

CENTRO  
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### CENTRO PRO UNIONE

The *Centro Pro Unione* is a center for ecumenical formation: for study and research, for the exchange of information, and for encounter. To achieve these ends, the Centro runs a series of conferences each year studying various aspects of the ecumenical movement from the pastoral, theological, social and practical points of view. Its facilities are available to any group with an ecumenical concern. The staff organizes programs for individuals as well as groups who visit Rome with an ecumenical purpose. It provides an ecumenical library for students in Rome and is available to supply information on ecumenical activities throughout the world. The library has 7,000 titles of an ecumenical nature in 5 languages (e.g. theological subjects studied ecumenically, dialogues, documentation, Church History etc.) as well as 1,200 bound periodicals (specialized in ecumenics) and more than 100 current reviews.

The *Movimento Pro Unione* is a gathering together of Christians, clergy and lay people, who are in sympathy with the ecumenical outreach of the *Centro Pro Unione* of the Atonement Friars in Rome. The members of the Movimento are encouraged to work and pray individually and corporately for Christian Unity where this is possible. The Movimento seeks to be a vehicle to share ecumenical experiences and provides means for ecumenical formation on the local level in Italy.

The *Centro Pro Unione* is staffed by the Atonement Friars who are a religious community in the Franciscan tradition, existing specifically to help fulfill the Church's mission of Christian Unity, to witness to the Gospel among Christians and non-Christians and to bring all men to the fullness of unity with the People of God.

### CENTRO PRO UNIONE

*Centro Pro Unione* est un centre de formation oecuménique: pour l'étude et la recherche, pour l'échange d'informations, et pour les rencontres. Pour réaliser ces buts, le centre organise chaque année des séries de conférences qui étudient les divers aspects du mouvement oecuménique: pastoral, théologique, social, et les points de vue pratiques. Il met ses locaux et autres facilités à la disposition de tout groupe ayant un but oecuménique. L'équipe organise un programme pour les particuliers ou les groupes qui visitent Rome dans un dessein oecuménique. Il possède une bibliothèque oecuménique ouverte aux étudiants, et il est à même d'informer sur les activités oecuméniques à travers le monde. La bibliothèque a 7.000 titres de caractère oecuménique, en 5 langues (sujets théologiques, dialogues, documentation, histoire de l'Eglise, etc.), 1.200 périodiques reliés et plus de 100 revues courantes.

Le *Movimento Pro Unione* est un rassemblement de chrétiens, de clergé et de laïques qui sont d'accords avec les projets oecuméniques du *Centro Pro Unione* des Frères de l'Atonement à Rome. Les membres du Movimento sont encouragés à travailler et prier individuellement et collectivement pour l'unité des chrétiens, où cela est possible. Ce Movimento cherche à être un instrument de partage des expériences oecuméniques et fournit les moyens pour une formation oecuménique au niveau 'grass-roots' en Italie.

Les Frères de l'Atonement (l'équipe du centre) sont une congrégation religieuse de tradition franciscaine. Leur vocation spécifique est d'aider l'Eglise en sa mission de rétablir l'unité chrétienne, de témoigner de l'Evangile parmi les chrétiens et les non-chrétiens, de conduire tous les hommes à la plénitude d'unité avec le peuple de Dieu.

## THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

John Mbiti\*

### I: INTRODUCTION

Several theologies of liberation have erupted since the 1960s, of which the most renowned are the Black Theology of liberation in the United States, the theology of women's liberation also in the United States, Britain and Europe, and the theology of liberation in Latin America. The 1970s are seeing other theologies of liberation such as that of the Indians in the United States and Africans in South Africa. The main source of published material on the theology of liberation in South Africa is the book, *Black Theology: the South African Voice*, edited by Basil Moore, and published by C. Hurst and Co., London 1973. It was first published in South Africa in 1972 but the government banned it immediately so that it could not be circulated there. The book is a collection of seventeen essays written by eleven South Africans, and edited by an Englishman who formerly lived in South Africa from where he fled to Britain.

For this lecture, South Africa will be used to mean the Republic of South Africa which has a population of about 23 million, of whom 16 million are racially classified as Africans (or Bantu or Blacks), 4 million as whites, over 2 million as Coloureds (because of European, African and Indian descent), and over half a million Asians or Indians. South Africa's population is 84 percent Christian, and has all the major Churches of Europe as well as locally created African Independent Churches. The country was occupied by a variety of African peoples for many generations before the first group of Dutch sailors arrived and settled at the Cape in 1662. Slowly the European immigrant population increased, and spread further inland. By the beginning of this century these Europeans had gained military supremacy over the Africans, and had taken most of the land and wealth from the African peoples. Since 1948 the white minority government has gradually introduced and imposed the policy of apartheid or separate development on racial lines.

The situation today is that, among other things, the whites who are less than 18 percent of the population occupy 87 percent of the best land, while the remaining 82 percent who are Africans, Coloureds and Asians have only 13 percent of the land or nothing at all. It is also reported that the whites have the political, economic, military and educational power while the rest of the people have none or very little. In Church life most of the power also is in the hands of the white leaders, except in the independent Churches, though in recent years there are attempts to share

power and decision making with Africans and other races. The majority of the population feels oppressed, dehumanised and denied basic human rights, while a small migrant group is enjoying great wealth, power and authority, often at the expense of the majority. This is the background against which the theology of liberation in South Africa is evolving. I will confine my analysis to the essays in the book we have mentioned, *Black Theology: the Voice of South Africa*, ed. Basil Moore; and to one issue of the All Africa Conference of Churches *Bulletin*, December 1974 which focused on Liberation. I have not been to South Africa, so I can only go by what I hear and read.

### II: DEFINING THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is exclusively a theology of the Africans and the so-called Coloureds. They see it as a theology "in revolt against the spiritual enslavement of black people.... It is a theology in search of new symbols by which to affirm black humanity. It is a theology of the oppressed, by the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed," (Moore, p. ix) They see the Christian pulpit as "almost the only platform open to black people in South Africa." Moore says that it is a theology born out of the failure of multi-racism which became disastrous for Africans because of the "vast gap in wealth and education between blacks and whites" (p.3). He continues that "it starts with black people in the South African situation facing the strangling problems of oppression, fear, hunger, insult and dehumanisation (p.6)." He also says that it "is a passionate call to action for freedom, for God, for wholeness, for man" (p.10).

Another contributor, Mokgethi Motlhabi, considers it to be a theology of "liberation for ourselves and what enslaves us; a social, political and economic liberation in relation to our fellow-men.... across the 'colour bar'; and a religious liberation in relation to God" (p.76). It "is not a new theology nor is it a proclamation of a new gospel. It is merely a reevaluation of the gospel message, a making relevant of this message according to the situation of the people.... (it is) the theology of liberation from suffering.... 'We understand Christ's liberation to be a liberation not only from circumstances of external bondage but also a liberation from circumstances of internal enslavement' " (pp.78, 79, 80). The third definition of South African theology of liberation comes from the essay of Ananias Mpunzi. For him liberation or freedom must be sought in the structures of society and the attitudes of people. He says that "in its structural aspect freedom is a vision. It is a dream", which functions on the individual and community levels (pp.130 f.). It is, therefore, "a situational theology. It asks theological questions which are

vital to particular people in a particular situation—that is, to us, the black people in South Africa... Although it directs its voice to black people, it nonetheless hopes that white people also will hear and be saved,” (pp.135, 139).

There is, thus, no unified definition of the theology of liberation in South Africa. The contributors also refer to it as “Black Theology”—a term which originated and is used in the United States of America and which should perhaps be confined to America to avoid confusion. Let us now look briefly at its main concerns and what it says about them.

### III: THE CHIEF CONCERNS OF SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

I have isolated six themes, as the main concerns of South African theology of liberation, as far as these essays are concerned. None of these themes is worked out fully, and different contributors have sometimes different ideas about the themes.

#### (a) *Christology*

This theology has much to say about Jesus Christ. Moore tells us that “Jesus was, though oppressed, a liberator of the oppressed.” Moore, though himself English, advocates a theology of liberation which sees Jesus Christ as both black and liberator (p.8). Another writer, Steve Biko, says this theology of liberation in South Africa “wants to describe Christ as a fighting god, not a passive god who allows a lie to rest unchallenged” (p.43).

Another contributor, Nyameko Pityana, holds that this theology of liberation “sees Christ as liberating men not only from internal bondage, but also from external enslavement....(It is) ‘a theology of liberation’ that emancipates black people from black and white racism, and thus provides an authentic freedom for both black and white people,” (p.63).

Finally, South African liberation theology sees Jesus Christ as point of coherence for the Christian community, i.e. the community of those who have been liberated “The radically new factor is Jesus Christ who is the ethos of the new community.” (p.149). On this basis it is possible for the Church to be spoken of as the body of Christ.

#### (b) *Man and Humanity*

The South African theology of liberation rejects the definition of African peoples by whites who refer to them as “non-whites”, and utterly rejects the South African policy of apartheid which it regards as a demonic “philosophy of enmity” (Adam Small, p.14).

It also rejects integration because, as Adam Small goes on to say, “we want to survive as men” (p.17).

This liberation theology attacks western theology for having subjected women. It says that this is particularly painful for the African women who are oppressed through the racial policy because they are Africans, and are also oppressed because they are women, in the Church which has a dominant male theology. So, liberation must be for the whole man, male and female alike. Man’s freedom, Motlhabi tells us, is “only a reflection of God’s freedom.... Since God is the uniting element between man and man, alienation from God meant alienation from his fellow-men” (76). He takes this alienation to be what enslaves people in South Africa, and to be manifested in all levels of human life there.

Apartheid then, is a distortion of mankind, a distortion of God’s image in man. The theology of liberation helps one to ask about one’s true identity as a human being - and “this in essence is the quest for true or authentic humanity”, as Manas Buthelezi tells us (p.93). Even though this image is distorted, it is nevertheless redeemable, liberatable. The theology of liberation is an attempt to make it possible for man to be free from these sub-human conditions imposed on Africans by migrant outsiders.

Buthelezi wrestles further with the problem of human alienation, about which he writes that “alienation engulfs the black man in South Africa with its deadly tentacles. Alienation and the realisation of true humanity are mutually exclusive concepts.... ‘Colonised humanity’ (is) a state of existence in which the selfhood becomes alienated from its ‘human house’. The selfhood is placed under ‘house arrest’ ” (pp.100 f.). This is what makes the task of the theology of liberation even more demanding, because the structures that have put man’s real selfhood under ‘house arrest’ are strong and demonic.

#### (c) *The Church*

South African theology of liberation sees the Church in South Africa as a very foreign institution insofar as it is dominated by the white minority there. In his essay on the Church, Sabelo Ntwasa laments that the Church in South Africa “is essentially the most colonial institution in the country today. Although the membership is almost 70 percent black, the power and decision-making are still essentially western and white-oriented. All land owned by the Church is registered as white land. ... The predominance of white value systems in the Church life of the black man has led him to equate whiteness with value.... (And) this is a cardinal sin” (p.111). According to Ntwasa, “the Church therefore cannot be seen simply as the company of believers who have had spiritual experiences. It is the company of those whose lives are perceived to have the quality of Christ—in-his—struggle—against—

human—bondage. It is thus the company of liberators, or it is not the Church” (pp.114 f.). That is the image of the true Church as Ntwasa sees it through the eyes of the theology of liberation. He concludes that “the Church is that company of people who ‘die with Christ’ in the quality of life which is totally committed to liberating black people.....” (p.116).

For this reason, Motlhabi advocates that in South Africa, “we need a Church which is authentically a Church of the people for their liberation” (p.128).

#### *(d) Black Consciousness*

Is another concern of the South African theology of liberation Steve Biko defines Black Consciousness as “an attitude of mind and a way of life..... Its essence is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression..... and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude..... Freedom is the ability to define oneself with one’s possibilities held back not by the power of other people over one but only by one’s relationship to God and to natural surroundings” (p.41). This Black Consciousness would mean, among other things, the restoration of freedom of African values, history and culture from the state of misrepresentation and ridicule which they have suffered in the hands of missionaries, white immigrants and the so-called ‘scholars of African peoples’ (pp.42 ff.).

Another aspect of Black Consciousness is to conscientize African peoples against the ways they have been treated in their own country, and to awaken them so that they would rebel against that form of treatment in their own country.

#### *(e) Authority*

The question of authority is another concern to which the theology of liberation addresses itself. Motlhabi points out that “it was in physical violence that power was wrested by the whites from the blacks in South African history”; and that the whites have since maintained an ever increasing exercise of authoritarianism over the Africans – in political, economic, educational, Church, and military aspects of life. This authoritarianism is enforced by a myth of racism and a white belief in a fictitious ‘divine election’ (p.120).

Motlhabi is also quick to point out that there exists authoritarianism in African society as well. He attacks the authoritarianism which has been engrained in the Church concerning God and the different officers of the Church. For that reason, he advocates the exploration of “those images which speak of the suffering God who is identified with the oppressed in their suffering and who struggles in and with them to lift the burden of oppression” (p.127); and calls for Church

leaders or bishops who have “heard the people sufficiently clearly to be able to speak both for them.... and to them ....” (p.129).

#### *(f) God*

South African theology of liberation has much to say about God. One of its primary endeavours is to present God in new images which are appropriate for the theme of liberation. So writes Basil Moore, that since this theology of liberation is passionately concerned with freedom, “it is natural therefore that it will explore new images of God.... Concepts such as omnipotence and omniscience ring fearfully of the immovable, militarily-backed South African government and its Special Branch.... (it) needs to explore new images of God which are not sickening reflections of the white man’s power-mad authoritarianism. We need new images which are freeing in that they are images of unity and wholeness, images of humanising relationships of love and truth and justice and kindness and mercy. We will therefore assert that our image of God is of one who is enmeshed in the fabric of unity and wholeness, love and justice... An appropriate symbol of this understanding of God would be that ‘God is Freedom’ – the freedom which has been revealed in our history” (pp.9 f.).

God is also portrayed as both Creator and Liberator. The theology of liberation, we are told by Motlhabi, “seeks to relate God as both man’s creator and his liberator to all these (oppressed) people in their entire situation” (p.77). Being liberator, God is identified with the oppressed. In another essay, Motlhabi continues that “in the place of these authoritarian images we should explore those images which speak of the suffering God who is identified with the oppressed in their suffering and who struggles in and with them to lift the burden of oppression. As such God is neither our servant, to be treated as we choose, nor our master, to treat us as he chooses, but our comrade and friend in the struggle for freedom” (p.127).

To affirm that God is, is to make an affirmation “of the uniqueness of every individual”, and this is what the doctrine of creation entails, according to the opinion of Ananias Mpunzi (p.136).

South African theology of liberation rejects the image of God painted in Western theology as a “white male” and the “anti-feminism” which has gone with that image. “Despite all the theological disclaimers about God’s non-racial identity, Western theology and art have made him supremely ‘white’.... All the classical portrayals of God in art are of a white male. It is only very recently also that a few Black theologians have dared symbolise God or Christ as black” (Sabelo Ntwasa and Basil Moore, p.21). The image of God as a white, authoritarian male, is what missionaries preached and persuaded Africans to accept. The theology of liberation advocates a rejection

of such images of God: "Black theologians have to be iconoclasts of the 'white' God. They have to tear down every image and symbol which, by presenting God as 'white', reinforces this sense of human inferiority and worthlessness" (p.25). Such a rejection of male authoritarianism will also mean freedom to the women. Therefore, "a theology of liberation relevant to South Africa, cannot afford to perpetuate any form of domination, not even male domination. If its liberation is not human enough to include the liberation of women, it will not be liberation" (pp.25 f.).

The kind of symbols of God that South African liberation theology is advocating, is what it terms "relational symbols". In a joint essay on the concept of God, Ntwasa and Moore say that "we need new images of God which give content and direction to the 'spaces between people', i.e. we need relational images of God". These are summarised in their statement that instead of the "much-abused 'love' " image, we have to say that "God is Freedom". God is the freedom made known in our history; God is the freedom fleetingly and incompletely known in our own experience. But God is also the freedom beyond anything we have yet known, the freedom that calls us out of our chains of oppression into a wholeness of life. God is this wholeness which exists in the spaces between the people when their dignity and worth is mutually affirmed in love, truth, honesty, justice and caring warmth" (p.27).

The theology of liberation takes the doctrine of the Trinity seriously, which it interprets to mean that "God is not any one of the unique three ('persons') alone. God is the oneness of the community. And that community demands an equality of the unique persons and their interrelationship" (Ananias Mpunzi, p.138). Furthermore, "people (are) made in the image of the Trinity among whose three 'persons' there is no superiority, are not meant to set some up in authority over others to rule their lives. (This theology) say that man, with his longing for fellowship will tear down every structure that sets about trying to rule over others" (p.139).

#### IV: SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

1. I find this to be a very painful theology because it is the voice of an oppressed people and it is angry and bitter. It is also painful because it asks what is the purpose of the Christian Faith in society if it does not help to build better human relations and living conditions in a country which is 84 percent Christian.

2. This theology of liberation does not discuss the question of violence. Yet it arises in a country

which is full of violence — violence to people, to property, to human values and dignity.

3. South African theology of liberation is presented neatly in terms of Africans versus the white immigrants, the oppressed versus the oppressor. In general terms this may be valid. But in details we cannot say that every European immigrant and missionary in South Africa is an oppressor — indeed, some of the white Christians there are fighting strongly for the freedom and justice of African peoples and they deserve some appreciative mention and encouragement.

4. Little use of the Bible is made in this theology of liberation. This is strange because any viable theology must be based on scriptural enlightenment. Similar theologies of liberation in the United States, for example, make more use of the Bible.

5. Insofar as this South African theology of liberation tries to give new meanings to the questions of Christology, Church, freedom, etc., it has some new insights which enrich Christian theology at large. These insights need further academic follow-up. It is a situational theology which seems to speak passionately to the place of its setting.

6. South African theology of liberation is an important element of African Theology in general. Other parts of Africa have different theological concerns. But the explosive situation in South Africa brings the South African theology of liberation to the doorsteps of Christian conscience and theological reflection elsewhere in Africa and in other parts of the world wherever the Church may be.

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### EGLISE ET SOCIETE

Aldo Comba\*

#### I

L'église chrétienne est née à l'intérieur d'une société classiste, l'empire romain, et elle a été composée, pratiquement dès le début, de personnes provenant de différentes classes sociales: elle a même envisagé l'opportunité d'accueillir en son sein des membres des classes dominantes (Quis dives salvetur?). La période constantinienne a marqué un tournant pour le christianisme et elle a transformé cette religion de marginaux en une religion de groupes dominants. Avant Constantin les membres des classes supérieures entraient dans l'église par un choix volontaire et souvent

individuel; après cette période l'église est envahie par les bureaucrates et les dirigeants de l'empire qui en font leur domaine. Au cours des siècles suivants la hiérarchie ecclésiastique se structure comme le système féodal et permet à ceux qui entrent de la base d'atteindre le sommet, mais ne le permet qu'à ceux qui veulent *monter*, c'est à dire à ceux qui s'intègrent dans le système. Au cours de ces siècles l'église a moralisé le système féodal sans le contester: elle a affirmé l'égalité des êtres humains mais elle l'a renvoyée à après la mort; mais elle a refusé de permettre de considérer les hommes comme souchumains ou comme divins. Même les connaissances théologiques sont expropriées à la masse des croyants et elles deviennent propriété de la classe dirigeante: la vraie doctrine descend d'en haut. La réforme protestante n'a pas changé grand chose sous cet aspect même si elle a choisi d'autres rapports: plus de hiérarchie féodale comme le catholicisme, mais des principes territoriaux pour le luthéranisme ou les bourgeoisies des villes pour le calvinisme. L'évolution de la société moderne et le succès du capitalisme qui a pour condition de base le profit et l'accumulation ont affranchi la science de la théologie et celle-ci à son tour de la tradition; la théologie a pris la peine de définir soigneusement quel était "son" domaine mais ne s'est pas soucée de savoir si la science, désormais affranchie se mettait au service de la masse des hommes ou du capital. L'on peut donc définir l'église une grande entreprise réformatrice. Il ne faut pas sousestimer ses côtés positifs: moralisation des sociétés anciennes, développement de l'assistance, limitation des atrocités de la guerre, développement de l'individualité par le biais de l'appel à la foi qui s'adresse précisément à l'individu et le responsabilise. Tout ceci s'est cependant produit dans les limites du système: on aide, on n'établit pas l'égalité; on limite la guerre, on ne fait pas la révolution sociale; on humanise le système, on ne le met pas en question. La littérature théologique même reste influencée par la classe sociale de ses auteurs: elle exhale réformisme en effet; il faut faire exception de ces récents auteurs sudaméricains qui sont impliqués du côté des opprimés dans une situation de lutte de classe.

On voit apparaître deux problèmes: a) l'église aurait-elle pu survivre dans le monde ancien et médiéval et à l'époque moderne si elle avait été révolutionnaire et non pas réformatrice? D'autre part le réalisme porte au compromis et ce dernier prive le message originare de toute sa signification. b) la tâche de l'église est-ce encore aujourd'hui une tâche réformatrice? doit-elle faire la dame de la Croix Rouge sur les champs de bataille ou doit-elle détruire les usines d'armements?

## II

Si on veut s'inspirer de la Bible pour la solution de ce problème on constate que le message de Jésus n'était

pas un message apocalyptique; ce n'était pas une annonce de choses futures à attendre tranquillement et avec patience; c'est au contraire un appel au changement. La "metanoia" n'est pas "repentir" mais "donner une nouvelle orientation à l'existence". Mais pourquoi ce changement devrait-il se limiter à l'infériorité des individus et ne pas impliquer le système? L'Evangile abonde en paraboles de "rupture" (citons la parabole du "bon samaritain" qui brise les barrières que la société lui a imposées; et la parabole des "travailleurs à heures différentes" d'où se dégage nettement la réaction de rejet des puissants envers le noeud du message de Jésus: ("Tu as fait ces derniers pareils à nous! ! ..."). Le règne de Dieu est proche, c'est à dire qu'il permet la nouvelle vie déjà dans le monde ancien; voilà pourquoi dès maintenant on peut vivre l'"agapè", qui n'est pas un angélisme à la manière de Don Quichotte, mais un effort pour établir des rapports paritaires et fraternels dans la vie concrète, dans les rapports interpersonnels, économiques, de travail etc. Le Règne de Dieu n'est pas mort mais vie, et ces deux termes ne décrivent pas un état mais une façon de vivre: vie c'est vivre pour faire épanouir la vie de chacun, mort c'est suffoquer la vie d'autrui par l'oppression, l'exploitation, la pollution etc. Le Règne de Dieu n'est pas hiérarchie mais fraternité dans l'égalité, car un seul est Père, celui qui est dans les cieux (et il s'agit encore une fois d'une paternité quasi fraternelle, pensez à la figure du père de la parabole du fils prodigue qui refuse l'hommage du fils désobéissant pour l'embrasser et fêter avec lui) alors que sur la terre personne n'est digne de ce nom. Il en naît une communauté qui n'est pas un ghetto fermé, mais une oasis ouverte qui offre la vie à tous. Savoir si Jésus lui-même a été un révolutionnaire n'a pas d'importance: il en reste que de son message naît le "communisme" de Jérusalem.

On pourrait objecter que de cette façon c'est nous mêmes qui voulons construire le Règne de Dieu, ce qui n'est pas du tout biblique. Nous répondons que le médecin qui lutte contre les maladies ne prétend pas créer l'immortalité, de même on peut lutter pour établir des rapports paritaires et fraternels sans pour cela voler à Dieu ce qui n'appartient qu'à lui seul.

On pourrait encore objecter que l'esclavage, par la façon dont il est traité dans les épîtres du Nouveau Testament, montre la communauté primitive occupée à lutter contre les rapports de pouvoir à l'intérieur d'elle même, et non pas dans le monde. Nous répondons que la communauté, vue la place limitée qu'elle occupe dans le monde ancien, a commencé par combattre les rapports de pouvoir en son sein, mais au moment où elle a acquis de la force, elle a été envahie par le monde (au moment du tournant constantinien) qui a réintroduit dans la communauté des rapports de pouvoir très voisins de ceux qui existaient dans la société. Cette lutte que la communauté ancienne venait d'entreprendre peut, en toute légitimité, être reprise et portée de l'avant aujourd'hui.

### III

La voie réformiste suivie en général par l'église de l'époque de Constantin à nos jours présente deux séries de problèmes. Tout d'abord elle implique une interprétation réductrice de l'Évangile: le salut est envisagé comme créateur de nouveaux rapports avec Dieu mais pas avec le prochain; le péché ne touche qu'aux fautes individuelles et ne concerne pas les fautes collectives; la communauté est réduite à communion spirituelle; les paraboles de Jésus contre les richesses sont transformées en exhortations pour le bon usage de ces richesses mêmes; la lecture de la Bible devient par nécessité sélective: on cite "femmes soyez sujettes..." et non "dans le Christ il n'y a ni homme ni femme...", on cite à chaque instant Rom. 13 mais on ne trouve jamais l'occasion d'appliquer Apoc. 13. La liberté évangélique est réduite à moralismes et compromis. Il est vrai que Luther redécouvre la liberté du chrétien mais il la limite injustement au domaine du pardon des fautes personnelles. Ainsi l'église a légitimé l'esclavage, le colonialisme, le pouvoir de classe, l'impérialisme, les a atténués lorsque il était possible mais les a justifiés en fin de compte.

Mais, et voilà la seconde série de problèmes, accepter la voie réformiste entraîne accepter en principe un système où les intérêts du capital l'emportent sur les intérêts de l'homme (de chacun et de l'humanité toute entière); accepter un système qui par sa propre nature produit toujours plus de gaspillages, de pollution, toujours plus d'armements, de destruction; un système au sein duquel, du reste, l'église a une niche confortable, un système qu'il est difficile de défendre pour des raisons idéales lorsque on en tire des avantages matériels.

Le moment est-il venu de reconsidérer la voie réformiste et de s'avancer sur un chemin révolutionnaire? Voilà le problème actuel de l'église.

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### LIBERATION, SALVATION AND DEVELOPING NATIONS

Paolo Ricca\*

I think it would be no exaggeration to say that this subject is one of the fundamental issues, if not *the* fundamental issue of Christianity today and in the decades

to come. Why? Because on the one hand it seems clear now that the historical future of Christianity depends increasingly on its future in the "developing nations". We were reminded of it again by Pastor Visser't Hooft, former secretary of the WCC, who predicted in a recent interview that by the year 2000 Africa would be, in terms of population, the continent with the largest number of committed Christians. Thus on the statistical level as well, the centre of gravity and impetus of Christianity would be destined to shift from the Western hemisphere to that of the "developing nations".

On the other hand there is no doubt that in these countries the future of Christianity is closely linked to the binomial of liberation - salvation and the correlation that Christians will or will not be able to make between these two realities. This is a fundamental issue, which cannot simply arouse curiosity or interest, but demands a deep level of participation and involvement, if it is to be taken at all seriously.

To talk about "salvation and developing nations" is not to make statements about far-off problems and peoples, but is in reality to talk about ourselves as Christians and Westerners. When we talk about the future of Christianity in those countries we are in fact talking about our own future.

Let us now approach the subject directly with a primarily critical and general examination. The topic is "developing" nations. Everyone knows which they are: the nations of the Third World. But is it really only these? Our own, for instance, what kind of a nation is it? Officially, it is an industrialised country, not in the third world but the first world. However, if others could speak at this moment on the subject - for instance a Southerner who has emigrated to Germany, or an unemployed or underemployed Piedmontese, or a Roman slum-dweller, or one of those families that moved to the big city and are evicted from one lodging after another, continually on the move, with their belongings and their mattresses on a cart. If one of these people were talking now, you can imagine that when they heard about "developing" nations they would think someone was talking about countries far more advanced than Italy. Practically the only development these people know is the development of prices and the cost of living, or the development of unemployment. That is to say that the Third World is here. It is at the gates of Rome; it is in many parts of Italian and European society; it is as much our own problem as that of other people or countries. Therefore we should be aware that in the industrialised West there are many people - whole classes and social groupings - who confront the problem of "Liberation, salvation and developing nations" on exactly the same terms as they do in the so-called "developing nations".

Furthermore, if one considers that the "developing nations" are generally countries tied directly or indirectly

to the international capitalist system — dominated and abused by it indeed — it will be appreciated that the socio-economic face of these nations has largely been determined by the capitalist countries, of which we are one.

Thus in the last analysis underdevelopment in the Third World countries is only the flip side of our own development, the development of the industrialised countries. But if that is the case, it is evident that one cannot talk of “liberation, salvation and developing nations” without talking also about “liberation, salvation and industrialised nations”. Substantially it is the same problem. It should not be imagined that it exists there in a way substantially different from the way in which it exists here. Thus to deal correctly with the question we cannot make it one that just deals with “developing nations”; we must also realise that there is no “liberation — salvation” problem that does not exist, in virtually identical terms, (though sometimes it is the reverse side that is seen) in industrialised countries.

The title specifies “developing”. This is a euphemistic term that avoids the brutal adjective of “underdeveloped”. We should ask ourselves, however, whether this euphemism gives an accurate idea of the situation. It gives one the impression that there actually is some development, and that underdevelopment is just a pause, which is sooner or later superceded, in the process of development which is nevertheless under way. It gives a more or less positive impression, as if referring to a steadily improving situation. It should be asked whether this impression is justifiable, and not rather misleading. The expression “developing” leads one to believe that the critical phase of development has already been passed, though in fact this is precisely what is doubtful. There is a kind of development that constitutes not progress but simply a process of disguising underdevelopment. A country can be described as “developing” even if it is actually becoming increasingly underdeveloped. It is a matter of what quality of development is being talked about. There is a kind of development which does effectively constitute moving beyond underdevelopment, but on the other hand there is also a kind of “development” which is paradoxically the cause of underdevelopment. Therefore one must immediately ask what kind of development is being talked about, and not be misled by certain ambivalent expressions like this one of “developing nations”. Above all, the basic factor that must always be considered is the relationship between the “development” (whatever its sign may be) of Third World countries and that of industrialised nations.

This comparison is essential in that it makes it possible to determine whether the development in the Third World countries fits the picture or at least the prospect of the emancipation of these countries from those that are industrialised, or whether in fact they

continue to live in a state of effective dependency and thus of persistent and even increased exploitation. Pierre Galél, at the end of his book called, significantly enough, *The Sack of the Third World*, outlines this interpretation. At the moment of political decolonisation, imperialistic exploitation of the Third World does not only continue but actually intensifies. The economic gap between industrialised nations and developing nations actually is widening rather than narrowing. For example, the standard of living for United States citizens, which in 1935 was seventeen times as high as India, was thirty-five times as high in 1962. Also in the last ten years (he was writing in 1965) per capita economic growth has been far more rapid in the imperialist countries than it has in the Third World.

The second question, then, has to do with the quality and even the reality of the “development” being talked about. The answer that is given to this question will modify even the historical content of the “liberation — salvation” binomial. “Development” can in fact either be understood as growth in the capitalistic dimension or it can mean the creation of a new social order along non-capitalist lines. Development that takes place inside a situation of dependency and domination, rather than helping to overcome this actually reinforces it and thus causes the overall situation of the Third World to deteriorate even though apparently, in terms of quantitative well-being, it seems to be improved. To put it bluntly: abundance, even widespread abundance, is not synonymous with liberation.

Thus we have made a first critical assessment of the topic, specially in relation to the idea of “developing nations”. In the first place we have shown that underdevelopment or super-development are not two successive stages of growth that all peoples and countries can go through, but that rather they are two aspects of the same reality, two sides of the same coin: one exists because the other one does. Secondly we have shown that the basic problem is not the existence (or lack of it) of development, but rather the nature of that development. There is a kind of development which does not improve but actually causes the general situation to deteriorate. Having made these critical specifications it remains for us to describe the Third World countries and their basic characteristics in more detail.

In a sense, the expression “Third World”, which appeared for the first time in 1956, is deceptive. It leads one to believe that the countries that are part of it belong neither to the capitalist world nor to the socialist world, while in reality this is not the case. On the contrary, the first and fundamental trait of the Third World is precisely its position of economic dependency in relation to the industrialised world in general, and the capitalist countries in particular. This economic dependence continues even beyond the acquisition of political independence. The domination and exploitation of Third World countries is called imperialism.

In the capitalist sector the major instruments of imperialism are the multinational companies. These companies constitute a powerful international network whose aim is to direct the benefits which come from industry, commerce and the exploitation of natural resources in underdeveloped nations to the economic and political interests of industrialised countries and, to a lesser extent, to the interests of the élite in the underdeveloped countries. In relation to the multinational companies the whole world is now Third World, not just the nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even the industrialised countries now find themselves more and more in a position of dependency. But in the Third World these things are more obvious, they are on a bigger scale and therefore it is comparatively easy to be aware of them.

It was this awareness that gave birth to the Third World. This then should be closely studied, as the first and fundamental characteristic of the Third World; not just the economic dependence, but also the awareness and deliberate rejection of it.

There is a second specific characteristic of the Third World countries, though it does not apply to all of them (in particular it does not apply to Latin America) and it is the racial factor. Though the Third World is created by the protest and revolt of the underdeveloped nations against imperialism it is also created to a very large extent by the protest and revolt of the coloured peoples against the white man. This is not the decisive characteristic, but it is nevertheless a very important one. The black Americans and the Puerto Ricans and the other racial minorities in the U.S.A. belong both racially and economically to the Third World though they live in the U.S.A. It is the white people who have been the protagonists of slavery and above all of colonialism. The majority of Third World peoples have this fact engrained on their consciousness.

A third distinctive characteristic of these countries is that they have generally undergone profound cultural violence at the hands of their colonisers, which has destroyed the indigenous cultural heritage. Third World means culturally negated world, which has nevertheless woken up to this fact and is now intent on asserting its own cultural identity. This is of course a longterm process, which so far has hardly begun. But it is essential to realise that the plundering of the Third World is not just economic; on the contrary, perhaps, the worst damage has been not on the economic level but on the cultural level. It is the soul of the Third World that has been plundered. The colonisers have created élites in their own image and likeness, and thus their presence is often prolonged and is still there today, even though they themselves are no longer physically present. For the peoples of the Third World it is a matter of accomplishing a delicate operation of suture or soldering the

culture itself and the people's history, joining the post-colonial present to their pre-colonial past. It is a matter of recovering some continuity, after the devastations of colonialism.

These are the three factors which combine to create the reality we call the Third World, or "the developing nations...." There is an economic aspect, a racial aspect and a cultural aspect: economic exploitation, racial oppression and cultural violence. Third World means awakening to these things and the will to oppose and revolt against them. It is in this context that the subject of liberation and salvation can be discussed.

Our reflection on these two terms and their relationship to each other will consist of two propositions: the first that salvation is liberation; the second that salvation is living with the Liberator, not only in a static reality but in a personal relationship.

## I. SALVATION IS LIBERATION

By now this point has become a part of Christian consciousness in our time, and no-one can think any more of seriously questioning it. The world missionary conference in Bangkok, on the theme of "Development Today" expressed itself essentially in terms of liberation. There is no need to insist on the biblical basis of this understanding; from the time of Israel leaving Egypt, the Gospel liberates, the Gospel is freedom. Christ is the great liberator, according to the prophecy which he himself refers to in Luke 4: 18-19. Where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. The evangelical calling is the call to freedom. The groaning of creation and of history is that of waiting for liberation, of waiting to enter into the freedom and glory of the people of God.

God's life giving intervention in history then is to have created the man of freedom. Salvation is liberation: where there is no liberation there is no salvation much less the fulness of salvation. The daily rediscovery of this aspect of the Gospel is fundamental and irreversible.

What is different about our time is that this liberation is understood not only as a spiritual fact but as a historical fact – not only as a personal matter but also a collective, and therefore political, matter. "Christ annuls the fatality of history" was said at Bangkok and again, "We must overcome the dichotomy we make between body and soul, individual and society, humanity and creation. We recognise this in the struggle for economic justice, for political freedom, and for cultural renewal, which are all elements of the world's complete liberation through the mission of God".

Salvation, then, as it is activated by Christ and received in faith, is defined in the Bangkok documents as "operative in the struggle". Paul the Apostle said faith "is operative through love" (Gal. 5). At Bangkok the Christians (mostly

from the Third World) said faith "is operative through struggle".

It is surely a relatively new dimension of faith for Christians and even non-Christians in our time. One of them can be quoted here, from among many. R. Garaudy says, "All my life I wondered whether I was a Christian. For forty years the answer was no. Because the issue was badly stated: as if faith were incompatible with the life of a militant. But now I am certain that faith and the life of a militant are both the same thing. And that my hope as a militant would have no basis except for that faith. Now if I hesitate to answer yes to the question it is for quite different reasons: such faith seems to me such an explosive force that it would be useless to make claim to it before verifying it with disruptive action. This verification can only come at the end of life, not in the middle, only when we have fully realised our part in creation".

What does this historical creation look like concretely, in relation to the situation described above?

a) With regard to the economic aspect liberation can only signify liberation from capitalism. This battle is fought here, in the industrialised nations. Radical changes have to be made in the first world, in relationships of world commerce, etc. Positively speaking, liberation in the third world means: (i) access to political power, (ii) access to and control of economic resources, (iii) access to technology and a way to make use of it. A free man is one who can decide his own destiny.

b) In relation to racialism this means black liberation theology: "God is black" "The holy spirit is Black Power". (1 Cong.) in other words the polemical approach to theology which stresses that God is not white

c) In relation to the cultural dimension, there are two important realities: (i) continuity in the third world nations between their post-colonial present and their pre-colonial past. It is a matter of history. (ii) The Bangkok "moratorium": "we are at the point now where it would seem that full responsible identity and a renewed and enriched collaboration with the churches might very well be favoured by a temporary withdrawal of foreign funds and personnel"

## II. SALVATION IS LIVING WITH THE DELIVERER

A typical characteristic of the Gospel is that liberation does not make the deliverer superfluous; God does not become superfluous after Israel has been taken out of Egypt, or after their delivery from the Babylonian exile. Jesus does not become superfluous for Mary Magdalen after he has delivered her from the seven devils. Jesus does not become superfluous for Saul the

Pharisee after the latter is delivered by him from his slavery to the Law. Indeed this is the principal feature of the evangelical concept and experience of liberation: it is an event which discloses the deliverer as a reality. It reveals him as a person and brings to birth the need to be with him. This is seen in Mark's Gospel with the possessed Gerasene, who after being set free by Jesus, "begged that he might stay with him" (5, 18). This can only imply that the man's liberation had somehow only just begun and would have to continue for the rest of his life.

In fact liberation has many aspects: personal and social, internal and external, individual and collective. These different dimensions are discovered little by little, in communion with the liberator. What does it mean to be free? It cannot all be learnt at once. One must live in close contact with Christ to learn the life of freedom. Bonhoeffer says that finally we will be free only in God, beyond the frontier of death, beyond the frontier of resurrection. The Nairobi topic: Jesus Christ frees and unites: freedom but reconciliation as well, the unity of men, brotherhood.

## CONCLUSION

The topic points to the need for: full political involvement and full involvement in faith both here and there, since we are bound by a double bond, for better or for worse, with the developing nations; their liberation is our own.

In conclusion I would like to cite the concluding prayer of Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica, who said in the speech he made at Nairobi under the title of "From the Shackles of Dominion and Oppression": "May this be the generation which turns the historic process into a genuinely moral process". Today, particularly as we think about the developing nations, we have to say it is a truly immoral process.

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## ALLIANCE LIBÉRATRICE DE DIEU AVEC L'HOMME

Augusto Segre<sup>23</sup>

Il est évident que le sujet qui m'a été proposé, par la façon dont il est formulé, ne témoigne pas d'une

inspiration hébraïque. J'ai, toutefois, accepté volontiers ce sujet car, à mon avis, il pourrait nous offrir l'occasion d'ouvrir un dialogue. Au sein du domaine hébraïque le dialogue a toujours trouvé, et trouve encore à l'heure actuelle, un terrain fertile en expériences et en tentatives; et ceci même au cours des siècles passés lorsque le dialogue nous était refusé et nous étions obligés d'assister à un monologue. Si nous voulons aborder ce problème de façon positive, nous devons, en nous inspirant de notre situation d'égalité vis à vis de Dieu, reconnaître l'égalité de tous les hommes dans leurs rapports directs ainsi que le profond respect du prochain et de ses idées, en conclusion en rapport sujet sujet et jamais sujet objet.

Je voudrais, tout d'abord, mentionner brièvement certaines considérations que j'ai déjà faites en d'autres occasions et que je considère utiles pour le sujet que nous devons traiter:

La Bible, qui a été traduite en plus de mille langues et qui est au nombre des peuvres les plus connues dans le monde, par la quantité de matériel qu'elle offre, matériel qui est encore, comme toujours, valable pour la solution de vieux et de nouveaux problèmes que l'homme n'a pas su ou n'a pas voulu, et encore maintenant ne sait pas ou ne veut pas, affronter et résoudre, est encore sous certains aspects un livre à redécouvrir ou à étudier. Ces considérations partent d'un point de vue très pratique et elles font abstraction de la critique biblique qui est sans doute importante et souvent même brillante pour certains aspects mais qui doit toujours plu se limiter à des hypothèses. On arrive jusqu'au point de partir de la critique pour remonter à la Bible plutôt qu'étudier la Bible pour arriver à l'évaluation des résultats mêmes de la critique. Et je reste très sceptique vis à vis de cette habitude anatomique de sectionner les membres des Textes Sacrés, étudiés non pas d'après la version originale, mais d'après des traductions parfois très discutables. Tout ceci semble bien étrange lorsque, d'un côté l'on affirme le caractère sacré des textes et l'on déclare vouloir s'y approcher avec foi pour découvrir la Parole de Dieu, pour la connaître et pour la vivre, alors que de l'autre l'on n'ésite pas à soumettre le texte à une analyse froide et détachée sous le microscope du laboratoire scientifique. Souvent on a l'impression que l'instrument scientifique soit en réalité utilisé non pas pour une recherche authentique de la Parole de Dieu, mais pour la démolir ou tout au plus la restructurer d'après des caractères particuliers. Je ne voudrais pas que vous ayez l'impression d'être en présence d'une personne sourde et aveugle au point de refuser la science. Je veux simplement dire qu'il faut faire attention à ne pas confondre la Parole de Dieu avec celle de l'homme et que la Parole de Dieu projetée dans le temps, c'est à dire dans l'histoire, est unique, éternelle et immuable; qu'il faut essayer de découvrir, tâche souvent difficile, ce

que la Bible veut réellement nous offrir et non pas rechercher ce qui n'existe pas dans la Bible, à savoir ce que nous voudrions ou pourrions penser y retrouver pour confirmer nos idées. Il faudrait donc, comme l'on fait remarquer plusieurs, que les historiens et les théologiens, fidèles aux textes, considèrent les textes bibliques maîtres et non pas objet de connaissance, sans y exercer aucune interférence. Pour conclure ces observations plutôt sommaires je crois inutile souligner le risque que l'on court lorsque on prend un verset de la Bible en le séparant du contexte pour en tirer les interprétations les plus diverses.

Notre sujet est donc: "*Alliance libératrice de Dieu avec l'homme*". Si nous en examinons les termes, d'abord singulièrement puis dans leur ensemble nous pourrions essayer de trouver une solution à notre problème.

*Alliance ou Pacte ou Berith ou Berith 'Olam, Alliance Eternelle*, il s'agit pour nous, les Juifs, de cette Alliance qui du temps d'Abraham arrive jusqu'à nous valable et immuée sans interruption à travers les siècles. Du temps d'Abraham, qui aurait du exercer "*humanité et justice*" et dans lequel "*toutes les nations de la terre auraient été bénites*" jusqu'à nos jours lorsque nous voyons se transformer en réalité ces paroles de l'Alliance: "*Serais-tu égaré à l'extrémité des cieux, de là même Yavé ton Dieu te rassemblerait et il viendrait t'y prendre pour te ramener au pays que tes pères ont possédé, afin que tu le possèdes à ton tour*" (Deut. XXX, 4). C'est la même Alliance que l'on trouve dans l'Évangile (Mathieu, V, 18) dans les paroles de Jésus: "*Car je vous le dis en vérité: avant que ne passent le ciel et la terre, pas un iota, pas un menu trait ne passera de la Loi, que tout ne soit réalisé*", ou lorsque Paul dit (Romains VI, 18-19): "*Pour ce qui concerne l'élection ils sont aimés par la voie de leurs pères, car les dons et la vocation de Dieu sont des choses dont Dieu ne se repent jamais*". C'est la même Alliance citée dans le Coran (II, 4): "*O fils d'Israël, rappelez-vous des faveurs que je vous ai accordées, soyez fidèles à Mon Alliance et je serai fidèle à la votre et ne craigniez que moi*".

Il serait trop long de s'arrêter sur les innombrables citations bibliques de cette Alliance dont l'interprétation est de toute façon toujours très claire et ne présente aucun doute; citons par exemple (I Chr. XVI, 15): "*Rappelez à jamais son Alliance, parole promulguée pour mille générations, pacte conclu avec Abraham, serment qu'il fit à Isaac. Il l'érigea en loi pour Jacob, pour Israël en Alliance à jamais*". Naturellement l'Alliance qui vient de Dieu ne peut qu'être éternelle. Nous devons donc nous limiter à rappeler en grandes le sens de cette Alliance, qui n'a pas été signée avec un individu mais avec tout un peuple. Le mont Sinai marque le plus haut sommet de cette Alliance entre Dieu et le peuple. Israël l'a acceptée et s'est engagée avec Dieu. Sur le mont Sinai ce n'est pas une nouvelle religion qui est enseignée à Moïse, comme fait observer S.D. Luzzatto, mais l'on retifie à niveau de

peuple et d'après les nouvelles nécessités ces mêmes principes d'humanité et de justice qu'Abraham avait commencé à vivre et à enseigner. Du mont Sinai la Parole acquiert une valeur temporelle, c'est à dire historique, car elle est adressée à ceux qui étaient présents mais aussi à ceux qui ne l'étaient pas. (Deut. XXIX, 14). L'Alliance sanctionnée sur le mont Sinai est ainsi destinée à se renouveler toujours, de génération en génération; elle engage les deux parties, selon des critères déterminés et affirme un principe de collaboration réciproque continue en confiant à chacun des contractants des tâches précises, comme par exemple (Psaume CXV, 16): "Le ciel c'est le ciel de Yavé, la terre il l'a donnée aux fils d'Adam". Mosé tout en enseignant la Parole de Dieu la transmettait même à des générations qui n'étaient pas encore nées, qui auraient du s'insérer activement dans une terre qu'elles n'avaient pas encore atteinte pour réaliser la Parole de Dieu. C'est ainsi que cette *élection, ce Règne des Ministres du Seigneur, cette segullà, ce quelque chose de particulier* qui auraient été justement les caractéristiques d'Israël à travers tous les siècles acquièrent une signification toute particulière.

#### Note Lattes

"Règne des Ministres du Seigneur signifie une collectivité dont Dieu est le roi et dont les membres sont ses ministres, les exécuteurs de ses ordres, ses citoyens les plus proches et les plus familiers. Vous serez appelez — dit Isaïe — ministres de l'Éternel, de Notre Seigneur des hommes qui auront la tâche spirituelle d'être de guide et d'enseignement aux autres peuples qui, comme le dit la Bible en langage figuré, sont le laïc de l'Humanité. Mais il ne s'agit pas de constituer un cénacle mystique, un ordre religieux consacré uniquement aux exercices spirituels, à la contemplation, aux études théologiques, mais d'être une nation supérieure qui se distingue (*quādōsh*) de ses soeurs par des qualités et des activités humaines non communes. 'Cohen' ne se rapporte pas uniquement à une tâche religieuse mais à une charge de haute responsabilité, par exemple les ministres d'un roi; les fils de David qui sont appelés dans II Samuel (VIII, 18) par le terme apparemment religieux de 'Cohan'im', dans I Chroniques (XVIII, 17) ils sont appelés rishonim (les premiers) un mot qui en est la traduction parfaite mais qui n'a plus aucune qualité sacerdotale. Le monde est l'empire de Dieu, un de ses Péchés est Israël avec son Roi, David; et comme David qui avait ses Cohan'im, ses ministres, les premiers personnages ou fonctionnaires de sa monarchie (*mamlakhah*), Dieu (le *Malkhuth Shamajam*) a ses 'cohan'im', son pouvoir exécutif est représenté par les fils d'Israël pas en tant qu'individus, mais en tant que collectivité, pas comme ministres d'une église mais comme ministres d'une idée, d'un système de vie qui se réalise sur la terre, dans les champs, les usines, à l'école, en famille, dans la société nationale et dans la société humaine et dans l'histoire de ce monde."

Il s'agissait donc d'une élection tout à fait particulière, non pas d'un droit saisi arbitrairement comme l'on veut souvent faire croire en inventant une tâche reçue du Ciel pour être utilisée comme instrument de domination envers les autres peuples. Il s'agissait au contraire d'un engagement riche en conséquences morales, d'une discipline qui devait être un exemple pour les autres et qu'Israël s'imposait. On voyait ainsi apparaître un type tout particulier de rapport et de collaboration entre Dieu et le peuple des hébreux. Il fallait retrouver le

sens du divin dans toute action humaine, même la plus insignifiante. Ainsi toute la vie de l'homme, toute action inspirée par des choix continus suivant l'enseignement divin acquiert une importance capitale. Les mystiques disent que d'après cette optique si l'homme a besoin de Dieu, Dieu aussi a besoin de l'homme et la vie devient comme dit Heschele une association avec Dieu. Aussi la création, qui d'après la tradition se renouvelle chaque jour, fait partie de l'Alliance, car l'homme doit constamment avoir à l'esprit cette grande responsabilité de vie associative avec Dieu.

Je veux citer deux exemples, l'un ancien, l'autre moderne qui témoignent de la continuité de ce rapport réciproque d'association. On raconte dans le *Talmud* que Turno Rufo demanda à Rabbi Aqiva quelle était à son avis l'oeuvre la plus belle, celle de Dieu ou celle de l'homme; celui-ci donna sa préférence à l'oeuvre de l'homme et pour lui citer des exemples lui fit d'abord voir des épis, puis du pain et enfin des écheveaux de lin et une toile. De même Ben Gurion à qui on avait demandé en 1959 au cours d'un interview de la télévision française d'expliquer quels étaient les buts d'Israël, répondit: "Le but d'Israël est de perfectionner la création. Lorsque je regarde la carte ce ne sont pas les pays avoisinants qui m'inquiètent, mais c'est le fait que le désert occupe encore une partie de notre pays. Nous pensons toutefois être en mesure de réaliser d'ici 10 – 15 ans ce que le bon Dieu n'a pas eu le temps de terminer". Voilà, comme on le disait auparavant, le renouvellement de la création de la part de Dieu et l'engagement quotidiennement renouvelé de la part de l'homme de collaborer en essayant d'imiter, pour ce qui est humainement possible, l'oeuvre de Dieu en renouvelant et en améliorant chaque jour ses propres actions.

Si Israël ne reste pas fidèle à l'Alliance elle en paye les conséquences, mais l'Alliance reste éternelle et tout s'arrange grâce à la *teshuvā*, le repentir, à savoir le "retour" de l'homme sur le bon chemin qui le ramène aux tâches qui lui ont été confiées par Dieu. Le Seigneur ne veut pas la mort du pécheur mais que le péché prenne fin. Voilà l'Alliance éternelle: "Car les montagnes peuvent s'en aller et les collines s'ébranler, mais mon amour pour toi ne s'en ira pas et mon alliance de paix avec toi ne sera pas ébranlée a déclaré Yavé qui a pitié de toi" (Isaïe LIV, 10); et encore: "Oui, moi, Yavé, je ne varie pas: et vous les fils de Jacob, vous n'êtes pas un peuple fini!" (Malakhī, III, 6); "Car je suis avec toi pour te délivrer" (Jérémie, XXX, II).

Passons maintenant à l'examen du deuxième terme du sujet: *libératrice*. C'est un mot qui vient de *libérer*, rendre libre, et libre est celui qui n'est pas sujet à l'autorité d'autrui, celui qui peut agir sans constrictions morales ou matérielles; libérer signifie aussi *dégager, sauver du danger* et les synonymes de libération sont *affranchissement, rédemption, émancipation, salut*.

Il serait trop long ici d'essayer de parcourir l'iter de

ce mot à travers les siècles, auprès des peuples appartenant aux religions les plus diverses, depuis les époques les plus anciennes jusqu'à nos jours. L'on passe de la lutte pour l'existence, et qui fait donc abstraction du milieu religieux et culturel, aux personnages mythiques, aux différentes formes rituelles payennes pour s'assurer la faveur des dieux et pour gagner leur assistance qui affranchit des difficultés et accorde des dons copieux aux fidèles (au paysan, au pêcheur, au chasseur, au soldat). L'on considère et l'on compare ensuite la vie humaine, son caractère périssable, avec un au delà où prendra fin tout souci matériel. On prête une attention toute particulière à l'affranchissement de l'élément spirituel de sa condition mortelle. Ainsi l'on arrive aux notions de libération et de salut qui acquièrent des nuances et des significations différentes ou complémentaires comme libération de la mort, du péché, de la corruption, et l'on souligne une séparation plus nette et plus précise entre âme et corps. Voilà donc apparaître comme il a été observé, une transition d'un salut naturaliste et économique à un salut spirituel. Quelle est la position de l'Hébraïsme vis à vis de ce problème?

Il faut tout d'abord se poser deux questions pour essayer d'expliquer en sens hébraïque le mot *libératrice* contenu dans le sujet. Voilà la première question: *Qui est libre?* Certainement pas celui dont les actions sont dominées par la volonté d'obtenir quelque chose à tout prix, même au détriment des autres, et qui essaye d'obtenir comme on dit, tout ce qu'il veut. Être libre signifie vivre comme sujet responsable, conscient de ses actions et sensible à la responsabilité morale collective. La libération de l'esclavage égyptien s'appelle *zəman cherūtenu*, temps de notre liberté. Mais pour bien comprendre cette idée nous devons tenir à l'esprit les paroles que Mosé adresse au nom de Dieu au Pharaon: "Laisse partir mon peuple, qu'il me rende un culte dans le désert". (Exode, VII, 16). Une liberté donc, rapportée au service de Dieu et condition première et fondamentale pour pouvoir réaliser pleinement l'Alliance associative avec Lui.

Deuxième question: *libératrice de quoi?* Vues les considérations faites et la réponse donnée à la première question il est plus facile de comprendre que *âme, corps, vie, péché* ont pour nous des valeurs sémantiques et représentent des notions bien différentes de celles du monde hébraïque.

L'homme, par son libre choix, peut vivre en liberté ou perdre la liberté. D'après l'hébraïsme il n'existe pas de mal ontologique dont l'homme ne pourrait se libérer que par l'intervention divine; le péché originel n'existe pas, au point que le juif dit tous les matins en récitant ses prières: "Seigneur l'âme que tu as placée en moi est pure". D'après la tradition juive, la libération même de l'esclavage égyptien avait été obtenue parce que les juifs, victimes de si atroces persécutions, étaient restés fidèles

à trois principes fondamentaux: ils n'avaient pas changé leurs noms juifs, ils avaient maintenu l'usage de la langue hébraïque et avaient fidèlement conservé l'usage (*mizvā*) de la *mīlā* (circoncision). Lorsque un peuple, privé de ses droits et de sa liberté, conserve ses propres noms traditionnels, sans céder à cette forme apparemment inoffensive d'assimilation et reste fidèle à sa propre langue, ce qui signifie maintenir vivantes les valeurs originelles de sa littérature et garder soigneusement les normes religieuses essentielles, il fait preuve, sans possibilité de doute, de sa vitalité spirituelle et il est digne de demeurer. Voilà pourquoi le peuple juif était digne de sa liberté et mûr pour la réaliser. Il est vrai que la libération de l'Égypte se produisit par l'intervention miraculeuse de Dieu, mais les miracles aussi il faut savoir se les mériter. Ainsi, le mal existe dans la mesure où l'homme fait le mal. Très clairement et en grande simplicité Isaïe dit: "Cessez de faire le mal, apprenez à faire le bien" (I, 16-17). L'homme dit Heschel est libre de choisir mais il n'est pas libre de renoncer à choisir: "Vois, je te propose aujourd'hui vie et bonheur, mort et malheur. Choisis donc la vie, pour que toi et ta postérité vous viviez, aimant Yavé ton Dieu, écoutant sa voix, vous attachant à lui; car là est la vie ainsi que la longue durée de ton séjour sur la terre que Yavé a juré à tes pères, Abraham, Isaac et Jacob, de leur donner." (Deut. XXX, 15 et suivantes).

*L'Hébraïsme*, dit Lattes ne s'est jamais débattu dans ce dualisme tragique et insurmontable qui naît de la négation de ce monde et de la nécessité inéluctable de devoir l'affirmer étant donné qu'on y vit et qu'on ne peut pas s'en débarrasser. Les religions sujettes à ce dualisme ont deux attitudes possibles: elles peuvent nier leur existence même, se considérant affirmation et message d'un monde nouveau déjà réalisé, d'un salut déjà atteint, pour redescendre parmi les hommes et donner à la vie et à ce monde la valeur qui lui avait été refusée, en rétablissant les valeurs de l'esprit hébraïque et en reparcourant les chemins marqués par l'expérience séculaire d'Israël; ou bien elles s'obstinent à condamner le monde et alors elles doivent livrer le siècle à la tempête de paganisme qui l'entoure."

Achad Haam affirme que: "L'Hébraïsme n'a pas répudié le corps vis à vis de l'âme, même pas dans la vie du monde futur, grâce à la 'résurrection des morts'. L'Hébraïsme, dit-il, n'a pas voulu la mortification de la chair, il ne l'a pas considérée un mérite mais un manque." D'après une interprétation traditionnelle, lorsque l'homme se présente au jugement de Dieu, il doit aussi rendre compte des biens que le Seigneur avait mis à sa disposition et dont il n'a pas fait usage.

Achad Haam dit encore que: "le corporel et le spirituel peuvent et doivent vivre en une complète unité et non pas se haïr réciproquement. 'Unité' qui ne signifie pas 'paix' entre deux adversaires dont chacun renonce à quelque chose qui lui appartient pour ne pas devoir lutter contre celui qui est en face de lui, mais signifie 'unité

*intérieure' dérivant du fait d'être l'élément spirituel pénétré dans la substance de la vie corporelle pour la nettoyer et la purifier de ses déchets, pour la rendre dans son ensemble élément de la vie spirituelle. Ainsi ce n'est pas l'esprit qui descend mais la chair qui monte car l'esprit lui cède une partie de sa sainteté et leur vie en s'unissant et en se reconciliant conduit l'homme vers son vrai but."*

Nous retrouvons ainsi dans les mots de Lattes et de Achad Haam, dans toute son intégrité, la notion fondamentale de *monothéisme* où tout est un car création d'un Dieu qui est Un et où de façon unitaire tout part de cet Un et lui revient. Il s'agit de l'idée qui a représenté la seule et définitive révolution du domaine de l'esprit. Une idée qui n'est pas renfermée dans un monde abstrait mais qui descend du ciel sur la terre et soude la terre au ciel, en stimulant simultanément pensée et action, esprit et matière.

La doctrine juive apparaît donc, comme toutes les vraies et grandes idées, très simple et linéaire. L'homme est libre de faire ses choix responsables. L'homme, certes, peut se tromper, "pécher", en s'éloignant de la vérité, c'est à dire que ses actions ne répondent plus aux notions d'"*humanité et justice*." Mais la punition que cette attitude entraîne peut être évitée, non pas par le biais d'interventions surnaturelles, mais seulement par le repentir sincère, réparatoire, définitif. Dans ce cas le pardon de Dieu est immédiat. "*Pécher*" signifie ne pas respecter cette *fidélité* qui est un des éléments constitutifs fondamentaux de l'Alliance, signifie choisir le *mal* plutôt que le *bien*, la *mort* plutôt que la *vie*. Mais il suffit d'un geste de repentir pour que le Seigneur, *comme est la tendresse d'un père pour ses fils, tendre est Yave pour qui le craint*, (Psaumes, CIII, 13), intervienne et pardonne. L'on *pèche* donc en ne respectant pas l'Alliance, c'est à dire en ignorant Dieu. Faire *teshuvā*, se repentir, signifie *retourner* sur la voie du Seigneur, recommencer à observer l'Alliance. Dieu n'oublie jamais que l'Alliance est *Berith 'Olam, Alliance Eternelle* même quand, malheureusement, l'homme ne respecte pas ses engagements. L'Alliance contient donc en son sein tous ces instruments qui sont nécessaires à l'homme pour le conduire vers le chemin du bien, de la vie; elle n'a aucune valeur charismatique, mais elle est le seul moyen qui permet à l'homme de suivre le bien et d'apprendre à vivre en pleine liberté.

Pour conclure, si j'avais dû dicter le sujet de cette conversation je me serais permis de suggérer: *La liberté dans l'Alliance entre Dieu et l'homme*.

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## TO EVANGELISE THE POOR AND LIBERATE THE OPPRESSED

(The human dimension of salvation according to Luke)

In the last Italian biblical congress (September 1976) the topic was "Evangelizare pauperibus". This famous expression makes a title out of the programme speech made by Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 4; 18) and he clarifies it with a quote from Isaiah 61; 1-3, on the prisoners' delivery from the Babylonian captivity; also another from Isaiah 58; 1-14 which talks of the jubilee year. This appears right at the conclusion of the Baptist's witness to the messianicity of Jesus (Luke 7; 22) which is concretised in the healing of the sick (the blind, the maimed, the lepers, etc.)

Jesus asserts that "today" (at the moment when he is reading Isaiah in the synagogue or healing the sick) the prophecies about the poor and the oppressed have come true. But now one asks: how did Jesus apply Isaiah's prophecy? In a purely spiritual sense or in a material, earthly, corporal sense as well? And today how should we apply the words of Jesus to our own time?

For some, the words of Jesus are taken in a purely spiritual way, because Christ came to transform the world with the power of love: he did not proclaim any revolution of the oppressed classes or any emancipation of women or the release of slaves (1).

Others think of it quite differently. G. Girardet, in his commentary on Luke 4; 16-22, points out:

"The revolution is at hand, and I am here to bring it about. But let it be clear that this involves the liberation of the oppressed. And I am with them."(2)

H. Schuermann, in his voluminous commentary of Luke's Gospel on "deposuit potentes de sede" (Luke 1; 51f) writes that Mary of Nazareth even proclaims a socio-political coup, a real revolution:

"The reality that comes with the coming of God helps create (the Revolution). This will also be a political revolution that will change relationships of power as well as relationships of social morality."(3)

In F. Belo this revolutionary language is pushed to the point of reducing the gospel to an economic model for the poor.

"Jesus' model is basically economic, because the decisive factor in it is the economic, or rather love (*agapē*), sharing bread. In fact, if there is expansion, if there is political hope, it is a function of this economic transformation."(4)

"Jesus' model is without power, it is the model of a dominated class, a poor man's model, a carpenter's model, and this will be the cause of consternation in his own country at the beginning of chapter 6 (of Mark): 'But is not this the carpenter's son?'"(5)

This text of Mark is also cited by Luke (4, 22) and it comes precisely after Jesus' assertion that "today" the prophecy of Isaiah 61 has been fulfilled. It becomes the reason

for which Christ performed no miracles in Nazareth, and why his proclamation of liberation came to nothing for the Nazarenes. (cf. Luke 4; 20-29)

What can be said of this tidal wave of revolution and liberation that claims its source in the Gospel? We shall see whether it springs from the texts, especially with regard to Luke 4; 18ff; 7:21f.

But before going into the Gospel of Luke, it should be noted that today "liberation theology" is somewhat disputed in that it runs the risk of reducing Christ to a socio-political liberator. Thus this theology must be in keeping with the general direction of the Paschal Mystery, particularly with the theology of the Cross (6); better still, to stress that the mystery of the resurrection is the source of liberation theology (7).

This is a perfectly acceptable rationale as soon as it is clear that it is the Kyrios, that is, the resurrected one, who sends his people out to evangelise. (Luke 10; 1ff) At the same time he empowers his missionaries to heal the sick, showing them that the Kingdom of God is at hand and opening their hearts to supernatural salvation, which is the meaning of delivery from the forces of evil at work among mankind (8). This vision comes through the resurrected one to his missionaries for the liberation of the oppressed and it is only in this context that we can compare the two passages from Luke mentioned above.

#### "LIBERATION" ACCORDING TO LUKE 4: 18F.

Although G. Gutierrez does not quote our basic text for his "liberation theology", we think the proclamation of Jesus at Nazareth is at the centre of the theology of Christ the liberator. In fact it is enough just to read the text for the idea of freedom to assert itself inescapably in the proclamation:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me;  
he has sent me to announce good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release of prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind;  
to let the broken victims go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18f.)

The Luke passage refers explicitly to Isaiah 6; 1-11; implicitly to Isaiah 58; 1-14. Chapter 61 is one of the most substantial of Isaiah's prophetic statements. The theme is liberation of the individual, the poor (*anawim*) (vv. 1-3) and then of the community (vv. 4-7). Liberation seen in the light of the Alliance (vv. 8-11). Central is the proclamation of salvation; the expression "evangelise the poor" is the general title at-

tached to the first canto of the servant of Jahwē (Is. 42; 1-9). Religious political salvation is not just the work of God but also the cooperation of those who will rebuild the central city of God (vv. 4-7). It should not be forgotten that everything is finalised in "God's justice" (religious and socio-political) on earth and in the atmosphere of the priestly alliance between God and the Chosen People.

Isaiah 58; 1-14 gives a better understanding of who the "poor" are. It is just after their return from exile. There are many poor people and few wealthy. In a liturgical climate (Jubilee year? the "day of purification"? (Yom Kippur?)) the people lament that though they seek Jahwē and his justice, God does not listen. God reprimands his supplicants who cannot accept their fast with "benevolence" or their mortification for they are reduced to going in sackcloth, bending like reeds and wailing like madmen. And the solution? To break the chains and the yoke of the oppressed and "set them free", offer bread to the hungry, shelter the poor (*anawim* by *anah*), clothing the naked; then God will answer: "Here am I" (To answer in Hebrew is *anah*: "Here am I" is "*Hinneni*" and is God's classical "benevolent" reply in the post-Exodus prophets). Note the play on words with *anah*, *mortify*, *poor*, *reply*: it is the context in which the word "poor" occurs.

The poor in question are the *anawim*. The Hebrew term "Anah" means "reply" and emphasises the benevolent reply of God (the mighty) to the lowly supplication of the poor man and the slave. The Greek *ptoxos* comes from *ptasso* and means "to go around begging with your head bowed". In Isaiah's text these poor people are the "prisoners" and the "slaves" (Isaiah 58; 6); and in Luke they are the "oppressed". The Greek term (*tethrausmenons*) means being beaten down, debilitated, broken up, bent over. If Luke leaves out "the broken-hearted", who appear in the Hebrew text and Vulgate, it would seem that he does so deliberately, for they are indeed a part of the oppressed, both physically and morally.

The categories really in question are the oppressed, the marginals. And it is to these that Jesus proclaims "liberation" (*afesis*) and seeks to make it real. The term is usually understood as the "remission of sins", but Girardet (10) has pointed out quite rightly that *afesis* does not mean the remission of an individual's sin through a simple sacramental absolution. In our texts it is translated as the "release from slavery", slavery being the social sin that Isaiah most condemns (Is. 58; 6) when he speaks of the "Holy Year". Indeed Luke 4; 18f. speaks of a "year of the Lord's grace": it is the jubilee year Luke 25; 10 speaks of, in which the slaves were set free to resume possession of their lands. The Septuagint, instead of using the word *yobel* (from which jubilee comes, referring to the trumpet that

announced the beginning of the sabbath year) uses the word *afesis* no less than five times: "thus the jubilee becomes the year of liberty".

But what remains of all this in the Gospel of Luke? To him it is evident that the salvation Christ brings has more to do with liberation from enemies than liberation from sins. This is precisely the way the Benedictus interprets it:

"That he would deliver us from our enemies,  
out of the hands of those who hate us...  
to rescue us from enemy hands...  
and lead his people to salvation through  
knowledge of him,

by the forgiveness of their sins." (Luke 1; 68-79)

It will be observed that salvation (*soteria*) before being "forgiveness of sins" is "delivery from our enemies". The vision of the Magnificat, however, is more specific: in the first half of the hymn the contemplative soul is blessed because God has regarded the "poverty" of his "handmaid", bringing about in this poor, unknown girl from a worthless village the marvel of the Messianic motherhood (11). But what has happened to her will happen likewise to the "poor", the "hungry", who take the places of the rich and powerful. The term used for "poor" is *tapeinosis-tapeinosis* and is contrasted with "*dunastis*", he who has human power. What is more important is that the changeover between the powerful-rich and the hungry-poor happens in a revolutionary way through God, the "Deliverer", the "Mighty One" (Luke 1; 47f.). There is a revolution, therefore, but from above. M. Thurian writes perceptively:

"Mary, the first Christian, is also the first revolutionary in the new order... she makes a prelude to the sermon on the Mount in which Jesus proclaims that the poor are blessed". (12)

But it is also stressed that it is:

"Not some human idea of social classes that determines these expressions but the actual vision of the speaker (who believes in Revelation). She sees the actual state of the world with the eyes of God, and knows that God must overturn the whole situation if the order He desires is to be instated." (H. Schuermann p. 76)

Returning now to chapter 4 of Luke we find the following: Jesus is tempted by Satan, makes his proclamation in Nazareth, is brought to the edge of a precipice to be thrown over but escapes by walking out through the middle of his attackers, cures a man possessed by the devil in Capharnaum, cures Peter's mother-in-law, and finally after praying, decides to "evangelise" other cities beginning by "preaching" (i.e. proclaiming, *kerusso*) in the synagogues.

Thus the context of the proclamation is not eminently revolutionary in the socio-political sense, but is limited to the field of healing, therefore to liberation from Satan

and sickness. However we should not overlook the significance of Jesus's delivery from the clutches of his angry compatriots. It is parallel to John's Christ and his escape from stoning after he had asserted that he was the son of God: *Ego eimi* (John 8; 59) (13)

Finally we should note that the verb to "evangelise" explained by the verb to "proclaim" (*kerusso*) and "set free" (*apostello*). All these terms are of profound spiritual significance; but all the same it is significant to see them occur in a text about the terrestrial, corporal liberation of the oppressed classes.

## THE CURING OF THE BLIND IN LUKE 7: 22

Restoring sight to the blind in Luke 4: 18 seems out of place, so much so that some have attempted to correct the text (14). But it seems better to keep it the way it is, even though in Luke rather than prisoners who see the light of freedom again it is those who are physically blind through economic misery and the lack of cures set aside for the consumer society. The cure of blindness appears specially in Luke 7: 21f.

"There and then he cured many suffering from diseases, plagues and evil spirits; *and to many blind people he bestowed sight*. Then he gave them (John's disciples) his answer: 'Go', he said 'and tell them *what you have seen and heard: how the blind recover their sight*, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, *the poor hear the good news* — and happy is the man who does not find me a stumbling block! "

It is to be noted in this how blindness is the only one singled out among so many infirmities; then Christ begins to name series of sick people who are finally defined as the "evangelised poor". The gratitude for those who are not scandalised stands in contrast to the anger that seized the Nazarenes who could not overcome the stumbling block of Christ's humanity and came to the point of lynching him (Luke 4: 22ff.). Even John the Baptist could succumb to this scandal as soon as it is clear that instead of a messiah who purifies his threshing floor with fire they are faced with the trauma which chooses the most rejected element of society.

We have said that *ptoxos* means "to go begging with bowed head"; now the blind man is defined in the gospels as the "beggar" (Luke 18: 35; Mark 10: 46; John 9: 8: the blind man!) in the sense that he could only live by begging for the alms and pity of passers-by (15). In the New Testament such infirmity is taken with all of its dramatic implications of physical and existential suffering (unlike the extrabiblical writers like Philo who usually move on immediately to the spiritual and metaphorical); but it does not stop there: it would be "not to see"

anything (Mark 8: 17-21) to reject any knowledge of God's work (John 9:3 "*erga tou Theou*").

Luke's stories are not as concrete as Mark's and John's, but it is significant that the blind are always coupled with the poor in his catalogues of maladies. (cf. Luke 14: 13-21 *Ptoxi, tuflous*). It is these who are invited to the banquet unlike Qumran where they were excluded; the follower of Christ should invite them since they cannot make any recompense he will be recompensed by God (cf. Luke 6: 26-36) in the resurrection of the dead (14:14).

In Luke 7:22 as well as blindness is shown in all of its harsh reality, but it also becomes a sign of greater blindness (one recalls the blinding of Elimas for his simony in Acts 13:11). The healing is not an end in itself but rather the factor which forces John's messengers to "see" who Jesus is. This is also shown very clearly in the Baptist's witness: I have seen it myself, and I have borne witness. This is God's Chosen One." (John 1:34).

However, it should be honestly noted that in chapter 7 of Luke there is no talk of healed blindness in particular, but of the centurion's servant cured, the widow's son brought back to life and it ends with a banquet in the house of Simon, the pharisee. Whilst in the other synoptic gospels the pharisees are avoided and condemned, here in Luke, Jesus goes to eat with one. Their pharisaical mindset at once appears, however, with their contempt for the "sinner" and their outrage at the prophet of Nazareth. Christ defends the woman and thus highlights her love for Him: "And so I tell you, her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven." (Luke 7:47)

Concluding our analysis of Luke 4 we have seen the parallel between Luke's Jesus and John's, in his delivery from his enemies. Now we must look at the liberation of the "sinful woman" with that of the Adulteress in John 8 who is first delivered from being stoned and then from her sins (16). This is Afesis in the fullest meaning of the word, which is the total freedom given by Jesus (John 8: 30-32).

## ACTUALISATION OF LUKE FOR OUR TIME

Schuermann has this comment on Luke 7:22:

"Eschatology is 'christologised' and almost paradoxically historicised. Isaiah, wavering between actuality and metaphor, expresses himself in an undetermined way; for Tradition v. 22 can be understood only as the concrete proof of the realisation of the *erga tou Theou* (par. of Mt. 11:2)" (p. 411).

We have seen how the miracles which form the context for the two Isaiah quotes are not mechanically realised (chapter 4 does not talk about prisoners, chapter 7 does not only talk about the blind) but concretely, in

a way that is both visible or "physical" and "spiritual".

It is therefore clear that if we apply the gospel mechanically we run the risk of betraying it, confining ourselves, for example to prisoners (J. Moltmann) and blind people, or reducing the prophecies to a merely economic or political zone (F. Belo).

It is necessary therefore, to attend more to the spirit than to the letter. This spirit, however is incarnate in our own time.

It has been observed that Paul limited himself to the interior conversion of man and did not sufficiently develop the need to alter the structures which suffocate man. It can be said of Luke that he is still too much involved in the Palestine milieu, where he indulges in the pure casuistry of healing the sick; all the same both the Benedictus and the Magnificat open up socio-political issues that are downright revolutionary. It is no accident that Paul VI presents a concept for Mary that goes beyond the traditional model:

"Mary... was anything but a passively submissive woman of alienating religiosity. On the contrary she was a woman who forthrightly proclaimed that God lifts on high the humble and the oppressed and has brought down the monarchs from their thrones. (Luke 1: 51-53 (Cultus Marialis 2/2/1974) )

Luke's ability to break up human and religious structures for the sake of Christian philanthropy is seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-37) more so than in the delivery of the sinful woman we were just talking about. It is not the priest and Levite who are proposed as a model, who look but are not "moved" and do not "do", but the heretic samaritan shopkeeper who has "pity" and "does" (18). It should not be forgotten that for Luke "being moved" is the fundamental quality of God and "doing" is synonymous with love (cf. Luke 6: 26-36 which puts "doing" and "love" together six times and ends with the Father who "is always kind", merciful, compassionate). Our historical situation is not limited to setting prisoners free or healing the sick: today it has much vaster scope. For instance Luke's theme of "common goods" in the Acts of the Apostles 2: 44-45; 4: 32-36, has been taken up again, where it is essential that to believe in the resurrected one means to rid the world of poverty, which is the ideal of Deuteronomy 15:4. Recent studies have left the question open to the libertinism of private property (19); but *Gaudium et Spes* emphasizes the "social function" (n. 21) of property "by its very nature", and Don Dupont writes:

"There could be no community worthy of the name if among its members there were some who lived in abundance while others lacked the bare necessities of life." (20)

It has been said that "sickness and poverty constituted an inseparable binomer in the ancient world, in as much as

the sick, having lost the ability to procure a living for themselves had to resort to beggary". (21) Also the modern world (of Bidonvilles and underdeveloped nations) the same reality is found. Therefore to do healing by setting people free from poverty is very much in harmony with the human dimension of salvation as Luke expounds it.

Here the church has to think out a strategy (from above!) whereby it can reduce the predominance of the "rich and powerful" and help the people instead of oppressing them with their unjustifiable wealth (Luke 16:7). (22) Zacheus who gained salvation (*soteria*) and thus distributed his goods to the "poor" and the parable of rich Epulone condemned to hell, should not be easy to forget about in contemporary preaching but without indulging in cerebral interpretations of it. Girardet stresses that even the rich should be accepted in "dialogue". But there is no place in the church for the overbearing rich (p. 124), therefore:

"The rich could be received (in the church) on the understanding that they would not be 'richer', that is, on the understanding that they would hold neither power nor leadership." (p. 128): giving to the poor does not mean alms, but rather to mobilise the resources of the rich to support the poor and their struggle, in every way".

## CONCLUSION

Our reflection started with Jesus's actualisation of the prophecies in Isaiah 61: 1-3; 58: 1-14. And with the actualisation of Luke's gospel by some contemporary writings (Belo, Girardet, Schuermann). Convinced that Jesus is risen by now, but that his passion still continues on earth, we have observed:

### (a) *The concept of liberation of the oppressed inherent in Luke 4:18f.*

The text recalling the jubilee, insists on the freedom (*afesis*) of the slaves and the poor (*anawim*) of whom Isaiah writes; thus the announcement of the good news is that of being set free, from prison and from misery. Jesus spiritualises the term "evangelise" though at the same time he incarnates in a historical situation which demands the healing of the sick. This healing is the sign of spiritual healing, and always goes with evangelisation. Although Luke 4:18 is not interpreted in a strictly socio-political sense, the dimension is by no means excluded, as is evident from the Benedictus and the Magnificat.

### (b) *Healing the blind in Luke 7:22*

This completes the analysis of Luke 4:18, but more than this it shows how "evangelising the poor" means caring for their infirmity, particularly blindness, a dreadful reality that is reminiscent of spiritual blindness. Christ,

giving sight to the blind, shows that he has come to give spiritual vision. In chapter 7, however, Jesus performs miracles which go beyond blindness, curing a dying man, raising someone from the dead, above all giving "freedom" to the sinful woman.

### (c) *The Actualisation of Luke's gospel in our time*

A considerable amount of wisdom is required in order to avoid reducing liberation down to socio-political freedom and at the same time prevent it evaporating in some kind of spiritual vagueness.

The fact is that the Benedictus and the Magnificat demand more concrete action from us in terms of our opposition to unchristian structures. Above all, Jesus has done it with his parable of the Good Samaritan which effectively dismantles human and religious notions which tend to oppress the people. This is no demagogy but a true rediscovery of the gospel. It is the reflection of our faith in the risen Christ (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 38). And even the bishops from across the whole world have said as much in their final declaration at the world synod of 1974, where they stress that in the light of Luke 4:18 the Church must be true to its evangelising mission that announces "the total salvation of man of his complete freedom and to *begin immediately to actuate it.*" (n. 12) It is an actualisation that demands sincere prayer and effective engagement. Upon this demonstration of the Church's ability to liberate man from oppression depends its credibility of the evangelisation of the poor.

## NOTES

(1) E. Graesser, "Der politisch Gekreuzigte", *ZNW* 62 (1971), 277.

(2) *Il Vangelo della liberazione. Lettura politica di Luca*. Torino, E. Claudiana, 1975, p. 26.

(3) *Das Lukasevangelium*, Ed. Herder 1969, p. 76.

(4) *Una lettura politica del Vangelo*, Torino, E. Claudiana 1975, p. 166.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 86.

(6) P. Grelot in his study on the methodology to use in researching the liberation events occasioned by Christ. The text is published in the appendix of a leaflet composed by the French episcopacy, "Human liberation and salvation in Jesus Christ", Torino, Ed. LDC 1975, p. 94.

(7) G. Ghiberti, "Risurrezione e liberazione", in *Parole di vita* 21 (1976), pp. 48-50.

(8) M. Miyoshi, *Der Anfang des Reiseberichts Lk. 9:51-10, 24*, Roma PIB 1974, p. 65 notes how healing always precedes and accompanies evangelisation: in 13: 10-17 it is the healing of a paralytic woman; in 14: 1-6 it is the healing of dropsy; in 17: 11-19 it is the healing of ten lepers. Note in Luke 10:9, Christ's command to "heal the sick and tell them the Kingdom of God has arrived."

(9) cf. our study "The gospel and social justice" in *Presbyteri* 1972, 783f. L. Boff has very rightly updated the title from "De verbo incarnato e salvatore" in *Jesus Christ liberates*. Assisi, Ed. Cittadella 1973. Particularly pp. 65-77.

(10) *Ibid.*, p. 28f.

(11) H. Schuermann, *op. cit.* p. 74. Grundmann, "Tapeinōs", (*TWNT* VIII (1969) p. 22 translates with "Niedrigkeit", lowliness, worthlessness.

(12) *Marie Mère du Seigneur Figur de l'Eglise*, Tsizé-Cluny 1963, p. 140.

(13) For the very dense liberation theology content in John 8 see my own article, "Christ's liberation is from Satan" in *Parole di vita*, 1975, pp. 102-104.

(14) M. Adinolfi in "Poverty in Christ's church", in *Bibbia e Oriente*, II (1969), p. 245 suggests changing the phrase "sight to the blind" for "discharge for the prisoners."

(15) cf. Schrage, "tufflōs", *TWNT* VIII (1969), pp. 286-299.

(16) cf. my article cited in n. 13.

(17) F. Refoulé, *Marx e S. Paolo. Liberare l'uomo*, Roma, ed. Città Nuova 1974, p. 151.

(18) For the whole complexity of this parable, see my own article, "Biblical notes on the relation between socialism and christianity" in *Bibbia e Oriente*, 17 (1975) pp. 236-238. We

showed here how the parable is a commentary on the one commandment to love and how its content is somewhat parallel to the universal Judgement of pagans who are not interrogated on their orthodoxy but on their "orthopraxis", (Mathew 25: 31-36).

(19) On this see M. del Verme's extremely erudite article "Common property in the first christian community of Jerusalem" in *Rivista Biblica*, 23 (1975), pp. 353-382 with its important conclusion on page 380.

(20) "L'union entre les premiers chrétiens dans les Actes des Apôtres" in *NRTh*, 101 (1969), pp. 908f.

(21) R. Batey, *Gesù e i poveri. Il programma di povertà dei primi cristiani*, Brescia, Ed. Morcelliana 1974 p. 22.

(22) For the concept of wealth in Luke cf. P. Colella, "Zu Lk. 16:7", in *ZNW* 70 (1973) pp. 124-126; H. P. Rueger, "Mamonas" *ivi* pp. 127-131.

(23) B. Rinaldi, "Luke and Social Revolution." Conference at international conference on *The Wisdom of the Cross today*, Vol. III, Ed. L.D.C. 1976.

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