne choisis pas, je néglige', disait récemment une étudiante. Cruel aveu d'inintéret abyssal pour les querelles des adultes; prolongement inquiétant de cette confiance de Malraux: 'La question ultime est de savoir si dans un monde où Dieu est mort, l'homme pourra survivre'.<sup>4</sup> Bossuet parlait déjà de cet 'inexorable ennui qui fait le fond de la vie humaine depuis que l'homme a perdu le goût de Dieu', et Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, encore lu par la nouvelle vague, de nous confier au bord du désespoir: 'Je me sentais sans clé de voûte et rien ne retentissait plus en moi. Et je connus l'ennui qui est d'abord d'être privé de Dieu'.<sup>5</sup>

#### TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Vous connaissez cette page extraordinaire jaillie de l'âme de Pierre TEILHARD de CHARDIN devant les immensités de Tientsin, entre novembre 1926 et mars 1927: 'Il faut coûte que coûte, raviver la flamme. Il faut à tout prix renouveler en nous-mêmes le désir et l'espoir du grand Avènement. Mais où chercher la source de ce rajeunissement? Avant tout, c'est bien clair, dans un surcroît d'attrait exercé directement par le Christ sur ses membres. Mais encore? Dans un surcroît d'intéret découvert par notre pensée dans la préparation et la consommation de la Parousie. Et d'où faire jaillir cet intéret lui-même? De la perception d'une connexion plus intime entre le triomphe du Christ et le réusite de l'oeuvre que cherche à édifier ici-bas l'effort humain.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cardinal SUENENS, Archevêque de Malines-Bruxelles, et Michaël RAMSEY, Archevêque de Canterbury, *L'avenir de l'Eglise*, trad. de l'anglais, par Claire POOLE, Fayard 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pierre de BOISDEFRE, *André Malraux*, Ed. Universitaires, col. *Classiques du XXème siècle*, 1960.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Charles MOELLER, *Littérature du XXème siècle et Christianisme*, t. V, *Amours humaines*, Casterman, 1975, IIème partie, ch. 2, p. 103-130.

Nous l'oublions sans cesse, le surnaturel est un ferment, une âme, non un organisme complet ... L'attente du ciel ne saurait vivre que si elle est incarnée. Quel corps donnerons-nous à la notre aujourd'hui?

Celui d'une immense espérance totalement humaine. Regardons autour de nous la Terre. Que se passe-t-il sous nos yeux, dans la masse des peuples? D'où vient ce désordre dans la Société, cette agitation inquiète, ces vagues qui se gonflent, ces courants qui circulent et se joignent, ces poussées troubles, formidables et nouvelles? L'humanité visiblement traverse une crise de croissance. Elle prend obscurément conscience de ce qui lui manque et de ce qu'elle peut.

Plus l'homme sera grand, plus l'humanité sera unie, consciente et maîtresse de sa force, plus aussi la Création sera belle, plus l'adoration sera parfaite, plus le Christ trouvera pour des extensions mystiques, un Corps digne de résurrection.

Tout essayer pour le Christ! Tout espérer pour le Christ! 'Nihil intentatum'! Voilà, juste au contraire, la véritable attitude chrétienne. Diviniser n'est pas détruire, mais surcréer. Nous ne saurons jamais tout ce que l'Incarnation attend encore des puissances du Monde. Nous n'espérerons jamais assez de l'unité humaine croissante.

Lève la tête, Jérusalem. Regarde la foule immense de ceux qui construisent et de ceux qui cherchent. Dans les laboratoires, dans les studios, dans les déserts, dans les usines, dans l'énorme creuset social, les vois-tu tous ces hommes qui peinent? Et bien! tout ce qui fermente par eux, d'art, de science, de pensée, tout cela c'est pour toi. Allons, ouvre tes bras. ton coeur et accueille comme ton Seigneur Jésus, le flot, l'inondation de la sève humaine'.<sup>6</sup> Page tout aussi prophétique que celle qu'il écrivit le 9 octobre 1936 à Pékin: 'à l'usage d'un Prince de l'Eglise'; quelques réflexions sur la conversion du monde'; 'le Christianisme se trouve confronté à l'heure présente avec un cas absolument nouveau. A l'origine, il s'était agi pour lui de conquérir et de transformer un monde finissant ... En face de nous, il y a maintenant un courant humain naissant ... On ne convertit que ceux qu'on aime ... S'immerger pour émerger et soulever. Participer pour sublimer, c'est la loi même de l'Incarnation. Il y a déjà mille ans, les Papes, disant adieu au monde romain, se décidèrent à passer aux

<sup>6</sup>R.P. Pierre TEILHARD de CHARDIN, *Le milieu divin, Oeuvres complètes*, t. IV, Seuil, 1957, p. 198-201.

barbares'. Un geste semblable et plus profond n'est-il pas attendu aujourd'hui?'<sup>7</sup>

#### VERS L'AN 2.00

Nos ancêtres de l'an 1.000 attendaient la fin du monde. A la veille de l'an 2.000, nous cherchons ce que nous réservent les décennies à venir: l'apocalypse devient prospective. Déjà, 160 livres sont parus dans la collection de Robert Kaners chez Denoël, 'Présence du Futur'.

Vous dites: 'où vas-tu? Je l'ignore, et j'y vais', osait écrire Victor Hugo ... La technique nous emporte à un rythme vertigineux et nous rions aujourd'hui du futurologue de 1900 qui cherchait les moyens d'améliorer la circulation des fiacres pour l'an 1950 à Paris. Mais si nous sommes passés du cheval au cheval-vapeur, avons-nous vraiment amélioré la circulation dans nos villes demeurément agrandies? Le problème a changé de nature, et il est devenu plus insoluble encore. Alors? Comme le dit de manière merveilleusement ironique le pseudo-proverbe chinois: 'Il est extrêmement difficile de faire des prophéties, surtout lorsqu'elles concernent le futur.'<sup>8</sup>

Dans un ouvrage qui je crois, fera date, le professeur Jean BERNARD écrit: 'Un médecin de 1900 endormi par quelque sortilège, s'éveille en 1930 ... Les campagnes et les villes se sont transformées ... Les empires se sont écroulés, mais la médecine a peu changé ... Un deuxième médecin assoupi en 1930, est tiré de sa léthargie en 1960. Il ne reconnaît plus rien ... Que trouvera en 1990, un troisième médecin au bois dormant, plongé dans le sommeil en 1960? Comment prévoir, organiser les adaptations nécessaires?'<sup>9</sup>

Et si du monde, nous passons à l'Eglise, la situation présente un caractère d'évolution plus marquée encore, avec un coefficient d'incertitude supérieur: plus de 50% des hommes vivent en Asie et parmi eux on ne compte que 2,50% de catholiques. Que sera ce ferment dans une pareille masse de milliards d'hommes en gestation d'un monde nouveau? La grâce de Dieu n'est-elle pas aussi puissante qu'aux temps de Pierre et des 12 apôtres dont la foi au

<sup>7</sup> P. TEILHARD, *Quelques réflexions sur la conversion du monde*, pub. dans *Bible et Vie chrétienne*, 71, Casterman, sept.-oct. 1966, p. 15-22.

<sup>8</sup> Alvin TOFFLER, *Le choc du futur*, Denoël, 1971, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Jean BERNARD, *Grandeur et tentations de la médecine*, Buchet/Chastel, 1973, p. 7-8.

Christ, voici bientôt deux millénaires, a soulevé et converti la masse du monde païen de l'empire romain, dont nous sommes les héritiers?

Il y faut pour cela un renouveau profond. Comme le déclarait avec force Monsieur Thomas, Président du Comité Central du Conseil oecuménique des églises, en ouvrant à Bangkok, le 29 décembre 1972, la conférence mondiale: 'Le salut aujourd'hui': 'la conversion à Jésus-Christ est rendue difficile parce qu'elle en est venue à signifier un transfert d'allégeance d'une culture à une autre ou d'une communauté juridique à une autre, et non plus le passage de l'attachement aux idoles, l'obéissance à Dieu par le Christ'.<sup>10</sup>

Si nous n'y prenons garde, le même phénomène pourrait bien arriver à nos vieilles communautés chrétiennes devenues étrangères aux aspirations des jeunes qui, pour incertaines qu'elles soient dans leur contenu, n'en sont pas moins gonflées d'espérance lorsqu'elles rencontrent l'audience des adultes. 'Lisez les passionnants témoignages que la *Œuvre Catholique*' a publiés sous le titre: '130.000 familles prennent la parole':<sup>11</sup> 'Qui oserait à présent dessiner le décor, le style, les conditions d'existence de ses enfants, lorsqu'ils seront devenus adultes? On ne peut plus présenter de modèle. On peut simplement cheminer avec les siens vers une terre inconnue. L'aventure est grisante. Elle est inconfortable. Elle est risquée'.

Ne serait-ce pas l'heure de redécouvrir le texte du vieux prophète des temps agraires: 'Ne vous souvenez plus d'autrefois. Ne songez plus au passé. Voici que je fais un monde nouveau!'<sup>12</sup>

#### LES CHRETIENS AU SERVICE DU MONDE

Mais tout d'abord, de quoi parlons-nous lorsque nous situons l'Eglise comme partie prenante de l'avenir du monde? Nous pouvons, me semble-t-il, poser au départ trois propositions:

1 – *Le chrétien fait partie du monde*: il est solidaire du progrès de l'humanité, de ses espoirs et de ses échecs, car il n'est pas d'une autre race que les autres hommes . . .

2 – *Le chrétien sait que ce monde terrestre, auquel se limitent les*

<sup>10</sup> M. THOMAS, Président du Comité central du C.O.E., Conférence d'Ouverture de la Conférence de Bangkok sur le *salut aujourd'hui*, le 29 décembre 1972, dans *Documentation catholique*, t. LXX (1973), p. 210-212.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre VILAIN, *130.000 familles prennent la parole*, Cerf, 1973, p. 93.

<sup>12</sup> *Isaïe*, 14, 18-19.

idéologies et les systèmes économique-sociaux, n'est pas une réalité définitive, au-delà de laquelle il n'y aurait rien. Pour le chrétien, ce monde prépare un 'monde futur' où règneront la paix et l'amour sans conteste, dans le rassemblement des hommes autour de leur père.

3 - *Le chrétien se veut, dans l'Eglise, au service du monde* 'au service de l'homme' comme l'a proclamé PAUL VI dans son mémorable discours de clôture du Concile, le 7 décembre 1965. Service loyal et fraternel. Sincèrement, il s'intéresse avec passion au progrès du monde, c'est-à-dire 'au bonheur véritable des hommes' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 37, § 3). Mais le chrétien sait que l'activité humaine est menacée 'par un esprit de vanité et de malice' qui la change en instrument de péché' (*ibid.*). Et donc son service sera à base de discernement: il ne sera loyal qu'à ce titre. Construire la société nouvelle, c'est discerner pour le chrétien, pour le privilégié, dans les motivations comme dans les comportements, ce qui va dans le sens du dessein d'amour du créateur. Non pas, seul, réaliser 'la société nouvelle' mais y collaborer avec tous les hommes de bonne volonté, en les aidant à discerner les vraies valeurs, pour mieux les incarner dans l'engagement quotidien.

Le secret du monde de demain, Dieu seul le sait: l'Eglise n'en connaît, pas plus que les autres instances responsables, ni les constitutifs politiques, ni les régimes économiques, ni les dimensions réelles. Elle veut seulement lui apporter le message évangélique ...

Qu'attend donc de l'Eglise ce monde qui nous apparaît présentement en douloureuse parturition? Quel appel lui adresse-t-il, insistant et poignant, malgré la discrétion dont il s'entoure? Et quelle réponse l'Eglise peut-elle donner, dans la fidélité à sa mission, à cette demande qui n'est pas d'ordre technique, mais spirituelle? C'est, me semble-t-il, le pain de l'espérance, pour l'aider à poursuivre avec confiance l'édification du monde, avant d'aborder par delà la mort à ce royaume éternel d'amour, qui, pour l'Eglise est le véritable avenir du monde. Donc trois parties:

- 1°) L'avenir du monde,
- 2°) Le chrétien dans ce devenir,
- 3°) L'Eglise, espérance du monde.

## I - L'AVENIR DU MONDE

Un mot le caractérise, celui de mutation. Une mutation, c'est plus qu'un changement, une véritable mue, une transformation fon-

damentale à tous les plans: culturel, social, psychologique, moral, religieux, qui conduit à ce qu'on a pu appeler la société technétronique.<sup>13</sup>

(a) *Mutation culturelle*

Le Concile situe à la base de cette mutation 'la prédominance dans la formation de l'esprit, des sciences mathématiques, naturelles ou humaines, et, dans l'action, de la technique, fille des sciences' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 5, 1).

Par une véritable révolution copernicienne, l'homme prend conscience de l'ampleur de pouvoirs jusqu'alors insoupçonnés (par ex. l'action sur la formation de l'être humain: le progrès de la génétique!). Des domaines interdits deviennent lieux d'expérimentation et d'action. D'où une double conséquence: d'abord que le 'domaine réservé à Dieu' diminue à vue d'oeil, ce qui semble, aux esprits simplistes, une promotion de l'homme contre un Dieu devenu inutile; ensuite que l'effort de l'homme se concentre sur l'*agir* (praxis), et que la contemplation (même scientifique) devient inutile. En conséquence, l'intelligence humaine étend en quelque sorte son empire sur le temps pour le passé, par la connaissance historique; pour l'avenir, par la prospective et la planification' (*Gaudium et Spes*, §2). D'où le caractère historique de l'actuelle mutation: 'Le mouvement même de l'histoire devient si rapide que chacun a peine à le suivre... Le genre humain passe d'une notion statique de l'ordre des choses à une conception plus dynamique et évolutive: de là naît, immense, une problématique nouvelle, qui provoque à de nouvelles analyses et de nouvelles synthèses' (*Gaudium et Spes* 5, §3). Il faut y insister. Hier, selon le mot de Gaston Berger, dans 'la fascination du passé', notre civilisation était 'rétrospective avec entêtement'.<sup>14</sup> L'homme aujourd'hui vit dans l'avenir (l'homme de 1880, de 2000...); il prévoit et anticipe.<sup>15</sup> Et cela aux dimensions du monde, car les techniques des moyens de communication et les mass-media permet-

<sup>13</sup> Zbigniew BRZEZINSKI, *La Révolution technétronique*, Calmann-Lévy, 1971, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Gaston BERGER, *Etapes de la prospective*, PUF, 1967, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Roger CLEMENT, *Vers une civilisation du futur*, Bordas 1972.

Jean FOURASTIE, *La civilisation de 1975*, PUF 1964.

Courrier de l'UNESCO, avril, 1971, *La futurologie a-t-elle un avenir?*

Arnold TOYNBEE, *Survivre au futur*, Mercure de France 1973.

A. FABRE-LUCE, *Expo 2000*, Plon 1972.



tant à chacun de se tenir au courant de ce qui se passe dans l'univers entier. Hier membre d'une bourgade, aujourd'hui citoyen du monde ...

(b) Je n'insiste pas sur *la mutation sociale*

- la généralisation de la société industrielle, au détriment de l'ancienne société rurale.
- l'interdépendance des pays, régions et continents.
- la remise en question des 'hiérarchies' de civilisation et des situations acquises.

Comme le déclarait le 22 janvier 1973 à Lyon, l'Archevêque de Cantorbery, le Docteur Ramsey: 'Il se peut que le christianisme européen de l'avenir ne soit pas à la tête du christianisme mondial. La Sainte Eglise catholique de l'avenir sera engagée dans de nombreuses cultures nationales, mais ne s'identifiera à aucune ...' 'Un renouveau spirituel s'opère aussi dans les mouvements qui ne souffrent plus l'Eglise institutionnelle; ils cherchent la fraternité chrétienne et l'engagement social dans des groupes de recherche hors de l'Eglise' ... 'Certes, nous avons, il y a quelques années, assisté à un renouveau passionnant. Actuellement, nous devons faire preuve d'esprit créateur.

Où se trouve l'espoir des peuples? La pauvreté économique du Tiers-Monde n'est-elle pas une dynamique qui bouleversera sous peu la carte du monde?

(c) *Mutation psychologique, morale et religieuse*

Le Concile note lucidement 'la transformation des mentalités, la remise en question des valeurs reçues, le sentiment d'inadaptation des cadres de vie, des façons de penser jusqu'alors reçues ...' (n° 7). Fait évident qu'il est à peine besoin de développer. Notons cependant trois points rapidement:

1°) Révision des idées reçues sur le constitutif social: ce qu'il y a de profond dans un intérêt et une sympathie pour le 'socialisme'; d'où l'importance des problèmes du *politique*, et l'attention qui leur est portée désormais dans l'Eglise.

2°) 'désarroi du comportement et des règles de conduite' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 7, 2): la mutation sociale, avec sa conséquence 'révisionniste' des règles reçues, de la tradition des anciens, remet en question le comportement. Pas simplement influence de théoriciens audacieux (ils ne font souvent qu'exprimer et justifier une conscience diffuse), mais une inquiétude rendue comme inévitable par la transformation de la vie. Ceci très sensible par la

critique de la tradition familiale et tribale dans le Tiers-Monde. D'où le 'désarroi' moral et psychologique, spécialement chez parents et éducateurs ...<sup>16</sup> Saurons-nous, 'pour arriver à temps' relever le défi des jeunes qui rejettent à bon droit ce que Dom Helder Camara appelle 'les sept péchés du monde moderne', à savoir: le racisme, le colonialisme, la guerre, le paternalisme, le pharisaïsme, la société aliénée et la peur?<sup>17</sup>

3°) Incidence sur la vie religieuse elle-même: essor de l'esprit critique à la fois favorable à une foi personnelle et destructeur de l'institution religieuse. La vraie crise est celle de la religion comme fait sociologique, comme institution autoritaire. Mais elle est très grave, parce qu'il est impossible de vivre de la foi sans rattachement à un organisme social, avec ses rites, ses lois, sa discipline. D'où le phénomène, semble-t-il, le plus significatif (inquiétant et réconfortant à la fois): celui de la substitution de communautés spontanées improvisées en quelque sorte, aux églises traditionnelles.<sup>18</sup>

Enfin je souligne la confusion entre la nouveauté apparente et la nouveauté réelle: ce qui signifie vraiment une mutation et atteste un changement objectif. Influence, dès lors, des modes, des opinions prévalentes. On a tendance à considérer comme définitif ce qui n'est que passager, comme absolu ce qui ne vaut que pour une saison, comme porteur de valeur ce qui n'est qu'originalité ou excentricité ... Le recul nécessaire à la vraie perception du changement fait généralement défaut; 'on n'a pas le temps! Les pressions sociales (fait universel et significatif de la *réclame*, sous toutes ses formes,) tendent à imposer des opinions toutes faites, en même temps que le conformisme des attitudes, des emballements ou des rejets ... Ceci peut aisément s'analyser par

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jean FOURASTIE, *Essais de morale prospective*, Gonthier 1967.

M. MEAD, *Le Fossé des générations*, Denoël 1971.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Dom Helder CAMARA, *Pour arriver à temps*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer 1970.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. par exemple: *Les groupes informels dans l'Eglise*, CERDIC, Hommes et Eglises 2, Strasbourg 1971; *Eclatements dans l'Eglise*, la mission en quête d'Eglise, Dossiers Parole et Mission 2, Cerf. 1972; *Le jaillissement des expériences communautaires*, témoignages présentés par Max DELESPESE et André TANGE, Communauté humaine, Fleurus, 1970; Jean-Thierry MAERTENS, *Les petits groupes et l'avenir de l'Eglise*, Centurion, *Religion et sciences de l'homme*, 1971; A. GODIN: *La vie des groupes dans l'Eglise*, Centurion, *Foi et Avenir*, 1969.

rapport à la mode vestimentaire ou capillaire; mais il en va de même des opinions, des jugements. Que penser? que dire? que faire?

Quel est le résultat de cette situation, de la conscience que nous en avons? Il me semble que nous sommes, selon le sociologue hongrois Tibor Mende: *Entre la peur et l'espoir*.<sup>19</sup> D'une part l'incertitude et l'angoisse, d'autre part, l'exaltation et l'enthousiasme devant l'avenir, la société nouvelle en gestation.

## II — LE CHRÉTIEN DANS LE DEVENIR DU MONDE

Et le Chrétien?

Dans cette situation de changement, le chrétien a une certitude, celle de l'amour du Christ, celle de la foi, celle de l'espérance. Cela l'aide à opérer le discernement des valeurs porteuses et annonciatrices du Royaume, ce que le Concile appelle après Jean XXIII et le Concile 'Les signes des temps'.<sup>20</sup> Sans entrer dans un examen critique des 'valeurs' poursuivi par *Gaudium et Spes*, il faut réfléchir un instant sur les principes de cet indispensable *discernement*.

On peut les ramener à trois:

(a) Il y a des valeurs authentiquement évangéliques dans les postulats et les exigences de la mutation du monde, à laquelle nous sommes participants. Le nier serait une manière de manichéisme qui oublierait que Dieu, loin de l'abandonner à son malheureux sort, aime le monde actuel, et y agit par son Esprit. Mais ces valeurs ne sont pas pures; elles sont mélangées de réactions d'égoïsme et de refus de Dieu. Un exemple: certaine critique de la morale traditionnelle, en un sens, va dans le sens d'une fidélité plus sincère et plus intérieure, refusant l'hypocrisie ou le conformisme; mais elle ouvre aussi la porte à la négligence, au laisser-aller, et, ce qui est pire, tend à légitimer intellectuellement (sous couleur de liberté) l'acquiescement aux instincts de jouissance et aux pulsions de la chair.<sup>21</sup>

(b) Le discernement consiste moins à *isoler* des valeurs qu'à dénoncer et corriger leurs propres limites. Il n'y a pas de valeurs 'chimiquement pures', mais toute valeur a un sens positif et un

<sup>19</sup> Paris, Ed. du Seuil.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. P.M.D. CHENU: *La Parole de Dieu*, t. 2, *L'Evangile dans le temps*, Cerf., *Cogitatio Fidei*, 11, 1964, p. 192.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. par ex., B. HAERING, *La morale après le Concile*, col. *Remise en cause*, Desclée 1967; A. HORTELANO: *Morale responsable*, Desclée 1970.

sens négatif. Ainsi la solidarité de classe tend à une vraie fraternité, mais peut susciter la haine et le désir de 'supprimer' l'adversaire. Principe évangélique de discernement: l'amour vrai de tout prochain, qui est 'le sacrement du Christ' (Mt, 25, 31sq.) (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* n° 27 à 31). Dans la mesure au contraire où la poursuite d'une valeur tend à développer la haine, l'esprit de classe contre d'autres classes, à sécuriser l'égoïsme sous couleur du respect de l'ordre ... Il faut en marquer la déficience et la corriger ...<sup>22</sup>

(c) Le monde nouveau qui naît a pour fondement des valeurs, que le chrétien reconnaît comme partielles et limitées, ambiguës et fragiles, dans la mesure où l'élément négatif et contestataire tend à occuper tout le champ de vision, au détriment de leur intention constructive, pour 'un monde meilleur'. Bien loin de refuser ce monde qui naît, il se rend compte de ses limites, et travaille de tout son pouvoir (sachant bien qu'aucun 'monde' ne sera ici-bas parfait ...) à les dépasser. Délivrer les valeurs du monde moderne de leur péché, afin de les ordonner au Royaume telle est la tâche du chrétien. Sympathique, il ne sera pas aveugle; critique, il ne sera pas celui qui dit non par principe!

C'est en participant ainsi au travail commun que le chrétien devient artisan de la Société nouvelle. Car le chrétien n'oeuvre pas seul, et il n'appartient plus à l'Eglise de proposer un plan original et des équipes homogènes pour faire un monde meilleur.

### TROIS EXIGENCES

Ceci implique pour le chrétien exigences:

1 - se rendre capable de cette collaboration à sa place et à sa mesure, avec un coeur large et désintéressé, mais aussi la compétence requise. Pour être témoin du Christ dans les choses humaines, et respecter l'autonomie des réalités temporelles, il importe de ne pas plaquer un prosélytisme généreux sur une ignorance candide: l'aspect économique, par exemple, des problèmes politiques demande à être bien connu et les meilleures intentions du monde ne suffisent pas à les résoudre. 'La connaissance des sciences et des théories nouvelles, ainsé que des progrès techniques' (*Gaudium et Spes* 62, §6) est un devoir de conscience qui permet de situer l'impact spirituel et évangélique de l'interven-

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Fr. PERROUX, *Masse et Classe*, Mutations Orientales 22. Casterman 1972. René COSTE, *Les chrétiens et la lutte des classes*, Ed. SOS, 1975.

tion du chrétien.<sup>23</sup>

2 – Développer les vertus que requiert une vraie collaboration, forme d'authentique charité: la conscience professionnelle, assurément, mais aussi la franchise, l'humilité, la bonne humeur, l'aptitude à partager les points de vue d'autrui et corriger, s'il le faut, étroitesse et entêtement . . .<sup>24</sup>

3 – Porter le témoignage loyal que tous les hommes de bonne volonté attendent du chrétien: l'esprit évangélique comme norme du jugement et de l'action; ni sectarisme ou puritanisme intempé-  
 pestif, mais conviction que la lumière de l'Évangile aide les hommes à résoudre leurs propres problèmes.<sup>25</sup> Car 'le mystère de l'homme ne s'éclaire vraiment que dans le mystère du Verbe incarné. Jésus manifeste pleinement l'homme à lui-même et lui découvre la sublimité de sa vocation . . . (22, §1)

Et le Concile dit encore:

'L'Eglise sait parfaitement que son message est en accord avec le fond du cœur humain, quand elle défend la dignité de la vocation de l'homme, et rend ainsi l'espoir à ceux qui n'osent plus croire à la grandeur de leur destin. Ce message loin de diminuer l'homme, sert à son progrès en répandant la lumière, vie et liberté; en dehors de lui, rien ne peut combler le cœur humain' (21, §7).

### III – LE CHRÉTIEN BATISSEUR DE L'AVENIR

#### 1<sup>o</sup>) *La sympathie efficiente*

A l'écoute du monde présent, le chrétien l'interpelle dans sa suffisance à partir des questions existentielles que se pose la conscience contemporaine, les pesant longuement afin d'en découvrir le sens . . . N'est-ce pas là ce que, d'abord les hommes d'aujourd'hui, artisans dans le brouillard d'un monde dont les dimensions et les structures leur échappent, attendent de l'Eglise? Que l'on prenne au sérieux, au nom même de Dieu, au nom de

<sup>23</sup> Cf. p. ex. J.M. AUBERT, *Pour une théologie de l'âge industriel*, Paris, Cerf, *Cogitatio Fidei* 59, 1971.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclique *Ecclesiam Suam*, 15 août 1964.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. l'admirable Saint John PERSE: 'Fierté de l'homme en marche sous sa charge d'éternité! Fierté de l'homme en marche sous son fardeau d'humanité'. *Oeuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, Gallimard 1973, Cité par L. Guissard, *La Croix*, 11-12 février 1973, *Défense et illustration de la poésie*.

Jésus-Christ, qui a partagé la vie des hommes leur recherche et leur incertitude?

L'Eglise refuse la tentation, trop fréquente aujourd'hui de rester prisonnière de l'incertitude. Comme l'a dit Karl Barth: 'Aujourd'hui on flotte, et flotter, ce n'est pas être libre, c'est être prisonnier de toutes les vagues qui déferlent'. L'Eglise ne possède certes pas de solution-miracle, mais elle propose du moins un principe. Et elle le proclame, invitant tous les hommes à regarder vers le Christ. Par-delà les problèmes économiques et politiques, une question essentielle se manifeste, lancinante et impossible à évacuer: qu'est-ce que l'homme, à qui le monde de demain devra apporter, mieux que celui d'hier, le respect effectif?<sup>26</sup> Qu'est-ce que cette dignité de la personne humaine qui demeure le constitutif de l'ambition du monde de demain?<sup>27</sup> La réponse du Concile est celle de la foi: 'Le message de l'homme ne s'éclaire vraiment que dans le mystère du Verbe incarné' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22, §1).

Fils de Dieu appelé à réaliser la vocation à laquelle le destine l'acte créateur, l'homme ne trouve la plénitude de sa dignité qu'en Jésus-Christ ... Accepter de sympathiser avec l'interminable, et souvent décevante interrogation de notre temps, c'est l'indispensable propédeutique pour annoncer le Christ Jésus ... L'Eglise ne peut dire autre chose que les apôtres: 'Il n'est pas d'autre salut que Jésus-Christ', dans la certitude que ce message est vraiment celui qu'attend le monde en gestation, pour ne pas être une oppression et une catastrophe, mais un monde fraternel. Le chrétien ressent profondément en lui le contrecoup de la mutation qui agite et tourmente d'anxiété le monde. L'Eglise, qui est dans le monde, non en face, mais au milieu du monde, éprouve en elle la secousse qui ébranle l'univers. En pleine recherche, au niveau des comportements et des institutions, loin de laisser le monde de demain se former à part, le chrétien participe à son enfantement. N'est-ce pas ce que voulait dire la Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, en affirmant que 'tous les hommes, croyants et incroyants, doivent s'appliquer à la juste construction du monde dans lequel ils vivent ensemble' (n° 21, §6).

## 2°) La défense de l'homme

La sympathie authentique ne cherche pas, par principe, à plaire

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Mikel DUFRENNE, *Pour l'homme*, Paris, Seuil 1968.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. M. A. SANTANER, *A la gloire de l'homme*, 3 Paris, Ed. Ouvrières, 1973.

ou à ne pas contrarier. Au contraire, elle sait, quand il le faut, rappeler les vérités nécessaires, même lorsqu'elles semblent inopportunes.

(a) notre temps, et le monde qu'il prépare pour demain est menacé par un grave danger: celui d'utiliser l'homme au lieu de se mettre à son service. La technique est dure, et volontiers inhumaine, par ses procédés, comme par son souci d'efficacité. L'homme est esposé à devenir un objet d'expériences (que l'on songe aux dangers des progrès de la génétique), une victime de la planification. La propagande, sous toutes ses formes,<sup>28</sup> depuis l'insistante réclame, jusqu'à ce qu'on a nommé 'le viol des consciences' par des procédés aujourd'hui bien connus, le manipule et le contraint irrésistiblement. Le primat de l'économique, qui mène la politique et impose sa loi implacable à toute la vie, fait peser un poids lourd sur la liberté, qu'il s'agisse de l'appétit de la consommation, dans un régime capitaliste, ou de l'alignement de l'esprit dans un régime socialiste totalitaire.

(b) défendre l'homme est devenu, aujourd'hui, une nécessité. C'est là une tâche majeure, à laquelle l'Eglise veut se consacrer: 'La valeur du Concile, déclarait PAUL VI dans son allocution du 7 décembre 1965, est grande, au moins pour ce motif: tout y a été orienté à l'utilité de l'homme ... La religion catholique a proclamé (au Concile) qu'elle est toute entière au service du bien de l'homme. La religion catholique et la vie humaine: la religion catholique est pour l'humanité. En un certain sens, elle est la vie de l'humanité'.

On a pu s'étonner de cette insistance du Pape et du Concile. Aurait-on oublié l'incarnation de l'Homme-Dieu, qui a vécu une authentique vie humaine parmi les hommes, et a donné sa vie pour eux?

L'Eglise respecte en l'homme, en tout homme, quelle que soit sa race, sa condition, sa pauvreté humaine ou spirituelle, l'image de Dieu, rachetée par le Christ qui veut le conformer à Lui et qui veut s'identifier aux hommes se faisant reconnaître 'dans le plus petit de ses frères'. Toute la Bible nous montre Dieu aimant les hommes, s'intéressant à eux, combattant en faveur de l'Alliance qu'Il a voulu contracter avec eux et finalement manifestant son amour en leur donnant son propre Fils, 'Ce Dieu qui est notre

<sup>28</sup> Cf. par ex. J. Marie DOMENACH, *La propagande politique, Que sais-je* 448, PUF 1950.

frère, cet homme qui est notre Dieu'.<sup>29</sup>

(c) Aussi l'Eglise lutte-t-elle, de toutes ses forces, pour que le monde de demain soit un monde vraiment humain, où se reconnaissent les uns les autres tous les hommes, par toute la terre. Ambition chimérique? Peut-être, à courte vue. Mais il est remarquable que sur ce point, l'Eglise rencontre l'idéal le plus cher aux hommes d'aujourd'hui, et pour ainsi dire, aille à la rencontre de leur secret désir:<sup>30</sup>

'L'Eglise reconnaît tout ce qui est bon dans le dynamisme social d'aujourd'hui, en particulier le mouvement vers l'unité, les progrès d'une sainte socialisation et de la solidarité au plan civil et économique. Promouvoir l'unité s'harmonise avec la mission profonde de l'Eglise ...' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 42, §2)

(d) Avec fermeté, l'Eglise met en garde contre certaines erreurs théoriques et pratiques. Elle combat l'athéisme, qui, dans la virulence de sa négation, attaque la racine de l'homme. Elle condamne, non seulement les guerres meurtrières, mais encore tout ce qui est offense à la dignité de l'homme, les conditions de vie sous-humaines, les emprisonnements arbitraires ... les conditions de travail dégradantes qui réduisent les travailleurs au rang de purs instruments de rapport, sans égard pour leur personnalité libre et responsable' (*Gaudium et Spes*, n° 27, §3).<sup>31</sup>

Il n'appartient pas à l'Eglise de préconiser des solutions techniques, et pas davantage de prendre parti entre diverses perspectives économique-sociales, entre diverses écoles de théoriciens: au niveau de sa compétence, l'Eglise respecte comme il a été redit à Lourdes, à l'Assemblée de l'Episcopat français de 1972,<sup>32</sup> l'autonomie de la recherche. Mais elle est obligée à réfléchir sur les conséquences, souvent mal perçues des techniciens, de telle ou telle perspective qui aboutit à l'asservissement de l'homme. L'homme, nous dit l'Eglise, doit être respecté; il ne peut être

<sup>29</sup> F. MAURIAC, Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques, *Qu'est-ce que l'homme?* Paris, Horay 1955, p. 250.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, dans *Populorum Progressio* 79: 'Certains estimeront utopiques de telles espérances. Il se pourrait que leur réalisme fût en défaut et qu'ils n'aient pas perçu le dynamisme d'un monde qui veut vivre plus fraternellement ...'

<sup>31</sup> Cf. JEAN XXIII, *Pacem in terris*.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Mgr. G. MATAGRIN, *Politique, Eglise et Foi, Pour une pratique chrétienne de la politique*, rapports présentés à l'Assemblée plénière de l'épiscopat français. Paris, Centurion 1972.



utilisé, manipulé, asservi à quelque finalité de profit ou de planification ... 'Les corruptions dénoncées par le Concile corrompent la civilisation, déshonorent ceux qui s'y livrent plus encore que ceux qui les subissent et insultent gravement à l'honneur du Créateur' (*ibid.*).

(e) L'Eglise n'a pas peur de la nouveauté; elle n'appréhende pas un monde nouveau, mais au contraire, l'appelle et le désire, N'est-elle pas, selon le beau mot de Saint Irénée, 'constamment rajeunié par l'Esprit qui l'habite'? Mais elle exige que ce monde nouveau soit un monde pour l'homme, créature et 'gloire de Dieu', et non un monde où l'homme connaîtrait sous le poids d'une technique plus implacable que l'antique esclavage, une privation de sa liberté et des conditions de vie qui ne lui permettraient pas de prendre conscience de sa dignité et de répondre à sa vocation ...' (*Gaudium et Spes*, n° 31, §2).

### 3°) L'espérance

'L'avenir est entre les mains de ceux qui auront su donner aux générations de demain des raisons de vivre et d'espérer' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 31, §3).

(a) Le monde nouveau en gestation n'aboutira que s'il est animé par l'espérance. Pour construire et pour engendrer il faut espérer. Conscient des difficultés considérables qu'ils doivent surmonter, les hommes d'aujourd'hui ont un impérieux besoin d'espérance – spécialement les plus jeunes, 'les générations de demain' –.<sup>33</sup>

Or une crise d'espérance sévit, au moins dans nos pays d'ancienne civilisation, de manière significative. Crise chez beaucoup de jeunes qui ont le sentiment de se trouver devant un monde 'bouché', à la fois imprévisible et fermé, et ne sentent pas attirés vers lui. A vrai dire, cette crise de confiance – car c'en est une – révèle un doute intime, grave chez plusieurs, à l'égard d'eux-mêmes. Si beaucoup n'ont pas confiance dans le monde de demain, c'est qu'ils appréhendent d'être incapables de le construire. La mutation du monde, qui les effraye, se combine avec la permanence des conduites économique-sociales pour donner l'impression qu'il n'y a rien à faire: la stabilité qui refoule les jeunes et décourage leur effort leur semble animée d'un mouvement fou, dont on ne sait vers quel rivage il entraîne, si tant est qu'il y ait es-

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Les références sont innombrables, qu'il suffise de citer Jürgen MOLTSMANN, *Théologie de l'Espérance*, Cerf, *Cogitatio fidei*, 50, Paris; René LAURENTIN, *Nouvelles dimensions de l'espérance*, Paris, Cerf, 1972.

poir d'aborder quelque part ...<sup>34</sup>

(b) La mission de l'Eglise est de rendre l'espérance à une génération qui risque de perdre coeur et de s'enliser dans un scepticisme amer, qu'on essaie de distraire par une agitation factice.<sup>35</sup>

Espérance, et non point espoir. L'Eglise n'a ni la vocation ni la compétence pour justifier l'espoir raisonnable que l'on peut mettre dans le proche avenir, compte tenu des éléments positifs et négatifs qui se mêlent. Il lui appartient, au contraire, de rappeler à l'homme ce qu'il peut et ce qu'il doit faire. Et d'abord, ne pas subir, mais véritablement créer. Pour cela, il faut que l'homme travaille, en tous domaines, à dominer les techniques, à apprendre à s'en servir, à refuser de se laisser asservir. Il faut aussi substituer le 'pour qui' au 'pour quoi': 'créer un monde nouveau, c'est pour les hommes, et non pour une prospérité matérielle'<sup>36</sup> fut-elle stimulée par la conquête des planètes. L'Eglise rappelle le mot de l'Evangile: 'Que sert à l'homme de gagner l'Univers, s'il vient à perdre son âme' (*Mat. 16, 26*), à oublier l'amour effectif des autres, le dévouement et la consécration de son activité, de son temps, et peut-être de sa vie, à ses frères dans le Christ et reflets de sa face: 'Ce que vous aurez fait au plus petit d'entre les miens' ... PAUL VI l'a dit justement dans son Encyclique *Populorum Progressio*: 'La recherche exclusive de l'avoir fait dès lors obstacle à la croissance de l'être et s'oppose à sa véritable grandeur: pour les nations comme pour les personnes, l'avarice est la forme la plus évidente du sous-développement moral'.

(c) L'espérance n'est pas la vague attente de 'lendemains qui chantent', la probabilité souhaitée qu'ils viennent et ne tardent pas trop ... C'est la projection dans un avenir, sur lequel on sait qu'on a réel pouvoir, d'un amour et d'une ambition. Amour des autres qui suscite pour eux l'ambition de ce monde meilleur, plus fraternel, contre la lassitude résignée et le désespoir de 'l'homme menacé de n'être plus qu'une partie de lui-même, réduit comme on

<sup>34</sup> Cf. La chronique de Jean BOISSONNAT dans *La Croix* du 11-12 février 1973, *Les ailes du rêve*: 'toutes proportions gardées, il y a du Parthénon et de la Cathédrale dans le Concorde, une cage qui s'ouvre pour laisser s'échapper un oiseau. Un rêve absurde et beau'.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, *Discours à l'organisation internationale du travail*, Genève, 10 juin 1969, n° 23, Une raison de vivre pour les jeunes.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. G. HOURDIN, *Les chrétiens devant la société de consommation*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, col. *Questions d'actualité*, 1969.

l'a dit, à une seule dimension'.<sup>37</sup>

(d) Ce n'est pas là un cordial éphémère ou un électro-choc revigorant ... L'espérance de l'Eglise est fondée sur la méditation du dessein de Dieu, réalisé dans le Christ, et sur la vue du monde qu'il implique: 'La volonté du Père, conclut *Gaudium et Spes*, est qu'en tout homme nous reconnaissons le Christ notre frère et que nous aimions chacun pour de bon, en action et en parole, rendant témoignage à la Vérité. Elle est aussi que nous partageons avec les autres le mystère de d'Amour du Père Céleste' (*Gaudium et Spes*, n° 93, 61).

Cette 'ferme espérance', l'Eglise, aujourd'hui, sait que le monde en a besoin, s'il veut restaurer et consolider son goût de vivre, et d'oeuvrer pour demain. Menacé d'être écrasé par les richesses qu'il a depuis le début du siècle, mises à la disposition des hommes, en même temps qu'empoisonné par la force de la critique et de la contestation que sa réflexion a déchaînées, notre monde est appelé à un effort considérable, s'il veut vivre. Et il n'a le choix qu'entre deux solutions: ou périr, ou se transformer.

#### L'AVENIR: UN CHOIX

Dans la tension dialectique qui écartèle l'existence chrétienne, privilégier l'avenir est déjà un choix qui relativise le passé, ou plus exactement qui situe sa consistance propre dans un devenir qui lui donne son sens, dans une visée qui sauve son évanouissement temporel, selon un axe d'existence proprement spirituel.

Parler de l'Eglise et de l'avenir du monde, c'est admettre au point de départ que ce monde a un avenir dont l'émergence intéresse l'Eglise au plus haut point; bien plus, c'est confesser que l'avenir du monde passe par l'Eglise du Christ, cette communauté qu'il a fondée en ouvrant aux hommes un chemin vers Dieu, en leur apportant la vie, la vraie vie, capable de traverser la mort et de surgir après l'épreuve, inentamée, que dis-je transfigurée.

#### L'AVENIR: UNE ESPERANCE

C'est dire que l'espérance chrétienne s'articule sur deux convictions profondes:

– que l'homme est un être de poussière et de gloire, un surgisse-

<sup>37</sup> PAUL VI, *Discours à l'organisation internationale du travail*, Genève, 10 juin 1969, n° 20, défendre l'homme contre lui-même, citant H. MARCUSE, *L'Homme unidimensionnel*, trad. de l'anglais, par M. WITTIG et l'auteur, Paris Ed. de Minuit, 1968.

ment vers l'infini tragiquement englué dans les finitudes de la nature et les pièges de l'esprit, une béance ouverte qu'aucune satisfaction ne comble.

— et en même temps que l'Eglise est réponse vivante et vivifiante à cette béance tragique, qu'elle donne consistance au projet de l'homme, qu'elle lui révèle son sens et lui donne force de le vivre en même temps qu'elle lui en découvre les abîmes. Bref, cette communauté qui atteste dans le moment actuel la présence et l'action du Christ ne vient en rien supplanter l'homme ni se surajouter à lui de manière adventice, mais accomplir au contraire cette promesse qui sans lui ne saurait être tenue, féconder son devenir, assumer ses valeurs dans la totalité de leur champ, en ouvrant leur horizon sur l'infini de Dieu, invisible rendu visible en cette épiphanie du Christ, image du Père et source de l'Esprit, en qui tout homme, en le reconnaissant, se reconnaît lui-même pour ce qu'il est en plénitude: fils de Dieu.

#### DESIR DE L'AUTRE

Si déjà l'univers nous apparaît comme une immense énergie en déploiement, si toute vie morale se manifeste comme un profond dynamisme en accomplissement, chacun sait aussi que l'objet contemplé dans sa plus pure beauté, le sujet aimé dans son mystère le plus transparent recèlent toujours ces opacités qui font le désespoir, aussi bien de l'esthète que de l'amant, l'un et l'autre toujours épris, dans leur attente toujours renaissante et jamais assouvie, de cet Autre qui enfin comblerait tous leurs vœux, sans susciter jamais ni fatigue ni ennui« mais au contraire désir toujours plus vif de rencontre, d'union, de communion plus intime où le-déjà-là appelle le-pas-encore, dont la présence jaillissante comme une source se manifeste comme océan de bonheur inépuisable.

#### CHRIST

N'est-ce pas le mystère même du Christ, et la force toujours rayonnante de sa personne à travers les générations, les civilisations et les idéologies, que son message échappe à toute détermination particulière, et en même temps apporte la détermination suprême, l'invisible rendu visible à nos yeux, l'indicible exprimé par la Parole, le Verbe fait chair dont la chair vouée comme la notre à la mort est désormais assumée par l'Esprit dans un au-delà qui rend la mort caduque et la vie enfin triomphante d'une manière décisive? Aspiration confuse de l'humanité enfin satis-

faire, vieux rêve définitivement assouvi: Le Christ rend Dieu manifeste et nous révèle en même temps notre être dans ce qu'il a de constitutif, ce dynamisme irrépressible qui l'habite et anime son agir lui est donné par l'Etre qui est source de son être et terme de son existence. Le Christ est le chemin de l'homme vers Dieu.

## EGLISE

Et qu'est-ce donc que l'Eglise, sinon cette Assemblée de ceux qui ont suffisamment déjà discerné ce secret, et suffisamment aussi fait leur cet appel, pour y répondre au fil des jours, dans ce lent et sinueux cheminement des hommes en marche vers leur avenir absolu, le Royaume?<sup>38</sup>

D'où vient donc que les chrétiens eux-mêmes soient pris aujourd'hui de vertige et en viennent à se demander à quoi bon l'Eglise pour l'avenir du monde et pourquoi même l'Eglise dans le devenir des hommes? Pourquoi sinon parce que la foi est redevenue fragile, l'espérance frileuse, et l'amour rabougri, dans le monde nouveau qui s'élabore, et où les idées chrétiennes devenues folles perdent leur identité sous un manteau dont l'éclat extérieur cache la vide profond.

Faut-il le dire sans fard? La crise de civilisation qui nous atteint si douloureusement est une crise théologique. Si les chrétiens n'étaient plus habités par la foi, s'ils n'étaient plus animés par l'espérance, s'ils n'étaient plus réchauffés par l'amour, ce signe dressé au milieu des nations que doit être l'Eglise ne serait plus signifiant pour personne, mais une simple forme ramenée à la matérialité de ses composants. Le surplus dont il était porteur, l'émergence qu'il avait pour mission de faire advenir se seraient engloutis et du même coup le mystère de l'homme redevenu opaque se serait évanoui, une fois évacué le mystère du Verbe fait chair: 'Nous proclamons ta mort, Seigneur Jésus, nous célébrons ta Résurrection, nous attendons ta venue dans la Gloire'.

Plus que jamais le monde a besoin de l'Eglise, à un moment où enviré de puissance, il sent l'hypertrophie des moyens comme rendue vaine et dérisoire par l'atrophie des fins. On l'a souvent diagnostiqué: passer de la civilisation néolithique à la civilisation industrielle, c'est sortir d'un équilibre harmonieux entre l'homme et la nature apprivoisée par des rites, humanisée par le

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Marcel LEGAUT, *Introduction à l'intelligence du passé et de l'avenir du Christianisme*, Aubier, col. *Intelligence de la Foi*, 1970.

travail, sacralisée par la médiation d'un langage où les mots ne sont pas sans pouvoir sur les choses.

Ce monde a disparu. La nature n'est plus l'horizon de la contemplation mais le champ de l'action. Une érosion lente, mais irrésistible, a attaqué la symbiose progressivement réalisée entre la société et l'Eglise en notre monde occidental qui, pendant des siècles, a été le Creuset exclusif de la pensée de l'Eglise. Par une sorte de processus cumulatif, en même temps s'affirmaient de nouvelles valeurs de civilisations, cependant que la culture nouvelle s'élaborait en dehors de toute référence à la foi chrétienne. Tacitement athée, le monde moderne ignore Dieu, beaucoup plus qu'il ne le combat. Sorte d'évidence implicite, de postulat vécu, l'athéisme d'après Jésus Christ éprouve moins le besoin de combattre, en cette fin du second millénaire marquée de son signe, un événement qui l'oublie dissout et efface peu à peu. 'Les signes se replient sur leurs mystères, ils ne parlent plus, ils n'interpellent plus; un grand silence s'étend sur le monde'.<sup>39</sup>

#### CRISE

En cette éprouvante nuit du samedi saint, retentit plus que jamais l'interpellation du prophète: 'Custos, quid de nocte?' 'Veilleur, quand point le jour?' Avec le poète, qui dira qu'il est beau la nuit de croire en la lumière et d'espérer l'émergence de l'aurore aux doigts de rose qui pointe à l'horizon de l'archipel grec avant d'embraser de son incandescence toute la mer Egée. L'Eglise semble aujourd'hui fatiguée de porter le fardeau d'une civilisation qu'elle a engendrée lorsque le monde a pesé sur ses jeunes épaules de tout le poids de l'écroulement de l'empire romain. Héritière de l'ordre romain, mais aussi de la sagesse grecque et du ferment hébraïque,<sup>40</sup> l'Eglise a servi d'armature à une civilisation nouvelle, celle-là même qui nous a enfantés, au point qu'à son déclin le plus beau rêve a pu surgir d'un 'nouveau Moyen-Age'.<sup>41</sup> Mais où est donc le secret qui nous donnera les ingrédients pour inventer ce nouvel humanisme, à l'heure où le 'paysan de la Garonne' voit se dissoudre 'l'humanisme intégral' qu'il avait si magnifiquement chanté?<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> JEAN LADRIERE, *La science, le monde et la foi*, Casterman, 1972, p. 206.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Didier LAZARD, *L'Occident, quel Occident?* La Bâconnière, col. *L'évolution du monde et des idées*, Neuchatel, 1960.

<sup>41</sup> Nicolas BERDIAEFF, *Un nouveau Moyen-Age*, 1927.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques MARITAIN, *Le paysan de la Garonne*, Desclée 1966. *Humanisme intégral*, Aubier 1936.

Il nous faut bien l'admettre, l'ancien moule est cassé, la machine à faire les dieux épuisée. C'est de bien autre chose que de 'la crise de la conscience européenne'<sup>43</sup> qu'il s'agit. Un nouveau paganisme, souterrain d'abord avec la Renaissance, agressif ensuite à l'ère des Révolutions, tranquillement triomphant en notre époque technicienne, a recommencé de reflourir et une nouvelle civilisation de se construire, plus païenne encore que l'ancienne civilisation méditerranéenne, plus orgueilleuse dans la superbe de sa mécanique, plus totalitaire dans le pouvoir de ses Etats, plus opaque dans son idéologie. A une démocratie chrétienne qui s'efforçait d'établir une projection des valeurs spirituelles sur le plan temporel, succède un royaume païen où les mythes temporalisés tiennent lieu d'eschatologie. Une puissante construction rationnelle, où la science triomphe dans l'élaboration de plans qui enserrer l'avenir et l'organiser pour 'le meilleur des mondes' fait s'évanouir l'idée même d'une liberté sans laquelle pourtant il n'est plus d'humanité.

Cette prise de conscience provoque chez les chrétiens un grand désarroi et chez certains suscite une parade où la foi même s'évanouit. Lorsqu'elle ne croit plus avoir rien de spécial à apporter, la foi se réduit à avoir été une forme signifiante du passé, un langage évocateur encore dans le présent, une symbolique pour l'avenir. J'ai nommé la tentative de démythisation au terme de laquelle il n'y a plus de foi.<sup>44</sup>

A l'opposé la foi apparaît pour certains comme une sorte de superstructure hétérogène au monde. Rejetant la tentation rationaliste comme ruineuse pour la foi, celle-ci croit-on s'épanouit dans un fidéïsme où elle ne tarde pas pourtant à se dissoudre inexorablement.

En cette heure de vérité, le chrétien est sommé de se présenter au monde pour ce qu'il est et rien d'autre, le disciple de Jésus, le messager des Béatitudes qui au plus épais du mystère de l'histoire, proclame le *Kairos*, cet événement unique et libérateur, irréductible à tous les systèmes: une jeune femme vierge a enfanté un fils, et ce petit de femme est le Fils de Dieu. Il est mort et il est vivant, prodigieuse aventure qui fait reculer les limites du mythe et ouvre une faille prodigieuse en notre monde tragiquement clos sur son histoire. J'ai dit événement, car c'en est un, et son épaisseur historique est perceptible, son sillon ouvert comme

<sup>43</sup> Paul HAZARD, *La crise de la conscience européenne, 1680-1715*, Fayard, 1961.

une blessure sur deux millénaires d'histoire. Qui ne le voit des lors: ce n'est pas un supplément de sens qu'il apporte, mais sa plénitude, sa vérité même, sans laquelle la vie devient dérisoire et l'histoire s'évanouit dans le mythe du perpétuel retour. Malraux nous a fait entendre 'les voix du silence'.<sup>45</sup> Mais nous voilà désormais désabusés: 'La monnaie de l'absolu'<sup>46</sup> n'est qu'une fausse monnaie chaque jour démonétisée davantage devant le poids de nos interrogations radicales et le soupçon de notre critique intransigeante.

Non, dans le dépouillement même où l'Eglise abandonne les oripeaux superbes qui l'avaient revêtue en ses heures somptueuses de triomphe temporel, son dénuement rayonne comme si à travers l'épreuve elle apparaissait enfin pour ce qu'elle est vraiment: le sacrement de Jésus-Christ.<sup>47</sup>

'La foi n'est pas un cri,<sup>48</sup> elle n'est pas non plus une idéologie<sup>49</sup> et malgré des tentatives renaissantes et sans cesse renouvelées depuis ses origines, l'Eglise n'est point non plus gnose secrète, chapelle souterraine, enclos réservé à un groupe de parfaits qui détiendrait dans son ésotérisme le secret du monde, mais tout au contraire vaste rassemblement, maison ouverte à tous, voilier de plein vent.<sup>50</sup>

#### BONNE NOUVELLE

Malgré les apparences, l'homme sans Dieu est en définitive seul au fond de lui-même. Les hommes sont seuls au sein d'une nature aveugle, et au milieu d'idoles toujours renaissantes à travers le renouvellement des civilisations, le flux et le reflux des idées. Dans la foi, le chrétien surmonte au contraire l'illusion, le mythe, l'erreur, le vertige angoissant et le désespoir total.<sup>51</sup> Ne pouvant

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Rudolf BULTMANN, *Jésus, mythologie et démythologisation*, Seuil 1968.

Mgr. de SOLAGES, *Critique des évangiles et méthode historique*, E. Privat 1972.

<sup>45</sup> André MALRAUX, *Les voix du silence*, Gallimard, 1953.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 465 sq.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Louis BOUYER, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, Cerf, 1970.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. H. DUMERY, Casterman, 1957.

<sup>49</sup> Karl RAHNER, *Est-il possible aujourd'hui de croire?*, Mame, 1966, p. 13-143.

<sup>50</sup> Jean DANIELOU, et Jean-Pierre JOSSUA, *Dialogue entre Christianisme de masse ou d'élite*, Beauchesne, col. *Verse et Controverse*, 4, 1968.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Paul POUPARD, *Initiation à la foi catholique*, Fayard, 1969, p. 21.



s'enfouir dans le misérable oubli d'une vie toute à la surface de son être, le chrétien échappe moins que quiconque aux lancinants soucis de la vie quotidienne et aux interrogations dramatiques de l'épreuve, du mal et de la mort. Mais une certitude l'habite, inouïe et extraordinaire: un visage d'homme, celui de Jésus, est pour lui manifestation de Dieu. En lui, Dieu est vivant et vivifiant. Avec lui, nous sommes fils de Dieu, et frères entre hommes pour réaliser un projet merveilleux. Telle est la bonne nouvelle de Jésus-Christ et l'Eglise, c'est Jésus-Christ répandu et communiqué. Non point groupe humain fondé sur un commun idéal idéologique, politique et culturel, mais communauté de ceux qui croient au Christ et constituent avec lui ce corps vivant dont il est la tête et dont l'esprit est l'âme (Cf. *Rom.* 12, 3-6; *I Cor.* 12).

#### EGLISE, ESPERANCE DU MONDE

Et c'est pourquoi l'Eglise est l'espérance du monde, l'âme secrète de son mouvement, l'axe de son dynamisme. L'homme n'est point, comme l'a cru Sartre 'une passion inutile'.<sup>52</sup> Sa passion suprême, c'est Dieu, et Dieu est vivant. Et Dieu source de vie nous a donné le monde foisonnant de vie. C'est pourquoi le chrétien a la passion du monde, d'un monde exorcisé des maléfices du paganisme et des sortilèges de la technique, d'un monde qui n'est plus celui des orphelins, des manichéens et des magiciens, mais la maison des fils de Dieu, avant que sa figure ne passe selon la vision prophétique de l'Apocalypse, que sa vétusté ne s'évanouisse et qu'enfin terre et ciel ne soient nouveaux et chaque homme aussi, lorsque l'avenir du monde sera accompli et que l'Eglise sera enfin ce temple de pierres vivantes indestructiblement réunies par le ciment de l'amour.

Mgr. PAUL POUPARD

<sup>52</sup> Jean-Paul SARTRE, *L'Etre et le Néant*, Gallimard, p. 708.