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*CONTEMPORARY MISSIONS IN THE WAKE  
OF 500 YEARS OF COLONIALISM: 1492-1992*



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*"The end of an Age of Mission — or the transition to a new meaning of mission — makes it necessary for us to reexamine history, . . ."*

## Contemporary Missions in the Wake of Colonialism

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ENRIQUE DUSSELL

In a few years' time Christianity will reach the end of its second millennium, 2000 years of life in world history. This is a very good time to attempt a theological and historical reflection of the history of missions during these twenty centuries and to reflect on the meaning of these missions in the forthcoming millennium.

I believe that the history of Christianity could be divided into three great eras without distorting events too much. *The first era* lasts until the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century with the Arab-Islamic expansion, and sees the slow missionary expansion of Christianity throughout the whole Roman empire and even eastward beyond its borders (the Persian empire and the whole of Asia) and toward the south (in Africa of the Upper Nile, with Coptic Christendom). *The second great era* (from the seventh century to the end of the fifteenth century), finds Christendom besieged by the Islamic world, a situation which ended with the fall of Constantinople (1452) and with the siege of Vienna. While the first era is somewhat shorter than one millennium, the second one lasts almost one millennium, half of the historical existence of Christianity. Christianity was reduced to being the religion of a region on the periphery, dependent on the Islamic world.

*The third era* from the end of the fifteenth century to the end of 1945 (approximately another half millennium, only a quarter of the life of Christianity) sees the expansion of our universal religion worldwide for the first time. It was only from 1492 onward that Christianity became empirically present in all the world. The earlier ecumenicity was merely symbolic; the so-called ecumenical councils were only Roman or European ones.

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In view of the third millennium and *the fourth era* in the history of missions it is necessary to abandon the traditional provincial conception which projects a universality on the Greek or Roman world which begins only in the 16th century. Very recently it changed its meaning by reason of two phenomena: the end of the colonial world in the modern sense of the word, and the crisis of the capitalistic world owing to the appearance of more than one third of humanity, if we take China into consideration, under the socialist system.

Let us make a quick historical and theological reflection on this development of Christianity in the history of the world as the history of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*) in order to be able to draw a few conclusions about the future.

## THE PLACE OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY IN WORLD HISTORY

Both secular and church histories in the central countries (the old or present colonial metropolises) trace direction more or less from the east towards the west, as introduced by Hegel in his *Lessons of World History*. Christianity takes the place of an axis or center as a result of the previous world history. The conception is as follows:

### Scheme 1

#### THE MOVEMENT OF WORLD HISTORY FROM THE EAST TOWARD THE WEST

Europe ← Middle Ages ← Romans ← Greeks ← Persians ← India ← China
---

This movement does not mean that life first appeared in the east and everything else was just a prolongation of that. Quite the contrary: freedom or the Spirit finds itself in its minimum expression in the east, in the state of possibility as in childhood, and continues to develop until it reaches its culmination and complete realization in modern Europe which, for Hegel, is the Germany of his time or imperial England.

Today in the United States people have the same picture of history, the only variation being that this country now is the culmination of Europe itself, which is considered to be old, pre-modern, or something that the great American country has fully realized with a new spirit. This interpretation of world history is consistently taught at all levels, from primary to university level.

What really has been done is to project into the past the centrality which only Europe achieved, for the first time thanks to Portugal and Spain in the sixteenth century, in the past 500 years. For Christianity, these last five centuries are only the fourth part of its history, and the other fifteen centuries (three-quarters of its existence) were really passed in a world on the periphery, and two-thirds of its time (almost ten centuries) dependent on the Islamic world, which came from Morocco and reached the Philippines, as we will see.

What concept of world history would allow us to discover the true place of Christianity in connection with all the existing cultures during its history? What is the place of Europe (the center from the sixteenth century on) in this history?

I would like to discuss this question in three parts, simplifying it, understanding that every pedagogical simplification has to be erroneous in many aspects because of its abstract nature.

1.1 *The movement of the neolithic revolution towards the east.* — Contrary to the ideological projection of Hegel (which is also a theological one because it anticipates falsifying the history of the centrality of Christianity and Europe), the Neolithic Age moves towards the east—without therefore wishing to indicate the direct relation which in many cases neither existed nor could exist. We are trying to regain a place in world history for Africa, Asia and Latin America, before the wrongly named fifteenth century discoveries. These were discoveries only for Europe, not for those discovered!

For example, Alfred Weber in *World Histories of Culture* shows Africa and the real Asia as assumptions of the Greco-Roman world and leaves out Latin America with only a contextual reference to Christopher Columbus. I repeat, Africa, Asia and Latin America are actually left out of this world history. This omission of history is not accurate; it is an interpretive and theological misstatement. They are pagans (and often in the sixteenth century, and for many with a racist mind today, non-human) who have to be converted by the missions. The fact that they were not Christians almost identified them as non-human beings for the European and North American mind. Since they were not human, or just partly human (like children, like savages, ignorant, uncivilized, etc.) their histories were only natural histories, quasi-histories, hidden in the darkness of irrationality, infernal cults, witchcraft, idolatries, bestial customs, etc. The only history was that which permitted the history of Europe to appear over against the darkness of non-history, and together with it, the history of Christianity.

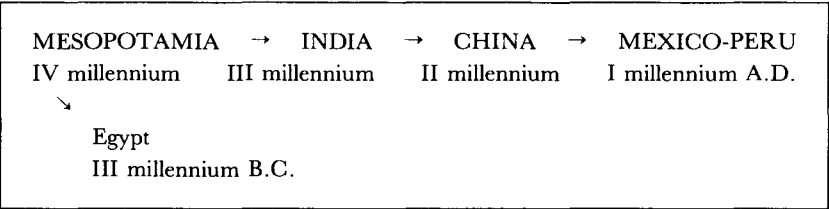
The first major confederations of cities of the Neolithic Age, important and existing without interruption, appear in the south of Mesopotamia or surrounding regions as early as in the fourth millennium B.C. In the third millennium the confederation of cities in the Nile emerges in Egypt, whose first dynasties in the south, of the black race, meant the appearance of an authentic black African culture at a time when the desertification of the Sahara drove the Bantus to begin their great migration toward the south. In Africa the great cultures of the savannah, south of the Sahara, are a crucial moment for understanding the European expansion from the fifteenth century on. In other words, this was the place where the history of the African peoples would develop, and not wait for David Livingstone or H.M. Stanley at the end of the nineteenth century to begin to present the African cultures as a context of the violent colonial expansion of Europe on this continent.

In this third millennium B.C., Europe was absorbed in the distant dream of the Paleolithic Age. Toward the east (not toward the west as indicated by the ideological and theological Hegelian and European interpretations) the Neolithic Age reached the Indus valley with its confederations of cities up to the Punjab of present day India. The first Chinese dynasties must also be situated in the middle of the second millennium B.C. — always toward the east and not towards the west. These fundamental centers and their influence up to the east of India and the south of China provide the basis for building up the whole history of Asia which does not look to the west in order to wait for its happy and complete realization in any way.

In the first millennium A.D., the classical cultures of Tuotihuacan in Mexico or of Tiahuanaco in present-day Bolivia emerge — always toward the east. Urban cultures cover the mountainous regions from the north of Mexico down to the south of Santiago de Chile (Aztecs, Mayas, Chibchas, and Incas, to mention but the great cultural centers or empires). From there on we have to describe the history of the American human being, the Indians (mistaken identity due to the idea that they had discovered Asian India). The urban cultures were of high social complexity, the culture of planters, organized into clans and villages; nomads, hunters and fishers of the north (the present day United States) and south (the so-called Southern Cone of Latin America). This is the place Latin America had before the invasion (not the discovery) of America by Columbus. It is the most eastern part of Asia (all the races and cultures in their original elements, etc., come from Asia, from the Pacific Ocean). Latin America is the Far East of the east.

Scheme 2

THE MOVEMENT OF WORLD HISTORY TOWARD THE EAST



(Explanation: the arrows do not indicate a direct influence in any case.)

1.2 *The Non-Centrality of the Roman World.* — The Indo-European invasions from the beginning of the third millennium onwards coming from the north (from north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea) descended toward the present day Turkey, Persia, India and even toward China in the east, and toward Greece, Palestine, Egypt, and even Italy and Europe up to the Scandinavian countries in the West. Warriors of iron and horses founded the



great empires of the Hittites and the Persians, in the battles described in the Brahmin Rig-Veda, up to the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.

It must not be forgotten that by way of successive invasions the Semites organized other kingdoms: the Accadian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Phoenician, etc., even though they did not come from the Arabian desert nor proceed from there originally.

Nevertheless, if we look at world history at the moment when the Mediterranean region has been unified by the Romans, we find that the Persian empire coexisted with them. To the north of both of them there were the great kingdoms of the steppes, which reach China (north of the Himalayas) through Iran or Turkey, toward the south to India, with its numerous kingdoms which already practice the Hindu religion, but which also had widespread Buddhism that already had departed from Southeast Asia. At the time of the Roman empire, the Chinese empire had about the same population as the Roman, about thirty million inhabitants. This population today would fit three times in Mexico, five times in Brazil, and more than twenty times in present day India. Apart from this we must not forget the numerous cultures in Africa and the existence of a larger number of kingdoms and cultures in Latin America before the Spaniards arrived. And the Eskimos (the last ones to pass from Asia towards America) slowly proceeded to their destination, passing through Siberia. If we were to draw a map of the Roman empire at the beginning of the Christian era we would see that it was an insignificant part of world history in terms of territorial extension and the percentage of world population—I repeat, the theological and ideological centrality projected on the empire in which Christianity was born is based on an illusion or distortion stemming from the triumph of colonial, mercantile, industrial and capitalistic Europe. From the fifteenth century on, Europe attached a disproportionate importance to its own history over the history of other peoples.

This distortion could seem innocent or without any consequences, but this is not the case. The history of modern missions showed its dangerous aspect from the fifteenth century onward, and to a certain extent, the end of the second millennium must give us the essential clarity about these interpretive distortions of the past because they are still projected in the present and toward the future. The mother churches (Roman, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, etc.) regard this centrality as their essential constitutive moment of the foundation of the mission. The end of an Age of Missions—or the transition to a new meaning of mission—makes it necessary for us to reexamine history, at least the pretended centrality of Graeco-Roman culture in world history. A future multi-centered Christianity demands more than just a few secondary corrections of our moral behavior and assumptions. It demands a profound revision of the whole Christian experience, reaching to its foundation. All history which imposes itself on the mind with the appearance of the natural, of what has always been like this, of what God wanted, must be re-evaluated.

## THE FIRST HALF MILLENNIUM<sup>1</sup>

The first quarter of the Christian experience (a little over half a millennium), has two moments of expansion, mainly over the Roman empire. The first and most exemplary one, the Church of the Poor, was missionary through the witness of martyrdom and the support of the oppressed, the enslaved, the marginalized, until the beginning of the fourth century. The second one is the more ambiguous one which in many ways perpetuates itself until today: the alliance with the empire, "Christendom," as Kierkegaard called it, in opposition to Hegel; the confusion and even identity with the state, the Roman, Hellenistic, and later the European state. From the freedom granted by Constantine to the hegemony of the time of Theodosius to the crowning of emperors in Rome with Charlemagne, this was what occurred. In Christendom there is no mission; the conversion of the king is that of his people and the heretic loses his civil rights. In Christendom there is obligatory cultural Christianity.

Criticized by the monastic movement in east and west, Christendom covered the whole Roman empire and turned it into a Christian one. It is the splendor of the first history of Christianity and of the evangelization of culture, of the people of the Graeco-Roman world. This was the most exemplary mission in the history of missions, and the only true mission because it later imposed the model of Christianity which had originated in Graeco-Roman Christendom on all the other missionized peoples. The only culture that had the right to be evangelized from within and to leave the signs of its existence in Christianity itself (as, for example, in the celebration of Christmas, pagan by origin, in the structure of the liturgy, the customs, and basic expressions of later Christianity) was the Mediterranean Graeco-Roman culture. It alone was normative. All the others, even the German ones from the north of Europe, received a Christendom which had already been constituted and which could not be as evangelizing and flexible as the Christianity of the first three centuries. This concept is fundamental to understanding the meaning of mission at the end of the second millennium.

Christianity has had one single experience of radical transformation of a culture which it adopted into its most profound tradition. To demonstrate: among the Incas of Peru, the birth of the sun (the shortest day of the year) was celebrated in the great temple of Cuzco on the 21st of June. But they were forced to accept Christmas (the birth of the sun in the Roman empire) as a constitutive celebration of the fundamentals of the faith on the 24th of December, the middle of the summer, on the longest day of the year. This is one example of how the Graeco-Roman culture penetrated everything so deeply that it identified itself with the fundamentals of Christianity. Will it be possible in the third millennium (with a view to mission in the living cultures of Africa and Asia and Latin America) to restore what can be restored from such depths?

## **THE BESIEGED, PERIPHERAL, AND DEPENDENT CHRISTENDOM**

The Prophet Muhammad was born in 560 A.D.; the Frankish King Clovis was baptized on Christmas in 499 A.D. When the Arab/Islamic world began to expand and occupy the whole north of Christian Africa, up to Turkey (which slowly became Islamicized before the fifteenth century, starting out from the south of France and Spain), the Byzantine and Roman Christianities were besieged, isolated, ignored, and peripheral in world history. As I said before, during almost one millennium (half the history of Christianity) Christendom was only open to the north of the Mediterranean, the south being in the hands of the Arabs. It grew toward the north of the continent, toward the great Moravia, toward what would later be Russia, whose king would be baptized in 988 A.D., then onwards to Germany and Scandinavia. But let us remember that while Christianity consolidated itself in continental Europe, another phenomenon with many more universal characteristics arose behind its back.

In 623 Muhammad reconquered Mecca. Abu-Bakr, the first caliph, began the glorious conquests. Jerusalem was occupied in 638 A.D. The Persian empire fell in 642. In 698 Carthage was defeated. In 711 Spain was occupied, and the Muslims were defeated by the Franks in Poitiers only in 732. The Mongols took Kiev in 1237 and Silesia in 1241. The Turks took Baghdad in 1055, Armenia in 1072, Ankara in 1403, and Constantinople on May 29, 1453. A wall surrounded Christendom, which was isolated, small, and peripheral in world history.

As we said, Clovis was baptized in 499, Richard, King of the Visigoths, in 589, and Saint Boniface (675-755) carried out the mission among the Germans east of the Rhine and from there toward the Scandinavian countries continuing until the eleventh century.

Christendom attempted to break the blockade of the Islamic peoples with the crusades, trying to occupy the center of the eastern Mediterranean (where all the caravans from the north came together, from the Chinese empire and India and the traders of the Sea of the Arabs (the present day Indian Ocean). But the Arab world was strong enough to resist this European attempt to thwart religious, political, economic and military expansion. And things stayed the way they had been until the end of the fifteenth century because the missions among the Muslims failed. One can reflect that this mission will continue to fail in the future unless the identification of Christianity with the Mediterranean, European or western culture is overcome.

Almost a thousand years, almost half of the history in a feudalized world, enclosed within itself, pretending to be ecumenical but in reality being provincial. Only the Islamic world possessed a true universality: from Morocco to Libya, Egypt, the Middle East to Baghdad, Teheran, the Delhi of the Moghul empire, the Muslim traders that dominated the Straits of Malacca, through Indochina to the southern part of the Philippines where



Mindanao started to convert to Islam from at least the twelfth century onward. So the Spanish found them in the sixteenth century. Muslim universality contrasts to dependent Christian regionalism. And on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the China Sea on the east, unknown, the Aztec, Mayan, Chibcha and Inca cultures of the large Asian continent of the Far East was wrongly named America (since Americo Vesputio was an Italian, again a European, not an American). Once again the new continent was given a foreign name, as if to connote its alienation, its colonial status, its constitutive negation of the singular, the old, the Caribbean, Tupi-Guaranic, Aztec, Inca (reality).

### THE LAST HALF-MILLENNIUM

The history of Christianity is four half-millennia long. Only in the last half-millennium, the fourth part of its history, has Christianity suddenly attained an unexpected centrality in world history.

In just one century the whole situation changed. According to central European histories of the church, the most significant events of the sixteenth century were the Reformation and the Tridentine Counter-Reformation. Viewed within world history and from the standpoint of the periphery already explained, both these events were domestic European events. Neither would radically alter world history; that would happen only as a result of the Portuguese-Spanish expansion and the Russian expansion in the north. The effect of this expansion would be no less than the decloistering of Europe, the exploration of the Atlantic Ocean, the creation of the first world market with worldwide competition and the transition, therefore, from a provincial or regional Christianity which was merely European and only on the periphery of the Arab world, to an empirically and objectively internationalized Christianity appearing on the scene for the first time in history. Through Portugal and Spain in the sixteenth century, Christianity became the first world religion to embrace Eurasia, Africa and America.

The Arab world, with its Euro-Asiatic and North African globality, was now surrounded by and interpreted within a really new planetary and ecumenical order. At Lepanto in 1571 A.D. the Turks fell into decline, but this was due to the start of this process: the Mediterranean centrality was coming to an end and the Atlantic of the Indies (both West and East) was taking its place.

4.1 *First evangelization cycle, under Portuguese and Spanish mercantile capitalism, beginning in 1492.* — As already indicated, the invulnerability of the Arab world via the eastern Mediterranean (the Holy Land of the Crusades) permitted Europe to expand only through those fringes which were most inhospitable and difficult for the Arabs and Turks. In the north, the Russians hunted for animal skins and in doing so moved into the interior of the frozen tundra, reaching the Pacific Ocean at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They

thus immobilized the movement of the peoples who, for millennia, had advanced from the Gobi and Siberia and invaded the richest regions of the south and west, from China to Europe. The Russian expansion halted the emigration of the Asiatic peoples of the steppes and turned Euro-Asiatic history definitely into a sedentary history. But the expansion from the extreme West of Europe would be still more important. The previous evangelizing movements were achieved by direct continental community action. If there was an intervention by kings, these were kings of the countries concerned, who had been converted without violence, by Christian monks, missionaries, women, etc. Christianity had not been imposed by or identified with violence. Arab expansion from the seventh century had been achieved by violence, by a holy war. The Christian attempt to reconquer the territory lost from the Arabs, though a genuine war of liberation, equated Christianization with violence of arms.

a. *Portugal.* — With the achievement of national unity in the twelfth century (Lisbon retaken in 1147 A.D. and Alfonso Enrique recognized as king in 1143 A.D.) and the decay of feudalism in the thirteenth century, it was possible for sea traffic to expand. Exploration and voyages of discovery were encouraged by Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), with the support of his father, Joao I. Ceuta. Africa was taken in 1415, El Ksar-es-Seghir in 1448, Arzila in 1505. The Madeiras were invaded in 1419, the Azores in 1431, the Cape Verde Islands in 1445. In 1482 the Portuguese reached the Congo, in 1487 they crossed the Cape of Good Hope. In 1498 Vasco da Gama reached the Sea of the Arabs (the Indian Ocean). Commercial ports were established in Ormuz (Persia) in 1515, in Colombo in 1518, in Diu (India) in 1536. From 1510 onward, Goa (India) was the center of Portuguese mercantile trading in Asia as far as Malacca, Insulandia (Indo-China), Macao and Japan. In the conquered areas dioceses were soon created, e.g., Cueta in 1421, Funachal in the Madeiras in 1514, Santiago of Cape Verde in 1532, Goa in India in 1534, Santo Tomas and Angra in 1533, Malacca and Cochin in 1557, Loanda (Angola) in 1596, Mellapur and Bombay in 1600. All this was in the Portuguese empire in Africa and Asia in the sixteenth century.

In the person of Alvaraz Cabral, the Portuguese had reached Brazil in 1500 (diocese of Bahia in 1551), thus bringing the South Atlantic, the Indian Ocean and the China Sea under a unified enterprise, a mercantile empire with American gold and silver as the world currency. Armed forces paved the way for the gospel and navigational skill and technology imposed its arguments on less developed peoples. But arms were not enough, and except for Brazil, Portugal was unable to organize large colonial territories.

b. *Spain.* — In 1344 Pope Clement VI conceded the Canary Islands to Spain, though it was not until 1479 that they finally passed into the Spanish king's control. On August 3rd 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail from Andalucia towards the unknown western sea with Japan, Malacca and India as his destina-

tion. On October 12th of the same year, the invasion of America began with the cultures of the Caribbean planters. From 1519 to 1550 the Aztec empire, the Mayan kingdoms of Yucatan and Guatemala, those of the Chibchas of Colombia, and the Inca empire were conquered and evangelized.

Thirty million people experienced the onslaught of arms, and simultaneously the gospel, when the exploitation of silver began in the mines of Zacatecas in 1546, of Potosí in 1545, and in many other places where silver and gold were to increase tenfold the currency in Europe and the Mediterranean world and bring impoverishment of the Arab world in its wake. Spain, however, was not enriched by the huge accumulation of money. It lost its wealth in purchases of goods from the Low Countries, and soon the Dutch would replace the Spaniards. From 1511, when the first dioceses were created in Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, to 1620, when the last dioceses of the founding period were created in Durango in the north of Mexico and in Buenos Aires, a colonial Christendom of nearly forty dioceses would be constructed, the first modern Christendom of the periphery. In fact, due to the decay of medieval Christendom, new modern Christendoms have been emerging in Europe (Catholic Portugal, Spain and France; English Anglican Christendom; Lutheran Danish, Swedish and Norwegian Christendoms; in Germany the historic division until the appearance of Prussian Lutheran Christendom centuries later, which would be criticized by the Hegelian left). A Christendom of the periphery, the Portuguese and Spanish Christendom of Brazil and Central America, emerged as a new phenomenon alongside the modern Christendoms of the center.

The feature which attracts our attention to this evangelizing cycle, therefore, is that only Latin America and the Philippines (conquered in 1565 with the creation of the first bishopric in Manila in 1581, dependent on the Archbishop of Mexico) are Christianized continentally, i.e., inclusive of all the population. In Africa and Asia, on the contrary, the evangelization was coastal, conducted exclusively from commercial ports. Why was this? Perhaps because military techniques in Africa and Asia, because of contacts with Europe and the Arabs, prevented total domination of the sort that was achieved with peoples such as those of America who were weaker in military technology. Only an advance in technology in general, and military technology in particular, together with economic and industrial growth, would permit Europe in the following centuries to achieve domination over (and therefore the evangelization of) Africa and certain parts of Asia, places which continue to resist evangelization by Christian regimes even today.

4.2 *Second evangelization cycle*: Christian expansion under central European capitalism (from the seventeenth century onward; English hegemony) Mercantilism acquires money only in order to purchase merchandise. Capitalism uses money to produce merchandise and, through trade, to acquire even more money, profit. It was Holland and then especially England



(and later France) which first expanded colonially—beginning with archaic mercantilist forms—and combined colonialism with capitalism. Thanks to technological advances, this was soon transformed from a manufacturing capitalism into an industrial capitalism, though this occurred only at the end of the eighteenth century. Like Portugal and Spain these three countries, Holland, England, and little by little France, dominated territories and peoples in the periphery world of North America and (for part of the time, South America), Africa and Asia. They established factories and ports wherever wealth was to be extracted—and even human beings could be sold, as in the case of African slavery—in an unequal and unjust trade which enabled them to accumulate large profits very quickly. In Antwerp, Amsterdam, London and Manchester, for example, large amounts of capital could be amassed and this, combined with revenue from land rental and low wages paid to workers in the manufacturing industries, made the emergence of the phenomenon of center capitalism possible. In this scheme of things, with this international division of labor, the role of the periphery was to sell tropical products or raw materials at a low price and to purchase industrial products at a high price.

a. *Holland.*—The emancipation of Holland from Spain, after having been a colony from 1610 A.D., made its rapid expansion possible. The Dutch East India Company had been founded in 1602, and like all Christendom models, its objects included both money-making and evangelization. In 1622 the Seminarium Indicum was founded in Leiden for the training of missionaries. Some years later, the Dutch West Indies Company was also formed under the initiative of William Usselinx, who would subsequently reach America. In 1605 the Dutch reached Australia, and in 1613 Indo-China (they took Solor that same year). In 1641 they reached Malacca and New Holland (later this would be known as New York). They fought with the Portuguese in Africa over Angola and occupied Brazil for many years (1630-1665 A.D.). In 1668 Ernest de Welz evangelized Dutch Guyana (now Surinam). Justus Heurnius published his *De Legatione Evangelica ad Indos Cappassende Admonito*, which presented a genuinely missionary theology. The Dutch Empire was, in fact, still a form of mercantilism. Immanuel Wallerstein has recently dealt with this theme in the second volume of his *The Modern World System* (New York 1980).

b. *England.*—The Anglo-Saxon crown had been in dispute with Spain over the control of the Caribbean since the sixteenth century, with pirates and corsairs acting under state instructions. By the decision of Cromwell, and as evidence of the western design of Divine Providence whereby the English were obliged to remove the papists from the Caribbean, Jamaica was occupied, after the failure to conquer Santo Domingo. From the island of Jamaica, the English would dominate the southern Caribbean, the center of sugar exploitation and black slavery. But the English also reached North America. The Pilgrim fathers arrived in 1620. In 1649 they founded the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, the first English missionary society. In 1698 the Society

for Promoting Christian Knowledge was organized, and in 1701 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which has a function similar to that of Rome's Propaganda Fide (1623), was founded. Taking the place of the Dutch, as in New England, the English occupied Madras in 1639, Bombay in 1661 and Calcutta in 1696. Anglicanism took up its place throughout the whole world periphery and from the eighteenth century would achieve hegemony in Africa and Asia by virtue of the economic and military power of the Commonwealth.

c. *France*. — France's overseas expansion began with the founding of Quebec by Champlain in 1608 and the organization of what came to be called New France (later Louisiana as far as New Orleans). Relying on pirates and corsairs, the French were also active in the Caribbean and were able in time to occupy Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana. In 1643 they also reached Reunion Island off Africa and also Madagascar. From the missionary standpoint, however, the *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris*, whose purpose was to train indigenous clergy (and so avoid the use of foreign missionaries), permitted their arrival in areas of Asia and the Middle East not occupied by the French, assisted by the work of the Society. In 1633 Vincent de Paul founded the *Congregation de la Mission* which also performed an important role. In 1664 the French East Indies Company was founded. As in the case of other metropolitan powers, its objectives were defined as profit and evangelization. In contrast to Spain, where it was the state which carried out the conquest, in the rest of these emerging centers it was the commercial companies which controlled colonization and thereby gave the latter a more pronounced economic character.

In contrast to Spain and Portugal, none of these missions are preponderantly mercantile processes, controlled by a Christendom and required to extract riches, treasure, and money from the periphery, i.e., forms of monetary capitalism. Rather, they are expressions of both Christendom (modern Christendom), where Christianity plays a legitimizing role, and of the churches (whether Catholic, Anglican, or Protestant). They are participating in a predominantly economic type of expansion rather than political as in the case of the Iberian powers. These missions of the second evangelizing cycle are more purely capitalist than the Portuguese-Spanish missions, even though the latter had pre-capitalist features at the Renaissance stage.

At this point we must emphasize the importance of this civilizing European impact for all the periphery cultures. European expansion, in fact, blocked and even destroyed the development of African and Asian social forms, caused them to decay, and softened them up for new types of colonialism dependent on raising industrial capitalism. Christianity was inseparably connected with the violence of the metropolitan European Christian powers. This explains the so-called martyrdoms of Christians in the periphery continents. Is it really possible to equate these martyrdoms of adherents of

a foreign religion, which was often without a conscience and which justified domination by European capitalism, with those of the first three centuries when Christians, in solidarity with the poor, struggled against the dominant power of the Roman Empire which oppressed slaves, the urban poor, the peasants and the colonies? In the early centuries, Christians were martyred for being with the poor; now they were martyred for being identified with the foreign forces of occupation. A Japanese text describes as follows the reason for the great persecution of the Christians in 1614: "The Kirishtan (Christian) groups have arrived in Japan, not only sending their merchant ships to trade merchandise but also to expand their perverse law, to destroy true doctrine, to enable them to take over the government of the country and our lands." (*Li Ki Confucian Book*, quoted in Delacroix's *Histoire Universelle des Missions Catholiques*, Vol. I, p. 308).

4.3 *Third Evangelization Cycle*: Restoration, Imperialism and Evangelization (since 1885). From the mid-18th century onward, the Industrial Revolution advanced especially in England. In 1765 Watt's model of the steam engine made it possible to base production on a universal motor whereby productivity and profit on capital investment was greatly increased. Industrialization gave Europe unqualified superiority over all the periphery cultures. Military technology now made possible the continental conquest of the kingdoms of India, Indo-China, China, etc., and of Africa, which had resisted the domination of modern Christendoms for three centuries. Whereas in contrast to the English and many other revolutions, the French revolution turned against the church and precipitated a crisis for this Christendom model, the secularization was in this case more apparent than real. In fact from the time of the Restoration in particular, both England and France supported the expansion of Christianity as an ideological legitimization of the military occupation of the periphery colonies. The metropolitan hegemony in the periphery was, in fact, guaranteed by Christianity. Missionaries could count not only on the respect of the metropolises but also on their military and economic support.

In the nineteenth century, especially after the Berlin Treaty (1884/85), coinciding with imperialist expansion in the technical sense (i.e., the stage of capitalism when the productive and financial capital is largely concentrated in the hands of the few, thus ending the phase of free market capitalism), Catholicism continued its missions via Catholic metropolises (Spain, Portugal, France, etc.) or through the Propaganda Fide after a crisis in the first part of the century. But this is, above all, the century of Protestant missions, due to the closer links between Protestantism and capitalism. The Baptist Missionary Society was founded in 1792, and the interdenominational London Missionary Society in 1795. In the United States, the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was launched in 1810 and the American Bible Society in 1816. Among the Lutherans, the *Evangelisch-Lutherische*



*Missionsgesellschaft* appeared, while on the Catholic side, the *Pere Blancs* (the White Fathers) would be founded by Cardinal Lavignerie, in 1868, for work in Africa especially.

From 1849 to 1856 a Protestant missionary named David Livingstone travelled through Africa, discovering it for the Europeans. H.M. Stanley would cross the continent in the other direction (1879-1881). On the initiative of the King of the Belgians the European powers met in Berlin from November 1884 to February 1885, and there without regard for the ethnic rights of the African peoples themselves, Africa was partitioned. In consequence, many peoples remained in the hands of two Christian European powers.

From 1885 onwards, identifying themselves with imperialist expansion, with its iron technology, its steam engine and its extraction of mineral and agricultural wealth from the colonial periphery, the missionaries set out on their third evangelizing cycle. Now, besides the gospel, their arguments included the prestige and proof of western technology, which greatly increased the dominant groups or classes in Africa, Asia and Latin America. What we now witness is the apogee of Protestant missions in the world. In the sixteenth century it had been Catholic.

Following the pioneer days of William Carey (b. England, 1761) as a missionary in India, the first regional conference of various denominational missionary bodies was held in Bombay in 1825. Another was held in Madras in 1830. The first missionary conference for the whole of India was held in Allahabad in 1872; for Japan the same year; for China in 1877; and for Mexico in 1888.

This process culminated in the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and in the Missionary Congress for Latin America held in Panama in 1916. The International Missionary Council was the fruit of a great missionary expansion, generally under Anglo-Saxon hegemony, Britain and the United States being the two industrial powers of that time.

Missions began to establish young churches in Africa and Asia, though both there and in Latin America such churches had existed since the sixteenth century and some even earlier. On the Catholic side, for example, Bishop Roche was consecrated as the first bishop of India in 1924; in 1926 six Chinese bishops (Chao, Sun, Theng, Chen, Hu and Ton) and one Japanese (Hayasaka) were consecrated; in 1933 three Chinese, one Indian and one Vietnamese; in 1937 one Korean and one Sri Lankan; Bishop Kiwanuka in Africa (Great Lakes); a Malagasy (I. Ramarosandratana) in 1939, and so on. The indigenization and nationalization of Catholicism had begun and the same process was even more rapid among Protestant churches.

Generally speaking, persecution was very rare, since the local elite was interested in adopting industrial civilization and the power of the landowning classes (more inclined to feudal, tributary, or pre-capitalist systems) began to

decline. Among the dominant classes, the national bourgeoisie, Christianity was thus accepted—or at least tolerated—and little by little religious liberty was permitted.

In the third evangelizing cycle, therefore, Christianity reached *de facto* the entire planet; it had become implanted in the whole world. In each nation there was a Christian community of some sort (ranging from insignificant minorities to clear majorities) which began to be aware of the need for the periphery churches to be emancipated from their mother churches.

4.4 *Fourth evangelization cycle:* The time of transnationalization of capitalism (North American hegemony). After the Second World War (1939-1945) important facts were discovered concerning the existence of new geopolitical powers, different from those of the past. From Yalta onwards, the United States replaced Britain, France, Holland, Germany, Italy, etc., in the colonial or neocolonial periphery. The hegemony of the United States in the capitalist world would have direct repercussions in the missionary field, and in the emergence of new churches. In fact, the United States did not plan to occupy the old colonies with its armies (except in Vietnam), or even with its administration. In this new stage of capitalism, productive capital (factories being also internationalized even in the periphery, the transnational corporation) and a new financial and banking system came into existence, one which does not require an English or French colonial presence. The United States was present in the entire periphery, replacing the old metropolises. This immediately produced political emancipation, the first emancipation, from the old metropolises (achieved in Latin America in the nineteenth century). The independent Republic of India under Nehru in 1947 in Asia and the emancipation of Ghana under Nkrumah in 1957 in Africa constitute the beginning of a process which in two decades would leave hardly any political colonies, in the old sense of the term, in Africa, Asia or Latin America, (although there are some colonies which still have to achieve emancipation).

The United States, whose colonial period ended in 1776 and whose national unity would be assured at the end of the Civil War in 1865, arrived in 1945 at the phase of its capitalistic world hegemony. What had been a missionary experiment among Indians (e.g., the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) or among black slaves (we should remember that a school for educating black leaders had been opened in Charlestown in 1745 under the Society's auspices) was now extended to missions on the frontiers. Founded in 1789, the Missionary Society of Connecticut would be concerned with these regions ("...promote Christian knowledge in the new settlements"). The Massachusetts Missionary Society had the same goals. In 1816 the Presbyterian General Assembly created the Board of Home Missions. In 1832 the American Baptist Home Missionary Society appeared on the scene. In 1820, the Episcopalians founded the Foreign Missionary Society. From 1846 onwards, missions would gradually be started in the territories annexed from Mexico (Texas, New

Mexico, Arizona, and California). From 1898 onwards, with the annexation of islands previously under Spanish control, the missionary societies would occupy Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines. Later on, their presence would slowly be felt in Latin America, in Asia, especially in China, and gradually in Africa as well. Only after 1945, however, would United States missionary influence be felt more intensely than before, not least its economic power. The presence of millennial sects and other fundamentalist groups would also increase, as well as pentecostal groups with their considerable growth among ordinary people.

In New Delhi in 1961, the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches merged into a single body and, as a result, a new concept of mission made its appearance in the Protestant world. Among Catholics, too, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) gave a fresh impetus to a "People of God" ecclesiology and encouraged the indigenization of churches.

The renewal of the churches, the advance of national and political emancipation, the affirmation of the cultural identity of the periphery, awareness of a new kind of neo-colonial exploitation at the economic level, and no longer at the political level as in the fifties (as with Nehru and Nkrumah)—these factors would combine to confront the missions with a final boundary and the periphery churches with an irreversible decision. This was the end of the era of missions and the beginning of the era of a church now located throughout the world. Each church now demands respect for its history, its culture, its way, its symbols. Each nation demands its independence, its liberation.

Even Propaganda Fidei changed its spirit and its name (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples). In Rome missionary prelatures, vicariates, and other such legal terms were replaced by dioceses. There are no longer any lands; there is only the territory of the churches. Mission is no longer concerned with a foreign situation; it is now the domestic evangelization which each church has to conduct with its own people.

## **TOWARDS THE THIRD MILLENNIUM**

Keeping in mind the third millennium of Christendom, let us take stock of what has recently happened in the missionized world, the Third World.

5.1 *Some significant events in the Third World.* a. First emancipation of the periphery: national and political church and emancipation.

If the process of modern colonialization began with Portugal in the fifteenth century, it ends with the political emancipation of the old colonies, a process I want to label a first emancipation, implying that there is a second emancipation still to come. The United States was the first colony to attain its independence (in 1776) while Belize in the Caribbean attained its independence only quite recently, in 1982, and there are colonies that still have not achieved their independence. This process has lasted more than two centuries. There were, nevertheless, two major periods of emancipation—from 1804 to 1821,

when most of the Latin American colonies, from Haiti to Brazil, achieved their independence from Spain and Portugal, and from 1950 to 1970, when most of Europe's colonies in Africa and Asia secured their political liberty. By political liberty we mean the freedom of nations to establish their own government and of their dominant classes to assume the exercise of political power. It does not mean they have achieved technological and economic emancipation. The latter is a development which has its center within the nation itself, and this is the goal of the second emancipation.

The mission churches, with greater or lesser autonomy, achieved their independence and acquired their own leadership along with the process of political emancipation. The emancipated government did not admit the existence of Christian churches which lack a national hierarchy, clergy, etc. The achievement of autonomy by the national church (which does not mean schism or institutional separation, but the nationalization of its leadership) demands an end to institutions born of compulsion or dependency as missions. It means the end of the missionary church. It is the birth of national churches.

Yet the elites in the churches united with the new elites in power (both in nineteenth century Latin America and in Africa and Asia later). National unity, the constitution of nation and state, demands certain coherence in the political apparatus which impedes all dissidence. Normally one of two situations is found: either submissive obedience to the young state on the part of the church or violent confrontation with various degrees of intensity. Such are the necessary risks of growth.

b. *The Socialist Phenomenon and the Crisis of Capitalism.* — This socialist phenomenon and the crisis of capitalism arose after Yalta (1945). With the decline of Europe, two states emerge as world powers: the United States and the Soviet Union, the former with hegemony in the capitalist world and the latter with hegemony in the socialist world. Economically dependent on the capitalist world, and therefore on the United States, the world of the periphery (known as the Third World in face of these two world powers) began its struggle for the second emancipation, in other words, for its economic, technological, cultural and ideological liberation. The confrontation with the United States and capitalism, which extracts wealth without distributing it among the poverty-stricken masses of peasants and workers in the periphery, engenders doubts as to the capacity of capitalism to develop these masses of the poor, to feed them, to provide for their basic needs: food, employment, education, housing, health. Socialism is presented as an alternative possibility for the periphery's vast poverty-stricken masses, in contrast to the crisis of world capitalism (the devaluation of raw material exports from the periphery, the increased cost of imported manufactured goods, the imposition of high interest loans because of corruption, and the enforced handover of all periphery exports to pay this interest on loans but not the capital itself, and even this is often not sufficient to cover the interest!). Problems confront the churches

of the world periphery on two fronts, therefore: they must struggle for their indigenous character (as in Africa and Asia) and, at the same time and in opposition to their mother churches, seek to create understanding of the needs of their poverty-stricken masses, exploited by a system which, located at the center, benefits those same mother churches which supposedly aid the periphery with their alms which amount to only quite an insignificant portion of what has been extracted from the periphery in the form of an unjust international system which imposes its domination by violence.

c. *Second Emancipation of the Periphery, Its Peoples and Its Economy, Churches and Liberation.* — As we have already said, awareness of the need for a second emancipation (the first covers those of Washington, Bolivar or San Martin, Lumumba or Nkrumah, or of Gandhi) does not have in mind the structuring of an independent national state, but rather the foundation of national independence at the technical, economic level, based on the development of the masses of the people. It does not mean merely the industrialization of minorities (which is what the transnational corporations can do). It means, rather, a development which impedes the flight of capital and the loss of human resources, which permits the personal accumulation of wealth, which uses a technology appropriate to the requirements of the majority of the people, which meets the basic needs of the majority of the population, before satisfying the sophisticated tastes of national elites of the country.

The second emancipation inevitably creates divisions within the churches. Some will side with the dominant elites, others with the poor, the dominated, the popular majorities. Young churches will thus confront new problems arising from a new phase of history of the periphery in the face of the crisis of the capitalist system and its incapacity to distribute the riches produced to great masses of the periphery, who wish to work but are unemployed, who wish to eat but have no money to buy food. The capitalist market system does not satisfy the hunger of the world's poor.

5.2 *From the "External" Mission to the "Internal" Evangelization.*<sup>2</sup> — In the last half-millennium the expansion of Christianity has come to an end. Nevertheless, the mission in Africa still remains to be finished and that in Asia has yet to grow. On the most populated continent (Asia) Christianity is a very minor presence, which does not even amount to one percent of the one billion inhabitants (one-fourth of present humanity) in China. In any case it is present enough by way of churches which are sufficiently well established in the national histories. The age of mission *towards the outside* has ended with the second millennium even though fundamentalist sects continue in the forward-pushing spirit.

The mission towards the outside was the mission that started out from a Christian country and went towards a pagan country where there was no church whatsoever. Evangelization had to begin so one could not count on any previous Christian experience. Since Christianity was identified with the European or

North American culture (where mother or metropolitan churches were), the missionaries unconsciously and unfortunately not only preached the gospel but also western civilization as a culture which was more human, more developed, almost as a precondition for the possibility to be Christians. In most cases this led to a situation where the basic cultural ideas from the peoples to be evangelized were not being learned. The *tabula rasa* was the method almost universally applied in the last half-millennium of preaching in the Third World. The fundamentalist sects continue to practice this method today.

The mission towards the interior begins, if one takes into account the existence of an already established Christianity with its own history, with acquired rights, with rooted customs and customs yet to develop, that is, with real autonomy. There should not be any mother churches or metropolitan churches but sister churches, showing solidarity, respecting the charisma of each and every one of them, those of Europe or the United States, of the socialist countries, the African, Asian or Latin American ones. Each cultural, economic or political world has its idiosyncrasy, and Christianity must now deepen its previous experience, develop its possibilities to evangelize in the light of the differences a multi-centered and ecumenical Christianity without hegemonies, with solidarity, creativity and attention to the regional, national, ethnic and social particularities.

In a certain way, the "go out and preach to *all the nations*" ended quantitatively or empirically in the second millennium of Christianity. But now a qualitative deepening is beginning. One has to go to the innermost center of each nation to convert it to the gospel. And this is where the mission *towards the interior* takes on its whole meaning. As Father Hurtado put it in Latin America in 1942, "Chile is Catholic?" or Father Gaudin in France, "France, country or mission?" Even in the so-called Christian countries mission is not only possible but necessary. The mission towards the interior, in England or Nigeria, in the United States or in Brazil, in the Soviet Union or in India, is unique. Even in India or China, it is the Christians of these countries by whom the mission in their own countries have to be realized and projected.

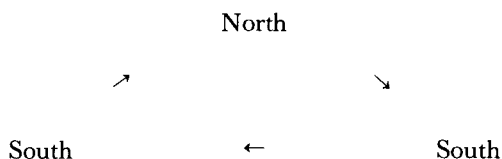
However, the spirit of these missions towards the interior must be different from the classical missionary spirit. It must be a spirit of respect for the national culture, of deepening indigenous traditions, of evangelization which observes the most authentic features. It might be that missionaries come from outside, or Christian missionaries might go from one nation to the other; but they will have to do it with this new spirit. The first action taken by the foreign missionary, from Nigeria in India, from Mexico in Japan, from England in the Philippines or from New Zealand in the United States, will be to put self at the service of the existing, established churches which are responsible for the mission towards the interior. Mission as a service means primarily being a disciple, an apprentice, listening like a disciple to the customs, the culture, the national, ethnic, popular Christian experience. The third millennium



demands a new type of humble, serving missionaries who are prepared for new aims.

But at the same time one can also observe a different movement, now from the south towards the north. During the last half-millennium (from the end of the fifteenth century to the twentieth century) the missionary movement went from the north towards the south (from Europe and the United States towards the Third World). We are now observing the flow of the gospel towards the north.

5.3 *The Ebb and Flow of the Gospel.* — The present missionary stage reached by Christianity is changing its meaning. We are at the end of the missionary age and at the beginning of the age of solidarity (*koinonia*: 2 Cor 9:13) among local churches. The centripetal north-south movements has changed into a circle; this encircles Christian life. Now Rome learns from Latin America, Geneva from Africa, New York from the Philippines or China. It is the age of new universality.



The circulation of the Spirit is not only from south to north and vice-versa. It is equally from south to south. In Latin America in 1984, the Missions department of CELAM, inspired by the missionary work of Jose Marins and his team, which founds Basic Communities all over the world (I remember meeting Marins by pure chance in Tokyo airport in 1981; I was coming from the Philippines and he was going to India, and we talked all night about “south-south” missions and our mutual responsibility) produced the document “*Ha Llegado la Hora*” (The Time Has Come), the time for the church of Latin America (and Africa and Asia) to state its missionary responsibilities towards the other continents of the Third World (south-south) and — why not? — towards the mother churches (south-north).

Christian solidarity means the co-responsibility that Christians exercise with regard to other local churches (and the churches of Rome and Geneva are themselves local in the unity of the same Spirit), co-responsibility in a liturgical, economic, ecclesial life in general, a circular co-responsibility of all for all. In this way we move from a model of dominant uniformity (bureaucratic Catholicism) to that of a pluriformity of the time of Vatican II and beyond that to a genuinely mutual model, in which the pluralism of uncaring co-existence is taken up into the co-responsible unity of universal solidarity of a church that is one, not through the rule of extrinsic and authoritarian obedience (imposed unity), but through the organic structuring of mutual co-

responsible solidarity (unity from the inner life of the Spirit of Jesus and the Father), and community (*koinonia*).

When this happens, the churches of “the center” open up to the witness of the poor churches in the periphery. They no longer seek to control their witness (as in the case of a missionary organization which sees itself being unable to publish certain works originating in the periphery because they are too advanced, too unsure in their teaching, etc.) This means the words of criticism and protest from the poor are controlled. This is the level on which we should seek to understand the recent confrontation between the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and the Theology of Liberation from the periphery. The center is protecting itself fearfully from what the poor on the periphery are achieving, and in this sense the fine and ancient Slavic church of Poland is just as much of the center—it feels challenged, humiliated, required to change—and it resists. It fails to see, however, that the Christianity of the “center” is the product of an ambiguous identification with Mediterranean and European culture, and later with the capitalist system. Both identifications are now prisons, straightjackets from which the church must break free if it is to open out to a new universality beyond western culture and capitalism as a historically necessary system. It is at this stage of conversion in order to go beyond both limits, the basic transcendentality of the gospel.

The 1980 Conference for World Mission and Evangelism in Melbourne<sup>3</sup> began with a theme, “The Good News to the Poor” (Sec. 1). I remember the first preparatory meeting when we were given the subject “The Kingdom of God and the Poor.”<sup>4</sup> God identified with the poor and the oppressed by sending his Son Jesus to live and serve as a Galilean speaking directly to the common people.<sup>5</sup> I also remember the time I spent working as a carpenter in Nazareth from 1959 to 1961. One day Billy Graham came to preach, in English, to the poor Christian Arab workers in the very town where Jesus lived. What a surprise to hear the terms in which this western missionary preached the gospel to those men and women! What sureness, pride, haughtiness even, this rich foreigner brought to his exposition of the gospel to those poor people from Jesus’ own country. Would it not have been more appropriate for this fundamentalist preacher to go down on his knees and ask those poor people to preach the gospel to him? For me, working ten hours a day beside them, unable to communicate as I was learning modern Hebrew and spoke no Arabic, he seemed the archetype of the missions of the Christian west: aggressive domination over other peoples. This is why the point was made at Melbourne that “the concept of mission being from sending to receiving countries has long been replaced by a mutuality in shared missions involving a two way flow between the churches in the industrialized countries and the so-called “Third World.” (IV,23)<sup>6</sup>

But there is more to it, as I have said before: solidarity (co-responsibility or mutuality) is practised first and foremost from a focus, from a nucleus, from

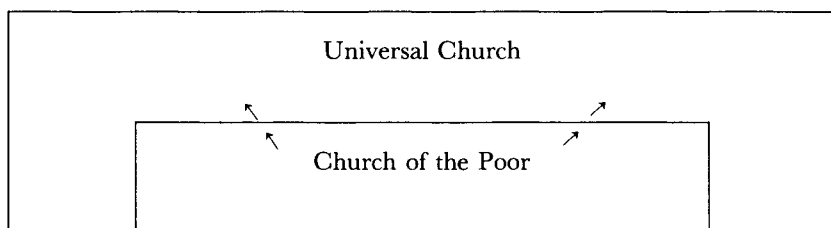
a community in which the gospel flows most clearly, most prophetically, most deeply, most spiritually. This evangelizing locus par excellence is the “Church of the Poor,” or those parts of the churches which are implanted among the objectively poor; among the poor nations, the poor classes, the shanty town dwellers, minorities, tribes, ethnic groups, the “wretched of the earth,” in Franz Fanon’s phrase.<sup>7</sup>

When a basic Christian community—let’s take that in Riobamba, where Msgr. Proana was bishop until recently—meets; when those poor people’s hands calloused from hard daily work, split by the cold of the Andes, prematurely aged by exploitation, when those hands take up the Bible, when those eyes dimmed by malnutrition and disease read the Bible, when those mouths whose lips are split by thirst, and by the boss’s blows, by the precariousness of their tenure, when those lips are open to explain the gospel; when those men and women, young people and children make up a community, all together sharing their goods with one another, breaking the eucharistic bread on the tables where they knead the dough to make their daily bread and prepare their beans for their meager meals, where mothers give birth to their children—who can these people be compared to? Is the basilica of St. Peter’s a more sublime place than the humble house of these Indians of the Andes?<sup>8</sup>

This Church of the Poor, a component part of the one church, but its most uncontaminated, most prophetic, most martyrial part is what today is becoming prophetically missionary and hope-bearingly evangelizing. This is the church that can work together, that can move the hearts of all young people, of all men and women of good will, in both the center and the periphery. Now the evangelized poor are becoming the evangelizers.

In the days to come, it is the Lord who speaks,  
I will pour out my spirit on all mankind.  
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,  
your young men shall see visions,  
your old men shall dream dreams.  
Even on my slaves, men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my spirit.

(Acts 2:17-18)



Gerald Anderson rightly wrote that at Melbourne “the focus was on the poor

in relation to the kingdom,"<sup>9</sup> and so the final message declared that the poor would mean in many cases a radical change in the institutional life of the missionary movement.<sup>10</sup> More still, this presence of the poor as Church in the churches (Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox) is a challenge to change not only in missionary institutes but in the mother churches themselves in their very life in the center. The churches of the center are defending themselves against this change. I remember the opposition of some members of the Roman Curia when meetings of the Third World Theologians were (and are) organized. A theology from the Third World? How can this be? Surely all theology is one universal. There is then opposition to the voice of the poor reaching not only the center but other churches on the periphery as well. There is mistrust, fear, doubt. In reality, what they are afraid of is losing identifications which tie the church to the past, to western culture, to capitalism, to power, to domination. It is a challenge of poverty, simplicity, hope. The "spirit" of John XXIII, who had experienced a poor and oppressed periphery in Turkey, teaches us to know how to learn from the other, the poor, the other local churches.

Obviously, for the poor to evangelize they must be listened to, must be seen as worthy bearers of the gospel, as subjects of the Kingdom, as Jesus himself in history among us. But for this to be possible, we have to leave our windows open. How would the Samaritan have seen the poor man who had been attacked and robbed if there had been a wall between him and the road? We have to knock down walls, or at least knock windows in them, if we are to see the poor. But we also need humility, poverty, openness—very difficult spiritual attitudes for the present world of the center to adopt.

Movements like "Sanctuary" in the United States, in which Christians of the center open themselves to poor immigrants to their country from the periphery, receiving them even though this means breaking the existing laws against aliens (particularly if they are poor and come from capitalist countries and so are no use for purposes of propaganda against socialist countries), enable North American Christians to be evangelized by the poor and to become in their turn an evangelizing church of the poor in the midst of their center churches.<sup>11</sup> Such conversions to justice are the fruit of evangelization, of the mission of the poor. They teach us how to live a more demanding, real, earthy, true gospel.

In this way the flow of the gospel has begun, just begun. In the near future as the crisis builds up, when the exploitation of the poor countries has become still more inhuman, when the conflict between capitalism and socialism has become irreversible, the Christian communities in the midst of the poor (poor countries, poor classes, poor groups of people, poor individuals) will become more and more exemplary, evangelizing. They will suffer in their flesh the oppression of the poor and the same sufferings as Jesus underwent. They will evangelize.

The missions of the third millennium of Christianity will therefore be missions towards the interior of each nation, each ethnic or social class; and missions where the spirit flows from the north towards the south, from the south towards the north, and from the south towards the south. It will be a mission with solidarity, an ecumenical, worldwide, multicentered mission, respecting the differences in a common spirit with neither center nor periphery, neither metropolises nor colonies, but with a unity, a new kind of unity.

I pray also for those who will believe in me  
 through their word,  
 that all may be one  
 as you, Father, are in me, and I in you;  
 I pray that they may be one in us,  
 that the world may believe that you sent me.  
 I have given them the glory you gave me  
 that they may be one, as we are one.

(John 17:20-22)

#### NOTES

1. For a more complete bibliography, reference should be made to: *Bibliotheca Missionum*, Robert Streit-Dindinger, ed., from Vol. I (Grundlegender und Allgemeiner Teil, Munster 1916) to Vol. XXVI (Freiburg 1968); A. Mulders, *Missionsgeschichte*, Regensburg, 1960; S. Delacroix, *Histoire Universelle des Missions Catholiques*, Vols. I-IV, Paris, 1956-1968; K. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vols. I-VIII, New York, 1935-1945; B. Deschamps, *Histoire Generale Comparee des Missions*, Paris, 1932; J. Gonzalez, *Historia de las Misiones*, Buenos Aires, 1970; E. Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation (1492-1979)*, tr. A. Neely, Eerdmans, 1981; "Introduction General" to *Historia General de la Iglesia en America Latina*, Vol. I(1), Salamanca 1983, pp. 299 ff.; J. H. Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions*, Chicago, 1971; S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, New York, 1980; H. Flachmeier, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Weltmission*, Giessen, 1963; C.P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, 4 volumes, London, 1948-1958; H. Perumal/E.R. Hambeye, *Christianity in India*, Alleppy, 1974; J. Hajjar, *Le Christianisme en Orient*, Beyrouth, 1971; A. Hastings, *A History of African Christianity (1950-1975)* Cambridge, 1978.

2. See O. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom*, New York, 1982; D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Approach, Meaning and Horizon of Evangelization*, Bangalore, 1973; *The Theology of Christian Mission*, ed. G. Anderson, New York, 1961; J.H. Bavnick, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, Philadelphia, 1960; A. Shorter, *Theology of Missions*, Indiana, 1972; O. Barres, *World Mission Windows*, New York, 1963; Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis*, New York, 1977; L. Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, Grand Rapids, 1978; D. Senior/C. Stuhlmuller, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission*, New York, 1983; J. Power, *Mission Theology Today*, New York, 1971; C. Couturier, *The Mission of the Church*, Baltimore, 1959.

3. *Witnessing to the Kingdom*, New York 1982, pp. 105 ff.

4. See *International Review of Mission*, Geneva, 1980, pp. 115-30. I recall that my name caused objections on the part of the Roman Congregation responsible for ecumenism because of our commitment with reference to the Puebla Conference. We had to defend the "poor" even against the position of some people in our mother church.

5. *Witnessing to the Kingdom*, cited in note 6, Sec. I.1. pp. 105-186.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

7. See my article "Populus Dei" in *Populus Pauperum: From Vatican II to Medellin and Puebla*, in *Concilium* 176 (6, 1984), pp. 35-44.

8. When I have been in Rome, I have always gone to St. Peter's catacomb and remembered in my prayers a little church by Lake Tiberias called "The Church of St. Peter," a church no more than twenty feet long. I think St. Peter would have felt close to this poor fishing community.

9. Introduction to *Witnessing...* the work cited in note 6, p. 2.

10. *Ibid.*

11. The Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church in the USA has initiated a praiseworthy programme in which ministers from the periphery (Latin America, Asia and Africa) preach to communities in the USA on the life of their poor churches (see *Like unto a Mustard Seed: the Struggle for Community*, Cincinatti 1985). But we need to go much further.