

# The mission in the light of the Johannine Apocalypse

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The term mission comes from Latin *Mittere* and Greek verbs *pempein*, *apostellein*, and also *exapostellein* which designates the sending, the delegation, and the embassy. This expression used in everyday language is repeated in the Bible to refer to God sending messengers, of his own son and of the Church to make his plan of salvation and love known and realized.. But, we have in the Bible a diversity of missionary theologies that are each elaborated within a concrete situation, in response to issues perceived by the biblical writer and the communities to which he addresses himself. Each author expresses differently the responsibility of announcing the Gospel, according to his situation, his origins and his theological perspective<sup>1</sup>

As part of the celebration of the centenary of Pope Benedict XV's publication of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud*, to reinvigorate missionary responsibility for the proclamation of the Good News, it was necessary to rediscover its Biblical inspiration. For this, theological-biblical reflection has above all summoned the synoptic gospels<sup>2</sup>, the Pauline writings, but especially the book of the Acts of the Apostles whose structure and theme are strongly missionary<sup>3</sup>.

For our part, we propose to convene a book that we do not refer to spontaneously when we talk about the mission, it is about the Johannine Apocalypse. Certainly, the missionary vocabulary of sending is almost absent. Yet, the author raises the question of the mission of the Church in a context of turmoil and fragility. To express it, John is enlightened by the experience and the language of the Jewish tradition, particularly the *menorah*<sup>4</sup>. But, this experience is revisited in the light of the paschal event.

Our remarks will include two great moments. At first, with John, we will explore the missionary experience of the First Israel. Then, we will see how Patmos' visionary takes up

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lucien LEGRAND, *Le Dieu qui vient, la mission dans la Bible*, Paris, Desclée, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Claude TASSIN, « Disciple – missionnaire. Qu'en dit l'évangile de Matthieu ? », in *Spiritus*, 235, juin 2019, p. 177 – 188.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Michel DUBOST, *La mission aujourd'hui. Une mission pratique des Actes des apôtres*, Paris, Mame, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Paulin POUCOUTA, *Perspectives missionnaires de l'Apocalypse*, Paris, Cerf, 1989. Du même auteur, *l'Église dans la tourmente. La mission dans l'Apocalypse*, Kinshasa, Épiphanie, 1989.

this experience to say the mission of a Church that is going through moments of turbulence. Is it not a bit like ours today?

## **1. 1. The missionary experience of the First Israel**

### ***1. Election as a service mission***

Israel's mission is linked to the election. In fact, for free and for love, God chose a people and sealed an alliance with him (Deut 7: 7-11). However, the election is not a privilege, but a mission. Israel must bear witness to the heart of the nations of a communion with the one God, living and true, which opens to universal brotherhood. The chosen people are charged with bringing to the nations the right and the light, either by going towards them, or by drawing them "to the mountain of the house of God" (Is 2, 2).

For this, Israel must be a model for other peoples. It must constantly convert to the holiness and tenderness of God. Which is reflected in justice structures. When it forgets it, God calls and sends out prophets with the mission to firmly remind it, "that he will not listen or listen to you" (Ez 3: 11).

But, in spite of the call of the prophets, Israel had finally yielded to the temptation of power and appearance, like other nations. The disastrous experience of exile will be an opportunity to remind it that its mission is to be a servant. This is reflected in the four songs of the servant in Deutero - Isaiah.

Like the servant, Israel relies only on God. It is at the service of law and justice. It carries out its mission with strength and modesty, firmness and gentleness (Is 42, 1-7). It will have to gather not only Israel, but all the nations and announce to them the salvation of God (Is 49, 1-9). The mission is demanding. Yet, the servant has confidence in God and supports the weak (Is 50: 4-11). Finally, the mission leads the servant to the total gift of his life, in solidarity with the multitudes. By the grace of his Lord, his suffering is a redeeming sacrifice (Is 52, 13-53, 12).

### ***2. Mission as the light of nations***

In the first two songs (Is 42, 1-9, 49, 1-6, 50), the servant has the mission to be light of the nations: "... It is too little for you to be a servant to me to raise the tribes of Jacob and bring back the survivors of Israel. I make you the light of the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth « (Is 49, 6/42, 6-7

The identification of the servant is very much discussed. Is it an individual, or is it the whole community of Israel? The *targumîm* will develop the individual aspect: thus the Targum of Isaiah 50, 10 identifies the servant to the prophet. The targumim of Isaiah 42, 1, and 43, 10 see him as the Messiah. For some commentators, the strongly marked individuality of the servant makes one think that it is a person: the prophet, Cyrus ... Others believe that it is the missionary vocation of the whole people that is meant here. The Septuagint will also suggest the collective aspect by identifying the servant to Jacob, the other name of Israel. In fact, the figure remains open to both possibilities of interpretation: individual and / or community mission. But this call to the mission is interpreted in two different ways.

Indeed, for some, the people were called out of their borders to bring light to other nations. This perspective will be essentially that of the Jewish diaspora where we note an intense proselyte activity, accompanied by a very extensive missionary literature, particularly with the letter of *Aristée*, *Flavius Josephus*<sup>5</sup>, *Philon*<sup>6</sup>, and the *Sibyllini Oracles*. These writings, essentially from Hellenistic Judaism, were intended to sweep away the prejudices of non-Jews towards Judaism, to make the Jewish faith accessible to the Greeks by reconciling Judaism and Greek philosophy. So, for the Jewish author of Sibylline oracles, if Israel remains an elected people, it must be a model for the nations and must lead people to the worship of the true God<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, this current, variously appreciated by historians<sup>8</sup>, was considered by many, especially the Jews of Palestine, as a deviation. For them, "*the raison d'être*" of the chosen people is to exist; its presence accounts for the divinity of Yahweh, its life proclaims all that God is for him and for the universe »<sup>9</sup>. Two parallel texts clearly echo: Is 2, 2-5 // Mi 4, 1-3: "It will happen in the following times that the mountain of the house of Yahweh will be established at the head of the mountains and will rise above the hills. Then all nations will flow to her (...) "(Is 2, 2).

For Israel, Zion is the city of light from which the Lord radiates the whole world. Then the people set out and make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to contemplate this light:

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<sup>5</sup>Josèphe, Flavius, *Contre Apion*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1950.

<sup>6</sup> Philon d'Alexandrie, *La vie de Moïse*, (Les Œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie 22), Paris, Cerf, 1967.

<sup>7</sup> *Oracles Sibyllins*, III, 219-247 ; 573-600.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Marcel SIMON, « Sur les débuts du prosélytisme juif », *Hommage à Dupont-Sommer*, Paris, Villeneuve, 1971, p. 509-520.

<sup>9</sup> Robert MARTIN-ACHARD, *Israël et les Nations, la perspective missionnaire de l'Ancien Testament*, Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959, p. 30.

*"Stand up! Resplendent! For here is your light, and on you rises the glory of Yahweh. While the darkness spreads over the earth and the darkness over the peoples, on you arises Yahweh, and his glory upon you appears. The nations will walk in your light and the kings to your nascent light "(Is 60, 1-3).*

### **3. Israel, Light of the nations**

#### **a) the candelabra in Judaism**

To express its mission as light, Israel will use the liturgical symbolism of the *menorah*, the candlestick whose seven lamps were to burn from evening to morning (Lv 24: 3), three a day and four at night in the temple. The menorah is thus the symbol of the light that shines constantly. This light first figures out God himself (see Ps 36, 10) and his manifestations (cf. Ps 104, 2 ; Ez 43, 2).

But if God is light, he asks his people to shine in turn. The menorah thus has a double meaning: it represents not only God, but also his people. This is evident in the text of Zechariah (Za 4, 3ss).

The position of the candlestick is also very significant. Indeed, the menorah is placed in front of the veil (Ex 26, 35, 40, 24), which the lamps illuminate (Ex 25, 37). In turn, the veil returns light to the candlestick. We must not look for the allegorical meaning of every detail of the symbolism, but focus on the global meaning that the people must be a reflection of the light of God.

After the destruction of the temple, the menorah will remain more than ever the symbol of the presence of God not only in the synagogue, but also in the world. The *midrash* of the Book of Numbers (Midrash Num 15, 10) shows it. The light of the candlestick must continue to burn to remind the presence of God and the mission of the people, a reflection of this presence. The mission of the people is to ignite others by contagion: each member of the people must be a lit torch, to ignite other torches (Midrash Ex 36, 13, Nb 14, 10).

#### **b) Hanucah, the missionary feast**

It is the feast of the *hanucah* that specifies the missionary sense of the menorah. Feast of the dedication modeled on that of Tents, the hanucah celebrates the new consecration of the temple profaned in 167. King Antiochus Epiphan IV had introduced an altar to Zeus and his statue. What the books of Daniel and the Maccabees call, with disgust and indignation, "the abomination of desolation" (Dn 9:27, 11, 31, 12, 11, 1 M 1, 54.59, 2 M 6, 2). After the victory

of the Maccabees, it was necessary to purify the Temple, to consecrate the new altar and, above all, to put back the candelabra.

According to tradition, only one jug of consecrated oil was found intact, just enough to make the menorah shine for a single day. Normally, eight days are needed to make oil. But the lamps of the menorah remained lit for eight days. Thus, the Hanucah, feast of the new dedication, feast of liberation is also festival of lights.

On this occasion, each family places a burning menorah at the door or window. The candlestick of the house has eight branches. As the party lasts eight days, every day a branch is lit. The whole family, gathered at the moment of lighting the light, sings hymns, mainly the hallel, to proclaim the wonders of God. The Menorah is prominently placed either in front of the door or window overlooking the street or in the living room. It must indeed attract the eye and proclaim the wonder of God.

The Hanucah, feast of the dedication, feast of light, thus reminds each Jew of his vocation, that of being the light that springs from his house, proclaiming the wonders of God. The hanucah is essentially a family celebration. It belongs to each family to witness the wonders of God before the nations.

Thus, the symbolism of the candlestick allows Israel to tell its mission as the light of the nations, with the exile and the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanius IV as a backdrop. By taking up the same symbol and rereading the experience of Israel, John places the vocation of the Church in the same track.

## **II. The lamp that burns and wastes away**

### **1. A Church in turmoil**

Written most probably in the time of Domitian<sup>10</sup>, the Christians of Asia Minor to whom the author of the Apocalypse addresses himself are going through difficult times. Admittedly, as many commentators note, at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, persecutions were not widespread. Christians are subject to harassment and sporadic executions. Nevertheless, John perceives that through the anodyne gestures of the imperial power autocratic tendencies hide that destroy people and society. The author sniffs the tricks of the autocracy that are so fine

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<sup>10</sup> T. B. SLATER considers that this hypothesis relies too much on the external testimony of Irenaeus. He prefers to be more attentive to internal evidences based on the prophecy *ex eventu* of Rev 17, 9-11. He locates the writing of the book in 69, either at the end of Otto's reign or at the beginning of Vitellius's reign. See T. B. Slater, "Dating the Apocalypse to John," in *Biblica*, 84, 2, Roma, 2003, pp. 251-258. Nevertheless most testimonies opt for the time of Domitian. See D.E. AUNE, *Revelation 1, Word Biblical Commentary*, 52/A, Dallas, Word Books, 1997, p. lvi-lxx.

that popular religions and some propagandists serve as ideological and religious guarantee to the imperial cult.

Destabilized, some Christians falter in their faith and take refuge in lukewarmness. This vigorously denounces the seven letters to the Churches (Rev 2 - 3), especially the one of Laodicea: "you are neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you from my mouth" (Rev 3, 16). Moreover, many Asian Christians have married the Gnostic heresy which offers a *docete* Christology. On the concrete level it becomes an undemanding morality, a true demobilization and lukewarmness that minimizes the importance of a public faith confession.

How to express and live this mission in this situation? John, whose community is essentially Judeo-Christian, will borrow the symbolism of the menorah to express and live his mission.

## **2. 2. Candlesticks in the Johannine Apocalypse**

To translate the term menorah, John uses the Greek term or luchniai (candlesticks) or luchnos (lamp) related to it. The term appears four times in the inaugural vision (1, 12a.13.20a, 20b), two in the letter to Ephesus (2, 1.5), and once in the episode of the two witness-prophets (11, 4).

The inaugural vision begins with seven candelabra. In verse 13, the number seven is implied. John did not think it was necessary to take it back. In verse 20, it is explicit. This verse has a dual function. It is the key, the explanation of the vision; and at the same time, it serves as a hinge between the vision of Christ illuminating his churches and the message to the churches.

This close link between the two passages allows us to better understand the ecclesial and missionary significance of the symbolism of the candlestick. In the inaugural vision, as in the letter to Ephesus, the candelabra are to be identified with the seven churches of Asia. Christ Himself reveals it: "*the seven candelabra are the seven churches*" (Rev 1, 20).

In Ap 11: 1, the symbolism of the candelabra, illuminated by that of the olive trees and the two witnesses, represents the whole Church rooted in the confidence of the Lamb, at the moment of the experience of the persecution. It joins the meaning of the symbol in the letters in which the Church is under the protection of her Lord who walks in their midst.

## **3. The *missio Christi***

Nevertheless, like all the symbols taken from the Jewish tradition, that symbol of the

menorah in John's writing is Christological and Paschal<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, the mission of the Church is in that of the Risen One. Like that of its Lord, it is part of the light / dark confrontation. So to be light is to opposed to the darkness, to take sides with the Lamb in the fight against the dragon and his animals. The mission is to make light triumph over darkness. The conflictual atmosphere in which the symbolism of the candelabra is located gives the mission of the Church a tone of radical commitment. Maintaining the flame of God's presence is not synonymous with passivity. It is in the vision of the New Jerusalem (Ap 21) that the author best suggests the centripetal vision of the mission. This passage affirms that the Lamb is the only lamp, *luchnos* (Rev 21,23). Inspired by the Trito-Isaiah texts on the future glory of Zion (Is 60, 1-2, 60, 19-20) and his mission, John shows here that the Church no longer needs the astral light (that of the sun and the moon: 21, 23), nor that of the light of the temple (21, 22). From now on, the Lamb is the only source of light, the only *menorah*. The passage focuses in fact on God and the Lamb, only sources of clarity :

*« I didn't see a temple in her, it means that it is the God – Master of all who is the temple, as well as the Lamb. The city can do without the brilliance of the sun and the moon, because the glory of God has illuminated it, and the Lamb stands in its place of light » (21, 22-23).*

Later, John takes the same idea once more, emphasizing it: "At night, there will be no more; they will not need a lamp or the sun to enlighten them, for the Lord God will pour out his light upon them, and they shall reign for ever and ever "(22: 5).

So John emphasizes God and the Lamb rather than Jerusalem. John gives another meaning to the missionary perspective of the Old Testament. Thus, he also describes a pilgrimage of nations in the light of the texts of Isaiah (2: 2-5) and Micah (4: 1-3): "The nations will walk in his light, and the kings of the earth will bring him their treasures. Its doors will remain open during the day - for there will be no night - and we will bring to it the treasures and splendors of the nations. " (21, 24-26).

The pagans come to be healed, to be saved by the Lord himself: "In the middle of the place, on both sides of the river, there are trees of life that give fruit twelve times, once every month; and their leaves may heal the Gentiles "(22,2).

At Isaiah, the people walk to Zion. For John, they go to the Lamb himself. The place of salvation is neither Israel nor the Church. It is the Lamb himself. Here we see the

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<sup>11</sup> This interpretation continued even among the Fathers of the Church. Thus, in the Eastern tradition, where the Apocalypse is little read, only Didyme develops the symbol of the Church-candlestick. In the Western tradition, Paulin de Nole is the first to interpret this candlestick in reference to the Apocalypse, relying on Ap 1, 16 and 2, 6. Cf. Martine DULAÉY, p. 20-22.

missiological consequences of the book's Christocentrism. Only the Lamb, standing on the mountain of Sion (14, 1ss), enlightens men and draws them to him.

The Church's mission is to reflect the light of nations. It is not the purpose of the mission. Her concern is not to turn the nations toward her, but to bring them to recognize the light and to "*give glory to the God of heaven*" (Rev 11: 13). Like the Baptist, the Church is "*the lamp that burns and is consumed*" (Jn 5:35). This symbolism makes it possible to say the radicality of the mission of the Church. It is not an activity among many others. It mobilizes and consumes the whole person.

#### **4. Following the faithful witness**

As a reflection of light, the mission of the Church is essentially a mission of witness. Now, in the New Testament, four Greek terms make the idea of testimony: the verbs *martyreô* (to attest, to testify) and *martyromai* (to confirm, to take to witness); the substantives *martyria* (witnessing action), *martyrion* (the proof), *martys* (the witness). All these words, except *martyromai*, are part of the vocabulary of the Johannine Apocalypse. From this etymology can flow several meanings. Among others:

- The empirical sense. The witness tells what he saw and heard.
- The legal meaning, the most common. The witness commits himself before a court, as accuser or defender. The fourth gospel often repeats this meaning.
- The prophetic sense that burst into the everyday use of the term and is grafted on the legal meaning. Thus in the Old Testament the prophet as a witness is the one who defends the cause of God.
- The apocalyptic meaning where the testimony takes several forms: announcement of the Word, accusation and judgment, testimony for or against.

In the Johannine Apocalypse, Christ fulfills all the roles of the prophetic and apocalyptic tradition. Faithful witness, he announces the Word, and he testifies in favor of his people and defends the cause of God against the forces of evil.

Moreover, the testimony goes hand in hand with fidelity. The believer is essentially a *martys*, a witness. His mission is summarized in the testimony, *martyria*. The witness is the one who is able to defend a cause, up to the risk of his life. This is why in the Apocalypse the term *martys* is linked to death. Nevertheless, it is not death that makes the believer a witness, but his faithfulness and commitment lived to the end, following the faithful witness, Jesus



Christ, *ho martyrs ho pistos* (Rev 3, 14).

In these times of turmoil and fragility, the Christian is called to live of radicality. Yet this radicality goes hand in hand with tenderness. It is true that the spirituality of the Apocalypse led the Phrygian priest Montan to fanaticism and schism. He wanted to found a religion of pure, excluding the others. Now, as we have seen, the Letter to the Church of Laodicea bears witness to a Lord who is certainly demanding, but also surprisingly tender, attentive and welcoming. It is not intolerance and fanaticism, but love and tenderness that provoke the radical and genuine conversion that the Christian must witness.

This call to conversion is present in other works of the New Testament. In borrowing the language of the apocalypses, John radicalizes it. Indeed, the whole book is revelation (this is the meaning of the word *apokalupsis*) of a concrete salvation that awaits a concrete answer. He is an invitation to give flesh to the *kairos*, to turn the *chronos* into *kairos*, the daily into history of salvation. What Martin-Achard points out about Jewish apocalypses is also valid here for the Johannine Apocalypse:

*« It is possible, writes Martin-Achard, to read in the apocalypses a tonic and liberating message despite the curious forms he has sometimes taken; its authors are perfectly clear on the catastrophic situation of the world and firmly convinced that the last word belongs to their God; they associate all ages and the entire universe with the redemptive work of the One they invoke, while insisting on the importance of the present commitments. »<sup>12</sup>.*

### **Conclusion: The mission in a context of fragility**

In sum, at the end of the first century, when the author of the Apocalypse addresses Christians in Minor Asia, evangelization is widely advanced. The birth of the churches of Minor Asia is the result of missions *ad extra*. The difficult times that the Christian communities face are for John a *kairos*, a favorable moment to go to the essential of the mission which can be summed up in three questions asked to the Christian communities of then, but also to ours today.

The first question is, "Who are we witnessing? Indeed, by its strong Christological connotation, John brings Christians back to the essential of the mission: the Risen One. Whether *ad extra* or *ad intra*, the Lamb is the heart of the mission. As Edouard Cothenet writes, "If the Church is to shine like the menorah, it is not to draw attention to itself, but to attest the presence of the One who is the true Light, who came to this world for the salvation

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<sup>12</sup> MARTIN-ACHARD, R., « Essai d'évaluation théologique de l'apocalyptique juive », *Beiträge Zur Alltestamentlichen Theologie*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 1977, p. 274.

of all believers.»<sup>13</sup>

The second question is, "What are we witnessing? With very shocking images, John means that the Christian is immersed in a story plagued by clashes, a story that evolves in a jagged manner, as is shown by the principle of recapitulation which, according to Victorin de Pettau, structures the book<sup>14</sup>. Yet at the heart of this broken history the presence of the slain but victorious Lamb shines. With him, it is possible to start afresh (Ap 21, 1-5). It is this concrete hope and madness that Christians witness. As G. Ravasi so rightly notes: "The Apocalypse wants to propose a defense and a very marked illustration of hope at the moment when the lack of confidence, the lukewarmness, a feeling of crisis seem to reach the different churches (chapter 2). 3)<sup>15</sup>.

The third question: How do we testify? The answer is particularly to be found in the Letters to the Churches, with the formula that comes in refrain: *metanoeson ouon*: "convert then, right now". The depreciative *ouon* and the aorist imperative reflect the urgency of this conversion. In this sense, the mission is path of conversion, personal and community. *Metanoia*, in the biblical sense of the term, is not a return to oneself in order to flagellate oneself or to auto-glorify oneself but is a requirement of openness to God and the others. The mission is essentially "a dynamic of conversion". What Pope Paul already recalled in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

*« Being the one Evangelizing, the Church begins by evangelizing herself. Community of believers, community of hope lived and communicated, community of brotherly love, it needs to listen unceasingly what it must believe, its reasons for hope, and the new commandment of love. People of God immersed in the world, and often tempted by idols, the Church always needs to hear proclaiming the great works of God who converted her to the Lord, to be summoned again by him and reunited. It means, in one word, that she always needs to be evangelized, if she wants to keep freshness, momentum and strength to proclaim the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council recalled and the Synod of 1974 strongly resumed this theme of the Church which is evangelized by a constant conversion and renovation, to evangelize the world with credibility»<sup>16</sup>.*

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<sup>13</sup> Edouard COTHENET, « Le Symbolisme du culte dans l'Apocalypse », *Le symbolisme des grandes religions*, p. 229.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. VICTORIN de Pettau, *Commentarius in Apocalypsim*, Patrologia Latina Supplementum, I, Paris, 1958, col. 102-172.

<sup>15</sup> Giovanni RAVASI, « L'Apocalypse, l'Église, l'État », in *Communio*, Paris, 2003, 28, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.

# “Within the Shadows of a Territorial and unilateral Mission”: A Historical Panorama of Mission until 1918

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The task to deliver a historical Panorama of Mission until the Eve of *Maximum Illud* (1919) within 45 minutes is not an easy one. Especially not when our Perception of Mission has been deteriorated or determined by what happened since Spain and Portugal divided the world at the end of the 15th or beginning of the 16th centuries and by what the European Colonial powers did since the late 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Therefore I would like to structure my contribution in 3 major time schedules each of them characterized by a particular concept of mission.

1) Mission of the Early Church and early middle Ages: a multilateral Mission of the Word

2) Mission during the later middle Ages and the early modern period: a unilateral spread within and of the European Mission

3) Mission of the Church and the starting Colonial Powers: a territorial Mission by specialized Congregations under the guidance of the Propaganda Fide

## 1

### **Mission of the Early Church and early middle Ages: a multilateral Mission of the Word**

This part wants to answer several questions “How has Christian Mission occurred? What were the backgrounds? Who were the missionaries? What factors and strategies did characterize mission” during the period 100-750?

#### A) BACKGROUNDS

##### 1. A Historical-Geographical Survey of Christianity’s spread

###### 1.1. The missionary work of the Apostle Paul

From the New Testament evidence – especially from Luke but also through Paul’s letters – the gospel spread significantly through the missionary work of the Apostle Paul. While the promised areas of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria had been touched (source *Acts of*

*the Apostles* 1:8), Antioch of Syria was also evangelized and became an important sending church for Paul and his companions. From there, they carried out mission work on the islands of Cyprus, Malta, and Crete; in Asia Minor and Asia between Tarsus and Macedonia; to Greece, Italy and Rome, and probably Spain. In general, Paul's first-century ministry progressed in a westward direction from Antioch toward Spain (see **ppt, maps 1 and 2**).

### 1.2. Expansion West (see **ppt, maps 3 to 6**)

In the centuries that followed, Christian mission continued to flow westward from Jerusalem and Antioch primarily within the Roman Empire.

Ironically, the region of **Palestine** remained largely non-Christian until the reign of Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In neighboring **Phoenicia**, there was a strong church in the city of Tyre, however, Christian communities were largely Greek-speaking and confined to the cities.

Prior to becoming Paul and Barnabas' sending church, **Antioch of Syria** was evangelized in the 1<sup>st</sup> century amid suffering and it is remembered for being the first place where followers of Jesus were called Christians – a pejorative name given by the pagan majority. Antioch was a cosmopolitan center characterized by Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman influences, which would contribute to it being an important locale for biblical interpretation and for sending intercultural missionaries toward the West and the East. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the population probably included close to half a million residents and there was a significant Christian population.

Within **Asia Minor**, governor Pliny's letter of 112 testified to the growing communities of Christians in Bithynia while Pontus and much of Cappadocia were reached through the efforts of Gregorius Thaumaturgus by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

In **Asia**, the cities of **Smyrna and Ephesus**, both within the province of Phrygia, continued to have a growing Christian presence. The martyred bishop Polycarp (d. 156) was a key missionary to Smyrna in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, while his mentor John the Evangelist apparently ministered in Ephesus in the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

Despite becoming the largest community of Christians in the western Roman Empire by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the origins of the church at **Rome** are unclear. While claims that Peter and Paul founded the church lack support, the first indication of Christianity in the city probably comes through the historian Suetonius who recorded that Emperor Claudius had dealt with an uprising of the followers of *Chrestus* (perhaps a misspelling of Christos or 'Christ') around

the year 50. The church was a Greek-speaking community for most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, an indication that the movement had largely taken hold among the lower classes, until Bishop Victor (d. 199) introduced Latin as the language of worship in 189. Some have estimated that by the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, there was as many as 30,000 Christians in Rome – a figure extrapolated from the large number of clergy serving the church.

Similarly, the beginnings of the church in **Gaul** are difficult to detect. The gospel probably came from Syria, Asia and Asia Minor via Christian merchants. Indeed, Irenaeus (ca.115-200), bishop of **Lyon** until 200, was initially set apart to minister to a congregation of Greek-speaking immigrants in the city. Further, many of the Christians who suffered in the persecutions of 177 were not of Gallic origin. As the church expanded, bishops were probably appointed in **Cologne** and **Mainz** by 185, and churches were established in **Arles, Rouen, Bordeaux, and Paris** by the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Though we are unable to confirm if Paul actually ministered in **Spain**, both Tertullian and Cyprian make mention of Spanish churches in their third-century writings. Also, in the acts of the Council of Elvira, in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, some 36 Spanish churches are listed.

Though some legends claim that Paul and even Joseph of Arimathea were early catalysts in evangelizing **Britain**, and Tertullian alludes to Christians in the region by the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the first indisputable evidence for a British church comes from the acts of the Council of Arles in 314 in which bishops from **London** and **York** were present. By 400, the **Briton** people of Roman Britain appear to have been evangelized; however, the **Anglo-Saxons** were largely neglected until the late 6<sup>th</sup> century and the ministry of Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604). In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, English monks were catalysts for reaching the **Saxons** of Germany.

Despite its geographical proximity to Roman Britain, **Ireland** was never part of the Roman Empire. Christianity came to the Celts in the 5<sup>th</sup> century primarily through the work of the famous missionary-bishop Patrick (ca.387-ca.461). As a result of his nearly 30 years of ministry, much of Ireland was evangelized. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Celtic missionary monks left Ireland to evangelize **Scotland**, and what is now **Switzerland** and **France**.

Prior to the lives and ministries of Clement (ca. 150-ca.215) and Origen (ca.185-254) of Alexandria, little is known about the origins of **Egyptian Christianity**. Eusebius, citing Clement, presented the traditional claim that the church had been planted by Mark the Evangelist. As Alexandrian Christians were challenged to articulate their faith in a Gnostic

milieu, the church opened a catechetical school to offer doctrinal training to new believers. While the churches in Alexandria were **Greek-speaking**, other Egyptian Christians were **Coptic** in language and culture, including Pachomius (ca.290-ca. 346) and other pioneers of Egyptian monasticism.

In today called Tunis and Algeria, it is said that the gospel most rapidly took hold. The great irony is that, like Rome, the **North African church** had anonymous origins. Archaeological evidence suggests that there were communities of Christians in Cyrene (near modern Benghazi) by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and in Hadrumetum (Sousse) by the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century. The first actual written account of North African Christianity came from a court case in Carthage in 180 in which 12 believers were executed. As the North African church developed, it would be shaped by theologians such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine of Hippo (354-430).

### 1.3. Expansion East (see ppt, maps 3 to 10)

In recent years, scholars such as Irvin and Sunquist (*History of the World Christian Movement*), Moffett (*A History of Christianity in Asia*), Cragg (*The Arab Christian*) and Jenkins (*The Lost History of Christianity*) have helpfully reminded western Christians of the rich and colorful history of early Christian communities in the East, especially in those regions outside of the Roman Empire.

As the gospel expanded west from Antioch, it also ventured eastward to the **Kingdom of Osrhoene** and its capital Edessa. Though Osrhoene would come under Roman control by the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, this **Syriac-speaking church** had been nurtured by the Antioch church in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century until a bishop was set apart around 200. Though Eusebius' claim that King Abgar of Edessa corresponded with Jesus during the Lord's lifetime has not found general acceptance, this account does show that the Syrians were surely exposed to the gospel **well before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century**. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Syrian church was strengthened by the work of its greater theologian Ephraem (306-373), who theologized in the Syrian context through preaching and writing hymns.

The Christian movement in **Persia and Mesopotamia** probably spread from Edessa in the **2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries** through merchants and even through Christians who had been captured by the Persians. By 225, some 20 churches had been established in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley bordering Persia. One of these communities converted a house into a small church building around 232 at **Dura-Europos on the Tigris River** – one of the earliest

excavated church structures from the early-Christian period. **By 285, the first Persian bishop had been set apart and by the beginning of the 5th century, there was a recognizable network of churches and bishops in the region.**

Christianity probably penetrated **Armenia** through the ministry of Christians from neighboring Cappadocia and Syria. The most celebrated missionary in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century was Gregory the Enlightener (ca. 240-332). What makes Armenia unique in early Christian history is that following the conversion of King Tiridates, who was reportedly healed and later baptized by Gregory, Christianity was declared the national religion of Armenia.

The initial evangelization of **India** has been the subject of much speculation, especially regarding the alleged mission of **Thomas**. Though the specific details of mission cannot be confirmed, there is no doubt that there was a Christian presence in India by the **3<sup>rd</sup> century**. In terms of church expansion, it is likely that the Indian churches were an extension of the church in Persia and were overseen by its leadership. One of the signers of the Nicene Creed of 325 was Bishop John of Persia who apparently signed on behalf of the churches of Persia and India.

In one sense, the gospel penetrated **Arabia** very early because this was where Paul first preached following his conversion. **Despite this, we know very little about Christianity in Arabia before the 4<sup>th</sup> century.** It seems that Arabs were most exposed to the gospel through the witness of Roman and Persian believers. The first known churches were established in what is now **Qatar**, while another bishop who ministered to Bedouin Arabs was present at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Finally, a number of 4<sup>th</sup>-century Arab monarchs embraced Christianity and invited missionaries to come and teach their people.

Though Luke (Acts 8:27) records Phillip baptizing an Ethiopian eunuch who served in the court of Queen Candace, scholars struggle to make a historical connection between that encounter and the origins of the church in **Ethiopia**. The most reliable account for the beginnings of the Ethiopian church date to the **early 4<sup>th</sup> century** as 2 youths from Tyre named Frumentius and Aedesius were travelling with their teacher down the Red Sea when their ship was attacked and they were sold into slavery. After gaining favor with the authorities and being allowed to go free, Frumentius (d. ca.383) chose to return to Ethiopia and is remembered for leading the royal family to faith in Christ, with starting new churches, and ordaining priests among other ministries. Finally, in 347, Frumentius was set apart as bishop for Ethiopia by Athanasius of Alexandria.

While Chinese silk was available for purchase in Mediterranean markets before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, meaning Chinese merchants were probably interacting with Christians, **there is no evidence for a Christian presence in China until the 7<sup>th</sup> century when the Chinese emperor favorably received Nestorian monks.** It was Nestorian Christians that spread Christianity along the Silk Road between Persia and China in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries (see ppt 7 to 10).

Finally, though located to the North and West of Antioch, **the Gothic peoples** certainly resided outside of the Roman Empire. In fact, it was these warring Germanic peoples from north of the Danube that overthrew Rome in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Christianity first came to the Goths in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries through the testimony of slaves – Cappadocian Christians captured by the Goths. The most famous missionary to the Goths, Ulfilas (ca.311-ca.383) was born to Cappadocian and Gothic parents. A moderate Arian, he was set apart in 340 as bishop to the Goths by another Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia (d. 341).

## 2. Political and Social Contexts

Given this survey of Christianity's spread, let us briefly describe the political and social contexts in which the church expanded and missionaries labored.

### 2.1. The Pre-Constantinian Period (100-312)

The story of early Christianity was characterized by sporadic periods of discrimination and suffering from its beginnings until well into the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Of course, the movement's founder, Jesus of Nazareth, and its earliest missionaries – most of the Twelve and Paul – died as martyrs. In 64-65 the Emperor Nero persecuted Christians in Rome, while Domitian probably did the same toward the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 4<sup>th</sup> century, followers of Jesus were met with discrimination and, at times, even violence. Though persecution against Christians was largely carried out on a local level (e.g. in Lyon (177), Alexandria (248)), there were some Roman emperors that initiated campaigns against the movement. Septimius Severus enacted in 202 a law forbidding conversion to Judaism and Christianity. The first imperial persecution was carried out by Decius beginning in 249. Valerian renewed the imperial persecution in 257. Nearly 20 years in his reign, Diocletian also wanted to return Rome to its traditional religion. The Great Persecution came to an end in 311. From a Roman perspective, the specific charges against Christians were: general impiety, by failing to honor the many deities of the Roman pantheon, which often included



the emperor himself, Christians were accused of atheism – since they were worshipping a god that they could not see.

## 2.2. Constantine and Imperial Christianity (312-610)

After **tolerating Christianity in 312** due to the fact he had seen on the eve of his battle with Maxentius at Milvian Bridge in the sky a sign, either the chi-rho labarum symbol or a cross, **Constantine gave the movement favored status in 324 when he took complete control of the empire.**

**How did Constantine’s conversion affect Christianity in Roman Empire both in the short-term and the long-term?**

After 324 some of the benefits extended to the church included clergy gaining tax exempt status, churches receiving funding, and government-sponsored construction of new church buildings. Though Christians had already been meeting for worship on Sunday, Constantine facilitated the practice by closing the markets officially making it a day of worship. Christians began to occupy important roles in government and society and bishops were given a prominent status. Finally, the emperor was clearly concerned about unity within the church and got involved in the Donatist and Arian controversies, gathering the bishops involved and sponsoring theological reflection toward the issues being resolved.

Historians conclude that ‘in a few short years, Christianity in the Mediterranean world went from being an illegal religion to the official creed of the Roman emperor’. They add that ‘Constantine’s embrace of Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was the first step toward a great synthesis of religion, state, and culture in the Roman world’.

But: though Constantine’s name is most often attached to the national religion or later state church paradigm – **the so-called ‘Constantinian Church’** – **the emperor was surely not the sole player in this broader development.** As noted, outside of Rome, **King Tiridates of Armenia** had already declared his country a Christian nation following his conversion and baptism in 301. **It should also be remembered that Christianity was not made the official religion of the empire until the Emperor Theodosius’ legislation in 380.**

Nevertheless, **the Constantinian paradigm** not only shaped church and state relations for centuries to come, but it **also influenced how the church began to understand and practice Christian mission.**

**A gospel expansion became synonymous with Christendom, it followed that compulsion and even violence were at times regarded as acceptable ‘missionary’ methods.** This development can be closely observed in Charlemagne’s campaign against the Saxons in which he declared these personal enemies to be the church’s enemies and they were given the opportunity to convert or face violence. As the historian Robert comments: “The dark side of the growing power of Christendom was the increasing willingness of popes and kings to use force against groups that refused to accept the Catholic faith”. His colleague Newbigin adds: “It is easy to see with hindsight how quickly the church fell into temptation of worldly power. It is easy to point ... to the glaring contradiction between the Jesus of the Gospels and his followers occupying seats of power and wealth.”

The Constantinian phenomenon should not be simplistically regarded as a triumph of the Church toward an automatic Christianization of the Roman Empire and other regions that accepted Christianity. Indeed, **in the decades and centuries following Constantine’s conversion, the narrative of the church and Christian mission remains complicated; however, in no way did it signal the end of Christian mission.**

While Clovis (481-511), first king of the Franks, and Charlemagne (800-814) certainly forced Christianity on their subjects, missionaries such as Patrick, Augustine of Canterbury, and the Celtic monks seemingly worked within this paradigm and preached the gospel to a region or nation after first evangelizing its monarchs. Though Boniface’s (680-754) 8<sup>th</sup>-century mission to the Frisians was certainly dependent on the political protection of the Frankish King Charles Martel (718-741), this arrangement was still not enough to save Boniface and his companions from martyrdom.

Finally, it is quite ironic that monastic movements, which were clearly fueled in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by an anti-Constantinian spirit, also produced the greatest number of transcultural missionaries from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onward. In short, Christian mission continued in varying forms in the post-Constantine period, including during the Vandal conquest of Rome (ca. 409-493) and through the Byzantine resurgence (ca. 527-565).

### 2.3. The Rise of Islam (610-750)

As Irvin and Sunquist wrote: “Within a century of the death of Muhammed (634), as many as half of the world’s Christians were under Muslim political rule”.

Just 2 years after Muhammad’s death in 634, Khalid ibn Walid defeated a Byzantine army in battle in Damascus resulting in Syria coming under Arab-Muslim control a few years

later. The Arabs gained control of Egypt by 640 and had conquered all of Persia by 642. By 670, the Arab conquest extended from Constantinople in the East to the Atlantic shores of Morocco in the West and by 700, after having defeated the last Byzantine armies, the Arabs controlled all of North Africa (see ppt maps 11 to 14).

An expanding empire with a religion at its center, the Arabs seemed quite adept at organizing and assimilating its conquered peoples and territories. **The Muslim armies generally offered 3 possibilities to its conquered foes: conversion to Islam, “dhimmi” status or jihad.**

While many Christians did convert to Islam under the leadership of the **caliphs of Medina (632-661) and during the Ummayyad Dynasty (661-750)** that was based in Damascus, others accepted this dhimmi status. That is, in exchange for paying a tax, they were given protection and freedom to continue worshipping as Christians. Though Christian missions diminished greatly in Muslim lands during this period, there were still be some accounts of Christian-Muslim engagement that will be worth noting.

### 3. Frontiers of Thought

The gospel not only spread across geographical and cultural boundaries in varied social and political contexts in the first eight centuries, but **the movement also encountered a worldview matrix that included a variety of philosophies and religions**, to know: Gnosticism (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century); imperial cult; Zoroastrianism; Manicheism; other monotheistic religions as Judaism and Islam. Within the church there were some doctrinal discussions as Docetism, adoptionism, subordinationism, Nestorianism, Arianism, Pelagianism etc.

#### B) WHO WERE THE MISSIONARIES?

While acknowledging that the missionaries in the early church came from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, let us examine some representative profiles of intercultural workers from 100 to 750.

##### 1. Full-Time Missionaries

Early church tradition suggests that **some of the apostles and followers of the Lord also became full-time missionaries.**

Though unable to provide firm historical support, the church in **Armenia** regards **Thaddeus and Bartholomew** as its founding evangelists. On the other hand, the modern

**Coptic Church in Egypt**, supported by the claims of Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea (ca.260-341), and Jerome (347-420), looks to the Gospel writer **John Mark** as its first missionary. The most famous apostle-missionary account in early Christianity involves **Thomas and his alleged mission to India**. Unfortunately, the key literary evidence pointing to the mission is the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century apocryphal work the Acts of Thomas, which tells according to Edward L. Smither “a rather fanciful tale of Thomas going to prison after building a spiritual palace for a certain King Gundaphar”. Despite the credibility issues with the Acts of Thomas, other evidence actually offers some support for Thomas’ work (see Frykenberg). These include the discovery of 1<sup>st</sup>- to 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Roman coins in southern India, an indication of significant trade between India and the Roman Empire, and archaeological evidence confirming that king Gundaphar actually lived (see Moffet). The fact also remains that when the Portuguese reached India in 1500, they encountered a community of 100.000 Christians in southern India, who through their oral history traced their spiritual lineage to the doubting apostle (see Neill; Moffett) (A recent article by the Jesuit George NENDUNGATT of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* (77: 2011, pp. 399-422) points that instead of the uncertainty of the apocryphal Acts of Thomas, one should take a different starting point, which is historically earlier and more certain, to know the early Alexandrian tradition presented by Pantaeus, Origen and Athanasius. Contrary to what scholars derive from Origen, the author states that Origen affirmed that the gospel had not yet been preached in Aryan India (North India), which is to imply that it did had been preached in non-Aryan India or South India. So, according to Nendungatt, a continuity is found here with the Thomaschristian tradition about Christian origins in India in apostolic times...).

Aside from these allusions to missions from the apostolic age, there is further evidence in the early church for full-time missionaries.

First of all, there is the *Didache*, a late 1<sup>st</sup>-century or early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century text that served as a discipleship manual for Gentile Christians. The fact that this work existed at all indicates that the gospel was crossing cultural boundaries as Gentiles in the ethnically diverse Roman Empire were embracing Christ.

Similarly, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, **Origen** made reference to full-time, traveling evangelists.

Finally, **Eusebius of Caesarea**, recounting the work of missionaries from the apostolic period to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, affirmed the work of missionaries, whose significant

travels certainly led them to cross cultural boundaries, and he also highlights their role in establishing churches.

## 2. Bi-vocational Missionaries

Many others were also involved in intercultural work, though it was not their primary vocation. They most notably included bishops, teachers, philosophers and monks.

### 2.1. **Missionary bishops** were, e.g.:

- **Ignatius of Antioch** (d.110) between Antioch and Rome by preaching, writings and martyrdom.

- **Polycarp of Smyrna** (d.156) in Asia by preaching and martyrdom.

- **Irenaeus of Lyons** (c.100-165) in Gaul and Rome by apologetics and preaching (originally from Greek-speaking Asia Minor, he labored as a missionary-bishop in Gaul, which was a largely Latin-speaking region. He also made it a point to learn dialect of southern Gaul in order to preach in the pagan villages around Lyons).

- **Gregorius Thaumaturgus** (c.213-270) in Pontus; Asia Minor by preaching, apologetics, healing, miracles and exorcism.

- **Martin of Tours** (c.316-397) in Gaul by preaching, apologetics, polemics, healings, miracles, by establishing monasteries (Originally from Pannonia (modern Hungary), he was dramatically converted to Christ while serving as a soldier in the Roman army. He became a monk and established monasteries in Milan and Gaul. Appointed bishop of Tours in Gaul, he labored to evangelize the pagan populations of Gaul through confronting pagan practices, destroying pagan temples, performing healings and other miracles).

- **Patrick of Ireland** (c.387-c.461) in Ireland by reaching local leaders, preaching and establishing churches (Despite the many legends associated with his life, Patrick was a 5<sup>th</sup>-century bishop with a clear burden for missions. Ethnically British or perhaps even Welsh, he was captured and enslaved by the Irish as a youth. After escaping to Gaul, Patrick writes in his *Confessions* that he was compelled by a vision to return to Ireland as a missionary. Though he was surely not the first missionary to Ireland, he was certainly a catalyst for Irish missions and by the mid- to late 5<sup>th</sup> century, some 200 churches with around 100.000 reported converts had been established).

- **Gregory of Rome or Pope St Gregory the Great** (540-604) by sending missionaries to England (Beda Venerabilis (c.672-732) writes in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People that while Gregory sent out a number of missionaries, he had a particular burden for the Anglo people of Britain. After encountering English slave boys for sale in Rome, Gregory, in a play on words, declared that the “Anglos” (angli) should become “angels” (angeli). Though some have questioned the veracity of this account, Gregory’s compassion for the English became evident when he sent Augustine of Canterbury and a team of 40 monks to evangelize them in 596).

- **Augustine of Canterbury** (d.604) in England by reaching leaders, preaching, miracles, establishing monasteries and churches.

## 2.2. Missionary Philosophers and Teachers

- **Justin Martyr** (c.100-165) in Rome and Ephesus by public debate, writing and martyrdom.

- **Pantaenus** (d.200) in Alexandria and India by teaching (According to Eusebius’ Church History, it is reported that Pantaenus displayed such zeal for the divine word, that he was appointed as a herald of the gospel of Christ to the nations in the East, and was sent as far as India... According to the historian Moffett, though details on Pantaenus’ mission are lacking, he was apparently sent by bishop Demetrius of Alexandria to teach philosophy and the Scriptures in India).

- **Origen** (c.185-254) in Alexandria and Palestine by teaching and writing (It is Origen who praised the work of full-time missionaries in Against Celsus and who functioned as a missionary-teacher in a cross-cultural context. One of Origen’s most famous students was Gregory Thaumaturgus who came to Palestine.

## 2.3. Missionary Monks

**Finally, the most significant group of bi-vocational missionaries, beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, are monks.**

This assertion may seem surprising to many modern people because monasticism is often regarded as a solitary vocation of prayer and asceticism that in the end only benefits the monk. However, the majority of monks in the history of the church have been coenobitic or communal in their monastic outlook. One distinctive feature of monastic life for cenobites

was manual labor. While some 4<sup>th</sup>- and 5<sup>th</sup>-century monk-bishops performed their monastic labor through serving the church as ordained ministers, many monks from the 6<sup>th</sup>-century onward fulfilled theirs through preaching and mission work.

- **Columba** (521-597) in Scotland by reaching local leaders, preaching; establishing monasteries.

The most famous Irish missionary-monk was Columba who was dubbed the apostle of Scotland. We know by Bede Venerabilis that Columba's approach was to seek in 565 first the favor of King Brute of Britain, who was apparently converted to the gospel, and who allowed Columba and his monks to begin a monastery at Iona. While their daily activities included prayer, fasting, study and manual labor, the monks also labored as evangelists among the Pict people of the Scottish highlands, an area that had been evangelized to some degree in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries by bishop Ninian (c.360-430).

- **Columban** (543-615) in France and Italy by reaching leaders, preaching and establishing monasteries.

In 590, the monk Columban left the monastery in Bangor, Wales, and established a community of monks at **Luxeuil in France**, where he served for 20 years. Though he initially found favor with the local king and was given the freedom to preach, he was later expelled by the king of Burgundy. After leaving Luxeuil, he and his fellow monks continued evangelizing **other parts of France and northern Italy**. Later, his disciple **Gall** (c.550-c.646) founded a monastery in **Switzerland**. While the monastery served as a mission base for the Irish monks, it became also an environment for copying Scripture, including ornate pieces such as the *Book of Kells*, and other works of Christian and classical literature. Later on it would develop into the famous Benedictine abbey of Saint Gall.

- **Augustine of Canterbury** (d.604)

As noted he and 40 Benedictine monks were sent in 596 by Gregory the Great to evangelize the English. According to Bede Venerabilis, their strategy included making contact with king Ethelbert of Kent, who apparently embraced Christianity and allowed the monks to proclaim the gospel freely and to establish churches.

- **Boniface** (680-754) in Germany by reaching leaders, preaching, confronting pagan religion, establishing monasteries and churches and by martyrdom.

While monks were used in part to evangelize England, **a group of English monks led by Boniface were instrumental in reaching Germany with the gospel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.** Set apart in 722 as a missionary-bishop for Germany, Boniface also sought to reach kings and leaders in Germany and Frisia, who then convinced their subjects of the superiority of the gospel. Afterward, Boniface and his monks baptized entire villages of people who had embraced the faith of their leaders. Boniface is probably most famous for his manner of confronting German paganism. In 724, he cut down the sacred oak dedicated to Thor at Geismar. After he emerged from the encounter unharmed, many Germans believed in Boniface's god and chose to build a church. Though he enjoyed the protection of the Frankish king Charles Martel, Bonifatius and a group of 50 monks were killed by an angry pagan mob in Frisia (near Dokkum) in 754.

- **Nestorians** (c.600-c.800) in **Central Asia and China** by reaching leaders, preaching, translating Scripture and literature, establishing monasteries and churches.

A final monastic mission group worth noting is the Nestorian movement. They were connected in name to the embattled bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius (c.381-451). Following the rise of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Nestorian movement was the only expression of Christianity that had any life East of Antioch. **With significant churches in Edessa, Nisibis, and Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the movement expanded along the trade routes between Arabia and Central Asia. Over time, 'Nestorian' and 'Christian' became synonymous terms in Asia.**

The most celebrated Nestorian missionary monk was **Alopen, who reached China in 635.** After finding favor with the emperor T'ai Sung, the Nestorian monks were free to proclaim the "luminous religion of Syria" and to establish a church (Moffet). While their monastic lifestyles were apparently impressive in the Buddhist context, the Nestorians learned Chinese and translated some key words of Christian literature into the language. Though the Nestorians endured several periods of persecution from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century, and **the movement seemed to disappear by 980,** there were probably as many as 3000 Nestorian missionaries in China in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. Lay and Anonymous Missionaries

It seems natural that these bishops, philosophers / teachers, and monks, all students of Scripture and its related disciplines, would be spokespersons for the Christian faith. However, laymen, including merchants, colonists and soldiers, also played a significant role in early



Christian mission. As Stephen Neill says: “Every Christian was a witness ... nothing is more notable than the anonymity of these early missionaries”.

Indeed, it is not insignificant that the two largest communions in the early western church (Rome and Carthage) had undocumented origins. North African Christianity had early beginnings (at least early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century or even late 1<sup>st</sup>-century) that were strikingly anonymous. It seemed not to have any connection with the apostolic period, nor was there a great episode of a golden legend, a great saint, or an apostle arriving on the African shores to convert the unbelievers. Rather this history opened through the testimonies of blood.

We conclude with the words of French historian Marrou: “The whole church considered itself to be involved in mission and to have a missionary duty, and every believer was a witness, felt called to the work of evangelization, even so far as the supreme witness of bloody martyrdom that was always on the horizon. This is perhaps the greatest lesson that Christians today can receive from their oldest brothers in the faith”.

## C) FACTORS AND STRATEGIES CHARACTERIZING MISSION

### 1. Suffering

Through examining various accounts of persecution and martyrdom, including the words and actions of those who suffered, the author Smither is able to argue that, in an indirect manner, suffering did serve as a strategic means for the advancement of the gospel. Specifically, he shows that **the public context of persecution allowed Christians the opportunity to witness verbally** (The word martyr (*martus*) literally means “a witness”) **about their faith and to clarify and defend the gospel** (key martyrdom records: acts of martyrs (*acta*) or martyrdoms (*passio*) revealed such testimonies: e.g. Polycarp of Smyrna. In some cases, it was reported that some bystanders were converted to Christianity because of the persecution they witnessed, while in other cases, non-Christian observers sympathized with suffering Christians, an influence that seemed to lay further groundwork for the growth of the church (the impact on pagan audiences seemed especially powerful when the martyrs were women, e.g. Agape, Irene and Chinoe, Crispina). Persecutions against Christians also resulted in **apologetics**, written treatises that defended and articulated Christian belief (e.g. by Justin Martyr, Tertullian). **Finally, suffering seemed to invigorate the church and its mission as martyrs were remembered on feast days, through sermons, sacred biographies (*vitae*)** (Heffernan notes that from the early church through the medieval period,

some 8000 sacred biographies were written to commemorate the lives of saints) **and even through the construction of churches on the very site of their tombs**. Sometimes believers were encouraged to imitate (*imitatio*) the faith commitment of these saints and martyrs.

## 2. Evangelism, Gospel or kerygmatic proclamation

Although it should be noted that much of evangelism in the early church happened in the context of the existing church and included inner proclamation, catechesis, and baptism, also the **Early Christian mission** was according to author Smither **characterized by a great commitment to kerygmatic proclamation**. Evangelism was a central priority to mission during this period. To support this claim, the author stresses a few examples of evangelism strategies while also focusing on some of the audiences that were hearing the gospel. First of all, there was the strategy of **sharing conversion testimonies and telling the faith stories of other Christians**. Besides, there was the one of **engaging intellectuals with the gospel**. The **commitment to church-based evangelism** and **approaching political leaders before preaching the gospel** was another strategy. A final strategy was **evangelizing heretics within and outside the church across dogmatic, ideological and worldview frontiers**.

## 3. Scripture

### 3.1.

Historians have pointed out that since the early church valued the vernacular principle, Bible translation in this period seemed to follow mission expansion and the establishment of churches. Translocation of the gospel message and translation went hand in hand. In fact, because the Gospels and New Testament were composed and circulated in common (*koine*) Greek, as opposed to Aramaic or even classical Greek, it can be argued that the New Testament Scriptures are translations in a sense and they testify to the missional nature of the faith. Identifying Christianity as a “vernacular translation movement”, Sanneh asserts that the “vintage mark” of the faith was that it has been a movement of “mission by translation”: translating into local languages served to clarify the gospel message within a given people group. In short, Christian mission in the early church and later periods has been facilitated by Bible translations.

If we look at the vernacular principle at work in the early church, we have to focus on the translation of Scripture into Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic in light of the church’s missionary expansion in the first 8 centuries.

#### 3.1.1. Syriac

According to Irvin and Sunquist, Syriac “became the language of choice among Christians in eastern Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, and eventually India, Mongolia and China.” The reason that the latter regions adopted Syriac was because it was the language of the Jacobite and Nestorian churches, the most active missional movements in the East throughout the early church period. The point is that we begin to see Syriac Christians reading Scripture in their heart language in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>d</sup> centuries. The Syriac Scriptures began to go through revision and development in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the resulting text was known as the Peshitta, which means “simple” or “clear”. Finally, while the Syriac Bible was arguably the earliest translation of Scripture in the early church, the Syriac Scripture project later influenced the translation structure of the Armenian, Georgian, and Arabic Scriptures.

### 3.1.2. Latin

Though the translation of the Scriptures into Latin was one of the earliest in church history and probably occurred in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the precise origins of the Old Latin Bible are unknown. As the church at Rome was continuing to use the Greek Bible in worship until the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, the Old Latin Bible was probably developed in North Africa.

The Latin Bible project, like the Syriac Scriptures, was driven by worship and discipleship. Eventually, the Old Latin Bible could be identified through 3 regional streams: the African, as evidenced in Cyprian’s preaching; the Gallic, observed in Irenaeus; and the Italian, which was used by Augustine. Concerns about the variant readings of the Old Latin Bible would ultimately result in the Latin Vulgate by Jerome (c.347-420), that moved from being a mere revision of the Old Latin to a new and fresh translation for the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Latin-speaking church.

### 3.1.3. Coptic

While Greek was the primary language of Egypt’s Hellenized urban centers, Coptic was widely spoken in town and villages in the early church period. It seems fair to argue that the Coptic language came into being because of mission and the motivation to distinguish a Christian worldview from the prevailing Egyptian pagan worldview.

### 3.1.4. Gothic

As we have seen, the Goths were a Germanic people that originated from north of the Danube River. Eventually; they divided into 2 distinct groups: the Visigoths or western Goths and the Ostrogoths who lived in the East in what is now Hungary.

While the Ostrogoths enjoyed a peaceful relationship with the eastern Roman Empire at Constantinople; the Visigoths are remembered in history for sacking the city of Rome in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century and then taking control of much of the western empire, including North Africa.

In addition to being a missionary-bishop to the Visigoths in modern Romania and Bulgaria, Ulfilas labored to make Scripture available in the Gothic language. Among the few surviving manuscripts, the most famous is the *Codex Argenteus*, a collection of the 4 Gospels, which dates to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. But the Gothic Scriptures had virtually no effect on the church in the region after the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 3.1.5. Armenian

As discussed, Armenia was evangelized in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century by Gregory the Enlightener. After king Tiridates was reached with the gospel and baptized, he declared Armenia to be a Christian nation around 301.

The primary spiritual influence on Armenia came from Syria as the Bible and Christian literature were available in Greek and Syriac. The vision for an translation into Armenian was realized through Sahak, the leader of the Armenian church in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when a scribe named Masrop completed the New Testament in 410 and the Old Testament in 414.

#### 3.1.6. Georgian

Scholars agree that there was a Christian presence in Georgia by the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century. Though it is disputed whether the Georgian Scriptures were translated from Armenian, Syriac or Greek, most scholars affirm that the Gospels and parts of the New Testament were available in Georgian by the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 3.1.7. Ethiopic (Ge'ez)

As discussed, the most accelerated mission activity in Ethiopia began in the 4<sup>th</sup> century with Frumentius. It is then when the Ethiopic alphabet was fully developed. The question when the Bible became available in Ethiopic is disputed: some claim that it was part of Frumentius' 4<sup>th</sup>-century mission work; others speak of the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century.

In terms of its legacy, although Amharic is the national language of modern Ethiopia, Ethiopic remains the Scriptural and liturgical language of the contemporary Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

### 3.2.

Second, worship seems to have driven the process of Bible translation. As the gospel spread and as new communities of believers sprang up, it was imperative that Scripture be read publicly as a focal point of worship assemblies.

### 3.3.

Third, while the need for Scripture in worship assemblies had been a catalyst for initial translations, concerns for discipleship drove the process of revising those works. The Peshitta Syriac, Latin Vulgate, and later editions of the Scripture in other languages certainly show that the early church was concerned about the accuracy of Scripture.

## 4. Contextualization

How did contextualization – in meaning making the never-changing Word of God relevant in ever-changing situations – occurred? How did early Christian missionaries articulated the faith through commonly understood ideas, by engaging sacred space, and through visual and work culture?

### 4.1. Ideas and forms

- As seen, some early Christian missionaries were also philosophers who were quite conversant with the worldview and ideas of their age. This was particularly true as the church expanded and grew within the Greek-speaking and Hellenistic thinking world and within the culture and legislation of the Roman Empire. **Justin** combined both of them by his choice to communicate Jesus as the Word of God by employing the Greek word *Logos* and by using the medium of Roman legal communication (*libellus*: an accepted form of petition to make his case; apologetics). Justin's legacy continues through the 5<sup>th</sup> century as **Augustine** wrote *The City of God* – his magnum opus that thoroughly responded to the pagan allegations that Christians were to blame for the fall of Rome.

- Outside of Rome and the Hellenistic world, an effort to contextualize through accepted ideas and forms can also be observed in the work of Nestorian missionaries in 7<sup>th</sup>-century China. One of their mission strategies was to develop a Chinese Christian literature. An early form of this was a work that included 4 treatises devoted to Jesus, God's nature, creation and human nature, and on Christ's ethical teachings. This medium seems deliberately contextual because the 4 texts were clearly patterned after the Buddhist genre of sutras. Nestorian missionaries also seemed to be contextualizing in the Buddhist context when they

constructed stone crosses, a clear text of material culture: a combination of Christian faith with the lotus-cross symbol on tombstones from China's Fujian province. Despite the work to develop a Chinese Christian literature, one clear shortcoming was that the Nestorians failed to translate the Scriptures into Chinese. Scholars also state that they went beyond merely clarifying the gospel in China and promoted a syncretistic form of Christianity that was mixed with Buddhism.

#### 4.2. Sacred Space and festivals

- One of the outcomes of the Christianization of the Roman Empire in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, was that Roman society's symbols, art, and rituals began to be Christian. This was expressed concretely in a number of contexts through the 'baptizing' of public spaces. This included removing or destroying architecture and symbols that paid any homage to pagan belief and replacing them with Christian symbols.

- In their late 6<sup>th</sup>-century mission to England, Augustine of Canterbury and his team of monks used a different strategy. While Gregory was clearly intolerant of the continued presence of pagan idols and ordered them destroyed, he was asserting a form of contextualization by redeeming sacred space rather than by destroying it and building new spaces. He did believe that the pagan sacred space could be transformed into a suitable place for sincere Christian worship. He wanted the local population to feel comfortable worshipping as new Christians in familiar surroundings.

- A second example of contextualization related to pagan sacred space is found in the already mentioned Boniface's 8<sup>th</sup>-century mission to Germany. By felling the sacred oak of Thor at Geismar, his action did in fact connect with the German traditions of "trial by ordeal": it was the German perception that Boniface's god was more powerful than their deities that led to their conversion after their sacred space was destroyed.

#### 4.3. Visual culture

Though often overlooked by scholars, one fascinating means of understanding Christian history is through the study of visual and material culture. The term 'visual culture' encompasses images and artifacts produced by artists or artisans that reflect aspects of civilization which may or may not be evident in other cultural artifacts such as written documents. Such artifacts, including lamps, mosaics, and architecture, offer a window into the daily life and worldview of early Christians.

Cf. the Nestorians use of the lotus cross symbol in China

Cf. in the context of the mission of Columba and his monks in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century to the Pictish people of Scotland: the Pictish people of Scotland that were specialists in metal work and stone art, with grave stones as well as monuments to commemorate their history. Scholars have grouped Pictish stone art into 3 periods or classes that coincide with their spiritual history: Class 1 = pre-Christian; Class 2 = representing the Cross publicly (beginnings of Christianity); Class 3 = images of the Cross that were completely free of pagan images (Christian period). Same with one of the most famous artifacts of Insular Art: the Book of Kells, which was developed at Iona around 800.

Because Columba and the generations of Ionan monks that followed embraced these art forms, it seems evident that they were being deliberately contextual in their mission strategy to convey the gospel through the building material of local Pictish culture.

#### 4.4. Work culture

A final way that contextualization efforts were apparent in early Christian mission was through the lifestyles of Nestorian missionary merchants along the Silk Road.

Describing this eastern marketplace context, Phillip Jenkins (Lost History of Christianity) writes: “Throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages, the legendary Silk Road ran from Syria into northern Persia and into what are now the nations of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Beyond Merv, travelers crossed the Oxus River (the Amu Darya) to enter central Asia proper, and reached Bukhara and Samarkand. The route ultimately took them over 45 hundred miles, into the heart of China”. Invigorating the Byzantine markets with Chinese silk in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century, the Nestorians also seemed quite adept at connecting with other merchants in Central and East Asia. This work, an authentic livelihood, became a platform that enabled these laborers, including monks and other merchants, to evangelize the eastern world. In fact, Jenkins points out that “Syriac Christian writers used the word merchant as a metaphor for those who spread the gospel.” The messenger was contextualized.

#### 4.5. Failing to contextualize

We should also point out that there were many examples of failing to contextualize the gospel in early Christianity.

- In the western church, Latin language and culture remained dominant where it should not have been. This was the case in North Africa where the Scriptures were never translated into the Punic-Berber languages. While Latin was important for urban centers like Carthage or even Hippo, it was not sufficient for even nearby communities and villages.

- Though we celebrate the ministry of Patrick of Ireland and Augustine of Canterbury, including their contextualization strategies, it is somewhat surprising that the primary language of Scripture and worship in the British Isles remained Latin.

- While the evangelization of Nubia (between northern Sudan and southern Egypt) ought to be regarded positively, the fact that the Nubian church adopted the Coptic Scriptures from neighboring Egypt was a missed opportunity for them to be a culturally Nubian church.

- Finally, one of the great shortcomings of the church in Christian history was the failure to plant a truly indigenous Arab church. Nowhere was it able to establish an authentic Arab base; it had not yet even translated the Scriptures into Arabic. As a result, there was really no biblically founded response to the rise of Islam in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, a movement that quickly became a global religion.

- This leads us to ‘the irony of the Latin Vulgate’’: Having becoming a symbol of western religious hegemony, the Vulgate’s presence effectively stifled vernacular translation efforts and contextualization efforts until the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

## 5. Word and Deed

The proclamation in early Christian mission was accompanied by ministries of good works including care for the poor, hungry, imprisoned, enslaved, and marginalized; but also by ministries to those in need of healing and freedom from demonic oppression.

- cf 4<sup>th</sup>-century bishop Basil of Caesarea

## 6. Church

Mission in the New Testament was necessarily church-centered. On one hand, the church was the product of mission; on the other, it was also the means for it. Though mission strategies changed over time and church forms looked different (until early 4<sup>th</sup>-century: private House churches; from 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards Basilicas: multi-purpose buildings that already were common in Roman society, which facilitated mission and gospel proclamation through the art – paintings, mosaics, and stone carvings), there was never a time when there was church-less Christianity.



### **Mission during the later middle Ages and the early modern period: a unilateral spread within and of the European Mission**

- The writings of the apologists, as well as the consolidation of more generic worship liturgies, provided a solidifying of Christian doctrine and contributed to an universalizing of practices, especially as Christianity moved north into Europe.

- This catholicity (universality) grew as the various evangelized tribes and peoples sought the benefits of the intellectual, religious and social structures of Roman times. Christianity came to be known as Catholicism. As tribes expanded, clustered and connected, common languages developed along with the Latin of the Romans. Customs and cultures consolidated and became established.

- In the 11<sup>th</sup> century (1054), the Church split along eastern European (Orthodox, Greek language) and Western European (Roman, Latin language) lines in a theological conflict known as the Great Schism. The Catholic Faith was ubiquitous across most of Europe, however, by the end of the Middle Ages. This was brought about in part, by the struggle, justified by some historians as the 'mission' to the Saracens, known as the Crusades.

- As we have seen, following the destruction of the Persian Empire by 650, Muslims conquered many hitherto Christian strongholds including Jerusalem and Palestine. Later, parts of Africa, Spain and France, and even Sicily, were dominated by Muslim armies. In response, beginning in 1095 as expeditions from the Christian West to recover the Holy Land from Islam and to preserve it for Christendom, the Crusade movement was mixed with expeditions to Christianize Northern Europe (so-called Baltic Crusades in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century), with inner-Christian struggles, e.g. the Hussite Wars in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and reactions against the expanding Ottoman Empire, with the dramatic fall of Constantinople in 1453, followed by the Siege of Vienna in 1529.

Reflection on the Crusades is important in a summary history of Catholic (and later Christian missions), not only in representing a regrettable violent and mostly unsuccessful methodology in the story of Christian mission, but also because this crusader attitude was to continue to influence the mission enterprise for centuries to follow.

- The strategy had not always been the utilization of force, however. In Britain, for example, as we have seen, the missionary monks had been instructed to cooperate with the existing culture and peoples. Old pagan customs were converted and given new, Christian meanings. Monasteries were seen as places of safety and authority. The educated monks introduced more effective agricultural techniques and provided written legislation for the Christian monarchs.

- Another missionary aspect that arose during the Middle ages was the development of monasteries and religious orders. These Orders dominated the missionary landscape, often sending missionaries throughout Europe and beyond. Much of the missionary work attempted at this time was accomplished by members of religious orders, especially the Franciscans and the Dominicans. Their monastic discipline made them assets for cross-cultural mission.

- With the Bible being translated into English in 1382 and the invention of the moveable metal type printing press around a century later, the Christian message could be disseminated on a grander scale. As more new technologies developed, exploration beyond Europe and eastern Asia had expanded. Still, in 1500, Christianity was mostly limited to Europe, although there were small communities in Egypt, Ethiopia, southern India and Central Asia. The upcoming Protestant Reformation gave among others rise to an understanding that each culture should be able to read the Bible in their own language. Biblical translation and transmission were to be the impetus for Protestant missionary ventures in the years to come.

**In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, the missionary enterprise was predominantly a matter of Catholic Orders.**

On May 4, 1493, the Spanish-born Pope Alexander VI decreed in the bull *Inter caetera* that all lands west and south of a pole-to-pole line one hundred leagues west and south of any of the islands of the Azores or the Cape Verde Islands should belong to Spain. Portugal objected because its status and rights had been omitted and overlooked. King John II of Portugal began negotiations directly with King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to push the line west and allow him to lay claim to lands discovered east of it. The result was the Treaty of Tordesillas. Signed in **Tordesillas**, Spain, on **June 7, 1494**, the treaty established a line of demarcation that was 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands (already Portuguese). Spain gained most of the Americas, except for the Brazilian bulge of South America, and Portugal, whose explorers had already reached the west coast of Africa, could

claim lands discovered to the east. However, because the line was neither defined by degrees of longitude nor strictly enforced, different interpretations regarding its practical implementation resulted. In addition, the line did not encircle the globe.

After Ferdinand Magellan's expedition (1519–22), the area of the Pacific came into play, particularly the Spice Islands (Moluccas), which both countries claimed. Always needing money for his European wars, Charles V of Spain sought a practical solution to the "Moluccas issue" after he married Isabella of Portugal in 1526; he signed a new treaty with Portugal in Zaragoza, Spain, on **April 22, 1529. The Treaty of Saragossa** (or Zaragoza) provided an anti-meridian to the line established by the Treaty of Tordesillas. Portugal paid Spain 350,000 ducats for the Moluccas, and, to prevent further Spanish encroachment, the new line of demarcation was established almost three hundred leagues (or  $17^{\circ}$ ) to the east of these islands. Portugal got control of all of the lands to the west of the line, including Asia, and Spain received most of the Pacific Ocean. Spain's argument that the Treaty of Tordesillas divided the world into two equal hemispheres was not recognized in the Treaty of Saragossa: Portugal's share was approximately  $191^{\circ}$ , whereas Spain's was roughly  $169^{\circ}$ , with a variation of about  $\pm 4^{\circ}$  owing to the uncertainty of the location of the Tordesillas line. Spanish interest in the Philippines, shown by the new treaty to be on the Portugal side of the line, would become an issue in the later decades of the sixteenth century.

Spanish and Portuguese mission went hand in hand with the colonization of much of North, Central and South America, the Philippines as well as parts of Africa, Indonesia, and South East Asia. There were also missionary settlements in China, Japan, and India. In these colonies, European culture was often seen as synonymous with Christian faith. The destruction of indigenous worship and other cultural artifacts and practices was thus thought to be essential. At the same time, it should be noted that hospitals and schools were established by the Church in Spanish colonies.

In Latin America, Spanish missionaries faced many problems because of the treacherous behavior of their own countrymen, the conquistadores, with their lust for gold and territory. Missionaries from religious orders were generally known for their love and concern for the needs of the local people, often, defending them against depraved colonizers. The Spanish Crown opposed slavery, but exploitation of indigenous people as unpaid laborers was common. To get around Spanish legislation, instruction in the Christian faith was sometimes offered in return for physical work. Slaves were also brought in from Africa to provide manual labor for the conquistadores.

Through the experience of the Jesuit Order in particular, and especially in opposition to the ways of colonizers, missionary methods were developing greater cognizance of local culture, language, and customs. The Jesuits were known for their establishment of educational institutions and they set up Christian communities which eschewed any colonial military presence. The Jesuits learned and studied vernacular languages, trying to protect and adapt ancient customs and culture where this would not tamper with newfound Christian practices. Indigenous people were encouraged to be baptized, married and were offered the sacrament of penance, but were limited in their participation in Holy Communion and ordination.

(For more information: see, among others, Tara Alberts, “Catholic Missions to Asia”, in: A. BAMJI, G. H. JANSSEN, M. LAVEN (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, Farnham, 2013, pp. 127-145; Karin Vélez, “Catholic Missions to the Americas, op.cit., pp. 147-162).

It is clear that the jurisdiction of the **Roman Congregation De Propaganda Fide**, founded by Gregory XV in 1622, was a point of continuous struggle with Spain and Portugal, who had obtained full power in ecclesiastical practice overseas by Alexander VI.

But what became the royal *patronato* (Spain) or royal *padroado* (Portugal) exercised in control of the Church overseas, included: 1) the sovereignty and jurisdiction over all islands and lands situated West or East of a notional meridian; the obligation of evangelizing the non –Christians of such territories; 2) the royal regulation of access and residence in these areas, which was understood to include the movements and presence of regular and secular clergy. The Spanish and Portuguese monarchies based on these foundations their further claim to order ecclesiastical communications from overseas to be maintained only with Spain and Portugal, not directly with Rome, to exclude appeals from overseas to Rome, and to prevent unauthorized return to Europe by clerics sent abroad. So the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns did not acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Propaganda Fide in any of their overseas territories.

In some cases, tensions flared because of the internationalism of the religious orders: ‘Belgian’, French, Polish, Spanish and Italian priests all served in the ‘Portuguese’ Jesuits missions, whilst many Franciscans and Theatines in Spanish and Portuguese Asia were Italian.

In rivalry with Spain and Portugal, and backed by the Propaganda Fide, **France** too established colonies in parts of Africa, North and Central America, and Canada. Hence

French Catholic communities formed, mainly consisting of European immigrants and African slaves. French friars were particularly interested in working with slaves. The Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris was founded in 1658-1663 specifically to train indigenous clergy for the creation of native grassroots mission. This society of foreign missions worked effectively in Canada, India, South East Asia, and China.

(For more information, see, among others, in: A.D. Wright, *The Early Modern Papacy. From the Council of Trent to the French Revolution, 1564-1789*, Harlow, 2000, pp. 189-230).

### 3

#### **Mission of the Church and the starting Colonial Powers: a territorial Mission by specialized Congregations under the guidance of the Propaganda Fide**

Paradoxically, the century following the destructive French Revolution saw a religious revival and the renaissance of the mission idea. Romanticism, with among others François-René de Chateaubriand and his *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802) as its Catholic representative, put the missionary life in a positive way. Chateaubriand created the perception and narrative of the Heroic Triumphalism of the Catholic Revival Movement, with the missionary as its highest exponent. Anti-intellectualism and cultural superiority were the latter's features.

During this era, the catholic world developed several personal and isolated initiatives. It was the revival of the so-called old religious orders; the birth of new congregations; the starting up of private fundraising for the missions. All this led to a restoration of the monastic and missionary life. In France the Spiritans, founded in 1703, revived by a fusion in 1848 with the Société du Saint-Coeur de Marie and developed into a Mission Congregation specialized in Africa. At Lyon, Marie-Pauline Jaricot started in 1822 her Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi to the benefit of the missions. And at Nancy, bishop Forbin-Janson, organized an analogue project to the benefit of the orphans in the China Missions, known from 1843 onwards as the Work of the Holy Childhood.

In Belgium we have to underline that one could speak until around 1860 of Belgian missionaries, but not yet from real Belgian missions. Together with their French, Irish, Italian

and German colleagues, some priests left for the United States to convert Protestants. Others missioned so-called “pagans” (mostly American natives), in Kentucky. While in Belgium an American Seminary at Leuven (1857) and an apostolic school at Turnhout (1872) were founded, the Belgian province of the Jesuits, with Pieter-Jan De Smet as spearhead, missioned the territory of the Rocky Mountains and the Potowatomie natives.

We have to stress that at that time some Popes were visionary in their ideas about missions. Pope **Gregory XVI** (1831-1846), former Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, was certainly one of them. In his Instruction *Neminem profecto* of 23 November 1845 he stated that it was utmost important to train natives in the missions to become priests, not as secondary priests, but on equal level of the Europeans, since workers of the Scripture were all equal. They eventually could be ordained bishop.

While **Pius IX** (1846-1878) invited the missionary bishops and apostolic vicars to the first Vatican Council and had a text on missions discussed, **Pope Leo XIII** (1878-1903) continued his support for the missions and gave the multiple new erected specialized mission congregations, as the already mentioned Spiritans; but also the CICM (Scheut) missionaries (1862), the White fathers (1868); the Mill Hill missionaries (1866) and the Verbiters (1875), and many missionary Sister Congregations a prominent role in his worldwide conversion project.

From that period on, we see appear the use to assign to the national provinces of international congregations the mission of a well-defined territory. The missionary idea of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was clearly embedded in a climate of political nationalism and ecclesiastical centralism, and was based above all on canon law and a territorial geography. In a sense, the Holy See and especially the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide divided the world into mission territories and un-missioned (or not yet missioned) territories. The territories where the congregations exercised power in the name of the Holy See received through the “*ius commissionis*” (that only would be abolished in 1969!) the status of a mission “*sui iuris*”, an apostolic prefecture or an apostolic vicariate. In a mission territory without an autonomous hierarchy, a European missionary was appointed by Rome as a mission superior, or an apostolic prefect or vicar.

It is clear that this system, together with the colonial aspirations of the European national states would eventually lead to all kind of problems, internal as external, with

repercussions on the mission. It is no accident that Benedict XV will point to it in *Maximum Illud*.

Contrary to the mission activities of the Church, Mission study (**missiology**) as a theological discipline is of recent origin: it initiated only during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was mainly because of the indefatigable efforts of the protestant **Gustav WARNECK (1834-1910)**, who taught at the University of Halle (1896-1910), and those of **Josef SCHMIDLIN (1876-1944)**, the founder of the first chair of missiology at a Catholic institution in 1910 at the University of Münster, that missiology was established as a discipline in its own right. These precedents were soon followed elsewhere, particularly because of tremendous impact and demand from missionary congregations, societies, and conferences such as the **1910 World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh**. Pressures came also from students (particularly in the United States), and in some cases even from governments, as happened in Germany. Although the Protestants were the real pioneers in the theology of mission, since they sought from the beginning for a rationale or justification for their missionary proclamation, the Catholic Church, however, was in the particular matter of creating missiological chairs ahead of other churches.

But here we are arriving at the eve of *Maximum Illud*.

## ***Maximum Illud*, hundred years after, a text beyond the context**

Messina

### **Introduction**

In the history of Mission in the twentieth century, no apostolic letter has resisted so much the wear of time, lost nothing of its brilliance of language, nor of its apostolic relevance, still less of its missionary dynamism as "Maximum Illud", published on November 30, 1919 by Pope Benedict XV. This letter, of which we are celebrating the centenary this year, is one of the documents that has most marked the history of the evangelization of peoples and the missionary teaching of the Popes. Its established authority, as far as the conception and vision of missionary activity since the twentieth century are concerned, makes it one of the most current pontifical texts of a youth and beauty rarely exceeded.

It seems useful to us, to help the reading of this pontifical document, and to highlight its historical fecundity in missionary pastoral work today - particularly in Africa - to begin by situating the world context in which the apostolic letter appears and which, in a certain way, will have conditioned its publication; and finally to revisit the innovative ideas whose resonance guarantees a certain durability in the post-conciliar Church (Vatican II).

#### **1- 1- The context of the Publication of Maximum Illud**



On September 3, 1914, in the tenth election, Giacomo Della Chiesa, born November 21, 1854, was elected 258th Pope of the Catholic Church. This former Substitute of the Secretary of State, also former archbishop of Bologna, takes the name of Benedict XV. This man whose pontificate corresponds to the period of the Great War (the First World War) was, according to Yves Marie Hilaire, a fine and lucid aristocrat<sup>17</sup> ». If, at the world level, humanity is marked by the bruises of the war, Europe, as far as it is concerned, is still in the nationalist movement. Yves Marie Hilaire talks about the transition from Europe of empires to Europe of nations<sup>18</sup>. The reference here is to Italy and Germany; two countries that, in the nineteenth century, managed to build their unity but in the tearing of the quarrel between modernists and traditionalists. It must be remembered that this crisis led Pope Pius IX to condemn the errors of the modern world through the encyclical *Quanta cura* on December 8, 1864, followed by a Syllabus of 80 propositions of these condemned errors. Moreover, the Roman question which caused the Popes to lose control of the Papal States is exacerbated by the taking and proclamation of Rome on September 20, 1870, as the capital of Italy, a month after the cessation of the work of the Council Vatican I, due to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war.

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The least we can say is that the Church is weakened by all these crises, which do not fail to affect the evangelization of the world, still designated by the expression *Propagation of the Faith*.

In general, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the world is marked by war and its aftermath, a human butchery of more than a million deaths. Despite the very visible conflagration of international relations, the Church is surprised and put away from the war, which was the fatal outcome. The war did not spare Africa. A country like Cameroon, in Central Africa and to take only this example, paid a heavy tribute in two years (1914-1916): many losses in human lives and destruction of the bridges and forts of the colony. But the settlement of the conflict in the Treaty of Versailles in 1918 did nothing to repair Africa, especially for the German colonies that are Rwanda - Burundi, Tanzania, Namibia, Togo and Cameroon. Here, a new form of colonization succeeded the other.

It is in this sad and painful context that the pontificate of Benedict XV, a man concerned with peace and preoccupied with the reconciliation of peoples with God and with themselves, emerges. About the First World War, he declares on the occasion of All Saints Day 1914:

*« Every day, the earth is dripping with new blood, covered with dead and wounded. Who could believe that these people who fight against each other come from the*

*same ancestor, that we are all of the same nature and that we all belong to the same human society?»<sup>3</sup>*

In order to reconcile the Christians of his time with the Church, if he maintains the condemnation of the modernists, he dissolves, in 1921, Sodality Saint Pius V (Sodalitium pianum), a group of fundamentalist journalists. - In 1920, by the publication of the encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, he asks the Catholic faithful to read the Bible.

His greatest humanitarian accomplishment, which testifies to his desire for peace, is the pontifical assistance service to the wounded and prisoners of war, through which it was possible for war invalids to be exchanged between the belligerents. All these questions, it must be emphasized, will not have diverted the eyes of Pope Benedict XV from the universal mission of the Church which is the propagation of the faith, say, of the evangelization of the world, by from nearby his interest to its spiritual and material conditions. It is this prophetic look that will allow him to publish, on November 30, 1919, one year after the end of the First World War, the apostolic letter *Maximum illud*.

## **2. Maximum Illud: a prophetic vision of the Mission**

The apostolic letter, which Pope Benedict XVI promulgates on November 30, 1919 in Rome, is addressed to the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic world <sup>4</sup>.

This document enriches and brings to a paroxysm the missionary teaching of the Popes, which we distinguish well from

the social teaching of the Church. And if, as we underline here, this apostolic letter is part of the missionary teaching of the Popes, it is not useless to recall the main principles of this teaching or to say a word about the documents published before *Maximum Illud*.

Speaking of the major principles of the missionary teaching of the Popes, Benedict XV himself inscribed his apostolic letter in the logic of "the propagation of faith throughout the world.<sup>5</sup> » For this he relies on Marc 16:15: "Go out into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all peoples". But let us not forget that this announcement of the Good News, seed of Hope and Faith in the Church, is since Pentecost, in the year of grace 30, the reason for being of the Church, and since the apostolic times it has been employed there with various fortunes. It will not be a question here of retracing the history of the mission, from its beginnings to the present day, but to highlight the aspects that help us to understand the novelty and relevance of *Maximum Illud*.

On January 6, 1622, Pope Gregory XV created a new dicastery in Rome, the Sacred Congregation for the Propaganda of Faith (The Propaganda Fide), charged with undertaking or continuing the evangelization of peoples, now under the direct control of Rome, say of the Pope through the dicastery in question. The creation of this congregation, in one way or another, revoked the missionary patronage granted to the kings of Portugal (for Africa) and Spain (for Latin America). It is in the years following the creation of this dicastery that the missionary teaching of the Popes begins to take shape in the form of instructions, encyclicals or apostolic letters.

Going up the course of history, we discover in 1659 *the Instruction addressed to the apostolic vicars for the Chinese kingdoms of Tonkin and Cochin China*. Through this **Instruction**, the Sacred Congregation warns missionaries against any temptation to **impose** culture or Western mentality on missionaries.

The following passage shows how much attention is paid in Rome to missionary adaptation, both in terms of habits and in the pedagogy of evangelization. :

*« Do not put any zeal, put forward any argument to convince these people to change their rites, their customs and their manners, unless they are obviously contrary to religion and morality»<sup>6</sup>.*

It is in the same vein that the apostolic letter of Pope Leo XIII **Ad Extremas** is in 1893. Beyond the interest in local languages as a channel for evangelization, it is of utmost importance for the future of the mission that indigenous priests be trained, who are better able to carry the message where the missionary cannot enter.

This reminder shows that before the publication of *Maximum Illud*, the missionary teaching of the Popes had already started and constitutes, at the level of the apostolic mission headquarters, the essential concern of the apostolate for the conversion of pagan peoples.

In summary, this teaching recommends:

- the respect of the person to be evangelized;

- respect for the culture of the people who welcome the Good News;
- The formation of an indigenous clergy.

All this is articulated around the paradigm indigenization, problematic node within the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in the nineteenth century.

*Maximum Illud*, published by Pope Benedict XV on November 30, 1919, is therefore part of a tradition: the missionary teaching that comes from Rome, as apostolic see. *Maximum Illud* extends it at the beginning of the 20th century. What makes it new or original?

#### **- Novelty and originality of Maximum Illud Maximum Illud**

It is important to emphasize that the social, historical and ecclesial context in which the apostolic letter of Benedict XV appears is in itself new. We are in the aftermath of the First World War; the laboriously negotiated peace at Versailles, in 1918, still smells beneath the smoking ashes of this first world-wide butchery. The voice of the Pope stifled by the war was expected, especially in missionary circles and countries of mission. The moral wounds and the damage caused by the war that Pope Benedict XV himself described as a "useless massacre" had fueled this expectation. It should be noted that the duration of the war not only weakened missionary activity in the area, but also led to changes that led to the emergence of a form of nationalism prejudicial to the missionary spirit. To support our point, we will give the example of Cameroon.

In Cameroon, evangelization was inaugurated in 1890 by Pallottine missionaries of German and Polish origin. At the end of

the Cameroon campaign of the First World War, in 1916, the Pallottine missionaries were expelled by the French army. It causes a quarrel of missionary succession, from 1916 to 1922. The Pallottines hope to resume their apostolate in Cameroon at the end of the war; the Spiritans, for their part, are supported by France, their mother-country to succeed the Pallottines. Such a situation no longer enables the interests of the Mission to be separated from those of the colonial metropolises where the missionaries originated from. It therefore seems urgent to clarify the stakes of the Mission, at the risk of taking it as hostage by the interplay of colonial interests of Western metropolises. From this point of view, the desirability of publishing the apostolic letter was indisputably obvious.

Moreover, as Pope Benedict XV pointed out, the number of pagans having reached one billion, the missionary conscience was challenged by the urgency and the moral obligation to announce to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Pope writes:

*« As for us, we deplore the lamentable fate of this immense multiple of souls. We long, through the sanctity of Our Apostolic Office, to be able to extend to these souls the benefit of the divine redemption ».*<sup>7</sup>

For this urgent mission to the pagans, a **vade mecum** has prevailed, avoiding the risk of missing the objectives to be reached. The twentieth century, which began with a world conflict, looked different from the nineteenth century. And it was very relevant for the Pope to renew the teaching on the Mission. The goal of this enterprise is, as Yves-Marie Hilaire indicates, to make "missions more catholic" by promoting "unity in diversity".

By putting itself in the continuity of the missionary thought of the Popes, *Maximum Illud* operates a certain number of ruptures. These breaks constitute its originality. The whole text is embedded in an aesthetic of language and style that is appreciated by unfolding the plan of the apostolic letter. After recalling the Church's historical role in the Mission, the Pope draws lessons from it to challenge the missionary conscience on its duty to engage throughout the world, always with more zeal and charity, in a spirit of diversity and complementarity of charisms, which does not forget to associate women and faithful lay for their cooperation and support in this Mission. The Pope expresses himself with images so strong and beautiful, that one has the impression of having to deal with a poet. But what is more interesting here is the innovative ideas that the Pope proposes in his letter.

- It commits the mission leaders to be the soul of their mission through a broad vision of the occupation of space, and especially to open missionary collaboration to other actors who are not their congregation or their country (*banish national or religious exclusivism*); the socio-charitable dimension, as a place of diffusion of the faith, is imperative for the mission: schools, orphanages, hospitals, hospices...
- He insists on the formation of an indigenous clergy equal to that of the Western clergy. « ... *it requires a full, perfect and complete formation in all the branches that it includes, the very one that the priests of civilized countries usually receive.* » The holy vocation of the native clergy is the guarantee of a solid foundation of the missionary Church. And it is here that the Pope expresses his regrets : « *It is regrettable that, in spite of the will of the pontiffs, countries born for centuries to the Catholic faith are deprived of a native clergy, worthy of the name* »



- The Pope recommends the spirit of renunciation to the missionaries not to confuse the interests of their homeland with those of the kingdom of heaven. He insists on this question to the point of calling **a dreadful plague** the missionary's inability to place the interests of the kingdom of heaven above those of his own country. It should be noted that this is the first time that one encounters an expression like **dreadful plague** in the missionary teaching of the Popes.
- The question of the intellectual culture of the missionary, appears for the first time under the pen of Pope Benedict XV. If, as he remarks, some people think that the missionary does not need such a piece of equipment to carry out his work, the Pope asserts without any outline: « ... *For lack of a sufficient intellectual culture, the missionary will often be deprived of precious help for the fruitfulness of his holy ministry.* ». And he keeps going on and recommends as perfect a knowledge as possible of the language of the country to be evangelized by the missionary
- The missionary activity, for the Pope, would not be successful if it lacks the missionary spirituality: **the life of prayer and the love of the interior life**, let us also say, the love of the neighbor.
- - Finally, we must remember that the Pope addresses the question of the resources that the mission needs for its activities. And for the source of these resources, he quotes the Propagation of the Faith, the Holy Childhood, the Work of Saint Peter, the Association of the Clergy for the Missions, without forgetting to appeal to the generosity of the faithful.

In the conclusion of his letter, Pope Benedict XV is very optimistic in giving it the title "*Duc in Altum*" (Lk 5, 4). We note, however, that this apostolic letter on mission remains silent on Africa as mission land. In the introduction, a timid allusion is made to Ethiopia and its first bishop Frumentius. In spite of this,

the analyzed reality does indeed relate to Africa as mission land at this time.

In view of the note of reading that we have just made shorthand, it is difficult not to recognize a certain originality to the apostolic letter of Benedict XV, as well as points of novelty to his teaching. We will now question the Church to know if *Maximum Illud* had a certain echo the days after its publication.

## **2- 2- The echo of *Maximum Illud* in evangelization**

Regarding the echo of *Maximum Illud* in the Church's mission of evangelization, we are going to dwell on the Second Vatican Council and the Synod on the New Evangelization, which are two significant moments in the life of the Church in our days. It is not an exaggeration to note that the publication of *Maximum Illud*, in 1919, increased in itself the ecclesial awareness of the experience of an evangelization in osmosis with the local realities, and thus, in depth of these realities. In any case, this apostolic letter will not leave indifferent either the missionary actors, the countries of mission, or even the missionary theologies of the post-war period.

With regard to the Second Vatican Council, it is important to note that it is the first council in the history of the Church that directly addresses the question of mission.

The reading of the decree on the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, which resulted from it, makes it possible to note that from the bibliographical point of view, *Maximum Illud* appears among its fundamental references, and leads us to see that the Council Vatican II has confirmed certain bold positions that the apostolic letter of Pope Benedict XV had, in his time, advocated: missionary witness on the humanitarian or socio-charitable level (GA, No. 12); the spiritual, moral and intellectual formation of the missionary priests (A.G. No. 25-26); collaboration between different congregations, the involvement of women (Religious) and other apostolic sensibilities (faithful lay), etc....

The *cultural challenge* was taken up again in Vatican II in section 2 of *Gaudium et spes*, No. 57, under the title of *Faith and Culture*. This challenge, evoked here in the plural, is analyzed by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Nos. 68 and 69. Pope Francis writes:

« *The need to evangelize cultures to inculturate the Gospel is compelling* » E.G. n°69.

We must not forget that when Pope Benedict XVI insists on the respect of peoples to be evangelized and the need to learn their language, not in a superficial but thorough way, it is to lay the foundations of inculturation. If the word does not exist at the time, the reality that it covers is old.

For African theology, *Maximum Illud* has opened important perspectives. And we cannot be wrong about the meaning of the words of a Bimwenyi-Kweshi, when he writes:

« *It is in this context and in the light of the pontifical missionary encyclicals that "black priests question" on "the responsibilities of theology" in the face of African cultures and traditions, on "theology and African culture" »<sup>8</sup>.*

*Maximum Illud*, by the rigor of the tone and the relevance of the analysis of the missionary situation at the beginning of the twentieth century, broadened the horizon of comprehension of the universality of the Church which, by promoting an authentic catholicity, must positively assume cultural differences, so that the message of Christ is fully received and deeply lived. It is not surprising that Pope Francis decreed that the month of October 2019 be an extraordinary missionary month. The Pope's decision then highlights the link between *Maximum Illud* and the Church's mission of evangelization today. It is regrettable that this decree of the Pope, at the approach of the centenary of *Maximum Illud*, did not have a resounding echo in certain Churches of Africa, at the height of the vision of Pope Benedict XV concerning the Mission, and in view of the challenges of evangelization of our continent today.

## **CONCLUSION**

*Maximum Illud*, one hundred years later, we are still talking about it. It is a letter that invites Rome to co-construct with the local Churches the vocation of a Catholicism that responds to the major questions of the Christian communities facing the challenges of a globalization that seems to ignore religious values. If *Maximum Illud* did not bring solutions to all the questions related to the evangelization of the world, it did, however, make an analysis that transcends time and space, and that raised the problems that preoccupy our present Church. It remains a source of inspiration that must be rediscovered, read and meditated to invent the new ways in which the spread of the Gospel is likely to reach every man, wherever he is, to be welcomed and lived by to reinvigorate hope and faith in a world where materialism becomes the essential and supreme value. *Maximum Illud* remains an apostolic letter of reference for the Church of our time.

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**AD GENTES: Mission and Missionary Activities at Vatican II and in the Post-Conciliar Documents up to 1968**

**By M. Lamberigts**

1. Introduction

Mission and missionary activities belong to the core of Christianity. People rightly are of the opinion that such topic must be a constant concern for the Churches and that these Churches have clear ideas about their mission and mission activities. In this regard, it is a bit surprising to see that the document on the missionary activities of the Catholic Church, the decree *Ad gentes*, was approved on the last possible day: December 7, 1965<sup>19</sup>. The approved document was the result of a long history of discussion, debate, dispute and the like. It remains amazing that a document, prepared under the guidance of the head of the Propaganda Fide, the curial institution par excellence with regard to the missionary activities, founded in 1622 thus having an expertise of about 340 years, needed so much time in order to result in a more or less satisfying document. Although I do not have a glass ball, I sometimes wonder what would have happened with the Church in case the head of the Propaganda, Gregory Peter Agagianian (1895-1971), born in modern-day Georgian, but living in Rome since 1906 (first as a student, then as a professor), would have been elected as pope in 1958. In any case, in 1958 he was a papabile<sup>20</sup> and a respected representative of the curia. Agagianian would serve as head of the Propaganda till 1970, the year he had to retire. I mention this man because the history of *Ad gentes* was often a history of tensions between him and the Propaganda on the one hand and missionary bishops and the superior generals of the missionary orders and congregations on the other.

In the period before the Council, two important encyclicals had been published: *Maximum illud* (1919), the reason for our meeting today, and *Fidei donum* (1957). Given the fact that the emancipation of the colonized people was underway, these documents showed Rome's growing awareness of the importance of indigenous cultures and the preparation of indigenous clergy, let it be under the conditions as promoted by the Propaganda<sup>21</sup>. In several

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<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, a reader can be surprised about the absence of a concept like mission. To give one example, *missio* never appears in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, a book about the earthly and celestial cities, and a reply to pagan critiques on the fall of Rome.

<sup>20</sup> See P. HEBBLETHWAITE, *Pope John XXIII Shepherd of the Modern World*, Garden City, New York, 1985, pp. 273-284.

<sup>21</sup> See J. BONFILS, *Portée religieuse d'une vie missionnaire*, in *Spiritus* 30 (1967) 146-156.

cases, these conditions were experienced as problematic for not respecting either the projects of missionaries or the expectations of the local population.

## 2. The Preparatory Period

After the announcement of the Council on January 25 1959 and the appointment of the Ante-preparatory Commission on May 17, 1959, bishops, curial congregations, universities and faculties of theology were asked to submit their wishes in Latin, a language with which a good number of people, active in the missionaries, no longer were familiar. Indeed, many missionaries considered Latin as the language of the colonists, suggesting that there was a great discrepancy between what people experienced in local settings and what was considered as commandments of the “center”. As from June 5, 1960 ten preparatory commissions and two secretariats were set up. Cardinal Agagianian became the president of the Preparatory Commission for the Missions, Titular Archbishop David Mathew (1902-1975), a Welsh man, serving the Church first as apostolic delegate to British Eastern Africa (1946-1954) and then as vicar apostolic of the military of Great Britain (1954-1963), became the secretary<sup>22</sup>. The commission was dominated by Europeans (41 out of 54), active in the missions or the missionary work (more than half of them teaching or working at the headquarters of their missionary orders and congregations in Rome)<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, 5 were coming from Northern America, 2 from Central America, 2 (exiled) from China, one from the USSR, Philippines, Australia, Ghana and India respectively. De facto, through their current or previous activities (several bishops had already resigned at that time), all continents were represented, although one had to add that indigenous clergy from the south was poorly represented: 4 people out of 54 (one African, two Chinese, one Indian). 3 out of 4 were, at the time of the preparation, active in Rome. 29% of the commission came from the Curia, most of them from the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith<sup>24</sup>. Because most of the members and many of the consultants were living in Rome, this preparatory commission could work very efficiently for they could easily meet each other on a regular basis. The commission would prepare a text of about 111 pages (7 chapters or schemata). However, the Central Preparatory Commission

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<sup>22</sup> However, it should be said that the real powerful man was S. Paventi, a minutante in the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and a consultant of the Commission for the Religious, a man with a great impact and influence on Agagianian, as will become clear in this article.

<sup>23</sup> See the first hand information as given by S. PAVENTI, *Entstehungsgeschichte des Schemas De activitate missionali Ecclesiae*, in J. SCHÜTTE (ed.), *Mission nach dem Konzil*, Mainz, 1967, pp. 76-77; cf. also J.B. ANDERSON, *A Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery: Ad Gentes I,2-5*, Rome, 1988.

<sup>24</sup> For the details, see J.A. KOMONCHAK, *The Struggle for the Council during the Preparation of Vatican II (1960-1962)*, in G. ALBERIGO-J.A. KOMONCHAK (eds.), *History of Vatican II. Vol. 1. Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II. Toward a new Era in Catholicism*, Maryknoll-Leuven, 1995, p.192.

would only retain chapter one (*De regimine Missionum*) and chapter seven (*De cooperatione missionali*), being of the opinion that other topics such as liturgy or training of the clergy could be better integrated in the texts prepared by other preparatory commissions<sup>25</sup>.

### 3. The Election of the Conciliar Commission *De missionibus*

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<sup>25</sup> Most of the preparatory commissions would prepare a good number of documents that never reached the aula. About 70 documents were prepared by the preparatory commissions, 16 approved by the Council, some not even the result of the preparatory work. Indeed, documents such as *Nostra aetate* or *Dignitatis humanae* and *Gaudium et spes* were results of the Council itself, not of a well prepared process before the Council.

As is known, the opening weeks of the first session offered in many senses great surprises. After the impressive opening speech of John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, the Cardinals Liénart and Frings asked on October 13, 1962 for the postponement of elections of the Conciliar commissions. Thanks to the engagement and commitment of Belgian bishops like De Smedt (bishop of Bruges) and Heuschen (auxiliary bishop of Liège), an international list of candidates was prepared and distributed among the Council fathers<sup>26</sup>. Many, present on this international list, were elected. Moreover, a good number of the members of the preparatory commissions were not elected. This was also the case for the commission on the mission. Indeed, the results of these elections, held on October 16, had, at first sight, dramatic consequences for the composition of the Conciliar Commission *De missionibus*. Only 2 members of the preparatory commission were elected: a Filipino and an Italian. Most of the bishops elected had an indigenous background (9 out of 16) or (had) worked as missionary abroad<sup>27</sup>. Two members of the preparatory commission would be reappointed by the pope, who also appointed archbishop Pietro Sigismondi, secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. In opposition to many other secretaries of congregations, Sigismondi would not play an important role in the work of his commission.

Comparing this Conciliar commission with the preparatory commission, one can really speak of an internationalization. Among the elected members, there was, during the first election of 1962, no superior general of a missionary congregation or order elected by the Council fathers. However, the pope would appoint the superior general of the Oblates, the Canadian Leo Deschâtelets (1899-1974) as a member of the commission, the Oblates being one of the most important missionary congregations.

Mission and missionary activities were not put on the agenda of the Council during this first period. Because of the critique on the Curia, the surprising events of the first session (most schemata were rejected), and the critical attitude towards the Propaganda, no official working session was organized during this session, even although a new Conciliar commission had been elected in October 1962<sup>28</sup>.

#### 4. First Intersession

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<sup>26</sup> L. DECLERCK-M. LAMBERIGTS, *Le rôle de l'épiscopat belge dans l'élection des commissions conciliaires en octobre 1962*, in J. LECLERCQ (éd.), *La raison par quatre chemins. En hommage à Claude Troisfontaines* (Bibliothèque philosophique de Louvain, 73), Louvain-la-Neuve, 2007, 279-306.

<sup>27</sup> See J. GLAZIK, *Von 25 Jahren Missionsdekret "Ad Gentes". Erinnerungen eines Augenzeugen des Konzils*, in *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 74 (1990) 257-274, p. 259.

<sup>28</sup> See P. HÜNERMANN, *Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche*, in P. HÜNERMANN-B.J. HILBERATH (Hrsg.), *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Freiburg-Basel-Vienna, 2005, vol. 4, p. 244.



At the end of the first session and the beginning of the first intersession, vice-president Sartre, French Jesuit, retired archbishop of Tananarive (Madagascar), took the initiative to organize a series of meetings with *periti*, present at Rome. Because the *periti* disagreed on what a text about missions should contain, Agagianian intervened and the decision was made that the two schemata of the preparatory period would be the basis for further discussion. The Dutch Jesuit Ludovicus Buijs, professor of canon law at the Gregorian, member of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, prepared a draft with regard to *De regimine missionum*, while the Oblate Armand Reuter, director general of studies in his congregation, did the same for *De cooperatione missionali*. These two texts, drafted by two members of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, were discussed between March 20 and 29, 1963, discussions in which differences in vision on mission became visible<sup>29</sup>. However, as soon became clear, members of the Commission were dissatisfied and seemingly sent alternative schema's to fathers and this for private use<sup>30</sup>. The only "official" agreement reached was the arrangement of the material of the proposed schema. The text itself would be written by a special editorial commission. This commission first met on April 2, 1963. That day, Paventi, Reuter, both members of the *Propaganda fide*, and N. Kowalsky, an Oblate who served as archivist of the *Propaganda fide*, together with the Bulgarian Giorgio Eldarov, professor at the Pontifical Theological Faculty of St. Bonaventure, met to discuss the schema. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, the *periti* A. Seumois (not to be confused with the White Father X. Seumois), H. Peeters, R. Moya, L. Buijs, D. Grasso, and Msgr. V. Che joined the group. It will be clear that most of these experts were in fact members of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith. Furthermore, several of them had already worked as members of the preparatory commission on the missionary activity of the Church. After some meetings, at the end of April, Father Peeters took care of the final draft of the text, which was sent to the Central Coordination Commission. This commission disapproved the text on July 3, 1963. Indeed, this commission criticized the absence of pastoral and theological dimensions of a schema that not even offered a definition of what mission might mean. While in March the Belgian André Seumois, Oblate, professor of missiology at the Urbaniana, consultor of the Congregation for the Promotion of the faith, expert at the Council, had, in vain, complained about the overemphasis on juridical aspects, this point was taken up again in the Central Coordination Commission. The commission also suggested that the restructuring of the

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<sup>29</sup> See the survey in GROOTAERS, pp. 456ff.

<sup>30</sup> See E. LOUCHEZ, *La Commission de missionibus*, in M. LAMBERIGTS-Cl. SOETENS-J. GROOTAERS (éd.), *Les commissions conciliaires à Vatican II* (Instrument Theologica, 18), Leuven, 1996, pp. 250-277, p. 262 (moet je toch eens controleren).

Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith should be studied in the Commission on Missions, an issue that would never be accepted by the members of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith present in the Commission on Missions<sup>31</sup>.

## 5. Second Session

One had to wait to the second session for the continuation of the discussions about a proposal that was radically rejected by the Coordination Commission. The division between the members of the Commission *De missionibus* was enormous. African bishops, both indigenous and missionaries, attempting to draft a new schema, were blocked. As a result, people like Jean Zoa, bishop of Yaoundé, promoter of an indigenous Church<sup>32</sup>, Riobé, Ungarelli, Sartre and Perrin, helped by the Belgian Dominican B. Olivier, P. Goossens, X. Seumois, G. Martelet and J. Masson, sj, prepared a document in which they presented the African Church as belonging to the young Churches, thus suggesting that they could dialogue with other Churches on a more or less equal basis. However, the bishop of Tainan, a former professor at the Urbaniana, Lokuang, was opposed to this schema because he did not accept that Asia was considered a mission continent, while Africa “ameliorated” its status<sup>33</sup>. As a result, the group Zoa created a team that organized regular meetings in order to prepare themselves against the dominating group from the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in the Conciliar commission on missions<sup>34</sup>. Members of this group criticized the role of the Congregation and explicitly asked to reduce it to financial support<sup>35</sup>.

Things changed after the commissions were extended with five members each, four elected, one appointed by the pope. Indeed, the four members elected and the bishop appointed by the pope were very familiar with work in the missions. They had an Australian, American, Italian, Indian or German background<sup>36</sup>. Especially the appointment of the SVD

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<sup>31</sup> On the critical remarks of the coordination commission, see S. PAVENTI, *Entstehungsgeschichte des Schemas “De activitate Missionali Ecclesiae”*, in J. SCHÜTTE (Hg.), *Mission nach dem Konzil*, Mainz, 1967, 48-81, pp.59ff. HÜNERMANN, *Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche*, p. 244.

<sup>32</sup> M. QUINSKY, *Zoa, Jean*, in M. QUINSKY-P. WALTER (Hg.), *Personenlexikon zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2012, p. 248

<sup>33</sup> LOUCHEZ, *La Commission de missionibus*, pp. 263-264.

<sup>34</sup> See Cl. SOETENS, *L’apport du Congo-Léopoldville (Zaire), du Rwanda et du Burundi au Concile Vatican II*, in É. FOUILLOUX (éd.), *Vatican II commence ... Approches Francophones* (Instrumenta Theologica, 12), Leuven, 1993, pp. 189-208, pp. 204-205.

<sup>35</sup> See GLAZIK, *Vor 25 Jahren Missionsdekret “Ad Gentes”*, p. 259.

<sup>36</sup> I am a bit surprised to read in E. VILLANOVA, *The Intersession (1963-1964)*, in G. ALBERIGO-J.A. KOMONCHAK (eds.), *History of Vatican II. Vol. III. The Mature Council. Second Period and Intersession. September 1963-September 1964*, Maryknoll-Leuven, 2000, pp. 347-490, pp. 390-391, that one of the new members might have been an African. Schütte was German, D’Souza Indian, Comber North American, Dogget Australian, and Cavallera Italian. It remains true that all had expertise in missionary work, but no one was an African.

general, Johannes Schütte, would become decisive. Missionary in China, exiled by the communists in 1952, he had been elected superior-general of his congregation in 1958. His experiences in China had made him sensitive of respect for local cultures and an adequate inculturation<sup>37</sup>.

## 6. Second Intersession and Third Session

After the second session, Paul VI and the Central Coordination Commission had decided to reduce the schemata not yet discussed to a series of propositions<sup>38</sup>. As a result, also the schema on the missions had to be reduced to mere propositions (foreword and 13 theses<sup>39</sup>), entitled *Schema propositionum De activitate missionali Ecclesiae*, a decision that was accepted in the commission but would cause consternation among the Council fathers during the third session for it was evaluated as a skeleton.

But the skeleton would be presented on November 6, 1964 to the Council fathers and this in the presence of the pope. In his speech, the pope praised the skeleton and was convinced that it would be approved. It was clear that the pope, who was very much interested in missionary work, was misinformed. Yves Congar noted in his diary: 'He [the Pope] hopes that the schema will be approved in order to be perfected. (While, as I know, the missionary Superiors have sent a letter demanding that the schema be rejected and replaced by another that they propose)'<sup>40</sup> Henri de Lubac, in his *Carnets*, wrote: 'The pope seems to have advised accepting the schema, all the while saying that it will without doubt be "approved and perfected". ... The pope is made to appear rather like a foreign dignitary making a state visit. That has rather distanced him from the council, conforming with a certain "Roman" ideology that wants the pope to appear always isolated, outside and above the episcopate'.<sup>41</sup> De Lubac is well aware of the drama: the pope was not well informed by his councillors. The distance between the Propaganda and the Council fathers was enormous. Already before the opening of the third session, congregations with a long tradition such as the Picpus-fathers, the

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<sup>37</sup> See M. QUISINSKY, *Schütte, Johannes, SVD*, in M. QUISINSKY-P. WALTER (Hg.), *Personenlexikon zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2012, p. 248.

<sup>38</sup> See HÜNERMANN, *Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche*, p. 245.

<sup>39</sup> For a presentation of these theses, see HÜNERMANN, *Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche*, pp. 245-246.

<sup>40</sup> 'Il (le pape) espère que le schéma sera approuvé pour être perfectionné. (Alors que, je le sais, les Supérieurs missionnaires ont envoyé une lettre demandant que ce schéma soit rejeté et remplacé par un autre qu'ils proposent.)'. CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile*, Vol. II, p. 241.

<sup>41</sup> 'Le pape a semblé à conseiller d'accepter le schéma, tout en disant qu'il aurait sans doute à être 'approfondi et parfait'. (...) On a fait apparaître le pape un peu comme un digne étranger faisant une visite d'apparat. Cela l'a plutôt éloigné du concile, conformément à une certaine idéologie «romaine», qui veut que le pape demeure toujours isolé, en dehors et au-dessus de l'épiscopat.' H. DE LUBAC, *Carnets du Concile* (introduced and annotated by L. FIGOUREUX); Paris, 2007, Vol. II, p. 275.

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the Montfortans, the Scheutist Fathers, and the SVD Fathers had complaint about the poor quality of the schemata proposed and they considered the text presented now as a text without body: *ossa arida*. By coincidence, most of the superior-generals of these orders were Belgians or Dutchmen. Henri Systemans, superior-general of the Picpus-fathers was, like Jozef Van Kerckhoven, superior general of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and Omer Degryse, superior general of the Scheutist-fathers, a Belgian. Leo Völker, superior general of the White Fathers, Corneel Heijligers, superior general of the Montfortans, and Henry Mondé, superior general of the Society of African Missions, were Dutchmen. The Dutchman Ad Van der Weyden, procurator general of the Augustinians, was also member of this group that regularly met during the Council. The animator of the group was Mgr. Tarcisius van Valenberg, former apostolic prefect of Dutch Borneo, at the time of the Council, member of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith<sup>42</sup>. All above mentioned superior-generals, except Degryse, were involved in the work of a committee, called Vriendenkring (circle of friends). These superior generals and many of the bishops belonging to their congregations were of the opinion that the missionary efforts should be given the attention these deserved and that justice should be done to the local situations in which they served<sup>43</sup>.

The Vriendenkring met on a regular basis. People were well aware that even so-called Christian regions now should be characterized as de-Christianized. The superior generals complained about the arbitrariness of the *Propaganda Fide*, an institution that quite a number of African bishops wanted to do away with<sup>44</sup>. The members of the Vriendenkring were also well aware of the fact that the dialogue with other religions and Christian denominations would become a challenge and would definitely urge them to reflect on future missionary work<sup>45</sup>. Already 28 March 1964, the proposals of the superior generals were sent to the commission on the missions<sup>46</sup>, protesting against the reduction of a schema on missions to a

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<sup>42</sup> The fact that van Valenberg as member of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith is taking the lead in an initiative that can be read as an implicit critique on the way in which other members of the Congregation are monopolizing this dossier.

<sup>43</sup> This part of my article is based on M. LAMBERIGTS, *Vatican II, Non-Christian Religions and the Challenges for (New) Evangelization Programmes*, in P. GROGAN-K. KIM (eds.), *The New Evangelization. Faith, People, Context and Practice*, London – New York, 2015, pp. 15-29

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Report of the meeting of 21 February 1964 in the papers of J. Van Kerckhoven, Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Reports of the meetings of 18 February and 19 March 1964 in the papers of J. Van Kerckhoven, Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

<sup>46</sup> A copy is included in the papers of J. Van Kerckhoven, Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

series of propositions<sup>47</sup>. The superior generals' proposal, very biblical in its content<sup>48</sup>, would be sent again to the secretary of the Council, Monsignor Felici. In the accompanying letter, dated 12 October 1964, the superior generals deplored, again, the reduction of the schema to a series of propositions about the Church's missionary activity<sup>49</sup>. In passing I observe that those protesting are not only experts in the domain but also heads of orders and congregations that sent thousands of committed people abroad to spread the Gospel. Their expertise was not yet sufficiently taken into account.

The text proposed on November 6 met with devastating critiques, the one of Donal Lamont, Irish Carmelite, bishop of Umtali (Zimbabwe) being the most famous<sup>50</sup>. The propositions were rejected with 1601 against, and 311 pro. The critics held a plea for the recognition of the Church's diversity. They asked for approaches that respected this diversity. They argued that the text should take into account the common responsibility of the bishops for the whole Church. The text should be an inspiration for a new missionary élan. The needs and expectations of the young Churches should get a place in the schema. Dialogue with local cultures was considered an urgent task, in order to avoid that Christianity was considered as a colonial import product. After such devastating critique, a new sub-commission was composed, consisting of Schütte, Lecuona Labandibar, Zoa, Riobé and Lokuang. Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America thus were represented in a committee that was expected to draft a serious text about missions. In the meeting of November 20, all canon lawyers of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith were excluded. New people were invited to serve as periti: Yves Congar, Joseph Ratzinger, Josef Neuner sj, Xavier Seumois (White Father), Domenico Grasso sj, and Josef Glazik (Missionary of the Sacred Heart). SVD superior general Schütte was president of the sub-commission. As superior general, he knew the

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<sup>47</sup> Letter of Van Valenberg to the superior generals dated 12 May 1964 in the papers of J. Van Kerckhoven, Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

<sup>48</sup> *Acta Synodalia* III, 6, pp. 953-966.

<sup>49</sup> See letter of Van Valenberg dated 3 August 1964 in the papers of J. Van Kerckhoven, Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

<sup>50</sup> See D. LAMONT, *Ad Gentes: a Missionary Bishop Remembers*, in A. STACPOOLE (ed.), *Vatican II by Those Who Were There*, London, 1986, pp. 270-282, p. 274: "We were resolved not to be fobbed off with such a substitute, but to reject it and to make our feelings known in the Aula. (...)". Lamont's plea to reject the propositions received an enormous applause. The testimony of the bishop makes clear that many of the Conciliar networks still need to be studied, Lamont speaking in this context on behalf of the English-Speaking bishops of Southern Africa. This testimony is also relevant for the way in which missionary bishops were evaluating the work in the Curia. People were upset. The critiques as listed in De Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, pp. 279-284 are impressive. Agagianian is accused of searching personal success. The interventions by bishops with a rich tradition of sending people abroad and bishops with an indigenous background make clear that the discrepancy between what the leaders of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith and the periphery experienced was enormous.

superior generals of the Vriendenkring. Several of the experts, involved in the commission *De missionibus* belonged to the congregations mentioned above. Ratzinger and Congar were invited because members of the commissions were convinced that the theological expertise needed to be increased. Congar's candidacy, certainly not well received by Agagianian<sup>51</sup>, was supported by the French bishops Riobé and Sartre<sup>52</sup>. Grasso, initially a defender of the positions of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, had converted to a more open position. Lecuona Labandibar and Lokuang<sup>53</sup> were considered to be defenders of the positions of the Congregation. In passing it must be said that X. Seumoï played an important role as go between: through his superior general he was informed about the wishes of the Vriendenkring and, at the same time, he informed the superior general about the work in this sub-commission<sup>54</sup>.

## 7. The third Intersession

A new scheme was developed. It would take into account the sensitivities with regard to religious liberty and ecumenism, both having an impact on the Catholic self-understanding in the light of changing realities. Seumoï, Leonhard Kaufmann and Glazik visited Congar in Strassbourg on 19-20 December<sup>55</sup>. Congar had already prepared a first draft and presented it to Mgr Riobé and Seumoï in Paris, on December 13. In other words, the committee was very well prepared for the meeting in January 1965. The new redaction committee met in the house of the SVD-fathers in Nemi, about 30 kilometres outside Rome and out of sight of the *Propaganda fide*. Although a series of projects existed, the commission decided to take the text of Congar as point of departure<sup>56</sup>. The new text was five times longer than the *Schema propositionum*. It offered (finally) a definition of what mission is and made a distinction between missions and young Churches. The new text was theologically underpinned, dealt

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<sup>51</sup> See CONGAR, *Mon journal du Concile II*, pp. 286-287; Agagianian seemingly preferred Reuter over Congar, but gave up his resistance after an intervention of Riobé

<sup>52</sup> Mgr Riobé had already asked Congar several times to write the theological part of *De missionibus*; see CONGAR, *Mon journal du Concile II*, p. 259.

<sup>53</sup> On Lokuang, see the devastating judgement of Congar in his diary; *Mon journal du Concile II*, p. 301.

<sup>54</sup> Seumoï will function as the go between between the Vriendenkring and the theologians of Central Africa, Völker being his superior general; see LOUCHEZ, *La commission de missionibus*, p. 269. Seumoï was one of the most vehement defenders of Congar's participation in the work of the commission and he even threatened to leave the commission if Congar was not accepted as member; see CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile II*, p. 286: "Le P. Seumoï, qui était prêt à rester à Rome pour ce travail, dit que, si je suis exclu, lui se retire."

<sup>55</sup> See Y. CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile II*, p. 292; GLAZIK, *Von 25 Jahren Missionsdekret "Ad Gentes"*, p. 264.

<sup>56</sup> CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile II*, p. 300.

with the urgent need to evangelize, took into account the so much requested pastoral aspect and dared to present a plan for the reorganisation of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith<sup>57</sup>. The committee did its utmost best to relate the decree on the missionary activity of the Church to the approved document *Lumen gentium*. Progress was made. This text was discussed by the commission *De missionibus* from 29 March to 3 April 1965, but meanwhile Seumois alarmed Congar about changes in the text, made in favour of the Propaganda's position<sup>58</sup>. Needless to say that drafters of former texts such as A. Seumois and L. Buijs were not happy with the text and in fact wanted it to be rejected<sup>59</sup>. However, they were often isolated, among others by the interventions of Lokuang, which were quite often contra-productive. Congar, in many senses the drafter of the theological part of the schema, was very much supported by Joseph Ratzinger<sup>60</sup>. Finally, the schema was approved unanimously by the commission and met the expectations of the Vriendenkring. The text was sent to the Council fathers in June, 1965.

Meanwhile, the schema was promoted; missionary bishops were contacted<sup>61</sup>. Sincere collaboration and networking became key words<sup>62</sup>. In passing, lobbying was done by all, whether they belonged to a minority or a majority.<sup>63</sup> It all happened under the radar, for the *Propaganda* did not like such 'conspiracies'<sup>64</sup>.

### *An Intermezzo: Networking for the Benefit of the Missions*

The Vriendenkring had contacts with father Schütte. The mentor of the Vriendenkring had already asked in a letter of 17 January 1965 to closely collaborate with each other and to

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<sup>57</sup> The text remained an occidental tekst; see A. BOLAND, *Évolution du schéma sur l'activité missionnaire*, in *Église vivante* 18 (1966) 21-36, pp. 26-27.

<sup>58</sup> LOUCHEZ, *La commission De missionibus*, p. 271.

<sup>59</sup> See CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile II*, p. 349.

<sup>60</sup> CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile II*, pp. 355: "C'est Mgr Lokuang qui est encore le plus présent et le meilleur. Parfois, il fait taire A. Seumois (...); Heureusement qu'il y a Ratzinger. Il est raisonnable, modeste, désintéressé, d'un bon secours."

<sup>61</sup> Letter of Van Valenberg to the members of the Vriendenkring dated 29 April 1965 in the papers of J. Van Kerckhoven, Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

<sup>62</sup> For the details see the letters of van Valenberg of 20 February 20 and 27 March 1965 in the papers of J. Van Kerckhoven, Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

<sup>63</sup> With regard to the minority, see, e.g., Ph. J. ROY, *Le Coetus internationalis patrum, un groupe d'opposants au sein du Concile Vatican II* (Université Laval, 2011; unpublished dissertation); cf. also the letters of Mgr D. Staffa to several superior generals and *periti*, as preserved in the Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

<sup>64</sup> See the letter of Van Valenberg, 27 March 1965 in the Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven.

influence the missionary bishops belonging to religious orders and congregations<sup>65</sup>. Schütte knew that he needed the support of the Vriendenkring and sent the draft of January<sup>66</sup>. He invited them to the SVD house in Nemi in the middle of February<sup>67</sup>. During a meeting in the generalate of the Montfortans on February 19, they discussed the expansion of their “local” network<sup>68</sup>. They thought of Schütte (because of his central role), but also of Degrijse, superior general of the Scheutists and of the superior general of the Capuchins, the Dutchman Clementinus van Vlissingen (Johannes Schutijser, born in the Netherlands). These superiors, very much convinced of the importance of missions and of the challenges waiting, took care to have a low profile. They did not want to irritate the Propaganda<sup>69</sup>, nor becoming dependent on it, for the president of Propaganda (and thus an important mecenas) was also the president of the Commission *De missionibus*.

The relation between Schütte and the Vriendenkring resulted in the fact that Schütte sent the approved version of March to the Vriendenkring at the end of March. A discussion took place on July 8, 1965 and this in the presence of the superior general of the Capuchins<sup>70</sup>. The superior generals searched for a broadening of the support for the new text and were thinking of French and Dutch superior generals like Calmels of the Norbertines and van Hees of the Holy Cross Fathers, but also of Arupe of the Jesuits and Deschâtelets of the Oblates. When the Carmelite Melsen became procurator of his order, he was invited, for he was in favor of the missions, dixit van Valenberg<sup>71</sup>. Knowing that in the “speakers-ranking”, superior generals seldom got the opportunity to speech, they started looking for big guns in order to defend their case<sup>72</sup>, the following names being suggested: cardinal Alfrink, archbishop of Utrecht, the Netherlands being one of the most important countries which regard to missions and missionary activities, Mgr. Garonne, involved in the redaction of

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<sup>65</sup> Van Valenberg to the members of the *Vriendenkring* in a letter of 29 April 1965. With regard to the letter, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>66</sup> For this letter, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>67</sup> With regard to this letter, see papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>68</sup> See the letters of van Valenberg, dd. 20 Februari 1965 and 27 March (Papers Van Kerckhoven, Centre maart 1965; with regard to the letters, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>69</sup> See the letter of van Valenberg March 27; see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>70</sup> Letter of van Valenberg van 17 mei 1965; with regard to the letter, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>71</sup> Letter of van Valenberg van 5 juli 1965; with regard to the letter, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>72</sup> Letter of van Valenberg van 29 april 1965; with regard to the letter, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).



documents such as *Dei Verbum*, *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*, Cardinals Frings and Duval, Laurean Rugambwa, the first African cardinal, and Mgr. De Smedt of Bruges, a gifted speaker<sup>73</sup>. The reports make clear that the superior generals of these missionary congregations want to be well prepared<sup>74</sup>, and as from July they reflect how to approach the generals and the episcopal conferences<sup>75</sup>. In sum, these people were very committed, mindful of the Church's mission as described in *Ad gentes* 2: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father." The story of the Vriendenkring makes clear that congregations and orders daily engaged in service to local Churches expected their own *aggiornamento* in a period of decolonization. They were aware of the new challenges for missionary activities, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue being underway.

#### 8. The fourth Session

The fourth session started with an incident. At the meeting of the Commission *De missionibus*, September 18, 1965, secretary Paventi announced that he, together with Kowalski and Peeters had prepared a new numbering of the schema. Furthermore, members of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith such as Agagianian and former members like Lokuang wanted changes in the text and Schütte accepted them in order to save the text as such<sup>76</sup>.

The schema was discussed *in plenum* as from 7 to 13 October. The text was much better than the schema of propositions of the previous session<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, people appreciated that the theological part was well elaborated (work of Congar and Ratzinger), focusing on the Church's vocation to spread the Gospel. People were of the opinion that the announcement of the Gospel would be an adequate antidote to the growing materialism in the world<sup>78</sup>. But the Council fathers still made objections, first and foremost with regard to the dominant role of the *Congregatio de propaganda fide*. The critics were of the opinion that the schema did not really discuss the missionary situation of the Church in, e.g., France, France being a *pays de mission* (Godin, 1943). Speakers deplored that *Lumen gentium* was not made sufficiently visible in this schema, especially with regard to the collective responsibility of the people of God with regard

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<sup>73</sup> Letter of van Valenberg van 18 juni 1965; with regard to the letter, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. the report of this meeting of 24 June 1965; see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

<sup>75</sup> Letter of van Valenberg van 5 juli 1965; with regard to the letter, see the papers Van Kerckhoven (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KU Leuven).

to missionary activities<sup>79</sup>. Several interventions protested against the idea that the hierarchy alone might be the final responsible for missionary activity. Clear critique was formulated about the poor phrasing with regard to interreligious dialogue, and the absence of the ecumenical spirit in a document that so much had to do with evangelisation by all Christian denominations<sup>80</sup>.

The comments also had to do with the future of the missionaries as such. Speakers mentioned the vocation crisis in Western-Europe: the number of missionary vocations was decreasing. Fathers asked the question whether the first task of a missionary was preaching or investing in solutions for local economic problems. In this regard, one should not forget that many dioceses in the South were financially very much supported by the congregations and orders in the northern hemisphere. And yes, how to reconcile missionary activities and freedom of religion? Furthermore, was the schema not all too Occidental, and thus did not speak enough about inculturation of the Gospel in the young Churches? The growing awareness of the values as present in other religions deserved more attention and better phrasing (cf. *Nostra aetate*).

But all in all, the schema was well received. To speed up things, bishop Riobé of Orleans proposed to organize a meeting of the presidents of the five sub-commissions and some periti in Nemi from 19 to 21 October<sup>81</sup>. It was a huge work, for about 193 remarks and proposals (about 555 pages) for change had been proposed<sup>82</sup>. In the commission, the discussion about the *modi* finally reopened the sensitivities, for people like A. Seumois – Seumois proved to be rather inflexible - wanted to broaden the concept mission, thus also including mission amongst the Christian faithful<sup>83</sup>. The idea was finally rejected<sup>84</sup>. The Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith had an important say in the commission on the

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<sup>76</sup> For the details, see GLAZIK, *Von 25 Jahren Missionsdekret "Ad Gentes"*, pp. 269-270. To the benefit of father Schütte, it must be said that he succeeded in holding all positions together.

<sup>77</sup> See the positive observations in AS IV,4,3, pp. 708ff. Appreciation is expressed by both bishops of the Northern and Southern hemisphere, an indication that the text met the expectations of both parts of the world.

<sup>78</sup> AS IV,4,3, pp. 208-212; see also A. WENGER, *Vatican II. Chronique de la Quatrième Session*, Paris, 1966, p. 293.

<sup>79</sup> On the somewhat complex relation between these documents, see P. DE MEY, *Sharing in the Threefold Office of Christ, a Different Matter for Laity and Priests? The Tria Munera in Lumen Gentium, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Apostolicam Actuositatem and Ad Gentes*, in A.C. MAYER (ed.), *The Letter and the Spirit. On the Forgotten Documents of Vatican II* (BETL, 297), Leuven-Paris-Bristol, 2018, 155-179.

<sup>80</sup> However, a good number of the interveners were of the opinion that the proposal was too progressive. They were of the opinion that it endangered the Church's task to develop missionary activities.

<sup>81</sup> ANDERSON, *A Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery*, pp. 177-178. The periti present were Congar, Ratzinger, Neuner and X. Seumois, Glazik, Moya, Buijs, Greco, Grasso and Eldarov.

<sup>82</sup> See the remarks of Schütte in AS IV,4,6, p. 261.

<sup>83</sup> PAVENTI, *Entstehungsgeschichte des Schemas De activitate missionali Ecclesiae*, p. 70-71.

<sup>84</sup> For the details, see ANDERSON, *A Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery*, p. 183.

missions. Neither Paventi<sup>85</sup>, who had not been involved in the activities in Nemi<sup>86</sup>, nor Agagianian wanted to accept any change with regard to the territorial concept of the missions. But other members, in the past opposed to concepts such as young Churches, “converted” and became promoters of the idea, Lokuang being one of them. However, the machinery of the Propaganda was able to re-introduce the territorial concept about mission before the final vote in December.

On 10 and 11 November, the Council voted about the treatment of the *modi* by the commission<sup>87</sup>. Schütte presented to the fathers the work of the commission. In his presentation, Schütte mentioned the following changes in the text: the theological reflection was better elaborated; the term mission area was better explained. People in the missions are treated as subjects, not as objects. Schütte discussed the sometimes difficult relation between the diocesan bishops and the religious orders and congregations.

Generally speaking, the Council fathers were satisfied by the work of the commission, even although several of them deplored that the commission had not taken into account the wish of many fathers to limit the dominant role of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith and to give the bishops a clear and deliberative vote in the decisions of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith<sup>88</sup>. Chapter 5, discussing this issue, would not receive the 2/3 majority and this chapter was thus sent back to the commission. Between November 12 and 26, the commission was involved in the evaluation of the *modi* as submitted, a time consuming work<sup>89</sup>. In general, the work was appreciated by the Council fathers and most of the chapters received an overwhelming majority. That the Congregation was a problem, became clear in the *relatio* of 30 November: 461 fathers had asked to reorganize the Congregation. Given the important presence of the Congregation in the Commission on the Missions, the reworked text was rather half-hearted and 54 fathers voted, again, against the text. However, the chapter was much better than what was presented in previous sessions. The schema as a whole only received 18 *non placets* out of 2182 votes.

In fact, at the end of the day, the decree was approved on December 7, 1965. It got an overwhelming approval: only 5 people voted against it.

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<sup>85</sup> On the amazingly dominant role of Paventi, see ANDERSON, *A Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>86</sup> PAVENTI, *Entstehungsgeschichte des Schemas De activitate missionali Ecclesiae*, p. 69.

<sup>87</sup> For the details, see ANDERSON, *A Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery*, pp. 187-190.

<sup>88</sup> ANDERSON, *A Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery*, pp. 190-191. With regard to the constantly inhibiting role of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith, see the information as given by father Greco to Congar; CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile*, pp. 472-473.

<sup>89</sup> See CONGAR, *Mon Journal du Concile*, p. 472.

## 9. A Presentation of the Text

The decree approved consisted of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion, the text being divided in 42 paragraphs. Chapter 1 (paragraphs 2-9) discussed the doctrinal principles, chapter 2 (paragraphs 10-18) the missionary work as such. In chapter 3 (paragraphs 19-22), the focus was on the particular Churches, while chapter 4 (paragraphs 23-27) paid attention to the missionaries and their profile. Chapter 5 (paragraphs 28-34) dealt with the organization of missionary activity and chapter 6 (paragraphs 35-41) stressed the importance of collaboration between all members of the people of God. A short conclusion followed.

*Ad gentes* (AG) is, partly because of the difficult peripeties up to the fourth sessions, a document that fully embedded the Conciliar spirit of *aggiornamento* and mission and this in line with *Lumen gentium*, a constitution *Ad Gentes* constantly refers to or quotes from. Mission is an essential dimension and challenge of the whole Church (AG 29; 35-37). Mission is a task of the people of God. The Church is in essence a pilgrim Church and as pilgrims we are trying to fulfill the mission of Jesus, the holy Spirit, in accordance with the plan of the Father (AG 2). For Christians, the incarnated Christ is the reference point: his life, death, resurrection and the assignment he gave his pupils are and must be the constant reference point for all efforts we made to announce the good news to the world (cf. AG 3). Christ as mediator is the safe beacon for the people of God on its way to its destiny as intended by God<sup>90</sup>. AG 1-9, elaborated in light of LG 17, makes clear that Christ is the center of our mission. Christ entered into our history. Christians are called to make his service to the world visible. Missionary activity is, in the post-colonial context, characterized by love and humility, no longer by power and glory. Vatican II has made clear that the preaching of the gospel is not to be reduced to the Western hegemony as often was the case. Indeed, if we do believe that Christ announces salvation to all people, we have to accept that such announcement respects the cultural, social, religious context within which his message should be interpreted. Mission today must be *multiform*.

Mission is about announcement of the Gospel. It is a way of living. It is respect for local cultures. It is appeal to constant personal conversion. Indeed, mission has to do with the individual, the community, the internal life of the Church and the Church in its dialogue with the world. AG 6 states that the conditions in which mission is carried out, must be taken into

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<sup>90</sup> On Christ's central role as mediator, see also AG 7.

account (AG 6). Mission in its true sense is not a business model with a CEO who makes clear which targets have to be realized. The announcement of the gospel is characterized by invitation, dialogue, search: Jesus Christ is, time and again, to be rediscovered by all, faithful and not yet faithful. This view is less evident than one might think: this view takes into account the important role of the local Churches. The document is clear about the fact that the mission of the Church is urgent and necessary, directed to humanity as a whole, and must be done in the way Christ did it. Christian communities should be formed in such a way that they may be able to provide for its own needs (AG 15). These communities are communities of faithful, possessing the cultural riches of their own nation and must be deeply rooted in the people. Explicitly referring to the decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, the document states: “Furthermore, let charity between Catholics of different rites shine out” (AG 15). The preaching of the gospel should be done in an ecumenical spirit: “Catholics collaborate in a spirit of fellowship with their separated brothers and sisters” (AG 15). The chapters 15-18 should be read as a recognition of the valuable role of local Churches in the process of evangelization: indigenous priests, catechists, religious are the best interpreters of local cultures (AG 16-18). In the context of the Church as people of God, this has an enormous consequence: local Churches constitute and contribute to the Church as *catholica* (all over the world), the peripheries influencing and determining the agenda of the center.

The third chapter is focusing on the particular Churches. The missionary countries are not object but subject of announcement (AG 20). Inculturation and adaptation were, are, and will become not “afterwards” conclusions, but preceding challenges (cf. AG 22). Indeed, the local Churches must not just be present in a territory, they must also permeate a society in all its social and cultural parts. The announcers of the Gospel should be aware of it: “In order that this missionary work of a particular Church may be accomplished, it is necessary to have suitable ministers, who should be prepared in due time and in a way that is appropriate to the circumstances of each Church” (AG 20). Local Churches “should share as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church” (AG 20). Discovering Christ’s message is both an exercise of service to the local and the universal Church<sup>91</sup>.

Chapter four describes the profile of these missionaries, who “are sealed with a special vocation (...) prepared to undertake missionary work, whether they are natives or foreigners, priests, religious, lay people. Sent by legitimate authority, they go out in faith and obedience

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<sup>91</sup> In this regard, I deplore the fact that there is so much emphasis on the centre’s government of the periphery while the periphery’s desires and expectations are seldom taken into account by the center.

to those who are far from Christ (...)” (AG 23). The point is not who will do the missionary work but who does not (yet) know Christ. Missionaries are ambassadors of Christ (AG 24), in a special way prepared for this work that must be done with an open mind and a large heart (AG 25).

Chapter five discussed the organization of the missionary activity. The chapter was, since the extension of the commission in 1964, intended as a kind of guideline for a fundamental reform of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith. However, this ambition failed. And in AG 29 it was explicitly said that for all missions and all missionary activity there should be only one competent congregation, the *Propaganda fide*, by which both missionary activity and cooperation should be directed and coordinated all over the world. However, the text also states that the rights of the eastern Churches must be respected and explicitly invites the Propaganda to work together with the Secretariat for the Promotion of the Christian Unity in order to develop cooperation with the other denominations, a new approach, especially when one takes into account the many pre-conciliar rivalries between Catholics and protestants.

In chapter six, the decree repeats that mission is the responsibility of all faithful: “Since the entire Church is missionary and the spreading of the gospel is a fundamental duty of the people of God, this synod invites everyone to a profound interior renewal (...)” (AG 35). Mission thus is not something that is done “for the other”, but it also has an impact on faithful’s personal life. Further, all must have “lively awareness of their responsibility for the world” (AG 36).

The decree makes clear that the essential point of the Church’s missionary activity is not the expansion of the Church, but the service to the world. In this regard, one should read AG also in relation to GS, LG, and NA. As one commentator said, God saves, not the religions. Religions are ways leading to God (NA 2). This is also true for the Church: she announces the kingdom of God, she is not the kingdom of God (cf. LG 48-51)<sup>92</sup>.

#### 10. The First Reception (1965-1968)

Despite a series of omissions, the decree was well received both in the Catholic world and among other Christian denominations<sup>93</sup>. With the *Motu proprio Finis Concilio* (3 January

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<sup>92</sup> É. MANHAEGHE, *Le décret Ad gentes. Début d’une nouvelle ère missionnaire*, in C. FOCANT (éd.), *L’Église catholique a-t-elle donné sa chance au Concile Vatican II? Analyses et perspectives* (Cahiers de la Revue théologique de Louvain, 41), Leuven-Paris-Bristol, 2016, pp. 231-260, p. 238.

1966), the pope announced among others, a post-conciliar commission for the mission. This commission first met in Rome on March 7, 1966.

Its ideas were complemented by Paul VI in the encyclical *Populorum progressio* (1967) and the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975), while evangelization today became the subject of the synod of 1974. Surely, the missionary activities were very much challenged by the promotion of interreligious dialogue, and a document *Dialogue and mission* (1984) was needed to clarify the relation between the two, but the sometimes critical reactions on Assisi (1986) made clear that some Catholics still had problems with the interreligious dialogue<sup>94</sup>. An encyclical, *Redemptoris missio* (1990), and a document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and proclamation* (1991) attempted to describe the precise relation between interreligious dialogue and the announcement of the gospel, a joy for Christians, as pope Francis made clear in *Evangelii gaudium* (2013)<sup>95</sup>. However, concrete and adequate implementation of such relation will remain a huge challenge in the years to come.

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<sup>93</sup> See MANHAEGHE, *Le décret Ad gentes. Début d'une nouvelle ère missionnaire*, pp. 239ff.; 244-246.

<sup>94</sup> MANHAEGHE, *Le décret Ad gentes. Début d'une nouvelle ère missionnaire*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>95</sup> With regard to the challenges of mission in the context of today, see MANHAEGHE, *Le décret Ad gentes. Début d'une nouvelle ère missionnaire*, pp. 246-259.

# A Vision for Christian Mission: Engaging the Missiological Significance of *Maximum Illud*

Robert Aaron Wessman

## Introduction

Christian mission is informed by, and emerges out of, diverse missiological visions. Just as any particular vision for mission has the potential to illuminate the complex reality of the Church's mission, it can also be misleading, limiting or even misdirecting Christians who engage in mission. What is necessary in engaging the missiological significance of Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud* is analyzing the document's particular vision for mission, so as to highlight various strengths and weaknesses contained therein. The purpose of this presentation is to begin to accomplish this task.

I will proceed by bringing the document's vision for mission into dialogue with aspects of certain conciliar and post-conciliar theological visions for mission. This dialogue will be followed by proposing how the vision contained in *Maximum Illud* can be enriched by some of the missiological reflections of the last century. This is not to suggest that the missiological visions entertained in the contemporary period are superior in all ways to Benedict's vision.<sup>96</sup> However, utilizing this method can begin to illuminate the possibilities, and the potential pitfalls, any vision for mission, including that found in *Maximum Illud*, can provide for the Church. As will be argued, though *Maximum Illud* provides an insightful vision for mission, particularly as this vision arose in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are certain limitations within the document's vision for mission that become apparent when juxtaposed with missiological developments of the past century.

As time limits this presentation, I will only be able to focus on four essential theological considerations contained within a missiological vision. These are: 1) The foundations of mission; 2) An understanding of the 'world'; 3) The goals or aims of mission; and 4) The people who are understood to be responsible for carrying out the Church's mission.

## 1. The Foundations of Mission

For Benedict, the mandate of Christ is given priority as a foundation of mission: Christ, particularly as recorded in Mark's gospel, commands his disciples to engage in mission.<sup>97</sup> The Church, accordingly, throughout the ages, responds to, and echoes, this command.

There is an attractive simplicity to this foundation of the Church's mission. Certainly, throughout the Church's history, obedience to the mandate of Jesus has motivated people to engage in heroic acts of mission.<sup>98</sup> Benedict XV highlights many of these historical responses in his document.<sup>99</sup> Other missionaries, in light of Benedict's document, responded to his own reiteration of Jesus' command, particularly as this command was framed within the context of the near-collapse of European missionary efforts after the carnage of World War I.<sup>100</sup> In the contemporary period, as the

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<sup>96</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century mission theology, see Robert Aaron Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants? Revisiting *Ad Gentes* and Contemporary Debates in Mission Theology in Light of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Pre-Conciliar Theology of Mission," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (2018): 128-148.

<sup>97</sup> *Maximum Illud* (MI), no. 1. For more on the importance of the mandate of Christ as a foundation of the Church's mission, see Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders," 130-134.

<sup>98</sup> See Stephan B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004).

<sup>99</sup> MI, nos. 2-5.

<sup>100</sup> See Stephan B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 239-251. See MI, no. 41.



Church has sought to navigate the turbulent post-conciliar context, the mandate of Christ continues to inform a vision of mission: from its inclusion in the documents of Vatican II, to its presence in the thought of Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, among others.<sup>101</sup>

What emerges, however, in the conciliar and post-conciliar period, is a more-robust Trinitarian foundation of the Church's mission.<sup>102</sup> This foundation highlights that the mission of the Church flows from the very life of the Trinitarian Persons. As *Ad Gentes* famously states: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father."<sup>103</sup> In other words, *communio*, that is, the communion that exists between the Trinitarian persons gives way to *missio*, where those same Trinitarian persons sustain, and draw, all of creation into communion with them. Once participating in the *communio* of the Trinitarian persons, Christians, likewise, are invited to participate in their *missio*.<sup>104</sup>

### **Enriching the Vision of *Maximum Illud*: Foundations of Mission**

How might a more-thoroughly Trinitarian articulation of mission enrich *Maximum Illud*'s vision for mission? I would like to suggest two possible ways.

#### **Moving from Obedience to Love**

First, highlighting the Trinitarian foundation of mission can safeguard reducing a Christian's missionary response to one of obedience, thereby more likely making possible a response of love.

Certainly, obedience, as a theological response to Christ and the Church, continues to motivate and form the life of the Church, especially as obedience is viewed as an evangelical counsel.<sup>105</sup> However, obedience to the Church as such, even when she communicates Christ's own words, can possibly fail to motivate the Church to sufficient action, or moral response. This can especially be the case when the sinfulness of the members of the Church—especially the hierarchical Church—emerges as a dominant discourse, and reality, for Christians. A Christian might ponder, for instance: Why should I sacrifice for the Church's mission if her very leaders cannot live the message they proclaim? It seems that a more intimate, integral motivation is required, particularly in light of scandal or persecution.

What is more, though obedience is a worthy response in the Christian life, the ultimate goal of a Christian is growth in the theological virtue of love.<sup>106</sup> Love, as St. Paul reminds us, is what will remain. Love is that for which a Christian directs her entire existence. Love, therefore, should be the ultimate motivation, and end, of the Church's mission.

Supplementing the mandate of Christ with a more thoroughly Trinitarian articulation of mission allows for the possibility of highlighting the central role that love plays in the mission of the

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<sup>101</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN)*, no. 13; *Evangelii Gaudium (EG)*, no. 19; *Redemptoris Missio (RM)*, no. 63; Pope Benedict XVI, "Message of His Holiness for World Mission Day."

<sup>102</sup> See Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders," 130-134.

<sup>103</sup> *Ad Gentes (AG)*, no. 2.

<sup>104</sup> On this point, see Andrew Meszaros, "The Thomistic Underpinnings of *Ad Gentes*," *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 13, no. 3 (2015): 875-901. See, also, Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders," 134.

<sup>105</sup> On the nature of the 'evangelical counsels,' see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983). Indeed, in *MI*, Benedict XV seeks to motivate the Church to mission by highlighting the importance of 'duty,' and 'obedience.' He is less concerned with drawing upon Christian love as a motivating factor in mission. See *MI*, no. 1.

<sup>106</sup> On the theological virtues, see Joseph Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Ignatius: San Francisco, 1997).

Church. Seen through the lens of the Trinity, mission is a loving response to God's Trinitarian outpouring of love: the love which motivated God to create and recreate the world, the love which motivated the Father to send the Son, the Son's love of the Father and his will, or the Spirit's activity which seeks to accomplish the Father's plan of love. Much more than a simple, yet still important, reliance upon obedience to a mandate, a Trinitarian foundation of mission recalls that one's engagement in mission, ideally, flows from a loving response to God in Christ through the Spirit, which is cultivated in the Church, and directed towards the world. This love is only possible because God's communion of love has been shared with the world through the mission of the Trinitarian persons.<sup>107</sup>

### **Mission as a Response to a Trinitarian God**

The second way recourse to a Trinitarian foundation of mission enhances a vision for mission is that it does not reduce one's missionary response to a response solely to Christ, but allows for one's response to mission to be Trinitarian in nature.

Certainly, Christians, in their mission, respond to the entire reality of the Incarnation. This Christocentric missionary response is notably detailed by Benedict in his document.<sup>108</sup> So, for instance, when Christians seek to live the Beatitudes, or when they seek to imitate Jesus' sacrificial way of being, they embody a missionary response to Christ's own words, and his very life. Responding to his mandate to go to the nations is a similar kind of response. Yet Christian mission is not just a response to Christ, it is a response to the entire reality of the Trinity.<sup>109</sup>

God's action in the world, through the persons of the Trinity, is multifarious and diverse. This ranges from God the Father's creation of the world, God's ordering of human beings to desire unity with God, God's calling of the prophets to unite a chosen people, the action of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation, the passion willingly endured by Jesus, the way in which the Spirit continues to draw all people to God, or the way in which the Spirit inspires the Church to mission. The *Missio Dei*, properly speaking, is a Trinitarian reality.<sup>110</sup> The Church's response to this mission is a response to the creative, diverse, and abundant mission of the Trinitarian Persons. Highlighting the Trinitarian foundation of mission more-adequately informs, safeguards the Church's understanding of, and emphasizes, the reality that a Christian's response to mission is a response to the entire life, and economy, of the Trinity.

Appropriately highlighting a trinitarian foundation of mission can also influence the Church's vision of the world. It is the particular vision of the world as contained in Benedict XV's missiological vision that is the topic of the next section.

## **2. A Theological Understanding of the World**

The theological concept of the world is by no means univocal.<sup>111</sup> For clarity, the 'world,' which this presentation is concerned, is the 'world' of non-Christians. While engaging in mission, Christians, whether implicitly or explicitly, maintain a particular vision of the non-Christian people they encounter in their missionary activity, including the cultures associated with these people. This vision is important, because it likely influences how Christians respond to non-Christians, what they

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<sup>107</sup> See 1 John 4:19.

<sup>108</sup> *MI*, no. 28.

<sup>109</sup> On this point, see Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders," 132. See, also, Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 249-251.

<sup>110</sup> On this point, see Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (IVP Academic: Downers Grove, 2006).

<sup>111</sup> On this point, see William T. Cavanaugh, *Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 36-42.

assume about non-Christians and their cultures, and what they desire for non-Christians whom they encounter.

It might be an understatement to say that Benedict XV's vision of non-Christians, as contained in *Maximum Illud*, is a bleak one.<sup>112</sup> He refers to non-Christians as "infidels" and "unfortunates," as a "pitiable lot," and as "wild and barbarous."<sup>113</sup> They are people subjected "to the powers of darkness" who "dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death," and whose souls are "hurtling to destruction."<sup>114</sup> Indeed, very little consideration is given to the potential virtues of non-Christians, the potential wisdom contained within their own traditions, the way in which non-Christians can be understood in light of the history of salvation, or the multitudinous ways in which God is preparing non-Christians for the reception of the gospel.

The most generous statement found in the document regarding non-Christians is that God can work in their "hearts and illumine their minds with the radiance of truth; only God can enkindle their wills with the spark of virtue; only God can give them the strength to pursue the truth and do the good they have seen."<sup>115</sup> Yet recognition of this activity of God is mentioned in the document more as a way to remind Christian missionaries of their reliance upon God's intervention, and less as a way to highlight the positive aspects of non-Christians, or the cultures associated with them.

Reflecting on the contemporary period, it is evident that the theological and soteriological status of non-Christians continues to inspire debates in missiology. On the one hand, certain conciliar and post-conciliar thought has echoed some of the language of *Maximum Illud*, which reinforces the possible precarious situation of the non-Christian world, while highlighting the way in which the Church is the 'universal sacrament of salvation,' offering grace and salvation to the world.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, some visions for mission have downplayed the importance of the Church, along with life in Christ, for the salvation of all people.<sup>117</sup> Debates have ensued where questions arise as to whether or not the Church should still be concerned about the soteriological status of non-Christians.<sup>118</sup>

With all of this being stated, what emerges as a dominant theme in conciliar and post-conciliar visions for mission is an effort to emphasize the ways in which virtues can be present in, grace can operate within, or the presence of God can be manifest, in the lives of non-Christians, or the ways in which truth and goodness can be found in various elements in many of the religious and philosophical systems they espouse. Indeed, referring to the previous section, a more robust Trinitarian vision for mission has facilitated a more in-depth reflection upon the ways in which God operates in the world, particularly in the lives of non-Christians, and in aspects of the religious systems they espouse.<sup>119</sup> Though this debate is far from settled, recognition of the persons of the Trinity, at work in ways not obviously related to the Church, though still connected to the Church, is a marker of mission-vision in the contemporary period.

## Enriching the Vision of *Maximum Illud*: The Non-Christian World

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<sup>112</sup> For more on this point, especially how many pre-conciliar missiological visions contained a 'bleak' conception of the existence of non-Christians, see Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders," 142-147.

<sup>113</sup> *MI*, nos. 7, 12 19.

<sup>114</sup> *MI*, nos. 4, 6, 18.

<sup>115</sup> *MI*, no. 29.

<sup>116</sup> For a summary of some of these 'visions,' see Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders," 142-147.

<sup>117</sup> On this point, see Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders," 138. See, also, Stephen B. Bevans, "Revisiting Mission at Vatican II: Theology and Practice for Today's Missionary Church," *Theological Studies* 74, no. 2 (2013): 261-283.

<sup>118</sup> Ralph Martin provides an insightful analysis into this problem. See *Will Many be Saved: What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

<sup>119</sup> For a helpful overview of this debate, see Terrence Merrigan, "Saving the Particular: Incarnation and the Mediation of Salvation in the Theology of Religions," in *Orthodoxy: Process and Product* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 299-332. See also, Terrence Merrigan, "'For Us and for Our Salvation: The Notion of Salvation in History in the Contemporary Theology of Religions," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64 (1999): 339-348.

How does a more robust appreciation of the positive aspects of the non-Christian world enrich the vision of mission as it is found in *Maximum Illud*? I would suggest two themes that are important for missiological reflection.

### **Appropriately Appreciating the Complexity of the Church's Mission**

First, recognizing the multitudinous ways that God can work in the lives of non-Christians, along with the potential positive elements that can be found in the cultures of non-Christians, or in the philosophical or religious systems they espouse, prudently highlights the complex task, which is missionary engagement with the non-Christian world.

There is a problem, which can, and has, become manifest in missionary activity when the potential positive aspects of the non-Christian world are not recognized, such as can be the case when it is presumed that non-Christians, as *Maximum Illud* states, are simply a "pitiable lot" whose souls are "hurtling to destruction." When this mentality has been presumed, it has been the case that whole cultural traditions have been destroyed, and even entire peoples have been nearly decimated.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, the Church has even been tempted to deny the inherent dignity of non-Christians.<sup>121</sup> The vision for mission contained in *Maximum Illud* does not seem to give sufficient consideration to this problematic in the Church's history of mission, nor does it thoroughly safeguard the Church from committing similar actions.

Vatican II, along with other post-conciliar missionary visions, considerably developed the Church's mission vision, not only because it was necessary for a true assessment of the world, but also to attempt to safeguard the Church from making similar mistakes, as were mentioned above. For instance, in *Lumen Gentium*, the ways that elements of various religious systems, along with the non-Christian people who espouse them, play a complex, though positive, role in the history of salvation is articulated.<sup>122</sup> Included in this assessment is the idea that elements of truth and goodness can be found in various cultures and religious systems. Acknowledging this reality, of course, in no way denies the possible precarious situations non-Christians may encounter when they do not respond to God's grace, nor does it deny the need for the Church to proclaim the fullness of the gospel. What it does do, however, is highlight the complex reality of the Church's engagement with non-Christians. Since Christians, who engage the non-Christian world, know that there can exist within every culture elements of goodness, truth and beauty, the missionary response must include *caution*, so as not to destroy something which is a 'seed of the word,' *discernment*, so as to know what is worth preserving, and *humility*, to recognize that, indeed, the missionary is engaged in a complex, difficult task, which is rife with potential pitfalls, and possibilities, for the Church, her mission, and the world.<sup>123</sup>

### **The 'Personal' Character of Missionary Activity**

Second, when a vision for mission is sufficiently nuanced regarding non-Christians, it more adequately highlights that the Church's missionary efforts require an engagement that is personal: missionaries are invited to a personal encounter with the non-Christian other.

Grouping together all non-Christians under one general category labeled 'pitiable' or 'unfortunate,' which is done in Benedict XV's document, does not sufficiently acknowledge the

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<sup>120</sup> For an overview of some of these challenges, see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2014). See, also, Bevens, *Constants in Context*.

<sup>121</sup> See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions: The Penguin History of the Church*, Vol. 6 (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

<sup>122</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (LG), nos. 14-17.

<sup>123</sup> On this point, see Stephen B. Bevens and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011).

personal, nuanced experience of life, or of God, which is always more rich, and more complex, than can be captured through the words “pitiable” or “unfortunate.” Every person comes with a particular history, filled with experiences of joy, sadness, love, hate, failure and success, all informing their experience of life, of God, and of the Church. What is more, Christians believe that God has been working with each individual person in a particular, multifaceted, and Trinitarian way. Taking into consideration the complex, unique reality of each person whom the missionary encounters becomes a trademark of mission in the post-conciliar period.<sup>124</sup> Certainly, it is the case that the Church, and her theologians, can engage overarching systems of culture, philosophy or religion, in her missionary efforts. Generalizations are even sometimes necessary. However, ultimately, each individual person is addressed by God, known by God, held in existence by God, and deserving of the individual, personal attention of the mission of the Church.

Reflection on the non-Christian world in reference to any vision for mission necessarily invites a discussion of the aims or goals of the Church’s mission while she engages the world. This is the subject of the next section.

### 3. The Goals of Mission

A vision for mission requires reflection upon the goals of the Church’s mission. Knowledge of these goals, along with accurately portraying their complexity, and order of importance, are vital to any mission vision, since the goals will inevitably influence the methods taken by the Church in her mission. They also will influence the allocation of resources that are necessary for missionary activity.

The vision for mission, which informs the document *Maximum Illud*, includes two main goals of the Church’s mission: *salus animarum* and *plantatio ecclesiae*—the salvation of souls and the planting of the church.<sup>125</sup> According to Benedict XV, drawing from the dominant missiological schools of thought of his time, the goal of the Church’s mission is the salvation of as many souls as possible. In order to carry out this goal, missionaries must proclaim the gospel to all people, which can most effectively be accomplished by planting the Church in territories where it has never existed. Once ‘effectively’ planted, the Church can continue to celebrate the sacraments, proclaim the gospel, and offer salvation to all.

These two goals continue to be part of conciliar and post-conciliar mission vision. Indeed, they occupy a tensile relationship in the documents of Vatican II.<sup>126</sup> Some missiologists, however, have noted certain shortcomings with these goals, such as the way in which a theology of *salus animarum* can reinforce an individualistic, other-worldly, understanding of salvation, or the way in which the theology of *plantatio ecclesiae* risks reinforcing a ‘Western Expansion’ model of mission. It should be noted that *Maximum Illud* does not entirely avoid these shortcomings.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> On this point, see Robert Aaron Wessman, “The Church’s Witness in a Secular Age: A Hauerwasian Response to Privatized Religion,” *Missiology: An International Review* 83, no. 1 (2017): 56-66.

<sup>125</sup> *MI*, nos. 5, 10, 11. See, also, Wessman, “Standing on the Shoulders.”

<sup>126</sup> See Wessman, “Standing on the Shoulders.”

<sup>127</sup> It is ironic that Benedict XV is, on the one hand, clearly concerned with differentiating the Church and her mission from any imperialistic machinations, or an overreliance upon any specific culture or race. He specifically warns against the dangers inherent in racism and imperialism. See *MI*, nos. 14-17; 19-21. However, he does not seem to be completely free of the ‘imperial’ mentality himself. This can be seen, for instance, in his statement that the ‘Americas’ were ‘discovered,’ thus failing to recognize that people already lived in those ‘Americas.’ See *MI*, no. 4. He likens missionaries to an ‘army,’ whose work is to ‘entrench’ the Church, whose ‘relentless assaults’ gain territories, which only reinforces a kind of militant missionary work. See *MI*, no. 5. He is convinced of the ‘profoundly’ impressive missionary works of previous centuries with little recognition of what might be called the shadow side of mission—that missionaries have not always acted in accordance with the principles of the gospel. Indeed, Benedict uses the language of ‘expansion’ in the document, and he indicates that the Church is “extending the Kingdom of God.” See *MI*, no. 8.

In light of these critiques, some missiologists have, on the one hand, sought to downplay, or even deny, the importance of these goals for the Church's mission.<sup>128</sup> Doing so, however, has unnecessarily denied two themes, which have remained central to more than a century of missiological thought, and which highlight essential soteriological and ecclesiological insights. On the other hand, other theologians in the conciliar and post-conciliar period, rather than deny these goals, have sought to develop and nuance them, by framing these two classical goals of mission within broader theological considerations. This has been done primarily through two main theological considerations.

First, conciliar and post-conciliar missiology has framed the 'salvation of souls' in the context of a wholistic, integral and even cosmic understanding of salvation.<sup>129</sup> In this way, the Church is still concerned with the salvation of individual people. Indeed, Christian theology, especially relying upon biblical narratives, maintains that every individual will be held accountable for his or her life.<sup>130</sup> However, 'salvation' is given a more expansive definition, and includes the sanctification and redemption of the entire person, who exists within a particular culture, is part of a particular people, is woven into the tapestry of creation, and lives within a cosmic reality. A missionary's vision seeks to consider this complex, expansive reality.

Second, the need to 'plant the church' is reinterpreted in light of a theology of the Kingdom of God.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, as certain debates in missiology have emphasized, the Church is intimately connected to the Kingdom of God, with the Kingdom being the more comprehensive, eternal, and eschatological reality towards which the Church is journeying.<sup>132</sup>

Consequences of this theology for the Church's understanding of mission are many. For instance, that the Church might not be effectively planted in a particular territory does not mean that God has not been present and active in the lives of the people—it does not mean that the Kingdom, at least in seminal form, does not exist in these territories. Furthermore, just because a person does not have access to a 'planted church' does not preclude or exclude her participation in, or contribution to, the Kingdom of God. Finally, the ultimate goal of the Church's mission is no longer viewed as simply establishing the Church, as important as this is. The ultimate goal of mission is the Kingdom of God: a kingdom where Christ is Lord, and which will only fully exist in the Parousia. All of this is to say that the theology of *plantatio ecclesiae* cannot be entirely understood without sufficient recourse to a robust theology of the Kingdom of God.<sup>133</sup>

## **Enriching the Vision of *Maximum Illud*: The Goals of Mission**

How might recourse to a theology of integral salvation and a theology of the Kingdom of God enrich the vision contained in *Maximum Illud*? Two themes emerge.

### **The Importance of the Care of Creation**

There are hints found in Benedict's encyclical that missionaries need to attend to transforming temporal realities.<sup>134</sup> These hints suggest that Benedict's vision of mission is not devoid of a wholistic anthropology. Yet contemporary reflection on theological anthropology, in the context of the theme

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<sup>128</sup> For an overview of this tendency in contemporary theologies of mission, see Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders."

<sup>129</sup> See Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders."

<sup>130</sup> See, for instance, Mt. 25:31-46.

<sup>131</sup> See Bevens, *Constants in Context*, 343-344.

<sup>132</sup> On this point, see Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington: CUA Press, 1988). See Bevens, *Constants in Context*, 343-344.

<sup>133</sup> See Wessman, "Standing on the Shoulders." See, also, Bevens, *Constants in Context*, 253.

<sup>134</sup> See *MI*, no. 30.

of integral salvation, has provided the Church with greater awareness of the need to approach mission considering not only individual persons and their *eternal* salvation, but also the communities they occupy, the cultures in which they live, the social structures which inform their lives, and the very earth they inhabit. Benedict could not have anticipated how important attending to the care of creation would become for the Church's missiological considerations, especially in light of issues related to climate change.<sup>135</sup> The Church now has to consider the real possibility that if she does not attend, in her mission, to issues related to climate change and its effects, there is a real possibility that there will no longer be an earth that sustains human beings, who are in need of the fullness of salvation.<sup>136</sup>

### The Importance of Collaboration and Dialogue

The second way the vision of *Maximum Illud* can benefit from the theologies of integral salvation and the Kingdom of God, is that they reinforce the importance of the missionary methods of collaboration and dialogue, particularly, though not exclusively, with those who are not active members of the Church.

It is important to highlight that the themes of dialogue and collaboration, particularly with the non-Christian world, are not given much attention in *Maximum Illud*. Certainly, it is a central concern of the document that collaboration exist between *all Christians* directly engaged in the Church's mission.<sup>137</sup> However, Benedict's document contains hints of what might be called a 'triumphalist' vision of the Church, i.e., a vision of the Church which assumes that she does not need to consider what she might learn from non-Christians. The document suggests that the Church has everything which is necessary for the world, and that she has the *methods* in order to provide the world with what the world needs. This is most evidently the case when the document uncritically expounds the 'successful' history of mission which has accompanied the Church. Benedict is convinced that the Church, by proceeding relatively on her own, if she simply energizes her mission efforts, will meet the current challenges she faces with success.<sup>138</sup>

What emerges throughout the last century of reflection on mission, however, is an understanding of a Church, which has, perhaps, come to a more humble realization of her missionary existence. For instance, inspired by a theology of integral salvation, the Church recognizes that she needs to rely upon experts in various fields to provide her insights into the 'integral' reality of human beings, along with how to attend to this reality.<sup>139</sup> Many of the people she needs to rely on are not Christian, and many espouse helpful philosophical, sociological, psychological or scientific systems, which did not arise exclusively through the Church. Indeed, the Church has even come to recognize that she requires the accountability provided by non-Christian institutions and people in order to be faithful to her own mission. In nowhere has this become more apparent than in the Church's sexual abuse scandals. Embracing an integral view of salvation, which includes recognizing that the Church is concerned for the entire complex, cosmic reality of human beings, necessarily reminds the Church of her need for collaboration and dialogue with a diverse group of people and philosophies in order to facilitate her missionary practice.

Inspired by a renewed theology of the Kingdom of God, the Church is also able to bury an expansionist vision of mission, which, though Benedict sought to overcome, is still vestigially present in *Maximum Illud*.<sup>140</sup> Informed by a theology of the Kingdom of God, the vision of mission which

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<sup>135</sup> On this point, see Pope Francis, *Laudato Si (LS)*, May 24, 2015.

<sup>136</sup> *LS*, nos. 1-59.

<sup>137</sup> *MI*, nos. 12-13.

<sup>138</sup> Compare *MI*, nos. 2-7.

<sup>139</sup> This is evident in *Gaudium et Spes*, along with *LS*, among others.

<sup>140</sup> See the notes above. Again, Benedict seems to desire to move beyond an expansionist model of mission. He states: "Remember that your [missioners'] duty is not the extension of a human realm, but of Christ's; and

emerges in the contemporary period more adequately recognizes that all of creation exists within the Kingdom. This is because God continually gives being to all that exists, and because Christ has redeemed all of creation through his death and resurrection. This interpretation of the theology of the Kingdom of God does not imply that people cannot deny the Lord of the Kingdom, thus denying salvation. Nor does espousing this theology deny that within the Kingdom there will be structures working against the principles of the Kingdom. What can accurately be implied, however, is that there are no obvious, *visible*, demarcations separating who is inside of the Church and who is outside of the Church. The Church cannot simply see her mission as expanding a physical boundary line between the Church and the world ‘outside.’<sup>141</sup> What is required of missionaries, therefore, is a commitment to dialogue with the world to determine, as much as is possible, how God has been a part of the lives of non-Christians, how the structures of the world either support or undermine the principles of the Kingdom, and how people might be invited to a deeper, salvific relationship with the Lord of the Kingdom, Jesus Christ.

#### 4. Those Invited to Participate in the Church’s Mission

A dominant mentality expressed in certain classical visions of mission, including that of Benedict XV, is that those people who are understood to be missionaries are, almost exclusively, men and women religious, including priests, who have a specifically ‘missionary’ vocation to go to ‘mission lands’ and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, establish the Church, and save souls. Aspects of this mentality have been carried through into the contemporary period. Certain visions for mission continue to recognize that some people will have an explicitly missionary vocation to go to places that are understood in the classical sense as ‘mission lands’ or areas.<sup>142</sup>

What is perhaps the most innovative contribution of *Maximum Illud* to the missiological reflection of its time is the document’s insistence that, in order for the mission of the Church to be successful, missionaries must strive to train local, indigenous populations to conduct the pastoral and missionary work of their areas. This includes training indigenous men to be priests, providing them with the best formation possible, and handing over mission territories, when it is prudent to do so, to the care of indigenous bishops.<sup>143</sup> In this way, Benedict anticipates what will become an underlying trend in conciliar and post-conciliar mission theology: rightly opening up the mission of the Church to all people.

Congruent with this trend, a dominant theme in the vision of mission of Vatican II and other post-conciliar thought is the reality that all Christians, on account of their baptism, are called to be missionaries.<sup>144</sup> This does not mean that all Christians are called to conduct mission in ‘far-off’ lands, nor does it imply that all people are called to be religious brothers, sisters, or clergy. What this does mean is that Jesus Christ, in and through the Church, is calling every Christian to a particular mission, which is to be lived out in the world.<sup>145</sup> In other words, mission is the very beating heart of the Church, the very reason for her existence.

#### Enriching the Vision of *Maximum Illud*: Those Called to Participate in Mission

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remember too that your goal is the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly-fatherland, and not for an earthly one.” Yet, for the many reasons cited above, the ‘expansionist model’ is still present in the document.

<sup>141</sup> See *MI*, no. 8, where Benedict draws upon a ‘spatial’ metaphor to describe the expansion of the Church.

<sup>142</sup> See *AG*. See, also, Wessman, “Standing on the Shoulders.”

<sup>143</sup> See *MI*, nos. 22-25.

<sup>144</sup> See Wessman, “Standing on the Shoulders.”

<sup>145</sup> See Robert Aaron Wessman, “What are Options for Authentic Identity-Discernment in a Secular Age?” *Church Life Journal*, December 5, 2018. Available online.



How might the mission vision of Benedict XV be enriched by a century of missiological reflection that has sought to expand involvement in the Church's mission? I would suggest two possible, interrelated, ways.

### **A Realization that all of Creation can Potentially Participate in the Mission of God**

Conciliar and post-conciliar mission vision has the potential to enrich Benedict's vision by suggesting that not only are all Christians able to participate in the *Missio Dei* but, indeed, all of creation can, and perhaps already is, in its own way, participating in this mission. A more thorough investigation into the way in which the order of the cosmos, or the beauty of creation, are inviting people to consider the mystery of the creator is an important element of missiological reflection today. Though 'fallen,' the cosmos has been ordered to proclaim the glory of God. In this way, it can be recognized that, for instance, the universe's expanse, or the beauty of a flower, are each, in their own way, ordered towards bringing people into the fullness of the reality of salvation. All of creation can be a means of grace that engenders the missionary work of the Church. This is all the more reason, once again, for the Church to work, in her mission, on caring for the very creation that can mediate salvation.

### **A Recognition that Even Secular Realities can participate in the Mission of God**

A second avenue that would enrich Benedict's notion of 'expanding' the participants of the mission of the Church would be to consider that secular, political realities, and the people within these structures, have the potential to participate in the mission of God. For instance, political debates can influence the thought of a nation, potentially deepening people's appreciation of the common good. Peaceful demonstrations can bring about justice. Government leaders, even those who are atheists, can choose to allocate resources to support the poor. Suggesting, through these examples, and many others, that secular realities can participate in the mission of God does not mean that God directly wills everything contained within secular, political realities. Neither does it mean that everything that flows from these realities is part of the mission of the Church. What can be implied, however, is that the ebb-and-flow of so-called secular history is not divorced from the history of salvation but, can, indeed, participate in that very history, albeit in mysterious and sometimes opaque ways.<sup>146</sup> To say this in a different way: God can accomplish God's will in history even through somewhat broken and less-than-ideal secular, political realities, because the only real history is salvation history.

### **Conclusion**

By way of conclusion, I would like to point out that, in many seminaries, schools of theology, and Catholic theological faculties, especially throughout the Western world, schools of missiology are rare, or even non-existent. Classes on missiology, furthermore, are rarely taught, and the Church's mission is considered as an afterthought in many courses on ecclesiology. This reality, I think, is a precarious one for the Church. As I have argued throughout this presentation, any vision for mission has the potential both to enlighten, or limit, the Church's reflection on her missionary activity, resulting in consequences that are, of course, eternal.

As I have shown, there are many missiological elements contained in Benedict's vision for mission that have been appropriated in the contemporary period. In many ways, as I have indicated,

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<sup>146</sup> On this point, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994).

these elements are helpful reminders to missiologists today. They can assist the Church in navigating many of the post-conciliar debates in missiology.

However, what is striking, at least to me, is the way in which the missiological insights of the last one hundred years serve to develop, enhance, and enrich the vision for mission maintained in *Maximum Illud*. These insights, among others, include recognition of a thoroughly Trinitarian understanding of the foundation of mission, the importance of considering salvation as integral, the importance of the theology of the Kingdom of God, and the essential cosmic breadth of the Church's mission. Neglecting these themes, even if benignly, can mean the difference between a triumphalist Church versus a Church more open to listen to, and dialogue with, the world. Or it can mean the difference between viewing the non-Christian world with little respect, versus viewing the non-Christian world as mysteriously participating in God's plan of salvation. Or it can mean the difference between focusing almost exclusively on the eternal destination of a person's soul, versus considering the gift of creation that always-already participates in the saving mission of Christ. Perhaps, then, the most enduring, missiologically significant aspect of *Maximum Illud* is the way in which the document reminds us that the Church and, especially, her theologians, should never fail to attend to the essential task of missiological reflection.

## **The concepts of mission and missionary disciple in the Latin American post-conciliar tradition.**

Luis MARTÍNEZ SAAVEDRA<sup>147</sup>

At the request of a reflection on the concept of "missionary disciple", it seemed sensible to me to grasp it, to situate it in its place of birth, that is to say to understand it within the Latin American post-conciliar tradition inaugurated in this historic event which is the "little council" of Medellín and which developed through the successive general conferences of the Latin-American episcopate. In these five post-conciliar decades, the Latin American Church has developed a new awareness of itself and of its Mission in the world.

Medellín, by its prophetic lucidity, is a turning point for the Church of the Latin-American continent. The magisterial tradition that is emerging in its wake is a good illustration of this paradigm shift in the Church, whose main note is the option for the poor and against poverty. The emergence of this new awareness of Church marks the post-conciliar path, traveled not without difficulties, but widely strewn with the Gospel and prophecy in Latin America.

I propose a journey in three moments: the change of the ecclesial and missionary paradigm of the Council; the reception of this new paradigm and its deepening in Latin America; and, finally, some tasks for today.

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## **1. Vatican II. A change of ecclesial paradigm**

At the Council, as in a new Pentecost, the power of the Spirit came to breathe new life into the Church and led her to open up to the world and begin a deep process of returning to the sources of the gospel and aggiornamento.

The inaugural address of Pope John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, remained, throughout the Council, a road map for a large number of fathers. The pope made a call for the updating of the Church by the assumption of a pastoral magisterium in dialogue with the world, and able to read the signs of the Spirit in and through human history. But above all, he encouraged them to make the evangelization of the poor the heart of the Council. It was his dream to make the Church, "the Church of the poor".

### ***A new understanding of the Church***

In addition, the new ecclesial paradigm of the Council, People of God, has come to revalorize the common dignity of the baptized. It emphasizes and establishes the co-responsibility of all the baptized in the life and mission of the Church, because every baptized person is invested with the prophetic, priestly and royal ministry of Jesus Christ (LG 31, AA 10). Thus, each disciple is called to contribute, according to the gifts and the charisms of the Spirit (LG 12), to the mission of the Church (AA 3).

The valorization of the common priesthood of all the people of God (LG 10, PO 2), as well as the recognition of the *sensus fidelium* and ecclesial

awareness that the baptized are all bearers of the Spirit and as such enjoy an adult status in the life and mission of the Church (LG 12), made possible the rebirth of an ecclesial model in harmony with the primitive experience of Christian fraternity witnessed by the New Testament.

However, the most dynamic aspect of the Council has been the realization that the mission of the Church in the world is above all a mission of service and solidarity with all humanity, especially with the poor (GS 1 ).

For the Council, the Church is in the world as "sacrament, that is, both the sign and the instrument of the intimate union with God and the unity of all mankind" (LG 1). In addition, the Council did not hesitate to recognize the active presence of the Spirit in human history. (GS 4; 11).

The Church of the Council sees itself as a community of disciples turned towards the world and animated by the same Spirit, that of its only Master and Lord who came to announce the Good News to the poor and to accomplish this mission in poverty and persecution. . Therefore, the Church deploys her mission in the world without "seeking earthly glory" but becoming a servant of humanity (LG 8). The paradigm of the Church People of God goes beyond the secularly acquired figure of a pyramidal church, centered on the clergy, and facing the world.

***A new understanding of evangelization and the mission of the Church***

At the Council, the conciliar fathers judged the scheme on the mission "too conservative and too Western"<sup>148</sup>; thus, in spite of the clear stand in his favor by Pope Paul VI (November 6, 1964), the scheme is rejected. Widely reworked, it is the seventh project which is presented to the discussion in the conciliar council on October 13, 1965. The reshuffle is still considered insufficient; it remained anchored in a pre-conciliar vision of the mission and did not sufficiently integrate the new ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*.

During the discussions, the fathers asked for the introduction of the openings promoted in the other conciliar documents.<sup>149</sup>

Concretely, we asked for a definition of the Mission in the perspective of the economic action of the Son and the Spirit in the world, rather than a synonym for the implantation of the Church<sup>150</sup>.

A collective intervention by the Latin American bishops drew attention to what would only be a facade evangelization<sup>151</sup> if we failed to imbue the structures of society with the Gospel. Mgr. McGrath, a member of the doctrinal commission, disciple of Chenu and great defender of the theology of the signs of the times, also pointed out that the scheme did not take into account the mission of the People of God and reduced it to the action of its hierarchy<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Jean Paul MESSINA, *Evêques africains au concile Vatican II*, Paris, Karthala, 2000, p. 125.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Norman TANNER, « Ecclesia ad extra », in : G. ALBERIGO (dir.), *Histoire du Concile Vatican II*, Paris, Cerf, 2012, vol. IV, p. 327-472, here « L'Église missionnaire », (the missionary Church) p. 404-421 ; Riccardo BURIGANA and Giovanni TURBANTI, « La dernière intersession » in *ibid*, p. 556-745, here « un nouveau schéma sur la mission », (a new scheme on the mission) p. 696-708

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Peter HÜNERMANN, « Les dernières semaines du Concile », in : G. ALBERIGO (dir.), *Histoire du Concile Vatican II*, op. cit., vol. V, p. 439-589, here, « Évangélisation du monde ou *propaganda fide* », (evangelization of the world or *propaganda fide*) p. 520-549.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid* p. 532

<sup>152</sup> Cf. G. ALBERIGO (dir.), *Histoire du Concile Vatican II*, vol. V, p. 534s. The dignity and co-responsibility of the laity is a subject dear to Mgr. McGrath, see, Speech at the Council, Paris, Cerf, 1964, p. 274-280; speech of 9 October 1964 in the name of thirty Latin American bishops on the apostolate of the laity (G. ALBERIGO (ed.), *History of the Second Vatican Council*, op.cit., vol.4, pp. 309s).

At the end of Vatican II, a new missionary paradigm is acquired. It was now necessary to make it incarnate in the practice of the Church.

This new paradigm of mission is nourished by the biblical renewal and rediscovery of the fathers of the Church and places the mission of the Church in tune with the *Missio Dei*, that is, as an action for the realization of the Project of God in the world, going beyond the pre conciliar paradigm that made the mission a synonym for the establishment of the Church, paradigm strongly marked by colonialism and proselytism<sup>153</sup>.

The Council sees the mission as a "mandatory task" (AG 7) for the whole Church, which is, by nature, "missionary" (AG 2)<sup>154</sup>. *Lumen Gentium* 8 and *Ad Gentes* 5 put this evangelizing action of the Church in consonance with the style of Jesus who, "sent by the Father" to evangelize the poor ... to heal broken hearts "[...] accomplished his redemptive work in poverty and persecution. For its part, the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, as has been said, reminds us that the Christian community wants to be united and to serve the world, especially the poor (n.1) and places all the action of the Christians in the world in the perspective of the realization of the prospect of the Kingdom (GS 72,2).

## **2. The new missionary paradigm in Latin American key**

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. P. HÜNERMANN, « Les dernières semaines du Concile », in : G. ALBERIGO, *Histoire du Concile Vatican II*, op.cit., vol. V, Cerf, 2005, 439-589, here, « Évangélisation du monde ou *propaganda fide* », pp. 520-549.

<sup>154</sup> A decade later, this idea is taken up and deepened by Pope Paul VI, in his exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "Evangelization is, in fact, the grace and vocation of the Church, its most profound identity. It exists to evangelize" (EN 14). The 1974 Evangelization Synod, which preceded the Exhortation, unveiled the contrasting vision of evangelism in the south and north, which led to its deadlock (Jan GROOTARS, *From Vatican II to John Paul II: The Great Turning Point of the Catholic Church*, Paris, Le Centurion, 1981, pp. 72-87;.

The final document of Medellín found largely its inspiration in the Council, which is quoted in 244 occurrences. *Gaudium et Spes* is the most cited, 53 occurrences<sup>155</sup>. The encyclical of Pope Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* (1967) is widely quoted (43 occurrences). It must be remembered that this encyclical assumes the question of development and Christian commitment to move from "less human" to "more human" structures, as a place of verification of the Christian faith in the world of today (n.20). For Paul VI, the Christian cannot remain indifferent to poverty and injustice (n.74).

Medellín initiates a true pastoral conversion of the Church on the continent, making it an event that marks a before and an after of the Church on the Continent<sup>156</sup>. The conclusions of the Second Conference have become a kind of "symbol", in the sense of the symbols of the ancient Church: it permeates its spirit and indelibly marks the post-Council on the Continent. Medellín goes, in the reception of the Council, beyond the only application and adaptation of the main conciliar lines in the continent.

As has been pointed out, among the Latin American bishops participating in the Council, some are very attentive to the danger of an evangelization of facade that has not been able to touch the deep structures of the society<sup>157</sup>. For them, the missionary action of the Church must contribute to the salvation of men

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<sup>155</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (40), *Lumen Gentium* (39), *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (30), *Optatam Totius* (24), *Christus Dominus* (12), *Perfectae Caritatis* (11), *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Ad Gentes* and *Inter Mirifica* (9), *Gravissimum Educationis* (6), *Dei Verbum* and *Nostra Aetate* (1). Three documents are missing: *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, *Unitatis Redintegration* and *Dignitatis Humanae*.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Joseph COMBLIN, « Medellín et les combats de l'église en Amérique latine », in COLLECTIF, *Le retour des certitudes. Événements et orthodoxie depuis Vatican II*, Paris, Le centurion, 1987, p. 34-53.

<sup>157</sup> Thus, for example, Bishop Larraín, a close friend of Father Hurtado, the Chilean Jesuit canonized in 2005, author of the book *Es Chile un país católico?* [Is Chile a Catholic Country] (1941), a book that raises the question of the permanence of unjust structures in a predominantly Catholic country. This practical incoherence between faith and social life is a very important issue in the Latin American magisterium, which denounces it with force.



and the progress of societies by humanization and the liberation of unjust structures.

Medellín receives the options of the Council and deepens them by engaging on a continental scale in a "new evangelization"<sup>158</sup> (Medellín, Message) or in a "re-evangelization"<sup>159</sup> (Medellín, Popular Pastoral 8), thus responding to the awareness of the limits of evangelization carried out on the continent, which failed to make the link between faith and life. For pastors, in a predominantly Christian continent, where inequalities and injustices are shouting in heaven, we need a "lucid and committed faith" (Idem) in social transformation:

*Evangelization must focus on the formation of a personal, adult, internally structured, active, and continuously confronting the challenges of today's life [...]. Evangelization must be linked to the "signs of the times". It cannot remain timeless and ahistorical. Indeed, the "signs of the times", which are manifested in our continent essentially on the social level, constitute a "theological place" and an interpellation on the part of God. In addition, evangelization must be the fruit of personal and community witness, which will be given in particular through the temporal commitment. This evangelization we are speaking of must explain in their eschatological perspective the values of justice and fraternity included in the aspirations of the peoples of our continent. It needs the support of a sign-church (Medellín, Pastoral elite 13).*

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<sup>158</sup> The repetitive language of evangelism (25 occurrences) and mission (48 occurrences) clearly shows the missionary reach of Medellín.

<sup>159</sup> The repetitive language of evangelism (25 occurrences) and mission (48 occurrences) clearly shows the missionary scope of Medellín.

In 1979, in Puebla, the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate confirmed and signed the option for the poor that it combines with the need for a renewed effort of evangelization for a "renewed civilization of love".(Puebla, Message, 8, Puebla 640, 1187, 1192)).

Following the conviction of *Evangelii Nuntiandii* that "evangelization is the Church's own mission" (Puebla 4; 75), the bishops affirm that "the responsibility for evangelization, liberation and human promotion" returns to "the Christian community as a whole" (Puebla 474; 348); therefore, they invite all the faithful to "be seed, light and strength of transformation" (Puebla 1133), in "a missionary Church ... committed to the liberation of the whole men and of all men ( the service of peace and justice is an essential ministry of the Church), because "to be a missionary and an apostle is the condition of the Christian" (Puebla 1304).

For Puebla, proclaiming "a gospel without economic, social, cultural or political implications, [is] a mutilation [that] is tantamount to a certain collusion [...] with the established order" (Puebla 558). Thus, in the search for greater fidelity to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Third Conference recalls that the evangelizing mission of the Church aims at "personal conversion and social transformation" (Puebla 362). By this conviction that the mission is above all a commitment to the "Kingdom of God, kingdom of justice and peace, which happens to men, in Jesus Christ" (Puebla 679)<sup>160</sup> Puebla with its missionary paradigm, takes some distances from its reduction to a self-referential project of institutional reproduction.

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<sup>160</sup> The reference to the centrality of the Kingdom as a note of evangelization is affirmed 55 times in the final document.

In addition, Puebla emphatically expresses "that it is impossible to fulfill this mission without a constant effort to know the reality and to adapt the message to the men of today in a dynamic, attractive and convincing way" (Puebla 85).

A little more than a decade later, in a difficult ecclesial context and despite the limited space for maneuver they had at the Conference<sup>161</sup>, the fathers of the IV General Conference held in Santo Domingo in 1992, managed to combine the idea of the "new evangelization"<sup>162</sup> to the option for the poor<sup>163</sup> which must, according to them, continue to guide all the evangelizing action of the "poor Church" on the continent (Santo Domingo 178b). Thus, by ratifying the option for the poor, "firm and irrevocable" (Santo Domingo 178; 296), Santo Domingo deepens the missionary vocation of the Continental Church for a true "inculturated evangelization" (n.248- 302). Contrary to the desire of the conservative wing to impose the question of inculturation as an alternative to the option for the poor, the fathers of Santo Domingo discerned in it a continuity and a deepening of the road traveled in Medellín; this option in no way precludes commitment to liberation, because "one of the goals of inculturated evangelization will always be the salvation and full liberation of a people" (Santo Domingo 243c).

The missionary paradigm of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops at Aparecida in 2007 is clearly in the tradition of previous conferences. By inviting all the disciples of Jesus - lay men and women, religious, deacons, priests and bishops (Aparecida 184-224) - to commit themselves to a Church in a state of permanent mission to witness to God and

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. Luis MARTINEZ, *La conversion des Églises latino-américaines. Op.cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>162</sup> The expression is present in 69 occurrences

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Saint Domingue, Message 7 ; 10 ; 17; Saint Domingue 23c ; 24d.e; 34; 67b; 178; 179a; 180 ; 200b

his project of life in fullness, Good News for all and especially for the poor and the suffering, Aparecida opts for a "pastoral conversion [which] requires to go from a pastoral care of simple conservation to a truly missionary pastoral" (Aparecida 370).

It is therefore a Church "servant of the Kingdom" (Aparecida 33; 190; 223) and servant of the poor (Aparecida 29; 30; 516), which reaffirms the purpose of its mission, "to give life in fullness" (Jn 10,10, the title of the Conference). This awareness allows, on the one hand, to insert itself into the world for its transformation and, on the other hand, to escape the temptation to understand mission as proselytism (Aparecida 146).

In consonance and fidelity with the *Missio Dei* - the Project or the saving will of God who wants to give his life to the humanity he loves (Tit 3,4) -, taking into account this missionary paradigm engages the Continental Church to "go out" to meet the new challenges of the present time (Aparecida 363; 548; 553).

### **3. The Missionary of the Missionary disciples: Witnesses of God's Benevolent Project**

The pastoral action of the Church of the poor and the missionary disciples can only be understood within this benevolent dynamic that runs through history. Thus, before the "cry" of the poor and excluded, the missionary disciple is invited to join them in building a just and fraternal society.

The missionary Church desired by Aparecida and the Latin American post conciliar tradition is that of benevolent otherness, as a new way of being Church more in keeping with the style of Jesus and his Project. It is a Church of brotherly sympathy and accompaniment of humanity. A Church of audacity and freedom (parrhesia) to respond to the perennial challenge of being a sign and instrument of the goodness of God in the world. The missionary disciple is placed within this paradigm and his action must be accordingly.

The Latin American post-conciliar tradition therefore refuses to view the Church's mission as an act of "proselytism" or a quest for hegemony over the society. Seeking to fulfill its vocation of being a place of benevolent otherness, sign and instrument of the Project of God, the community of missionary disciples seeks in its practice to better highlight the style of Jesus, the poor and crucified Messiah, prophet of the Kingdom announced to the poor; and secondly, to better articulate the relationship between faith and life, especially in its implications for justice, peace and the preservation of the common home.

As in the time of the prophet, it is a question of "comforting" the humanity that God cherishes (Is 40: 1ff), of helping and welcoming orphans, widows and strangers (Ps 146,9). Before the cry of the abandoned, the Christian community, to the extent of its strength, seeks to be "home" and place of rest (Aparecida 362), "Samaritan" community who is close and cares (Aparecida 26; ), a prophet who raises his voice to defend the rights of the poor (Aparecida 414; 518, i).

The missionary presence of the Christian community in the society is analogous to that of a midwife at the bedside of a woman in bed, accompanying

the birth of a newborn (see Mk 13.8, Rom 8, 22). ). His mission, in the words of Pope Francis, also resembles that of a "field hospital" (Amoris Laetitia 291)<sup>164</sup>

According to this model, the Church in her mission to announce the good news to the poor has her place in society alongside all those who dream of a better, peaceful and socially just world; it is not a religious ghetto, but a force that inspires and works side by side with those who give their lives for the good of others and for the safeguarding of the "common house".

The missionary community is not self-centered; it is at the service of the Kingdom of God and, therefore, it cannot be self-referential. It is there to evangelize (EN 14), not "to seek earthly glory" (LG 8). It is in the world to serve and to accompany humanity in its march towards the liberation of all the hindrances which prevent the realization of the benevolent Project of God.

This implies not to be afraid to dissolve like leaven in the mass (Mt 13, 33) or as salt in food (see Mt 5, 13), or to disappear, like the grain that falls into the earth (Jn 12,24), to fulfill its mission in the world and to bear fruit.

The Church of the Missionary Disciples is an ex-centered and relative Church, that is, a Church that knows that the central place does not belong to it, that it belongs to the Kingdom and that it is relative because the only absolute is God and his Project which it must serve.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>164</sup> See also, Interview of Pope Francis to Jesuit Cultural Journals, by A. SPADARO, sj, Etudes, October 2013, p. 14; Speech by Pope Francis to the meeting organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, 19 September 2014, n.4

In the consciousness of being at the service of the benevolent project of God for humanity and, consequently, of rejecting the sectarian temptation of the ghetto, of the self-referential and identity reflex seeking only to perpetuate the ecclesial institution, the diakonia takes a central place in the action of Christian communities.

The testimony of a Christian practice of benevolence towards all beings and of the reception especially of the suffering, renders to the Christian community its status of "sign and instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of all kind human "(LG 1). It then becomes a "home" for all those who suffer from all forms of exclusion or suffering, and for those who seek a deeper meaning to their lives, especially by engaging in the service of a more human and fraternal world.

This new awareness of being at the service of a greater mystery, of which the main actor is always God himself, who is close to all his children, without excluding any person, makes the priority path of evangelization out of caring proximity and liberating commitment.

Perhaps it is useful in this connection to remember the words of Karl Barth: "If the Church has no purpose other than her own service, she already bears the marks of death."<sup>165</sup> Or those of the Jesuit-theologian-martyr Ignace Ellacuría :

*A church centered on itself [...] is not a sacrament of salvation; it is rather a power more in the history, which follows the dynamisms of the*

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<sup>165</sup> Karl BARTH, *Esquisse d'une dogmatique*, Genève, Labor et Fides, 1988<sup>2</sup>éd., p. 144.

*historical powers. It is useless to say that the center of the Church is the Risen Jesus if we remove all historicity from this risen Jesus; the directing center of the life of Jesus resided of course in the experience of God, but of a God who took historical body in the kingdom of God. If the Church does not embody her central concern for the risen Jesus in the realization of the kingdom of God in history, it loses its touchstone and with it the guarantee of actually serving the Lord and not herself. It is only by emptying oneself of self-giving to the most needy, until the death and death of the cross, that the Church can claim to be a historic sacrament of salvation of Christ<sup>166</sup>.*

Ultimately, the missionary paradigm of the Church of the Poor in Latin America is an invitation to join the centrality of the Gospel and the liberating mission in the world, to get out of the trap of self-referentiality and pastoral autism, that the pope denounces as true "spiritual worldliness" (EG 93-97).

For this Church to become a reality, it is necessary to find the harmony with the Gospel and with the signs of the times through which the Spirit speaks today to the Churches (Ap 2,7). It is necessary

*to move from a self-centered Church to [...] a servant church of so many people who feel dejected and live by our side. A Church capable of placing in the center what is important: the service of the Lord in those who are hungry, incarcerated, thirsty, dislodged, denuded, sick, abused ... (Mt 25,35) [...] This is the sign that the Kingdom is among us [...]*<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ignacio ELLACURÍA, « La Iglesia de los pobres, sacramento histórico de liberación » [The Church of the Poor, a historic sacrament of liberation], in: Ignacio ELLACURÍA - Jon SOBRINO (eds), *Mysterium Liberationis*, Madrid, Trotta, 1990, p.134.

<sup>167</sup> Pope Francis to the Bishops of Chile convened in Rome, 15-17 May 2018, Discussion Paper, No. 22.



Summing up, we can say that the paradigm of evangelization developed during the post council in Latin America finds its red thread in the awareness that the Church is in the world in the service of a Project that exceeds it: the Kingdom of God nothing else is something than the realization here and now of the benevolent plan of God who wants to give life in abundance to those he loves (Jn 10,10)<sup>168</sup>.

The conception of discipleship as an individual issue and related to fuga mundi<sup>169</sup>, is exceeded by that of the sequela Christi, as a quest for fidelity to the style of Jesus of Nazareth and his liberating mission in the world (Aparecida 112; 139). Only this testimony makes the Church grow and honors her mission (Aparecida 159).

I thank you!

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<sup>168</sup> The magisterium of the universal Church is no stranger to this conviction. Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, emphasized it: "Christ first announces a Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, so important that, in relation to him, everything becomes "the rest", which is "given extra". Only the Kingdom is absolute and it relativizes everything that is not him "(n° 8). And his successor, Pope John Paul II, draws the ecclesiological consequences of such a conviction: "We cannot separate the Kingdom and the Church. Of course, the Church is not her own end, because she is ordained to the Kingdom of God of which she is a germ, a sign and an instrument ... Hence also the special link of the Church with the Kingdom of God and of Christ that it has "the mission to announce and to establish in all the nations" "(*Redemptoris Missio* 18).

<sup>169</sup> "Holiness is not a flight into intimism or religious individualism, nor is it a resignation from the urgent reality of the great economic, social, and political problems of Latin America and the world, even less, a flight into an exclusively spiritual world "(Aparecida 148).

# PERMANENT ELEMENTS OF THE MISSION

ACCORDING TO JOSEPH COMBLIN

**Alzirinha Souza**<sup>170</sup>

## Introduction

The theme of the mission has always been a constant in Comblin's thought. Biblist formed by the teachings of Lucien Cerfaux, influenced by the in-depth studies of Pauline theology and by the family reference of his brother André Comblin (missionary in Africa - in Rwanda - for many years), he himself became a missionary.

Seeking to flee a European Church which, according to him, was heading towards the end under the papacy of Pius XII, encouraged by the Encyclical *Fidei donum*, he left for Latin America, "with almost no knowledge of the language and local culture, but to participate in a living Church ", according to his own words.

The theme of the mission begins to appear in his writings after the 1970s, during his Chilean experience. We believe this factor occurs for two basic reasons. The first, of historical and ecclesial origin in Latin America, is the moment after Medellín (1968), where the bishops of the continent make the re-reading of the Council from their reality. Among several necessities, the theme of the mission is addressed in a primary way, theme that will be developed and deepened in Puebla in 1979, under the influence of the *Evangelii nuntiandi* of Paul VI, published four years earlier, in 1975.

The second reason is that Comblin understands the theme of mission as something intrinsic to the essence of the Christian and of the Church itself. We would say today that Francis is once again right when he announces and reminds us that the Church has to come out and that must "primerear - take initiative" in the world (EG).

Comblin did not see Bergoglio being transferred from the diocese to become bishop of Rome, but surely both converge on the essentials of all times: the responsibility of all the baptized (regardless of their status) in carrying out the announcement of the person of Jesus and his message. Baptism not only empowers us to be missionaries, but it drives us to fulfill the mission. Encouraged by the Holy Spirit, with the practice of the Son as a parameter and

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remembering Irenaeus of Lyon and the two hands of God, we ourselves become the agents of this proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which came to fruition and which is made possible in the stage of the historical process where we are.

The density and breadth of Comblin's writings have forced us to adopt a methodology for this conference: we have focused on two elements that the author defines as permanent and essential in any missionary process and that ensure the actuality of the mission over time. He presents them in two keys of reading: 1) mission as mission, and 2) mission as salvation. The latter will be associated by Comblin to the theme of the crisis of religion and the Church in the news. The second reason for our methodological choice is that each of these keys reveals three essential aspects for the understanding of his theology: anthropology, pneumatology and practice.

### 1. Mission as mission

Mission as mission is born in the person of Jesus, who came into the world to address Peter, John, Andrew and all those called Peter, John, Anthony and Mary of history. It is then constituted by the words "send-go-come" which call each man and each woman to put itself in the dynamism of the announcement of the person of Jesus.

It was the same for the first communities: the apostles are sent as missionaries; they are not apostles because they will make material profit, nor are apostles because of an application of their ministries (of the sacramentalization of the Church, one would say today). First, they are sent because their activities are at the service of the announcement and the question asked to men and women about the person of Jesus.

In the last instance, the mission of the apostles is in the mission of Christ as an instrument that Christ could use to draw closer to the men and women of his time. To understand the mission in Comblinian thought, we must concentrate on the person of the missionary having the mission of Jesus as a parameter. The way of being of the missionary determines the accomplishment of the mission.

First, the missionary is the one who, on leaving his place of speech (physically and personally), enters the world of the other. He leaves his personal and referential universe, and enters the universe of the other which is composed of other references, of a historicity. The entrance of the missionary into the other universe was not planned or expected, so that the

other, to defend his autonomy, reacts several times to external impacts in an unknown way (by welcoming or by being refractory)<sup>171</sup>.

This is perhaps why so many doors are closing and the challenge since the time of Jesus is to disarm this closing reaction, to open the path, to penetrate the personal universe, to plant seeds in worry, to awaken new aspirations, to reveal a new faith, a new life. Jesus (whose example the missionary must follow) was sent to penetrate, to be accepted in the inner world of people and in the one they project by external action. It is only from this realization that, according to Comblin, the transformation of political, economic and social systems begins, structured to eliminate what is peculiar to the human being, which is the act of becoming human. "Going to men" is not walking on the surface of the Earth among these, but seeking those who are far away (Lk 15: 1-7). The greatest challenge is to ensure that the Word of Jesus Christ can reach man in his intimacy, in his authenticity, in his concreteness<sup>172</sup>.

Secondly, the place of the missionary is in a specific type of Church: the one who is called to make a journey from God to men. To walk on the paths that lead to men, the arduous and narrow (though short) paths, this is the journey that defines the condition of the Church, which cannot stop on itself by recollecting itself. It is made to walk with men or, today, as Francis says, to be a Church in mission, Church going out, a field hospital, Mother and the one where its members take the initiative towards men and women of our time.

When they remain available in the service of Jesus Christ, the Church and missionaries are forced to permanent flexibility. Keeping the values and not the rigidity of the doctrine as a "package to be swallowed", the fixed formulas and the models are abandoned, to achieve, with the assimilation of contexts, demands and cultures, the presentation of the person of Jesus in a category of meaning. It is essential to become aware of the reality we are in for the fulfillment of the social function of mission, which is to mediate between what is specific to the Gospel and what is specific to the people to whom we announce it. . The transmission of the message by the Church cannot be made by the repetition of formulas as did the scribes, as the contemporary Church has already done, and as some insist on doing it again. This is what Comblin says: "These pure formulas betray the word of God and do not reach the hearts of men. If the message disappears behind the conciliar or episcopal formulas, behind the

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<sup>171</sup>SOUZA, A. *El análisis de la desconexión de sentido entre la esperanza y la acción humana, a partir de la obra de José Comblin*. Thèse doctorale. Université catholique de Louvain, 2014. p. 351.

<sup>172</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teologia da missão*. Petrópolis : Vozes, 1980, p. 23.

confessions of faith or the condemnations, the message may disappear as a communication from God to men<sup>173</sup>.

For this reason, the missionary is someone who thinks for himself. His thought is to listen to what comes from Jesus Christ and to create from there the words that can make known the message of Christ in the language of the other. Comblin will call this movement the "social function of theology"<sup>174</sup> », that is to translate the human understanding, the density and the essence of the Gospel. The missionary is the translation of a foreign language - the language of God - into another foreign language - the language of men. He ends up no longer having his own language, as his own becomes a channel of transmission (Ga 2,20). To fix the language of God in an ecclesiastical discourse is to fix the Peregrine Church in stable, self-contained communities, it is to suppress the mission by replacing it by the administration of the communities. The ecclesial bureaucracy has overthrown the mission and freedom of the Church since the fifteenth century. The first obligation of every missionary, that is, of every baptized Christian, is to evangelize, not to administer. Comblin will say that "the duty of every missionary is the duty of the Church, which is none other than the missionary body of Jesus Christ"<sup>175</sup> ». Therefore, the call to conversion of the Church is the call to return to the mission. There is, of course, an urgent need for reform of institutional and moral frameworks, but the fundamental conversion is that of "turning towards the other". From this parameter, it is essential to "be Church", which will be followed by everything else. Obviously, the mission is enormously wider than the visible boundaries of the Church.

However, we cannot claim that all the responsibility for carrying out the mission is solely centered on the strength of the missionary and the Church as an institution. There is the presence of the Holy Spirit of God. If it were only a matter of administering an ecclesiastical society, the intervention of the Spirit would not be so necessary, once to repeat formulas and to proclaim the greatness of what was created, one does not need his presence. Self-sufficiency, the legacy of Christianity and the propagandist conviction that the Church had the answer and the solution to all problems, is contrary and hinders the action of the Holy Spirit.

But the missionary is one who lives led by the action of the Spirit and obeys him, not because he forces him to think or removes his ability to do so, but because the missionary is someone who must to be constantly linked to his movement (of the Spirit). The Spirit is the

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<sup>173</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teologia da missão*. Petrópolis : Vozes, 1980. p. 25 e 26.

<sup>174</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teología. ¿Qué clase de servicio?*, In : GIBELLINI, Rosino (org.), *La nueva frontera de teología en América Latina*, Salamanca : Sígueme, 1977. p. 63-81.

<sup>175</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teologia da missão*. Petrópolis : Vozes, 1980. p. 27.

one who intervenes in human discernment not to decide, but to propose a second possibility of perception of the reality that had not been perceived before. The action of the Holy Spirit is to match the will of God and the human will. And from this coincidence of wills and new senses, the missionary Christian acts. Obedience brings with it the "Pauline audacity" of the apostle who no longer acts solely in his own name. His actions express a superior activity which, once inspired by the Holy Spirit, overcomes the human limitations of the missionary. The purpose of his announcement is no longer himself, the Church or formulas, but the salvation.

#### 1. 1. Mission as a salvation

Obedient to the action of the Spirit, the missionary is the one who proposes the mission as salvation.

Objectively, the reflection on salvation is born of an affirmation that is sometimes forgotten in the history of theology: "All that God does, has done and will do in this world is for man.<sup>176</sup> ». This datum is revealed from the first page of the creation of the man (Gn) to the last page of the Apocalypse which culminates in the manifestation of the saved man. And the mission of Jesus inserted in it has no other purpose than to offer salvation.

Jesus was and is a man so that all become men in him. So salvation is to make men men, because what was lost was the man himself, who was dehumanized and who is dehumanizing himself. In this sense, Comblin will affirm: "to save is to free man from what prevents him from being a man. And what prevents him from being a man? The man himself and his own human limitations. Salvation is defined at this level: to free man from his incapacity or his will to be a man. (...) The object of the Gospel is: to be a man. The object of salvation is to be a man in every sense of the word. This being a man is the term of a reconquest of man by himself and on himself<sup>177</sup> ».

Hence the urgency of the "humanization of the Gospel". Any attempt to separate evangelization and humanization destroys what makes the heart of Christianity. To evangelize is Jesus' own mission. Yet the gospel is not a "mere word"; on the contrary, it is an effective word that produces what is announced: evangelization aims at the salvation of the human by putting it on the path of a renewed man. What is it if it is not humanization? This is the definition of the humanism of God. Among so many "humanisms" created in the course of

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<sup>176</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teologia da missão*. Petrópolis : Vozes, 1980. p. 36.

<sup>177</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teologia da missão*. Petrópolis : Vozes, 1980. p. 38.

history to classify people, God presents his own: to save the human being in its entirety by giving him another opportunity to integrate all human dimensions into the process of human reproduction by the configuration to the person of Jesus<sup>178</sup>.

There is no doubt about the urgency of changing ecclesiastical and social structures throughout all times (and especially now). But external structural changes that can be manipulated for various interests will always be ambiguous. On the other hand, the salvation proposed by the Gospel is the one that touches the freedom of the human. That is why Comblin will affirm: "Saving man will always first of all rely on that flame of freedom and responsibility that is at the bottom of every man (Ga 5). (...) The act that comes from freedom is love. All love presupposes a man who has rediscovered something of his freedom. Freedom and love: here are the two concepts of Christian anthropology, the two eschatological themes, and fruits of Christ's salvation. Salvation consists in restoring freedom or love in men<sup>179</sup> ».

For this reason, ultimately, the missionary's central proclamation of the Gospel is not only aimed at suppressing the powers of the concrete structures into which we are inserted, but also at transforming them to ensure that its legitimate role is fulfilled, as there is the expression of human freedom and love between men who were first touched by the Gospel<sup>180</sup>.

In this sense, Jesus and his Gospel do not operate on the structure of humanity, but on the source, the point where freedom and love have their spring, which are not definitive conquests, which are obliged and not given, but which are continually maintained in a constant process of experience and practice of Christianity, in encounter with each other.

### *The saving action*

In contrast to all postmodern impositions of subjectivism, individualism and self-centeredness, the humanized salvation presented by the missionary from the Gospel presupposes the encounter with the other. And Comblin explains it by the various forms of "Words".

The first is the Word that comes from the encounter with the other during the contact between people who speak to each other by overcoming the barriers. The missionary is one whose word has the value and strength of the Word of God, which is the subject of his encounters with people. Just like Jesus' encounters with his interlocutors in biblical texts,

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<sup>178</sup>SOUZA, A. *El análisis de la desconexión de sentido entre la esperanza y la acción humana, a partir de la obra de José Comblin*. Doctoral thesis. Université catholique de Louvain, 2014. p. 341.

<sup>179</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teologia da missão*. Petrópolis, Vozes, 1980. p. 41.

<sup>180</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Vocação para a liberdade*. São Paulo : Paulus. 1988.

those between missionaries and people must also awaken freedom and love, which lead to a transforming force through a new action.

The "Word", considered in its biblical sense, concerns any gesture, any expression of a love capable of arousing another love as an answer, of a freedom that gives rise to freedom. The strength of the word is reciprocity, just as the strength of God towards the man who revives the creature by awakening in it the first love.

Far from the mythological patterns that eventually influenced ancient theology, in which dead heroes saved people, the New Testament destroys this idea by the peculiarity of the resurrection of Jesus. The Gospels clearly state that the Savior is the risen Christ and comes among men to speak to them and to act in them. This is the salvation. And it is this form of life that makes the encounter with Jesus, announced by the missionaries, not only a mystical phenomenon nor an exceptional and abstract experience.

Concretely, it becomes present in a usual way thanks to an encounter with a man, a human person, whose word, love and freedom constitute a revelation and an appeal. Men become parts and instruments of the saving act of Christ when they become the messengers of his announcement from their personal encounter with the risen.

#### *The salvation of the saved man*

For this reason, salvation can be observed as a lived situation. Salvation becomes concrete in the reality of history through the movement of men and women who, restored in a first moment, constantly fight for their conquests and for the maintenance of love and freedom.

Comblin will say: "Man becomes a man to the extent that he conquers himself to conquer his humanity first of all on himself and, consequently, also on the other structures which prevent and limit his humanity". And the beginning of salvation is faith. Faith as a response of man to the encounter with Jesus, the awakening of a new man, the awakening of a new freedom and a new love. From this comes the rest of the Christian life, while this faith is a global act of openness and receptivity to the presence of Jesus Christ.

All the rest (the confessions, the formulas of faith) are the explicitation of this initial faith to answer the needs which are not properly of the faith, but of the human acts. Even if some theologies do, for Comblin there is no way to completely separate the act of faith from human life as if it were the exit to another world without contact with it. On the contrary, it is



from this first act of consciousness, of openness, of adherence to the person of Christ that we call faith, that new practices and a new form of being are structured.

Faith precedes active charity, and from there it struggles against evil installed in the world (inside and outside man). Again, contrary to the claims of modernity, the Gospel shows us that human activities are not neutral. Actions (based on charity and faith) operate through the available means of history, promoting their development and conversion, and generating hope of victory over established situations, whether personal or structural. Hope inserted into the world supports the Church's mission and its challenge to transform it<sup>181</sup>. The only force capable of keeping the mission free and on the move is hope. It will support the Christian faith beyond Christianity established as religion and will seek to give answers to its essence, which is purely eschatological<sup>182</sup>.

Charity is based on the hope of being able to modify the individual and social man, as well as on the hope that rests on a faith: faith in the power given to men, in the Spirit sent to produce something new.

Thus, for Comblin, the missionary's announcement is anthropologically transformative. "If we consider salvation in its presence in man, as an effect produced in him, as his way of being, we can say that it is the salvation of faith (...). To save man is to save what is in him the source of his initiatives, projects, creative dreams, risk options, perseverance in adversity: to save his faith in the human work, his faith in man, by clearly revealing to him the unshakeable source of a God who creates freedom and not slavery<sup>183</sup> ».

Finally, it is important to emphasize the mission as a service. It is a service offered by the Church that missionaries continue to carry out without elaborate formulas, without magical or ready solutions, while respecting the historical time of the present. The Church has not received the ability to achieve the salvation of men, nor to oblige them to do so.

The service performed by missionaries relies on the action of the Holy Spirit given by Jesus to each man and woman, who put themselves in his dynamic. Then, the liberation of man ultimately comes from the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, who works in him and leads him

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<sup>181</sup>The Second Vatican Council vindicated this perspective precisely in the *Ad Gentes* decree, 2 affirming: "The Church is, by nature, missionary, since it originates from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit, according to the plan of God the Father "(AG, 2). "The whole Church is missionary; the work of evangelization is a fundamental duty of the people of God "(AG 35).

<sup>182</sup>KUZMA, C. *A esperança cristã na teologia da esperança: 45 anos da teologia da esperança em Jürgen Moltmann, sua história, seu caminho, sua esperança*, p. 462. The author states: "She (the Church) is a sign and a sacrament as Vatican Council II rightly put it in the constitution *Lumen Gentium*."

<sup>183</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teologia da missão*. Petrópolis : Vozes, 1980. p. 48.

to move freely in history from a conviction of faith and adherence to his way of being in the way of being the very person of Jesus.

As in the case of Jesus, the activity of the missionary consists of two fundamental acts: to announce and exhort. The purpose of the announcement is the coming of the Kingdom of God and is realized through meaningful words and gestures that transform old men into new men, according to Pauline theology<sup>184</sup>. And the exhortation, that is to say, the call to man to enter into consonance with the Kingdom of God, assumes an enormous confidence in the capacity of change given to the human.

Christianity is distinct from systems and ideologies that are closed by being based on the questioning of man by another man. And this interpretation is service coming from the love of neighbor and openness to him. Salvation comes from an act of love for the neighbor, the invitation initiated by Jesus and continued by every Christian who puts himself in a missionary attitude.

#### Conclusion

From all the density of Comblin's work on the mission, we sought to present in this presentation what we believe to be the key points of his understanding of the theme.

Comblin understands mission not as an accessory to the Church, but in accordance with Vatican Council II, as the primary activity of the Church: to fulfill the proclamation, of the proclamation of the person of Jesus. It is clear to the author that this missionary centrality has not yet been assumed by the Church, which in the course of its history has lost itself in a process of bureaucratized institutionalization, leaving aside what is peculiar to its essence.

It is the historical and current reality that confirms this situation. In Latin America, the Fifth General Conference of CELAM, held in Aparecida, Brazil, strongly underlined this perspective by identifying not only the reduction and migration of Christians, but also the phenomenon of "religious circulation", also present in the world inside and outside the Christian communities. The Church of John Paul II and Benedict XVI stopped going to others and they left elsewhere. In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, taking up the agenda of the Second Vatican Council, Francis asks us to take the initiative to be a Church in a state of mission and to come out of ourselves to men and women who have increasingly complex demands and expect from us, Christians, an openness to dialogue.

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<sup>184</sup>COMBLIN, J. *Teología de la Revolución*. Madrid : Herder, 1971. p. 285-286.

In this sense, in addition to creating and strengthening missionary work, there is an urgent need to continually recall their foundations to move forward. To do a mission, according to what has been presented in our text, is not only the proclamation of the Gospel, but in a last instance to generate new men and women who, with their personal limitations, allow themselves to be encouraged by the Holy Spirit who was given to us in the constant process of self-renewal from the adhesion by the act of faith to the gospel and the person of Jesus.

Let's get to missionary service!

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# Mission of the Church in the Past, Present and the Future in an Asian Perspective

**By Mgr. Yvon Ambroise**

## **1. Preamble**

The paper analyses the mission of the Church (*Missio ad Gentes*) in a holistic perspective, keeping in mind the command of Christ at the moment of his departure from this world to his Father (Mt. 28:18-20) as well as his caution about the judgement of a person at his death (Mt. 25:31-40). Secondly it is restricted to an Asian perspective about the mission of the Church. Being an analytical paper with historical, sociological and some theological inputs the analysis is meta-personal and hence no intention or purpose needs to be attributed to the content of the analysis.

Since the world has been going through several social, economical, political and cultural changes there have been several nuances that were added to missionary work over the centuries which enriched the concept of mission. Further the concept of mission has evolved a lot from the past to the present day in the Asian scenario. But this evolution cannot be seen independent of the developments of the Vatican's teachings through Popes over ages. Actually there is no unilateral dimension to this change. There were realities and changes that took place in the social, economic, political and cultural fields over the world influencing the change of thinking and decrees of the Pope. The changes taking place in the mission countries both in the thinking (even theologically) and in the legitimised cultural factors were incorporated into this process. All these made this change process in policies and practices acquired a dialectical nature and not a unilateral one. This paper would first study historically the official position of papal teachings on the *missio Ad Gentes* in the course of history. Thus in the contextual setting of the socio-economic, politico-cultural contexts paper would trace in a summary way all these trends and contexts as well as the beliefs and practices of mission work in Asia.

A word of caution is needed on the use of the word "Indian". It was a historical error to call the local people of American Continent (Latin America and North American Continent) with the name "Indian". The first discoverers of the lands used the word thinking that they

discovered India. Hence this historical error continues today. The addition of the word “Red Indians” was also used to distinguish them from Indians in Asia.

## **2. Historical Evolution on the concept and practice of Missionary work through the years**

We need to study the historical evolution of the past leading to the present in the work of the mission of the Church. For the spread of Christianity the Asian Church (mission work) was heavily dependent on Vatican's teachings and directives as well as the personnel engaged in mission work. Hence we trace hereby the different teachings of the Popes on the mission work. Asia cannot be understood outside the teaching of Popes but with abundant Asian originalities both in its existence and its historical presence

Missionary work is the main concern and command of Jesus Christ. Hence we must analyse the historical evolution on the understanding and practice of the concept of mission through the centuries from the perspective of Papal teachings that was in turn influenced in a dialectical way by the mission lands. We have historical documents mostly from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century but the origin of the mission was from the mandate of Christ and continued its practice from AD 33. We shall summarily deal with those mission efforts.

### **2.1 Era of Christ and Spread of Christianity AD 1 to AD 313**

**A word of the great management decision of St. Peter on the headquarters of the Catholic Church by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.**

**The centre or the headquarters of the early Church was Jerusalem. We do not see any demand anywhere in the Acts of the Apostles that this Centre should be shifted to Rome. This was the decision taken by Peter, who was appointed the head of the Church by Jesus. The handing over of the tradition that during the persecution in Rome, Peter tried to flee Rome and on his way met Jesus going to Rome. Peter asked Jesus: Quo Vadis? (Where do you go?) Jesus answered him that since he is fleeing Rome, He is going there to take charge of the Church. The fact that this tradition lives in the minds of people today it shows its authentic character and the plan of God.**

**What would have been if Peter had not changed the headquarters of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome? How did he come to the conclusion that he had to change the headquarters of the Church to Rome? Definitely it must have been an inspiration and direction from the Holy Spirit. Imagine that Peter had not shifted the headquarters of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome, what would have been the history of the Church today wherein even the very tomb of Christ does not belong exclusively to the Catholic Church?**

**We see the unmistakable hand and the initiative of the Holy Spirit in this decision to shift the Centre to Rome. It had definitely impacted the history of the Church which converted the entire Roman Empire.**

After the Ascension of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit the Church began to expand territorially to different ethnic groups. The early Christian faith centered on Eucharistic Celebration started the spread of Christianity. It is significant to quote Acts 2:42 "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers".

Let me quote Brother John of Taizé <sup>1</sup> “Prisons occupy an important place in the story of the life of the early Christians, and this will be true throughout the centuries whenever the Church witnesses authentically to the Gospel message. By these accounts of persecution Luke counterbalances the “triumphal” aspect of the way of the Church. It may well have been true that the first Christians “were held in esteem by all the people” (Acts 2:47; cf 4:33b; 5:13); it is no less true that beginning on the day after Pentecost they encountered hostility. Immediately following the first cure performed by Peter and John, they were arrested and had to appear before the Sanhedrin (Acts ch.4). And that is only the first of a long series of hardships that believers will have to endure: stays in prison (Acts 5:18,8:3,12:4,16:23, 21:34), appearances in the court (Acts 5:27, 6:12,17:6, 18:12,22:30,24:1,25:6,23) violence (Acts 5:40,16:22, 18:17-19:23ff, 21:30f, 23:10), persecutions (Acts 8:1,13:50) and even an execution (Acts 7:55-60). In this way the disciples follow to the letter the way of their Master, the way of the cross.

And just, as for their Master, the failure is only apparent. Human malice never has the last word. Paradoxically the persecutions contribute to the success of the Gospel. Following the death of Stephen, for example, a persecution breaks out and leads to the scattering of believers: “And there arose on that day a great persecution against the Church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... Now those who were scattered went about preaching the Word”. (Acts 8:1, 4). The second phase of the expansion of the Church (Acts 1:8) then begins. Persecuted, scattered the young Church becomes a missionary body.”

As thousands of people accepted Christ, the State of Roman Empire did not favor this. Hence there started a persecution of Christians till 313 AD. When Emperor Constantine himself embraced Christianity, from that time the entire Roman Empire advocated Christianity.

## **2.2 From AD 313 to AD 500: Era of Christification of the Roman Empire**

Because of the conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine he promulgated in AD 313 an Edict of Milan that started the mission work in Europe. By AD 500 Christianity spread through the Roman Empire. The irony was the fact that Roman Empire that was the enemy of Christianity and persecuted it became an instrument of Christian mission after AD 313. By AD 500 the Roman Empire became Christian<sup>2</sup>.

## **2.3 From AD 500 to AD 1400**

From A.D. 500 onwards Christianity spread from Roman Empire to Europe. Missionaries were sent to every part of Europe. It took nearly one thousand years to reach the entire Europe. The Kings in Europe became Christians and worked together with the



Roman Catholic Church, namely with Popes, Bishops, Priests, Heads of the Monastic orders and Religious Congregations. By 1400 the whole Europe was Christian. This was a time Europe discovered America and the missionaries brought Christ to America<sup>3</sup>.

#### **2.4 Changes in 15<sup>th</sup> Century (Introduction of *Padroado* Rights)<sup>4</sup>**

The rise of Ottoman Empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and its flourishing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a major concern of the Popes since it was an Islamic force. In order to evade an interference with their politics and territorial ambition Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) turned to the maritime forces of the Portuguese and the Spanish on the Atlantic Ocean by giving a spiritual dimension to their explorations and journeys. In other words the Political powers of these nations had only political and economic interests through such expeditions to the American Continent and elsewhere. The Pope entrusted to the King of Portugal and Spain the task of evangelization of the lands they will discover and conquer. Further he gave them also the right of Patronage of the local Church, called *Padroado*, with the right to appoint the bishops in the name of the Pope in those countries. The exact areas of evangelization were clearly divided between the Portuguese and the Spanish after the treaties of *Tordesillas* of 1494. The Eastern part of the Atlantic Ocean was given to Portuguese including Brazil extending even up to Japan and the western part of the Atlantic Ocean was given to the Spanish which contains the North American Continent up to Philippines. At this period, to be a missionary meant that one goes to another country and plants the Church. Hence the word, coined as “the planting of the Church” or “the planting of the faith” in far off lands, was thus called in those places practically up to 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Dominicans, the Franciscans as well as all the authorised Religious Orders of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, who had the experience of understanding the endeavours of missionary work took the mandate of mission work at the request of the Kings of Portugal and Spain.

It is in this connection that the Jesuits were sent to the East, especially to India from 1542. One of the great missionary figures we can cite was St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552). Incidentally having been the Bishop of Tuticorin for 14 years I can state that St. Francis Xavier from Spain came to Goa and then he came over by sea to Manapad, situated in the diocese of Tuticorin. He lived in a cave near the sea and preached Christianity and converted the fisher folk to Christianity.

#### **2.5 Changes in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>5</sup>**

In the middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century there was a clash of ideologies between the old missionaries and the new ones coming with the enlightenment approach of Renaissance. This interaction brought out the injustices done to the local population in mission lands. Though the missionaries evangelized the people, the political powers of Spain and Portugal rented out the land of the local population to the local population themselves at a profitable rate in the Spanish colonies called in Spanish *encomiendas*. Though in fact it is the land of the origin of local Indians for which the locals paid rents to foreign colonialists. Gradually there arose a conflict between the local population, the colonial powers and the generation of people, born of the mixing of the colonial powers with the local population. The conflict of interest consisted of the following. The colonial powers were interested to convert the local people to Christianity to make them as Portuguese or Spanish in order to make them a great work force for them in the Colonies. But the missionaries wanted to evangelise them to promote the human dignity and to prepare them for the salvation of souls. This situation of conflict mixed with violence in subtle forms of the colonial powers was more and more pressurizing the Holy See to do something on such a phenomenon. The Papacy was conscious of the problems of the *Padroado* system and the forces that were opposing the spread of the gospel. Hence the Pope wanted to purify the missionary efforts from any political interests and from political powers. Such contextual problems caused particular damage in Japan from 1612 when there was a condemnation of Christianity in the country followed by the expulsion of the missionaries. This made the Pope to take the whole responsibility under his control.

## **2.6 Changes in 17<sup>th</sup> Century** <sup>6</sup>

Pope Gregory XV (1621-1623) founded the Congregation of the Propagation of Faith in January 1622 which was responsible for the following activities: improve the formation of missionaries in the spirit of the Council of Trent, to start seminaries to form the local clergy who would take the responsibility of the mission work in their country and to encourage nomination of Apostolic Vicars in some areas having the powers of a Bishop without having a titular diocese and receiving the Jurisdiction of geographical area. This was done mostly not to hurt or to earn enmity with the political powers of the countries like that of China. This new missionary thinking was given in the instructions to the Apostolic Vicars from 1659, insisting on the spiritual and intellectual quality of missionaries as well as to develop

prudence to be followed towards European and local Political powers. Vatican instructed that the missionary work should develop along with the spirit of the unity of the Church around the Pope. The salvation of souls and an introduction to the Christian faith among the local people were made to become sensitive not to hurt the rights and the cultural heritage of each local population. The political powers as well as the economic powers in those countries in Europe delegated their powers locally to their own Chieftains and were not happy with such an attitude of Rome.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was also a change in the traditional missionary work used in Asia and Latin America. The missionary work endeavoured to give respect to religious and philosophic traditions of the mission country and to give more respect to their culture and values not inimical to Christian faith.

## **2.7 The 18<sup>th</sup> Century** <sup>7</sup>

Two events of the 18<sup>th</sup> century deserve our attention. One was the suppression of the Order of Jesuits in 1773 by the decree "*Dominus ac Redemptor*" issued by Pope Clement XV (1705-1774). The second important event was the independence of the United States of America in 1783.

The Jesuits were totally 22,589 in number at that time. Their suppression brutally disorganised the missionary work in the far off lands. The teaching staff in several Institutions lost their job. The noviciates were also closed. Many of the Christians consequently had no pastors. This move made the other Religious Congregations to be afraid of any such move arising from theological disputes which could also happen to them by way of suppression. Such a victory of a kind of anti-clericalism sowed the seeds of uncertainty on the future for the missionaries.

It was the Protestant Organisations that maximized this event to expand their in-roads to those places. The expansion of the maritime power of the British also helped this trend.

The war of independence of the United States of America (that profited by the treaty of Paris of 1783) was another force that shocked differently the Christian community of United States of America. The independence movements started to come up everywhere.

But for Canada the colonial British hegemony, especially after the victories of the British in 1763 was pouring cold water on the desire for independence.

But in the other Spanish and Portuguese colonies the British hegemony had a major impact on the desire for independence that could arise in certain regions. The Church took a historical lesson from these events to quicken the process of the autonomy of the Churches by placing a hierarchy belonging to the local population. Following the spirit and the word of the Council of Trent there arose a Christian identity specific to the American continent. It was seen in the places of devotion and the pilgrimages organised with an adaptation of the Liturgy (e.g. mass in Créol). Devotions like our Lady of Guadalupe which was a significant devotion having a pilgrimage to the place of the apparition of Mary in 1531. Besides there were a lot of devotions for Saints like St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617), Marianne of Jesus (1618-1645) at Quito, etc.

Thus the American Continent acquired a double image as the situation existed: if it was situated in the Andean that was more inculturated to the local Indians and if found besides Mexico and West Indians of the Caribbean Sea it manifested a Creole Catholicism.

This desire for autonomy within the Church thus was accompanied and even increased the ferment of independence that appeared practically everywhere.

## **2.8. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century** <sup>8</sup>

With the introduction of ships to be navigated by steam power the travelling time was cut short as well as the communication between the Continents gained momentum. Europe got stabilised politically from 1815. It facilitated the deployment of missionaries in greater numbers. It was particularly significant by the number of women Religious Congregations, leaving to far off mission lands. Thus the characteristic of 20<sup>th</sup> century was the very high number of women religious belonging to old Congregations like the Daughters of Charity, Rev. Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres and many new Congregations founded after the French Revolution. This introduction of the Women Religious brought about a diversification of missionary activities. We find in missionary lands these qualities and categories of persons: teachers, nurses, contemplatives, with exemplary behaviour of their lives, being strengthened and reinforced by their life of prayer and community life, to work to restore back the dignity of a human person, defending right to life and assured the

development of women in all the cultures. This served as a great channel of enrichment of the missionary work.

Pope Pius VII (1742-1823) and Gregory XVI (1765-1846) reorganised the Congregation of the Propagation of faith that started in 1817 stressing the centralisation of missionary endeavours to the detriment of Portuguese and Spanish *Padroado system* and tried to root out also the conflicts between the different Religious Congregations in the mission territories though each area of the mission land was entrusted to one Religious Missionary Congregation.

In 1845, the Congregation of Propagation of Faith by its directive "*Neminem Perfecto*" recalled the missionary thinking of Pope Gregory XIV. They consisted of the following: priority of following the formation of the local clergy but with the same type and quality of European seminaries and multiplication of Vicariates. While the old missions in the American Continent and Asia were sub-divided as per the increase of the number of Christians new missions were opened in Africa and Oceania.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century (after 1870) after the Council of I Vatican in 1869 there was a fair distribution of Bishops that came together for the Council. In 1878 Pope Leo XIII who was elected Pope, pursued the centralisation of Vatican which alone could guarantee a missionary work, stripped of any compromise with political powers. He followed the true aim and ideal of the Church to evangelize others in the world, going beyond any racist division. Pope further urged that men need to be saved and led to Christian liberty, free from any human slavery as well as from religious fears. He advocated the autonomy of every mission by which responsibility should be gradually taken over by the local clergy with a quality formation. He affirmed that only Christianity could assure the bases of the true civilisation which contains neither slavery nor cruelty nor barbarism. Pope Pius X (1835-1914), proclaimed St. Francis Xavier as a patron of the missions. He revised totally the statutes of the Congregation of Propagation of Faith. He liberated European Congregations from the direct control of Rome and integrated all the North and South American countries which had acquired independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Mexico, Equator, Colombia, and Chile and withdrew fully the *Padroado* system of Spain and Portugal.

## **2.9 The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Happenings till 1944<sup>9</sup>**

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the great advances made in missionary endeavours in all the continents by the Catholic or Protestant Churches energised the missionary Church, which was young, active, consolidating its base by the nomination of the local clergy, over the years, nearly 20 local Bishops. It also brought into the main current the ecumenical awareness and its consequences.

The important preoccupation of the Church during the I World War (1914-1918) was that it destabilised the mission work because the missionaries from Europe had to come back leaving the missions to their own Pastors because of the Political and Colonial changes (changing of territories and the tensions arising thereof). There were different reactions among the missionaries. Some wanted that Christianity should be well founded in the local culture and that the activities of the Church should be handed over to the local ecclesiastical authorities. There were some others who exaggerated their national belonging of their Apostolate which opposed the Christian universal spirit. It is in this context that Pope Benedict XV denounced this kind of nationalism manifested by Europeans missionaries during and after the First World War. Thus, he removed the colonial interests by his Apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* in 1926 from missionary endeavours by distinguishing between the interest of God and the vested interests. The Catholic Church, he said, cannot be a stranger in any nation.

It was Benedict XV who started Mission Sunday in 1926 to pray for the missions and he proclaimed St. Thérèse of Child Jesus on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1927 as a patroness of the missions. He started the practice of praying for the conversion of the world. He also encouraged the foundation of contemplative monasteries in the mission countries from 1926-1939 and thus 80 monasteries of which 23 were Carmelites were founded.

His successor Pius XI (1857-1939) followed the missionary policies of Benedict XV. He promoted the transfer of missionary activities to the local Christian community by naming Bishops from the local clergy. He insisted that the local population have the capacities to take charge of the life of the Church. He published in 1926 in the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*. This was a good follow up of Pope Benedict XV *Maximum Illud*. At the same time the Pope encouraged missiological studies, promoting the reflections on the strategies of missionary works in the previous centuries as well as the formation of missionaries who are better adapted to enter into the culture of the land of the mission. He founded the Faculty of

Missiology in the Gregorian University in 1926, a special Missionary and Scientific Institute in the College of Propaganda Fide in 1933 and a Missiological Centre in the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. Chairs of history of missions were founded for example in the Catholic Institute of Paris by Gregory Goyau, at Lyon by Rev. Fr. Jules Monchanin; Rev. Fr. de Lubac opened a course in 1941 on the theological foundation of missions. Rome multiplied such efforts so that the young Churches may flourish in the Continents.

### **2.10 The New Face of Christian Missions After 1945**<sup>10</sup>

After the II world war (1939-1945), there was a collapse of colonial powers. The world was divided into two major blocks: the Liberal world and the Communist world, starting a wave of cold war. Latin America was caught in the midst of this cold war. There was a threat of Communism which was expanding itself due to its well organized propaganda mechanism. Hence the members of these Latin American Churches were obliged to place themselves as a counter power, with the risk of being persecuted.

In such a context of cold war Pope Pius XII had to face the challenges of geopolitical situations and recalled in all his writings the supra-nationality in missionary activities. Further, Rome increased its efforts to nominate Cardinals and Bishops from the local population, thereby anticipating the coming of the independence of the colonies that would be achieved. All these were unavoidable in Asia, Africa and Oceania.

In 1957 Pope Pius XII proclaimed an Encyclical *Fidei Donum* to address the new needs of the Young Churches. He broke the myth that Evangelization is the domain of specialised persons. It is the work of every catholic lay or clergy. Missionary work is the collective responsibility of the entire Church and not just that of Europe. Thus the encyclical permitted that the Diocesan priests could be sent for a particular period to another Diocese as well as to another Continent for mission work.

Further Pope Pius XII insisted also that the laity also take this missionary responsibility by encouraging the Movement of Catholic Action in all the Churches. These movements created a link with such movements in other Continents which helped to have an exchange of lay missionaries between them. One of the standing examples was Pauline Jericho who started a movement for the Propagation of faith which was appreciated and approved by Popes and afterwards owned it up as a Pontifical Mission Society. In the same

period four Pontifical Missionary Societies originated to promote evangelisation under the guidance and support of the Pope. Besides Propaganda Fide (1622), Pontifical Society of Holy Childhood (1843), Peter the Apostle (1889) and Missionary Union of Clergy (1916) were coordinated in a systematic way by the Holy See.

Pope Pius XII also made an appeal to the European Religious Congregations to found their novitiate and seminaries to respond to the demands of the mission, arising from various countries. This helped the internationalization of Religious Communities with the arrival young Religious Men and Women who were from the mission countries themselves. Thus in 1930s the people of the country could also equip their own institutions and novitiates with properly trained persons. All these encouraged lay movements to be at the service of the poor as well as services based on justice and peace.

From 1945 we also see initiatives of inculturation of the Catholic faith within the framework of the values, rituals and cultural practices of the country they lived as missionaries. Hence experiences of interreligious community life as that of Rev. Fr. Jules Monchanin (1895-1957), Rev. Fr. Henri Le Saux (1910-1973) gave an in-depth knowledge of other religions which were taught in Catholic Universities. Thus Fr. Henri de Lubac elaborated on Buddhism and Louis Massignon (1883-1962) on Islam. These new experiences and approaches opened the doors of Christianity to respect other religions in such a way as to start a dialogue among other religions. This approach has been taken by II Vatican Council and supported in the Encyclical of Paul VI in *Ecclesiam Suam* in 1964. This inspired a new dimension to Missionary work showing the necessity to be open to the dialogue between the Church and contemporary world.

### **2.11 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Second Vatican Council (11 October 1962) and its Contribution**

The II Vatican Council convoked by Pope John XXIII on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1962 was at the same time in a position to profit by the 2000 years of the mission work. The Council made the synthesis of all the learning at the previous centuries and thus marked the fourth face of the missionary work of the Church.

II Vatican Council brought out a missionary document "*Ad Gentes*" that gave a new orientation to mission in the world. Mission is in the very nature of the Church as it arises



from the very Trinity itself that communicated itself to humanity *Ad Gentes* No.10 defined the mission in the following way. The Church is sent by Christ to manifest and communicate the love of God to all men and to all nations understood that the Church should be involved in an enormous missionary work". The Church becomes naturally by its very nature a missionary church.

All these posed an important question for the future of mission work. How do we hold that mission work is constitutive of the Church on the one hand and on the other that the Church respects the liberty of conscience and expressed its regard for the believers of other religions? These questions continue a new theological search in the Church to increase a better understanding of mission work.

II Vatican Council opened new avenues of missionary work:

- The very identity of the Church is its missionary character and all the members of the Church should be preoccupied with it
- It is Christ who is the light of the nations and the Church is the Sacrament of the meeting of God and Humanity and its origin is the Holy Trinity.

Further the II Vatican Council did not want to be involved in a defensive position vis a vis modernity wherein we discern the signs of times. The Council placed the human person at the centre of creation and the possibility of salvation was offered to everyone. All these were summarised in 1965 in the document of Vatican Council *Ad Gentes*. This was followed up very actively by the Latin American Bishops' Conferences particularly at Medellin in 1968. It had the presence of 145 bishops, 95 experts and 9 observers taking into full account the culture of Latin Americans as well as the resources of these Churches to put into practice the message of II Vatican Council by adapting them to the particular social, political and economic realities of the sub continent. The topic of poverty took a centre place at Medellin as well as at Puebla in Mexico in 1979 coining the expression "preferential option for the poor".

"*Gaudium et Spes*", "*Dignitas Humanae*" and "*Nostra Aetate*" are equally significant II Vatican documents for mission work. In other words they define that the Church is not above the civil society or by its side but is mixed with the society. *Dignitas Humanae* brought out for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church a document that accepted the religious liberty for all persons. In *Nostra Aetate* the Church expressed her esteem and respect for all religious traditions. For the first time the II Vatican Council documents gave

their reflexions on other religious traditions. It is also a turning point in the thinking about the Jews. It was also significant to note that Pope Paul VI seeing the contextual trends proposed the new ways of evangelization in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. For him the Church existed to evangelise.

All these posed an important question for the future of mission work. How do we hold on the one hand that mission work is constitutive of the Church and on the other hand that the Church respects the liberty of conscience and expresses its regard for the believers of other religions?

The origin of the expression 'New Evangelization was proposed by Pope John Paul II at Santa Domingo (1992). He introduced a working paper titled "New Evangelization human development and Christian Culture". It was keeping in mind the 500 years of missionary efforts in Latin America Pope Paul VI proposed as the theme of New Evangelization and the formation of a new Christian culture. Noticing missionary commitment and missionary creativity in the Church he prepared the era of New Evangelization from AD 2000.

As St. Pope John Paul II defined that new evangelization is not a new message but a new ardour, new methods and new expressions.

With the arrival of Pope Benedict XVI the new evangelisation picked up a momentum. Further his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* ( December 25, 2005 ) *Spe Salvi* (November 30, 2007) and *Caritas in Veritate* (June 29, 2009). They define the new evangelisation as an art of building a new evangelisation of love. He clearly formulated that to encounter with the Risen Christ and the experience of his love is central to mission work. In 2008 a Synod of Bishops, called by Pope Benedict XVI he materialised the theme: the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation was "*Dei Verbum*"(18 November 1965). Its very structure was missionary: Word of God, Word in the Church and Word to the World. God speaks to the Church which takes the Word of God to the world.

The Pontifical Council for the promotion of New Evangelization was erected by Pope Benedict XVI on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010. It had the responsibility to coordinate all the new Evangelization initiatives in the Catholic Church and to see to the possibilities of supporting them.

From 7<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012 a Synod of Bishops was held in Vatican to probe on the theme “New Evangelization” for the transmission of Christian faith and to become a permanent missionary dimension in the Church. There was the Inauguration of the year of Faith on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and closing on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2013. It was the intention of the Church to promote New Evangelization for the transmission of Faith.

From 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013 Pope Francis started to be the Pope of New Evangelization calling every Christian as a missionary disciple. Pope Francis further gave us another missionary document through an Apostolic Exhortation called “*Evangelii Gaudium*” (joy of the Gospel which can said to be a core document where he calls for Kerygmatic (creative proclamation) and creative evangelization. It was also the conclusion of the Synod 2012. Similarly “*Amoris Laetitia*” is a very important document of Pope Francis calling all the families to involve in new evangelization.

With the arrival of Pope Francis in March 2013, he brought out his first encyclical “*Lumen Fidei*” (light of faith) (29 June 2013.) Faith is not to be a mere intellectual affair but an experience of the heart. It brought to the fore why, what, how of the life of faith to promote New Evangelization. There was the 28<sup>th</sup> World Youth day from 23 July to 28 July 2013, celebrated at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Millions of youth participated in it. “Go therefore, make disciples of all nations” was the leading theme.

At the end of the year of faith Pope Francis summarized the Synodal reflections in his Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*” (24 November 2013) the fruit of faith is joy. Year of the Consecrated Life from November 30, 2014 to February 2, 2016 invited the Religious to rejoice in their life of consecration to proclaim the faith. The Encyclical *Amoris Laetitia* (08.04.2016) and *Veritatis Gadium*(29.01.2018) are to be the integrated to go ahead to fulfill the vision of Jesus in and through New Evangelization.

The above historical evolution on the concept and practices of mission work right from the time of Christ to the Church today gives summarily that the concept of mission and practices was something lived through centuries amidst the interplay of social, economic, political and religio-cultural forces. In this background we could understand better the Asian Scenario on the concept and practices of missionary work.

### 3. Asian Scenario- The Contextual Setting

Asia consists of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and of a multi-faceted society. Only India with a population of 1.33 billion and China with 1.38 billion could make up half of the World's population. Besides, Asia is composed of nearly 40 countries with a variety of contextual situations: people under communist regime, deeply religious and traditional people, people living with peaceful co-existence, areas with bitter socio-religious or political conflicts going on for decades, some parts very highly developed and affluent and some other parts touching the poverty line, etc.

In spite of these varieties we can also find some similarities in Asia. We experience in India the presence of several major religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. India is also the birth place of Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism. The same scenario is more or less true in **South Asia**. In **South East Asia** except Philippines where the majority of Christian population (92%) in Asia is found we also find Islam, Buddhism and Vietnamese folk religions. In **East Asia** there were Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, Chinese folk religion and Shinto religions. Thus we see a variety of religions, cultures, ethnic groups and cultures that exist and co-exist in Asia.

Hence in Asia, Christianity did not have a smooth sailing and easy acceptance of Christianity because there were well formulated religions with the meaning system, value system, symbols and cultural practises as well as religious rituals already existing in every country for every religion. Hence Christianity needed to find its own place after a lot of struggle in every country in Asia. It explains the minority character of the Christians in all the countries except Philippines and East Timor in Asia.

At the very beginning we need to point out that it is very difficult to generalise the situation in Asia with all the varieties expressed above as well as complexities present. Further in the context of globalisation and market invasion the Asian countries have also competed equally with European and North Atlantic countries concerning modernisation, industrialisation as well as marketing. Though in the beginning stage, some of the Asian countries depended on the west for technology it is no more the case at present. On the contrary big intellectual giants in IT industry are found only in Asia and could be imported to the West and North Atlantic countries. By the sheer fact of its 4.5 billion

people (as of June 2019) that constitute roughly 60% of the world's population Asia tends to get dominance in several areas in the process of industrialisation, marketing as well as consumers and innovative IT intellectual experts.

While talking about Asia we need to take into account the major resource of people (4.5 billion), the multiplicity of languages, cultures and ethnic groups. Further the number of religions increasing their numbers day by day, the assertion of certain marginalised cultural groups needing due attention and place in the Asian scenario as well as the rise of religious fundamentalism in some countries. We should situate the concept of mission work particularly in the present scenario as well as for the future. Concerning the missionary works done in Asia we shall deal with specific countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan which form South Asia. Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) form South East Asia. Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, Taiwan, Tibet and Peoples Republic of China which form East Asia. We shall deal with each Country very briefly in a separate way.

### **3.1. SOUTH ASIA**

#### **3.1.1 India <sup>12</sup>**

##### **3.1.1.1. AD 52 – AD 1949**

Missionary work in India was started by one of the Apostles of Jesus himself, St. Thomas in the year 52 AD. At the dawn of Christian era there were trade routes connecting West Asia and the East. The land routes reached parts of North India. As regards the sea routes they reached the coast of Kerala and the other parts of South India. The hypothesis that there were the Jewish settlements and the trade connections with Malabar could validate the missionary endeavours of St Thomas<sup>13</sup>.

Further there are more evidences to prove the historicity of St. Thomas the Apostle in Malabar which is the Western part of South India <sup>14</sup>. The Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore houses the tomb of St. Thomas. Further there is another place called St. Thomas Mount where, as tradition holds, he was martyred. Further the 1900<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the martyrdom of St. Thomas in India was celebrated in 1972 in ecumenical fellowship. Proper

historical data and written documents regarding the existence of Christianity in India date from the end of the third and the beginning of fourth century<sup>15</sup>.

From the beginning of 6<sup>th</sup> century there is a record of relationships with the East Syria Church of Persia (today Iran and Iraq). The Syrian Christian community took efforts to establish a Metropolitan See in Kerala. This did not finally succeed.

To summarise this period it can be said that both St. Thomas Christians and Syrian Christians were inculturated in their Christian practices and beliefs with Hinduism. It is also said that those Christians belong to the upper echelon of the society i.e. high caste society. These were two reasons for the neglect of their missionary efforts: one was that they did not feel the urgency of preaching the Word of God to the lower castes. Secondly, they were well inculturated with Hinduism and hence they did not find the value for mission. Since they could not influence easily to their advantage the caste structure of Hindu society they did not make any attempt to break the caste structure of Hindu society. (George Evers P.445) "During the 13<sup>th</sup> century Indian Christianity made first contacts with Roman Catholic missionaries. The Franciscan missionary Odorich of Paderbone visited India in 1322 on his way to China. In the year 1498 the era of "Latin Christianity" in Indian Soil begins. After having sailed round Africa and the Cape of Good Hope, Vasco da Gama landed in the Indian port of Goa. From 1500 onwards Franciscan and Dominican missionaries came to India".

#### **3.1.1.2. AD 1500 – AD 1599**

In 1533 Pope Clement VII founded the Diocese of Goa which exercised jurisdiction of a vast territory which extended from the Cape of Good Hope till Japan. The Portuguese Kings were entrusted with the right of Patronage (*Padroado*) over the vast colonial empire which Portugal had built for itself in Asia (George Evers p.445-446)

Then St. Francis Xavier reached Goa in 1542. Within three years he started his successful missionary work among the fishermen (*paravas*) in Manapad in the Diocese of Tuticorin and Coromandal coast.

Inquisition was introduced into Goa in 1561. In 1567 the Council of Goa prohibited the use of force in conversion work. Madurai Mission by the Jesuits in 1595 started developing an incultured Christianity by accommodating certain rites, symbols and practices of Hinduism especially by Robert de Nobili (1577-1656).

Of course criticism was not spared on it though nearly for a century such accommodation method prevailed. As a reaction Papal Legate Maillard de Torunon forbade the Malabar Rites. Consequently all missionaries, going to India, have to swear "*sopra rite malabarichi*" involving a promise not to discuss the problems of accommodation of the Christian faith to Hindu rituals and full obedience to the Pope.

Though it officially brought some type discipline locally there was a conflict between St. Thomas Christians and Latin missionaries which was not based on their faith but a ritual practices. In 1959 the Archbishop of Goa Alexius de Menezes touched this delicate issue by conducting the synod of Diamper in 1599. This led to a schism. It was in fact the end of the ecclesiastical and ritual independence of St. Thomas Christians who had long standing ties with the Chaldean Church over the centuries.

#### **3.1.1.3. AD 1600- AD 1943**

In 1659 Propaganda Fide erected Malabar, Bijapur and North India as Apostolic Vicariates. In 1673 the jurisdiction of Portuguese Goa was restricted to Portuguese territory. Further Portugal had to give up *Padroado* rights fully in 1832 as per the demand of Pope Gregory XVI to which Portugal was not willing. Hence Propaganda Fide began to erect a series of Apostolic Vicariates: Apostolic Vicariates of Madras in 1832, of Bengal in 1834 and in 1836 that of Pondicherry and Madurai. This caused an ugly scenario to double jurisdiction in the same territory. In 1857 Vatican compromised by a concordat with Portugal by giving back its *Padroado right* for a short period. By 1884 Rome gained full control over the right to exercise full jurisdiction over the whole India by erecting an Apostolic Delegation. In 1886 Pope Leo XIII constituted the ordinary hierarchy in India ending the Goanese schism.

Apostolic Vicariates were made to become dioceses under 7 Church provinces: Goa, Bombay (Mumbai), Agra, Calcutta (Kolkata), Madras (Chennai), Verapoly and Pondicherry. In 1923 Vatican re-erected the Syro-Malabar Ecclesiastical Province of Ernakulam under which came Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam with their own hierarchy. In 1932, the Syro-Malankara Church was formed with the Archdiocese of Trivandrum when Bishop Mar Ivanios entered into union with Vatican.

#### **3.1.1.4 1944-1947**

In 1944 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) was formed as a Conference of Metropolitan Sees. It took place at Madras. From 1944-1960 the Apostolic Delegate exercised ex-officio the office of the President of CBCI.

### **3.1.1.5:1947-1962 New Developments in Independent India before II Vatican Council**

India gained independence from the British on August 15, 1947. Indeed it experienced the painful incidence of the partition of Pakistan, a kind of Hindu Muslim divide. The Catholic Church at that time had a high number of foreign missionaries. The leadership was entrusted to the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who was resolved to give the Country a Secular Constitution, embodying the spirit of secularism. This secular ideology reduced the influence of religious groups on the political life. There was no State Religion. No religion was privileged. On the first anniversary of Indian Independence Diplomatic relationships with Vatican was established with Indian government by erecting the Apostolic Inter-Nunciature in Delhi on August 15, 1948. Through a mission treaty of July 15, 1950 Portugal renounced its right of *Padroado* in the Diocesan Sees of Mangalore, Quilon, Trichinapoly, Cochin, San Thome Mylapore and Bombay.

Pope Pius XII appointed on December 4, 1950, the then Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay Valerian Gracias as the first Archbishop of Bombay and three years later as the first Indian Cardinal. The Papal central seminary in Kandy in Sri Lanka which was erected in 1893 by Pope Leo XIII was transferred to Pune, India in the existing De Nobili College of the Indian Jesuits.

From Jan 6-18, 1950 the first Plenary Council of India in Bangalore with 54 Bishops and Superiors of the Religious Congregations was inaugurated by Cardinal Norman Gilroy of Sydney, the Papal Legate by Pope Pius XII. It passed the first Constitution of "Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). This was a major step for the existence and work of the Catholic Church.

On January 26, 1950 the Indian Constitution was brought into operation. It contained Religious freedom including the right to propagate one's religion freely. This raised a storm among the Hindus, particularly among those tending towards fundamentalism of Hindu religion. In April 1954 such forces tabled the Nyogi report, containing a critical and even



biased opinion on the missionary work of the Christians, particularly in Madhya Pradesh. In 1950 the Indian High Court upheld the Constitutional Right of religions to propagate their religious convictions. This endorsed the right of foreign missionaries to engage themselves in missionary works. But at the same time the government started the move to restrict the entry of foreign missionaries. Today each foreign missionary is systematically followed up and their visas get terminated, asking them to quit India. The case of Rev. Fr. Henri Bonal, a priest of Missions Étrangères de Paris working in Dharmapuri district had to leave India in 2019. Only those who are specialists in a field where Indians lacked it were allowed to stay. But in India at present stage of exporting IT specialists to Europe and USA it is a very rare to identify such a situation. In 1960 a bill was introduced into the Indian Parliament against attempts to convert the tribal population by Christian missionaries. The fundamentalist forces consider the tribals to be Hindus. But in reality they are not Hindus but people following animistic beliefs. They introduced a new word *Vanavasi* for the tribals and want to incorporate them into the caste structure of Hinduism.

#### **3.1.1.6: After Second Vatican Council**

At the time of II Vatican Council the number of Catholics was 574 million and 45 out of 77 Catholic Bishop in India were Indians as well as 8 of them belonged to Oriental Rites. During the break between the third and the fourth session of II Vatican Council Pope Paul VI came to India as a Pilgrim of Peace for the 30<sup>th</sup> Eucharistic Congress held in Bombay (Mumbai) from 28 November to December 6, 1964. He was welcomed by Hindus and Muslims as well. There were also heavy controversies and agitation organised by radical Hindu groups. In 1966, the National, Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) was founded and it became a key element of the Indian Church to respond to the Challenges of II Vatican Council and fructified the Catholic Church. Among the key efforts mention could be made of All India Seminar: Church in India Today” in Bangalore in 1969, as well as the one held in 1981 in Bangalore. Late Fr.D. S. Amalorpavadoss was the founder and the dedicated leader to initiate new formation in the Catholic Church according to the mind of II Vatican Council.

The Church in the struggle for a New Society discussed and followed up the following topics: Reform and inculturation of liturgical celebration, inter-religious dialogue, the ecclesiology of the personnel and finance. Another important step on 1974 by the CBCI was

the setting of a “National Advisory Council (NAC) composed of Bishop Priests, Religions and lay persons. This was changed after due study in 1987 to “Catholic Council of India” as a permanent advisory council for the Catholic Church in India.

A number of seminars and efforts were taken towards inculturation, developing an Indian Spirituality based on Indian ethos, formation and involvement of the Laity in the Mission of the Church, starting of Basic Christian Communities, an Indian Liturgy with Indian Anaphora, etc.

### **3.1.1.7. Catholic Church and Three Rites**

Today the Catholic Church in India is constituted by three rites “The Roman Catholic Rite (also called Latin Rite), the Syro-Malabar Rite and the Syro Malankara Rite. The Syrian rites wanted the right to erect “eparchies” (dioceses) everywhere in India. In 1983 the Latin Indian Bishops’ Conference agreed that with Syria rite churches that ‘one’ Ecclesiastical region only ‘one’ Bishop should be installed. Finally in 1987, Pope John Paul II wrote a letter on the problem of rites. This letter settled all doubts on matters of three Ritual Churches. In 1993 the Pope John Paul II appointed a Major Archbishop as head of the Church of Syro-Malabar Catholics. It gave a status of an autonomous Church. In 1997 the Bishops of Syro-Malabar Rite set up their own philosophical and theological institutions for training their own clergy. They created a Research and formation centre of the Syro-Malabar Church in Kottayam named “Oriental Institute of Religious Studies.”

Pope John Paul II visited India in February 1986. He was the Second Pope to come to India after Pope Paul VI. He was invited as the State guest. Of course the Hindu fundamentalist groups levelled a lot of criticism not knowing that Vatican is also a Country and he could be invited as a State guest. 1986 was also the centenary of the erection of the hierarchy in India which was also celebrated. Further Pope’s visit was declared as a “Pastoral Visit”.

In November 1999 Pope John Paul II visited again India to present in New Delhi the Post-Synodal (18 April to 14 May 1998) document of Ecclesia in Asia. “The FABC also took the occasion to meet in India. Pope expressed in his central address in New Delhi his expectation that in this vast and vital continent the churches in Asia would be able to make a

“rich harvest of faith” in approaching the new Millennium. This was opposed very much by the Hindu fundamentalist groups, like Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council)”.

There was also the starting of Missionary Societies of Indian origin. Among Syro-Malabar rite in 1855 the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) was founded. In 1968, Missionary Society of St. Thomas Apostle” was founded. There were also in the Latin Rite church some missionary societies founded.

In 1887 the Society of the Missionaries of Francis Xavier, more widely known as “Society of Pillar” was founded in Goa. In 1939 it was restructured to be an authentic missionary society. In 1942, Fr. Gaspar Pinto founded the “Indian Missionary Society. In 1953, it was canonically recognized as a Religious Congregation. It erected the Ashram Christanagar as formation House in Varanasi. In 1976, the Divine Word Fathers opened Ishvani Kendra Institute, as a study and documentation Centre for missiological issue. The Salesian Fathers publish since 1979, Indian Missiological Review as a forum for discussion on missiological questions.

Further one of the main changes in missionary work was that from a status of receiving foreign Missionaries at India had become a country sending missionaries abroad. Taking into account the number of vocations and what theological Institutes could achieve within the Indian Church it has become a very strong missionary power compared to all churches in the “Third World”. This is in spite of several hurdles faced by the Church in India, particularly for conversions taking place in India. In 1968 anti-conversion law was enacted in Orissa, in 1969 in Madhya Pradesh, in 1970 in Rajasthan, in 1972 in Gujarat and in 1978 in Arunachal Pradesh. This law threatens to punish conversions brought about by force, by deception or by fraudulent means with money fines or prison terms. It was passed in the Federal States of Indian Union. But in 1972 the Indian High court declared the anti-conversion law in Orissa to be unconstitutional and invalid because Parliaments of the Federal States did not have the competence to pass such laws. Tamil Nadu was the last to follow the anti-conversion law in October 2002 and the first one to repeal it soon after. But the Government of India had passed a law that the scheduled castes who became Christians will lose all privileges which the Constitution of India gives to the socially weak sectors in Indian Society. The situation still stands valid. Hence a person converted from Scheduled

Class loses a lot of economic benefits of the government given to them under several programmes.

Today the Catholic Church faces several problems created by the Hindu fundamentalist groups. Bharatya Janata Party which came to get the Central Political Power in India in 2014 and 2019 is the political spearhead in the name of Hinduism. Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and Rastriya Swayam Sevak (RSS) were such radical fundamentalist groups belonging to the family of “Sangh Parivar” i.e. Sangh family that wants to establish a *Hindu Rashtra*, a purely Hindu nation with the ideology of one race, one culture and one nation has become the order of the day. This ideology was first originally developed by V.O. Savarkar during 1920s. This was developed further by M. S. Golwakar in the line of fascist ideas of Mussolini and German National Socialism.

Consequently there were problems created for the Catholic Church, particularly in North India and in a subtle way in South India by controlling through State laws the Educational, Health and Social Welfare Organisations of the Catholic Church. Let me give just one concrete example: The Jharkhand State in Bihar arrested one Rev. Sr. Concilia, belonging to the Congregation of Mother Teresa on the pretext that she was selling children when she was involved in adoption cases. The Jharkhand High Court imprisoned her and for 15 months she was in prison and released on bail by the Jharkhand High Court on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019. It is only through prayer and penance that Church undergoes such trials believing in the dictum coming from the I Century AD. “The blood of martyrs is the seed for the growth of Christianity”. There are several such instances and in the past one of the most glaring historical examples was Khandamal, Orissa where hundreds were martyred because they were Christians.

### **3.1.2 Nepal**<sup>16</sup>

In 1707, the Capuchin Fathers, who were not allowed entry into Tibet, stayed in Nepal and did missionary work. From 1707 to 1769 they worked in Kathmandu, Bhatgaon and Potan and the Capuchins succeeded in establishing some Christian communities. But when the Kathmandu Valley was conquered by the King of Gorkha the Capuchins together with their converts left Nepal and went to India. Nepal is the only kingdom which officially had Hinduism as a State Religion and hence a Hindu Kingdom. For 150 years Nepal was

closed to the outer world. Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism as they derived from Hinduism were also officially accepted.

In 1980s there was a strong resistance movement against the autocratic rule of Nepali Kings. In 1993 the Parliamentary elections promulgated a New Constitution. The King was forced to give up his absolute power which after the new Constitution was transferred to people. The new Constitution allowed the building of temples, mosques and Churches. But whether one was allowed to engage oneself in missionary work was not clear. But before the new Constitution no missionary work was permitted. Conversions to Christianity could be and were punished by imprisonment, ranging from 1 to 3 years. After the new Constitution it changed imposing these punishments.

We make a remark on the fundamentalist evangelical protestant missionary groups which were insensitive to Hinduism in their preaching by calling Hindu Gods Rama, Krishna and Shiva as demons and devils. But the Catholic Church avoided such comments and such preaching. It was a time when the Hindu fundamentalist from India entered Nepal, promulgating the ideology of *Hindutva* as a weapon against Christian mission in Nepal.

In 2002 there were 6500 Catholics among a population of 23 million of whom 80% were Hindus, 10.7% Buddhist and 4.2% Muslims. The protestant groups boasted of a big figure of 50,000. Roughly the Christian community in Nepal was about 0.45% of total population. In 1993 the Church organised "Nepal Catholic Society", officially recognised by the government. Expatriate priests and religious were allowed to work as specialists in the fields of education, social development, medicine and social services.

In 1983, the catholic community was made an independent Mission Territory (Missio Sui Juris) in contrast to being part of the Archdiocese of Patna in India. The Catholic Church was raised to Apostolic Prefecture in 1996 with the appointment of Jesuit, Anto Sharma, born in India but a descendant of a Nepali family. He was appointed as Apostolic Administrator. He prioritised that the Church in Nepal should have indigenous priests.

On May 31, 2000 out of 5 diocesan priests ordained three were Nepalese. This was a great event of the Catholic Church. Till 1980s all Church activities were concentrated in the capital, Kathmandu. In 2000 there were Churches and institutions in 14 other places. In order to bring a positive image to Christianity, considered as a foreign religion, the style of

preaching as well as Church constructions started to inculturate themselves in Nepali culture. Though direct missionary work was forbidden educational and other institutions started.

In 2002 Salesians started the first Vocational Training Centre with government permission. Thirteen female Religious Congregations started and worked in educational, social and medical works. Caritas Nepal was set up and special programmes for HIV AIDS patients were undertaken. After 2000, it was a period of increasing struggles between so called Maoist groups of social reformers and revolutionaries fighting to abolish Monarchy. On June 1, King Birendra and several of his family members were murdered by one of his sons. It destabilised the country. Catholic Schools and centres were attacked and some even torched. On February 1, 2005, King Gyamendra Sha declared a State of Emergency and suspended the Constitutional freedom such as freedom of Expression, peaceful assemblies and free travel due to increased military activities of Maoist rebel forces. Amidst all these living and working conditions, the Church improved in the last decade giving more opportunities to engage in social, educational and missionary activities.

### **3.1.3. Bangladesh** <sup>17</sup>

In 1540 the first missionaries who came to the country were Jesuits, Augustinians and Dominicans. The oldest church was built in Khulna in 1650 by the Jesuits. The Christian community in Bangladesh consists of descendants of Portuguese colonialists, Indian merchants from Goa and other castes and tribal groups like Garo, Santal, Kasi, Tibera and Lusha. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the arrival of missionaries from the Congregation of Holy Cross Fathers, Missionary Society of Milan (PIME), the Congregation of the Xaverians and Anglo-Belgian Benedictine missionaries.

The Apostolic Vicariate of Bengal was erected in 1834. In 1850 the Vicariate of Bengal was divided into two Vicariates of East Bengal and West Bengal.

In September 1960 Fr. Theotonium A.Ganguly was the first indigenous priest to be consecrated as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Dhaka and then appointed in 1967 as its Archbishop. The Apostolic Nunciature was erected in Bangladesh on February 2, 1973 and Archbishop Edward Cassidy was the first pro-Nuncio.

It was in December 1971 that East-Pakistan seceded from Pakistan to constitute a new and Independent Nation of Bangladesh. The new Constitution of Bangladesh accepted the principle of secularism, namely, the obligation of the all religious and ideological groups in the country. It also constituted religious freedom for all religious groups. Bangladesh was to become a homestead for Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians alike.

In 1975 the reign of Mujibur Rahman came to a sudden end. In a coup d'état he with most members of his family was killed and the military took the power. In 1977 the Constitution was amended and the principle of secularism was given up. Bangladesh was declared to be an Islamic State in 1988. These developments negatively affected the other religious minorities. Talisma Nasrin, had described and criticised the discrimination of women in Islam. In 1994 an Islamic Religious court condemned her to death. But this verdict was lifted because there were several protests in Bangladesh and the international community. Finally she was allowed to leave the country and seek asylum abroad.

Bangladesh is also a county often devastated by natural calamities. Cyclones and heavy flooding devastated the country. Caritas Bangladesh took as its main task to address all of them by foreign funds. Safe cyclone shelters were built and individuals were rehabilitated. Caritas Bangladesh ran also several orphanages, executes a programme of Natural Family Planning, set up water cleaning stations, and conducted rehabilitation programs for drug addicts and other health programmes. Catholic Church runs 316 Elementary Schools, 45 Secondary Schools, 13 Technical Schools and 2 University Colleges as on 2005. Further several other organisations and agencies were set up by Church organisations as NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) in social and educational fields. There were particular programmes for women to make them skilled and self reliant. Huge sums of money flowing from foreign countries alerted the political powers to put controls on them. Thus in 1981 a Foreign Donation Ordinance was passed in the Parliament which obliged the Catholic Church to register as a Welfare Organisation. But the Catholics Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh protested and clarified its religious character which translated its social commitment to the poor and the needy.

The Catholic Church in Bangladesh in 2005 was 275,000 and 0.20% within a population of 40 million. Muslims formed 86.6% of the population. The Hindus formed 12.1% of the population. The task of inter-religious dialogue was not an easy one. But some

pioneers can be cited Victor Courtois SJ (1907-1960) worked from Calcutta with the Journal “Notes on Islam”; the dialogue programme for women (*Women Netritto Proshikkon Kendra*) dealt with the problems of Christian’s Muslim dialogue with focus on the particular situation of women in Bangladesh society; Mary Knoll missionary Bob McCahill started a “Dialogue of life” by his own priestly ministry living in a small hut among the poor, serving the sick and the poor in their day to day problems. *Dipika* and *Sampreeti* founded by Kraus Beurle, developed interreligious prayer and meditation with different religions. The Muslims objected to this as a syncretistic aberration.

Such initiatives were encouraged by Most Rev. Dr. Joachim Rosario from 1996 as a Bishop of Chittagong. Hindus, Christians and Buddhists formed a common organisation “Bangladesh Hindu Christian Buddhist Council (BHCBC) to discuss common issues and to talk to Muslims with a united voice whenever problems arose.

Inculturation of Christianity into Bangladesh culture did not seem to give a rich dividend. It started by theologians who followed the Indian theologians on it even incorporating some Hindu religious and liturgical practices and *Bhajan* singing. But they did not catch up.

Special to Bangladesh was the small groups of Christians called Isai Muslim (those faithful to Jesus) and Maschee Jamal (the community of the Messiah). All these live according to Sabrial (Muslim laws) acknowledge Quran as the Holy Book, join Muslims in their prayers while simultaneously using Bible as Holy Book and applying the sacrament of Baptism. These groups are not well received by all, including the government agencies.

### **3.1.3. Sri Lanka** <sup>18</sup>

The first Catholic missionaries were Franciscan who reached in 1543 and succeeded in converting the local population of Kadayan. The historical context was that from 1505 to 1658 the colonial masters were Portuguese and from 1658 to 1796 the Dutch were the dominant colonial force. Then the British replaced them for 150 years till independence was achieved in 1948.

In 1575 King Dharmapala of Kotte received baptism together with several of his subjects. In 1602 the Jesuits started missionary work, followed later by Dominican and Augustinian missionaries.



In 1658 when Dutch replaced the Portuguese colonial power they expelled all Christian missionaries. Indigenous Catholics were left without priests and at the same time did not want to join Dutch Calvinists.

It was at this time that a charismatic missionary, Oratorian Priest Joseph Vaz (1651-1771) (who was later beatified by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Colombo) entered in 1687 by disguising himself as a beggar. In spite of restrictive measures of the Dutch he managed to involve himself in the missionary work and pastoral care of the dispersed Catholics and had his success in keeping the faith of Catholic flame alive. Since 1966 other Oratorians

from Goa came to his support and worked as an underground Church to cater to the needs of the Catholic population. They also produced some Catholic literature (translations of Bible and the Catechism into Sinhala and Tamil, distributed clandestinely. 1793 was the end of Dutch colonial rule. The capuchin missionary Marco della Tomba reported that at that time there were 90,000 Catholics in 400 parishes, pastorally looked after by 14 Oratorian Priests.

The British gave full religious liberty in 1806. In 1834 the Apostolic Vicariate of Ceylon was erected. In 1849 it was divided into Colombo and Jaffna. In 1886 the Catholic hierarchy was set up and Colombo was made into an Archdiocese with Jaffna and Kandy as suffragan dioceses. In 1893 two more dioceses of Galle and Trincomallee came. At that time the missionary work was mainly entrusted to missionary Congregations of Oblates, the Silvestrians and the Jesuits. In 1893 Pope Leo XIII founded the central major seminary in Kandy as formation Centre for the priests of Sri Lanka and Indian subcontinent. Since 1895 the Jesuits were entrusted with running the Kandy Seminary. In 1939 a new diocese of Chilaw was set up from the Archdiocese of Colombo. First time an indigenous priest was appointed bishop of Chilaw but since he died before his Episcopal ordination, he was replaced in 1940 by another oblate priest who became the first Bishop of Chilaw. In 1945 Thomas Benjamin Cooray OMI (Oblates of Mary Immaculate) was appointed with the right of succession for the Archdiocese of Colombo. When Archdiocese of Colombo became vacant, he became the first Sri Lankan Archbishop of Colombo. On Feb 22 1965 he was the first Sri Lankan to become the Cardinal elevated by Pope Paul VI.

Such local appointments eased the tension between the Catholic Church and the Sri Lankan Government in the context of a forced privatization of the Catholic Schools and Hospitals. Another positive development of the Catholic Church was the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Holy See and the Government of Sri Lanka. On December 11, 1967 Rome erected an Apostolic Delegation which was elevated after eight years on September 6, 1975 into Apostolic Nunciature. Pope Paul VI on his return from his trip to Australia- Oceania made a brief stopover for a few hours in Colombo and celebrated mass to 600,000 Catholics on the tarmac of Colombo International Airport.

### **3.1.3.1. The Catholic Church after Independence (1948-1971)**

From 1948-1956 which can be termed as the first period after Independence there was a common nation building aim of different ethnic groups of Sinhalese, Tamils and Burghers. In 1956, the Political Party of Sinhalese Nationalism came to power. They used electioneering slogans such as “Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalese” or “Sinhalese culture is the national culture of “Sri Lanka” or “Buddhism is the National Religion”. Simultaneously there was resentment against the missionary work of the Catholic Church in the field of education. Practically all the national elites were educated in these Catholic Institutions and served during British rule very efficiently. This culminated in 1960 when all private schools which received financial subsidies from the government, were taken over by the Government. This was primarily a move against the Catholic Church which ran several types of educational institutions both in cities and countryside. Out of 764 schools only 47 were run by the Catholic Church in 1960. Further all religious sisters working in government hospitals were dismissed in 1964. Further they ordered foreign missionaries to leave the country.

Amidst these developments the Sinhalese Catholics towed the line of Sinhalese nationalists. This created a tension to the Catholics of Tamil background in the North of the country where Tamils were in majority and felt discriminated. In 1966 the government had abolished Sunday as the weekly rest day and replaced it by the Buddhist *Poya* (New Moon) day. But it retracted it in 1971 bringing back Sunday as the official weekly day of rest.

### 3.1.3.2. Social and Ethnic Tensions

Since Sri Lanka had a rich natural resources as well as high standards of education and many other structural realities it could have become the most promising developed nations in the region. But the problems of ethnicity and nationality served as a destructive force. Sinhalese formed 75% of the population, the Tamils 12.6% of the local and plantation Tamils brought by the British to work in Tea estates, the Muslims formed 7% and the so called Burghers (descendants of the Portuguese and the Dutch) formed 1%. In terms of religion 69% of Sinhalese were Buddhists, 15.5% of the Tamils majority were Hindus.

After Independence Buddhism regained its dominant position and suspected the Christians for supporting the colonial forces. These ethnic and religious differences were aggravated more by the political development as well as mismanagement of the government of handling massive social tensions. In 1971 it erupted in violent demonstration and revolutionary activities of People's Liberation Front (*Janatha Vimukti Peramuna, JVP*). It was founded by Rohana Wijeweera in 1964, based on the ideology of Marxist-Leninist as well as from Chinese Cultural Revolution. It found strong support from the youth and the students. JVP was well organized and exercised ruthless terror to spread fear and anxiety in Sri Lankan Society. In April 1971 the students of several Universities in the capital demonstrated against the government and called for radical changes in Sri Lankan Society. From 1971-1990 the government used massive military power against JVP. Consequently more 60,000 children, young boys and men disappeared, supposed to be put to death without any legal process. In November 1989 the leader of JVP Rohana Wijeweera and his substitute Gama nayaka were killed and decisively weakened JVP.

There was another tension brewing in the society since 1950s. The Sinhalese Politicians aggressively defended the ideology of the supremacy of Sinhalese over and above the Tamils and other ethnic minorities. Prime Minister Bandaranaike started a campaign to make Sinhala as the National language of Sri Lanka. His Sinhala only policy resulted that Sinhala was to become the teaching medium in all educational facilities and the official language for all government agencies. The Tamils opposed it. But the government adamantly refused to meet even the moderate demands of Tamils.

It was in this context that the radical movement of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) arose and demanded total independence of the areas with Tamil majority. LTTE was

directed by Velupillai Prabhakaran, a young leader with ruthless tactics of opposition to the government of Sri Lanka. By his movement and using guerilla tactics terrorized the government for several years. He succeeded in building up the appearance of a Tamil State in the North of the Island.

After a prolonged struggle of 25 years of civil war it showed that the policy of Chandrika Kumaratunga has fully failed losing more than 50,000 people. Mediation from third party was not first acceptable to Sri Lanka government. But after all these struggles and casualties she agreed on Norwegian Government to act as a mediator. In 1999 Chandrika Kumaratunga herself became the target of an assassination attempt in which she lost sight in one eye.

LTTE was depending on the funds of Tamils who migrated during the ethnic tension to several countries in the world and could get a refugee status. They were also sending funds to support LTTE. But after September 11, 2000 terrorist attack in USA LTTE found it more difficult to mobilise funds from abroad from the Tami refugees. With the beginning of war on Terror of the Bush administration, the United Nations put LTTE on the list of Terrorist Organization. This made it impossible for LTTE to recruit financial and logistical support from abroad.

In 2002 these developments led to a truce between the Sri Lankan Government and LTTE. After prolonged discussion and negotiation in December 2002 in Oslo an agreement was reached where the Tamils were granted restricted autonomy in a federal system within the Sri Lankan Nation. All these brought about a need for Constitutional changes. But it did not come out because of several political forces within the country. But it led to a general relaxation in the country on the movement of both communities. The pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine of Madhu, situated in a jungle is in the North. The Catholics could freely participate since 2002.

From 1958 to 1983 the Catholic Church considered the ethnic conflicts purely as a political issue and hence did not interfere. But in 1983 the Tamils were targeted for violence all over the country, several hundred killed and thousands lost their possession in the looting or burning by the Sri Lankan Military. The Sri Lankan Bishops came out with a pastoral letter condemning the use of military force and demanded a political solution to the conflict in the line of moderate federalism. Though several attempts of peace were made calling for a

nation-wide dialogue among the conflicting groups and ethnic violence were done by the Church it seemed to be not very successful and left unnoticed by the general public. Within the Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka out of 11 dioceses where only indigenous Bishops were appointed there were 8 Sinhalese and 3 Tamil Bishops. There were considerable differences among them on the ethnic conflict.

For priestly formation since the Papal seminary was moved to India in 1950 the major seminary in Kandy became the National formation centre for priests. From 1950 to 1972 both the Sinhalese and Tamil seminarians studied together. This seminary was not disturbed by civil war. The Tamil dioceses Jaffna, Trincomalee-Balticolao and Mannar wanted to have their own seminary in Jaffna. But this was greatly disturbed by the ethnic war and destruction by the military. The seminarians had to flee and seek temporary shelter in Jungles. All these affected their formation. Hence the division of seminaries was not successful. As regards theological literature the necessary vocabulary in Sinhalese was first the major block. Till today it is the problems as well as the marketing of these books. As for Tamils they established contact with Indian Theologians in Tamil Nadu and made use of their literature in theology and Holy Scriptures.

The beginning of missionary activities by the local Church marked an important step to become a genuine autonomous local Church. Since the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century Sri Lanka sent indigenous oblate priests as missionaries to India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In 1992 on January 21-22 Pope John Paul II came to Sri Lanka and met with representatives of other religions. Though the Buddhist were hurt by the remarks of Vatican on Buddhism Pope John Paul II spoke to Buddhist leaders he confirmed the high esteem he felt for Buddhism and stressed the readiness of the Church to continue and deepen the dialogue. Like other Asian countries there were a lot of social commitments and social welfare services of the Catholic Church.

#### **3.1.4. Pakistan** <sup>19</sup>

Pakistan was created in 1947 as an Independent Nation by the British Rulers, seeing the tensions between Muslims and Hindus in India. The partition has a history of massive displacement of people and a bloody conflict with great loss of lives. India was divided by the

creation of Pakistan which was divided into two parts: West Pakistan consisting of two Provinces of Punjab and Sind and East Pakistan including a part of the State of Bengal.

There is a reliable tradition that St. Thomas, the Apostle, passed through the Kingdom of King Kondulphares in North India. On his way to the South he preached the gospel there. The Archaeological evidence for the existence of Christians in North India is the Taxila Cross, dating to 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD which was discovered in 1935 in the ruins of an ancient town of Sirkap. Today it is kept in the Anglican Cathedral at Lahore. Jesuit missionaries were received at the courts of the Mogul Rulers Akbar (1579-1605) and Jahangir (1605-1627) for learned discussions on religious and philosophical questions (Georg Evers P.579). Later Carmelites came to the country and founded small communities of Christians. These were the humble beginnings not leading to an official Church structure. In 1886 Apostolic Vicariate of Punjab was founded including Punjab including both India and Pakistan today. It also included from Pakistan side the Archdiocese of Lahore. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholics from Goa, Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai) came as merchants. They set up Catholic Communities in Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Rawalpindi.

Till the division of Pakistan and India large areas of West Pakistan belonged to the Archdiocese of Bombay. After the establishment of Pakistan the diocese of Karachi was erected on May 1948. On July 15, 1950 the Church Province of Karachi with suffragan dioceses of Multan and Lyallpur (since 1997 renamed as Faisalabad) came into existence. On January 17, 1952 Apostolic Prefecture, Kashmir and Jammu was erected which in 1986 became Jammu and Kashmir Dioceses.

The British Colonial rule created Pakistan due to the insistence of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), the Founding Father of Pakistan, who wanted Pakistan to be a "Homestead for Muslims", but not an Islamic State. After the untimely death of Jinnah who desired only a secular nation there was political confusion where the Military took over the political power. This created the ruining of government affairs with arbitrary judicial decision mostly on religious matters thereby creating an unbearable situation for ethnic and religious minorities. In 1970 in East Pakistan Mujibur Rahman won the political election in East Pakistan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto lost the election. But he usurped the Office of Prime Minister. In March 1971 a civil war was started in which Mujibur Rahman took the side of Bengali nationalists. East Pakistan ceased to exist and New Nation of Bangladesh was

created and in 1971 to Sheik Mujibu Rahman became the first Prime Minister. At that time Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the Prime Minister and President of Pakistan People's Party in East Pakistan. After the loss of Bangladesh East Pakistan became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Though Islam upholds the equality of all the caste system of the Indian soil was very active also in Pakistan. The vast majority of converts to Catholicism were from the group of the lowest rank of society, working in brick kilns, tanneries and laundries or street cleaning. There are also descendants of Goanese Catholics, a dominant group within the Catholic Church. Catholics form 10% of the population. Conversions do take place because of the relatives and friends of the newly baptized Christians who influenced them. The Catholics in the cities due to their better educational opportunities occupy good professional position and reach a middle class status, containing well known sportsperson, good journalists, medical doctors and teachers. They live more as a Ghetto Society as Christianity is considered an alien religion imported to Pakistan.

The Catholic Church in Pakistan had built-up various types of educational institutions: 70 Senior High schools, 130 Elementary and Junior schools and 5 Colleges. In 1972 all the educational institutions run by Catholics or Protestants were taken over by the government by force. They believed that this takeover would make Islam the only dominant factor in the country. But in 1985 the Government returned back several of these schools to the Catholic Church due to the lack of trained teachers and maintenance cost of these schools. In several cases though the Church did not want to take them back the government pressurized the Church to take them back and run it by their own finance. At that time there were 200 different educational institutions. Besides the regular curriculum of the school, the government obligatorily introduced courses in the fundamental doctrine of Islam. Any other religious instruction could be had outside the school hours. In Pakistan direct evangelization and conversions of Muslims to Christian faith are strictly prohibited.

Pakistan had a fair level of inculturation of the Christian message into Pakistan culture and developed new forms of pastoral activity as well as theology. The Pastoral Institute of Multan was founded in 1970 by Dominican Missionaries from USA. Pakistan followed the pattern of East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila. It trained catechists, teachers and lay people in theology and catechetical work. This Institute kept its contact with Muslims for a good Christian Muslim dialogue. Thus came also the National Justice and Peace

Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Pakistan and similarly the Conference of Major Religious Superiors to improve the human rights problem. Pakistan had a national seminary “Christ the King” by name at Karachi which trained future diocesan and religious priests. In 1994 the philosophical training was separated and taken to Lahore.

There is comparatively high number of vocations to priesthood. In 1990s criticisms were leveled against the luxurious life of priests and a slackening of pastoral concerns of life, namely, not visiting the houses, neglecting the poor in the parish, etc. Among the Muslims themselves the conflict and even armed conflicts between the Sunnites and Shiites increased. Besides educational institution the Church also built and run several medical institutions which gradually took up the care of lepers.

Caritas Pakistan also was involved in several instructive programs of social awareness and leadership training. In 1984 National Commission of Justice and Peace was erected by the Catholics Bishops’ Conference of Pakistan. Bishop John Joseph of Faisalabad became the first President of this Commission. He worked in a very committed way. But it was very sad that to be in solidarity with the suffering Christians undergoing injustice in society, particularly the Catholics. He led the fight against anti-blasphemy law. But he also took a very sad and radical stand of killing himself with a pistol on the steps of the court building in Lahore on May 9, 1998.

In February 1996 several Christian Churches were attacked for the first time and in the town of Khanewal 7 Catholic and Protestant Churches were burnt fully. A mob of 15,000 militant Muslims torched the houses of Catholics and ransacked nearly 800 houses. In reaction to the terrorist attack on New York on September 11, 2001 USA together with its partner nations began the so called ‘war on terror’. Several such attacks continue in Pakistan even to this day.

### **3.1.5. Bhutan**

**Bhutan** (officially the Kingdom of **Bhutan**) is a landlocked country in South Asia. Located in the Eastern Himalayas, it is bordered by the Tibet. Till today no Christian missionaries are allowed. It is estimated that between two-thirds and three-quarters of the Bhutanese population follow [Vajrayana Buddhism](#), which is also the [State religion](#). About



one-quarter to one-third are followers of [Hinduism](#). Other religions account for less than 1% of the population.<sup>[136]</sup> The current legal framework, in principle guarantees [freedom of religion](#); proselytism, however, is forbidden by a royal government decision and by judicial interpretation of the [Constitution](#).

### **3.2.South East Asia**

#### **3.2.1.Laos<sup>20</sup>**

Laos covers an area as big as the formal Federal Republic of Germany. Till the middle of 13<sup>th</sup> century the Laos tribes migrated from Southern China and followed the Theravada Buddhism. Hence the Buddhist monks exercised major influence on Laotian Society. From 1630 Catholic missionaries made several efforts to enter Laos to preach the gospel there. But they did not yield stable results like founding of a Local Church. In 1878 the Jesuits as well as the Paris Foreign Mission Society (MEP Fathers) were most successful in building an indigenous church in Laos. In December 8, 1885 could be accepted as a date of birth of the Catholic Church in Laos and the kingdom of Laos was the first mission station founded on the Island Ban Dorn Don in river Mekong. In 1935 the Oblate Fathers (OMI) did missionary work in the tribal areas in the mountains in the North of Laos.

In 1899 the Apostolic Vicariate of Laos was founded. And from that in 1950 the Apostolic Prefecture Thakhek was separated with 23,764 Catholics. In 1958 it was raised to an Apostolic Vicariate. It was in 1974 that the first Laotian Priest was consecrated as a Bishop. Between 1952-1967 the Catholic Church was divided into 4 Apostolic Vicariates: Vientiane (1952), Luang Prabang (1963), Savannakhet (1963) and Paksé (1967).

In 1945 after the end of Japanese occupation the Laotian “Movement for National Independence” declared independence of Laos but met with the strong resistance from the French to reestablish their colonial power for a short time. But in 1953 Laos gained political independence and full sovereignty. For many years after independence the political situations were very unstable and could not bring about a strong nation state. In 1953 during the First Vietnamese War Laos was trapped in the struggle between the French colonial power and the communist forces of the Vietminh. The Second Vietnamese War (1964-1973) worsened the situation. The communist forces of North Vietnam used Laos as a transit area

and built the famous *Ho-Chi-Minh-Trail* on Laotian territory. USA retaliated through powerful bombs on Laotian territory, estimated at 3 million tons of bombs causing unimaginable damages with the evil effects continuing even today.

In 1971 the Communist Pathet Lao succeeded to bring two thirds of the country under their control. In 1975 the monarchy was abolished and the Laos Democratic People's Republic was established. Prince Souvanuvong became its first President. Hence 34,000 Laotians mostly from higher and middle strata because of the collaboration with Americans and refusing to live under the Communist regime left the country. Most of them landed in Thailand taken care by the Thai Government and other NGOs. Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) took very important initiatives towards the rehabilitation of the migrants. **In 1976 all foreign missionaries were expelled from the country and all church institutions: schools, hospitals and social institutions that taken over by the government.** Besides 3 Laotian Bishops, there were only 13 other indigenous priests. During this situation from 1976-1986 it was very difficult to maintain the pastoral care of the faithful. Further repressive measures by the government such as repeated arrests of Bishops and Priests either imprisoning them or sending them for hard work technically called 'work camps' and 'house arrest' debilitated the Church. All the Christian Churches were ordered to form patriotic associations and given the task to inform the Communist party as well as the government about all religious activities within the churches. The Catholic Church was allowed to continue in a very limited way its contacts with Rome via the Apostolic Delegate for Laos with his residence at Bangkok. During the religious persecutions the Apostolic Delegate could visit Laos and maintain contact with Laotian Bishops. The Laotian Bishops were not allowed to continue their international contacts and for 40 years they were not allowed to visit Rome for the "*Ad-Limina-Visit*". At this period the Church survived due to the committed work of the Catechists, indigenous Religious Sisters and lay leaders in the parishes.

In December 8, 1985, the centenary of the foundation of the Catholic Church in Laos was celebrated by the Church in Laos. On the same day was also the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Lao Democratic People's Republic, celebrated in the whole country.

In 1991 new Constitution was passed stating that all Laotian citizens enjoy religious freedom. It was interpreted that it fully applies to traditional religions of Laos. i.e. Buddhism and tribal religions but only to a lesser degree to Christianity (in Laos called Religion of Jesus) since it was considered a foreign religion.

But the July 2002 “Decree regarding the control and the protection of religious activities”, stipulated the control of all religious activities. Hence the permission of the government was needed to build new churches, for the enrolment of students in major seminaries, to relate to foreign Churches, to receive donation from other countries, for printing religious and liturgical books, etc. Religious activities were to be restricted strictly within the premises of churches, temples and mosques. **Foreign missionaries were not allowed either to enter the country or to continue to work there. Even the local Laotian priests cannot venture out for missionary activities outside their area of work** where there is no established Christian community.

In 1997 as per official statistics of Apostolic Nunciature, Bangkok, the total number of Catholics was 36,000. But other sources gave even 100,000. They were along with Protestants 1.2 to 2% of the total population, while Buddhists formed 57% and the other tribal religions 33%. In 1990s the Episcopal Conference of Laos and Cambodia met while from 1965-1975 it was not allowed to meet together. Similarly the link with Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) was re-established. From 1984 to 1999 through the Apostolic Delegation in Bangkok financial assistance of more than a million dollars reached Laos.

During the time of persecution and isolation the main problem of the Church was the formation of priests and Rev. Sisters. In 1996, the major seminary could be opened in Thakek. There were just 100 Religious Sisters of three Congregations and they joined the Conference of Religious Superiors of Thailand. **Catholic Church was not allowed to run schools, hospitals and social institutions.** Most Religious Sisters were working in parishes, in government hospitals and leprosaria. After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) there was an opening to have Christian-Buddhist dialogue. In 1973 the Patriarch of Laotian Buddhist of Luang Prabang paid a visit to Pope Paul VI in Rome. But only at the end of 1970s this dialogue continued. The present situation is more or less the same.

### **3.2.2.Cambodia** <sup>21</sup>

The year 1555 was the beginning of the Catholic Mission, during the one year stay of Portuguese Dominican Gaspar de Cruz reaching the court of King Aug Chan. During the interaction of Portuguese merchants the king expressed his desire to learn more about Christianity. From 1574 more Dominicans arrived and founded the Catholic Church. It was at this time that the first Catechism book in Khmer language was published. Conversions were not numerous but were exceptions. They come from social groups of slaves and the descendants of mixed marriages between the Portuguese and Khmer and these were mostly Vietnamese who were refugees in Cambodia.

The history and face of the Cambodian Church was shaped by the Vietnamese refugees, for example from 1872 to 1939 out of 105 priests ordained, all were of Vietnamese origin and only 38 Vietnamese were born in Cambodia. The first indigenous priest of Khmer origin was ordained on November 7, 1957.

From the demise of the powerful Khmer-Empire at end of 14<sup>th</sup> century Cambodia was politically dependent on Thailand and then on Vietnam. In 1863 to end the ongoing struggle with Thailand and Vietnam the French brought it under their Colonial control. From 1941-1945 during the Pacific War the Japanese occupied Cambodia and terminated Colonial rule of the French in 1945. Japanese declared independence for Cambodia while at the same time installed a pro-Japanese government. After 1945 the French were able to restore their Colonial Rule for a short duration. On November 6, 1953 the French Colonial Rule ended officially due to the independence movement of the "Free Khmer", supported by the Communist Vietminh.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 1955 Cambodia gained full independence. The Holy See reorganised the Apostolic Vicariate of Cambodia to coincide with the borders of the New Independent Nation. There was a separation from Cochin-China. This step lost two thirds of the Catholics. Before this separation there were 126,000 Catholics. In 1968 another ecclesiastical restriction took place. It was divided into two Apostolic Prefectures of Battambang and Kompong Cham. The II Vatican Council brought a change of attitude in liturgy. Instead of using only the Khmer language Vietnamese, Chinese and French were accepted to be used in the Liturgy.

The perception of Christianity was that it was a foreign religion. Hence the Bishops issued a pastoral letter urging the faithful to integrate more intensely into the local society.

It was a prophetic voice to make the Cambodian Church more indigenous. In 1970 only 5 ethnic Khmer priests were working in Cambodia.

In March 1970 General Lon Nol came to power in a Coup d'état and King Sihanouk went into exile to China. The new government followed an anti-Vietnamese Policy and ordered around 200,000 Vietnamese descent to be deported to Vietnam of whom 50,000 (75%) were Catholics. During 1970-75 heavy fighting took place between Lon Nol and *Khmer Rouge*. Kompong Cham Province, bordering on Vietnam faced the thickest battles. Three French missionaries Noel Grannec, Jean Cadour and Pierre Rapin were killed and the rest fled to Vietnam. The dioceses were left without priests.

**During** that period Catholic Church organised "*Comité d'Entraide et d'Assistance aux Victims de Guerre*", Help and Assistance for Victims, providing food and medical care to the suffering and refugee population through Caritas Internationalis. In order not to give an image of cooperation with USA, the Catholic Relief Services of the USA was refused.

**The Church** proactively organised special courses and training the Catholics for a life without priests in case the Khmer Rouge were winning the war. In 1973 the work of translating the New Testament in Khmer language was started. But when the Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975 it was stopped. It was at this dangerous and difficult period the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue started. They experienced a problem from fanatic American Evangelical mission fundamentalist groups which were unwilling for a dialogue with other religions.

With the Victory of the Khmer Rouge on April 17, 1975 the bloody regime of Pol Pot started. He had a ruthless organisation called "*Angkar*". He expelled the total urban population from Phnom Penh, Battambang and from all other major cities **in the country**. Members of the Military, most government officials, all intellectuals and skilled people were systematically imprisoned and were starved to death by hunger and excessive hard manual work in camps. Among them were included the Buddhist monks, Catholic Priests and the Religious as well as leading faithful. The Cathedrals in Phnom Penh and Battambang and nearly all Catholic Churches in the country were destroyed. On April 4, 1975, the first Khmer priest who was consecrated Bishop of Salas died in a labour camp in 1977. The Apostolic Prefect of Battambang was also killed on April 30, 1975. About 300,000 fled as refugees to Thailand. Many others fled to Vietnam or a third country like USA, Australia or European

Countries. The credit must be given to Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) of Caritas Thailand for helping these refugees.

Fr. Robert Venet a MEP priest, who had exceptional command of the Khmer Language functioned as a bridge to the outer world not only for Catholics but also for many other who were searching for their relatives or were looking for an asylum abroad. Late St. Pope John Paul II visited the refugees when he came to Thailand in the refugee camp of Phanat Niphom on May 11, 1984.

On Christmas 1978, the Vietnamese army started its military campaign against Pol Pot and his henchmen. They succeeded in January 1979 to expel the *Khmer Rouge* from the Capital, Phnom Penh and from most big cities in the country. It took several more years to eradicate them as they fled to forests.

The official name of the country was changed to People's Republic of Kampuchea. It was not an easy task for Pol Pot to build up again the Nation. In 1979, the Chinese People's Liberation Army started a huge military operation into Northern Vietnam to teach Vietnamese aggressors a lesson. They agreed with the International Community that condemned the military action of Vietnam against *Khmer Rouge* as aggression and imposed heavy economic sanctions against Vietnam.

It was an occasion that many surviving Catholics returned to Cambodia in the 1980s but they faced a lot of difficulties to revive the Church. It was also due to the fact that the government of Heng Samrin gave permission to resume religious activities except to Catholics and Protestants.

In the context of all Catholic parishes that were destroyed and most of their members were dead, with no priest left in the country it was an uphill task to reorganise the Church activities.

In 1983, the Holy See erected the Bureau for the Promotion of the Apostolate among Cambodians (BPAC) and appointed Msgr Yves Ramousse, the former Apostolic Prefect of Phnom Penh to take care of the Catholic refugees from Cambodia and worldwide. In 1984 it was also extended to Cambodia territory which he could exercise from abroad.

In September 1989 the Vietnamese troops left Cambodia but the battle of *Khmer Rouge* was continued by Cambodian government troops under the leadership of Hun Sen. In

March 1990, Msgr Emile Destonbes MEP, managed to take residence in Phnom Penh as official representative of Caritas Internationalis. Msgr Olivier Schmitthaeusler MEP is the current Archbishop of **Phnom Penh** since 10 October 2010. On May 1, 1989 Prime Minister Hun Sen recognised Buddhism as the religion of the nation and granted religious freedom for all other religions. Only on April 14, 1990 Catholics got official permission to celebrate Easter in which 57 catechumens participated.

After the peace treaty on July 18, 1991 between four fighting parties in Cambodia Prince Sihanouk resumed exercising his office as King. From 1991 the reconstruction of Church life and institutions started. In 1991 Salesians of Don Bosco founded the technical school in Phnom Penh and later in Sihanoukville. Jesuits and Mary Knoll Priests started their work in Cambodia as well as the members of the then mission society.

The Indigenous Congregation of Sisters of the “Lovers of the Cross”, expelled from Cambodia in May 1970, returned to Cambodia. In 2002, the number of priests working in Cambodia reached 50, of whom 5 were Indigenous Khmer priests. On March 25, 1994 diplomatic relations were established between Holy See and Kingdom of Cambodia.

### **3.2.3. Vietnam** <sup>22</sup>

Vietnam in South East Asia occupies an important place because next to Philippines it has a high number of Catholics i.e. 10% of the population. Historically Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism came to Vietnam very early. They partly substituted the traditional animistic religions that existed. Some sporadic Christian contacts were made in 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Only in 1615 two Jesuit missionaries Francisco Buzoni and Diego Carvalho from Macau started the first mission.

The Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660) began in 1627 his successful missionary Apostolate in Tonkin, North Vietnam. From the very beginning they concentrated on the formation of Indigenous Catechists, founding special training schools for them.

His greatest contribution was to the Vietnamese language itself. The elite Vietnamese language was written with Chinese characters but the language of the ordinary people had no script. He developed a system to express the language of the ordinary Vietnamese in Latin script which is in use even today.

In 1650 the number of Catholics had reached 350,000 though the Vietnamese government forbade the spread of Christian religion. In 1658 Pope Alexandre VII appointed the first Apostolic Vicar for Tonkin. Father François Pallu and Pierre Marie Lambert de la Motte founded the first indigenous Religious Congregation of Sisters “Lovers of the Holy Cross (*Amantes de la Croix Sainte*) in 1670. Even today they work widely in Vietnam and run Kindergartens, dispensaries and small hospitals in different places.

The characteristics of the Church of Vietnam are the pride of its being the Church of the Martyrs. **On several occasions the foreign missionaries were expelled and propagation of faith was forbidden by authorities. In 19<sup>th</sup> century the Church faced the worst bloody persecutions under the rule of King Tu-Duc (1848-1883), condemning to death over 50,000 Catholics. In the last three centuries more than 300,000 died as martyrs. In 1983 Pope John Paul II canonised 117 Vietnamese and the government considered it as act of violation of the national honour.**

During the Pacific war (1945-1954) the Church supported the resistance movement against Japanese occupation. After the defeat of Japan, the French established their colonial rule. Many Catholics opposed the French Colonialism. But still the widespread disbelief and odium of the Catholics viewed with doubtful loyalty to the nation, linked with the notion of foreign religion, made them to be considered supporters of the French and traitors of the National Cause.

The Communist Party of Vietnam did not disclose the true ideological identity and political ambition in the beginning. The Communists tried to build up a National organization to unite all groups together to build up a New Vietnam and Founded “Cultural Association for the welfare of the Nation”, where there were several Catholics. We should recall that HO CHI MINH, the then leader of League for Independence (Founded in 1941) declared independence of Vietnam on sept-2, 1945. He replaced the puppet regime of the European Bao Dai who was forced to resign in 1949 and went into exile to France.

In 1945 the French in the person of General Leclerc tried to establish the Colonial Rule. The Vietnamese Bishops wrote an open letter asking people to support the struggle for independence. This political climate slowly changed. The Communists came out of their hidden agenda, i.e. to make Communism the National ideology and to make it the main promoting power in the country. They started eliminating other political groups to become



the dominant power. They saw the French Colonial rule as the lesser evil and hence withdrew for their resistance struggle.

On July 15, 1949, Holy Office of Vatican issued a decree that if Catholics in anyway cooperate or support Communists were liable to the canonical punishment of excommunication. Further in April 1949 Bishop Le Tuu Hu had already denounced Communism as not compatible to Catholic faith. On 2 Nov 1950, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam published a statement forbidding the Catholics to join the Communist Party or to cooperate with it. **The Government retaliated it by imposing exorbitant taxes, taking possession of Catholic schools, hospitals and other Church institutions. They also leased violence on the Catholics and their institutions.**

On July 21, 1954 the Armistice Accord was signed in Geneva and Vietnam was divided into North and South Vietnam. Within 300 days i.e. July 20, 1955 as deadline, the Vietnamese were given the choice of opting for North or South Vietnam. In 1954 the population was more or less equally divided between North and South. But with this new accord many from the North moved to the South around 860,000 Vietnamese from the North of whom 650,000 were Catholics (40%) decided together with 70% of the priests to go to South Vietnam to escape the Communist Rule. For example, from Phat Dian diocese, 60% of the laity, and 85% of priests migrated to the South, Ho Chi Minh tried to convince the people not to migrate to South and that complete religious freedom would be given in North Vietnam. But in spite of that the influx continued. When they failed in their efforts to stop migration to the South the Northern government used harsh measures like arresting, putting into trial and executing them as well as those who organised the migration to the South.

When Communists took over South Vietnam from American allies in 1975 many Catholics priests were among those who were sent to re-education camps and suffered and died in camps on the charges that their flight to South Vietnam in 1954 was a proof of their fundamental rejection of Communism. As per the Geneva agreement the elections were to be held to elect a common government for the whole Vietnam. But it never took place. Consequently the partition of the country into two independent states of North and South Vietnam continued for 20 years. The Bamboo curtain with bamboos erected 17degree parallel with the frontier river Ben Hai made the division of the country into two.

Those who migrated from North Vietnam to South (650,000 Catholic) constituted two thirds of all Catholics living in South Vietnam. Prior to 1954, 1127 priests were working in the North, but only 300 stayed on, of whom many were old and feeble. In the North, the government systematically tried to obstruct the formation of seminarians by new laws e.g. there were government regulations to admit new candidates in the seminary, and getting permission to ordain priests.

The report published in 1965(10 years after the constitution of North Vietnam guaranteeing religious freedom) gave a very dismal picture. All Church properties were confiscated, all religious publications were banned and the government took over all instruments of publications like printing machines; all Church educational institutions were taken over; religious education of youngsters was allowed only inside the churches; groups of Communist youth disturbed religious gathering, of Catholics, while the Police was doing nothing to such incidents to protect the Catholics. Most of the twelve dioceses in the North were left without Bishops for long years for lack of clearance from the government.

The attempt to split the Vietnamese Catholics consisted of setting up a “National Union of Patriotic and Peace Loving Catholics” in Hanoi met with a failure. The Catholic Bishops strongly opposed it. Further there were agrarian reforms in 1955 -1956. They had very evil consequences for the Catholic Church. Under the guise of rich farmers the government prosecuted even farmers with small land holding. North Vietnam was an agrarian economy with a majority of farmers tilling only small parcels of land. Most of Catholics were such farmers. In the garb of agrarian reform 100,000 farmers were condemned to death in the North. There were several uprising of farmers that were suppressed ruthlessly by the force of the military.

1960 was a historical year when Pope John XXII established 3 Church Provinces with 17 suffragan dioceses. Except two all had indigenous Bishops. In 1960s and 1970s the Catholic Church in the North was very much restricted to reach out to the outside world. Bishops from North were not allowed to take part in II Vatican Council (1965-1969). No official documents of II Vatican Council could reach them. Hence they could not be implemented. Vietnam (1963-1975) dominated the media worldwide several years. The reporting, done by Westerners, mostly spoke of South Vietnam. About North Vietnam it was

rarely reported. Contacts with the Church were maintained through Caritas Internationalis and Misereor.

Shortly before the re-unification of Vietnam the auxiliary Bishop of Hanoi was allowed to take part in the session of Bishops' Synod in Rome in 1974.

### **3.2.3.1. Church in South Vietnam (1954-1975)**

After the Geneva accord in 1954, as already observed, the Catholics in the South increased i.e. practically doubling its number to the 1.4 million. In 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic, came to power as Prime Minister. At that time the Catholics constituted 7% of the population in South Vietnam occupying the leading political, administrative and military posts. In 1960, 66% of the Senate members, 30% of the members of the Parliament, 21% of higher officers in the army were Catholics. His brother was Cardinal Ngo Dinh Diem, the Archbishop of Hue. Ngo Dinh Diem followed a strict anti-Communist course which was using ruthlessly its political power. In 1963 during a violent revolt Ngo Dinh Diem was killed leading to the joy of most people in South Vietnam.

During 1954 -1969 the Church expanded its educational facilities to a large extent. The number of Catholic schools of High and Higher Secondary levels rose up to 226 having 82,827 Catholics and 70,101 non-Catholics. The primary schools increased to 1030. Catholic Universities came up in Saigon, Da Lat and Hue. Medical and social institutions of the Church were held in high respect by people. All South Vietnamese Bishops participated in II Vatican Council. The documents were published and new insights were brought to the Church that started to act on them. In 1970 when FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences) was founded in Manila, the Vietnamese Bishops' Conference was one of its Founding members.

The Church in South Vietnam was enriched by Theology of Liberation and the "Church from below" theologies that emerged in the post II Vatican period.

### **3.2.3.2. Reunification**

After reunification in 1976 the country was renamed "Socialist Republic of Vietnam" and the then Labour Party of Vietnam changed its name to "Communist Party of Vietnam". The 1980 constitution named the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat", persisting on the "Struggle against International Capitalism". In this reunification process, the Communist

cadres from North Vietnam occupied nearly all government posts and determined the form “Central Socialism”.

During the first years after reunification Vietnam got isolated by the embargo inflicted by USA, supported by most western countries. Further tensions between Vietnam and the People’s Republic of China increased. This forced Vietnam to rely on USSR. All these created innumerable difficulties in the economic field coupled with ideological repressive measures. All these led to the exodus of Vietnamese. It was technically named “boat people” who fled outside Vietnam to make a new life for themselves.

In 1970 the Catholic Church of South Vietnam was one of the founding members of FABC. Their position was not accepted after reunification by the government and only from 1988 the *Ad Limina* Visits to Rome were allowed. But Vietnamese government was to decide about who could participate in it. On April 15, 1992 the religious freedom in article 70 was described in the following way “Every citizen enjoys religious freedom to adhere to a faith and to believe in a religion. All religions were equal before the law. The buildings of all religious Communities and faiths are protected by law, nobody was allowed to violate religious freedom, nor may anybody abuse religions to act against the law and the politics of the State”. In practice often the opposite was imposed by the communist Party, by the officers of National Security, by the police and by other government agencies. The Decree 26 published on April 19, 1999 replaced the earlier decree of 1992. It stipulated the freedom to believe or not to believe in a religion; all religious activity have to be in accordance with the laws of Vietnamese State, and only those religious activity in accordance with the laws or protected by the State.

Normal religious activities were only allowed within the premises of the religious Institution. All activity outside these places required the permission of the government. Violation of these regulations was forbidden. Religious Affairs Bureau, which is an organ of the Patriotic Front was responsible to oversee, and control them. The Decree 26 met with strong opposition and criticism from different religious organizations in Vietnam. During the General Assembly in October 1999 the Catholic Bishops’ Conference expressed its reservation and demanded the reduction of controls stipulated.

From 1625 to 1886 more than 300,000 Catholics died for their faith. The State wanted to have a say in the appointment of Bishops. The Church did not yield to it. House

arrests and imprisonment were the lot of many. Bishop Van Thuan was refused to be appointed as Archbishop of Ho Chi Minh city, was imprisoned for 13 years and released.

A word about the mountain people (*montagnards*) should be said. The pastoral activities of catechists working among the mountain people who were from more than 50 indigenous ethnical groups. They lived in Central Vietnam forming 14% of the total population. Tay, Thai, Hmong, Jarai, Muong and Nung were the ethnic groups, having each around 500,000 up to a million members. They were working among them and many were converted to Christianity. During past two decades many mountain people became Christians by listening to Radio broadcasts of "Radio Veritas Asia" from Manila and other religious radio programmes from Hong Kong without having direct contact with priests and missionaries. In 1994 there were more than 200,000 Christians through the efforts of local catechists. There have been growing tensions due to the control exercised by the Communist Party but these uprisings were put down by the military might. In 2003 there were 2694 priests, 1295 seminarians and 161 candidates were waiting. At the end of 2000 there were 9986 Reverent Sisters of whom there were 4450 Rev. Sisters of Lovers of the Holy Cross Congregation, 548 novices, 501 postulants and 2172 candidates and aspirants. The Congregation of Dominican Sisters grew from 879 in 1995 to 1192 in 2000. It was the same with others. From its beginning the Church had a strong tradition of lay participation and work of catechists.

#### **3.2.4. Malaysia** <sup>23</sup>

The Portuguese conquered in 1511 Malaysia. In 1647 they lost the territory to the Dutch who were forced to leave in 1795 when British became the Colonial power. In 1545 Francis Xavier was involved in Missionary work in Malacca and after his death on the Island of Shangechuan on December 3, 1552 his body was first buried and exhumed to be found intact and sent to Goa where it has the final resting place. In 1554 Dominican Friars came for missionary work. In 1557 the diocese of Malacca was erected as a suffragan diocese of Goa.

In West Malaysia missionary activities were directly connected with the persecution of the Church in Siam (people born/migrated to Malaysia with recognised status of *Bummiputra* (indigenous people) by King Phaja Tak who expelled Mgr Le Bon, the Apostolic

Vicar and all Catholic Priests. Fr. Coudé and Fr. Granault, two French Priests found refuge in Kedah where there was a small Community of Catholics, refugees from Siam.

In 1810 the Regional Major seminary could be reopened in the peninsula of Penang which was transferred in 1779 to Pondicherry (India) where it operated for 25 years. From 1840 the jurisdiction was shifted to the Apostolic Vicariate of Siam. Consequently Malaysia and Singapore remained no longer under the jurisdiction of Goa and Portuguese *Padroado* system. Congregation of Propaganda Fide of Vatican took over the jurisdiction with the concordat of Pope Leo XIII with the Portuguese. Thus the Catholics of Malacca and Singapore were put under the jurisdiction of the Bishops of Macau. In 1888 Pope Leo XIII erected the diocese of Malacca with the Episcopal See in Singapore as Suffragan diocese of Pondicherry where the Fathers of Foreign Missions (MEP) worked to evangelize the population.

During the Pacific War (December 1941- August 1945) Japanese occupied Malaysia. The British fought and succeeded to re-establish their Colonial power. But the Communists put up a strong fight against the British who broke the Communist resistance. On August 31, 1957 the Union of Malacca was founded as an Independent State. On September 16, 1963, it became the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah under the State name of Malaysia.

On August 9, 1965 Singapore left the Federation and declared its independence. After that the Federation of Malaysia was formed with 13 Federal States of whom 9 still have a Sultan, functioning as a Secular Ruler as well as the religious head of Muslims. Every five years a King is elected from this group of Sultans as representative head of the State of the Federation of Malaysia.

In 1969 violent racial clashes occurred because the Malays, being the majority felt disadvantaged in comparison with Chinese immigrants, more successful in business and commerce. There was a violence that erupted in 1969 against the Chinese business institutions and shops where several died or hurt severely.

The government woke up to remedy the situation of Malays by providing better training facilities for Malay youth, guaranteeing them fixed quotas for employment in government offices. State of Emergency was invoked to control the racial unrest. Many

Foreign Missionaries were expelled from Sabah, not extending Visas and in 1779 refused to issue new working permits for missionaries from abroad.

A Catholic Politician and leader of United National Kadagam organization fought for religious Pluralism. In the Malaysian Constitution from 1963 it was stated that Islam was the State Religion of the Federation of Malaysia. All forms of missionary activities to convert a Muslim were practically impossible. It could be done only secretly and consequently the new convert would have to emigrate from Malaysia. Belonging to the ethnic group of Malays were equated to be Muslims. Christian social activists among Muslim population were often suspects of doing indirect ways of conversion.

The Catholic Church was allowed to run its own private schools. There were 157 of them. Gradually the government introduced new controls and regulations to deprive the schools, their Catholics characteristic and identity. In 1980 the total number of Catholics was 440,000 in the total population of 13.4 million.

II Vatican Council encouraged the mission of the Church and that of the lay apostolate. During the 1930s Catholic Action groups started. Later Legion of Mary, Young Christians Workers' Movement (YCW), Christian Farmers' Movement (CFM) and Christians' family and social movements were active.

**The stopping of foreign missionaries ordered by the government put additional burden to the Church that did not have sufficient indigenous priests.** This encouraged the vocation of local indigenous people. This also increased the number of Catechists from 1965 to 1980 to 323 in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and 139 in the diocese of Penang. In 1982 a major seminary was started in Kuching to do philosophical and theological studies.

After the II Vatican Council inculturation efforts were started and Bahasa Malaysia was introduced in liturgy along with Tamil and Chinese as official liturgical languages. In 1976 the Malaysian Bishops organised a month of Pastoral Reflections for the whole country as a means of *aggiornamento*. Lay people were asked to secure the continuation of activities in the parishes, to develop their own forms of Liturgical services without priests on Sundays. Basic Christian Communities were started. In 1979 the Diocesan Pastoral Institute of Kuala Lumpur developed a 18 months pastoral course to execute the national pastoral plan, to collaborate with Basic Christian Communities, courses in liturgical, dogmatic and pastoral subject.

The Bishops Conference of Malaysia was a member of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC). Malaysian Christians constitute 6.5% of the total population. As long as English, Tamil and Chinese languages were used in the liturgy there were no

problems on the words used. But when Bahasa Malaysia was introduced there was a problem with the Muslims.

In 1982 the Malaysian government passed a law which decreed that Muslims would reserve 25 originally Arabic terms. The use of these terms by Christians or other non-Muslims religions in their liturgical celebration, in theology or preaching was forbidden by the Printing Presses and Publication Act of 1984, amended in 1987 by the Home Ministry. There were big protests from non-Muslims religions. The government somewhat relented and allowed them for internal use. The controversial words were *Allah* (for the name of God), *Nabi* (for prophet), *Hadith* for doctrine, *Iman* for priest.

As there was rapid economic development in 1980s the government proclaimed “New Development policy” (NDP) in order to catch up with the so called Tiger Nations (South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore). All these had a direct effect on ecological damage as well as the poor who were made poorer by working for multinationals for a low salary. The Church criticised these trends. It was done mostly by Office of Human Development (OHD) in Kuala Lumpur, founded by Fr. Pierre Gauttier, an MEP priest. They published critical assessment of these rapid economic changes. Hence the Christians came under suspicion and reacted strongly against them. The Church was accused of Communist infiltration and was a threat to internal security of the country as the government accused the Church. The Director of OHD of Malaysia Antony Rogers, a De La Salle Brother was imprisoned for a year without ever being tried in a court of law. The Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Soter Fernandez, strongly defended the Church that the training programmes in the field of human rights, integral human development and work with Trade Unions are genuinely the work of the Catholic Church as preferential option for the poor is the thematic of Church approaches and that the Church could not be restricted to purely religious activities. The tensions continue to exist in subtle or open form today.

### **3.2.5. Singapore**<sup>24</sup>

Thomas Stamford Raffles founded Singapore in 1819 as Colonial outpost and harbour of the East India Company. During the Pacific War the Japanese army conquered it in 1942 and it remained under their control till 1945. In 1946 Singapore was made a British Colony and ended in 1963. At first it was the Member State of the Federation of Malays but left it in 1965 due to ethnic and political tensions. It declared its independence as Republic of Singapore in 2003.

Singapore had a population of 4.1 million in 2003 of which 77% were Chinese, 14% Malays and 7% Indians. The Buddhists were 31.9%, the Taoists or Chinese traditional religions 21.9%, Muslims 14.9%, Christians 12.6%, of whom 3.6% were Catholics and 3.6% are Hindus.

Till 1881 Malacca was a part of Portuguese *Padroado* system. In 1641 the Dutch occupied Malacca, expelled all Catholic priests. In 1841 the Apostolic Vicariate of Malacca-Singapore was founded and Penang was chosen as the Episcopal residence which was shifted to Singapore in 1871. In 1972 the Archdiocese of Singapore was created. In 1983 a major seminary was opened. Singapore is ethnically, culturally and religiously a pluralist society. The portion of Chinese speaking Catholics is very high. In 1980s Fr. Jean Charbonnier MEP founded the research and documentation centre “*China Catholic Communication Centre*”, intended to study the Catholic Church in the People’s Republic of China.



As Singapore grew the number of migrant workers also grew. The majority were Filipino as domestic workers or housemaids. The Church was active in educational sector and in 2001 ran 12 Kindergartens, 33 Elementary Schools, 221 Junior and Senior High Schools and 1 College. Religious instruction could be offered only outside the class hours. Pope John Paul II on November 20, 1986 made a stopover of half a day in Singapore during his Asian Journey and celebrated mass.

From 1959 to 1990 Singapore underwent a rapid economic growth. Catholic action groups defended the rights of the poor and foreign migrant workers, exploited by big Companies and the rich. The Government brought the restriction on the Church to stick to purely religious activities and accused many Catholic activities being influenced by Communist ideas. On May 21, 1987, Prime Minister ordered the arrest of ten as collaborators of Communists, using Internal Security Act.

Justice and Peace commission was under pressure and torture and the government officers extracted dubious confessions from them to have collaborated with Communist cells in an anti-government conspiracy. Strong protests from abroad especially by Church organisations poured in. The local Archbishop Gregory Yong Soi Ngean could not dare to come out in the open to challenge the government accusations. He rather bowed down to them.

In such an atmosphere of political tensions an importance on the relationship between Christianity and other religions was held in Singapore from July 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, 1987. It was organized by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). The theme of the conference was "Living and working together with Sisters and Brothers of other Faith". Eminent theologians from the Catholics and Protestants gave theological input on the theology of religion and interreligious dialogue. It was also ecumenical in nature. Many Catholic as well as protestant persons engaged in human rights activities were expelled from Singapore. Some among Catholics and Protestants kept silent. This continues today.

### **3.2.6. Brunei** <sup>25</sup>

The Malaysian Islam Monarchy Brunei is the Sultanate of the island of Kalimantan (Borneo in Indonesia) in which Islam is a State religion. 68% of its 300,000 inhabitants were of Malay descent and Muslims. Brunei is the largest producer of petrol in South East Asia, occupying the fourth place in the world.

During this period, the Sultan of Brunei tried to expel the Spaniards and the Filipino. At the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish missionaries came from Philippines to start a Catholic mission but did not succeed on a long term basis. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish troops landed in 1648-1649, on the East cost of Borneo and the Jesuits converted 700 persons but there was neither follow up nor sustenance of the community. In 19<sup>th</sup> century the attempts

of PIME fathers ended similarly. A stable missionary work was done by the British Mill Hill Missionaries in 1881 in Kalimantan, in Sabah, in Sarawak and in Brunei.

In 1950 the Apostolic Prefecture composed of Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei. In Nov.27,1997 Brunei was made into an Apostolic Prefecture and Cornelius Sim was appointed as the first Apostolic Prefect of Brunei.

On October 20, 2004 Pope Paul II elevated Brunei Darussalam to the rank of Apostolic Vicariate. In 1991, the number of Catholics was 13,000 and in 2005 it was 25,500. The increase in number was not due to conversion to Christianity but due to the Catholic migrant workers who came from the neighbouring Philippines. The greatest number of Catholics in Brunei was ethnic Chinese, Dusan and of Ilban people. Only one fifth of the Catholic in Brunei were born in Brunei. The restriction on missionary work continues today.

### **3.2.7. East Timor** <sup>26</sup>

East Timor comes under the Indonesian Archipelago with more than 13,000 islands. Timor is divided into East and West Timor. From 1586 till 1975 East Timor was a Portuguese colony, playing a modest role of provider of coffee, coco products and sandal wood. During the Pacific War (1941- 1945) it was occupied by Japan. In the war of resistance there were at least 60,000 who lost their lives. After the Pacific War the Portuguese took it back in 1945 as a part of their Colonial Rule. The political problems of the Portuguese Rule internally encouraged movements of independence in East Timor (*Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste* )

During the 1975 Civil War, Lemos Pires, the last Portuguese Governor left East Timor without even a farewell. With his departure ended 400 years of Portuguese Colonial Rule. On November 28, 1975 independence of East Timor was attained and the Democratic Republic of East Timor declared.

The country was in a pathetic condition. 96% were illiterate; baby's death was 50%; an endemic tuberculosis and malaria became the order of the day during the time of independence to make it one of the poorest countries of the world.

But Indonesia invaded East Timor on December 7, 1975 and occupied it totally and made East Timor the 27<sup>th</sup> Province of the Federation of Indonesian States and introduced Bahasa Indonesia as the officially recognized language, and teaching medium in all schools. There were several attempts of resistance of the people of East Timor to the Indonesian occupation. Indonesia employed brutal military measures to destroy the Culture of East Timor as well as the morale of people.

This crime and genocide committed by Indonesia was condemned by the international media. During 1975 to 1995 more than 200,000 people lost their lives, which was one third of the population.

At this moment the Church in East Timor played a critical observer to be the advocate of people and to condemn the Indonesian military and civil atrocities . The Indonesian occupation introduced that every citizen should belong to one of the five religions, acknowledged by the government, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. This pressurized those who belonged to traditional religions to convert to Catholicism. This created a huge wave of conversions to Catholic Church. With Indonesian occupation in 1975 it was 30% and grew to 85% in 2001.

In 1983 Vatican was pressurized to relieve Bishop da Costa Lopes as Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Dili as he was condemning publicly the human rights violation of the Indonesian Military. Carlos Ximenes Belo SDB, a Salesian, was put in his place. Dili was the only diocese of East Timor with 700,000 Catholics divided into 30 parishes and administered by 71 priests. Within the Indonesian Bishops' Conference he was given a guest status. Only once in 1995 the Indonesian Bishops raised voice against the policy of the Indonesian government. But the Indonesian Bishops sent many pastoral agents to assist the Catholic Church in East Timor.

Pope John Paul II did his pastoral visit to East Timor in October 1989 during his pastoral visit to Indonesia. When Indonesia annexed East Timor John Paul II spoke of the human rights in East Timor and never recognised the annexation of East Timor or condemned it, being made the 27<sup>th</sup> Province of the Association of Indonesian States. During his mass in Dili, attended by over 200,000 he appealed in East Timorese Catholics to forgive

their oppressors. He consecrated the new cathedral in Dili on October 12, 1989 with 2000 seats.

On November 12, 1991 Indonesian military opened fire on huge crowd of Catholics in the cemetery in Dili during the burial of a student killed by Indonesian security agents and killed a high number called Dili Cemetery Massacre.

As follow up the military again went on killing about 500 people, those who were shouting political slogans against the military. Then Vatican sent Archbishop Giovanni de Andrea as a Special Papal Envoy to show solidarity and sympathy with those killed. Bishop Belo played a very important role in visiting the wounded and consoling them. There were many threats to his life but he braved them.

In October 1996 Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize together with José Ramos Horta, the speaker of the “National Council of the Maubere Resistance”. The Indonesian government did not take these gestures as an honour. They allowed Bishop Belo to go to Oslo to receive the prize but strictly warned him not to speak on any situation of Indonesia. President Suharto of Indonesia after 32 years was forced to resign and replaced by Vice-President Bacharudin Habibee who was sworn in as the New President.

On August 30, 1999, a referendum was held in East Timor in which East Timorese opted for independence by a vast majority of 78%. The Pro-Indonesian militia groups reacted and caused extensive violence and destruction. The capital city of Dili was destroyed by arson. Such violent actions forced more than 500,000 East Timorese (60% of the population) to flee to West Timor or to the mountains and forests to escape from violence. Many churches were burnt and some of the priests were killed.

On October 20, 1999 the Indonesian Parliament recognised officially the outcome of the referendum and decided to withdraw all Indonesian troops from East Timor. United Nations took over the administration and established the “United Nations Transnational Administration (UNTAET) as the intermediate organisation, given the task to prepare the road to full independence of East Timor. On February 29, 2000 the first step towards reconciliation between Indonesia and East Timor was taken. The President Abdurrahman

Wahid, visited the cemetery Santa Cruz in Dili and he publicly admitted the guilt of the Indonesian military during the 25 years of occupation and asked for forgiveness. He also placed a wreath at the monument of their cemetery. The two Bishops Carlos Filipe Belo of Dili and Basilio do Nascimento of Bacau welcomed it.

The first Presidential election was held on April 14, 2002 and won by José Alexandre Xanana Gusmao. The interim administration of UN ended on May 20, 2002. After nearly 400 years of Portuguese control and 25 years of Indonesian occupation full independence was achieved. There was a vast destruction that took place. The Catholic Church contributed very much through development assistance, healthcare and charity. Till 1996 Diocese of Dili had over 700,000 Catholics. In 1996 Vatican created the new Diocese of Bacau and consecrated Basilio do Nascimento as Apostolic Administrator of Bacau. The situation is calm today.

### **3.2.8. Indonesia** <sup>27</sup>

In the islands of the Republic of Indonesia, the beginning of Christianity can be traced back to Nestorians in Northern Sumatra in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. A few centuries later we find the Syro-Chaldaic rite in today's Indonesia. In 1502 in Palembang in Sumatra an Episcopal See was erected.

In 1514 the Portuguese reached Ambonia in the Moluccas coming from the trading post in Malacca. From 1546-1547 Francis Xavier worked in Ambonia as missionary and Jesuits organised missionary work and other missionaries came. In 1677 the Dutch East-Indian Company expelled the Catholic missionaries and forbade all Catholic worships. In 1653 they conquered the Western part of the Island of Timor while the Eastern part remained with Portuguese.

In 1806 Louis Napoleon, the then King of Netherlands, declared all religions equal, applying also to the Dutch East India Company. In 1807 all Catholics of this area were included in the Apostolic Vicariate Batavia which in 1842 became the Apostolic Vicariate Batavia.

In 1890 the Dutch Jesuits were allowed to go to Java and they began to erect the first Catholic parishes and ran several educational institutions. Fr. Van Lith with other Dutch

Priests advocated the policy that all Catholic missionaries should support the independence movement of indigenous population against Dutch Colonial Rule. In 1929 the first Catholic Political Party the "*Persatuan Politik Katholik Indonesia*" was founded to support the movement of Indonesian Independence.

In 1900 the number of Catholics reached nearly 50,000, not including East Timor. Forty years later at the beginning of Pacific War (1941-1945) Catholics reached 10 times more i.e. 500,000. On May 1, 1940 the Jesuit, Fr. Albert Sugijaparanata an indigenous priest, was first time appointed the Apostolic Vicar and consecrated Bishop.

During the Japanese occupation of the Indonesia Islands (1942-1945) Bishop Aerts from the Moluccas along with twelve Priests were executed in today's Irian Jaya by the secret police. This ended missionary work by Foreign Missionaries. Indonesian priests and Religious Sisters were allowed to continue the pastoral work. A few missionaries from Germany, the then ally of Germany, were the only foreigners allowed. Japan brought some Japanese priests and a Japanese Bishop, to Moluccas and Flores. This did not succeed as the Japanese priests and Bishop showed greater loyalty to Vatican and Universal Church than towards the Japanese Emperor. It was the dedicated services of a few Indonesian priests, Religious Brothers and Sisters that kept the Church alive. After the Pacific war, the foreign missionaries were able to return to their former places of work.

On Aug 17, 1945 only two days after the Japanese surrendered, Sukarno and Hatta declared the independence of the Indonesian Republic. He reversed the position of Catholic leaders by giving high posts while the Dutch because of Calvinism did not do so. Hence the Catholics suffered under them and it was remedied.

Since several Catholics were active in independence struggle after the birth of the new independent Indonesia two alternatives emerged. There were the Islamic groups and Political Parties which could think of only an Islamic State. Secondly there were the nationalists who advocated the formation of a Secular State in which all ethnic groups and all religions and cultural traditions would be respected.

The Christian Churches supported Sukarno and Hatta who wanted to create a pluralistic Nation State using the *pancasila* Ideology. It consists of the following

- Belief in one and only one God.
- Social justice
- National Unity of Indonesia
- Democracy guided by deliberations amongst representatives
- Humanism

This was accepted by different parties and signified a religiously, culturally and ethnically pluralistic Nation State thereby giving up the idea to make Indonesia an Islamic State.

The first period of nation building was an agonizing one. The Dutch tried to restore their Colonial Rule by military power. Yogyakarta was captured, and President Sukarno was taken to custody. At this difficult time all Catholics in radio talks in 1947 supported and defended the republic of Indonesia, and even fought with Colonial power. At that time the majority of the Church personnel were also foreign missionaries of Dutch origin: 90% of the Priests, 86% Religious Brothers, and 81% of Religious Sisters.

### **3.2.8.1. 1949-1965 Under the Rule of Sukarno**

The long and bloody war of independence ended with the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the United States of Indonesia. In December 27, 1949, the new name was replaced by the Republic of Indonesia.

In 1950 it also became a member of United Nations. When the Dutch left there was a doubt whether the principle of a Secular State would last. In Aceh, in the Central Java and in South Sulawesi (Celebes) Muslim organizations were advocating the creation of Muslim State.

In 1953 the Ministry for Religious Affairs decreed that for Foreign missionaries would no longer obtain Visa to enter the country. In case they went to their house country for long, they would not be given re- entry permits. The Dutch missionaries, who had been staying in Indonesia for many years, could continue to stay and do pastoral work. One of the reasons for such step was the issue of West Papua New Guinea (remained as Irian Jaya) which was captured by the Indonesian army from the Dutch in 1962. There was a long drawn conflict mediated by United Nations and became a Province in the Republic of Indonesia.

In 1956 president Sukarno introduced cleverly changes in the Constitution to put an end to the Multi- Party system leading to constant changes of governments. The changes introduced gave the President special powers and privileges and lead to a quasi democratic system, which Sukarno called "a guided democracy". In April 1955 Asian-African Conference



of the Non-aligned National was convened in Bandung in Java. It was an important date for Indonesia. In 1955 the Indonesian Bishops met for their first Plenary Assembly since 1939. On Jan 31, 1961, Pope John Paul II erected six ecclesiastical Provinces with a total of 6 Archdioceses and 19 dioceses. Archdioceses of Jakarta and Semarang were indigenous Bishops. On June 26, 1967, the Archbishop of Semarang, Justinus Darmojuwono became the first Cardinal, designated by Pope Paul VI.

There was an attempted *coup d'état* by the Communists to on Sept 30, 1965 but failed. Christians condemned it. On March 11, 1966 the Communist Party was banned. During the conflict with Communists the military acted ruthlessly killing 500,000 people (numbers suspect to be 1 million). The Church at the time was silent on the murders called "Action of September 30<sup>th</sup>". In a pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Indonesia mourned such incident, asking God's pardon and all co-citizens for forgiveness for the lack of commitment and negligence to come forward to the aid of the persecuted. They also endorsed the *Pancasila* Ideology.

On March 27, 1968 Suharto was re-elected as the President. The obligation that every Indonesian should adhere to one religion and the first principle of *Pancasila* in the belief of one and only one god was favourable to Islam. The traditional religions of Indonesia were not recognized and hence they joined Islam. It made the country with Muslims as highest number. Christians also experienced unprecedented growth. In 1964 Catholics were 1.85 million (i.e. 77%) while in 1980, they were 3.5 million (3% of the total population). There was a spurt in indigenisation of Religious personnel to meet the needs of the Church.

After II Vatican Council, the *Bahasa* Indonesia was introduced as an official liturgical language. Social and development problems were dealt with. In 1968, the Institute for Social Research and Development was founded as a sub-unit of the Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference. Communication was another field used by the Church. Programmes for radio and television were produced by the Catholic Church. There was a daily news paper *kompas* produced and edited by Catholic Journalists. In 1972 there were 121 Catholic hospitals, 353 Dispensaries, 354 Kindergartens, 92 Orphanages, 2320 elementary schools, 4 Special schools for Deaf and Dumb, 615 Junior High Schools, 139 Senior High Schools, 63 Teachers' Training

Colleges, and 3 Universities. In 1970 Indonesian Bishops were the founding members of FABC.

The Social commitment to the poor and the marginalized particularly in the textile and leather industries increased and the trend shifted to accuse the Catholics with communist leanings. Further the Indonesian Church faced the shortage of Priests for pastoral ministry. In 1990, 822 regular parishes and 6,660 mission stations did not have a resident priest. The total number of priests was 1,868 both diocesan and religious and foreign priests were 370.

In May 26, 1998 President Suharto's regime came to an end and the Vice- President Bacharudin Habibie came to power. In 2001 summer he was deposed and on June 7, 1999 the Democratic Party of Megawathi-Sukarnoputri succeeded in summer 2001.

Indonesian had several Presidents from 1945. Sukarno's period was 1945 to 1967, Suharto's: 12<sup>th</sup> March 1967 to 21<sup>th</sup> May 1998; Abdurrahman Wahid: 20 October 1999 to 23 July 2001; Susilo Bambang: 20 October 2004 to 20 October 2014; Megawathi-Sukarnoputri: 12 October 2004 to 20 October 2014, Joko Widodo 2014 onwards.

During Sukarno's 23 years of reign there were 2 churches destroyed, during Suharto's regime of 32 years the number increased to 456 and in the only 17 months of transitional Habibies rule 156 churches and as President till 2001, 211 churches were destroyed.

The fundamentalists Muslims dreamt of an Islamic state and the rule of Shariat laws in the country. It did not happen but tensions between these two communities increased. The transmigration policy of the government as well as the general difficult economic situations caused the tension also caused several of these attacks and social tensions.

### **3.2.9. Philippines** <sup>28</sup>

In 1521 the Portuguese sailor Fernão Magalhães landed in the Philippines in his attempt to sail around the world in the service of Spanish King. On Easter Sunday April 27, 1521 he was killed by local tribal chief on the island of Mactan when he tried to invade the Island by force. In 1625 the first Augustinian missionaries came. In 1577 the first Dominican Friars started missionary activities, followed by Jesuits in 1581. In 1569 it was made a

Spanish Colony, except for the island of Mindanao. In 1579 the diocese of Manila was erected as a suffragan diocese of Mexico. All missionary activities of Religious orders came under *patronato real*, implying that the Spain paid all expenses for the diocesan and the Religious clergy with the right to appoint Bishops'. The Church enjoyed exemption from taxes and for property rights. Traditional religions were Prohibited, their religious leaders persecuted and their places of worship were destroyed. The indigenous people were forced to live in Christian villages. Resistance came only from the Muslims who defended the Sultantes of Sulu and Mindanao against the Spanish invaders who did not succeed to Christianize the whole archipelago.

In 1855 the number of Catholics was 400,000 and ten years later 700,000 and grew to two million till 1620. In 1595 the hierarchy was erected with the Archdiocese of Manila and the Suffragan dioceses of Cebu, Nueva Segovia and Nueva Caceres. In 1611 Archbishop Miguel Benavides O.P. founded the Catholic University of Santo Tomas in Manila, which received its official recognition by Pope Innocence X in 1645.

In the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century there was a strong polarisation of the Foreign Religious clergy, supporting the Colonial Rule and the indigenous diocesan clergy who felt discriminated to be only assistant priests and were not elevated as Bishops. In 1872 there indigenous clergy were executed, convicted of treason in a rather doubtful trial. This boosted the Independence movement against the Spanish which stated in 1896.

In June 12, 1898 Emilio Aguinaldo declared Independence of Philippines from Spain. The military intervention of USA shortened the period of independence and established their Colonial Rule. The *Padroado* system was abolished. Public educational system was introduced by them and marginalised the Catholic educational system. In 1902 Vatican put the ecclesiastical Province of Philippines under the leadership of North American Bishops, decided by the congregation of Propaganda Fide.

Since the local clergy were marginalized a Catholic Priest Gregorio Aglapay (1860-1940) Founded the "Independent Philippine Church" in 1902 and Felix Manolo Founded another "Iglesia in Christo" in 1920.

During the Pacific war (1941 to 1945) the Japanese occupied Philippines and installed a puppet regime dependant on Japanese military. On July 4, 1946, after a year after the end of Pacific war Philippines received independence but for a long time politically and economically depended on U.S.A. At that time 85% were Catholics.

In July 1946 Philippians received political independence but USA in a series of separate treatises secured for themselves special economic rights and the right to maintain military bases in the Philippines. Even after political independence the political and economic power passed into the hands of the oligarchy of a few powerful families which blocked the necessary social and political reforms. There was a discontent in the society and the communists active during anti- Japanese people's Army as a guerrilla force against Japanese occupation, emerged again during this occasion. It was "HUK movement" that originated in Luzon. It emerged again demanding from the government social reform, particularly a radical land reform. This Huk revolt was suppressed and Ramon Magsaysay (1953- 1975) with military and logistical assistance of USA did the suppression.

In 1945 the then Papal delegate founded the Catholic Welfare Organization to coordinate all relief of operations and donations mostly sent by U.S.A. to recover from war damages. In July 17, 1945 the Catholic Bishops could meet for the first time. But the formal Founding of the "Catholic Bishop Conference of Philippines (CBCL) was in 1967. II Vatican council introduced several more developments in the Church. It made them look into the structural defects of the economic and political system.

Several Institutions were started to study, examine and propagate social doctrine of the Church. We cite some examples: Institute for social order in 1949, Federation of free workers in 1950, Federation of free farmers in 1953, Federation of sugar workers. In 1962 Asian Social Institute was setup in Manila as an international, ecumenical and interreligious teaching and training institute in social studies and sociology. Several Catholic Action groups were active but were controlled by Bishops. Hence the laity played only a marginal role.

In 1960s the Jesuit University of Ateneo gave good critical analysis of economic, social, political developments. Similarly the Centre for social policies analysed social and political fields. In 1965 Catechetical Institute was founded and later developed as East Asian

Pastoral Institute (EAPI). Several priests, Religious Sisters and lay persons benefitted by their teaching and publications.

After the II Vatican Council (1965- 1972) Priests Institute for Social Action (PISA) trained several Priests in Philippines. They demanded the Catholic Bishops Conference to institute an Episcopal commission for social Apostolate. Thus in 1966 started NASSA: National Secretariat for Social Action. This created a great impact on social Action. From November 26, till December 15, 1970 Pope Paul VI visited the Churches in Oceania, Australia and Philippines. In Manila Paul VI attended the first symposium of Asian Bishops' Conferences where he declared the setting up of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). During his visit the Pope insisted on visiting the slum area of Tondo in the Metro Manila to stress the Apostolate of the poor. Thus the Office of Human Development (OHD) of the FABC was located in Manila as well as the Bishops Institute for Social Action (BISA) was held in Manila in 1974.

The Archbishop of Manila invited the Asian Bishops and Oceania Bishops to the blessing of his renovated Cathedral in Dec 1958. Many responded to the invitation and it was the first time that there took place a meeting of this nature in Asian Church. Realizing this, Pope John XXIII sent as his special delegate Cardinal Pietro Agagianian, the Pro-Prefect of Propaganda Fide to this gathering. After the blessing of the renovated Cathedral, the Bishops met at the Catholic University of St. Thomas in Manila. The Bishops were concerned about the communist occupation of China which resulted in the suppression of the Catholic Community in China. At the suggestion of the Papal delegate, the Bishops then took the historical decision to set up a Catholic Continental Radio Station which was later named as Radio Veritas Asia. The German Church through Missio, Misereor, Church in Need, the Archdiocese of Köln and Ministry for Economic Cooperation of the German Government along with the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, pooled resources to start it and maintain it. In 1969 it started its shortwave programme, giving catechetical and faith instructions in 20 languages in the countries of South East Asia.

In 1965 Fernando Marcos won Presidential elections. In his first term he operated within the framework of the Constitution. In 1969 he was re-elected for a second term. The Constitution did not allow a third term. Hence he manipulated the existing military conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Mindanao and the Communist guerrillas of New People's

Army and declared martial law to control situations in his favour. His dictatorial rule was characterised by corruption, violation of human rights and enrichment by those in power. Land reforms, promised by him, did not take place but the opposite happened with the rich families accumulating land.

All the tricks of Marcos failed. Under the leadership of Cardinal Jaime Sin the Bishops and the laity united against Marcos and a call was given to join Civil disobedience and non-violent resistance against Marcos. This resulted in the peaceful [1986 EDSA Revolution](#) that forced Marcos into exile in Hawaii.

After II Vatican Council the Church opted for the Church of the poor. The Bishops' Conference had 110 Bishops. Some supported Marcos government, the second group joined hands with Cardinal Jaime Sin and took the path of Critical Collaboration and some opposed Marcos regime. The pastoral letters at that time of martial law leaned towards a critical attitude to Marcos. The pastoral letters in 1984, 1986 practically called for Civil disobedience and non-violent resistance against Marcos. The Religious were very uncompromising with the adoption of Latin American Liberation Theology.

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Several Religious were victimized by Marcos. The government opposed institutions of social apostolate and publications critical of the government. The Catholic Human Rights Organization "Task force for Politician Detainees was set up by the major superiors of Religious Congregations in January 1974. They found that 2225 were killed without any trial from 1973-1985 and 334 simply disappeared in the same period while there were thousands of political detainees. Thus the number of persecuted and murdered increased among human rights activists, Judges, Journalists and especially Church Collaborators.

Besides the Christians for National Liberation the Communists also founded "National Democratic Fund". All these were fighting the dictatorship of Marcos Regime. Marcos dealt with them very violently through military power and several fled to the mountains to protect themselves. When Pope John Paul II visited from February 17- 22 Marcos lifted the martial law and imposed it immediately afterwards with repressive measures. The Pope defended the human rights and dignity of human person.

The murder of the opposition politician Benigno (Nevioy) Aquino who was shot at the Airport of Manila on August 21, 1983 marked the slow end of Marcos regime. In May 1984

Marcos succeeded for the last time to manipulate elections which he cleverly did to the total loss of the credibility of people. Marcos looked for another legitimatisation of his rule with a major mistake of ordering a snap Presidential election for February 7, 1986.

During the election Corazon Aquino, the widow of Benigno Aquino won the majority votes. The International Election observers and the National Movement for free elections gave the correct results, frustrating all efforts of Marcos to manipulate them. On December 4, 1986 the Philippines Bishops' Conference published a pastoral letter objecting to Marcos' manipulations and asked people to resort to a non-violent struggle as Marcos was not the rightful head of the State. The strength of people's power during 23-25 February, 1986 along, "Epifanio de los Santos Avenue" called the EDSA that remained disciplined and non-violent reciting rosary and prayers. Radio VERITAS Asia called the population to come out in great number into the streets to protest. Cardinal sin called also the Sisters of two Carmelites monasteries in Manila to support the Protest Action by fasting and praying. EDSA revolution showed the ability of the Church to influence the history of Philippines.

Unfortunately the Benigno Aquino's regime did not fulfil the expectations of people. There were severe economic problems like 26.6 billion U.S. dollars in 1989 left by Marcos. Since Basic Christian communities played a vital part in the life of the Church they were asked to tackle the sinful structures, responsible for poverty and inequality.

Beginning in 1968 there were ecumenical efforts to translate the full Bible in several local languages. In 1978, the translation of the New Testament in Tagalog, Ilobo, Hilgaynon, Ragasian and Samarenyo was completed. As for full Bible translation it was prolonged.

In 1965 during the 4<sup>th</sup> Year of Celebration of the Church in Philippines the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Philippines (CBCL) founded the Missionary Society of the Philippines for foreign mission as a community of diocesan priests. It started its services in Asia and Africa. Since 1975 a missionary seminary was set up in Tagalay. In 1977 the American Mary Knoll missionaries started a formation Centre for lay missionaries as well as Jesuits, Divine Word Fathers (SVD), Salesians (SDB), the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) and the Belgian Scheut Fathers (CICM) also did missionary work. At the end of the International Congress on Missions from December 2 to 7<sup>th</sup>, 1979 there was a solemn sending out of 64 missionaries to other countries. After the visit of Cardinal Jaime Sin to People's Republic of China in 1984,

being himself a Chinese descent founded “Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society”, whose main task was to be active in the apostolate of Chinese descendant living in the Philippines as well as to engage in missionary work in mainland China. From Sept 27<sup>th</sup> till October 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 the first missionary congress was held. The pastoral letter of the Bishops that preceded it stressed the missionary obligation as the Philippines Association of Catholic Mission and Missiology in the field of mission studies.

In the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century several million Filipino men and women left their homeland to work as migrant overseas workers in Southeast countries, Arab Gulf Countries and Saudi Arabia. Several went to USA. Thus there was a brain drain as well as young energetic and well trained people left the country with negative consequences for economic development except that overseas workers’ money coming home kept the International Exchange Reserve stable.

### **3.2.10. Thailand**<sup>29</sup>

The Catholic missionary activity in the Kingdom of Siam, the then official name of Thailand began in 1567. Two Dominican Fathers arrived in Ayutthaya the then capital of Siam. They were killed after two years of missionary work in 1569. Later Franciscan missionaries succeeded on several occasions to enter into Siam for missionary work but could not set up lasting Church institutions. From 1609 Jesuits started missionary work under Portuguese *Padroado* system. In the beginning of 1662 Paris Foreign Missions (MEP) set up mission starting in Siam under Msgr. Pierre Marie Lambert de la Motte (1624-1679) and Msgr. François Pallu (1626-1684). The Capital Ayutthaya, the centre of missionary activities not only for Siam but for Annam and for China. When the French missionaries came there were already small Christian Communities existing. They were more than 2000 Catholics under the pastoral care of Portuguese priests. This small community consisted of mainly Portuguese merchants and of Catholic refugees who fled from persecutions of Christian in Annam and China.

The newly created office of Apostolic Vicars made a change in the policy of Vatican because the new Apostolic Vicars were directly responsible to Pope. The Portuguese king opposed it as it was not in line with *Padroado* rights of Portuguese Kings. The Portuguese officials and clergy disapproved and even showed hostility by placing obstacles in the work.



Originally the French missionaries were to start work in Annam, but due to the persecution in Annam, they stayed back in Siam. The Siamese King Narai (1657-1688) welcomed the French Missionaries because he desired political and economic ties with France. The French Missionaries founded St. Joseph Major Seminary in Ayutthaya as the inter regional seminary for the whole mission territory of the MEP in Asia. After 100 years it was shifted to Penang in today's Malaysia and then shifted to Pondicherry in India.

Msgr. Pierre Marie Lambert de la Motte founded in Ayutthaya the Religious Congregation of Sisters of "Amantes de La Croix", the first indigenous Congregation of Sisters in Asia. In 1669 the Apostolic Vicariate of Siam was founded and Msgr Laneau MEP was consecrated as the first Bishop in 1674.

In 1688 a Greek merchant, Constantine Phaulkon, who had a great influence in the royal court of Siam and even became the prime minister was executed during a revolution against King Narai. Since that Greek Merchant had been acting as a protector of Christians in Siam, his fall and execution started a general persecution of the Christian Community. At that time Msgr. Laneau the Apostolic Vicar was arrested and the Catholic mission destroyed.

In 1731, the Siamese government ordered a prohibition of conversion to Christianity and foreign missionaries were forbidden to preach the gospel in the country. In 1767 Ayutthaya was conquered and destroyed by the Burmese army. This signalled the end of Catholic Church in Siam. The Burmese destroyed Buddhist temples and monasteries as well as all Catholic Churches.

At the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic missionary activities were resumed. The major seminary in Ayutthaya which was moved to Penang started to operate there in 1809. The Catholic Church started to grow not only by conversions but also by a great number of refugees from Cambodia and Annam. In 1841, the Apostolic Vicariate of Siam was later changed to Apostolic Vicariate Bangkok. Msgr Pallegoix held the post till 1861. Since he entertained good relations with Prince Mongkut, later King Rama IV (1851-1861) was helpful to the Catholic Church. When he died a state burial was given to him. He is remembered for his unique contribution of his dictionary of their Language in Latin, French and English. It influenced the development of their language.

In 1885 Fr. Colombet MEP founded the Assumption College, the first Catholic school in Bangkok which later was directed by the Brothers of St. Gabriel who developed it into the first Catholic University in Thailand. Hence Msgr Jean Louis Vey, the Apostolic Vicar in Siam brought in the first the missionary personnel, such as Brothers of St. Gabriel for educational work and Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres who in 1898 opened the St. Louis Hospital, of first Catholic Hospital in Bangkok.

In 1939 the Kingdom of Siam changed its name into the Kingdom of Thailand. The national religion of the Thailand is Buddhism of the Theravada school, to which 93% belong. According to Thai Constitution, the king as the head of the State has to be a Buddhist. To be a genuine Thai was synonymous with being a Buddhist. The Catholic Church is a small minority of 0.4% in the country and consists mostly of immigrants from Chinese, Laotians, Vietnamese or Cambodian descent. In spite of the fact that the Catholic Church was present for 500 years it is considered an alien religion.

The Constitution of Thailand's grants freedom of religion. Like Buddhist monasteries all institutions of the Catholic Church are exempt from paying taxes. The Catholic Priests and Seminarians are exempt from military service. The new constitution of Thailand from October 11, 1997 maintains the principle of separation of Religion and State and the attempt of Buddhist monks to make Buddhism as State religion did not succeed.

In their society the Catholic Church enjoys a high reputation. The quality and excellence of Catholic schools and Universities was upheld by the Church. The Catholic Church avoided criticising the existing social problems and conflicts in the country in public statements.

After 1950s the number of expatriate priests steadily increased to outreach 50% of the total number of 180 priests working in the country. The influx of missionaries, expelled from the newly founded People's Republic of China was especially very high. Till 1970s the leadership was still entrusted to foreign missionary societies such as Paris Foreign Missions (MEP) which was in charge of 3 dioceses and Redemptorists and Salesians who had one diocese each. A small group of Jesuits were working as Student Chaplains in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The Camillian Fathers and Brothers set up three hospitals and the Brothers of De La Salle and the Brothers St. Gabriel built up schools.

In 1955 Legion of Mary was founded. The activists of Legion of Mary were 10,000 members from 1955-1975 and broke the ghetto mentality of Thai by meeting other sick and needy persons to care for them. Credit Union Movement started in 1965 among Catholics and more than 80 groups with 5000 members were shortly established. After II Vatican Council the Catholic hierarchy was established. Out 8 dioceses 3 were led by indigenous Bishops. Further two Ecclesiastical Provinces were established: Archdiocese of Bangkok with 5 suffragan dioceses: Chanthaburi, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Sawan, Ratchaburi and Surat Thani and the Archdiocese of Thare Nonseng with 3 suffragan dioceses: Nakhon Ratchsima, Ubon Ratchthani and Udon Thani.

In 1969 the Kingdom of Thailand and Holy See established diplomatic relations. Bangkok became the residence of the Papal Nuncio who was also Nuncio for Cambodia, Singapore and as Apostolic delegate for Brunei, Laos, Malaysia and Myanmar. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand was formed and met twice a year. On February 2, 1983, Michael Michai Kitbunchu, the Archbishop of Bangkok was named Cardinal by Pope John Paul II. On 24 May, 1973 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand became a full member of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC). In 1979 Bishops' Institutes for Inter-Religious Affairs (BIRA) for members of FABC along with a good delegation of Buddhists and Christians was conducted. The Catholic Church of Thailand was twice the host for Plenary Assemblies of FABC (1982 and 2000).

In 1972 the major seminary "Lux Mundi" was founded in Sampran to train seminarians. Earlier they were going to Penang to the Inter-regional major seminary. The attempt to introduce Thai as a medium of teaching brought some problems. Buddhists were afraid that gradually Christianity would become more attractive for traditionally Buddhist Thais. Hence even the Ministry of Religious Affairs intervened and forbade the Christians to use the terms derived from Buddhist Holy Scripture in liturgical usage and theology. But Cardinal Michai Kitbunchu asserted right to use the Thai Language which could be understood by the common person. Similarly an attempt at inculturation was suspected by Buddhists. In 1984 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand founded the "Research Centre for Religion and Culture" to promote inculturation and to engage in dialogue with Buddhists.

Pope John Paul II visited Thailand from May 10-14, 1984 and was officially received by King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The Buddhist Patriarch Vasa Tava also received the Pope in the Rachbopit Pagoda in Bangkok.

Pope also visited the Refugee Camp Phanat Nikhom to draw the attention of the International Community to the plight of refugees from Cambodia. He appreciated the work of Thai Caritas (COERR) among them. Consequent to Pope's visit vocation to priesthood increased. But in May 1989 Thai government decided to stop granting Visa for foreign missionaries. In the same year Pope John Paul II canonised seven Thai Martyrs in Rome: a catechist, two Religious Sisters and four lay persons. They were killed in December 1940 in Songkhorn in Northeast Thailand because of their faith during the period of the alliance of Thailand with Japan. At this time all foreign missionaries were expelled and Christian persecuted. On March 5, 2000, the Catholic priest Nicolas Bunkert Kitbamrung died in May 1986 after spending several years in prison. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) was founded in 1978 as Non-Governmental Organisation. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) also did a commendable job. When refugees slowly stopped coming COERR had taken up development programmes, language schools and professional training centres as well as the HIV-AIDS patients.

As a rule the Catholic Bishops' abstained from criticism of socio-political problems. But in May 1990 they issued circulars against sex tourism involving Thai girls, women and young boys in sex trade. Several international Conferences were held on it in Thailand.

Since 1990s Bangkok became the seat of Catholic News Agency "Union of Catholic Asian News (UCA News) moved from Hong Kong. Since monastic is valued in Thailand Church also had in 1995, seven belonging to Clarissian and three to Carmelite tradition. In 1969 Fr. Verdrière and MEP founded a contemplative monastery for men in Nong Ri, in Northern of Bangkok. It did not persist very long. In 1987, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand founded "Thai Missionary Society". They engaged in missionary work in North and West Thailand among Karens, Hmong, Yao, Akha, Lahu and Lisu.

### **3.3. East Asia**

#### **3.3.1. Taiwan <sup>30</sup>**

Taiwan is 36,000 Sq Kms. When Portuguese landed in 1590, they named it as Formosa and held it for 50 years. In 1642 the Dutch erected a trading outpost. But 20 years later the powerful Chinese General Zheng Chenggong (considered a captain of group of Pirates) expelled the Dutch. Till 1891 Taiwan was part of Fujian Province belonging to China. In 1895 after Sino-Japanese war, Taiwan was ceded to Japan in the treaty of Shimonoseki and remained a Japanese colony till the end of Pacific War. In 1949 after being defeated in the civil war by the Communist forces under Mao Zedong, Tschiang Kaishek, the leader of Guomindang retreated with the rest of his army and thousands of refugees from the mainland China to Taiwan. For several years Taiwan managed to occupy the permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations reserved for China as Founding Member.

In 1913 an Apostolic Prefecture was set up in Taiwan. Till 1949 only 12 priests were working in Taiwan. But with the end of the Civil War in China and the founding of the Peoples' Republic of China on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1949, most Catholic Bishops, Priests and male and female Religious left the Main Land China and sought refuge in Taiwan. Thus the number of Priests reached 400. Mgr Antonio Riberi, the then Pro-Nuncio to China, after having been expelled from Shanghai, came to Taiwan to resume his office as Inter Nuncio with Guomindang Government. In Taipei the Inter Nunciature and in Rome a plenipotentiary of the Republic of China was accredited with the Holy See. Till 1966 it lasted. On Christmas 1966 the diplomatic status was upgraded to the rank of Apostolic Nunciature. This move of Rome pleased Guomindang Government but annoyed the Communist Regime in Beijing which interpreted the move of Vatican as a hostile act against the Republic of China.

In 1959 the number of Catholics was 170,000 and grew in the next 5 years to 240,000 in 1964. The converts came from indigenous population of the different mountain tribes who have their own independent cultural and religious traditions. They were completely different from those of Han Chinese. Some converts also came from the Refugees of the Main Land China. In 1962 the Archdiocese of Taipei was erected with 6 suffragan dioceses and 2 Apostolic Prefectures constituting the 21<sup>st</sup> Ecclesiastical Province in China.

In 1960 Cardinal Thomas Tian, Archbishop of Beijing, fled to Taiwan and was appointed as the Apostolic Administrator in Taiwan. In 1961 Bishops' Conference of Taiwan was founded and received the name Bishops' Conference of China. In 1974 the First Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Bishops' Conferences met in Taipei on the theme of

Evangelization in Modern Day Asia. In 1960 the number of Catholics reached 300,000 which remained unchanged for 40 years. It implied that there were less converts among the mountain people who were 2% of the population, but 50% of the Catholics.

Till the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century the leadership positions of Bishops and Priests exclusively were held by persons who still had been born in the Main Land and were emotionally affiliated with their religious and cultural roots. They continue to use Mandarin Chinese and were reluctant to learn the local Taiwanese dialect or the languages of the mountain people. Politically the leadership of the Church supported the Guomintang Government. The open letter of Taiwanese Bishops to the Bishops of the World was “in communion with our people, we declare that we acknowledge only one China, one culture and one country.” This made them profess that Chinese culture and philosophy was their only heritage. During the course of the last years the new developments in political and ecclesiastical circles started to change. It may happen that could change the name of the Conference from Catholic Bishops’ Conference China to Chinese Regional Bishops’ Conference of Taiwan. This should clear the confusion because in the mainland China there was not the Chinese Bishops’ Conference of the Official Church, but also under the same name a Chinese Bishops’ Conference of the Underground Church.

Since 1984 John Paul II entrusted to the Taiwanese Bishops during their *Ad Limina* visit the task to function as bridge Church for their contact with the Catholic Church in Main Land China. The Taiwanese erected a commission for Bridge Church Service within the Bishops’ Conference of Taiwan to provide liturgical, catechetical and theological literature. The fact that the Holy See is the only European Country to maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan constitutes an obstacle for the normalization of relationship between Rome and Beijing. Since 1972 the diplomatic relation with Vatican was changed into a Chargé d’Affaires in the Apostolic Nunciature of Taipei.

### **3.3.2. Mongolia** <sup>31</sup>

The Republic of Mongolia covers an area of 1,566,500 sq kms and inhabited only by 2.7 million of whom 760,000 live in the capital Ulan Bator. In 1245 the first attempt to

establish relationship with Mongols or Tartars was undertaken by Pope Innocence IV who sent the Franciscan Friars. But it did not succeed. At the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century emigrants from Manchuria were the first setup of small Catholic communities in Inner Mongolia in the region of Xiwnazi. During the period 1828-1840 Mongolia had become a safe haven for persecuted Catholics from Beijing. Beginning of 1874 the Belgian missionaries of Scheut Fathers (CICM) started missionary work in the Apostolic Vicariate of Southwest Mongolia. In 1922 the efforts were renewed and entrusted to the self governing mission (*missio sui iuris*) Uрга, the old name of Ulan Bator was established and entrusted to the Scheut Fathers. In 1924 because the Communist gained power in Outer Mongolia and made Mongolia a satellite country of the Soviet Union. The Belgian missionaries could not do missionary work.

During this period the Mongolian government propagated aggressive atheism and severely suppressed Buddhist, the national religion. Many Buddhist monks lost their lives. And more than 2600 Buddhist monasteries were destroyed and the precious Buddhists scriptures were lost. Only at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century new Catholic missionary activities were possible. On April 4, 1992 Vatican and the Republic of Mongolia established diplomatic relationship. The Scheut missionary, Fr. Wenceslao Padilla, a native Filipino was appointed as a first mission superior. In July 1982 Fr. Padilla with two confreres started the Catholic mission. At that time there were no indigenous Mongolian Catholics living in a country. They were employed an international firms and embassies. Hence they were having liturgical celebrations in a rented hall. In May 1976 the first church was built in Ulan Bator for the missionary centre. There was also work started with the centre for street children as well as mentally retarded people. A counselling centre for alcohol addicts also was started. Since 1995, 4 Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity started working in Ulan Bator opening a centre for homeless people. 3 Korean Sisters for the Congregation of St. Paul de Chartres and 3 Sisters of Immaculate Heart started their work running a Montessori and Elementary Schools as well as another Elementary School in Zun Mod. In 1998 the Apostolic Nuncio officiated at the first ordination to priesthood of Pierre Titengie Kasemuana CICM born in Kongo. At that time the missionary personnel were 35 belonging to 7 different religious Congregations and the number of Mongolian Catholics reached under 35. On May 22, 2001 the Apostolic Nuncio made another step in erecting a hierarchical Church structure *sui iuris* of Ugra (Ulan Bator) and appointed Fr. Wenceslao Padilla, as the first Apostolic Prefect. In summer of 2002

another new phase of missionary activity was started. On August 15, 2002 a second parish was erected in Ulan Bator and Salesians opened an oratory in Darhan, the second largest city in the country. Sisters of Charity started another centre in Dai Ekh. In August 2002 the eighth International Congress of Mongolian Scholars was held in Ulan Bator. On this occasion, the contribution of Sheurt Missionaries were remembered and hoped that they will continue their work. The first Apostolic Prefect Mgr Wenceslao Padilla died of sudden heart attack on 25 September 2018.

### **3.3.3. Macau** <sup>32</sup>

On December 1999, the history of 450 years of Portuguese colonial rule came to an end and the former colony was returned to Chinese Sovereignty. Diocese of Macau was erected in 1576 which once comprised of the whole of China, Japan and the neighbouring countries and islands. Today in that area, 600 dioceses were erected. In the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century, it had 20,000 inhabitants of whom 18,000 were Catholics. For more than 100 years Macau functioned as the central mission station for the old missions of China and Japan. It was in Macau that the Jesuit missionaries Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Adam Shall von Bell (1592-1666) prepared themselves for the mission work in China.

When Macau returned to China on Dec 20, 1999, the local Catholic Diocese was reduced to the Macau city (23.5 sq kms) and the adjacent islands Taipa (6.33 sq kms) and Coloane (8.07 sq kms). At the end of Pacific War (1941-1945) and the liberation from Japanese occupation, several thousand refugees from Main Land China fled to Macau, especially during the period of civil war X (1946-1949) between the troops of the Guomindang and the Communist forces. In 2001 population went up to 500,000 (95% of population were Chinese and the others were Portuguese and Macanase (mixed population of Portuguese and Macau). Catholic Macau worked very much to receive and integrate these immigrants. The Portuguese Overseas Province administrative measure continued till the Portuguese handed over Macau to Chinese authorities. At the end of the Vietnamese war in 1974 many Vietnamese boat people found their way to Macau. In 1977 the Sisters of St Paul opened a centre for Social Communication consisting of Radio, film music art, culture and print media.



In 2001 the total population of Macau was 460,000 of which 30,000 (6.5%) were Catholics. At the return to the Main Land, the Diocese of Macau had 11 parishes served by 70 priests (30 diocesan and 40 Religious). There were also 13 Religious Brothers and 173 Religious Sisters. In 1968 the major seminary which for centuries had been a centre for Catholic Mission in Asia was closed down due to lack of vocation. In 2001 Church maintained 39 schools with 49,000 pupils and students. Further 23 different institutions like Homes for Children, Houses for Aged People, Hospitals, Psychiatric Clinic and Institutions for Unmarried Mothers. The local mafia organizations are running the gambling spots and Casinos providing 40% of all tax revenues. The Chinese Government respects the freedom of local Religious Communities. On July 2003 the Second Chinese Bishop in 426 years of old history of the diocese of Macau took over the administration.

#### **3.3.4. North Korea** <sup>33</sup>

The Apostolic Prefecture Pyongyang, erected in 1927 consisted of South and North Pyongyang and the Apostolic Vicariate of Seoul. The first Apostolic Prefect was Patrick J. Byrne, a member of American Missionary Society of Mary Knoll. During the Pacific War (1941-1945) Mgr Byrne left Korea and went to USA but returned to Korea in 1945. To fill the post left vacant, Francis Hong Yong-Ho was consecrated Bishop and was entrusted with the office of Apostolic Vicar of Pyongyang in 1943. In 1949 the Apostolic Prefecture became an Apostolic Delegation with Mgr Byrne as the first Apostolic Delegate. After the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953), Mgr Byrne was captured by the North Korean Military and died in Communist captivity in 1950. The German Missionary Benedictines of Saint Ottilien had built their first monastery in the Apostolic Vicariate Wonsang which was handed over to the Foreign Missions Society – MEP Fathers in 1927. In 1928 the Benedictines started a new monastery in the Apostolic Prefecture of Yenki. In 1940 it became the Abatia Nullius of Tokwon and its abbot Bonface Sauer was appointed the Apostolic Vicar of Hamheung. On August 9, 1945, a week before the Japanese surrender, the Soviet Army invaded North Korea. Soviet troops looted and destroyed cities and villages in the Apostolic Vicariates of Yenki and Hamheung. They destroyed Catholic churches and monasteries and committed acts of violence against some Catholic Priests.

In 1948 the Communists founded their Democratic People's Republic Korea and Kim Il – Sung became the first President and the Head of the Government. The constitution of

the new Republic guaranteed Religious freedom on principle but de facto it did not exist because the exercise of this freedom was left to the interpretation of the officials at the Religious Affairs Bureau. Consequently the attendance at Religious services was severely constrained and even forbidden by Government regulations.

Through the land reform of the Government, Catholic Church lost all its property and buildings. On May 9, 1949, the Communists took over the Abbey of Tokwon and Abbot arrested with fellow monks. On Feb 7, 1950, Abbot Sauer died in prison due to exhaustion and sickness. 39 Benedictine monks and 18 Benedictine Sisters were sent to work camps to do forced labour. Due to harsh conditions in the camp and due to hunger and sickness, 19 out of 67 imprisoned Monks and Sisters died. In 1954 the survivors were expelled from Korea back to Germany. In Pyongyang Bishop Francis Hong Yong–Ho was arrested with 14 priests and 2 Rev. Sisters. Afterwards there was no news about them. All pastoral work like Sunday masses, pastoral care of the sick, etc were stopped. The persecution was also extended to lay people many of whom fled to South Korea. In the beginning of Korean War on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1950 persecution of the Catholics intensified. All Catholic Priests who were still in North Korea were arrested and summarily executed. Most churches in Pyongyang and its vicinity were destroyed. In Nov. 1950 Fr George Carroll was appointed Apostolic Administrator but had to leave Pyongyang when the troops of the United Nations were pushed out of the city by the Communist Forces. In the whole of North Korea all church activities came to a complete halt and all church personnel were arrested, killed, expelled or fled voluntarily.

As for natural resources, North Korea was in a much better situation than South Korea. Iron and coal mines as well as the centres of heavy industries were located in the North. Hence it was in a position better than South Korea on the path of economic and industrial development in collaboration with USSR and People's Republic of China. There was a lot of personality cult around Kim Il Sung who died in 1994. Kim Il Sung developed in 1955 his own model of socialism called *Juche-ideology* proved finally disastrous to the country.

Catholic Church was always persecuted. When Kim Il Sung was in power just the fact that someone owned a Bible or that people came together in homes for Religious services constituted a crime and could be punished with imprisonment or even death penalty. Today there is no Catholic Priest in the country. Caritas Hong Kong built contact since 1995 with

North Korean Government Organizations in the name of Caritas Internationalis in order to send food grains as well as money to the starving population of North Korea.

#### **3.3.4. South Korea** <sup>34</sup>

In the beginning of the great geographical discoveries at the end of 15<sup>th</sup> Century the Christian Mission began first in Japan and later in China. Korea remained outside the Christian missionary interest and activity because of its geographical position as well as isolation policies. The first conversion to Christianity was among the Korean Prisoners of war who had been brought to Japan. As per Jesuit missionary record, more than 3000 of them were baptized and became the first Korean Christians and formed in a certain sense the first Korean Church. The Korean Christians are proud because in their mission history of the Catholic Church the first missionary attempt to proclaim the Christian message in the Country were undertaken not by foreign missionaries but by Korean scholars. The year 1784 is given as the birth year of the Catholic Church in Korea. These lay people took care of all activities even celebrating Eucharist and administering the sacrament of penance. They actually doubted whether they can do it, but out of necessity did it. They consulted the Jesuits in Beijing and stopped them when told they were not permitted.

In 1794 the first Chinese Priest Zhu Mun-Mo was sent as the first Catholic Priest to Korea and found 4000 Catholics. In a controversy over the rites of ancestral veneration served as obstacles and induced a lot of persecution among the Catholics. The first Chinese to reach Korea as well as MEP Fathers and the Fathers Mauban and Chastan were executed along with 130 Korean Christians in 1839. In 1846 the first indigenous Korean Priest Andreas Kim died as a martyr at the age of 26 as well as in 1866 French Bishop Berneau was executed along with the Fathers Bretenièrs, Baulieu and Borie and a great number of Korean Christians. In 1882 the persecution of Christians ended. Korea established diplomatic relations with different Western Countries and allowed preaching of Christianity. In 1890 the French Missionary Gustavo Mutel MEP was appointed Apostolic Vicar and started to work as Bishop in Korea from 1981. The period of Japanese Colonial Rule in Korea was a difficult time for Korea as they controlled all missionary activities. During the Pacific War all Foreign Missionaries from USA, Ireland and France were either deported or imprisoned as hostile Foreigners.

At the end of Pacific war which was the same time the end of Japanese colonial rule over Korea on Sept 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945 Koreans celebrated both with great joy with Te Deum in the masses. But the idea of national independence did not last long. The United States of America and Soviet Union divided Korea into 2 parts along 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Thus 2 ideologically opposed countries –South Korea with democratic model of USA and North Korea with its own form of Communism were created. The repatriation of thousands of Koreans to Japan as forced labourer was not successful since the Korean left behind Japan constituted a despised and exploited minority. Since establishing a common Provisional for the whole of Korea failed in the spring of 1946, the Americans then instituted a representative Democratic Government in the South of the country with Syngman Rhee as Chairperson. As a counter reaction, Russians formed in North Korea People's Committee and appointed Kim Il Sung its chairperson. All attempts to unite North and South Korea by the United Nations proved futile. On August 15, 1948 the founding of Republic of Korea in South Korea was proclaimed. On August 28, 1948 the Democratic Republic of Korea was created in North Korea. The Holy See was the first international organization to recognize the existence of the new Republic of South Korea. In Dec 1948 United Nations acknowledged the independence of South Korea.

In 1949 the number of Catholics in South Korea was 157,000 while in North Korea it was a little more than 100,000 Catholics. The number of Korean Priests was 144 of whom 58 were foreign missionaries. Out 374 Religious Sisters in South Korea, 358 were indigenous South Korean with only 16 foreign Sisters.

On June 25, 1950 North Korean Communist Troops invaded South Korea except the harbour city of Pusan. This was a hard time of persecution and destruction of churches, arresting Catholic Priests and Rev Sisters as well as many Church Institutions destroyed. Many Catholic Priests and Rev Sisters were arbitrarily ill treated or killed. Thus after 3 years of Korean War which ended on 23 July 1953, the deadly struggle costed 2 million victims among the military and civilian population both in South and North Korea. This resulted in a radical division of the Country did not permit any contact, no road, no railway, no communication by postal services, telegraph or telephone brought great suffering for most families in Korea. But South Korea soon experienced an exceptional growth.

The great achievement of Catholic Welfare Organizations mostly from USA which brought relief for the suffering civil population bolstered the image of the Catholic Church. During the following decade the number of Catholics in South Korea more than tripled from 196,000 in 1954 to 630,000 in 1964. At the end of Korean War the Government of Syngman Rhee Steered a staunch anti-communist course. The style of government was rather autocratic with democratic rights of the citizens strongly curbed while the police had far-reaching powers in the name of the national security. In 1960 blatant manipulations of the elections led to violent students demonstrations against the dictatorial regime of President Syngman Rhee, who resigned and went into exile in the USA. The Catholic Church was not directly involved and did not intervene in these political struggles. Even less did the Protestant Churches participate because they had been rather close to the government of the Protestant Syngman Rhee and had occupied high positions within it. After new elections the leader of the Democratic Party, John Chang Myong (1899-1966), a Catholic, became Prime Minister. Because of tensions and divisions within the Democratic Party, Chang's government was unable to run the affairs of State effectively and to push through the necessary reforms. After just one year, John Chang Myong resigned. Thus, the first government of the "Second Republic" in South Korea remained just an episode.

Military Coup by General Park Chung-Hee on May 16<sup>th</sup> 1961 toppled the Government of the Catholic Prime Minister John Chang Myong. From 1961 to 1963 it was a period of military rule. In 1963 Park Chung-Hee resigned from his commission in the military and became the leader of the newly founded Democratic Republican Party which won the Presidential election in Oct 1963. During his regime called the "Third Republic" did not introduce any democratic political reforms, but only continued the military dictatorship. He also strengthened the security apparatus, the infamous Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) which became the most operative instrument of the Park Regime. All forms of political opposition and criticism were ruthlessly suppressed and boasted extraordinary successes in developing the Korean Industry and Economy. There was a massive financial assistance given by the government. This one-sided economic development more social tensions because the social rights of the labourers, the farmers and small merchants were curtailed while the upper classes were increasing their wealth. All these did not contribute the quality of life to the majority of the population who were deprived of their fundamental

rights. Thus the trade unions were controlled as well as the opposition of the farmers and fishermen were crushed. On March 1962 Catholic Hierarchy was erected in South Korea. For 600,000 Catholics, 3 Archdioceses were created. Pope John Paul II on Dec 11, 1963 erected the Inter Nunciature of Korea which was changed into Nunciature on Sept 3 1966.

All South Korean Bishops took part in the Second Vatican Council and brought about far reaching changes in the liturgical life making Korean the liturgical language.

In 1972 Park Chung-Hee did away with the democratic order and imposed martial law reacting to the surprisingly strong performance of Catholic Politician Kim Dae-Jung in 1971. The National Assembly had been dissolved and the Constitution suspended. A new Constitution called Vitalization Reform Constitution was passed in a Referendum in 1972. This new Constitution came into power on Dec 31, 1972 that marked the beginning of the "Fourth Republic" (1972-1979). In the following year he issued emergency measures repeatedly to suppress the protests of opposition groups of students, trade unions and Church groups. In 1973 the Catholic Opposition Politician Kim Dae-Jung was abducted from a hotel in Tokyo by South Korean Secret Service and was imprisoned in South Korea. The Catholic Church, particularly the labour movements, showed opposition while the main hierarchy was neutral. Some Catholic Bishops like Daniel Tji Hak-Soun, the Bishop of Wonju (1921-1993) raised strong opposition voice to the political situation as well as human rights violation. He was kept under detention for 7 months. This led to the conscientization of the people of Korea. Poet Kim Chi-Ha raised an important political opposition. The Young Catholic Workers and Catholic Farmers Association were becoming more radical and mounted their opposition. Poems, theatre plays and sketches that the poet wrote during his detention had served to criticize and to ridicule the policy of Park Regime. Finally in an irregular and biased trial, the poet was condemned to death. National and International Protests were pouring in. All these series of events and persecutions of Christians came to an end when on October 26, 1979 the dictator Park Chung-Hee was assassinated by the Chief of the Secret Service.

After this incident, a civilian interim government led by the Choi Kyu-Ha took over the government. He was the officially elected President on Dec 6, 1979. Barely a week after the election, General Chung Doo-Hwang took over the power through a military coup. He gave orders to put down the student protest in Kwangju. The Military brutally committed murders

and more than 1200 students were either killed or seriously injured. The Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Kwangju published all these atrocities. Chung Doo-Hwang also acted with force against some Buddhist monks by occupying several monasteries and arresting many monks. All these finally led in 1987 to the ouster of Chun Doo-Hwang by Roh Tae-Woo who presided over the transition of South Korea towards Democracy.

During the reign of Chun Doo-Hwan, there were several events which were very important for the Catholic Church in South Korea. In 1981 the Catholic Church in Korea celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the erection of the “Apostolic Vicariate of Korea” with a national program for spiritual renewal in the whole country. Another significant event was the celebrations of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of evangelization of Korea in 1984 which were celebrated with a four year national program of renewal and remembrance starting in 1980. The theme for year 1980 was “Year of the Sanctification of the Families”; for 1981: “Year of the Evangelisation of the Neighbours”; for 1982: “Year of Building the Parish”; for 1983: “Year of Building the Diocese”. All the celebrations at the diocesan level culminated into A National Pastoral Congress which was held in Seoul in November 1984. Pope John Paul II highlighted the jubilee celebration with his papal visit in May 1984 when on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1984 he also canonized 103 Korean Martyrs who had given their lives for the faith in the period 1838-1866. It was for the first time in Church History that a Pope held a canonization ceremony outside of Rome. A publication on the Church History, theology and Church life titled “Lexicon on Theology and Church” was commissioned and completed in cooperation with Sogang University and the Institute of Korean Church History. In 1989 the Catholic Church also hosted the 44<sup>th</sup> “Eucharistic World Congress” participated by a host of foreign Church dignitaries and theologians.

The Catholic Church in South Korea enjoyed great influence within labour movements because it propagated the principles of Christian Social Teaching such as the protection of workers against exploitation, security of the working conditions and the improvements of workers insurance proved to be very helpful and effective in the fight of the workers for their rights. In the farmers’ movement, the Catholic Farmers Union was an important factor in the defence of the rights of the farmers against the constantly deteriorating conditions under which farmers had to work and to produce. As a result, many Koreans saw the Catholic Church as an institution which, although it did not have any physical power,

nevertheless, was the only moral force in a position to fight convincingly for human rights and human dignity. Within the Catholic Church in Korea there were groups who worked for promoting human rights and dignity. They are: the National Bishops' Conference, "Association for the Realization of Justice" and the National Commission for "Justice and Peace". Cardinal Stephen Kim was considered the "Spiritual President" of the country for his bold commitment for human rights everywhere in the country. His cathedral situated at Myongdong in Seoul was again and again the central place for demonstration and refuge for those looking for asylum against and violence by police and the military. The Catholic Bishops' Conference confirmed its commitment for human rights by introducing "Human Rights Sunday" in 1982 to be celebrated every year on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent.

President Roh Tae-Woo made use of his period to build up democracy by using the chances that came his way: 24<sup>th</sup> Olympic Summer Games held in September 1988 presented him in a positive light in the eyes of many foreign visitors. He organized a big international exhibition on the theme: "The Challenge of a New Way to Development" in August – November 1993 at Taejeong. The contribution of the Korean Catholic Church in the exhibition consisted of a description of the significance of the first contacts of Korean Scholars with Jesuit Fathers in Beijing for the introduction of Western knowledge in the fields of natural science and astronomy in Korea. With this, the Korean Church wanted to refute the prejudice that religious faith is hampering development of science and progress.

Reunification of Korea was one of the ardent desires of the Koreans. Serious attempts were made first for hoisting jointly the 24<sup>th</sup> Olympic Summer Games held in September 1988, but did not materialize because the North was not interested. Later the reunification of Germany in 1989 created an exaggerated expectancy about the unification of the two Koreas. But the attitude of North Korea and its pre-occupation to develop suitable missiles to deliver its nuclear weapons shattered this hope.

The Korean Church must be credited for putting into practice the teachings of the Church, particularly the Social Teachings of the Church which inspired and attracted the farmers, youth and workers. Further the Korean Church takes pride in considering it as "Church of Martyrs". Its spectacular growth seems to prove the fact that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of new Christians". The Church also made efforts to make the laity



proficient in Theology by creating various Institutes like “Woo-Ri” (=our theology) in Seoul to give lay people qualified education in theology.

The growth of Christianity in Korea is a unique success story. The Catholic population of Korea in 1990 was 3 million. During the next decade it grew up to 4 million with the following statistics: 3000 diocesan priests and 1000 religious priests. The number of Religious Sisters was 8500 and that of male and female catechists was 12,000. Within the span of thirty years, the number of Catholics quadrupled. To manage the growth, the Church in Korea adopted Small Christian Communities based on Basic Christian Communities. A significant sign of maturity of the Korean Church can be seen in the founding of Korean Foreign Mission Society to train priests to be missionaries. The Congregation of Korean Missionary Sisters was formed to train Sisters to become missionaries.

The speedy growth however saw a slow down since 1990.

### **3.3.5. Hong Kong** <sup>35</sup>

During the Pacific War Hong Kong was occupied by Japan. All foreign missionaries except those from Germany and Austria were imprisoned. In 1946 when Pope Pius XII erected the Catholic Hierarchy in China, Hong Kong became an independent diocese on April 11, 1946 including the territories of Huizhou and Haifeng. They were separated in 1949 when the People’s Republic of China was founded and Hong Kong became isolated from the mainland as a British Colony. Consequently thousands of refugees from the Communist Regime from the mainland China came to Hong Kong, increasing the population in 6 years from 600,000 in 1945 to 2.5 million in 1951. The Catholic Church also benefitted by its growth from 131,698 to 241,986 in the decade 1958 to 1968. From 1950s and 1960s the Church began to build schools and hospitals and other social institutions. Caritas Hong Kong founded in 1958 had all Catholic Welfare Organizations. We should also note that the founding father of Caritas Hong Kong was the German Prelate Carl Wäth (1909 to 1974) was the driving force behind all these. On the island of Lantau the Chinese Trappist expelled from Hebei Province in Main Land China started a new Trappist Monastery: “Our Lady of Lieve”.

In 1969 Francis Hsu Chenping was the first Chinese Priest to be consecrated as the first Bishop of Hong Kong. During the period of Cultural Revolution in Main Land China, 1966

to 1976, students in Hong Kong were conscientized by that event and protested against the British Colonial Rule. The Communist Leadership in Beijing was not eager to support such a move. Hong Kong could be credited since 1963 for having trained each year 150 catechists who finished 2 years of formation. The number of seminarians is on the decline as well as the percentage of indigenous Chinese priests within the clergy is rather low.

Pope Paul VI on 4th Dec 1970 made a stopover in Hong Kong on his way to meet with Asian Bishops in Manila. In the Radio Address the Pope expressed his admiration and love for Chinese Culture and Chinese People. He thought it would link it to Main Land China, but it did not happen. Hong Kong in March 1971 became the seat of the Secretariat of FABC and became an associate member. Several study centres collected and processed information about the developments in the Catholic Church in the Main Land China.

In October 1991 the Church in Hong Kong commemorated its founding with a magnificent celebration. Pentecost 1995 Cardinal Wu published pastoral guidelines in view of the approaching date of the return of Hong Kong under Chinese Sovereignty on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1997. All Catholic Priests and Religious were asked by the Church to stay in the territory. Very small number of priests emigrated. International Religious Orders and Congregations removed sensitive archives and other material from Hong Kong to Taiwan. UCAN News Agency also shifted to Thailand fearing restriction. To avoid future possible regarding the successor Bishop in Hong Kong, Vatican appointed Joseph Zen Ze-Kiun, a Salesian as Coadjutor Bishop with the right of succession and the diocesan Priest John Tong Hon as Auxiliary Bishop. On Sept 23, 2002 Cardinal John Baptist Wu after having led the diocese of Hong Kong for 27 years died and succeeded by Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-Kiun as the 6<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Hong Kong.

On July 1, 1997 Hong Kong till then the crown colony of the Great Britain changed its status and became as *Special Administration Region (SAR)*, part of Main Land China. The Agreement stipulated that Hong Kong was to enjoy a special status under the principle of one country two systems. The Government of People's Republic of China was to be in charge of the international relations of Hong Kong. The local authorities of the *Special Administration Region* were given the charge to maintain the capitalistic and trade system maintained up to then in Hong Kong. This was applied in the religious sphere in a very restrictive manner, maintaining that no religious organizations from abroad (surely not the

Catholic one) should be allowed to mingle in the affairs of any religious organization in the Main Land China. 1997 Christian Churches were around 600,000 (9%) of the population. The number of Catholics was 350,000 and among them 90,000 were Filipinos working mostly as housemaids. In Hong Kong the Churches ran 40% of the schools and 20% of the hospitals. The Catholic Church alone was running 6 hospitals, 9 clinics, 323 schools with more than 300,000 pupils, 14 Social organization, 11 hotels, 29 medical stations and centres for the handicapped. The fear that Human Rights Situation would deteriorate did not materialize. But there were certain issues in which the Church raised its voice. In 2000 the Catholic Church protested against cancelling the rights of the children of the refugees to stay in Hong Kong. The Government wanted to deport these children and send them back to Main Land China. Secondly concerning the regulations of running schools, clashed with the Organization and direction of the private schools run by the Church.

In spite of the reservations and remonstrations by the Hong Kong Government, the Diocese of Hong Kong celebrated the canonization of 120 Chinese martyrs by Pope John Paul II on Oct 10<sup>th</sup> 2000 in Rome. Even the mainland China in Beijing strongly opposed it. Another conflict was when in 2003 Hong Kong revised and proposed a new Security Law. The New Proposal was that “an organization which is attempting to commit treason, secession, subversion, sedition or spying or is subordinate to a mainland organization, be banned on security grounds. Bishop Joseph Zen was very outspoken to criticize it. In the early months of 2003 public life was brought to near in the mainland, in Taiwan and Singapore on July 1, 2003 on the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to Main Land, half million people went to the streets to protest. The Government then relented and withdrew the proposed legislation.

### **3.3.6. Japan** <sup>36</sup>

Francis Xavier came to the city of Kagoshima on the island of Kyushu on August 15, 1549 for evangelization. In 2 years he succeeded in founding 4 Church communities in the South of the Country and to baptize several hundred Japanese. In a span of next 50 years, when European Missionaries were free to preach Christianity, the number grew to 300,000. The city of Nagasaki developed into the centre of the Japanese Church. On the islands along

the west coast of Kyushu, especially on the Goto islands many Christian communities were established.

From 1614 to 1860, in spite of two and half centuries of persecution, Christianity survived because of its remote geographical location. During a short persecution of Christians on Feb 5, 1597, 26 Christians were crucified. In 1614 Tokugawa Ieyasu, who since his victory in the battle of Sekigahara in 1600 ruled the country as shogun, declared Christianity to be an evil religion not suitable to Japanese. All foreign missionaries who remained in the country were forced to leave. The policy of closed country (Sakoku) Tokugawa Ieyasu began, closed off Japan to foreign countries for nearly 250 years. Repeated attempts by Christian missionaries in spite of the ban imposed on Christianity ended in arrest and martyrdom. In spite of the regular and strict controls by Japanese authorities, thousands of Japanese Christians, the so-called "hidden Christians" (Kakur Kirishitan) survived in the underground during the period of persecution. This period ended in 1853 when the American Commodore Perry forced an opening of Japanese ports by international trade by his naval intervention in the port of Yokohama. This led to the end of Tokugawa Ieyasu shogunate and the beginning of the Meiji reform policy in 1868 in Japan. Christian missionaries were again allowed to enter Japan for missionary activities in the year 1865 missionaries of Mission Etrangères de Paris discovered the first group of hidden Christians who had come to their church in Nagasaki. This extraordinary event was celebrated in Europe as a miracle because more than 200 years without any priest or institutional church life, they preserved their Christian faith. Particularly in spite of their total isolation and without Bibles or liturgical books, these hidden Christians managed to protect the most important elements of Christian faith such as the liturgical calendar, the formula of baptism in its Latin form and most essential prayers and several Biblical stories. Further in order not to be detected by the government, they developed new forms of prayer, their ways of formulation and handing on the faith to the next generation which were adapted to Japanese religiosity and mythology. Thus there emerged a certain degree in accommodating the Christian faith to Japanese tradition and to develop a more Japanese form of expressing and living the Christian faith.

During Meiji era (1868 to 1914) till the beginning Pacific War in 1941 the Catholic Church in Japan enjoyed a quiet period of growth. Sometimes it was disturbed by the

growing militarism of the thirties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During these years state Shintoism became the leading ideology favouring personality cult around Japanese emperor and proclaim ultra nationalistic ideas. It was a matter of conscience for the Christians to take part actively in the Shinto rites honouring the emperor and if they do not participate, they were considered unreliable patriots.

With the promulgation of Meiji constitution, Christianity became a legitimate but was considered a foreign religion. Before the beginning of Pacific War in 1940 all foreign Bishops retired thus making room for the appointment of Japanese Bishops. During the period 1940-1946 the Japanese Christians slightly decreased. In the atomic bomb at Nagasaki 10,000 Catholics lost their lives.

On Aug 15, 1945 was the capitulation of Japan which was a deep shock to the nation. Gen MacArthur, the supreme commander of the occupation forces exercised supreme power in the country. He wanted to rebuild the country through the introduction of democracy and writing of a new constitution. Pressurized by the Americans, Emperor declared publicly that he gave up the prerogative of being considered as divine. In the new constitution he was simply a symbol of unity of the Japanese people. Shintoism lost its privileged position of being the state religion. The period immediately following the War was one of deep insecurity, of inner searching for new ideological and religious ideas. This period presented many chances and opportunities for Christian Missionaries. In 1945 the number of Catholics in Japan was 110,000 of whom 60,000 were living in and around Nagasaki. During the short period of 1945 to 1951 the number of Catholics grew and reached 257,000 (140%) increase. In 1949 they celebrated the fourth centenary of the arrival of St. Francis Xavier and the beginning of the Catholic Church. The presence of foreign missionaries increased. New Religious congregations of Priests and Religious arrived: Irish Missionary Society of St. Columban SSC, the Belgian Missionaries of Scheut, CICM and the Swiss Missionaries of Bethlehem (SMB).

Ecclesiastical structures were reorganized. In 1945 the Archdiocese of Tokoyo with the suffragan dioceses Nagasaki, Sendai, Yokohama, Osaka and Fukuoka was set up. In the course of next 15 years, the apostolic vicariates and Prefectures of Kyoto (1951), Sapporo (1953), Niigata (1962), Nagoya (1962), Urawa (1957), Hiroshima (1959), Takamatsu (1963),

Oita (1961) and Kagoshima (1955) became dioceses. In 1959 Nagasaki became the second Archdiocese. Apostolic Delegation was raised to the status of Inter Nuntiature. Several Universities and Educational Institutions were founded during this period reaching a number of 170,000. Catholic Institution enjoyed a high reputation. Several Catholic Action groups and movements were started in Japan.

The Catholic Bishops of Japan joined FABC when it was established in 1970. In Sept 1986 the Bishops' Conference of Japan facilitated the IV Plenary Assembly of FABC with the theme: the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the world of Asia. Pope John Paul II visited Japan in Nov 1981 and stayed in Hiroshima Nagasaki. In 1968 the number of seminarians both diocesan and religious was 412 and 442 Japanese diocesan Priests, 271 Japanese Religious and 228 Japanese lay Brothers. The number of foreign missionaries working in Japan was 1191. Japanese also wanted to go as missionaries. In 1982 the Catholic Missionary Commission was set up within the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan. In 1982 already 228 lay missionaries, Religious Sisters and Priests were working as missionaries in 38 countries outside Japan. In 1986 the number grew to 349 of whom 297 were Religious Sisters working in 49 countries. Japan woke up to the growing number of migrant workers from Philippines, Korea and Thailand as well as Peru and Brazil. From 1970s to 1980s when there was a rapid expansion of economics, far exceeding the capacity of Japanese work force, foreign migrant workers were allowed. They were employed in construction work, for building Highways and Railways and other important building projects. The majority of migrant workers coming to Japan are Catholics.

### **3.3.7. The People's Republic of China** <sup>37</sup>

The attempt of the encounter of Christianity with China was by Franciscan missionaries at the end of 13<sup>th</sup> Century during the reign of Mongols. In 1294 the Franciscan Missionaries John of Montecorvino reached Mongol capital Kambalik (today's Beijing). Pope Clement V appointed him as the Archbishop and the Patriarch of the Far East. When he died in 1328, missionary work came to a standstill with the number of Catholics at 30,000. The missionary revival started with the arrival of Jesuit missionaries Michael Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci in 1583. Missionaries of Dominican (1631), Franciscan (1633) and Augustinian (1638) gave impetus to the missionary work. Because of the controversy over the ancestral veneration in China, Emperor Kangxi reacted and ordered general prohibition of all Christian

missionary activities. In 1724 all Foreign Missionaries were expelled except those French Missionaries working in the realm scientific work or astronomy.

From the beginning of Opium War (1840) till the end of World War II in 1945 by the treaty of Nanking (1842) five Chinese ports at the East China Coast were opened for trade with Western Powers. This opened up new opportunities for the Christians. Till 1900 the number of Christians reached 741,562. Attacks against Christian mission, foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians gave the Western Powers specially France to act as the protector of Catholic mission in China. Using it as a pretext to intervene militarily, France demanded high indemnity for the damages done to Christian Institutions from the Chinese Government. The *Massacre of Tientsin* (1870) and that of *Boxer Rising* (1900) were the most famous among the attacks against the Christians. This damaged the image Christianity and led to strong anti-Christian feeling. For many years the attempts of the Holy See to establish direct diplomatic relations with China were thwarted because France insisted on continuing its function to act as protector of all Catholic missionaries in China. Finally in 1922 the Holy See was able to erect an Apostolic Delegation in China and to appoint Celso Costantini (1876-1958) the first Apostolic Delegate. He soon became a strong advocate of the movement within the local church in China for the consecration of indigenous bishops. He became a strong advocate to remove Latin as the official liturgical language and use Chinese. In 1924 the first Plenary Council of China was held in Shanghai. It passed important decisions for the life of the Church and for missionary activities in China. After long controversies, Pope Pius XI, Rome ordained 6 indigenous Bishops in 1926.

### **3.3.7.1. Catholic Church during Chinese Civil War (1945-1949)**

During the civil war between the Guomindang Government under Chiang Kai-Shek and the communists under Mao Zedong, the Catholic Church took a clear and unmistakable decision for supporting the cause of the nationalistic government and rejected Communist ideology with an aggressive atheistic position. In 1946 Pope Pius XII formally erected the Chinese hierarchy just when the civil war started. Actually China used this point of foreign Bishops and Religious Superiors who were leading the Church of China, while Chinese Clergy and Religious were restricted for subordinate roles. When Communists came to power, four-fifths of Catholic Bishops and two thirds of the priests were still foreigner. In 1948, one year

before the Communist won the civil war against Guomindang the following were the official statistics of the Catholic Church in Chinese were as follows: the number of Catholics was 3,274,740 under 20 Archdioceses, 34 Apostolic Prefectures and 85 dioceses. Totally there were 139 Bishops including 40 Chinese Bishops; 5788 priests including 2698 Chinese priests; 7,667 Religious Sisters including 5,112 Chinese Sisters; 1,107 Religious Brothers including 632 Chinese Brothers. The Church was running 216 hospitals, 254 orphanages, 4,446 schools of all types.

### **3.3.7.2.Period after Communist Occupation:**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1949 Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic of China. Due to the anti-Communist stand of the Church, the Christian Churches were seen as natural enemies of new socialist order of the Communists. The Communists were especially angered by the decree issued by the Inter Nuncio Archbishop Antonio Reberi forbidding the Chinese Catholics to co-operate in any form with Communist Government Agencies. The Catholic Church was accused of many crimes against humanity. Further the hope of the Christians that the defeated Guomindang would return one day victoriously with the help of America further angered the Communists and made any negotiations impossible with the Catholic Church. All sorts of crimes were attributed to the Church institutions to discredit it. Hence Christians were labelled as spies for America. All Religious organizations were ordered to break their relationship with foreign religious institutions to achieve complete independence by managing all their affairs by themselves. To this effect, was set up and approved under

In 1957 the National Religious Affairs Bureau organized a national conference with 241 representatives of the Catholic Church in China where they decided to set up Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and elected Archbishop Pi Shushi of Shenyang as its first President. The delegates also passed a resolution declaring that the Catholic Church in China continued to recognize the Pope in Rome as the Spiritual leader of the Church. But at the same time, it decided to make the Catholic Church in China free from foreign influence, all financial and political ties with Rome and with other Churches abroad had to be broken. But matters regarding faith and morals were not touched. On April 13, 1958 two Episcopal Consecrations took place without the papal approval. Before the Consecration took place, the names were sent to Rome seeking permission for Consecration. But Rome



bluntly refused it. From Dec 1957 to Jan 1962 altogether 42 more Bishops were consecrated without papal permission. The Consecrations were condemned by Rome.

Foreign observers alleged that the Catholic Church in China has split into a Patriotic Church cooperating with the government and an underground Church remaining faithful to Rome. To assert the autonomy of the Catholic Church in China, in some Episcopal consecration the text of the consecratory formula was changed. In 1950 Bishop Charles Van Melckebecke CICM was expelled from China but was officially entrusted with the pastoral care of the overseas Chinese. The Second Vatican Council was held without the participation of the Continental China. The cautious attempts made by Pope Paul VI to establish diplomatic contact with Chinese leadership did not succeed. When the Holy See at Christmas 1966 elevated the Inter Nunciature into Nunciature, it was another setback for the relationship with China since this move seen by Beijing was an intended affront by the Vatican and a breach of the one China Principle. Soon Vatican corrected this mistake by appointing only a Charges d'Affaires restricting his responsibility to only Taiwan territory.

After the death of Mao Zedong on Sept 9, 1976 the situation for the Catholic Church improved when Deng Xiaoping took the reins of China with his reform policy. The Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong created a traumatic experience among the people in China and he wanted to improve the situation. In fact the suppressive situation under Mao made many Chinese to turn to religion to find a new support and answers. Hence the year following cultural revolution are characterised by a growth of all religious communities in China, which was not imagined before. The Christian Churches including the Protestant Churches profited most by this situation. The attraction of the Christian Churches was so great that some observers spoke of "Christianity fever". Bishops, Priests, Religious and many "simple" faithful lay people had borne witness of such strength of character, honesty and patience in the prisons and work camps that not only fellow convicts but also prison wardens were deeply impressed. Similar things can be said of the image of Christians in Chinese society in general, where Christians were perceived often as positive elements contributing to the development of society. That is the reason why the Christian Churches in China lost the stigma of supporting a foreign religion that had collaborated with the Western colonial powers, which had exploited and suppressed China. The development to become

independent and self-reliant churches helped to clear the Chinese Christians from the accusations to lack patriotism and authenticity as Chinese Citizens.

This further led to the beginning of the reform policy of Deng Xiaoping who adopted in 1982 a new policy on religious freedom as follows: "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No organ of state, mass organization or person is allowed to force any citizen to believe or not to believe in religion. It is impermissible to discriminate against any citizen who believes or does not believe in religion. The State protects legitimate religious activities. No person is permitted to use religion to conduct counter-revolutionary activities, which disrupt social order, harm people's health, or obstruct the education system of country. Religion is not subject to the control of foreign countries." Further the Government declared that to respect and protect religious freedom as central objects of its religious policy. The Chinese Communist Party and government authorities principally admitted the possibility of religion and socialism co-existing, but only with the restriction that it is socialism, which dictates the conditions under religions might exist in a somewhat one-sided harmony within a Socialist State.

Many Bishops and priests, who after many years had been released from prison and work camps, were faced with the question, whether they were ready to trust the reformist policy of the Government. Those who were ready to make that step were given the opportunity to celebrate masses in the newly opened churches and to become pastors of the parishes.

For all Chinese Bishops, priestly formation ranked highest among the other urgent tasks of the Church. Whereas in 1952, 16 major seminaries existed in China, all but one, the major seminary Sheshan near Shanghai had been closed in 1965. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), all major seminaries were closed and during a period of more than ten years no priests were trained. However during this reform time slowly 10 major seminaries and 20 minor seminaries started to function. The government Religious Affairs Bureau could not control the admission of candidates to enter the major seminaries but later on had to give permission for ordinations. In this context it is worth mentioning that the Catholic Continental Radio Station called Radio Veritas Asia started by Asian Bishops in 1969 made especial efforts to use SW broadcast to supply online training in Mandarin with the help of Jesuit professors in Taiwan Seminary. Many senior priests of this period

acknowledge Radio Veritas Asia as their seminary formator. The Government also allowed the visit some Bishops from Germany and Philippines.

There was always a tension between Underground Church and Open Church which spoiled the development of a harmonious atmosphere among the Church circles. In 1989 the upheaval in Eastern Europe when East Germany united with West Germany, made the Chinese government to increase its control and regulation measures directed against all religious organizations and the Christian Churches. The Chinese authorities critically observed that the Christian Churches played rather an important part in the political upheaval in Eastern Europe. The Chinese government was not only disturbed by the phenomenon of the growing number of Christians but also by the growth within the other religions. The Communist party viewed these developments as a challenge. The Religious Affairs Bureaus were not only disturbed by the sheer growth of Christianity but also by the fact that many of the new Christians refused to join the government approved religious organizations but instead became members of Underground Church and thus put themselves outside the control of government offices. Bishops from Mainland China could not take part in the Bishops' Synod for Asia and were not provided travel passports. The relation between Beijing and the Vatican deteriorated dramatically when on October 1, 2000 Pope John Paul II canonised 120 Chinese martyrs in Rome. The Chinese Government protested violently. In a national campaign Bishops, priests, seminarians and lay people had to attend special seminars and training courses all over the Country in order to follow the government's line in condoning the canonisations. But in spite of government's harassment, the Catholic Church in China continued to grow. As per unofficial statistics, the catholic population in 2000 reached 12 million in 138 dioceses. The number of priests was 1200 in the Open Church and 1000 in Underground Church. 2150 Religious Sisters in diocesan congregations of the Open Church; whereas 1500 in the Underground Church. Open Church was credited to be running 40 novitiates while in the Underground Church it was 20. In 24 major seminaries there were 1000 seminarians in Open Church whereas in Underground Church it was 700 in 10 major seminaries.

On September 22, 2018, an Agreement was signed between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite its temporary nature, its importance is such that it

has attracted much comment, and it has already become the focus of in-depth study. Only time will tell the outcome of this agreement.

#### **4. Modern Possibilities to Mission Apostolate in Today's World.**

Today the technological revolution in communication poses a big opportunity to the Church. Formerly missionary was always associated with the idea of going to places and peoples. Today reaching our audience and target group is made easy provided one masters the art of digital communication. Digital communication has so pervaded all spheres of human life that it is impossible in the modern world to communicate to any group without the help of digital technology. Competence in digital technology will be essential for not only for missionary but also for all ministries in the Church like Catechetical, Biblical, Youth, Workers, Vocation Promotion, etc.

Asian Bishops were faced with the problem of meeting the pastoral needs of the Chinese Catholics when the Communists blocked the access to missionaries into China. To circumvent and penetrate the Bamboo curtain, the Holy Spirit inspired them to think of Radio Apostolate. They set up a SW Radio Veritas Asia which was able to penetrate the Bamboo Curtain and reach the Chinese faithful whom Communism wanted to starve of the Word of God and pastoral care. Radio Veritas Asia remedied this situation. That is why during the Cultural Revolution in China under Mao, Radio Veritas Asia was able to reach the seminarians to compensate the absence of Professors. The priests who benefited by RVA in China acknowledge it to this day by calling it as Seminary Formator.

But the technology is advancing at a very fast pace and makes the previous knowledge obsolete. While SW Radio can only reach a limited target area digital online can reach the global audience. Further SW broadcast can be heard only during a fixed time when it was broadcasted but now through digital online broadcast of the matter can be accessed anytime and anywhere through various gadgets like computers, tablets, cell phones, etc. The website stores any amount of material that can be accessed by anyone from anywhere and at any time. The cost of digital broadcast is very minimal compared to SW broadcast. An individual can also broadcast if one knows its technique. The format is not stereotyped but

flexible to the choice of the audience. Further Radio broadcast does not provide any data on the listeners but online digital broadcast provides all possible data such as the number of listeners, how often they listen and how long they listen and their favourite programs.

Radio Veritas Asia under the FABC has now become a dedicated online broadcast since July 2018 and it can reach its audience not only in Asia but globally and accommodate more languages. Today it broadcasts in 20 Asian language serves and serves a vast number of its audience all over the globe. I am quoting the following statistics from the Secretary of FABC – Office of Social Communication:

**RADIO VERITAS ASIA MOBILE APP 24**

**Audio stream records (24 hrs. ) – Mobile app of RVA**

LANGUAGE SERVICES	JAN- DEC 2017	JAN - DEC 2018	PERCENTAGE DIFF.
1. BENGALI	16,844	31,028	84%
2. CHIN - HAKHA	1,994	1,906	-4%
3. CHIN- FALAM	505	530	5%
4. CHIN- MINDAT	294 (NOV-DEC 2017)	1,313	346%
5. CHIN - TEDDIM	3,080	3,473	13%
6. FILIPINO	13,100	22,624	73%
7. HINDI	3,750	3,468	-7%
8. HMONG	1,793	1,869	4%
9. KHMER	15,549	18,606	20%
10. KACHIN	48,279	63,666	32%
11. KAREN SAGAW	38,775	46,667	20%
12. KAREN PWO	272 (NOV-DEC 2017)	14,792	5,338%
13. MYANMAR	138,198	179,897	30%
14. MANDARIN	1,591	8,938	461%
15. SINHALA	NA	968	968%
16. TAMIL	56,930	67,183	18%
17. TELUGU	1,584	4,800	203%
18. URDU	1,379	1,294	-6%
19. VIETNAMESE	2,350,329	3,103,349	32%
20. ZOMI-CHIN	3,793	1,775	-56%

## 5. The Future of Missionary Apostolate.

The experience of the Mission work today holds a very bright future for the Church, but it is more in the hands of digital technology and any new improvements in communication technology. Already Pope Paul VI warned the Church in his Encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that the Church would feel guilty before the Lord if the Church would not make use of the communication technology which human brain develops constantly.

## 6. Conclusion

Looking at the ethos and the religiosity of Asia (23 nations), we have seen that the missionary endeavours have answered to the aspirations and longings of the Asian Community. No evil force can either contain it or suppress it. There have been lives lost in the prisons, in the work camps and in indiscriminate killings of the Catholics for their faith. We could safely say that Christianity could stand the challenge of any force opposing it and survives in the midst of its arrests, prisons, tortures, death threats and killings of innocent people. This is the way of the Cross that the Asian Church is willingly following. As St Paul States in Philippians 1;6: [“being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will continue to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus”](#). I wish that Missio Belgium will always trust in the Lord and follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

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Primary Notes:

**Two main books were points of references:**

1. Data on the history of the Church with successive Roman documents on Mission as well as the development of missionary works in the Church through several Encyclicals and Apostolic Exhortations. The following books were helpful: Bernardo Colomenares Gómez, (ed) Nouveaux Visages de la mission Du ,“Sans Unique” à l’échange entre Églises locales ! Éditions KARTHALA, Paris, 2016.
2. George Evers, Churches in Asia, Cambridge Press, Delhi. 2005.  
I have elaborately taken the data from these two sources and acknowledge them for the scholarly and historical works these authors contributed.

**Footnotes**

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2. Fr S. Panner Selvam, Star of New Evangelization, Sivakasi, First Edition, 2018, p. 15.
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27. *op. cit.* pp. 241-284
28. *op. cit.* pp. 185-240
29. *op. cit.* pp. 388-403
30. *op. cit.* pp. 173-182
31. *op. cit.* pp. 168-172
32. *op. cit.* pp. 161-165
33. *op. cit.* pp. 85-93
34. *op. cit.* pp. 45-84
35. *op. cit.* pp. 153-160
36. *op. cit.* pp. 3-44
37. *op. cit.* pp. 94-152

**MISSION YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMMORROW**  
**SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN MISSION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE**  
**DAGARA IN NORTHWESTERN GHANA**

**ABSTRACT**

***By Edward Tengan***

Even though the Church has always understood that it exists to carry on the mission of Christ, the understanding of this mission has not been the same through time. In the course of time, both the universal and the local churches have experienced shifts in paradigms as regards their understanding and carrying out of their mission in the world. Thus, a particular church's understanding of its mission determines its perception of its identity, task and the methods used for attaining its missionary project. It is in this light that this paper examines the shifting paradigms in the understanding of mission as experienced by the Dagara of northwestern Ghana.

The Missionaries of Africa (popularly known as the White Fathers) arrived in this region and set up their first mission station in Jirapa in 1929. From the inception of the mission in this land to date, the understanding of mission has undergone three paradigm shifts largely due to the historical and theological changes experienced by the Church and the world at large. Whilst the Pre-Vatican II Church ran mostly by the missionaries saw mission as the call to save their pagan hearers from their cultures through baptism into the Church, the Church after Vatican II saw inculturation as the way of being church in Africa. The second African Synod called for reconciliation and the reconstruction of an Africa that has been disfigured by conflicts, corruption and other social evils thus, demanding a new model for mission in the wake of the communication explosion and its resultant globalization. This paper seeks to explore these shifts in the paradigm of mission and their consequences for the life and mission of the local Church among the Dagara of the Wa Diocese in northwestern Ghana.

**Introduction**

Even though the Church has always understood that it exists to carry on the mission of Christ, the understanding of this mission has not been the same through time. In the course of time, both the universal and the local churches have experienced shifts in paradigms as regards their understanding and carrying out of their mission in the world. Thus, a particular church's understanding of its mission determines its perception of its identity, task and the methods used for attaining its missionary project. It is in this light that this paper examines the shifting paradigms in the understanding of mission as experienced by the Dagara of northwestern Ghana. From the inception of the mission in this land to date, the understanding of mission has undergone three paradigm shifts largely due to the historical and theological changes experienced by the Church and the world at large.



The Missionaries of Africa (popularly known as the White Fathers) arrived in this region and set up their first mission station in Jirapa in 1929. This was in the context of the Pre-Vatican II Church run mostly by the missionaries who saw mission as the call to save their pagan hearers from their cultures through baptism into the Church. Mission was seen as salvation of souls through baptism into the Church. In the 1960s, the event of Vatican II coupled with the fight for independence of the African countries saw a shift in the paradigm for mission. The Church as people of God in their historical and local context saw the stress on the local church and the significance of the local culture in building of self-reliant churches that speak to the people in their own cultures: Mission as inculturation. The 1990s witnessed ethnic and tribal conflicts both in Europe and Africa after the dissolution of the East-West political polarity. These conflicts coupled with the effects of the economic globalization and the ecological crisis called for a new model for mission, the mission as healing and reconciliation through a personal and structural conversion to Christ in the transformation of the world view.

### **Missionary Church: Mission as Planting of Churches**

In the post-tridentine Church, missionary activity went hand in hand with colonization, so much so that a colonial power determined, in principle, the religious identity of the people it colonized. Institutional churches in Europe sent their members out on mission to pagans. The said missionaries drew their authority from the sending churches who gave them laid down regulations for their missionary activity. This period was marked by a struggle between churches for converts as each group went out to conquer the world for God from the power of Satan. Salvation of souls was thus the main task of mission. This salvation was regarded as the attainment of heaven after death. Pagans were exhorted to present themselves for baptism into the Church as the sole means of being saved for there was no possibility of being saved outside the church; *extra ecclesia nulla salus*. The baptized were then exhorted to avoid sin, to be in the state of grace to be able to enter into heaven.

It is in this context that Benedict XV sought to make a clear distinction between national interests and ecclesiastical interests with regard to the Church's missionary activity. Hence, in his Apostolic Letter, *Maximum Illud* issued in 1919, he exhorted the missionaries;

*You have been called to carry light to men who lie in the shadow of death and to open the way to heaven for souls that are hurtling to destruction. Assure yourselves*

*that God was speaking to you, to each one of you, when He said: "Forget your people and your father's house" (Ps 44:11). Remember that your duty is not the extension of a human realm, but of Christ's; and remember too that your goal is the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly fatherland, and not for an earthly one. (...) No, the true missionary is always aware that he is not working as an agent of his country, but as an ambassador of Christ. And his conduct is such that it is perfectly obvious to anyone watching him that he represents a Faith that is alien to no nation on earth, since it embraces all who worship God in spirit and in truth, a Faith in which "there is no Gentile, no Jew, no circumcised, no uncircumcised, no barbarian, no Scythian, no slave, no free man, but Christ is everything in each of us" (Col 3:11). (Maximum illud 19-20)*

Pope Francis rightly sums up Benedict's message when he says that 'the Church of God is universal; she is not alien to any people, as such, missionary work should be devoid of any national or particular interest. (Baptised and sent p. 9).

Pope Benedict XV thus gave a new direction and impetus to missionary work. Hence, when the Missionaries of Africa started their missionary work among the Dagara, they were very much conscious of the directives given by the Pope. Besides the teaching of the Pope, they had to heed to the words of their founder Cardinal Lavigerie whose teaching on adaptation elucidated further the mind of the Pope. In this vein, Lavigerie reminded his missionaries that their primary identity should be one of "Christian" and "apostle" rather than *Français or Européens*. (14)

Hence, in this first missionary phase of evangelization among the Dagara, the main purpose of mission was the salvation of souls through baptism into the Church. The Missionaries of Africa saw adaptation at its varied levels as the means of achieving their goal. Cardinal Lavigerie believed in transforming Africa by the Africans themselves

Hence, missionaries were regarded as initiators but the lasting work must be accomplished by the Africans themselves. For this, they employed the services of catechists who helped them reach out to the people at the grassroots. I would like to explore briefly each of these elements of mission as it was undertaken by the Missionaries of Africa among the Dagara.

*Salvation of Souls through Baptism*

As children of their time, a major preoccupation of the Missionaries of Africa in their evangelization of the Dagara was the salvation of souls. To achieve this, they made regular visits to the people in their villages and participated in their social events as a means of being free with the people. In this, they paid particular attention to the sick whom they visited regularly with the aim of baptizing them in danger of death. In this vein, they made their catechists to understand that they had to make sure they baptized the dying, including children. As one catechist recounts:

*We were warned that we had to visit sick persons especially those in danger of death. In such cases we had to baptise the person to pave the way for the person to be accepted into heaven. We were told that if we neglected to visit and baptise such a person and the person died without baptism, his judgement would be on our heads. For this reason, we were very particular about visiting the sick to be able to administer baptism to those who were dying.*

*(...)It was written in our book of instructions that if a woman dies in childbirth, either the catechist or the Christian leader has the obligation to perform an operation on the woman to remove and baptise the child. (...). The law stated that if you refused to make the operation, you had committed a mortal sin by refusing to operate and baptize the child thereby saving his soul. (Tengan, E. 2015 pp. 30-31)*

### *Adaptation as Means of Evangelisation*

After the Council of Trent, the general rule was that every mission church should conform as closely as possible to the Roman way. It was the belief at the time that western theology and Christian practices were universally and perennially valid. In this regard, adaptation referred to the accommodation of non-essential cultural elements that were uncontaminated by paganism into the faith.

In this vein, Cardinal Lavigerie believed that conversion did not require a total rejection of the social customs but the indigenous religions and the practices in connection with them. He therefore exhorted his missionaries to make a distinction between the secular customs which should be maintained and the religious institutions and practices which should be abolished. He instructed them to approximate as much as possible to the exterior habits of the people by eating their food, wearing their dress and speaking their language. In his view, 'such adaptation diminished the strangeness of the missionaries and allowed for a tone of respect, not condescension when dealing with the natives'. Louisiana p. 25.

Writing about the use of this missionary adaptation by the Missionaries of Africa among the Dagara, Der (1983, p. 279) notes:

*In northern Ghana, the missionaries ate the local staple foods and drank the locally brewed beer but they found nothing suitable for them in the type of local dress then in use in the area. Their position in relation to the problem of adaptation was made relatively easier by the absence of widespread initiation cults.*

Besides adapting themselves to the people's way of life, they adapted several social practices into the Christian practice. The planting of the cross on the farms in place of the traditional symbols, the blessing of the seeds before sowing, and the celebration of Christmas which fell at the time the people celebrated traditionally their thanksgiving rite for a good harvest were issues that spoke effectively to the people who were dependent on farming for their livelihood. The blessing of pregnant women also replaced the traditional ritual the people performed at the time. In the field of the liturgy, the missionaries translated many songs and prayers into the local language and also adapted local tunes for Church music.

It must be noted that in all this, the adaptation of the missionaries to the way of life of the people was a significant element in winning the people to the faith. Unlike the government officials the missionaries were sociable and approachable. They had personal contact with the people at the grassroots. They shared the joys and sorrows of the people and were totally available to them in their times of need. Of particular significance was their apostolate of the sick and dying which they saw as an apostolate of compassion in line with the mission of Jesus himself. However, one cannot underrate the role of the catechists whom they enrolled as aides in their evangelizing task.

*The Catechists and the Catechumenate*

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, 1931, Fr. McCoy inaugurated the catechists' formation programme in Jirapa (McCoy, R 1988, p. 245). The programme consisted of three years of intensive training in the bible, catechesis (content and delivery), and community leadership. The wives who accompanied their husbands for the training were given instructions in home management, spirituality and personal hygiene. The colonial government had made it a policy not to open formal schools in this region in order to preserve the young men as workers for the cocoa farms and mines in the South. To circumvent the rule, the missionaries enrolled brilliant young boys into the Catechists school whom they later sent to Navrongo to continue their formal education. This was the case of Dery who eventually became the first bishop of the Diocese of Wa. After their training, the catechists were sent in pairs to villages other than their natal villages. There, they acted as representatives of the missionaries in the village communities where they engaged in primary evangelization as well as pastoral evangelization of the growing Christian communities.

By the end of the 1950s the missionaries saw the need to open many parishes to cater for the large number of Christians. Besides preaching to pagans, there was the dire need for pastoral evangelization to take care of the spiritual needs of the Christians and the catechists became indispensable agents in the evangelizing mission of the local Church. Speaking about the role of the catechists in the missionary work of the Church, one catechist had this to say:

*It is true that conversion is the work of God's grace. But we cannot rule out the fact that God calls people as humans in their own culture. Hence, even if they (the missionaries) would have succeeded, they would have suffered. The Fathers did not know the people. It is the catechists, living with the people who know them.*

*When there is a case to be settled, the priests will go and they will deceive them with half-truths. They will never tell them the truth. They will rely on that information to come to a conclusion thinking they have solved the case, but in fact, they would only have wasted their time. For example, the case of abstaining from meat on Friday, the priests wanted to tell our people that they could eat dried meat on Fridays during Lent. But it was the catechists who advised against it. Knowing their people, they said that people would put fresh meat on the fire for some time and claim it is dried meat and go ahead to eat it. Following the advice of the catechists, the priests taught that all meat is forbidden on Friday during Lent. (Tengan, E. 2015, p.70).*

Hence, in the first phase of the missionary endeavor among the Dagara, the purpose of mission was the salvation of souls through baptism into the Church. In terms of the Church's relation to the culture of the people, adaptation was the approach. However, that was merely touching on the surface of the culture. Furthermore, the missionaries failed to understand that even the social practices of the people were rooted in their religious worldview. Hence, it was difficult to distinguish the social from the religious. Culture is a complex unity within which social practices derive their meaning from the underlying religious worldview. How does one distinguish the potency of traditional medicine from the religious context within which it has been prepared? Liturgical translations that sought to avoid the religious worldview introduced words that had no meaning for the people. Words like *teng vla* (good land) *missa* and *sacrificio* were used to refer to heaven, mass and sacrifice instead of the more appropriate terms *dapare*, *bagr maalo* and *bagr* respectively. This was to avoid the religious connotations the latter terms implied. Finally, though the introduction of the catechists as aides had its immense benefits, it gradually estranged the missionaries from the people at the grassroots as they depended more and more on the catechists for information from the village communities. By the 1960s, mission as conversion of pagans was gradually being superseded by pastoral evangelization for the growing Christian population. This called for a new paradigm for mission.

## **Vatican II and its Aftermath: Mission as Inculturation of the Gospel**

### **Before Vatican II**

The Diocese of Wa was created on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, 1960 with Peter Porekuu Dery as its first bishop. Already as a young priest, Dery lamented the fact that the Church's liturgy was celebrated in a language that was incomprehensible to the people. Against the advice of his White confreres, he began to translate some of the church songs into the local language. It is therefore not surprising that when he became bishop, he took the occasion to push his agenda. In his coat of arms he used the image of the two houses, the old house without the cross and the new house with the cross to encapsulate his vision regarding the relationship between gospel and culture. In his *Memoirs* he writes:

*Hence, in my apostolate, I must bear in mind not to destroy the treasures that are of value in the old house. Rather, I should keep and use them in the construction of the new family so that the people of the old house who have to leave certain things that are unacceptable to the Gospel, will still identify themselves in their new house and feel at home in it. I must constantly bear in mind that the same God of the new house is the originator of the old house. He has made it and ordained it to Himself. As such, there must be something of value in it which can lead its members to God.*

*In this connection, it is sad to note that (through no fault of theirs) the early missionaries desisted from using terms of the traditional religions to instruct the people in the Christian faith. (...). These are examples of what I mean by saying that there is the need to use the things of the old house to construct the new one. When this is adequately done, people, coming from the old house into the new immediately recognize themselves in it. They see in the new house things that they have always cherished. Looking around in the new house and seeing these things, even if they are present in a transformed state, they will say: "We were afraid we were leaving our values behind but here they are in our new house even in a better state than we could ever imagine". (Dery, P. 2001, p.82)*

He recounts how, after his ordination as bishop, he asked for an audience with Pope John XXIII. In his meeting with the Pope he sought permission to use the local language in the liturgy to enable the people participate meaningfully in it. He noted that the Pope was very sympathetic to his views and two weeks after his meeting with the Pope, he received a reply in a written document permitting him to make experiments at adapting the liturgy to his local culture. As Dery explains, 'he not only granted me the permission to have the people sing in their own language at Mass. He exhorted me not to transliterate the songs. I was to use the people's own thought patterns to express the Christian essence of the songs such that they would be meaningful to the people' (Dery 2001, p. 117). Hence, one can say that the use of the local language in the liturgy started in Wa Diocese before Vatican II when it became a universal policy for the entire Church. In this way, one can say that Dery paved the way for the understanding of mission as inculturation in his diocese.

Dery's vision would be confirmed in Vatican II which witnessed a fundamental shift in the understanding of mission. The concomitance of historical and theological factors in the 1960s had great implications for evangelization in Africa. On the political plane, the black consciousness and the independence movements that swept across Africa would have their

repercussions on the vision of mission as it had been practiced by the missionaries. It is also worth noting that besides what was going on in Africa, there was, in Western Europe, a shift regarding the way culture was understood. Social scientists were now appealing to the empiricist method to debunk the claim that the western culture represented the peak of the development of the one universal culture in which case European missionaries saw their evangelization as a way of civilizing the uncivilized and developing countries. Contrary to this classical view, the scientists argued for plurality of cultures with a diversity of norms. This shift in the understanding of culture influenced the discussions of Vatican II in that regard.

### **Inculturation as Mission of the Church**

Vatican II brought about a radical change in the understanding of the Church, salvation and the role of culture in the life and mission of the Church. Departing from the hierarchical understanding of the Church, Vatican II stressed on the Church as the People of God, that is, the Church as communion. In this vein L. G. No 26 notes that “this Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of believers, which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament. For in their own locality these are the new people called by God” In this context, Amalorpavadass rightly notes that inculturation is ‘the incarnation of the Church in a place, time and people’. In his view, the living Gospel lived by the Church in a living culture with all its transformations and realities it entails is what is called inculturation. He goes on to note that:

*(...), there is no preaching of the gospel (evangelization) without inculturation. There is no Church without being localized, concretised and visibilised. There is no salvation without the incarnation of the Word of God. It is good to note that the Incarnation of the Word, the localization of the Church and indigenization (inculturation) should not be understood as referring only to externals (1974. P.16).*

Inculturation precisely lives out the nature of the Catholic Church which is living primarily in the local Churches bonded together by the Spirit in the Universal Church.

In place of the salvation of souls as the main task of the Church, Vatican II insisted on the salvation of the total person who can only attain his full humanity through culture. Pope Paul VI had this insight when he said that

*For the Church evangelizing means bringing the good news into all strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it*



*new. (...). The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieus which are theirs. (...). What matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin coat of colour, but in depth, going to the very centre and roots of life. The gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man (...)* (EN no. 18).

The person is full human only through culture. As such, the promotion of the gospel must include the furtherance of the people's culture. It is for this reason that Pope John Paul II insisted that 'the synthesis between culture and faith is not only a requirement of culture but also of faith.... Faith that does not become culture is not fully accepted nor entirely reflected upon or faithfully experienced. (Francesco Follow 2010) JP audience Jan 16 1982. In *Christi fideles Laici*, 59, he noted that "a faith that does not affect a person's culture is a faith not fully embraced, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived.

#### *Concrete Attempts at Inculturation among the Dagara*

##### Inculturation

As mentioned earlier, the Bishop of Wa had already made some moves at inculturating the liturgy before Vatican II. This project was thus given a greater impetus after the Council. However, it was in the area of liturgy and worship that most of the work was done. Local terms were introduced into the liturgy and the Order of the Mass. Besides translating existing Christian hymns, local songs were also introduced into the liturgy. Cultural studies were also conducted in order to formulate appropriate sacramentals in order to respond to some psychological needs of the people. Another area which preoccupied the local Church was the translation of the scriptures and related Christian literature into the local language. However, one must admit that besides these attempts in the area of practical theology, there have been very few attempts at working out our contribution to mainstream theology in such areas as Christology, ecclesiology and so on.

##### Self-Reliance

The call for local churches manned by local clergy brought in its trend the call for building up self-reliant churches. In this vein, there are those who called for a moratorium on expatriate missionaries requesting that African churches cut themselves off from the

dependence on the West. In the case of the Diocese of Wa, the leadership did not share this view. According to Bishop Dery,

*Self-reliance consists primarily in assisting people to develop their potentials so that they can eventually take care of themselves. It needs time to assist people identify and develop their material and human potentials. Hence, it consists in the formation of people to enable them do things for themselves. If you want to build up a self-reliant diocese, you must start by forming the individuals within the diocese. ( Dery, P. ,2001 p. 111 )*

He argued that it is only when people are able to work for themselves in order to take care of their basic needs that they can have something to contribute for social and Church-related projects. He noted that self-reliance is more global than material self-reliance. A self-supporting Church must also have people who have been trained to take care of the various areas of Church life including the formation of priests and religious. Self-reliance should not be seen only in terms of money. It has to be seen holistically.

It was the contention of Dery that a self-reliant church is neither self-centred nor cut off from the universal Church. It must remain in communion with the other churches. In this regard he has this to say:

*When, as bishop, I went out to Europe to ask for assistance to sustain my diocese, I did not see myself as beggar. I kept reminding the people I contacted that we may be the poorer Church today in need of assistance from our sister Churches in Europe. But the day could come when they, in turn, will need our help, maybe not financially, but spiritually. I told them: 'You have it now. So, you have the duty to help me so that I may realize our common task of evangelising the people. In this way, you and I are realizing our common objective of establishing the Kingdom of God. If it turns out, some day, that you need my help, you will be benefiting from the fruits of our common endeavour'.As I write now, I can say that Europe is already benefiting from the fruits of their contributions in the missionary priests and religious whom they have helped to train in Africa. (Dery, P. 2001, p. 112-113)*

Hence, while the African church is called upon to recognize and use optimally its potentials, it must desist from making unrealistic projects and wasting its scarce resources. As such, the Church in Africa can attain self-reliance in those areas where she can do things for herself, seek reasonable assistance from external bodies for projects beyond its means. The

solidarity of the local churches in search for the common good in building up the kingdom of God remains a hallmark of our catholicity.

### Evangelisation and Development

For the Church in Africa, contextualizing the gospel also requires the liberation of the people from all forms of oppression. In the Diocese of Wa, the people experienced oppression from some elements of the culture and the poor conditions in which they lived. In this vein, there was the need to fight for the upliftment of the Dagara woman and particularly the widow in terms of her place in society. (Dery) Some other cultural beliefs that militated against the integral development of the human person had to be challenged.

On the material level, the Church had to provide such basic amenities as potable water, health services and educational facilities for these people as they often lived in deprived areas. Though such development is seen as a major component of evangelization, it is not always easy for the local church to find the human and material resources needed for such ventures.

### Small Christian Communities

In the 1970s, there was a general wave in Africa to see the building of Basic Christian Communities as the way of evangelisation best suited for Africa. The argument was that the Church was fully planted in Africa and needed strategies to live out its life as a vibrant cell of the universal Church. This led to the idea of the Basic Christian Communities as an alternative means of primary and secondary evangelisation. The option for the Basic Christian Communities not only led to a shift in ecclesiological model. It also brought about its own vision of leadership. All along, the Church had operated with the parish as its basic cell under the leadership of the parish team. The catechist in the village was only a representative of the priest who prepared the people for the sacraments. However, all activities were still monitored and directed to the parish. Like the priests, the catechists were missionaries as they were sent outside their own communities to serve. With the concept of the Basic Community, the living cell is the community which is served by the different ministries run by members from within the community. These work closely under the Animator who is a trained member from within the community. This church model had no place for the traditional catechist. Also, life and pastoral programs were shifted from the parish to the community level and priests had to visit these communities to oversee and celebrate the sacraments with them.

Secondly, the centering of life on the basic community ran the risk of building independent communities who saw no need to forge a united parish community to relate with the diocese. The issue of leadership at the community level and the diminishing role of the parish in the daily lives of the people thus became sources of conflict between the basic communities. One area of concern was the finances. Granted that the community needed money to take care of its activities and structures, the problem ensued as to how much of their contributions they were to maintain for their community use and how much they had to give to the parish. Given that the parish was dependent on the local communities for its finances, it began to experience a dwindling of its much needed resources for the running of the parish. This difficulty was replicated in the relation between the parishes and the diocese. Within the context of the policy of self-reliance where each unit needs to take care of its basic needs, the issues of subsidiarity and solidarity did not seem to apply very well. This certainly affected the mission at the different levels.

#### Challenges relating to inculturation as mission

In the first place, one can say that the term inculturation as it stands could give the wrong impression that culture is given first place in as far as the term stresses the cultural element in the gospel-culture relationship. In this case, a wrong vision of this reality could lead to the gospel being ‘incultured’ and not inculturated. In such a situation, the identity of Christianity would be lost. It is in this context that one can understand Ratzinger’s fear that inculturation smirks of relativism as the diverse cultures each seeks to create a version of Christianity which is right for its own situation.

Secondly, talking about presenting the ‘essence of the gospel’ in the language and symbolic forms of a given culture could give the impression that inculturation is a static event. But the fact is that the gospel-culture relationship is a dynamic one. Besides, we can never discover the ‘neutral essence of the gospel’ since the Word has always come to us in a culture since the time of Jesus himself (incarnation of the Word). Hence, the term inculturation continues to be meaningful to us when it is grounded on solid theological bases.

#### **Mission as Transformation of Worldview**

In missiological literature, there are two opinions relating to the shift in mission paradigm for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whilst Schreiter’s reflection on the socio-political events,

globalization and the ecological crisis led him to conclude that ‘new voices of reconciliation and healing’ are beginning to ask for a shift in our paradigm for mission’, Hiebert (2002, P. 19) from his reflection on conversion to Christ as the end result of mission concludes that, if behavioral change was the focus of the nineteenth century mission movement, and changed beliefs the focus of the twentieth century, transforming worldviews must be central to the mission task in the twenty-first century. The two positions are not necessarily exclusive of each other. For, right from creation through salvation history, God’s purpose has been to bring healing and wholeness to the world. In this sense our mission is thus rooted in this mission of God in which we Christians are called upon to join hands with others to fight against the forces that dehumanize life. However, it needs true conversion to Christ to be able to bring that healing and peace to the world which God alone can give. It is in this light that I would like to see the future of mission among the Dagara in the light of Hiebert’s call for a transformation of the people’s worldview. This call for transformation in worldview goes beyond inculturation.

Talking about transformation of the worldview, Hiebert, P, ( 2002, p. 19) notes:

*It is increasingly clear that for true Christianity to continue over the generations there must be a transformation in the worldviews people have in the light of biblical revelation. An analogy may help us here. Culture is like an iceberg. Behavior and beliefs are what we see above the surface of the ocean. The worldview is the large hidden mass beneath the surface that holds the whole iceberg up. If we convert only beliefs and behavior, in time the worldview will take the Christian beliefs captive. The result is "Christo-paganism."*

In an earlier paper (Tengan, E., I gave three examples illustrating how Christian beliefs are held captive by the Dagara culture. These include the Dagara belief in the spirit world, the Dagara belief in death and the life hereafter and the Dagara notion of the family).

Dagara continue to hold onto their traditional conception of the spirit world and the diffused mystical power that pervades their universe. If earlier missionaries tried to deny the existence of the spirits and such other beings that wield mystical power in the Dagara universe as witches and so on, contemporary theological discourse prefers to gloss over them. The result is that, many Dagara Christians who still hold onto the powers of these beings and their effects in their lives see nothing wrong in going to other churches as they would to their former medicinal and other cults for salvation and assistance.

Secondly, the Dagara view of death and the rites that accompany the dead have undergone very little transformation even for Christians. The symbols, the symbolic acts and the dirges sung at Christian funerals find their meaning from the traditional worldview. The woman is staged facing the west, where the sun sets, such that she may remember to go home early from farm to prepare supper for her husband. The deceased are also equipped with the tools and implements they need to continue their sex-related roles in their respective families. As such, the dead forebears are called upon to receive the deceased whom they are expected to recognize because they have lived out faithfully the values and injunctions of the given family. Life hereafter is a continuation of this life in the company of the ancestors.

Thirdly, Dagara still look to their traditional conception of the family and marriage as the yardstick for taking fundamental decisions. Hence, they claim that it is the consecration of the bride price to the ancestors that 'blesses' the union and binds the woman in total fidelity to her husband. The role of the woman in the family and the rites she has to undergo at the death of her husband all hinge on this traditional perception which has not been transformed by our Christian faith which professes the equality of the sexes in marriage.

Indeed, due to the lack of fit between the Christian and traditional worldviews, Dagara Christians live in two worlds. They easily commute between the two. Through baptism and participation in the Christian liturgy, they get their identity as Christians. However, they see nothing wrong in visiting other churches to solicit the support of the spirits in taking care of their psychological and other needs. A similar dichotomy is experienced by many Christians regarding their spiritual and professional lives. This is reflected in the lack of knowledge in spiritual matters exhibited by most lay professionals. In this regard, the church of Africa suffers from the fact that lay contribution to the development of theology is very minimal.

Christianity should make a difference. This can only happen if our missionary endeavor aims at a transformation of the worldview that underpins the beliefs and practices of the Dagara. This requires not only personal conversion but also cultural and corporate conversion to the mind of Christ. We suggest the following as means of achieving such a transformation.

#### *Concrete Suggestions*

Even though Vatican II has stressed on the Church as the people of God, the Church in Africa is yet to experience the full import of the role of the laity in the life and mission of the Church. In *Gaudete et Exultate* Pope Francis reminds all Christians 'whatever their condition

or state, are called by the Lord – each in his or her own way – to that perfect holiness by which the Father himself is perfect (...) by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves’ (GE 14). In *Baptised and sent*, the Pope reiterates the call addressed to every Christian to participate in the mission of the Church. Evangelisation is the task of all the baptized. Working towards transforming our worldview demands the conscious involvement of all. Indeed the task of transforming our family lives and the temporal order through their professional lives lies heavily with the laity. It is only a committed laity who can make a difference in the world of business, politics and so on.

However, in order to carry out this important task of theirs, the laity need to be properly formed. Whereas we have structured and sustained formation programmes for priests and religious, we cannot talk of similar formation programmes for our laity to enable them live effectively their family and professional lives. Working for a transformation of our world will require the active participation of a laity who have a good grasp of their faith to be able to evaluate issues and take informed decisions in the light of their faith.

In the same vein, the laity in Africa will need to be motivated to develop an interest in the sacred sciences to bring their experience to bear in the project of inculturating the Christian faith. The current situation where theological discourse is being carried out by mostly priests and religious does not auger well for the Church as the experience of a greater portion of the Church does not have much influence on the discussion. Furthermore, seasoned lay theologians will have a lot to contribute in the development of the social sciences.

In this regard, there is the need to encourage already established laity groups within the Church. There may also be the need to establish other groups along professional and social lines. Such groups do not only present fora for sharing ideas and taking common decisions that can have an impact on the society. They also act as support groups for their members.

Indeed, evangelization as the transformation of the worldview of the people relies heavily on a committed laity acting under the leadership of their pastors. Tomorrow’s mission depends on the quality of the laity who by virtue of their engagement in the temporal order are called to be the leaven that transforms the world through the kingdom values they cherish and live.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper has been to examine the changing vision of mission in terms of its purpose, agents and methods employed. In the first stage of evangelization among the Dagara, mission was geared towards the salvation of souls. It was the expatriate missionary who was the agent. As means, they made use of their personal relationships and enlisted the support of local catechists. After Vatican II, the positive notion of culture and the fight for independence called for a shift in the understanding and strategies employed for mission. Inculturation, liberation from poverty through development and the work towards establishing self-reliant churches manned by the local clergy and Christian community leaders were the order of the day. However, though this shift stressed the role of the local church in the universal mission of the Church, it had its own challenges in the sense that whilst inculturation was mostly in liturgy and worship, the stress on the local church created difficulties in the understanding of the Church as communion at various levels. The stress on personal conversion failed to touch on the worldview as the life world within which personal decisions are taken. It is for this reason that we argue for a paradigm shift that sees mission as a transformation of the worldview. Working for a transformation of the worldview not only takes culture seriously. It also ensures that the gospel is the yardstick for deciding which cultural elements should be preserved or changed. If the main task of evangelization is to create a Christian community that continues Jesus' mission of establishing the kingdom of God on earth, our mission should aim at transforming the cultural worldviews of our people such that their beliefs, decisions and engagements conform to the mind of Christ. In this way, Christians will really act as the leaven that transforms the world from within.

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**Salvation in a Wounded World:**

**Towards a Spectral Theology of Mission**

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me ... in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones ... bones that were very dry. He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

(Ez 37, 1-3)

Ezekiel’s vision offers a powerful image for a wounded world in deep transformation. It gives a stark portrait of the pervasive power of death, and yet, it also speaks to a strong desire for life, in the midst of annihilation. Here, it is through the prophetic proclamation of God’s Word that the bodily remains are brought back to life. Today, theological reflection is faced with a growing awareness that the proclamation of God’s word is not only, and not self-evidently, life-giving. Not least a critical review of modern mission history has revealed how deeply Christian God-talk is implicated in the necropolitics of empire and a theological reflection of mission in the wake of colonial trauma has to account for these ambiguous entanglements that has given shape to theological knowledge production under imperial conditions. The question for theological reflection today is not simply what analysis and solution a theological approach can offer in view of the complex legacies of mission in a wounded world. Rather, we have to ask what kind of theological approach is able to fully grasp the theological complexities of these legacies. I will suggest that a spectral theology of mission offers a framework for addressing the ambiguities with which theology emerges from the necropolitics of empire. I will develop my argument in three steps: a first section points to

a growing discrepancy between theological and critical approaches to mission: while critical mission studies have abandoned teleological frameworks for the narration of mission history, they are still very influential in theological conceptualizations of mission. In order to develop a full theological response to the complicities of mission with colonialism, section 2 will present a case study of two possible memory discourses in the wake of colonization: section 3 will further develop building blocks for a spectral theology of mission.

#### 1. Writing mission history – between critical and theological perspectives

Early mission history followed the methods and epistemology of 19<sup>th</sup> century historicism, and this historicist approach allowed to align mission history and salvation theology within a teleological framework. Mission history was written as a history of progress in which the essence of Christianity was imagined to unfold historically and to expand geographically, and this expansion was interpreted theologically as the progressive unfolding of salvation history. More recent, interdisciplinary approaches to mission historiography have departed from such historicist forms of knowledge and complicate their teleological alignment of history and theology. Missionary activity is now studied as an aspect of global knowledge production under asymmetrical power relations. These approaches show how mission was part of a discourse that informed the modern conceptualizations of religion, culture and race. Willie Jennings, for example, has shown how profoundly theological knowledge production in missionary encounters has been implicated in the modern invention of race. In “nothing less than a theological operation”, he argues, the whiteness of the colonizers became both, a benchmark of “progress” and an icon of salvation. The Christian imagination, as forged during colonial modernity, has thus been central to the origins and maintenance of the racialization that is embedded in the European project of Enlightenment.

Critiques such as this are not limited to an investigation into the deep-running political complicities of modern mission enterprises with European colonialism. Instead, they call for epistemological reconfigurations in how we understand theological knowledge production. Crucial is the growing insight *how constitutively* Christian imaginations are tied into global political, economic and cultural flows. Such critique replaces the imaginations of a progressive unfolding of salvation (in) history, that were typical of early mission history, with insights into the messy and ambiguous character of Christian theologizing. And the exposure of this foundational messiness calls for new frameworks of how we can understand the relation between mission history and salvation theology. They can no longer be alligned in

teleological frameworks with which we could hold on to the idea that of a given, unambivalent deposit of salvific truth unfolds through the contingencies of history.

In missiology, however, teleological imaginations continue to provide a powerful framework for how mission is understood theologically. While mission history is no longer written within teleological frameworks, salvation theology often continues to be framed in teleological terms. Such teleological missiologies acknowledge the complexities of mission history but hold on to the idea that there is an underlying Christian continuum that is free from contingency and ambiguity. They are, for example, at work in approaches that denounce the collusion between Christian imaginations and racism as a deformation of authentic Christianity. Such an approach allows for a strong critique of theological complicities in systems of oppressions, but it locates theology ‘proper’ outside, rather than inextricably interwoven into ongoing negotiations of knowledge and power. Ultimately, therefore, it cannot make *theological* sense of the constitutive ‘messiness’ of the Christian tradition that results from its irresolvable alignments with social forces that have been exposed by interdisciplinary studies of mission histories. Instead, it immunizes a theological understanding of mission from the powerful contingencies of mission history. In order to develop a fully fledged theological response to the complex legacies of mission in a wounded world, it is necessary, therefore, to part with teleological soteriologies and instead search for theological frameworks that can imagine salvation without teleological theologies of history and soteriological unambivalence.

I will set out for this search for soteriological reimaginings from a perhaps unexpected place: the Africa Museum near Brussels, that was founded at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by King Leopold II to promote his colonial efforts in Central Africa and that has been a powerful instrument for colonial knowledge production that produced sanitized memories of Belgium’s colonial past and remained silent on the violence of this colonial project. For the last few years, the museum was closed for renovation and aimed to divest itself of its colonial gaze that had served to legitimize the colonial exploitation of the Congo. It would indeed be interesting to use the Africa Museum as a site to investigate the intersections between colonial projects and mission enterprises in Belgian Congo, but for the purposes of this paper, I will focus on an analysis of the narratives through which the museum imagines its project of decolonization. The debates about a decolonization of European museums are often couched in soteriological metaphors. Decolonization is imagined in terms of debt and reparation, of

wounding and healing, of guilt and atonement. Christian imaginations have been implicated in the political-aesthetic regimes of colonialism, and they continue to remain operative in discourses of decolonization. An investigation of the narratives that shape the project of decolonization in the museum can therefore open trajectories for new theological imaginations of salvation. In the following section, I aim to do this by analyzing an artistic intervention in the renovated Africa Museum in the former entrance hall of the museum. Here, visitors are greeted with statues of white men in gilded robes cradling naked African children, above plaques that extol Belgium for bringing ‘civilisation’ to the Congo. They represent the colonial discourse through the gaze of the colonizer. The renovation committee has decided to reshape this space through an artistic intervention: it commissioned a new statue by a sculptor from the Congo, Aimé Mpane. It is entitled ‘Congo Nouveau Souffle’ (Congo New Breath) and is placed near the centre of the hall, in addition to the older statues. Which histories of decolonization can this statue tell, and which imaginations of salvation do each of these histories endorse?

I encountered a first possible reading of the museum’s decolonization project during a tour through the museum in 2017, before it reopened to the public. The renovations were still in full swing, and Mpane’s statue had not yet been installed, so I got my first impression of the new arrangements through our guide’s description. In his account, I could detect a clear desire to construct an unambivalent story from wounding to healing. For him, the new statue would provide a sharp contrast to the colonial representation of the older statues. Based on his account, I imagined the statue to represent an unblemished black body, adorned with traditional African embellishments, telling a story about the beauty and resilience of African life that has left the colonial past behind. Our guide saw in the future arrangements of the rotunda a vision of complete restoration, telling a story of wounds fully healed, leaving no scars. In the wake of empire, he imagined a shift in the telos that orients the history of encounter between black and white. No longer is it seen in redemption through whiteness. Rather, it is found in an arch of redemption coming full circle to a restoration of original, unblemished blackness that is freed from all traces of the colonial encounter with whiteness.

Yet, is this the only way we can see these statues? Gayatri Spivak, after all, has warned of the pitfalls of such a “historiography of the cure” that constructs a linear narrative from wounding to healing. The cure, Spivak says, perpetuates the colonial gaze. Here, the white gaze, that now wants to leave colonialism behind, remains the organizing principle in the telling of colonial history. It uses imaginations of seemingly unblemished black flesh to

absolve the colonizers from their historical guilt, and thus continues to instrumentalize black bodies for the self-definition of the colonial masters. With Spivak, we can argue that the redemptive arch of the cure re-establishes white sovereignty over the interpretation of the colonial past and continues to conceal the lethal ways by which the empire has promised peace, prosperity and redemption, and it remains silent over the ongoing psychopolitical effects of colonial rule today.

But is there a different way of imagining the colonial past and how it figures in the present? Spivak suggests ghost stories as such an alternative way of remembering. Suggesting haunting as a critical alternative to the teleological historiography of the cure, she builds on an interdisciplinary body of literature that uses spectrality as a lens to conceptualize history, memory, trauma and justice. It conceives of ghosts as “figures of social memory” that open “a perspective on the suppressed shares of death in life, especially in societal processes of marginalization. ... Ghosts are narrative figures that answer to guilt and articulate the desire for redemption.” Ghost stories, then, give a different account of history. Like the cure, haunting is concerned with death and life, suffering and redemption. Yet, it strikes a different, more complex, balance between a history of suffering and a hopeful future. Haunting is a rewriting of history through wounds that registers the desire for a time without suffering but does not subject wounding and healing to the violence of a linear narrative that continues to silence the shameful shares of death in histories. Haunting, instead, is the occupation with a troubled past that opens the imagination for a fragile future in ways that disrupt the self-evidence of a teleological sequence, and instead represents healing, justice, reparation by way of a fleeting absence, a painful incompleteness, a hopeful yearning.

Postcolonial trauma theory suggests that such ghostly historiographies will take the form of “critical ... recalcitrant ... mourning”. Such a non-therapeutic memory of the past grounds a different mode of historicization that disrupts the violent vision of the cure by “making other sense of the event and the narratives that congregate around it”. As Shelly Rambo puts it, “Engagement with ghosts transforms our present, not by a traumatic repetition of the past but by confronting us with the limitations of the ways we structure reality”. Figuring ruptures, haunting points to “something [that] remains to be seen”. In ghost stories, therefore, melancholia is underpinned with political agency: they express a “refusal to be cured” that has transformative potential.



Through the lens of haunting and mourning, we begin to see that Mpane's statue can tell a more complex story of postcolonial Africa that disrupts the memory politics of the cure. In such a ghostly reading, the statue does reclaim Africa for black bodies. It is shaped in form of the African continent that bears the facial features of a black person – and yet, its colour is white. Black agency does not replace the white invasion of the continent, but is at work within it, telling a story about resilience in which chronologies of death and life appear convoluted. Mpane's statue presents us with a wounded resurrection body that is (irredeemably?) marked by the lethal violence of empire, and yet reinterprets signs of death for the purpose of life: a hesitant plant is sprouting from what looks like a barren landmass that has been systematically mined by the violent mapping of the colonial scramble for Africa. This sign of new life is tied to a colonial history: it mirrors the crown of palms that surrounds the portrait of Leopold II which has dominated the Rotunda before the renovation. What was a spectacle of colonial sovereignty becomes a spectral presence of postcolonial living-on in the wake of lethal violence. The statue represents new life not by relegating colonial wounds to the past, but by reappropriating the tools of colonial subjugation. In this ghostly reading, the statue disrupts the teleological temporality of healing by “making *other* sense of the event”. Not by concealing the suppressed shares of colonial death, but by ad/dressing the festering wounds on a traumatized body, truly transformed life can, hesitantly, take place.

#### Towards a spectral theology of mission

Our visit to the Afrika Museum in Tervuren thus allows us to differentiate between two historiographical paradigms in the wake of empire. Both include concepts of decolonization in soteriological terms and thus bring together narratives of post/colonial history with imaginations of salvation, albeit in different ways. The historiography of the cure unfolds within a teleological framework that pictures decolonization by subjecting the violent legacies of colonialism to a linear arch of redemption. Here, salvation can only be imagined as an absence of wounds; redemption appears as an absolution from a history of colonial violence that continues to privilege the white gaze. Haunting, in contrast, engages in a hermeneutics of wounds that performs transformation by rupturing established imaginations of post/colonial history. Salvation emerges – by way of ruptures that point to fleeting absences and hopeful yearnings – in the midst of the legacies of violent histories. It does not envision redemption from suffering, but offers resources for conceptualizing redemption in the midst of suffering. Haunting, therefore, may provide a framework for crafting theological

soteriologies that do not rely on teleological imaginations, and it could thus open trajectories for developing a fully fledged theological response to the complex legacies of mission in a wounded world.

Studying the gospel of John with the tools of postcolonial trauma studies, Benny Liew gives an example of such a re-reading of Christian soteriological concepts through the lens of spectrality. He argues that in John's narration of the passion, the cross simultaneously appears as a spectacle of Roman imperial power that demonstrates its sovereignty by disposing of killable people, *and* a spectre of death that hauntingly reveals that Pax Romana builds on lethal violence. Jesus died as an instrument for the demonstration of colonial sovereignty, and his traumatized resurrection body continues to tell a story about the might of his masters. The wounds that remain on Jesus' resurrection body, therefore, present us, first and foremost, with a spectacle of imperial power. Yet, at the very same time, these wounds have the power to destabilize the hegemonic narrative of the empire about itself. They expose the unacknowledged shares of death on which it rests and make the spectacle of colonial power also a spectre of death. A spectral hermeneutics of critical mourning can thus reveal a moment of undecidability in the significance of the cross which then can pave the way for re/signing death and life. A scrutiny of wounds develops a narrative in the mode of yearning which believes that "something remains to be seen" beyond the spectacular regime of colonialism, that relies on suppressing the shares of death on which it is built. Resurrection, in these haunting relectures, is therefore not a self-evident triumph of life over death. Instead, it emerges from such semantic undecidabilities and is confirmed only through a hermeneutics of wounds and tears. In the gospel of John, too, it is a "refusal to be cured" that carries seeds for salvation: Thomas has to touch gaping wounds in order to believe. It is through Mary's mourning at the empty tomb that a vision for new life emerges. A relecture of cross and resurrection as a story of haunting and mourning thus breaks with a triumphant narrative from death to life, but does open our eyes to life that emerges from the midst of suffering that remains. It turns to wounds and tears as the organizing principles of Christian soteriology and wrests hope for resurrection from the lethal logic of colonial politics by assigning a different significance to the spectacle of political death. In a haunting relecture that resists the powerful temptations of the cure, Jesus' wounded resurrection body epitomizes a convoluted chronology of death and life that reveals afterlife in the mode of mourning and yearning.

Liew's postcolonial interpretation of John's passion thus demonstrates that spectrality offers a fruitful lens to re-imagine central soteriological concepts of the Christian tradition

beyond a teleological framework. When we tell it as a ghost story, cross and resurrection disrupt a triumphalist teleology from death to life and instead trace signs of living-on in the midst of lethal histories of colonial oppression. Through the lens of haunting, cross and resurrection can become a theological resource to address the complex legacy of mission in our contemporary world that continues to bear the marks of global colonial histories.

Yet, Liew's spectral re-reading also points to the reconfigurations that such a ghostly practice of theology entails. Ghost stories reveal the *irresolvable* ambiguity of salvation. In ghost stories, salvation takes places as an interpretation of irreducibly ambiguous events and narratives. Ghosts emerge by way of a critical practice of interpretation that makes "other sense of the event and the narratives that congregate around it". Ghost stories, therefore, emerge from and remain inextricably entangled into the contingencies of (salvation) history. Thinking of revelation as a ghostly activity thus deprives us of the idea that there is an absolute origin to Christian tradition, and it makes it impossible to think of Christian tradition as a progressive unfolding towards ever greater truth. Instead, it appears dispersed and dependent upon the worlds from which it emerges and cannot be subjected to the self-evidence of teleological imaginations of salvation history.

But which other organizing frameworks are there to give a theological account of mission history?

In search for alternatives, theology can follow the lead of other disciplines that have abandoned teleological frameworks in the narration of mission history, and instead turn to mission archives as a resource for patterning missionary historiography, with a particular focus on how mission archives can be studied as configurations of power and knowledge that privilege some narratives over others. Achille Mbembe offers resources to understand, in more detail, these ambivalent knowledges in the mission archives, and to use them as a starting point for conceptualizing a spectral theology of mission. Mbembe's reading of the archives dovetails with his critique of black reason, and is tied to his conceptualization of blackness as haunting. In his "The Critique of Black Reason", Mbembe develops a profoundly ambivalent notion of black reason. On the one hand, he argues that the invention of blackness is the unacknowledged core of modernity. Black reason has sponsored the commodification of human bodies by distributing life and death along neo/colonial lines of racialized capitalism. And yet, in the very midst of racialized capitalism, Mbembe also traces black responses to the abjection of being human that can be reconstructed from the survival strategies of the enslaved. Ghosts take a central place in his articulation of such recalcitrant

Blackness, which, for Mbembe, is a name for “specular experiences ... [that] are, essentially, extreme forms of human life ... in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer upon them the status of living dead (ghosts).” Existing under the constant threat of annihilation, the ghost has no self-mastery, but is forced into a continuous re-making of the self through the profoundly ambiguous “work for life” that “consists in capturing death and exchanging it for something else.” Mbembe’s hauntology offers a lens for imagining Black life as a constant re-imagination in which the reparation of world and self through practices of black living-on do not overcome a history of racialization, but are, precariously, at work within it. For Mbembe, this precarious work for life through death follows a compositional logic that is “about the capacity to assemble and to compose, including things that at first do not appear to be compatible.”

In the *Critique of Black Reason*, Mbembe aims to analytically disentangle these interwoven practices oppression and resistance. Pursuing this critique as archival work, he points out that “the archive one is dealing with is, to a large extent, an incomplete archive” that requires a specific historiographical approach: “For an incomplete archive to speak with the fullness of a voice, a supplement is necessary.” Crucially, this supplement does not reverse annihilation but “has to be created... out of the debris of information, on the very site of the ruins.” “The voice [of the historian working in the archives therefore] shifts because it must now confront something not so much unique as soiled.” Mbembe’s description of his work in the archives of black reason bears methodological resemblance to the critical work in the mission archives. Yet, while critical mission studies abstain from normative approaches, Mbembe, in contrast, argues that a “mere historical account is not enough.” Rather, his critical approach has soteriological undertones that express hope for transformation. For him, writing a history of ghosts from the debris in the archives of death is a practice of resurrection: “Indeed, [such writing] is to ... mourn what is lost in a way that does not dwell in the trauma [but] put[s] together ... the debris ... and tr[ies] ... to return to life the harvest of bones that have been subjected to the forces of dessication [sic], to render the world habitable for all, again.”

Mbembe’s suggestions for reading the archives explicates the methodological approaches that propelled my ghostly readings of Mpane’s statue and John’s narrative of cross and resurrection above. Echoing Ezekiel’s prophecy of resurrection, it allows to elucidate the hermeneutical strategies with which Mpane and Liew speak to life in the aftermath of colonial violence. They compose texts in which “traces of the past live on, but

without classical references”, and thus work with the debris of colonial death in order to give a vision of life in which “death is the currency of life”. Read as ghostly supplements that rise from the remnants of colonial violence, both Mpane’s ‘Congo – New Breath’, and the gospel of resurrection become part of the spectral archive of survival in the midst of a wounded world.

Such work in the incomplete archives of ghostly desire for redemption translates into building blocks for a spectral theology of mission. Such a missiology does not consolidate hope for salvation into an arch of redemption, but traces signs of salvific presence that are revealed as supplements in the ghostly modes of mourning and yearning. These spectres of colonial death transcend the established order of things, not by overcoming its arrangements of power and knowledge, but by being critically at work within them. They have thus revelatory effects that blur the boundaries between the religious and the secular. In the mode of spectrality, transcendence is no longer the realm of the purely theological, but bleeds from the struggles that wrestle life from death. In search for signs of God’s salutary presence, theologians therefore join historians in their work in the archives of death, tracing ghostly practices of living-on as signs and instruments of redemption. For them, the spectral work for life under the conditions of death becomes a sacrament of divine salvation.

In the mode of spectrality, therefore, theology is practiced as *missio ad vulnera*. Yet, sent into a world of wounds, the witnesses for God’s promise of salvation have no sovereign proclamation of a certain cure. In contrast to teleologically oriented missiologies, a spectral mission does not speak from a position of epistemic privilege. Rather, it proceeds by ways of re/membering that discern signs of redemption from the ghostly work for life in the midst of death. Proceeding by the logics of composition, it is not oriented towards closure and fulfilment. Rather, it remains indebted to spectral practices of living-on from which it borrows the signs to speak to the hope for resurrection by way of fleeting absences, in hopeful yearning. A spectral theology thus does not ground hope for redemption in retrotopian or utopian warrants, but traces how it rises from the midst of the messiness of violent histories. Through the lens of spectrality, salvation history is not the proprium of a purely theological discourse, but remains dependent upon the worlds from which it emerges. No longer here a history of wounds, there a history of salvation. A spectral theology thus foregoes the self-evidence with which teleological missiologies proclaim the promise of redemption – and therefore, it can speak to the inextricable entanglement of theological knowledge production

into hegemonic discourses and can account for deep-running complicities of theology with empire.