

TESI GREGORIANA

Serie Teologia

8

PHILIP GIBBS

**THE WORD
IN THE THIRD WORLD**

**Divine Revelation
in the Theology of Jean-Marc Éla,
Aloysius Pieris
and Gustavo Gutiérrez**

**Editrice
Pontificia
Università Gregoriana**

Roma 1996

TESI GREGORIANA

Serie Teologia

PHILIP GIBBS

THE WORD IN THE THIRD WORLD

Divine Revelation
in the Theology of Jean-Marc Éla,
Aloysius Pieris and Gustavo Gutiérrez

EDITRICE PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITÀ GREGORIANA
Roma 1996

Vidimus et approbamus ad normam Statutorum Universitatis

Romae, ex Pontificia Universitate Gregoriana
die 12 mensis decembris anni 1995

R.P. Prof. JACQUES DUPUIS, S.J.
R.P. Prof. JARED WICKS, S.J.

ISBN 88-7652-697-8

© Iura editionis et versionis reservantur

PRINTED IN ITALY

GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS
Piazza della Pilotta, 35 – 00187 Rome, Italy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely grateful to all who helped me during the years devoted to preparing this work. Firstly I want to acknowledge the cooperation of Jean-Marc Éla, Aloysius Pieris and Gustavo Gutiérrez along with their friends and colleagues for their hospitality and cooperation. They gave of their valuable time to respond to my many questions.

I thank Fr. Henry Barlage, the superior general of the Society of the Divine Word, who first suggested that I take up further studies. I acknowledge the companionship and support of all the members of the SVD community in Rome and also the encouragement of my SVD brothers in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere.

A sincere thanks to the Dean and professors at the Gregorian University, particularly my moderator Professor Jacques Dupuis who was always available with expert and wise advice. I also wish to thank Professor Jared Wicks, the second reader of this dissertation, for his suggestions for improvement, and I thank Professor Gerald O'Collins who presided at the doctoral defence.

I am grateful to John and Rita England and their colleagues in the Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia who first stimulated my thinking along the lines of this study.

I want to thank Virginia Fabella, Paul Knitter, William Burrows, John Fuellenbach, Carlos Pape, Gaspard Mudiso, Anthony Pernia, Josephine Mendis and others, who read and commented on various sections of the dissertation. Also a word of appreciation goes to those who helped with proof-reading, particularly Carolyn Nicosia, Jim Perry, David Giddings and Marguerite Crépin. The director and staff at SEDOS in Rome were very cooperative in making resources available. Romeo Ballan and the Misioneros Combonianos in Lima helped me in many ways.

I also want to thank those who were generous with assistance, particularly during the frequent computer crises, especially Franco Sensi, Gary Roche, Tom Ascherman, Fritz Förster, Wendelin Kaufmann, Paul

Raabe and Richard Gibbs. I thank Roland Meynet and Carlo Valentino for their cooperation in preparing the text for publication.

Finally a word of appreciation to my family in New Zealand, and friends in Italy and in other places too, who helped me maintain a certain equilibrium through it all.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Object of This Study

The Christian faith is based on the self-communication of God in history. For centuries people have studied and prayed over the content of the Word of God, but reflection on the idea of revelation itself is a more recent concern. Revelation is now recognised as one of the fundamental concepts for Christian theology¹. Thus the value of theological reflection will depend very much on the validity and clarity of this underlying concept.

However, in an increasingly secular world the term «revelation» is ambiguous and may seem to be of little value. The concept risks becoming a casualty in the constant tension between faith and reason as theologians search for appropriate ways to understand the manner of contact between God and the human believer. Some ask about the relevance of a once-given revelation, and question whether God is absent or silent in the face of the violence and suffering in the world today. Contact with other religious beliefs raises questions about the necessity of revelation as a religious concept. Such issues need to be taken seriously.

In the early part of this century there were moves on several fronts to utilise the idea of revelation. Wilhelm Schmidt of the Society of the Divine Word, introduced the idea of revelation to the world of anthropology by attempting to show that the monotheism found among «primitive» peoples was traceable to a primeval revelation (*Uroffenbarung*) passed down by tradition to all the descendants of Adam². On the other hand, attempts to rethink revelation in a way adapted to the religious experience of modern

¹ Max Seckler writes, «Nella teologia contemporanea il concetto di rivelazione è considerato per un verso un *concetto teologico essenziale* — Karl Rahner lo definisce “il concetto più fondamentale del cristianesimo” — e un *concetto chiave* per l'autointerpretazione del cristianesimo. In particolare, può essere concepito come *principio* della teologia moderna» (M. SECKLER, «Il concetto di rivelazione», 67).

² See E. BRANDEWIE, *When Giants Walked*; A. DULLES, *Assurance*, 264-265.

men and women led to the condemnation of «modernism» in the decree *Lamentabili sane exitu* (17 July 1907) and the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* (8 September 1907).

This authoritative reaction on the part of the church did not eliminate many of the valid questions raised. What is the relation between the revelation of God and human experience? How can one distinguish between truth in itself and truth as possessed by the human mind? What is the relevance of history for theology? Many such questions remained to receive a sympathetic and critical hearing at the Second Vatican Council.

It is ironic that the church has attempted to come to terms with the modern world at the very time when modernity has entered a crisis of its own. The realisation that both faith and science may become ideologically distorted has reduced confidence in the capacity of tradition to respond to the questions people are asking. In these circumstances theological teaching is accepted on the strength of its credibility and its ability to respond in a meaningful way to questions about God's action in contemporary history. This hermeneutical turn puts more emphasis on discovering what God is saying today than on possession of revealed truth.

Previously the discussion took place almost exclusively in the North Atlantic region. Now the Third World has entered into the debate both as protagonist and victim³. People from the Third World raise even more insistently issues concerning the deformation of reason and the instrumentalisation of humanity. Third World theologians stress that if God's word is to have any relevance it must speak to humanity, not in terms of faith and reason, but in terms of faith and life, particularly the life of the poor. They maintain that the theological issues of our time come to a focus in the problem of history as a history of suffering and oppression, or wellbeing and liberation.

The Third World theologians have not shown great interest in developing a theology of revelation to accompany their quest for a new way to talk about God⁴. Nevertheless, their understanding of revelation undoubtedly plays a significant part in their work since the concept is so central to Christian theology. One would hope that the Third World perspectives on revelation might stimulate advances in theological reflection. On the other hand, could not the intense interest in suffering humanity mean a

³ For a defence of the term «Third World,» see chapter II, fn. 61.

⁴ Avery Dulles writes, «These [liberation] theologians have not as yet elaborated a systematic theology of revelation, though they have made major contributions to the theology of faith and hermeneutics» (A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, 30).

de-emphasis of the significance of a concept such as revelation? Adrian Hastings says that the emerging Christian African theology is confronted with the problem of being faithful both to revelation and to the multiplicity of African experience⁵. How the Third World theologians understand revelation in the light of their experience is the object of this study.

Theologians from the Third World are asking questions which come from their life experience. The questions are many, mostly centred on finding a faith answer to the ambiguities and conflicts of their situation. Behind their questioning lies a conviction that the gospel as it has been preached and lived in the past is no longer credible in the face of poverty and suffering today. Christian revelation will be an intelligible authoritative word only if it illumines people's historical experience, actualises God's word, and confronts inhuman situations. From their first questions, other fundamental questions arise, for example, concerning God's will, and about church tradition being judged by the Word.

The stance of the Third World theologians touches on many fundamental theological issues and raises numerous theological questions. For example, how do they treat tradition and scripture, and how does that influence their understanding of revelation? Does their reinterpretation of the Word in the light of their world mean reducing revelation to the particularity of historical situations? Is eschatology reduced to historical immanence? What is the status of revealed truth in relation to social or economic factors?

With such questions in mind this study will inquire into three main issues. Firstly, how do the Third World theologians understand divine revelation? Secondly, what are some of the strengths and weaknesses of their view? Thirdly, how does their understanding relate to official Catholic church teaching, and to what extent do they expand the existing bounds of orthodoxy? This study will focus on the work of three theologians: Jean-Marc Éla from Cameroon, Aloysius Pieris from Sri Lanka, and Gustavo Gutiérrez from Peru.

How were the three theologians chosen? Persons from three Third World continents were selected so as to benefit from the diversity of opinion in the Third World. Other areas could have been considered, for example, Oceania or Black America, but it was decided to limit the choice to theologians from the three areas noted. There was also the matter of finding persons who would have at least something in common, so as to facilitate comparison. The three selected are Catholic priests who underwent their

⁵ A. HASTINGS, *African Catholicism*, 95-97.

initial theological training in Europe about the time of the Council, but who returned home to develop particular approaches to theology in their home countries.

There have been studies of the individual authors, concerning topics such as their ecclesiology and methodology. Some surveys of Third World theology have included the theologians studied here. Particularly valuable works are *Théologies chrétiennes des tiers mondes*, by Bruno Chenu, and *Theologie in de context van de Derde Wereld*, edited by Berma Klein Goldewijk and Jacques Van Nieuwenhove⁶. However there are no studies comparing just these three authors, and none specifically on the understanding of revelation behind their theology.

The major part of this study is devoted to the work of the three theologians. However the work begins with two chapters that provide background material and information necessary for locating the theologians in the wider theological context. Thus the first chapter presents an overview of the Second Vatican Council teaching on revelation. The intention is to provide a base and a reference point for the study of revelation from other perspectives. The second chapter raises the matter of how one may perceive the divine encounter in a different context, with an anthropology and philosophy quite unlike those found in the Council documents. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section considers the notion of human experience. The second section looks at the responses of assemblies of Bishops' Conferences in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania in the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council. The three theologians studied have all been associated with The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). So the third section of chapter II looks at how the concept of revelation has been treated in EATWOT conferences. After the three chapters devoted to Éla, Pieris and Gutiérrez, the sixth and final chapter considers the continuity and discontinuity of their theology with that of Vatican II, and the contribution of the three theologians to the theology of revelation,

2. The Method

This work employs an integral approach which includes description, analysis, and the use of hermeneutical, historical and comparative methods.

⁶ B. CHENU, *Théologies chrétiennes*; B. K. GOLDEWIJK – J. VAN NIEUWENHOVE, ed., *Theologie in de context van de Derde Wereld*.

Chapters I and II provide a *description* of the Vatican II teaching on divine revelation and attempts by Bishops' Conferences and other groups from the Third World to relate the message of revelation to people's experience. Chapters III-V commence with a brief description of the context, and continue with an expository section which provides data for evaluation.

The *analysis* required special care for two reasons. Firstly, the use of an analytical method to critically evaluate a theology said to be based on life experience or praxis demands particular attention which is why the research was undertaken at two levels. One level involved library research in Rome and other countries in Europe, USA, Latin America, and Asia. The second level involved fieldwork whereby an effort was made to know at first-hand more about the life context of the three authors. I visited Africa (East Africa and South Africa) for two months in 1978. As part of the fieldwork for this study I was in Sri Lanka for a month in 1992, staying with Aloysius Pieris at his Centre near Colombo, and under his direction visiting other parts of Sri Lanka. Also, I was in Latin America for three months in 1993: for two months in Bolivia studying the Castellano language, and three weeks in Peru, where I met with Gustavo Gutiérrez on several occasions. I have not been to Cameroon, but I had the opportunity to meet with Jean-Marc Éla in Rome.

These encounters with the theologians provided time to ask questions and also to solicit their reactions to some of the ideas developed during the initial library research stage of this dissertation. Having established contact with the theologians and the members of other principal sources, for example, from EATWOT, every effort has been made to continue the dialogue on the results of this research. Thus I have tried to go beyond theory, to learn (albeit briefly and tentatively) at first-hand about the context, and to enter into the experience-reflection cycle which characterises the theologies under investigation.

The second reason why analysis required special care is because theological method itself is in question in this study which concerns the three theologians' methods for perceiving and understanding revelation. Thus questions arise concerning their use of mediations other than philosophy, their dialectical methods, and how much their methods are influenced by ideology.

This study employs *hermeneutical* methods to interpret what the theologians mean and how they justify their understanding. It is not merely a study of what the authors say about revelation. Rather, it is principally

about the understanding of revelation behind what they say. So the study involves interpretation as much as analysis of what they state explicitly.

An effort has been made to interpret each theologian according to his own way of thinking, so as not force his ideas into foreign structures. For example, Éla's understanding of revelation will be determined from a structural analysis of the terms he uses. Pieris' work will be examined by means of the models he uses. The structure of Gutiérrez's ideas will be facilitated by one of his own diagrams. Also, in the chapters devoted to the three theologians, sources for critique and evaluation generally will be persons from the same geographical region, rather than from elsewhere.

Historical methods are used, especially in tracing the development of ideas. Connections are made to the historical context, and between the theologians' ideas and the teaching of Vatican II. The methods employ both diachronic and synchronic perspectives; that is, they follow the development of the theologians' understanding, and then present their basic understanding from a structural viewpoint. Combining the two risks repetition but ensures a more thorough treatment.

The study is a *comparative* one in several senses. Naturally there is a comparison among the three writers. However there is also a comparison between their work as a whole and Catholic orthodoxy as propounded by the Second Vatican Council. This is why the first chapter is about the Council and its teachings.

The subject matter and methods in this study are those of fundamental theology. The principal subject matter is divine revelation which is the fundamental norm for all theological method. While this work accepts the central importance of revelation for theology, it does not simply presume divine revelation in its method. Rather it allows space for the presentation and analysis of material methodologically prior to the truths of revelation itself.

This study is limited to the subject matter which concerns three authors and their understanding of divine revelation. The choice of three Catholic priests means dealing with theology which has been filtered through clerical male Catholic experience. However there is an attempt in the second chapter to be open to the views of women and of members of other churches.

The geographical breadth of the study offers an opportunity for a wider treatment of the topic, but at the same time risks generalisation. References to «Africa,» «Asia,» or «Latin America» concentrate on common features to the exclusion of particular distinctive features. Bruno Chenu has used the plural form in his book *Théologies chrétiennes des tiers mondes* to

emphasise the diversity of theology in the Third World. In his opinion the differences are greater than the features in common. While Chenu makes a valuable point, the stress in this study will be on the common features. Often regions or continents will be referred to as a whole because the authors concerned use that terminology.

A further risk of generalising occurs when this writer refers to «official» or «orthodox» church teaching. The usual point of comparison will be the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, particularly the Council Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*). The writer is well aware that the Council ended almost thirty years ago, and that there have been many developments since. Occasional references will be made to later developments, but they are more the exception than the rule.

A explanation on style may be appropriate. English expression has changed in recent years in that some words are now regarded as having an exclusively male content. An effort has been made to use inclusive language in the text. However quotations and references to other works have not been altered. Biblical quotations are from The New Revised Standard Version. Bibliographical information is kept to a minimum in footnotes. However, with the bibliography and the abbreviations index, all necessary information should be available for anyone wishing to follow up references in the notes. Often with periodicals only the volume and page numbers are given (e.g., *CTC B.*, 3, 43-61). However, occasionally the issue number is included (e.g., *Conc.* 1.3 [1967] 4-10). In such cases the volume number is given first. In chapters III-V, the principal author's name will be given for the first reference to each book or article. Subsequent references to those works will have only an abbreviated form of the title, the page reference, and where applicable, the page number of the English translation in brackets (e.g., *Foi*, 217 [181]). Capitalisation with the term «word» presents a difficulty. Following the customary usage a capital will be used when the term clearly refers to the second person of the Trinity, but not if the term refers to a part of speech. However the term's reference is a central point of the problem addressed by this study. What is really meant by expressions such as «universal word», «revelatory word», «word of revelation», «word of God», «God's word», «liberating word»? Where the reference is clear, for example, «the word of God», capitalisation is unnecessary. However, where the reference is simply to «the Word», (meaning God's word), capitalisation will be used to clearly distinguish the term from the word simply as a part of speech.

CHAPTER I

Vatican II Teaching on Divine Revelation

1. Introduction

The principal aim of the present chapter is to provide an overview of the Second Vatican Council teaching on revelation¹. The intention is not to make a comprehensive investigation of revelation in the Council, but to provide a base and a reference point for the study of revelation in other sources².

Before proceeding it should be clarified whether this study is concerned only with the term «revelation» (Latin: *revelatio, revelare*), or whether it is concerned also with alternative terms. For instance, often the expression «manifest» or «manifestation» (Latin: *manifestare, manifestatio*) is used in the Council documents in a way that is almost interchangeable with the

¹ Unless otherwise noted references will be from the Latin text and English translation of the Vatican II documents and the documents from the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council, in N.P. TANNER, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*.

² Studies of Revelation in the Second Vatican Council may be found in the following: P. EICHER, *Offenbarung*; H. FRIES, *Revelation*; R. LATOURELLE, *Theology of Revelation*; K. McNAMARA, «Divine Revelation»; G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*; ID., «At the Origins»; ID., *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*; LEEUWEN, P. VAN, «The Genesis of the Constitution»; H. WALDENFELS, *Offenbarung*. Commentaries include: U. BETTI – E. FLORIT – A. GRILLMEIER – al., ed., *Commento alla Costituzione*; U. BETTI, *La dottrina del Concilio Vaticano II*; F. GIL HELLÍN, *Dei Verbum*; G.H. TAVARD, «Commentary on *De Revelatione*»; H. VORGRIMLER, gen. ed., *Commentary*, vol. 3. Besides the *Acta Synodalia* there are also day by day accounts of the Council such as G. CAPRILE, ed., *Il Concilio Vaticano II*, 5 vols.; H. FESQUET, *Diario del Concilio*. A fuller bibliography on *Dei verbum* appears in G. O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, 178-217.

term revelation³. René Latourelle points this out at the beginning of his comprehensive study on the theology of revelation. He says that even more than to the words, one must be attentive to the reality of revelation⁴.

The complexity of the matter is even more apparent from a scriptural viewpoint. For example, in the Johannine writings terms like: «glory» or «glorify», «light», «truth» and «witness», refer to the reality of revelation. John is referring to signs that manifest Jesus' glory. Moreover the «I am» sayings reveal various aspects of Jesus' person and work and Jesus himself as the epiphany of God⁵. The Fourth Gospel alludes to the revelatory role of the Paraclete who will bear witness to Jesus and lead the disciples into the truth (Jn 15,26; 16,13). Elsewhere terms such as *apokalypsis* (revelation), *epiphaneia* (manifestation), and *phanerosis* (disclosure) are used, often referring to the final appearance of Christ at the parousia⁶. These few examples indicate that this study must not be confined by terminology but rather treat a reality beyond the scope of a single term or expression.

2. Interpreting the Second Vatican Council

In order to avoid a fundamentalistic approach of simply expounding on the content of Vatican II teaching, a preliminary question needs to be considered, namely: How is one to interpret the documents of Vatican II? It is important to respond to this question because of the bewildering range of responses and diversity of opinions emerging since the Council. Hans Küng claims that the spirit of the Council has been betrayed in a Rome-centred restoration movement⁷. Archbishop Lefebvre maintained that

³ For example, DV 6 states, «By divine revelation [*revelatione*] God has chosen to manifest [*manifestare*] and communicate [*communicare*] both himself and the eternal decrees of his will». Tanner translates GS 36: *vocem et manifestationem eius in creaturarum loquela semper audierunt* as, «have always sensed the voice and manifestation of the creator in the utterances of creatures». Flannery translates it as, «have always recognized the voice and the revelation of God in the language of creatures». Abbott renders it, «have always heard his revealing voice in the discourse of creatures».

⁴ R. LATOURELLE, *Theology of Revelation*, 46.

⁵ G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, 95-96.

⁶ A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, 228-229. Dulles cites: 1Cor 1,7; 2Th 1,7; Col 3,4; 1Tm 6,14; Tt 2,13; Heb 9,28.

⁷ H. KÜNG, «On the State of the Catholic Church».

Vatican II has betrayed the tradition from Trent and Vatican I⁸. The bishops at the Synod of 1985 speak of «lights and shadows» in the Council's reception⁹. For the purpose of this study it is important to have guidelines for reading the Council documents, and for evaluating the opinions expressed in the commentaries.

2.1 *Principles for Interpreting the Council Documents*

The bishops at the 1985 Extraordinary Synod set out principles for a theological interpretation of the Council doctrine. Their principles may be represented in the following six points:

- Each document and, indeed, each passage must be interpreted in the context of all the others.
- The four constitutions of the Council are the hermeneutical key for the correct understanding of other decrees and declarations.
- The pastoral import and the doctrinal content of the documents are not to be separated or set in opposition.
- The spirit and the letter of Vatican II are not to be held in opposition.
- The Council must be interpreted in continuity with the tradition of the church including earlier councils.
- Vatican II must be accepted as illuminating the problems of our own day¹⁰.

These guidelines are obviously a move toward harmonising tensions both within the documents and between Vatican II and earlier church teaching.

In addition to those of the bishops above, principles given by Hermann Pottmeyer are helpful¹¹. Firstly, one must keep in mind that each of the texts has a preconiliar history, a history within the Council, and a history of influence exercised afterwards. The preconiliar history includes the texts of the preparatory commissions, and also includes the activity of renewal movements such as the liturgical and biblical movements. The history within the Council includes the various drafts and the debates on them. It also includes the wishes of the Pope at the time; for example, Pope John

⁸ Y. CONGAR, *Challenge to the Church*, 14.

⁹ SYNOD OF BISHOPS (1985), «Synodus Episcoporum: *Relatio Finalis*», in *Leges Ecclesiae* 6, col. 9239; E.T., «The Final Report», 445.

¹⁰ For a paraphrase of these principles, see A. DULLES, «The Reception of Vatican II», 350.

¹¹ H.J. POTTMEYER, «A New Phase», 27-43.

XXIII played a decisive role in recalling the schema on revelation after the vote during the first session, and in the fourth session Paul VI intervened with his request for further clarification on three points in the draft of *Dei verbum*¹².

Secondly, one must bear in mind that many of the texts have structural characteristics that are important to consider for a correct interpretation. The Council retracted nothing from the dogmas of the Councils of Trent or Vatican I but in some cases it altered their emphasis by locating them within a changed context. Often alongside a thesis couched in preconciliar language is set a thesis that formulates some complementary aspect. For example in *Dei verbum* 10, the thesis on the magisterium's mission of serving the Word is set alongside the theses from *Humani generis* and from the First Vatican Council on the role of the magisterium in interpreting the word of God. This method of juxtaposition must be taken into account for a proper interpretation of the Council texts.

Thirdly, one must bear in mind that Vatican II refers to a «hierarchy of truths» (*UR* 11) resulting from the different ways in which dogmas are related to the mystery of Christ. So while affirming that the whole of revelation is to be accepted with the same faith, the Council legitimates as a hermeneutical principle the relative importance of dogmatic statements¹³.

Finally, one must bear in mind that critical attention to the context is part of the hermeneutic of any Council¹⁴. Many statements of Vatican II were possible only after scholars had shown ways in which Trent and Vatican I reflected their times. Likewise, Vatican II was intimately linked to its temporal setting. Thus historical events such as the relative prosperity in Europe, and currents of thought in philosophy and the sciences all had their influences and need to be noted for a valid interpretation of the Council.

¹² On 21 November 1962, the Council Fathers voted 1368 to 822 in favour of interrupting the discussion on the schema (*AS*, I, III, 255). This did not attain the two thirds majority needed, but the reaction was so strong that the Pope removed the text from the agenda and handed over its revision to a specially created Mixed Commission (see J. RATZINGER, «Dogmatic Constitution», 160-161). Joseph Ratzinger relates how on 18 October 1965, Card. Cicognani sent a letter to Card. Ottaviani (one of the chairmen of the Mixed Commission) at the request of Pope Paul VI, calling for additional clarification on questions relating to tradition, inerrancy, and historicity (*Ibid.*, 164).

¹³ This point was affirmed again in the CTI paper, «On the Interpretation of Dogmas».

¹⁴ H.J. POTTMEYER, «A New Phase», 43.

The principles from the bishops and from Pottmeyer outlined above will be taken into account in the following presentation of aspects from Vatican II teaching on revelation.

2.2 *The Conciliar Starting Point*

There were significant developments in the understanding of revelation during the course of six years from the time of the preconciliar consultations to the day when the Constitution *Dei verbum* was promulgated by the Council. In the early preparatory period, revelation was included in a project on the deposit of faith, while, scripture and tradition were part of a project on the church. However the section on scripture and tradition developed into a schema of its own («Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de Fontibus Revelationis») because its contents became too vast for a subsection on the schema on the church, and because Pope John wanted scripture and tradition to receive special attention¹⁵.

The project on the deposit of faith was mainly inspired by proposals from the Congregations of the Holy Office and of the Seminaries and Universities. It developed into the «Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de deposito fidei pure custodiendo». The schema teaches that public revelation is the divine communication of the mysteries of salvation. However the events of salvation are revelation only because of the teaching contained in them. Revelation is identical with revealed teaching and this teaching reaches its plenitude in Christ because he has proclaimed to us the perfect teaching of revelation¹⁶. The schema about the deposit of faith, along with others, such as the schema on the sources of revelation, was sent out to the bishops prior to the Council. However the schema itself was not dealt with by the Council and was allowed to slip out of the agenda. Nevertheless the theology of the *Schema de deposito*, with its dogmatic, propositional understanding of revelation, contributed to the opposition of the Council Fathers in the debate on the *Schema de fontibus revelationis* during the first

¹⁵ Report of the first plenary session of the Preparatory Theological Commission, 27 October 1960. Also, *Pontificia commissio centralis praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II. Quaestiones comissionibus praeparatoribus Concilii Vaticani positae*, 7 (see LEEUWEN, P. VAN «The Genesis of the Constitution», 4).

¹⁶ «Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de deposito fidei pure custodiendo» nn. 17-21, in *Schemata constitutionum et decretorum de quibus disceptabitur in Concilii sessionibus*, series 1, 36-38.

session of the Council¹⁷. The resulting controversy supplied the opportunity to introduce a christocentric, personalist understanding of revelation. In this way the preconiliar projects, in the dialectics of opposition, helped provoke the change to an understanding of revelation based on the person of Christ rather than on revealed truths. The new approach provided the germ of what would become the first chapter of *Dei verbum*.

3. Developments in the Theology of Revelation

There were significant developments in the theology of revelation during the Council. A positive view of *history* enabling one to read God's revelation in history itself was an important stimulus for these developments. At the same time there was a renewed interest in scripture and fresh efforts to see revelation from a *christological* perspective. This made it possible to consider revelation in terms of *dialogue* or communion. Such an interpersonal approach meant rethinking the church's understanding of the patrimony of faith (*deposit*) passed on from the apostles. It also meant reconsidering the *human response of faith*.

The dynamic view of revelation that emerged in Vatican II has important consequences for our understanding of the *transmission of revelation* and our perception of *revelation in scripture*. Moreover, if history itself is revelatory, it follows that there is *ongoing revelation* in our time. This raises the question of revelation today in the *signs of the times* and of the link between revelation and the *kingdom of God*. Also it is necessary to look beyond the history of Israel and address the issue of revelation in the history of those *beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition*. These are the principal themes that will be studied in this chapter. They have been chosen because they are important distinguishing features of the understanding of revelation in Vatican II, and because they are relevant as a basis for discussion in later chapters.

3.1 *Revelation and History*

When Pope John XXIII announced the Council, he signalled a new attitude of the church to the world and a positive vision of history¹⁸.

¹⁷ For example, see the intervention of Bp Paul Schmitt of Metz (17 November 1962), who proposed points for a new schema on revelation (AS I, III, 128-130).

¹⁸ POPE JOHN XXIII said, «We feel we must disagree with those prophets of gloom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand.

In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of

Giuseppe Alberigo regards the Pope's opening address «as from beginning to end a single, unbroken reflection on history as conditioning Christianity and on the unparalleled importance of this fact for the Council»¹⁹.

Such a positive attitude had not been characteristic of magisterial teaching prior to Vatican II. In the introduction to the dogmatic constitution on faith from Vatican I, post-tridentine history is depicted as a progressive corruption of humanity due to denial of magisterial authority²⁰. In the first part of this century, after the condemnation of modernism, views open to the historical character of Christianity were suspected of relativism. It was not until 1943, with the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII that a change came about when the historico-critical method was declared acceptable in biblical studies²¹.

Joseph Ratzinger writes that three motifs came together in the «struggle» for a constitution on revelation: a new view of tradition, the application of critical historical methods to the interpretation of scripture, and the biblical movement²². All three of these are associated with a renewed understanding of history and revelation.

Concerning tradition, the idea of tradition as truths to be passed on was abandoned in favour of tradition as a process. John Henry Newman's idea of development as an organically evolving process through history contributed to this understanding of living tradition. With modern methods of scripture study and with the growth of the biblical movement, new attention was given to the historical plan of salvation and the historical and human mediation of revelation through the incarnation in Jesus Christ.

human relations which, by men's own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of God's superior and inscrutable designs» (POPE JOHN XXIII, «Gaudet mater Ecclesia», AAS 54, 789; E.T., Abbott, 712-713).

¹⁹ Cited in G. RUGGIERI, «Faith and History», 97, fn. 13.

²⁰ Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*, introduction (see Tanner, 804-805).

²¹ Vatican I, in insisting on the knowability of supernatural revelation, was attempting to counter ideas found in Rationalism and Hegelianism. The historical and intellectual context of Vatican II was different. Christopher Butler says that it was «a belated attempt to make the Church and Christianity relevant to the human race in an epoch of unprecedented change in the human condition [...]; and because it opened the way for a renewed and most genuinely Christian understanding of the gospel of Christ, and of the response which that gospel invites from man in his fully historical existence on earth» (C. BUTLER, *The Theology of Vatican II*, 215).

²² J. RATZINGER, «Dogmatic Constitution», 155-159.

There was little evidence of such a positive view of history in the first drafts of what would become *Dei verbum*²³. In those drafts revelation was portrayed in terms of ahistorical truths that one acquires from different sources. Only after the schema had been withdrawn during the first session and handed over to a Mixed Commission was there a change. Thus in the text distributed after 3 July 1964 in preparation for the third session of the Council there appears a special chapter headed *De ipsa revelatione* in which there is a change to an appreciation of what happens in God's self-revelation²⁴. By going back to the reality of the deeds and words of God it was possible to escape from the positivistic idea of the «sources» of revelation that had become so problematic. In the new chapter God's revealing activity is described within a comprehensive survey of salvation history²⁵.

The development is evident in *Dei verbum* 2 which states that the pattern of God's revelation «unfolds through deeds and words bound together by an inner dynamism». The reference to God's deeds as well as words reflects the Council's desire to express the character of revelation as a totality of word and event. The intimate link between words and deeds is further emphasised in *Dei verbum* in reference to Jesus' completing the work of revelation by his «words and works» (*DV* 4), and of the apostles handing on «whatever they had received from Christ's lips, his way of life or his works» (*DV* 7).

With the focus on salvation history and the recognition that God acts, the Council showed an openness to reading God's revelation in history itself. As some have pointed out, this implies that history is not simply the setting for revelation, but is itself revelatory and therefore plays a constitutive part in salvation²⁶. The Word of God is not a set of abstract, atemporal truths. It has reference to a specific historical context and historical events. Thus

²³ Information about the various schemas may be found in J. RATZINGER, «Dogmatic Constitution»; U. BETTI, *La dottrina del Concilio Vaticano II*; and F. GIL HELLÍN, *Dei Verbum*.

²⁴ J. RATZINGER, «Dogmatic Constitution», 166.

²⁵ Gerald O'Collins shows the close connection between *DV* 3 and *DV* 14-16 in his analysis of the draft on revelation in the Old Testament by Pieter Smulders. He shows how the idea of God's personal self-communication in history entered *DV* through the section on the Old Testament (see G. O'COLLINS, «At the Origins», 5-12).

²⁶ This is brought out well in E. BIANCHI, «The Centrality of the Word», 115-136, especially 123-125. Also see R. LATOURELLE, «La spécificité», 45.

one may understand history as a revelation of God's salvific plan for all humankind²⁷.

The theology of tradition as found in the second chapter of *Dei verbum* is another instance of a new appreciation of history resulting in a significant advance in the Vatican II theology of revelation. Some wanted to include Vincent de Lérin's well-known canon of tradition (*quod ubique [...] semper [...] ab omnibus*). However such a static *semper* did not seem the best way to express the issue of the development of tradition in the course of history. The dynamic concept of tradition developed by the Council takes historical change into account in the spiritual experience of the whole church. Contemporary faith reaches back to its historical origin to discover what can be understood for our time. So history is recognised positively as a hermeneutical locus for discerning and proclaiming the active presence of God²⁸.

Council documents other than *Dei verbum* also contribute to our understanding of revelation and history. The whole basis of schema 13 (which developed into *Gaudium et spes*) is the relationship between the living tradition and the action of God in history. History is not instrumentalised. It is constitutive of the salvation that Christians hope for and proclaim. In the historicity of the world of which it is a part the church discerns the «signs of the times» (GS 4), which express the needs and the aspirations of humanity today.

The dynamic idea of tradition raises a number of issues. What is the role of human experience in our growth in understanding of revelation? Perhaps revelation is as universal as God's salvific action in the whole of history and is not to be limited to the history of successive covenants as indicated in *Dei verbum*? Is there not a sense in which history is still revelatory as the church advances «towards the fullness of God's truth» (DV 8)? These issues will reappear in other sections of this chapter.

²⁷ Joseph Ratzinger notes that this theology of word and event takes up the ideas that emerged in theology between the First and Second World Wars. However the controversy between the theology of salvation history (Cullmann) and the theology of the word (Bultmann) was not considered (see J. RATZINGER, «Revelation Itself», 172). Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Offenbarung als Geschichte* was published in 1961, but his emphasis on the end of history, dispensing with the word, does not correspond with mainstream Catholic theology (see R. LATOURELLE, «La Rivelazione come Storia», 482-484).

²⁸ E. BIANCHI, «The Centrality of the Word», 125.

Though the Vatican II integration of history and revelation does not settle all questions, it achieved a great deal in the change from an ahistorical propositional view to one that sees history as a constitutive part of God's self-revelation.

3.2 *Revelation in Jesus Christ*

Revelation is not only historical, it is also sacramental. It occurs not simply in events, but in events plus their interpretation. The full meaning of the events can only be known to us through the word. One of the contributions of the Second Vatican Council is the understanding of Jesus Christ, the Word, as a fundamental principle for understanding the whole of revelation.

Vatican I was more ecclesiocentric. It declared that the church itself was an unshakeable witness of its own divine mission because of its astonishing propagation, outstanding holiness, fruitfulness, unity, and stability²⁹. Vatican II tends to be more christocentric. It teaches that Christ, through his own presence and self-manifestation, through his signs and words, his death and resurrection, is the fullness of revelation, which he himself guarantees with his own divine testimony (*DV* 4).

The change in focus was influenced by developments in theology in Europe in the years before the Council as scholars sought alternatives to neo-scholasticism. Marie-Dominique Chenu at Le Saulchoir maintained that theology had to pay greater attention to the realities of salvation as found in scripture and tradition³⁰. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, reflecting on the relationship between faith and science, took a cosmological perspective in an attempt to show how cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis find their fulfilment in christogenesis: evolution fully realised in Jesus Christ³¹. At Lyon-Fourvière, Jean Daniélou, building on Oscar Cullmann's conception of Christ as the midpoint of salvation history, defended the typological exegesis of the Greek Fathers. The cosmic covenant with Noah (Gn 9) extends to all humanity³². Yet it is only in Jesus Christ that the hidden God is truly revealed³³. Also at Fourvière, Henri de Lubac taught that the original deposit of revelation consisted not in doctrinal formulas but in

²⁹ Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*, chap. 3.

³⁰ M.-D. CHENU, *Un école de théologie*.

³¹ P. TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *Le milieu divin*.

³² J. DANIELOU, *God and the Ways of Knowing*, 104-105.

³³ J. DANIELOU, *God and the Ways of Knowing*, 139.

concrete and vital adherence to the person of Christ who was «le Tout du Dogme»³⁴. In Nimegen Edward Schillebeeckx was writing about Christ as «the Sacrament of the Encounter with God», and in Innsbruck Karl Rahner was asking penetrating questions about Christology and the community which perpetuates Christ's sacramental presence in the world³⁵.

Such developments in European Catholic theology, along with a greater openness to ideas from Protestant circles, contributed to a movement away from a propositional, intellectualist notion of revelation to a more personal one centered on the person of Christ. In presenting the revised schema on revelation to the Council (1 October 1964) Archbishop Florit said that the whole of revelation was incarnate in one man and this man is Christ in whom one finds the totality of revelation³⁶.

The first words of *Dei verbum* refer not simply to the word of scripture, but to the Johannine *Logos*: the Word as revealer of the Father. The eternal life of 1Jn 1,2 cited in the Prologue also refers to the Word who is «with» (*pros*) the Father³⁷. This is taken up again in *Dei verbum* 2. Where Vatican I started with natural knowledge of God, Vatican II begins immediately with God's revealing activity which culminates in Christ who is «both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation». *Dei verbum* assumes natural revelation in a reference to creation in the first phrase, but does not dwell on it. The testimony to God in the created order is linked with the Word through whom all has been created³⁸.

Dei verbum 4 teaches that Jesus' message is «that God is with us, to deliver us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to eternal life»³⁹. Revelation is not about «something», but about Emmanuel: God-with-us (*Deum nempe nobiscum esse ad nos* [...]). The significance of this expression may be seen in comparison with the previous stress on revealed truth. God's revelation and address to humanity in Jesus is a manifestation

³⁴ H. DE LUBAC, «Le problème du développement», 130-160.

³⁵ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Christ the Sacrament*. Also K. RAHNER, «Current Problems in Christology»; ID., «The Theology of the Symbol». For an example from the time of the Council see ID., «Scripture and Tradition».

³⁶ AS, III, III, 135.

³⁷ I. de la Potterie shows parallel passages in Jn 1,1 and Jn 1,18. He translates 1Jn 1,2 as «La Vie tournée vers [*pros*] le Père» (I. DE LA POTTERIE, «Le Christ comme figure», 32-33).

³⁸ LEEUWEN, P. VAN, «The Genesis of the Constitution», 6.

³⁹ Unlike Tanner and Abbott, Flannery translates «*Deum nempe nobiscum esse ad nos* [...]» as «God was with us». The use of the past tense misses the point concerning God's continuing salvific presence.

and confirmation of God's love for human beings and God's will for (comm)-union with us. That union with God is to be seen in terms of deliverance or liberation (*mortisque tenebris liberandos* [...]) Jesus' message, deals with the basic elements of human existence: good and evil, darkness and light, bondage and deliverance, death and life.

Significant elements in the above text, were first introduced into the draft of the schema on divine revelation after a written intervention (10 July 1963) by the Indonesian bishops. Commenting on the draft sent to them in May 1963 by the Mixed Commission, the bishops suggested that the text include the question of who God is for us: that is, a merciful God who saves us from slavery to sin and death and who raises us to new life⁴⁰. These ideas were incorporated into the text which was discussed in the assembly during the third session of the Council.

The change moves the focus from Jesus' teaching and miracles to the whole significance of the incarnation. The incarnation, like revelation, is the self-manifestation and self-giving of God. Jesus Christ is *the* Word who not only merely speaks of God, but is himself the speech of God. As the principal point of contact between God and humankind, Jesus is the primordial sacrament of God's saving presence in the world. Through the incarnation the whole of Jesus' existence reveals the love of God, which in practice means a new way of life and deliverance from sin and death.

Vatican II did not settle all the issues it raised concerning Jesus Christ. For example, the relationship between Jesus Christ, the Spirit active in the church, and the universal activity of the Spirit was not defined. However the christological emphasis in Vatican II contributed to a richer, more dynamic and more personal understanding of revelation.

3.3 *Revelation as Dialogue*

Dei verbum 25 refers explicitly to the prayerful reading of scripture as a dialogue between God and the human reader. There are also implicit references to divine revelation as a form of dialogue. God «speaks to» (*alloquitur*) humankind as friends and «enters into» (*conversatur*) their life. As divine Wisdom appeared upon earth and lived among us in the Jewish

⁴⁰ «Quapropter non solum vita sua sanctissima, miraculis ceterisque signis confirmat se esse a Patre missum et a patre loqui, suaque verba doctrinam esse Patris, sed simul per eventus ac actus vitae suae ostendit nobiscum Deum esse (c.f. Mt 1,23) ad salvandos homines ex morte ac peccati servitute et ut eos ad novam aeternam vitam resuscitet» (F. GIL HELLÍN, *Dei verbum*, 432).

Law, so in Jesus the wisdom of God is incarnate, continuing the dialogue at a new personal level.

Vatican I had been concerned with defining the relation between natural and supernatural revelation. *Dei verbum* faces the question of the divine-human relationship in a different way. Philosophical terms are exchanged for biblical ones. The symbol used is the Word since a word is the privileged mode for communicating thought, emotion, or purpose⁴¹. This Word is not one of «laws and decrees» as in Vatican I, but the secret purpose or mystery (*sacramentum*) of God's will. The purpose is not information but unity and transformation. It is a Word of friendship that facilitates the divine-human dialogue. In this Word the transcendent has become near to us. Christ is the end of God's speaking, «but this end is nothing but man's being constantly addressed by God»⁴².

The Council's approach to the God-human relationship is also seen in the treatment of the sacred writings. The human authors are given full recognition (*DV* 11). At the same time it is maintained that God is the author of scripture (*DV* 12). God wants to speak to us in these human words, and yet these human words are at the same time God's word for us⁴³.

3.4 Revelation as Deposit of Faith

In his opening speech to the Council, Pope John XXIII spoke of the ancient doctrine of the «deposit of faith» (*depositum fidei*)⁴⁴. At the close of the Council, on 7th December 1965, Pope Paul VI also referred to the «deposit» received from Christ; a living deposit by virtue of truth and grace⁴⁵. One finds the expression in several places in the council documents: *Lumen gentium* 25, *Unitatis redintegratio* 6, *Dei verbum* 10, *Gaudium et spes* 62. What is this «deposit» and how is it related to the Council teaching on divine revelation⁴⁶?

⁴¹ For a development of these ideas, see K. McNAMARA, «Divine Revelation», 3-7.

⁴² J. RATZINGER, «Revelation Itself», 175.

⁴³ L. BAKKER, «Man's Place in Divine Revelation», 14.

⁴⁴ POPE JOHN XXIII, «Gaudet mater Ecclesia», AAS 54, 792; E.T., Abbott, 715.

⁴⁵ Homily of Paul VI at the 9th session of the Council, 7 December 1965; «Hoc est depositum a Christo ipsi commissum; [...]. Hoc, cum vivum sit ob divinam veritatis et gratiae virtutem» (POPE PAUL VI, «Hodie Concilium», AS, IV, VII, 655; E.T., *CMind* 64 [April 1966] 58).

⁴⁶ The expression has a long history: as a biblical notion of *paratheke* (something precious entrusted to someone), see the Pastoral Epistles: 1Tm 6,20; 2Tm 1,12-14; as Irenaeus' idea of a valuable deposit in a precious vase (the apostolic deposit in the

The notion is taken up in the second chapter of *Dei verbum*. Jared Wicks, in a helpful commentary, outlines three significant points found in *Dei verbum* 7-10⁴⁷. Firstly, the patrimony of faith passed on from the apostles is more than a body of doctrine derived from revelation. Both by what they said and did the apostles passed on whatever they had received from Christ's lips, his way of life or his works, or had learned by the prompting of the holy Spirit (*DV* 7). What has been handed down from the apostles includes everything that helps the people of God to live a holy life and to grow in faith (*DV* 8). This relatively broad notion was important because in the years before Vatican II, the deposit of faith was understood narrowly in terms of a body of doctrine to be preserved in the church.

Secondly, there has been a growth in understanding of this apostolic deposit, both the words and the realities they signify (*DV* 8). This too shows a change from the defensive spirit of opposition to modernism with its idea of the relative and progressive nature of Christian truth.

Thirdly, the Council declares that the sacred deposit, formed from scripture and tradition together, is given to the church so that the «entire holy people» might remain faithful to the apostles' teaching and shared life, to the breaking of bread and prayer (*DV* 10). Moreover everything that the church proposes for belief, as being divinely revealed is drawn from this one deposit of faith (*DV* 10). The teaching function in the church is at the service of the word of God. It evaluates and adapts the teaching of the church to new situations thus facilitating the progressive contribution of the deposit to the faith and life of the church.

All three points show a noteworthy change from the official teaching prior to the Council. Little more than a decade previously, in the encyclical *Humani generis* (1950), Pope Pius XII had deplored the rashness of some theologians who were trying to re-state dogma in terms of modern philosophy. Pius XII reaffirmed that in Catholic teaching over the course of the centuries «the divinely revealed truth» has been like a star, illumining the human mind through the church⁴⁸. Thus it would be wrong to deviate from the formulation of dogmatic truth explained by the authoritative voice of the magisterium.

church) see IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses*, III, 24, 1; as the «idea» of revealed truth see J.H. NEWMAN, «The Theory of Development».

⁴⁷ J. WICKS, «Deposit of Faith», 234-235.

⁴⁸ POPE PIUS XII, *Humani generis*, AAS 42, 566. Cited from *The Christian Faith*, ed., J. Neuner – J. Dupuis, 54.

The consensus arrived at by the end of Vatican II did not come without differences of opinion during the debates. The difficulty came from fundamental differences in the understanding of truth, and the relation between truth and history. At the end of the first session Edward Schillebeeckx noted the difference between those who thought «essentially» and those who thought «existentially»⁴⁹. The former thought that the exact formulation of an unchangeable *essence* was to be the main purpose of the Council. In Schillebeeckx's opinion, for such people to think non-essentially would mean, for them, skirting the truth⁵⁰. The alternative is to regard truth not as some abstract essence but as a reflection of our ever-changing reality. Any expression of the truth is not accidental, but is involved in our very understanding of it. We never see the «naked» truth. Truth emerges in each given situation, so expressing the truth is a never-ending task which has to be begun anew all the time.

In *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (1973) the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith admitted that dogmas are historical in the sense that their meaning is partly dependent upon the expressive power of the language used at a particular point in time and in particular circumstances⁵¹. The solution offered is based on the distinction between the form and content of dogmatic formulations, a distinction made by Pope John XXIII in his opening speech to the Council⁵².

The distinction between the deposit or truths of faith and the manner in which they are expressed has both advantages and disadvantages for clarifying the issue of the deposit of revelation and changing dogmatic formulations. It affirms how the mystery of Christ surpasses the possibilities of formulation and how the holy Spirit makes this mystery present in

⁴⁹ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Vatican II*, 10.

⁵⁰ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Vatican II*, 12. Schillebeeckx adds, «Hence the consternation, even panic, when after the first large-scale vote it was found that the majority of the world episcopate had abandoned the essentialist mode of thought».

⁵¹ CDF, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, AAS 65, 396-408; E.T., Flannery II, 428-440.

⁵² There has been some debate over what Pope John XXIII really said. See the reports and letters to *The Tablet* (7 December 1991 – 8 February 1992) by Hill, Finnis, Hebblethwaite, Sullivan and others. The official Latin version is in AAS 54 (1962) 792, but there is also John XXIII's original Italian text which has some slight but significant differences and which appeared in the Italian edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*. This latter text must have been the source for the English version in Abbott's translation of the Council documents.

different cultures and changing times. Thus it provides an alternative to a rigid dogmatism.

However there are also disadvantages to the distinction. It gives the impression that there is a supra-cultural message that can be separated from the language and culture in which it is presented. This notion that one can get to an objective «kernel» of truth by stripping away the «husk» of interpretations has been criticised in modern hermeneutical theory⁵³. Events and their meaning are inextricably linked. Tradition enriches the interpreter's understanding, yet tradition is itself shaped by events and models of thinking. The International Theological Commission has pointed out how «no clear-cut separation can be made between the content and form of the statement. The symbolic system of language is not mere external apparel, but to a certain extent the incarnation of a truth»⁵⁴.

The main difficulty with the form/content distinction is its continued reliance on a propositional notion of revelation. Vatican II tried to lead us beyond a propositional model to the notion of a vital presence which helps the faithful live their lives in holiness and grow in faith. The deposit of faith entrusted to the church is not simply formulations about the teaching of Jesus, but the mystery of Christ.

Thus the deposit of faith must not be viewed only from a philosophical viewpoint. It must also be seen from the richness of other perspectives. From a biblical perspective, truth is seen in the genuineness of the manifestation of God's saving purpose⁵⁵. Theological notions of truth maintain that reality is always greater and deeper than all the historically and culturally conditioned representations that we have of it. The *norma normans* in theological enquiry is the truth of revelation, which, though received in history, is not totally dependent upon it⁵⁶. One may argue intelligently about credibility, but ultimately the truth of revelation has to be accepted in faith.

⁵³ A.C. THISELTON, *The Two Horizons*, 81.

⁵⁴ CTI, «On the Interpretation of Dogmas», 12. The CTI says that dogmatic language is not entirely dependent on certain philosophical systems, since «in a process of faith coming to linguistic expression, the church created its own language and therein brought to expression realities which were previously unknown and which even now by virtue of that same expression belong to the church's paradisis and through it, to the historical heritage of the human race» (*Ibid.*, 13).

⁵⁵ C. BUTLER, *The Theology of Vatican II*, 50. He refers to Eph 1,13 and Jn 14,6.

⁵⁶ I. DE LA POTTERIE, «Truth», 1133, 1136. Also, ID., «History and Truth», 98.

3.5 *Revelation and the Human Response*

Encountering God in the living dialogue of faith leads to a study of the believer as subject and the human pole of the divine-human dialogue. Many scholars have sought to incorporate modern philosophical theories in their theologies of grace, faith, and revelation. Developments in hermeneutics and the social sciences have discovered a complexity in the human person that casts doubt on any clear antithesis of object and subject in a theology of revelation and grace. In Catholic circles personalist philosophy has led to a view of the human person as being inherently free to transcend the limits of the world and history. The human person both creates and is created by his or her world⁵⁷. Scholars like Rudolf Bultmann have emphasised the existential impact of revelation. However this approach too often reduces revelation to what the person finds existentially meaningful.

The intellectual climate illustrated above influenced, but did not determine, the anthropology of Vatican II. The principal image of the human person in *Dei verbum* is reflected in the opening words of the prologue. A person is one who is capable of hearing the word and responding in faith. This brings to mind Karl Rahner's work on the human person as a «hearer of the word» and his metaphysical approach of the human transcendental openness to God⁵⁸.

How a person recognises divine revelation has been an issue in theology for a long time. Aquinas held that every act gets its specific nature from its formal object; for the intellect — truth; for the will — goodness, etc.

⁵⁷ Writing in the period after the Council, Thomas O'Meara says that the Catholic theology of revelation and grace suffers from «a naive consideration of the Western subject-object schema» and from too simple a description of the human person. For O'Meara, revelation and grace are terms we give to the *presence* of God in our lives (see T.F. O'MEARA, «Toward a Subjective Theology», 407, 417).

⁵⁸ The Transcendental theology of Karl Rahner views the human person as *spirit in the world*. In experiencing finiteness, the human person reaches beyond and encounters a transcendent horizon which is really the *a priori* openness of the subject to being as such. This is the primordial form of God's self-communication. In the transcendental aspect of every experience we can encounter the divine mystery (even if it is not explicitly reflected upon). Rahner proposes a theory of grace in which the latter is the milieu of God's loving presence as an horizon of our being. This theory is helpful in that it does not separate the orders of creation (nature) and salvation (grace), but unites them in the divine will that creation is intended for salvation. Grace, though distinct from our created nature, is an intrinsic part of human existence as the gift of God's presence. There is little explicit evidence of this viewpoint in *Dei verbum*.

According to this theory faith requires a supernatural formal object. Thus an act of faith needs some form of illumination or supernatural knowledge prior to faith itself. There have been attempts to identify this «knowledge»: connaturality (Aquinas), instinct (Newman), the concurrence of interior and exterior facts in «crendity» (Blondel), the «eyes of faith» (Rousselot)⁵⁹. Generally it is referred to as the attraction of grace. The point relevant to the present topic is whether this interior grace as a form of self-communication of God to the human spirit is itself revelation. According to the scholastics, with their propositional understanding of revelation, this illumination is not speech and consequently is not revelation. Others, with a broader understanding of revelation and a more universal understanding of grace consider that God is present to, and at work in, every genuine experience of self-transcendence⁶⁰.

Dei verbum holds to the scholastic line and refers to the full submission of intellect and will in assent to God's revelation («obedience of faith»)⁶¹. This approach tries to avoid extrinsicism on the one hand and immanentism on the other by including both intellectual dogmatic faith (using the terminology from Vatican I [*Dei Filius* chap. 3]) and the giving over of oneself in trusting acceptance (of Jesus Christ). There is no attempt to explicitly address the issue of whether God's grace is a form of revelation. The Council says that grace both anticipates and accompanies the act of faith together with the inward assistance of the holy Spirit.

Revelation and the response of faith are clearly linked, especially in the transmission of revelation. An example may be seen in the *sensus fidei*, an expression appearing several times in the Vatican II documents (*LG* 12, *LG* 35, *PO* 9, *GS* 52)⁶².

⁵⁹ T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae* 2-2ae. 1,4 ad 3; 2-2ae. 45,2. Also J. ALFARO, «The Supernaturality of Faith», 111-116; J.H. NEWMAN, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 270-271; F. MALLET, *Qu'est-ce que la foi?*; E.T., M. BLONDEL, «What is Faith?», particularly, pp. 186-187; P. ROUSSELOT, «Les yeux de la foi».

⁶⁰ R. HAIGHT discusses this in *The Dynamics of Theology*, 61. «God does deal with all human beings equally through a common or universal structure of human subjectivity. That common structure, however, is not pure reason; revelation is not "natural" or "general" revelation. The structure is the openness of human freedom for transcendence and a dynamism toward it, on the one hand, and its being met by a universal personal Presence of God called Spirit or grace, on the other».

⁶¹ Karl Rahner says that *Dei verbum* treats the question of faith with «caution and timidity» (K. RAHNER, «On the "History of Revelation"», 196).

⁶² The meaning of the term depends on whether one interprets it in a subjective or an objective sense. The former could mean a supernatural instinct for God's will. The

The expression *sensus fidei* as such is not used in *Dei verbum*, but *Dei verbum* 8 refers to a growth in understanding through «the intimate understanding of spiritual things which they [believers] experience»⁶³. Here is an example where one document from the Council may help in the interpretation of another⁶⁴. In *Lumen gentium* 12 (where it occurs twice) the expression *sensu fidei* (the ablative form) is used in the context of the people of God sharing in the prophetic role of Christ with the help of the holy Spirit. The reference given is to the word of God which is at work in the believers (1Th 2,13)⁶⁵. This helps provide insights into *Dei verbum* 8 where the context is the transmission and development of tradition. The understanding of spiritual things which the believers (from the bishops to the last of the faithful [LG 12]) experience is one of three ways that the church's understanding of revelation develops.

What are these «spiritual things» (*spiritualium rerum*)? Are they experienced individually by a spiritual «instinct» or is it more a sense of faith aroused and sustained by the spirit of truth in the community? *Lumen gentium* 12 seems to include both possibilities. The sense is communal — the «whole people». It is concerned with the experience of Christian life of all those who welcome the word of God. Yet one of the effects of this gift is being able to penetrate more deeply into the object of faith through right judgement⁶⁶. Applying these insights to *Dei verbum* 8 we see how the body

latter could refer to what the faithful believe. Some prefer the term *sensus fidelium* which refers to the «sense» or the «mind» of the faithful. This is the opinion of Francis Sullivan who refers to Congar (see F. SULLIVAN, *Magisterium*, 187). Perhaps one could combine both the subjective and objective genitives to get the full meaning: *sensus fidei fidelium*. This is the suggestion of fellow student C. PILLET, «Le Sensus Fidelium et son rapport», 5. The appropriate meaning may be determined by its context with each occurrence of the term.

⁶³ Zoltán Alszeghy observes that while this text does not use the words *sensus fidei*, it speaks of the same thing (see Z. ALSZEGHY, «The *Sensus Fidei*», 138).

⁶⁴ G.H. TAVARD, «Commentary», 32.

⁶⁵ In connection with this occurrence of the term, Gérard Philips in his commentary gives the following definition of the *sensus fidei*: «La foi suppose à l'égard de la vérité révélée une réceptivité et une espèce d'affinité que l'Esprit Saint répand dans le coeur de la communauté hiérarchiquement organisée» (G. PHILIPS, *L'Église et son mystère*, 170).

⁶⁶ On this point Francis Sullivan likens the gift to Thomas Aquinas' idea of connaturality whereby a person deeply committed to a virtue will instinctively tend to make right judgements in matters that pertain to that virtue (see F. SULLIVAN, *Magisterium*, 22).

of believers, united with Christ (and in harmony with the magisterium and theologians), can intuitively judge whether doctrines are compatible with their experience of faith. So faith is not only the result of revelation received, but plays an integral part in the transmission of revelation as the Christian community, living their faith, advances «towards the fullness of God's truth» (DV 8)⁶⁷.

3.6 *The Transmission of Revelation*⁶⁸

How is revelation passed on and how is this accomplished faithfully in time and space without its becoming defective in any way? The answer from the Council of Trent was that the gospel of Christ which is the source of the truth of salvation and the rule of conduct, is «contained in written books and in unwritten traditions which were received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or else have come down to us, handed on as it were from the apostles themselves at the inspiration of the holy Spirit»⁶⁹. This was the basis of the two-source theory which was in the minds of those preparing the initial draft of the decree on divine revelation for Vatican II.

By the time of Vatican II, with the emergence of a more dynamic view of revelation, some theologians began to focus on the passing on of the apostolic experience through the experience of the Christian community. Yves Congar was one of the most influential in this regard and is a good example of how a theologian could influence the thinking of the Council⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ Zoltán Alszegehy stresses that the understanding comes not from intelligence but an experiential knowledge based on what has been lived (see Z. ALSZEGHY, «The *Sensus Fidei*», 139).

⁶⁸ Recently there have been proposals for new ways to integrate theology and tradition (for example, in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer), but the details of these developments are considered to be beyond the scope of the present study.

⁶⁹ Council of Trent, Session 4, *First Decree: Acceptance of the Sacred Books and Apostolic Traditions*.

⁷⁰ In fact Yves Congar had an influence, not just with his *Tradition et les traditions* (vol. 1 published in 1960 and the second volume before the second session of the Council in 1963), but also in his constructive critique throughout the Council. During the preparatory period (1960) he sent a 27-page report to the Preparatory Theological Commission, proposing alternatives to an intellectualist, propositional view of revelation and to a material approach to tradition (see U. BETTI, *La dottrina del Concilio Vaticano II*, 22.). These ideas did not find a place in the official schema. So before the official schema (*De fontibus revelationis*) was presented in November 1962, an alternative text

Referring to the presence of the dynamic view of revelation in chapter II of *Dei verbum*, Joseph Ratzinger says, «It is not difficult to recognize the pen of Yves Congar in the text»⁷¹. Congar describes tradition in terms of continual renewal and fertility within the church. Within this process continuity of identity is guaranteed by the active presence of the holy Spirit⁷².

In considering tradition it is important to be aware of the different understandings of the term. With the apostles the transmission of revelation practically coincides with the constitution of the revealed deposit. For the bishops, their successors, it is different. Thus there are both constitutive and transmissive phases to tradition. Formerly the focus was on the constitutive phase, and tradition was seen in an objective sense as truths to be passed on. Recent developments pay heed to the transmissive phase and see tradition in terms of *paradosis*: the handing on process itself⁷³.

Signs of both the objective and the dynamic views on tradition appear in chapter II of *Dei verbum*. This presents some difficulties in understanding

edited by Congar, entitled *De traditione et scriptura*, was distributed to the Fathers. The alternative text explained that tradition was the whole of the apostolic activity and a living reality in the church which is the loving, praying vessel in which tradition is preserved (BETTI, 41-42). The text, supported by the French bishops, was very influential. After a heated debate the official schema was withdrawn. The following year (July 1963) Congar wrote a report for the French Bishops' Commission, saying that the schema prepared by the Mixed Commission was «assez médiocre» and that «Il devra être sérieusement amendé» (BETTI, 308). In 1964, now a member of a special sub-Commission to the Theological Commission, he prepared a new text on tradition, taking into account the 230 pages of observations from the Council Fathers. This particular text was put aside but Congar participated in preparing the text that finally won approval.

⁷¹ J. RATZINGER, «The Transmission of Divine Revelation», 184.

⁷² Y. CONGAR, *Tradition and Traditions*, 264-265.

⁷³ At the time of the Council the meaning of tradition was being debated not only by the Catholic church. The Fourth Faith and Order Conference in Montreal (1963) distinguished *tradition*, *traditions* and *Tradition* (with a capital T). The former refers to the process of transmission from person to person, region to region, generation to generation, and also the substantive contents of whatever is transmitted. The second term denotes the several, yet specific, patterns of traditioning by which the separated churches, and church families, have come to be distinct and distinguishable one from another. The third refers to «the self-giveness of God in the self-giving of Jesus Christ» or, in other words, the gospel (see P.S. MINEAR, ed., *Faith and Order Findings*, 15-18). A. FRANZINI summarises the ideas of tradition at the Montreal Conference in *Tradizione e scrittura*, 242, fn. 120.

precisely what the Council meant by tradition⁷⁴. In the first part of *Dei verbum* 8 tradition is portrayed in the wider, more dynamic sense as the whole life of the church. What is passed on by the apostles needs the whole of the activity of the church to grow and mature. The relation between the apostolic deposit and its transmission becomes a particular example of the relation between revelation and church. However in *Dei verbum* 10, tradition is depicted in a narrower sense, as the original apostolic preaching. It is an objective reality which along with scripture is the norm and reference for the life of the church⁷⁵.

The inclusion of different views in *Dei verbum* leaves some issues open to discussion and interpretation. The idea of tradition expressed in *Dei verbum* 8 is certainly wider than the classical post-Tridentine view of the «oral» transmission of doctrine. If the church passes on «all that it is and all that it believes», presumably this includes scripture, patristic teaching, magisterial teaching, confessions of faith, sacraments, etc. But this makes it difficult to distinguish the apostolic tradition from the ecclesiastical traditions thus blurring the distinction between divine revelation and church teaching⁷⁶. It is important to consider chapter II of *Dei verbum* as a whole and to note that *Dei verbum* 10 distinguishes church magisterium and tradition (in its narrow sense). The magisterium is at the service of the word of God (revelation). It appears that the Council did not wish to enter into the question of tradition (in its broader sense as the life of the church) being judged by the word of God⁷⁷.

⁷⁴ A. Franzini, citing P.S. Minear, terms it an «elusività semantica» (A. FRANZINI, *Tradizione e scrittura*, 242). J. Ratzinger says that chapter II of *DV* «still bears the marks of the bitter struggle from which the final version of the text emerged» (J. RATZINGER, «The Transmission of Divine Revelation», 181).

⁷⁵ For a discussion of the various meanings of the term tradition in *Dei verbum*, see A. VARGAS-MACHUCA, «Escritura y tradición», 189-204.

⁷⁶ Joseph Ratzinger notes the objection of Card. Meyer in the cardinal's speech to the Council on 30 September 1964. The cardinal pointed out how not every tradition that arises in the church is a true celebration and keeping present of the mystery of Christ. There can be distortions. Ratzinger adds that the text is unclear and «must be regarded as unsatisfactory, and it is to be regretted that the suggestion of the American Cardinal was not, in fact, taken up» (J. RATZINGER, «The Transmission of Divine Revelation», 185).

⁷⁷ Joseph Ratzinger says that Vatican II «more or less ignored the whole question of the criticism of tradition», and «that this opportunity has been missed can only be regarded as an unfortunate omission» (J. RATZINGER, «The Transmission of Divine Revelation», 185, 193). However A. Franzini is of the opinion that the mirror image in

If tradition is taken in its objective sense then one may ask what is handed on. The Council states that it is «whatever they had received from Christ's lips, his way or life or his works, or had learned by the prompting of the holy Spirit» (DV 7). In other words, it is the totality of the apostolic preaching⁷⁸. This preaching was expressed in a special way in the scriptures. How scripture relates to tradition will be addressed in the next section. First there is another point to clarify. How does official church teaching (dogma) relate to the apostolic preaching? Does it mean as some claim that the church «adds» to revelation?

The question of the development of dogma came to a head in the controversy concerning the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. Without biblical proof, the onus was put on tradition which could no longer be understood simply as the passing on of a datum from apostolic times. So tradition had to be understood in terms of growth and progress. Various theories were proposed⁷⁹. For example, Maurice Blondel expressed the development in terms of the metaphor of the conversion into small coin (*monnayant*) of the apostolic deposit⁸⁰.

The coining metaphor was further developed in the theological theories of Pierre Rousselot, Henri de Lubac and others. Rousselot pointed out how the treasure of divine truth is hidden in the Word Incarnate⁸¹. So dogmatic development is not logical but *christological*: it is an attempt to *monnayer* Jesus⁸². Thus revelation and doctrinal development must be thought of in terms of the mystery of Christ who gave Christianity its distinctive truth content.

DV 7 indicates that our present knowledge is imperfect and leaves open the possibility of ambiguity and deformations (see A. FRANZINI, *Tradizione e scrittura*, 248). The Decree on Ecumenism states how Christ summons the church to «continual reformation, of which it is always in need» (UR 6).

⁷⁸ This illustrates a difference between Trent and Vatican II. Where Trent referred to traditions, Vatican II refers to tradition in the singular.

⁷⁹ For a helpful summary of various theories, see A. NICHOLS, *From Newman to Congar*. For a further view on this topic see K. RAHNER, «Considerations on the Development of Dogma».

⁸⁰ M. BLONDEL, *Histoire et dogme* (Italian ed. *Storia e dogma* [1992] 107).

⁸¹ P. ROUSSELOT, «Petite théorie du développement».

⁸² Henri de Lubac uses the same expression. «All the doctrinal explications that follow the apostolic age are simply *le monnayage*, the conversion into small coin, of a treasure already possessed in its entirety by the primitive Church» (cited in A. NICHOLS, *From Newman to Congar*, 211).

Vatican II profited from these theological developments. In *Dei verbum* 8 we read that tradition «makes progress» (*traditio proficit*), and «there is a growth in understanding» (*crescit perceptio*) of what is handed on. The juxtaposition of these two statements is in itself a development from the teaching of Vatican I where revealed doctrine, revelation, and the deposit of faith were seen as the same reality⁸³.

In changing from a propositional understanding to a christological one, Vatican II could bypass the problem of narrow and broad senses of tradition. The Council was free to recognise the progress of tradition through theological reflection, faith experience, and church teaching since tradition is the unfolding of the mystery of Christ within the church. It is ultimately based on the belief that the Christ event cannot be limited to the age of the historical Jesus, but continues in the presence of the Spirit as the church remembers and assimilates that event into the experience of the present.

Revelation does not change but our experience of it does. Tradition is the unfolding of revelation as Christ speaks to our experience in new ways. Tradition hands on revelation but is not the word of God in the way that scripture is. How this is so will become clearer in the next section.

3.7 *Revelation and Scripture*

In the previous section it was noted that tradition appears in *Dei verbum* in two ways: as the dynamic of passing on the apostolic deposit in the life of the church, and as an objective source of our knowledge of revelation. When tradition is considered in a broader sense in the first part of *Dei verbum* 7 the term gospel is used, but there is no mention of scripture. It is as though scripture is a part of tradition. But when tradition is taken in a more restricted sense, then scripture is explicitly mentioned along with tradition⁸⁴. These different viewpoints illustrate the complexity of the relationship of scripture and tradition: an issue which Vatican II did not fully resolve.

Prior to the matter of the relationship of scripture and tradition there is a question which needs clarification. In what way and to what degree is revelation contained in scripture? This was a much-debated issue at Vatican II. At Trent the Council Fathers linked scripture and tradition with «*et*» and

⁸³ *Dei Filius*, chap. 4 (see R. LATOURELLE, *Theology of Revelation*, 265).

⁸⁴ For further discussion on this point, see A. FRANZINI, *Tradizione e scrittura*, 242-243.

left the question open about whether scripture contains materially all the essential truths of the Christian faith⁸⁵. Vatican II did not resolve the issue either⁸⁶. Scripture is affirmed as «the utterance of God as it is set down in writing under the guidance of God's Spirit» (DV 9), but there is no statement as to whether or not the whole of revelation can be found in scripture either explicitly or implicitly.

In order to avoid the polemic over the word *fons* (source/spring), Vatican II uses the term *scaturigo* (wellspring). Scripture and tradition both «flow from the same divine wellspring»⁸⁷. They «are bound together in a close and reciprocal relationship» and «merge together to some extent» (DV 9)⁸⁸.

A minority group were not satisfied with this new way of thinking and as a consequence on 18 October 1964, Pope Paul VI intervened with a letter asking for clarification on tradition, inerrancy and historicity. Following that intervention a statement was included in the second part of *Dei verbum* 9: «The church's certainty about all that is revealed is not drawn from holy scripture alone»⁸⁹.

So the first part of *Dei verbum* 9 views scripture and tradition together in a broad interpretation of tradition. The second part differentiates them. The distinction does not concern sources, but certainty. Scripture is the

⁸⁵ J.R. Geiselmann is noted for his studies in this area. He was of the opinion that some of the Trent Fathers had supported the *sola scriptura* idea and concluded that the Council of Trent had not desired to make any statements about the relation between scripture and tradition and had also left open the possibility of the material completeness of scripture. Joseph Ratzinger comments that «Geiselmann's views were greeted immediately with both enthusiastic acceptance and violent rejection» at the Council (J. RATZINGER, «Dogmatic Constitution», 156). Ratzinger provides further bibliographical information, p. 156, fn. 5.

⁸⁶ This was the main topic for the debate in the Council from 30 September – 6 October 1964 (see J. RATZINGER, «Dogmatic Constitution», 163).

⁸⁷ In his report on the discussion surrounding this change of terminology, Umberto Betti notes that *scaturigo* refers not to the source itself (God) but to «ciò che promana dalla fonte, cioè la Tradizione e la Scrittura» (U. BETTI, *La dottrina del Concilio Vaticano II*, 117-118).

⁸⁸ A. Franzini notes an additional «third» source suggested in DV 7: the action of the holy Spirit (see A. FRANZINI, *Tradizione e scrittura*, 226).

⁸⁹ J. RATZINGER, «Dogmatic Constitution», 164; ID., «The Transmission of Divine Revelation», 190-196. After that addition there was another which pleased the more conservative members and caused difficulties for ecumenism — a formula from Trent: «Both scripture and tradition are to be accepted and honoured with like devotion and reverence» (see Council of Trent, Session 4, *First Decree: Acceptance of the Sacred Books and Apostolic Traditions*).

«utterance of God». Tradition «preserves» the word of God. Thus tradition is differentiated from scripture and defined by its conserving and guaranteeing function.

There is another way that the Council faced the issue of the relation of tradition and scripture to revelation by bringing them together on the christological and ecclesiological level. Karl Rahner made a significant contribution to the debate on this issue in an article entitled «Scripture and Tradition», published during the early stages of the Council⁹⁰. Rahner argues that revelation in its true sense is the revealing deed of God and a constitutive element of this act is the Word becoming flesh, and the handing over of Jesus Christ in the paschal mystery. This unique and final event which Rahner calls the *traditio Jesu Christi* (self-tradition of Jesus Christ), is one moment of *traditio* (handing over). Those who encountered this mystery (the community of believers) have in turn handed on their experience and this has expressed itself in scripture. So we have a handing-on of a handing-on, and scripture is itself a mode of tradition because it is a means of handing on the meaning of the self-tradition of Jesus Christ. But one can never exhaust the meaning of the event of the revelation of God. It cannot be reduced to words alone. So scripture is always part of the transmission of living faith⁹¹.

Taking up this point the Council says that in its «teaching, life and worship» the church perpetuates and hands on what it is and what it believes (DV 8). This is firstly a statement about tradition, but it is also

⁹⁰ K. RAHNER, «Scripture and Tradition». Rahner played an important role in the theological debates, especially during the early period of the Council. Umberto Betti recounts how before the ill-fated «two-sources» schema was presented to the Council «Un antischema vero e proprio, costruito a tempo di record» was composed, principally by Rahner (U. BETTI, *La dottrina del Concilio Vaticano II*, 39-40). Rahner played a major role in the Fulda Conference between the first and second sessions of the Council (see R. WILTGEN, *The Rhine Flows*, 80). In his work with the Mixed Commission Rahner produced several texts, including: *De revelatione Dei et hominis in Iesu Christo facta* (BETTI, *La dottrina*, 299-302), and *Novus textus proponitur de traditione* (*Ibid.*, 322-323). Wiltgen comments that Card. Frings, one of the four Cardinal Moderators «had leaned heavily upon the theologian Father Rahner; but by the end of the Council, he had come to be more cautious in accepting his proposals» (WILTGEN, *The Rhine Flows* 285).

⁹¹ Yves Congar, viewing the scripture-tradition relationship from another perspective says, «Scripture, as the prophetic and apostolic witness to God's plan *explains itself* in tradition» (Y. CONGAR, *Tradition and Traditions*, 267).

about scripture because scripture is an essential part of all three functions of the church.

The church has always considered the scriptures «together with tradition, as the supreme rule of its faith» (*DV* 21). The same article of *Dei verbum* continues: «all the church's preaching, no less than the whole christian religion, ought to be nourished and ruled by holy scripture». Thus scripture plays a privileged part in church teaching.

Concerning church life, *Dei verbum* 23 affirms how the church «strives to attain, day by day, to an ever deeper understanding of holy scripture». The whole of *Dei verbum* 25 is an exhortation to promote the use of scripture in the daily life of the church.

Dei verbum 21 contains a profound reflection on scripture and worship. «The church has always held the divine scriptures in reverence no less than it accords to the Lord's body itself, never ceasing — especially in the sacred liturgy — to receive the bread of life from the one table of God's word and Christ's body, and to offer it to the faithful». In this way the scriptural testimony is actualised in church worship⁹².

Scripture plays a special part in handing on the apostolic faith. Thus scripture and tradition come together in the constitutive history of revelation. They are also linked in the transmission of revelation in the teaching, life, and worship of the church. Revelation as word and event is passed on in the word and event of the church.

3.8 Ongoing Revelation

Dei verbum teaches that through tradition scripture comes to be more profoundly understood and in this way «the God who spoke of old still maintains an uninterrupted conversation with the bride of his beloved Son» (*DV* 8). Does this mean that God's revelation continues today? *Dei verbum* does not dwell explicitly on the question of ongoing revelation, but states that «God is with us» (*DV* 4), implying that God's saving presence is revealed today. Some bishops wanted to include a statement about the closure of revelation with the apostles⁹³. However, the proposal was expressly excluded⁹⁴. The Council was concerned to point out that God has

⁹² For a fuller commentary on the place of scripture in the teaching life and worship of the church, see A. FRANZINI, *Tradizione e scrittura*, 234-240.

⁹³ For example, the intervention of Card. E. Ruffini on 30 September 1964 (see *AS* III,III, 142-145).

⁹⁴ See F. GIL HELLÍN, *Dei Verbum*, 34.

spoken through Jesus Christ in a way that is unsurpassable and in a way that is irrevocably valid for all time⁹⁵. Thus *Dei verbum* 4 closes with a statement that «no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ». Faith proclaims Christ as the eternal Word of God who has come and who is to come.

Other Vatican II documents are more explicit, referring to God's self-revelation in the present tense, for example, *Dignitatis humanae* 10 and *Ad gentes* 8. In *Gaudium et spes* 58 we learn how God continues to speak to humanity through the life of the church and the events of history⁹⁶. Avery Dulles comments that the Council «did not spell out the concept of revelation underlying documents such as *Gaudium et spes*, but it is fair to say that these documents "rest upon a more developed notion of revelation than that which has yet surfaced"»⁹⁷.

What is this more developed notion of revelation which is only presumed or hinted at in the documents? When revelation is thought of in terms of propositions or truths it is not difficult to conceive of these truths being passed on to us in the present and on indefinitely into the future. When revelation is understood as event (the event of God's self-communication) several problems emerge. One problem is, how and in what sense that event continues to exist. An event in which one participates and a story about an event in someone else's past are quite different things⁹⁸. How can revelation consisting of events in the past be revelation for us in the present? This requires a dynamic understanding of tradition, not simply remembering or interpreting, but helping to actualise the living event of the divine self-communication⁹⁹. This leads to another problem: whether, and in what sense, we can say that revelation continues. If history is a means of revelation and constitutive of it, why should it not be ongoing in our time?

The answer given by the Council is that: «In revealing himself to his people [...] God has spoken in terms of the culture peculiar to different

⁹⁵ In Jesus Christ God has «said himself» and there is nothing more to say (J. RATZINGER, «Revelation Itself», 175). He refers to K. RAHNER, «The Development of Dogma», in particular, p. 49.

⁹⁶ Avery Dulles says: «The Pastoral Constitution [GS], with its positive orientation toward contemporary secular history, implicitly affirms that revelation is a continuing process, and that it must be newly expressed for every age in prophetic witness» (A. DULLES, *Revelation Theology*, 158).

⁹⁷ A. DULLES, *Revelation Theology*, 158. He quotes from Gabriel Moran, «The God of Revelation», in D. Callahan, ed., *God, Jesus, and Spirit*, 7.

⁹⁸ This point is stressed in G. MORAN, *Theology of Revelation*, 54.

⁹⁹ G. O'COLLINS, «Revelation Past and Present», 125-137.

ages» (GS 58). God's self-manifestation is not confined to any one time or place. God's saving presence continues today in the light of Christ who is the image of the invisible God (GS 10) and in the church which is the mystical body of Christ (LG 7). So for post-apostolic christians God's revelation continues in their experience of the divine self-communication in and through Christ¹⁰⁰. Some call this «dependent» as compared with «foundational» revelation¹⁰¹.

In dependent revelation God's word and the event of Christ continue to be an ever-present saving reality for humanity. The event of Jesus Christ is insurpassable but the history of faith continues¹⁰². God continues to be encountered in the living dialogue of faith. The self-manifestation of God is not finished. It is ongoing in the church, through the power of the Spirit, realising the kingdom in deeds and words.

There is still another understanding of revelation which forms part of the «more developed notion of revelation» referred to above. This understanding, which Rahner calls «universal» or «transcendental» revelation, is hinted at in *Gaudium et spes* and *Ad gentes* but was not dealt with explicitly at the time of the Council¹⁰³.

¹⁰⁰ Gerald O'Collins writes: «The divine self-communication is present and at work when those who are already Christians grow "in Christ", know more fully his power in their weakness and enter more deeply into the life of the Trinity: through the sacraments, sermons, the reading of the Scriptures, loving activity with and for others, episodes of suffering and any other concrete means (of a dramatic or an everyday kind) that convey revelation and grace» (G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, 100).

¹⁰¹ Gerald O'Collins uses the terms foundational and dependent revelation to differentiate the normative apostolic experience of revelation from the experience of post-apostolic christians dependent upon the event of Jesus Christ (see G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, 101). In practice, «dependent», «ongoing», and «continuing» revelation refer to the same reality.

¹⁰² On this point about insurpassability (*unüberholbarkeit*), see K. RAHNER, «The death of Jesus», 322.

¹⁰³ This view corresponds to a large extent with Avery Dulles' fifth model: revelation as new awareness (see the discussion in A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, 98-114). Criticisms and difficulties are discussed on pp. 111-114 of that work. It is discussed in terms of «personalist and existential theories» in an earlier but nonetheless interesting study by A. DULLES: «The Problem of Revelation». The question of universal revelation will reappear in section 3.11 on revelation beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition.

3.9 Revelation and the «Signs of the Times»

The phrase «signs of the times» was used by Pope John XXIII in *Humanae salutis* at the convocation of the Council (25 December 1961)¹⁰⁴. During the Council, in his encyclical *Pacem in terris* (11 April 1963), the pope devoted a section (pars. 39-45) to «the distinctive characteristics (*notis distinguitur*) of our age», including new opportunities for the working classes and for women, and the end of colonialism¹⁰⁵. John XXIII says that with such developments people come to understand better the meaning and significance of truth, justice, charity and freedom and «are brought to a better knowledge of the true God who is personal and transcendent»¹⁰⁶.

In *Humanae salutis* the pope cited Mt 16,4, for «the signs of the times» is a biblical term. However Pope John did not use the term in its biblical eschatological sense, but as indications of the key movements in history, and of what the Lord wants of the church in this world now and in the future¹⁰⁷.

The expression «signs of the times» appears in several places in the Vatican II documents¹⁰⁸. Here examples will be taken from *Gaudium et spes*. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World is unique in the way it attempts to give full recognition to the historicity of the world and the life of the church itself which is bound up with it. The tortuous history of the document which was completely rewritten at least five times illustrates the difficulty of this task¹⁰⁹. The expression was

¹⁰⁴ «Indeed, we make ours the recommendation of Jesus that one should know how to distinguish the “signs of the times” (Mt 16,4), and we seem to see now, in the midst of so much darkness, a few indications which auger well for the fate of the Church and of humanity» (POPE JOHN XXIII, *Humanae salutis*, AAS 54, 6; E.T., Abbott, 704).

¹⁰⁵ POPE JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, AAS 55, 257-304.

¹⁰⁶ Marie-Dominique Chenu points out, «ciascuna delle quattro parti dell’enciclica *Pacem in terris*, 11 aprile 1963, si concludeva con la citazione dei “segni dei tempi!” come di altrettante manifestazioni dei valori evangelici che operano all’interno dei movimenti della storia» (M.-D. CHENU, «I segni dei tempi», 87).

¹⁰⁷ M. McGRATH, «The Impact of *Gaudium et spes*», 64.

¹⁰⁸ *Presbyterorum ordinis* 9; *Dignitatis humanae* 15; *Apostolicam actuositatem* 14; *Sacrosanctum concilium* 43; *Unitatis redintegratio* 4; *Gaudium et spes* 4.

¹⁰⁹ C. MOELLER, in «History of the Constitution», describes the history of the *Gaudium et spes*. Moeller shows how the very idea of the Pastoral Constitution goes back to Pope John XXIII’s fundamental intentions for the Council. However the impulse which led to the decision to produce a schema on the church in the world came from Dom Helder Câmara of Brazil, and a speech about the church *ad intra* and *ad extra* by

introduced during the formulation work in 1964, but because of the protests of scripture scholars was changed to «signs of God's presence». Later it was reinstated in *Gaudium et spes* 4, while *Gaudium et spes* 11 retains «the true signs of God's presence and purpose»¹¹⁰.

In a *relatio* to the Council on 12 November 1965 Bishop McGrath explained why it was necessary for the church to scrutinise the «signs of the times» saying that the expression as used in *Gaudium et spes* 4 was not to be taken in its special scriptural sense but with the general meaning it has in Pope John XXIII's encyclical¹¹¹. So the expression refers to the main facts which characterise an age. Through its prophetic office the church is to read these signs and thus offer humanity «replies to the continual human questionings on the meaning of this life and the life to come and on how they are related» (*GS* 4).

Gaudium et spes 44 refers to the need for God's people «to listen to the various voices of our day, discerning them and interpreting them, and to evaluate them in the light of the divine word, so that the revealed truth can be increasingly appropriated, better understood and more suitably expressed». While put in terms of *vox temporis*, *vox Dei*, it obviously refers to the same process of discernment as the «signs of the times».

The early attempts to relate the church and the modern world were based on the social teaching of the church up to that time. However this often reflected a dualism of the spiritual as opposed to the material. From this

Card. Suenens. With the collaboration of the Theological Commission and the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity the work continued right up to the end of the Fourth Session. Factors influencing the document included ecumenical collaboration with members of the World Council of Churches. Referring to the warm ecumenical climate during work on the constitution in Zurich, Moeller comments, «Even before the idea of the signs of the times which have to be read played any part in the text of the schema, it was brought to the attention of the members of the Central Subcommittee» (*Ibid.*, 31). The expression first appears in a draft of April 1964. Later a special Subcommittee for the Signs of the Times met during the Third Session of the Council and produced a document of 87 closely written pages. For various reasons their work was not well accepted. François Houtart was one of the secretaries of the Subcommittee. His book *L'Église et le monde* was published at this time. Moeller's commentary on the introductory statement of the Constitution details the history and fate of the expression «signs of the times» in the various texts (C. MOELLER, «History of the Constitution», 93-100). In the end, the term appears only once (*GS* 4) but in fact each chapter in part 2 begins with these signs and then proceeds to principles.

¹¹⁰ Details are in M.-D. CHENU, «I segni dei tempi», 91-92.

¹¹¹ C. MOELLER, «History of the Constitution», 97.

perspective the historicity of the world is not taken seriously. Historical reality is too easily reduced to a reflection of some heavenly reality¹¹². However with the «signs of the times», history becomes the subject of grace as the church reads in historical reality itself the summons of the gospel. Reading the «signs of the times» is discovering God's grace at work in the world and in history¹¹³.

The «signs of the times» are a form of dependent revelation¹¹⁴. Just as in the foundational history of revelation there were events in which God was present in a special way, so today there are signs which indicate God's intention to reveal and save. As *Gaudium et spes* 4 states, we read these phenomena in the light of the gospel. So they do not reveal any new public revelation. Rather they are a form of revelation dependent on the foundational revelation in Christ.

Discerning the signs for tomorrow's weather is one thing. At least the advance of science has increased the range of weather forecasting. But that has not made the discernment of the «signs of the times» any easier because in a theological sense it means interpreting the meaning of history itself from the perspective of faith in the conviction that God speaks to us in our contemporary situation. Reading the «signs of the times» is a means

¹¹² The point is taken up by Y. CONGAR in *Le concile au jour le jour*. Troisième session, 144. Congar adds (p. 166): «L'Eglise est dans le monde et dans l'histoire, mais le monde et l'histoire sont dans un ordre surnaturel dont le Christ est le principe, dont l'Eglise est le moyen positivement institué de révélation et de réalisation. Nous entendons ici par "ordre" un certain niveau ou une certaine qualité d'existence déterminés par une fin et assurés par certains moyens proportionnés à cette fin. Ce sens est assez proche de celui dans lequel on parle d'ordre minéral, végétal, animal, ou de celui de Pascal dans le fameux fragment 793 des *Pensées* sur les trois ordres, car il s'agit de niveau ou de qualité d'existence. Mais ici, "ordre surnaturel" englobe la totalité du monde historique en tant qu'il est lié à l'homme dont la vie se qualifie par la fin dernière à laquelle elle est ordonnée». These ideas will be taken up later by Gustavo Gutiérrez.

¹¹³ M.-D. CHENU, «I segni dei tempi», 95, 102.

¹¹⁴ G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, 102-107. O'Collins shows how there are both positive and negative «signs of the times». The bishops at the 1985 Extraordinary Synod point to misery, division, and violence. However the signs given at Vatican II tend to be positive. Dulles comments that the bishops at the Synod «without opposing Vatican II, were inclined to think that the Council had spoken somewhat naively in a situation that no longer exists, when secular society all over the world seemed to be converging toward greater freedom, prosperity, and universal harmony. The signs of the times today, according to these bishops, are almost the contrary» (A. DULLES, «The Reception of Vatican II», 353).

of knowing God's revelation because it is a way of discerning the demands of God's will in history.

3.10 *Revelation and the Kingdom*

Ideas about the kingdom can vary greatly. In his book *Models of the Kingdom*, Howard Snyder distinguishes eight models of the kingdom as found in scripture and church history¹¹⁵. There are 85 references to the kingdom (variations of the term *regnum*) in the Vatican II documents but no definition of it. The meaning has to be found in the context of the various expressions (kingdom of God, of Christ, of heaven, of truth and life, etc.)¹¹⁶ The greatest number of occurrences is in *Lumen gentium* (x 42). There are 13 references in *Gaudium et spes*, 8 in *Ad gentes* and 2 in *Dei verbum*¹¹⁷.

The first chapter of *Dei verbum* begins: «It has pleased God [...] to reveal himself and to make known the secret purpose of his will» (*DV* 2). The mystery of God's will is one way of representing the content of revelation. Jesus told us about the inner life of God and revealed God's will which is that we should share in God's divine nature. Thus «Jesus completes the work of revelation» by his words and works and symbolic acts (*DV* 4). There is a similar reference in the first part of *Lumen gentium* which gives a brief history of salvation in which God's gracious design for humanity is revealed, especially in Christ. Where *Dei verbum* refers to revelation, *Lumen gentium* refers to the kingdom. God's kingdom «shines forth for humanity in the words, works and presence of Christ» (*LG* 5). *Lumen*

¹¹⁵ H.A. SNYDER, *Models of the Kingdom*. The models include the kingdom' as: future hope, inner spiritual experience, mystical communion, institutional church, countersystem, political state, Christianised society and earthly utopia. According to Snyder the kingdom of God came increasingly to be associated with the institutional church and was the dominant view of medieval Christianity and of Roman Catholicism until Vatican II (p. 71). Jacques Dupuis says that only with the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* (1990) has there been a clear distinction between the church and the reign of God in their pilgrimage through history (see J. DUPUIS, «Evangelization and Kingdom Values», 8).

¹¹⁶ These are basically the same, though not identical. For example: The kingdom of God refers to the salvific and creative will of God considered in its totality and in its fulfilment at the end of time. The kingdom of Christ is more specifically concerned with the historical and cosmic process stretching from the Ascension to the Parousia (see O. CULLMANN, *La royauté du Christ*, 1-59).

¹¹⁷ X. OCHOA, *Index verborum*, 423-424.

gentium continues: Faithfully carrying on the mission of the Son, the church is sent to all nations to announce «the kingdom of Christ and of God» thus acting as a sacrament of the salvific design of God. It appears that the kingdom and salvation refer to the same dynamic reality. The seeds of the kingdom are the first signs of the mystery of God's salvific will¹¹⁸.

God wanted to raise human beings to share in the divine life (LG 2), and chose us in Christ to be adopted sons and daughters (LG 3). The kingdom reveals God's will of union and communion: for the human race with God and at the same time with one another. This is also a revelation of who God is, a trinitarian communion of life and love (LG 4). Christ has revealed the mystery of God's will to us, and his disciples extend his kingdom of «truth and life, the kingdom of holiness and grace, the kingdom of justice, love and peace» (LG 36). This new kingdom quality of relationship becomes a testimony of the life of Christ and a sign of the living God (LG 38). There is a similar section in *Gaudium et spes*. In striving to make the world a better place followers of Christ are «making preparations for the heavenly kingdom» (GS 38). They show that the fundamental law of human perfection and of the world's transformation is the command of love. At the same time this reveals to us that «God is love».

The kingdom also brings out the eschatological dimension of revelation¹¹⁹. Accounts typically look at the origins of revelation and then trace this to the fullness of revelation in Christ. The kingdom helps direct our interest to the future. We await the fullness of the kingdom when the mystery of God's salvific design will be realised at «the climax of human history which is in full accord with the design of his love, "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1,10)» (GS 45)¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ In the same chapter of Mark's gospel both the word of God (Mk 4,14) and the kingdom (Mk 4,26) are compared to seed being sown. In the first passage the seed is the word. In the second the maturation of the kingdom is compared to the gradual but inevitable growth of a seed.

¹¹⁹ Marc Michel shows how the eschatological perspective was integrated into the theology of church in Vatican II (see M. MICHEL, «Le retour de l'eschatologie», 187-188). Also see S. BENKO, «The Kingdom of God in the Documents of Vatican II», 576-577.

¹²⁰ In LG 50 there is a reference to how God, in the lives of the faithful and saints who have gone before us, «speaks to us in them and provides us with a sign of his kingdom». The reference given is to *Dei Filius*, chap. 3 from Vatican I. There it is mainly miracles and prophecies (and the testimony of the church itself) that are seen as the signs of the credibility of God's revelation. In *Dei verbum*, with its christological emphasis, the words and deeds of Jesus are the principle signs of «the reign of God on

From the eschatological perspective we see the link between the fullness of the kingdom and the final eschatological revelation in «the glorious manifestation of our lord Jesus Christ» (DV 4).

So the kingdom and revelation are closely linked. The content of revelation is the salvific will of God which finds its fullness in Jesus Christ. Jesus preached the kingdom of God (Mk 1,15). The «signs of the times» may be seen as signs of the presence of the kingdom of God in our midst¹²¹. Not only are the signs of the kingdom today a form of dependent revelation but they also help to reveal God as a communion of life and love. The kingdom is particularly helpful in calling our attention to the eschatological dimension of revelation in the day of full and final salvation.

3.11 *Revelation beyond the Judeo-Christian Tradition*

Until this point the focus has been on God's revelation seen in the history of salvation through the people of Israel and its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. However it is necessary to consider whether and to what degree the Council recognises divine revelation beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Dei verbum acknowledges that creation offers a lasting *testimony* to God (DV 3)¹²². *Dei verbum* also displays an openness to religious knowledge that is a preparation for the gospel (DV 6). But these are exceptions to the strictly Judeo-Christian focus of that document¹²³.

earth» (DV 17). The difference in perspective is an indication of the development in understanding during the course of the Second Vatican Council.

¹²¹ J. FUELLENBACH, *The Kingdom of God*, 1-5.

¹²² Does Vatican II consider the testimony to God in creation to be revelation? It is difficult to give an unqualified answer. At least the positive response of Vatican I is not denied by Vatican II. René Latourelle says that the Council reserves the term revelation for «historical revelation» and uses the term testimony for what he calls «cosmic revelation» (e.g., DV 3); (see R. LATOURELLE, «Dei Verbum: Commentary», 221). The distinction appears helpful; however in *Dei verbum* the term testimony is used for different forms of revelation and not just the testimony of God in created realities. For example, DV 4 refers to the divine testimony (*testimonio*) of the Spirit. Cf. GS 36: «And all believers of whatever religion have always sensed the voice and manifestation (*manifestationem*) of the creator in the utterances of creatures». This passage in the context of an article on the relation between faith and science, is using the term (*manifestationem*) to refer to people knowing God through created realities. It is not simply a matter of humankind searching for God, but of God speaking from within the created world.

¹²³ Referring to revelation in DV, Karl Rahner writes: «We may well think that the Constitution on revelation — which assumes that revelation begins in the Old

Several other documents take up the theme of a preparation for the gospel and show an effort to broaden the scope of revelation. *Lumen gentium*, one of the earlier documents of the Council, addresses the question of salvation for those who have not yet accepted the gospel. God is not far from those «who search for the unknown God in shadows and images». Whatever goodness and truth is found amongst them is considered a preparation for the gospel and given by «him who enlightens everyone that they may in the end have life» (LG 16).

Later documents, such as *Nostra aetate*, acknowledge that there are different grades of the knowledge of God in religions other than christianity. *Nostra aetate* sees not only the possibility of knowing God, but the reality of it¹²⁴. Religions «reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens everyone» (NA 2). *Ad gentes* refers to truth and grace already to be found among peoples, that is in fact a secret presence of God (AG 9).

Is the phrase «seeds of the word» used in the sense of revelation in other religions? The expression is used in different senses. It is most frequently used to refer to a preparation for the gospel, even in our day. For example, *Lumen gentium* 36 refers to people's work preparing the world for the seed of the divine word. However the expression «seeds of the word» as used in *Ad gentes* 11 refers to discovering the presence of the word of God in people's religious traditions. The expression as used in *Ad gentes* 11 comes from Justin who taught that the seed of the *Logos* was sown in the pre-christian religious traditions. What was shown partially in these traditions was totally revealed in the incarnation¹²⁵. In addition, *Lumen gentium* 17 refers to the «good seed» found in people's hearts and minds, rites and cultures, being *brought to completion* in Christ. So Christ does not bring

Testament, with Abraham — does not exactly present a concept of “revelation” which is easily accessible to African and Asian cultures» (K. RAHNER, «Basic Theological Interpretation», 81).

¹²⁴ Vatican I used the distinction: natural/supernatural knowledge of God. *Nostra aetate* reflects a change of approach. The natural/supernatural distinction is no longer employed and the religions are recognised as possessing what is «true and holy». *Ad gentes* 9 declares that there is in fact truth and grace in the religions. The change is reflected in the call to dialogue by Pope Paul VI in *Ecclesiam suam*, published during the Second Vatican Council.

¹²⁵ JUSTIN, 2 *Apol.*, 6,3; 8,1; 10,1-3. For further discussion on Justin and the «seeds of the Word» see J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ and His Spirit*, 3-19; also, ID., *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 133. Another expression is *praeparatio evangelica* from EUSEBIUS of Caesarea, *Praeparatio evangelica*, 1, 1.

about a totally new reality, but realises something already begun by the *Logos*.

While not referring explicitly to the religions as mediums of divine revelation, the possibility is there to be developed. Members of other religions have a genuine experience of God¹²⁶. People search for God with a sincere heart and «under the influence of grace» and try to put into effect the will of God. Others strive «not without divine grace» to lead an upright life (LG 16). Such people can attain salvation. If grace is the active presence of God in us and salvation comes from the acceptance of God's active presence, then one could hardly say that there has not been divine self-communication, that is, revelation¹²⁷.

A major difficulty is to find a suitable way to refer to such revelation. Most attempts rely on the work of Karl Rahner, who refers to transcendental or universal revelation. But this is not entirely satisfactory. Not everyone accepts Rahner's theory. Universal revelation may have only virtual existence¹²⁸. Also there is a danger of gnosticism if one would think of christian revelation only in terms of a new awareness of the truths of salvation as some proponents of the theory tend to do.

Elements of a possible solution may be found in the documents themselves. *Gaudium et spes* 22 refers to grace secretly at work in the hearts of all people of good will. *Ad gentes* 9 refers to the secret presence of God among peoples. Naming that presence along with a renewed theology of the Spirit of Christ may make explicit what occurs only implicitly and unsystematically in the documents of the Council¹²⁹.

4. Some Developments since the Council

The 1985 extraordinary session of the Synod of Bishops met as a celebration, verification, and promotion of Vatican II. In their «Final

¹²⁶ The experience of God in other religions is developed in J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, especially p. 144.

¹²⁷ Gerald O'Collins points out the close connection between revelation and salvation and prefers the term «divine "self-communication"» (see G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, 58-59).

¹²⁸ For further comments on the virtual existence of revelation prior to faith, see A. DULLES, «The Problem of Revelation», 102.

¹²⁹ One attempt to do this is in, T. O'MEARA, «Toward a Subjective Theology of Revelation», 401-427. O'Meara says that the primary revelation of God is not Being but Presence. «"Revelation" and "grace" are subsequent, partial terms we give to that presence» (*Ibid.*, 417).

Report» the bishops reaffirm the importance of *Dei verbum* which they consider «too neglected». They also warn of the danger of «a partial reading» of *Dei verbum* and note that exegesis of scripture cannot be separated from the living tradition of the church¹³⁰. They observe that «the signs of our time are in part different from those of the time of the council, with greater problems and anguish»¹³¹. They say that this requires new and more profound theological reflection so as to interpret such signs (hunger, oppression, injustice and war, sufferings, terrorism and other forms of violence) in the light of the gospel¹³².

In the face of these developments in the world there have been new forms of theological reflection. Whether they are more profound or sufficiently orthodox for the Synod could be debated. Referring to Catholic fundamental theology, Aidan Nichols sums up the shift in attitude since the Council in three words: reception; hermeneutics; pluralism¹³³.

Yves Congar sees the notion of reception as a help towards an organically reunited Christendom¹³⁴. He gives the formation of the Canon of Scripture and the reception of the Roman liturgy as examples of reception in the early church. In more recent times Congar refers to the *re-réception* of Vatican I by Vatican II. This was accomplished by a new reading of the history and intent of Vatican I in the changed context of Vatican II. Congar says that reception does not affect the legitimacy or authenticity of the magisterium, but it does recognise and confirm that a Council teaching indeed has a value for the good of the church. Faith and tradition pertain to the whole church and reception by the universal church is a sign that the teaching is in conformity with the faith received from the apostles.

With the contemporary world sceptical about the very possibility of revelation Edward Schillebeeckx no longer presumes the starting point of

¹³⁰ SYNOD OF BISHOPS (1985), «The Final Report», 447.

¹³¹ SYNOD OF BISHOPS (1985), «The Final Report», 449.

¹³² Avery Dulles attributes this less optimistic view, at least in part, to the emergence of a «neo-Augustinian» group at the Synod. This group which emphasises the church as mystery is urging the church to take a sharper stance against the «world». Dulles concludes that the «Final Report» is an artful combination of the concerns of the neo-Augustinians, who emphasise mystery and sacred authority; the communitarians, who value communion and participation; and the liberationists, who prize the option for the poor and the oppressed (see A. DULLES, «The Reception of Vatican II», 353, 355).

¹³³ A. NICHOLS, *From Newman to Congar*, 266.

¹³⁴ Y. CONGAR, «La «Réception» comme réalité ecclésiologique».

belief as expressed in dogma (revelation-in-word), but has sought fresh ways to express the deeper underlying reality of revelation in human experience¹³⁵. He has tried to look again at scripture with the aid of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics. Schillebeeckx's view of hermeneutical theology mediating between the life of Jesus and contemporary experience does not place much importance on dogma as a way of understanding the content of the gospel.

Karl Rahner sees the development of differing hermeneutical schemas since the Council as leading the church to concentrate on the central doctrines of Christian revelation, interpreting those doctrines by means of diverse and pluralistic theologies¹³⁶. Is there a formal criterion in the light of which it can be decided what might or might not be an original part of supernatural revelation strictly so-called? According to Rahner such enquiry will lead to real pluralism in theology¹³⁷. Rahner is of the opinion that the Second Vatican Council in its recognition of the opportunity of everyone to be in touch with God's salvific revelation was the beginning of a tentative approach by the church to realise itself as a world-church¹³⁸.

Congar, Schillebeeckx, and Rahner have been mentioned because they were three influential theologians at the Council. If one were to do a comprehensive survey of theological developments since the Council that have affected fundamental theology, one would have to study Johann Metz and Walter Kasper in Germany, Claude Geffré in France, Hans Küng in Switzerland, René Latourelle in Rome, and David Tracy in the U.S.A., to name only a few influential male Western Catholic theologians. A fuller study would have to include women theologians, and theologians from other Christian traditions. In addition, there have been important developments in theology coming from the experience of the Third World.

5. Conclusion

The Council Fathers had to try to do justice to a wide variety of opinions so as to reach a moral unanimity. In the Council documents there is an

¹³⁵ E. Schillebeeckx says that Vatican II in the church was the breakthrough of the achievements of the French Revolution taking place 150 years later. The problem is, Vatican II was a catching-up manoeuvre of the church which came too late since the world had already moved on (see E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Church*, 206).

¹³⁶ A. NICHOLS, *From Newman to Congar*, 268-269.

¹³⁷ K. RAHNER, «Basic Theological Interpretation», 87-88.

¹³⁸ K. RAHNER, «The Abiding Significance of Vatican II», 100.

element of compromise and not one unified opinion that one would expect to encounter in a theological treatise by a single scholar. Nevertheless, as has been shown in reference to the wealth of scholarship on the Council, it is possible to arrive at an comprehensive understanding of the Vatican II teaching on divine revelation.

Briefly, what has been presented is as follows. The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation refers to the progressive self-communication of God in deed and word leading to a climax in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the foundation of the church as the special community of witnesses to this intervention of God in history. The experience of these events is recorded in inspired scriptures entrusted to the tradition of the church. The message of salvation is addressed to everyone and calls for a faith response in those who hear it. The truth revealed in God's word is seen in God's saving purpose and the mystery of God's will for communion with humankind. The view of revelation in *Dei verbum* is historical, biblical, interpersonal, concrete, and ecumenical¹³⁹. Other Vatican II documents add to our understanding of revelation, especially in the secular and cosmic dimensions. They help explain how we come to perceive God's revelation today in the «signs of the times», the establishment of God's kingdom, and in the salvific plan of God that has a place for all religions of the world.

The significance of the Council teaching is greater than what was said in explicit statements. The Council effected structural changes. For instance, the approval of liturgical changes and the recognition of the efforts of the biblical movement helped put scripture at the centre of church life. As a result, believers are being presented not just with doctrinal truths but with God's historical plan of salvation. Furthermore, the Council recognised, besides the magisterium, the contemplation and study by believers and their intimate understanding of spiritual things. This too has opened up new opportunities for the appreciation of God's self-communication within the whole of the faith community.

If there is a common thread running through the Vatican II teaching, it is in the dynamic vision of revelation. This vision opened up new possibilities which are only implicit in the Council documents. From the pre-conciliar neo-scholastic viewpoint, revelation had to be in ahistorical

¹³⁹ Avery Dulles says that the view of revelation in *Dei verbum* may be characterised as «concrete rather than abstract, historical rather than philosophical, biblical rather than scholastic, ecumenical rather than controversial, interpersonal rather than propositional» (A. DULLES, *Revelation Theology*, 157).

categories to preserve it from the risk of historical relativism¹⁴⁰. Vatican II recognises God's transforming presence in history. Jesus' message is that God is with us. The kingdom is already mysteriously present and at the Lord's coming it will be fully realised.

The issues opened up by the dynamic vision of revelation in Vatican II are wider than simply the relation between revelation and history. For example, this vision of revelation raises issues such as the unity of reality itself and the meaningfulness of distinctions between natural and supernatural, transcendence and immanence, nature and grace. It raises questions about the historical character of Christianity and the need for an anthropology that will take seriously the findings of historical consciousness. It brings up the issue of the particular in God's dealings with the people of Israel. With the distance of time from the controversies with Deists and Modernists, the Council, encouraged by Pope John, was prepared to risk a dialogue with a world that would inevitably raise questions about such issues.

Vatican II was a pastoral council and commissioned by Pope John to present the truth of the gospel in a way geared to the needs of the times. This means taking human experience seriously as is shown in the inductive approach of *Gaudium et spes*. But this inevitably leads to pluralism and questions about the validity of universal formulas because of the diversity of human experience. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World disclosed the need for a hermeneutical theology that tries to establish links between the tradition and present-day experience.

The teaching of Vatican II opened up new possibilities in various parts of the world. Writing in 1979 about the move toward a world-church, Karl Rahner noted that Latin America has already «staked its claim to a theology of its own», and «perhaps Africa also and the Far East will soon develop theologies of a specific character as a result of coming to terms creatively with their own cultures»¹⁴¹. This development will begin to be addressed in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Giuseppe Alberigo is of the opinion that the concept of revelation was one of the key points where the Council showed «a deep and intense, concrete awareness that many preconciliar tendencies were not suitable expressions of the *sensus fidei*». The awareness of discord led to a move to reclaim the earliest and most authentic traditions of the church (see G. ALBERIGO, «The Christian Situation after Vatican II», 23).

¹⁴¹ K. RAHNER, «The Abiding Significance of Vatican II», 95.

CHAPTER II

Revelation and the Third World Experience

1. Introduction

In 1974 Walbert Bülmann published *Es Kommt die Dritte Kirche*, which appeared in fuller form two years later in English as *The Coming of the Third Church*. The church referred to is that of the nations identified geographically with the Third World including Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Bülmann contends that the West is no longer the centre of religious cultural unity for the whole of Christianity and that by the year 2000 the Third World will play an important part because the majority of adherents will be there. This basic thesis means two things. It signifies a radical change in relations between the Western and Third Churches, from a maternal relationship to one of partnership and mutual aid. It also provides a background for changes in theological attitudes necessary for understanding theology coming from the Third World.

Today some scholars are asking how divine revelation can be understood from a non-Western, or non-European worldview. How can one grasp the divine encounter with an anthropology and a philosophy perhaps quite different from the perspective of the Council documents? More specifically some are asking what it means to speak of God in a world of poverty and violence. How can one refer to the presence of Christ in a world where the majority of people are not Christian? How can one understand God's revelation from a point of view foreign to Western individualism?

The seeds of a response to questions such as these may be found in Vatican II, but the full flowering of the inquiry into such issues has come about gradually in the years since. Walter Kasper sees the development in terms of a new pluralism in theology resulting from increasing specialisation and the influence of newly emerging African, Asian and Latin

American theologies¹. The present chapter will describe some aspects of this development and look at some of its consequences for theology, particularly the theology of revelation.

The methodology followed in this chapter is important because of the broad range of subject matter. The notion of human experience is the thread running throughout. It was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, since the Council there has been a growing awareness that revelation involves both God's action in history and the experience in faith of the people of God. Secondly, the great diversity in the life experience of people in different parts of the world was very apparent during the time of field work for this study.

The aim in this chapter is to present a variety of opinions from the Third World in order to locate the theologians who will be the focus of study in the three chapters which follow. Space will not permit an in-depth study or critique of particular issues at this point. Closer attention to specific issues will be feasible with the study of individual authors in the following three chapters and also in the final chapter.

The first section of the present chapter will be an introduction to the matter of revelation and experience.

The second section will concentrate on four selected assemblies of Bishops Conferences. This choice has the advantage that the assemblies investigated cover most of the territory of the Third World. A disadvantage is that given the type of document produced at such conferences it is not easy to ascertain the bishops' theological views. The documents from the Latin American bishops are the most detailed, but still it is not a simple matter to make an honest reading of these documents and to summarise some of their major points in just a few lines.

The third section will focus on the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). The Association was chosen because it offers a different perspective from that of the bishops: It is ecumenical, includes men and women theologians, and its material is available to a wide readership for critique and evaluation². The first and later chapters of this

¹ W. KASPER, *Theology and Church*, 4.

² Until now there has been little representation from Oceania in EATWOT conferences. For the reports from EATWOT conferences see V. FABELLA, *Beyond Bonding*; S. TORRES – V. FABELLA, ed., *The Emergent Gospel*; K. APPIAH-KUBI – S. TORRES, ed., *African Theology en Route*; V. FABELLA, ed., *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*; S. TORRES – J. EAGLESON, ed., *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*; V. FABELLA – S. TORRES, ed., *Irruption of the Third World*; V. FABELLA – S. TORRES,

study deal principally with material from Catholic theologians. EATWOT has a strong Catholic representation, but members of other Christian churches make an invaluable contribution. Their insights along with those of Catholic theologians contribute to the present chapter.

The EATWOT publications present a problem for interpretation. They comprise papers from individuals, group reports and final reports from conferences. Papers from particular theologians are not necessarily representative of EATWOT. Final documents, like most texts assembled by a committee, in haste at the end of a conference, are a particular genre of text characterised by generalities aimed at gaining approval of the majority present. The method adopted here presumes that conference papers and final documents need to be taken together if one is to come to a valid interpretation of the mind of the group. So in this chapter points selected from EATWOT final documents will be further supported through reference to papers given during the conference³.

2. Revelation and Human Experience

Until recently «experience» was a rather suspect term in Catholic theological circles. Many presumed that there was a conflict between the authority of experience and the authority of revelation. To accept experience would mean rejecting the other as normative. There are historical reasons for such suspicion.

- During the Enlightenment in Europe there was a critique of Christianity in the name of empirical rationality. In appealing to experience, reason became independent of supra-rational faith.
- At the beginning of this century, modernism was condemned because it identified revelation with forms of human experience.

ed., *Doing Theology in a Divided World*; K.C. ABRAHAM, ed., *Third World Theologies*; V. FABELLA – P.K.H. LEE – D. KWANG-SUN SUH, ed., *Asian Christian Spirituality*; V. FABELLA – M.A. ODUYOYE, ed., *With Passion and Compassion*; K.C. ABRAHAM – B. MBUY-BEYA, ed., *Third World Spirituality*. There are other books published from EATWOT international conferences and also their semiannual publication: *Voices from the Third World*. It should be noted that not all theology done in the Third World is Third World theology. Nor does EATWOT represent the whole range of theology in the Third World.

³ Not all the EATWOT conferences are of equal importance. More attention will be given to the initial Assembly and the General Assemblies which take place every five years.

- Especially in the English-speaking world empiricist philosophy saw experience as both the material of knowledge and the ultimate criterion of its truth.
- The gap between empirical rationality and religious assent widened as psychological, sociological and historical studies tended to treat church doctrine as conditioned by human cultural experience.

These have been some of the major causes for suspicion, which meant that, until recently, the human pole of revelation tended to be neglected theologically, and the magisterium preferred to stay within the bounds of the formal legitimacy of supernaturally guaranteed authority⁴.

However, if divine revelation is to be meaningful it must impinge somehow on human experience⁵. It must address people, not in the abstract, but in the reality of their lives. The word of God in scripture is a privileged means of communicating God's revelation and, in the work of both scholars and pastors, much work has been done to relate the word of God to people's experience. However scripture is by no means the only medium. In the previous chapter it was shown how revelation comes to us through events of history, including the life of the church. Thus God's revelation comes to us mediated by various historical signs⁶. Since revelation is a form of communication it is important to consider how the experience of the recipient plays a part in the reception of God's word⁷.

Just what is human experience? It is more than just empirical experience. In the literature, opinions as to what constitutes human experience vary greatly. They fall roughly into three main categories. Firstly there is *transcendental* experience, a notion found in the philosophy of Karl Rahner, referring to the tendency toward an ultimate horizon of unconditioned being. It is called transcendental because it lies beyond our normal knowing

⁴ Peter Eicher calls it «administered revelation» in a situation of alienation between the official church and experience (see P. EICHER, «Administered Revelation»).

⁵ Gerald O'Collins states this clearly: «The divine self-manifestation meets us in our experience or it does not meet us at all» (G. O'COLLINS, «The Pope's Theology», 801).

⁶ «Family life, political episodes, religious worship, aesthetic experience, economic movements and other human realities can all provide the raw material through which God's saving word comes to us» (G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, 64).

⁷ Henri Bouillard writes: «La révélation, en effet, ne consiste pas simplement dans la réalité objective du Christ et de l'Église ou dans la teneur objective du message chrétien. Il n'y a pas de révélation sans sujets qui la reçoivent. Une révélation qui ne serait reçue par personne ne serait pas une révélation» (H. BOUILLARD, *Logique de la foi*, 19).

and willing⁸. Secondly there are *historical* «depth experiences». Writers refer to this as experience of limit or finitude accompanied by a dimension of a surplus of meaning⁹. In these disclosure experiences a deeper dimension of reality unfolds. Thirdly there is everyday *life* experience where God's revelation may be communicated through a wide range of experiences from the very dramatic to the most commonplace¹⁰. For the most part, in this chapter the reference will be to life experience.

Since the Council, in Catholic theological circles, the topic of experience has taken greater prominence with the realisation that the language of revelation in scripture is the expression of an original Christian experience of faith¹¹. The disciples experienced the presence of God in their midst in a new way in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The inexhaustible meaning of this originating experience has meant that our words about it, even the inspired words and the words of church teaching are open to deeper understanding and reformulation¹².

How then does the mystery of Christ continue to be experienced by believers and continue to be interpreted in religious language today? As noted in *Dei verbum* 8, our understanding of revelation develops partly «through the intimate understanding of spiritual things which they [believers] experience». From the perspective of orthodoxy this requires a valid hermeneutic. It also calls for orthopraxy whereby the contemporary

⁸ Karl Rahner claims that elements of the openness to being as such can be recognised in the experience of «infinite longings, of radical optimism, of unquenchable discontent [...] the experience of a radical guilt and of a still abiding hope etc.» (K. RAHNER, «Nature and Grace», 184). Peter Eicher is of the opinion that: «By recourse to the strictly impenetrable transcendental of unending mystery, this [transcendental] theology in its own way takes refuge from actual confrontation with all the areas of empirical experience» (P. EICHER, «Administered Revelation», 13).

⁹ D. TRACY, «The Particularity and Universality», 110.

¹⁰ The three categories are the writer's own. Jean Mouroux also refers to three levels of experience: *l'empirique*, *l'expérimental* and *l'expérientiel*. The latter is perhaps similar to what is referred to in the text as «depth experience» (see J. MOUROUX, *L'expérience chrétienne*, 24).

¹¹ Claude Geffré says that hermeneutical reflection on the language of revelation as an expression of the original Christian experience means that not only are revelation and experience not opposed, «ma l'esperienza è un momento intrinseco della rivelazione» (C. GEFFRÉ, «La rivelazione e l'esperienza storica», 165).

¹² See G. O'COLLINS, «Experience», 306-308; also, B. HEARNE, «Theology and Revelation», 28.

communities of believers, faithful to Jesus and the apostolic tradition, strive by the way they live, to share the experience of revelation with others.

As a living word, God's revelation speaks to contemporary human experience and helps to clarify and evaluate it. It may be a force of contradiction and a judgement on aspects of contemporary experience. In so doing it uncovers falsehood and helps in the discernment of value and meaning. God's revelation as a living word helps illuminate both positive and negative human experience so that people are able to choose new ways of life.

From another viewpoint, human experience influences the reception and interpretation of revelation. In cultural experience language is an important factor, influencing the way one organises and shapes new experiences¹³. Furthermore, different religious experiences occur in the context of specific religious traditions¹⁴. Also, people interpret new experiences in the context of earlier experiences as they have developed into the traditions that form their personal history and cultural environment. All these affect the interpretation of revelation. This is apparent from the beginning of the Christian era as seen in the different gospel accounts, and it has continued as each age and culture continues to reinterpret God's living word for their own situation¹⁵.

Experience can also serve as a source of critique for traditional formulations of revelation. For example, some (after Auschwitz) refer to an experience of the absence of God, which demands new efforts to discover God in silence¹⁶. The meaning of pronouncements of faith depends partly on the expressive power of the language used at a certain point in time and in particular circumstances¹⁷. Changed circumstances open up new

¹³ According to L. Wittgenstein, when language-games change, there is a change in concepts and the meaning of words (see A. THISELTON, *The Two Horizons*, 138). In another chapter Thiselton notes, «Language [...] cuts the grooves in which our thoughts move» (*Ibid.*, 341).

¹⁴ See M.C. HILKERT, «Discovery of the Living God», 44. A helpful example may be found in Jacques Dupuis' account of the experience of Swami Abhishiktananda, in J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 67-90.

¹⁵ Mary Catherine Hilkert comments: «Every epoch and culture has its own unique sensitivities, but also its biases and limitations. Hence every age and culture has access to unique aspects of revelation, but each culture also has its own possibilities for distortion of the tradition» (M.C. HILKERT, «Discovery of the Living God», 50).

¹⁶ See C. GEFFRÉ, «La Rivelazione e l'esperienza storica», 173.

¹⁷ CDF, *Mysterium Ecclesiae* 5, AAS 65 (1973) 402; E.T., Flannery II, 433.

possibilities for understanding the mystery of God. Moreover the experience of differing cultural vantage points can help identify limitations of other enculturations of the gospel.

From these considerations it can be seen how human experience plays an important role in the understanding and formulation of revelation today¹⁸. Revelation is not identical with human experience but occurs within it and points beyond it. Our experience of revelation changes as our standpoints change and as our knowledge develops. So it is important to have a broad understanding of human experience in order to be able to discern and interpret divine revelation as it comes to us through these experiences.

What difference does it make to the understanding of revelation when it is received by people whose experience is radically different from that of Europe or North America? That is the principal issue in this chapter.

3. The Magisterium of the Third World Episcopates

In his book *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, Ralph Wiltgen gives an account of the influence on the Second Vatican Council by the coalition of bishops from the countries bordering the Rhine River¹⁹. Just over one third of the bishops at the Second Vatican Council represented Europe, but European bishops and *periti* had by far the greatest influence on the Council commissions and subcommissions²⁰.

European concerns were very much part of the historical context in which the idea of the Council was born. Giacomo Martina describes the influence on the Council of the situation in postwar Europe²¹. One factor was the change in Europe with rapid and intensive industrialisation and the accompanying changes in values and lifestyle. Another factor was the clash

¹⁸ This includes papal teaching also. Gerald O'Collins notes how Pope John Paul II writes about human experience in his encyclicals. For example, in *Dives et misericordia* he begins by appealing to collective and individual experience and goes on to use the term «experience» as a noun 13 times and as a verb 6 times (see G. O'COLLINS, «The Pope's Theology», 801).

¹⁹ The countries are Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and also Belgium.

²⁰ Wiltgen tells how members of the European alliance constituted at least fifty percent of the important Theological Commission (see R. WILTGEN, *The Rhine Flows*, 18). The percentages of those present on the first day of the Council were: Europe (39%), South America (18%), North America (14%), Africa (12%), Asia (12%), Central America (3%), Oceania (2%); (*Ibid.*, 13).

²¹ G. MARTINA, «The Historical Context».

between conservative and more open tendencies in the Church. The churches from beyond Europe and the North Atlantic were only beginning to have an influence as decolonisation moved through various stages in the countries of the Third World.

In this situation it is understandable that the Council focused mainly on the concerns of the First World churches and that the treatment of topics pertaining to the so-called «mission» countries shows a First World bias. Giuseppe Alberigo says that the Third World episcopates had quite limited influence on the work and decisions of the Council. Often they acted as supporters of the Central European leadership²². Despite its European bias, the Council provided an aperture and an impetus for the creative energies of the churches in other parts of the world. This can be seen in the development and growth of the Assemblies of Bishops Conferences in the period after the Council.

3.1 *Latin America (CELAM)*

The end of the 1960's was a time of heightening discontent in Latin America. Popular movements and revolutionary groups denounced the prevailing state of affairs. In this situation the hierarchy called for profound social changes as a cure for the institutionalised violence that was threatening the continent²³.

Even during the Council, CELAM (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano) had set up a series of departments, roughly corresponding to the key areas of pastoral action of the Council. It also promoted meetings of bishops and experts to which leading priests from the Latin American countries were invited²⁴. Following the Council, the Medellín Conference of CELAM

²² Giuseppe Alberigo notes: «One of the tensions at Vatican II was due precisely to the presence in large numbers of the third world episcopates, which, however, had quite limited influence on the work and decisions of the Council. The African, Latin American, and Asian bishops acted rather as supporters of the Central European leadership and were unable effectively to influence it, much less go beyond it. This does not mean that they participated passively; on the contrary, the experience of these bishops at the Council was the basis for the role that they and their churches are now playing in the final decades of the twentieth century» (G. ALBERIGO, «The Christian Situation», 11, fn. 33).

²³ For a concise description of this situation, see L. DE VAUCELLES, «The Changing Social Contexts», 47-49.

²⁴ For details of the activities of CELAM during and after Vatican II see M. MCGRATH, «The Impact of *Gaudium et spes*».

(1968) was a rereading of the Council from the Latin American experience of the economic, social, political and cultural developments that were transforming the continent²⁵.

In his address to the Medellín Conference, Bishop Marcos McGrath used the idea of the «signs of the times» from *Gaudium et spes*, and pointed to three principal signs: rapid and radical change, secularisation, and the interdependence of people throughout the world²⁶. He called upon the conference to interpret these signs for the theological and pastoral mission of the church in Latin America. Secularisation could liberate revelation from myths and superstitions so that the church could be more effective as a sign of unity, justice and peace. God's revelation could also provide permanent values in the midst of change. From the documents of Medellín it is apparent that Bishop McGrath's words were taken seriously.

In the introduction to the Medellín documents, the bishops recognised that they were on the threshold of a new epoch in the history of the continent. In this they saw the signs of the Spirit, the presence of God and the active presence of Christ in their history²⁷. This recognition of God actively present in history is a notable feature of the theology of Medellín and a key to their understanding of God's revelation.

The method used reflects the concern of the conference to take seriously the experience of the church in Latin America. The «see, judge, act» method had become a pastoral habit for many persons and its application at Medellín meant looking first at the facts, then the light of revelation, leading in turn to pastoral recommendations. The method means that lived reality is the starting point, and revelation provides the values and the light of faith for evaluating and understanding that situation.

It is not a simple matter to apply revelation to any situation. As the Pope warned in his opening address to the conference, there is a danger that some want to shape Christianity «to the measure of man, and not to the

²⁵ The meeting at Medellín was the second general conference of CELAM. The first was when it was established after the International Eucharistic Conference of 1955 in Rio de Janeiro. The continent-wide Council is made up of 23 national Episcopal Conferences. The Medellín Documents were published in two parts: *Ponencias* and *Conclusiones*.

²⁶ See M. MCGRATH, «Los signos de los tiempos».

²⁷ CELAM, «Introducción», *Conclusiones*, nos. 4-6. This was one of the principal points in an address to the conference on the subject of the «signs of the times» by Eduardo Pironio. (see E. PIRONIO, «Interpretación cristiana de los signos de los tiempos», 105).

measure of the authentic Word of God»²⁸. Aware of this danger yet trying to make the Christian message applicable to the Latin American situation, the bishops in their document said that it was imperative that the message of salvation be a word of life. So it was not enough to just repeat the message of revelation. It had to be expressed in a way that was relevant to people's life experience, while at the same time remaining faithful to the revealed Word²⁹. One of the principal ways they did this was to link faith and social responsibility and to call on the church to identify with the poor as «a clear and unmistakable sign of the poverty of her Lord»³⁰.

The third general conference of CELAM at Puebla (1979) followed a similar method to Medellín. The first part of the final document describes the social and religious reality and this sets the tone for what follows. Archbishop Marcos McGrath says that the dynamic of beginning with the pastoral reality, then moving to theological reflection and to pastoral guidance is the most important key for understanding the Puebla document³¹. By starting with lived experience, the method ensures that experience is taken seriously in the process of linking faith and life. The challenge is to find how the unchanging gospel can shed light on these changing realities³².

Jon Sobrino says that one would be missing the theological importance of the section on reality in the document if it were seen merely as the first step in the see, judge, act process. Rather it forms the basis of a theology of history which he sees as the core of the document. The later sections on doctrine and evangelisation can be understood from that core. Thus, for example, the preferential option for the poor is not just a highly laudable ethical option; it is also a way to live history in accordance with God's reality, prompting a life after the manner of Jesus³³.

²⁸ POPE PAUL VI, «Discurso de S.S. Pablo VI», *Conclusiones*, 19.

²⁹ «No basta, pues, repetir o explicar el Mensaje. Sino que hay que expresar incesantemente, de nuevas maneras, el "Evangelio" en relación con las formas de existencia del hombre, teniendo en cuenta los ambientes humanos, étnicos y culturales y guardando siempre la fidelidad a la Palabra revelada» (CELAM, «Catequesis» 15, *Conclusiones*, 138).

³⁰ CELAM, «Pobreza de la Iglesia» 18, *Conclusiones*, 213.

³¹ See M. MCGRATH, «The Puebla Final Document», 95.

³² Some of the best examples of this in the Puebla final document are the sections on «Evangelization, Liberation, and Human Promotion», and «Evangelization, Ideologies, and Politics», nos. 470-562.

³³ J. SOBRINO, «The Significance of Puebla», 304-307.

The conference in Santo Domingo (1992) organised jointly by CELAM and the Pontifical Commission for Latin America (CAL) adopted a different theological procedure from the two previous conferences. In employing a more deductive methodology whereby there is an application of theology to the world, rather than starting with present reality, the conference indicates that historical reality is not seen as a sign of the times in a strictly theological sense. Thus the truths of revelation are seen first apart from what happens in the world³⁴. Still there are notable features in the document. The option for the poor is renewed. The list of the faces of the poor is extended to include those suffering from hunger, the consequences of inflation, external debt and social injustice³⁵. The particular «signs of the times» noted include ecology, land, and the neo-liberal economics³⁶. It is still too soon to know how the Santo Domingo conference will be received pastorally and theologically in the Latin American church and whether it will change the theology of God acting in history, which has been at the heart of the Latin American contribution to the theology of revelation.

3.2 Africa (SECAM)

SECAM (The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) was established as a body for liaison, study and consultation among the Bishops Conferences of Africa and Madagascar. Every three years its plenary Assemblies bring together representatives of the 33 Episcopal Conferences of the region.

SECAM first met in conjunction with the visit of Pope Paul VI to Uganda in 1969³⁷. It was a time in which much of subsaharan Africa was

³⁴ See J. SOBRINO, «The Winds in Santo Domingo», 167-183. Card. Angelo Sodano, appointed to preside at the Santo Domingo conference, in an interview with *30 Giorni*, novembre 1992, p. 45, is quoted as saying: «In questa Conferenza direi che si è passati dal dominio dell'analisi sociologica della realtà e dei suoi problemi all'attenzione per il primato dell'annuncio di Cristo».

³⁵ See CELAM, *Santo Domingo*, Conclusiones 178.

³⁶ See CELAM, *Santo Domingo*, Conclusiones 164-209.

³⁷ The symposiums have been as follows: Kampala (1969: Peace and Development); Abidjan (1970: Catechists and Priests); Kampala (1972: The Commitment of the Laity, and the Integral Development of Africa); Rome (1975: The Evangelisation of Africa); Nairobi (1978: Christian Family Life, also Justice and Peace); Yaoundé (1981: Justice and Evangelisation); Kinshasa (1984: The Church and Human Promotion); Lagos (1987: The future of the Christian Mission in Africa); Lome (1990: Evangelisation through the Communications Media).

achieving political independence. Expectations were high, but the changes also created new difficulties for the African nations. In his address at the opening of the symposium, Cardinal Paul Zoungana, referred to *Gaudium et spes* and the link between the social milieu and the apostolate of the church. He noted a loss of momentum in Africa on both the economic and political levels, which was contributing to problems in the apostolate of the church³⁸. From their experience of the situation throughout Africa and Madagascar, the bishops enumerated some of the problems for the people including: poverty, hunger, sickness, ignorance, the undermining of liberty, the tragic consequences of racial discrimination and the ravages of war and oppression³⁹. They also drew up a list of areas of concern for the church in Africa and Madagascar. These included: laity, priests, catechists, missionaries, resources, peace, marriage and family, and relations with non-Christians. So from the beginning SECAM established topics for future meetings, based on the experience of the life of the church at the time.

The term «gospel» is the principal way the bishops refer to God's revelation. They were concerned with how they could respond to the Christian revelation without renouncing the values and wisdom of their own heritage. How can they root Christianity in Africa, but in a way that remains faithful to the gospel?

In his speech to the Symposium, Pope Paul VI addressed the issue of adapting the gospel to African culture. Firstly he said that the Church must be Catholic. They should adhere to the message of revealed doctrine which the Church has set down in certain conceptual and verbal formulas. But, granted this, a certain pluralism was not only legitimate, but desirable. They must have an African Christianity⁴⁰.

Encouraged by the Pope's speech the African bishops sought ways to bring together gospel and culture both theologically and at the pastoral level. This was not always appreciated outside of Africa. For example, at the 1974 Synod in Rome, the African bishops made a statement on co-

³⁸ See «Le discours d'ouverture du Cardinal Zoungana», *DC* 1548 (1969) 859.

³⁹ These may be found in the Acts of the First Plenary Assembly of SECAM, Kampala, 1969 (see SECAM, *The Voice of SECAM*, 154).

⁴⁰ «Un pluralisme est légitime, même souhaitable. Une adaptation de la vie chrétienne dans les domaines pastoral, rituel, didactique et aussi spirituel est non seulement possible, mais est favorisée par l'Eglise. C'est ce qu'exprime, par exemple, la réforme liturgique. En ce sens, vous pouvez et vous devez avoir un christianisme africain» (POPE PAUL VI, «Allocution au symposium des évêques d'Afrique», 765; E.T., *OmTer* 23 [November 1969] 14).

responsible evangelisation in which they said that they were adopting a theology of incarnation and that they accepted the fact of theological pluralism within the unity of faith⁴¹.

In his closing discourse the Pope condemned talk of diversified theologies as dangerous. «The content of the faith is either Catholic or it is not»⁴². The Africans saw this as a word of warning from the Pope. In response, Bishop James Sangu wrote that there must have been some sort of misunderstanding. What the African bishops wanted was to express the Christian message in their «own language and terminology, which is not necessarily identical with the rational Aristotelian-Thomistic system»⁴³.

The desire to integrate African values and the Christian revelation appears often in the deliberations of SECAM. The Gospel is seen as fulfilling the religious aspirations of the people, appreciating their positive values and perfecting them in Christ. In his speech to the 1972 symposium Bishop Tshibangu said: «Let us start from our own cultural milieu, from its traditions and customs, from its wisdom and institutions in order to animate them, uplift them, consecrate them and sanctify them by the life itself of the Spirit of God»⁴⁴.

What is characteristic of Africa in this approach is their anthropology and their attention to people's desire for life in all its dimensions. Thus human promotion and peace are priorities. They stress that it is the human person and not the state which has a transcendental character. For them, what is at stake is «*man* [...] the African man, irrespective of the colour of his skin,

⁴¹ See SECAM, «Co-responsible Evangelization», in *The Voice of SECAM*, 61.

⁴² «Thus we consider necessary a word on the need of finding a better expression of faith to correspond to the racial, social and cultural milieux. This is indeed a necessary requirement of authenticity and effectiveness of evangelization; it would nevertheless be dangerous to speak of diversified theologies according to continents and cultures. The content of the faith is either Catholic or it is not» (see A. SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 214). The Latin original of the address is in the Italian edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* 248, 27 ottobre 1974, 2.

⁴³ See J.D. SANGU, «SECAM and Evangelisation in Africa», in *The Voice of SECAM*, 66.

⁴⁴ See Bp T. Tshibangu's address to the 1972 Symposium of SECAM, *The Voice of SECAM*, 50. Attention to cultural traditions is referred to often. For example at the symposium at Kampala in 1972 the bishops encouraged study and research capable of enriching the knowledge of African anthropology, sociology, traditional religions, rites and ceremonies. In this research the traditional experience and wisdom of elders and common people was not to be neglected (see SECAM, «Resolutions of SECAM Assembly», 362-363).

his ethnic origin, his social condition, or his cultural or religious environment»⁴⁵. Liberation is relevant in this context of people struggling to attain the fullness of human existence. They point out that the Word liberates and that the revelation of the good news can itself be seen as a form of liberation. «To evangelise, to bring the good news to the poor, is to liberate them through the Word. The Gospel is a saving force, news which gives back hope and courage and gives rise to joy»⁴⁶.

The most recent event for the African bishops was the Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa (1994), where again the emphasis was on the «gospel» and its proclamation in Africa. The *Instrumentum Laboris* contains a list of the «signs of the times». It is in that African world with its signs of grace and human sinfulness that the gospel of salvation has to be proclaimed anew today. The Synod followed a course similar to that of SECAM in stressing how the Word must take flesh/root in the incarnation/inculturation of the gospel in contemporary Africa⁴⁷.

3.3 Asia (FABC)

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) brings together representatives of 14 episcopal conferences from 18 countries in Asia. It was planned during the Asian Bishops' Meeting in Manila in 1970⁴⁸. Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum progressio* was the overall theme of the discussions, and the teaching of Vatican II was beginning to be heard in that part of the world. The bishops' central concern was how the gospel

⁴⁵ See «Declaration by SECAM: Justice and Peace in Africa», appendix 37 of Acts of the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of SECAM, Nairobi 1978, 2.

⁴⁶ SECAM, «Pastoral Exhortation of the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar», in *The Voice of SECAM*, 165.

⁴⁷ See SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Special Assembly for Africa, *The Church in Africa and Her Evangelising Mission towards the Year 2000: Instrumentum Laboris*; also «Message of the Synod», *Synodus Episcoporum*, Bulletin 35, 6 May, 1994.

⁴⁸ There have been six FABC Assemblies. In Taipei (1974: Evangelisation); Calcutta (1978: Christian Prayer); Bangkok (1982: Church); Tokyo (1986: Laity); Bandung (1990: Emerging Challenges); Manila (1995: Discipleship). Besides the Plenary Assemblies there have been a number of series of Bishops' Institute meetings, including: BIMA (Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate), BIRA (Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs), BISA (Bishops' Institute for Social Action), and BILA (Bishops' Institute for the Lay Apostolate). Statements from these meetings appear in FABC, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, ed. G.B. Rosales – C.G. Arévalo.

could meet the needs and the aspirations of the people of Asia and it was felt that a transnational body for mutual cooperation would be helpful⁴⁹.

Felix Wilfred says that if one were to summarise the orientation of the FABC in one word, then it is *dialogue*⁵⁰. This is borne out by the way the First Plenary Assembly of FABC in 1974 declared that the church has a triple task in the evangelisation of Asia, requiring a dialogue with the life-realities of people, with the Asian religions, and with the poor.

At the 1974 assembly, dialogue with the Asian religions was seen in terms of Christians discovering in the Asian religions the seeds of the Word of God. At the same time the dialogue reveals to Christians many riches of their own faith which they might not have perceived (16)⁵¹. Dialogue allows Christians to receive from the other religious traditions and also to know what must be purified in them or made whole in the light of God's Word (17). On the other hand, Christians are seen as being able to communicate the experience of the Risen Christ (30) and to offer others the good news of oneness with the Father in Jesus His Son and the ways to grace given by Christ (18).

The notion of Christians learning about God's revelation through other religions is a point that recurs in the FABC assemblies. In the brief statement of the 1974 assembly the bishops say that the great religious traditions «can shed light on the truths of the Gospel» (13). In the workshop reports at the second assembly in Calcutta (1978), the bishops declare: «We are to recognise in them, none the less when expressed in religious forms alien to our own, the voice of the Spirit bearing witness to the marvellous variety of God's Self-revelation to man» (23). In the assembly in Bandung (1990), they maintain that «[The Son] has imprinted traces of his revelation in the world which exists in him (Col 1,16), and in the seeds of the Word found in cultures and in other religious traditions» (3.1.1).

Repeated references to the Spirit working in and beyond the church in Asia gives the FABC theology a different stress from that of CELAM and SECAM. At the 1978 Assembly the bishops renewed their commitment to the tasks «which the Gospel and the Spirit speaking in the «signs of the times» have given to us and our communities» (42). In the 1982 Assembly they refer to the need for Christian communities in Asia to listen to the Spirit at work in the many communities of believers who live and

⁴⁹ See «Asian Bishops' Meeting: Message of the Conference», in FABC, *For all the Peoples of Asia*, 3-7.

⁵⁰ See F. WILFRED, «The FABC: Orientations, Challenges and Impact», xxiv.

⁵¹ The numbers in parentheses in this section refer to the paragraph numbers in the texts from the assemblies.

experience their own faith in their own social, cultural and religious history. Thus Christians may be «sensitively attuned to the work of the Spirit in the resounding symphony of Asian communion» (8.2). Pneumatology has taken on more importance in the work of the FABC as the bishops have become more aware of the importance of the Spirit active not only in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but also active amongst the religions and peoples of Asia today⁵².

Dialogue with the religions in Asia is important for the FABC, but, as noted above, they call for a dialogue also with life's realities (culture) and with the poor. Sometimes this is expressed in terms of discerning the «signs of the times». The Asian interpretation of these signs shows a different emphasis from the Latin American stress on a theology of history. Sometimes the Asian bishops refer to both God's presence and action in history, but just as often they refer simply to God's (hidden) *presence* discovered in prayer and contemplation which enables people to respond to God in history⁵³.

The lesser emphasis given to a theology of history is possibly due to a different Asian view of history or to Christians being such a minority in Asian society. Nevertheless, the bishops place great importance on the dynamic insertion of the gospel into the realities of Asia. Dialogue is to be a dialogue «of life» in which people join together to promote whatever leads to unity, love, truth, justice and peace. Christians are to find Christ, especially in the suffering and the afflicted, the poor and the powerless⁵⁴.

⁵² The Third Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs on the Theology of Dialogue (BIRA IV.3), in Hong Kong (1986), met with the theme: «Discerning the Spirit at work in and beyond the Church in Asia». In their statement the participants say that «clear signs of the presence of the Spirit amongst the living faiths of Asia are the living out of the moral code (patience, sincerity, respect, etc.), innate humaneness, the common concern to alleviate hunger and poverty, and the intense desire for world peace with justice» (6) (See FABC, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 259). The Conclusions of the Theological Consultation in Thailand (1991), called by the FABC Office of Evangelisation, state clearly that: «The religious traditions of Asia command our respect because of the spiritual and human values enshrined in them. These are expressions of the presence of God's Word and of the universal action of his Spirit in them» (43); (*Ibid.*, 344).

⁵³ For example, the Statement from the 1978 Assembly says, «The Christian and the Christian community are made aware of God's presence in and through prayer and are thus enabled to respond to His Word in history, in "the signs of the times" and in the events and vicissitudes of everyday life» (26); (FABC, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 34).

⁵⁴ See the «Statement of the Second Plenary Assembly» (1978), no. 18, in FABC, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 32.

The proclamation of Christ in Asia means, first of all, a proclamation through Christlike deeds and the witness of Christian communities to the values of the kingdom of God⁵⁵.

The FABC has taken an approach which, while maintaining the importance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, has involved the bishops in a learning process based on the experience of Asian culture and religions. In its openness to dialogue with Asian religions, with Asian cultures and with the multitude of the poor, the FABC has opened up new possibilities for understanding how the Spirit is revealing the divine presence beyond the confines of the Christian church.

3.4 Oceania (FCBCO)

Oceania has only four Bishops Conferences but they represent churches that cover areas as great and cultures as diverse as those of the Federations considered above. The Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) was formed only recently. However the members of the episcopal conferences of Australia, the Pacific (CEPAC), New Zealand and Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands have met on six occasions. The first coincided with the visit of Pope Paul VI to Australia in 1970⁵⁶.

The Pope's address to the 70 bishops present was about unity within the church. He stressed unity of faith as symbolised in the Creed and noted how there can be no doubt or ambiguity concerning this gift «which Revelation has given us»⁵⁷. He noted that pluralism was permissible if limited to contingent forms of religious life. However the Pope warned the bishops against arbitrary interpretations of dogma, taking the popular

⁵⁵ See the «Statement of the Fifth Plenary Assembly» (1990), no. 4.1, in FABC, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 282.

⁵⁶ The FCBCO statutes were approved *ad experimentum*, 28 July 1992. The Federation is a special case because Australia and New Zealand are classed as First World countries while the Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands and CEPAC represent Third World nations. Thus the Federation is under both the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for Evangelisation of Peoples. Joint meetings of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania have all taken place in Sydney, Australia: 1970, 1973, 1976, 1980, 1985, 1990. The first official Assembly of the FCBCO was in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1994. CEPAC and the Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands are individual Bishops Conferences which normally meet every year. The meetings tend to be concerned with practical and pastoral matters such as their seminaries and human development issues.

⁵⁷ See POPE PAUL VI, Address, «We Have Come».

mentality as a criterion of truth, or theological study that prescind from authentic tradition and the responsible magisterium of the Church.

It is not clear whether Paul VI was speaking from his concern for the universal church or whether the warning was addressed to particular dangers present in Oceania. The bishops' meetings do not normally deal with doctrinal matters but rather with pastoral concerns.

An indication of these concerns in Oceania can be seen from the six topics on the agenda for the 1970 meeting, namely: evangelisation, development, youth, priesthood, religious life, and cooperation between the churches. In his position paper on evangelisation, Bishop Rodgers of Tonga said that from his experience people in the Pacific were experiencing problems of lack of a truly human life, partly due to over-population in the small Pacific islands, and problems associated with western influence like materialism, a foreign educational system and religious sects⁵⁸. The New Zealand Bishops Conference contended that people were struggling and that «the thrust behind this struggle is a revolution — a revolution of rising expectations. More and more Islanders expect and even demand better education, better housing in urban areas, better employment, more favourable opportunities to share in their own development, opportunities to govern themselves»⁵⁹. To help solve the problem, the New Zealand bishops proposed a conference for Christian development, with Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum progressio* as the basic text.

In the majority of the presentations at the 1970 meeting and at subsequent meetings, the bishops begin with a particular pastoral problem, explain the problem from their experience with the people of God, and with the aid of teaching from the Council, Canon Law or papal encyclicals, seek a practical solution. Position papers are practical rather than theological and there is little reference to scripture, though obviously the fundamental issue they are facing is how to help people to discover meaning in their lives in the light of the Gospel⁶⁰. This is usually expressed in terms of the participation of the whole people of God in the local church.

⁵⁸ Bp J. RODGERS, «Bringing Christ to the Peoples of the Pacific».

⁵⁹ Paper presented by the New Zealand Episcopal Conference, «The Role of the Church in the Development of the South Pacific», Combined Meeting of the Bishops Conferences of Oceania, Sydney, 1970.

⁶⁰ J.R. KNOX, position paper, «The Priesthood: Modern Challenges and Demands». He continues, «How do we proclaim the challenge of the gospel in a way attractive to people who do not see the need for God in their daily lives?».

3.5 *The Experience from the Local Churches*

The data in the four sections above show how the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council were a time of rapid and wide-ranging development of energy in the churches in the so-called periphery. This was partly due to the «spirit» of the Council, characterised by openness for renewal. It was also a result of new readings of the Council documents, along with other teaching such as Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum progressio* (1967). Thus in the various regions Bishops Conferences were encouraged to cooperate in finding new ways to relate the message of revelation to people's experience and the «signs of the times».

The Latin American bishops' understanding of revelation can be seen in their methodology which comes from their theology of history. There the principal issue is the relation between revelation and history.

In Africa and Madagascar the bishops have been concerned with revelation as the gospel with which they seek to confront and integrate African values. Their starting point is their understanding of the human person, and theirs is a theology of incarnation in which the principal issue is the relation between revelation and culture.

The Asian Christian experience of being a minority in the midst of cultural and religious pluralism leads the Asian bishops to face the issue of the locus of divine revelation. Their openness to dialogue is supported by a developing theology of the divine presence and the holy Spirit.

In Oceania the bishops have been concerned principally with human development and the full participation of the people of God in a world which is becoming increasingly secular. So the principal issues for them are the relation between revelation and culture, and revelation and secular values.

A plurality of views influenced by different contexts is a striking feature of the responses of the bishops. The next part of this chapter will look at the opinions of an ecumenical association of theologians who, because of their informal links to the official magisterium of the Catholic church, have different opportunities to explore the relationship between faith and life, or revelation and human experience today. Being an ecumenical association, not all members have Vatican II as their basic point of reference. Their different backgrounds allow other views on revelation from liberal Protestantism, evangelical biblicism and the Lutheran dialectic of the word as law/gospel to intersect with the Third World context.

4. The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians

The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) was formed in 1976 by a group of theologians from the Third World who saw the need of a forum for promoting theology in the context of Third World social, political, economic, religious, and cultural realities⁶¹.

The option for the poor and oppressed is fundamental to the theology from EATWOT. Also they make an option for action and experience before analysis and theory. In many respects this is the methodology of so-called liberation theology. However many EATWOT members resist being labelled as liberation theologians because the term is so closely associated with Latin American theology. While the methodological approach of liberation theology is generally accepted, members of EATWOT differ in their opinions as to the point of departure and appropriate ways to analyse reality. They stress that their work is pluralistic and multi-faceted because of the great varieties of context, culture and experience.

The next sections will examine how EATWOT theologians understand revelation. The first part will survey some ideas relevant to a theology of revelation which have emerged during various EATWOT conferences held over the past two decades. The second part will explore briefly some of the underlying issues.

4.1 Tanzania (1976)

In his opening address to the meeting of Asian, African, and Latin American theologians that took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 1976, Sergio Torres said that they had come «to explain how they understand the meaning of revelation in the midst of poverty and underdevelopment»⁶². What came through clearly as the meeting progressed was the participants' conviction that Western interpretations of revelation were not suitable for their situation. They observed that theology is conditioned by the socio-

⁶¹ For the history of EATWOT's beginnings, see O.K. BIMWENYI-KWESHI, «The Origins of EATWOT». The term «Third World» is objected to in some circles, but EATWOT defends the expression saying that the term has acquired layers of meaning which vary from the purely geographic (South), to the socio-economic (poor), to the political (non-aligned), to the theological (from the underside of history). They prefer it to expressions such as «Two-Thirds» world because they say, the expression Third World refers more to quality of life than to numbers (see the «Preface» to *Irruption of the Third World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, xii; also see V. FABELLA, *Beyond Bonding*, 124, fn. 42).

⁶² See S. TORRES, «Opening Address», in *Emergent Gospel*, 1.

cultural context in which it has been developed and were of the opinion that theologies from the West should not be uncritically adopted without facing the question of their relevance for the human needs and aspirations of those in the Third World⁶³.

In papers delivered at the meeting, various terms were used to refer to revelation. Ngindu Mushete uses terminology from Catholic dogmatic theology, referring to «revealed truth» which is «given in the person of Christ».⁶⁴ His concern is that pluralism in theology should not threaten «the unity and harmony of revelation». Mushete warns that the «transcendental character» and «purity» of Christian revelation should not be confused with «human truth»⁶⁵.

The presentation from Allan Boesak from the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa illustrates a different approach. He prefers to use the term «gospel» for the content of revelation⁶⁶. Boesak says that the biblical message of the gospel has been abused and exploited so that it has become an ideology used to the advantage of white people. So the gospel «needs to be liberated»⁶⁷. He proposes that black theology, with its central theme of liberation, offers a way for both black and white people to discover the truth about God's will for them. For Boesak, gospel truth (revelation) in its most profound sense is the possibility for black and white people to break away from old oppressive structures of society to discover their God-given authenticity in community.

Where is the truth of God's will to be found? The EATWOT theologians are concerned with divine revelation within human history. However opinions differ as to what precisely are the loci of God's presence.

For Carlos Abesamis of the Philippines, revelation is found principally in the Bible, seen as the record of God's redemptive activity in the past and as what is hoped for in the future⁶⁸. The Bible is also the source of our faith and its message, being the principal source of revelation because it narrates and interprets the action of God in history. Abesamis implies that revelation continues today in so far as God continues to act in history. He says that the theologian's primary task is to discover the meaning of the present moment within the context of a history of saving deeds that begins with creation and will be completed in Christ's second coming. Though

⁶³ EATWOT, «Final Statement», in *Emergent Gospel*, especially, 269-271.

⁶⁴ N. MUSHETE, «Unity of Faith», 51.

⁶⁵ N. MUSHETE, «Unity of Faith», 54.

⁶⁶ A. BOESAK, «Coming in out of the Wilderness».

⁶⁷ A. BOESAK, «Coming in out of the Wilderness», 77.

⁶⁸ C.J. ABESAMIS, «Doing Theological Reflection», 117.

God continues to be revealed in the events of history, these events are to be interpreted in the light of the proclamation and the teaching of Jesus.

D.S. Amalorpavadass from India took a broader view of the locus of revelation⁶⁹. He says that one must recognise God's presence and discern «God's designs for our times» within the Indian universe of ancient religious traditions and modern concern for development⁷⁰. He says that revelation, inspiration and salvation should be granted and recognised in other religious traditions. If theologians have difficulty in understanding how revelation occurs in these religions, this is no reason to deny them the reality of God's saving revelation⁷¹. Through interreligious dialogue one can come closer to the truth as each partner listens to God speaking in the self-communication and questioning of their fellow-believers⁷². So Amalorpavadass presents an example of a tolerant approach in which revelation is not limited to Christian scriptures or church tradition. It respects the role of the human subject searching for the truth of God's presence in the totality of the religious, social and cultural situation.

In his paper at the meeting, Gustavo Gutiérrez says that our encounter with God occurs in history, but history itself has been interpreted from a Western bourgeois point of view⁷³. So he proposes a reinterpretation of history from the perspective of the Third World poor. Such a reinterpreting of history cannot be merely an intellectual exercise but must involve the poor themselves as the subjects of their history, engaged in an effort to «remake» history. In this active reinterpretation of history people will discover God's saving and liberating love in «a new experience of the faith, a new spirituality, and a new proclamation of the gospel message»⁷⁴.

Sergio Torres lauds Gutiérrez's paper as one which best expresses what they were attempting to do at the conference; that is, «to use the scholarship of academic theology to express the aspirations and sufferings of Third World Christians who are struggling against all forms of oppression»⁷⁵.

⁶⁹ D.S. AMALORPAVADASS, «The Indian Universe».

⁷⁰ D.S. AMALORPAVADASS, «The Indian Universe», 137.

⁷¹ «We can have endless discussion as to the difference between divine "manifestation" and "revelation", between "milieus of grace", "occasions of grace", "channels of grace", and "means of grace", between "samskaras" and "sacraments". [...] In any case our present incapacity to formulate them adequately is no reason to deny them the reality of Christ's saving action through their socio-religious phenomena» (D.S. AMALORPAVADASS, «The Indian Universe», 141).

⁷² D.S. AMALORPAVADASS, «The Indian Universe», 144.

⁷³ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Two Theological Perspectives» (1978c) 227-255.

⁷⁴ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Two Theological Perspectives» (1978c) 248.

⁷⁵ S. TORRES, «Introduction» to *Emergent Gospel*, xii.

Though a variety of opinions was expressed at the meeting, what emerges is an understanding that in the midst of poverty and underdevelopment, revelation is the gospel or good news of the saving liberating presence of God in history.

4.2 *Ghana (1977), Sri Lanka (1979), and Brazil (1980)*

Following the meeting at Dar es Salaam, the *Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians* was formed. The Association then planned a series of three conferences, one each in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The «Final Communiqué» of the African conference in Ghana (1977) follows a pattern similar to that of the conference in Dar es Salaam the previous year. For example, it begins with a description of contemporary experience in Africa. This is important for their approach which stresses the contextual nature of theology.

The contextual nature of one's perception of revelation is particularly relevant for the African theologians because of their interest in the relation between revelation and culture. At the Ghana conference Ngindu Mushete stressed that people who live in different places and conditions live out their culture and religion in different ways, so there is «not one theology but many»⁷⁶.

Kwesi Dickson highlighted the contextual nature of biblical revelation as the witness of a particular people at a particular point in history. He argued that God's word is intended for specific identifiable situations rather than as a generalised truth having little to do with the specifics of the human condition⁷⁷. Desmond Tutu said that the theology of the Bible is an engaged theology, concerned with a particular group of believers. So people today must interpret it for their situation and this will mean different interpretations of theology or different theologies⁷⁸.

The Asian conference in Sri Lanka (1979) looked at human experience in a slightly different way. The 80 participants began with an immersion experience in depressed and marginal sectors of Sri Lankan society. This

⁷⁶ N. MUSHETE, «The History of Theology in Africa», 30. Muchete says, «the notion of a universal theology, like that of a universal philosophy, is a myth. It has no foundation in revelation, faith, or history» (*Ibid.*, 29).

⁷⁷ See K.A. DICKSON, «Continuity and Discontinuity», 106.

⁷⁸ Bp Desmond Tutu says, «any relevant theology must accept the scandal of its particularity, which, after all, is the price of its relevance». Tutu makes it clear that while our understanding of divine revelation changes constantly, «the Gospel is eternal» (D. TUTU, «The Theology of Liberation in Africa», 165).

helped emphasise the conviction of the organisers that the Asian reality and experience must be a point of departure for Asian theology.

Taking Asian reality as the starting point means trying to discover the revelation of the living God in the people of Asia struggling for full humanity. However, at the conference, it was difficult for the theologians to reach a consensus as to what that discovery entails and how to understand the Asian social and religious context. The difference of opinion is apparent in the papers by Carlos Abesamis from the Philippines and Aloysius Pieris from Sri Lanka⁷⁹.

Carlos Abesamis stressed «Third-Worldness» as a sociopolitical condition that calls for liberation. «Asianness» which includes the religiocultural dimension and attempts at inculturation must take second place⁸⁰. Aloysius Pieris had a different point of view⁸¹. He, too, saw the Asian context in terms of Third-Worldness and Asianness, but for Pieris they are equally important, forming two poles of reference characterised by poverty and religiosity. In his paper Pieris concentrated on the religio-cultural dimension, arguing that religiosity signifies religion as both bondage and freedom.

So there was a difference of opinion on the perspective from which one should view Asian reality. This affects the understanding of God's revelation. If Asian religiosity is viewed negatively in terms of bondage, superstition, or religion's tendency to legitimise an oppressive status quo, then it will hardly be seen as a vehicle of divine revelation. But if one is cognizant of religion's motivational potential for radical social change, then it could easily be a medium of the liberating will of God. In later conferences the latter perspective (Pieris' view) came to be widely accepted among the Asian theologians.

The Congress in São Paulo, Brazil (1980), met at a time of change and polarisation of opinion in Latin America. The previous year saw the CELAM conference in Puebla, the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador, and the revolution in Nicaragua. The effect of this historical context is evident in the presentations during the conference and in the «Final Document».

In a letter to the Christians in Popular Christian Communities, published along with their «Final Document», the conference participants declare that the signs of the resurrection are visible in the empty tombs of those

⁷⁹ For this reason Dalston Forbes calls the «Final Statement» a compromise (see D. FORBES, «Notes on the Asian Theological Conference», 164).

⁸⁰ C. ABESAMIS, «Faith and Life Reflections», 134.

⁸¹ A. PIERIS, «Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation» (1979c) *ATL*, 69-86.

thousands who have disappeared in the repression in Latin America. The participants link the revelation of Christ and the poor, declaring: «You [...] are the Good News of God already proclaimed throughout the world. [...] through you, the face of Christ is shining once more on the world. [...] Through your witness, Jesus evangelises the poor, opens the eyes of the blind, sets free the captives [...] confronts the powers of domination, and reclaims life for all»⁸². So the poor are seen as manifesting Christ to the world and their life and death is intimately linked to the life and death of Christ. Their struggles for liberation are seen as signs of God's action in history⁸³.

All three EATWOT conferences stressed the contextual nature of our perception of divine revelation. The African conference referred to «the African experience of God» as a source for their theology⁸⁴. The Asian conference said that the Asian context «dictates the terms of an Asian theology» in people's struggle for fuller humanity «in socio-political as well as psycho-spiritual aspects»⁸⁵. The option for solidarity with the poor and oppressed in Latin American became an experience of the God of Jesus Christ⁸⁶. What emerges in the three conferences is a view of revelation which not only stresses God's presence and action in history, but also the particularity of God's self-manifestation and the way our perception of that revelation is influenced by cultural, religious and historical factors.

4.3 *India (1981)*

The meeting in New Delhi in 1981 was intended as a way of synthesising the work of EATWOT from the time of its beginning at Dar es Salaam five years before. However, at the New Delhi conference the participants realised that it was premature to talk of a unified synthesis of Third World Theology. Virginia Fabella summarises this as follows:

Prior to the Delhi meeting, it had been accepted that a Third World theology is contextual, liberational, biblically-based, and ecumenical; it is inductive in its method, starting with the faith experience of the poor and oppressed, and it rejects traditional Western theology as inadequate for the Third World. The

⁸² EATWOT, «Letter to Christians», 248.

⁸³ This supported in the «Final Document» with references to the exodus, to the Beatitudes (Mt 5,2-11) and to the Last Judgement (Mt 24,31-40); (see the EATWOT, «Final Document», paragraphs 24-26, in *The Challenge*, 235).

⁸⁴ EATWOT, «Final Communiqué», in *African Theology*, 193.

⁸⁵ EATWOT, «Final Statement», in *Asia's Struggle*, 153.

⁸⁶ EATWOT, «Final Document», in *The Challenge*, 241.

context is understood to include both the socio-economic-political and the religio-cultural dimensions; liberation is both personal and societal; the text and context are related dialectically in biblical reflection. Though all these elements are held in common, as seen in the Final Documents of the past EATWOT conferences, in Delhi nuances began to surface⁸⁷.

It became apparent that there are different emphases in the three continents. The work coming from Latin America tended towards a liberation theology based upon a sociopolitical analysis and the word of God in history reflected in the poor and oppressed. Asians pointed out the liberating possibilities in their religious context. Africans were beginning to stress the need for liberation from cultural poverty. In addition, black theologians from South Africa, the United States and the Caribbean, and women too, all demanded that their theological voices be heard and taken seriously⁸⁸.

The nuances arose from the contextual nature of their work. Though all identified as being from the Third World, they differed in their experience, situation and history. For example Engelbert Mveng from Cameroon illustrated a different interpretation of a fundamental term like «the poor». He pointed out that Africans experience an «anthropological poverty» that robs human beings of their very identity⁸⁹. The different viewpoints also enabled them to criticise the position of other participants. For example, Asian and African delegates expressed reservations about the Western bias of liberation theology from Latin America. Aloysius Pieris lamented how ironic it would be if Asian theologians would subscribe uncritically to «a [Marxist] thesis that is as colonialist as it is Western»⁹⁰.

The «Final Statement» of the Delhi conference says that the God-image in the poor is «the most meaningful image and expression of God in today's world» and so theology must be based on «the liberative praxis of

⁸⁷ V. FABELLA, «Preface» to *Irruption*, xv.

⁸⁸ A. ODOYOYE describes the debate over attitudes to women as an «irruption within the irruption» (see A. ODOYOYE, «Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective», 247).

⁸⁹ E. MVENG, «Third World Theology — What Theology?», 220. «[Anthropological poverty] consists in despoiling human beings not only of what they have, but of everything that constitutes their being and essence — their identity, history, ethnic roots, language, culture, faith, creativity, dignity, pride, ambitions, right to speak [...]». He also says, «We thank our colleagues for sharing with us, over the years, their Marxist analysis, their socialist projections for the society of the future, and their contextual reading of the Bible. But we are not satisfied» (*Ibid.*).

⁹⁰ A. PIERIS, «The Place of Non-Christian Religions» (1982d) in *Irruption of the Third World*, 116.

the oppressed of the Third World»⁹¹. If this is so, and it is the experience of the poor which reveals God today, then the spirituality of commitment to and participation with the poor is the prerequisite for discovering God in that experience. This was a point made by Gustavo Gutiérrez. He said that living one's faith (spirituality), characterised by contemplation and practice, are an integral part of the theological method which was emerging. In other words, «our method is our spirituality»⁹².

Such a methodology is a consequence of taking history seriously as a constitutive element in the reception of revelation. So talk about God (theology) is possible only after one participates in God's liberating and fulfilling action in history and after one listens to what God is saying. Listening (contemplation) and practice together form a basis for theological discourse. The link between method and spirituality in faith praxis was to become a significant concern in later EATWOT conferences⁹³.

4.4 *Second General Assembly of EATWOT: Mexico (1986)*

The Second General Assembly of EATWOT met in Oaxtepec, Mexico. As in other conferences, theology was based largely on people's experience of struggle and hope. What came through clearly was the contribution of women's experience. The provisional final document refers to their way of doing theology «with passion and compassion, with the heart, the body, and the mind»(33)⁹⁴.

⁹¹ EATWOT, «Final Statement», in *Irruption of the Third World*, 200.

⁹² G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Reflections from a Latin American Perspective» (1983c), 225.

⁹³ Between the 1981 conference in India and the 1986 General Assembly in Mexico there was an International Conference in Switzerland (1983). It included some First World participants who were representatives of communities struggling against injustice in the First World. The conference raised many questions. For example, can people's suffering and their sense of being unjustly treated as non-persons be a block to recognising God's self-manifestation? How can we speak about Jesus' death on the cross if we do not recognise the death of people in the destruction of their cultures and religions? Can an understanding of God that has been used to support racism and the exploitation of women be of divine origin? The «Final Statement» refers to the social conflicts dividing the world in terms of idolatry or allegiance to false gods (see EATWOT, «Final Statment», *Doing Theology*, 179-193).

⁹⁴ Numbers in parentheses refer to the numbered paragraphs in the document. In the «Final Document» from the Women's Meeting immediately prior to the Second General Assembly, the women express it differently. They refer to their theology as one «made not only with the mind but also with the heart, the body, the womb» (EATWOT, «Final Document: Intercontinental Women's Conference», in *With Passion*, 188). For the story of women's contribution to EATWOT, see V. FABELLA, *Beyond Bonding*.

Just how is women's theology different? Women say that they have their own way of organising and systematising insights into God's revelation and that the key to their theology is the notion of «life»⁹⁵. Ana Maria Tepedino explains that «since she carries in her womb for nine months a new life that is coming into being, a woman feels and expresses her experience of God in a different manner»⁹⁶. Women are deeply covenanted with life — giving, protecting and sustaining life. They point out that certain theological themes such as the image of God and the experience of God could be deepened from the woman's viewpoint⁹⁷. Not only do they have a contribution to make, but many feel that without their contribution God's image and God's plan will be «distorted». As Virginia Fabella says, «without women's perspective and their contribution to theology, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, church, and mission will be only half understood»⁹⁸.

Women are also making an impact in their attempt to reread the Bible with women's eyes and with women's feelings. The Third World women say that not only do they suffer the dehumanising conditions of the Third World, but they are also exploited and restricted as women. This experience is basic to their theology and must be part of their reinterpretation of the Bible. They say that the provision for a feminine hermeneutic will «help to ensure that those dimensions of God's word that can be properly understood only by women are brought to light for the benefit of all»⁹⁹.

Women's contribution to theology is a particular example of how human experience can influence our perception of God's revelation. Women claim the possibility of discovering «a new face of God» and «a more human and closer image of Jesus»¹⁰⁰. Within Third World theology their influence can be seen particularly in a growing understanding of God as the God of life.

⁹⁵ EATWOT WOMEN'S COMMISSION, «Women's Evaluation of EATWOT», 144. Also EATWOT Intercontinental Women's Conference, «Final Document», in *With Passion*, 188.

⁹⁶ A.M. TEPEDINO, «Feminist Theology as the Fruit», 167.

⁹⁷ EATWOT, «Final Statement: Latin American Conference on Theology from the Perspective of Women», in *With Passion*, 182. They refer to such themes as: the image of God, the incarnation, the experience of God, the Trinity, community, the body, suffering and joy, conflict and silence, play and politics, tenderness and beauty.

⁹⁸ V. FABELLA, «A Common Methodology?», 117.

⁹⁹ T. OKURE, «Women in the Bible», 56.

¹⁰⁰ L.B. ARELLANO, «Women's Experience of God», 148. V. Fabella gives the example of the controversial presentation by Chung Hyun Kyung at the World Council of Churches Assembly, in 1991, in Canberra, Australia, as an example of what EATWOT women are trying to do theologically and methodologically (see V. FABELLA, *Beyond Bonding*, 106).

4.5 *Third General Assembly of EATWOT: Kenya (1992)*

The Third General Assembly of EATWOT met in Nairobi, 6-13 January, 1992. In the «Statement» from the Assembly it appears that the participants regard both indigenous religions and the Christian tradition as sources of revelation.

Indigenous peoples tend to give precedence to God's revelation in creation¹⁰¹. Thus the «Statement» says that «God has revealed God's nature and being from the beginning of creation, and God continues to be revealed in nature, people's cultures and religious traditions»¹⁰². The «Statement» continues: this sort of revelation is «the first book of God» and the Bible is «a second book to reveal to us the fullness of God's word and to transform the cosmos and the lives of our people in a big epiphany of God's presence»¹⁰³. The participants lament that in the past the Bible has been used as a tool of conquest. Now Third World people want to recover the Bible and its inspiration «on the basis of their own tradition of revelation and salvation»¹⁰⁴. This tradition is based on spiritual experiences and praxis that reveal God in creation as the God of life.

These insights from indigenous spiritualities are not seen as contrary to Christian faith. The theologians' faith is based on Jesus of the gospels who is seen as experiencing the conflicts, the suffering and the death which are the lot of Third World peoples. They share in the experience of Jesus in christopraxis, that is, by following him in a life of solidarity with the poor, and working to realise a more just society. The participants see the task of Third World theologians as working to create new christologies by confronting their own experience of Jesus with the «cry for life» which resounds in the Third World¹⁰⁵. The cry for life, discerned in the ecological

¹⁰¹ This point was made by George Tinker in his address to the Assembly. He presented a critique of liberation theology's emphasis on God's revelation in history. He says that Native Americans view this as the Western intellectual tradition giving priority to temporal metaphors. The Native American temporal awareness is subordinate to their spacial sense. Indigenous people give priority to spacial metaphors and experience their personhood in terms of their relationship to the land. Thus he argues that precedence be given to God's revelation in creation (see G. TINKER, «Spirituality, Native American Personhood»).

¹⁰² EATWOT, «A Cry for Life», 59.

¹⁰³ EATWOT, «A Cry for Life», 59.

¹⁰⁴ EATWOT, «A Cry for Life», 58-59.

¹⁰⁵ At the Assembly George Soares-Prabhu presented a paper on how Jesus must be sought afresh by confronting the Christian tradition with contemporary Third World experience (see G. SOARES-PRABHU, «The Jesus of Faith»).

movement and the liberation movements among various peoples of the world, is seen as a movement of the holy Spirit and really a cry for God.

5. Issues Raised by the EATWOT Challenge

The wholesale condemnation of First World theology as artificial and academic is a caricature which could be questioned, but the concern here is not to point out weaknesses in the ideas coming from EATWOT but rather to explore briefly how they might contribute to a broader, more creative understanding of revelation.

Examples have been given to show how the EATWOT theologians perceive divine revelation as the good news of the saving liberating presence of God in history. These theologians point out how our perception of this revelation is influenced by cultural, religious, social and gender experience. In order to take such experiences into account they propose a method which includes faith praxis. This means commitment and solidarity with the poor and listening to what God is saying through them. More recently «life» has been used as a hermeneutical key for their understanding of revelation. God's presence is seen as a life-giving presence from the time of creation until now, when the cry for life is the Spirit groaning to give birth to a new humanity characterised by a life-giving connectedness to God, to our human roots, to the rest of nature, to one another and to ourselves.

There are some underlying issues to address. What is the basis of their claim to an «epistemological break» with Western theology? With the importance they give to praxis, are they not displacing the truth of revelation and the authority of scripture? These are the principal points to be taken up in the remaining part of this chapter.

5.1 *An Epistemological Break*

The Third World theologians assert that until very recently history has been interpreted from a colonial or Western bourgeois perspective, and this is reflected in Western theology. They criticise what they see as claims to universality on the part of Western theology. They say that such claims ignore the right of Third World persons to think for themselves, and that this situation leaves little intellectual space for the development of theologies that reflect the interests and concerns of those who have suffered as a consequence of developments in the First World. From their perspective, the triumphs of individualism and rationalism in Europe only mean new and refined forms of exploitation for those who live on «the underside of history» in the Third World.

Their call for a theology from the underside of history is pertinent to the theology of revelation particularly in the Third World theologians' claim that all theology is contextual. So if revelation comes to us in human history, it will be perceived in different ways, depending on the historical situation. The Third World theologians say that in the past the unacknowledged social and historical influences on the understanding of revelation have resulted in treating the poor (on the underside of history) as if they were nonpersons. So only by being critically aware of the influence of historical and social factors on one's thinking can one be attentive to the contextual nature of theological reflection, so as to arrive at a more authentic understanding of the truth of God's revelation.

In their effort to establish their own form of theology the Third World theologians claim to be making an epistemological «break» with Eurocentred theology. The break has to do with seeking the truth, not in terms of faith and reason but in terms of faith and life¹⁰⁶.

The Third World theologians maintain that in the Western attempt to liberate reason from church authority, theologians became preoccupied with harmonising faith and reason. In this effort to understand reality there was less concern with being a part of that reality. The Third World theologians contend that merely understanding reality can easily become a form of ideology which allows wrongness and alienation to continue. They say that theologians must not only try to understand reality but also to reveal its wrongness and uncover a potentiality for transformation.

What the Third World theologians are saying is that history is a part of faith and part of theological reflection. So the relation between theology and history is not external but internal. Historicity is not just merely the object of theological reflection but part of the act of theological reflection itself¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁶ Theological reflection is associated with various «breaks». Revelation itself is usually thought of as an intervention (breach) in human history. There is at some point an epistemological break between faith and reason, for they do not lie along the same continuum. These various breaks are discussed by C. BOFF, *Theology and Praxis*, 109. The Third World theologians' use of the term most probably comes from the Latin Americans. Jon Sobrino used the term in a presentation in Mexico City in 1975 (see J. SOBRINO, «El conocimiento teológico»). Per Frostin is of the opinion that on the macro-level, i.e., in the choice of epistemology, there are fundamental differences between Third World theologies and the Western intellectual tradition, but on the micro-level, i.e., in the study of exegetical, historical and systematic-theological arguments there is a strong continuity between the two (see P. FROSTIN, «The Hermeneutics of the Poor», 133). S. TORRES says much the same thing in the «Preface» to *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, x.

¹⁰⁷ A.K. MIN, «Praxis and Theology in Recent Debates», 544.

So it is not a matter of applying universal truth somehow apprehended apart from an historical context to a particular situation. Rather participation in the historical praxis of faith is the condition for apprehending the truth in theological reflection¹⁰⁸.

Is this a proposal for a different criterion of truth? Epistemology, based on Greek philosophy, considers truth to be conformity of the mind to a given object. The epistemology of truth is a complex issue. Western theology has basically followed the realism of the Greek approach¹⁰⁹. But the Third World theologians say that such an epistemology only legitimises the world as it exists and that there is another way of understanding the truth, in which knowledge comes not from conformity of the mind to the given, but from an immersion in the process of transformation. Sergio Torres comments on the implications of this view as follows:

Theological truth is not only the conformity of the mind to revelation as it is contained in Scripture; it is also the discernment of present evil in the world and in human hearts, judged by the message of the Gospel and the discovery of the movement of redemptive and liberating history. Divine truth is redemptive, but the norm of theological truth comes from its role in the ongoing process of world-building¹¹⁰.

Is praxis being proposed as a criterion of truth at the expense of the Bible and revelation as the *norma normans* of Christian theology¹¹¹? These

¹⁰⁸ A.K. Min notes that Gustavo Gutiérrez uses a dialectical method, so «it is not a question of “reducing” the universal content of faith to the particular demands of immediate praxis or to its perspective but one of subjecting both the content of faith and the historical perspective to a mutual critique [...]. The hermeneutical circle of TL [Liberation Theology] is essentially dialectical» (A.K. MIN, «Praxis and Theology in Recent Debates», 545). Clodovis Boff also stresses that praxis and theory must be kept in a dynamic conflictual (dialectical) relationship. When that movement is lost one falls into pragmatism or idealism (see C. BOFF, *Theology and Praxis*, 207). Alfred Hennelly too notes the constant dialectical interplay between the sources of revelation and real Christian existence (see A. HENNELLY, «Theological Method», 724).

¹⁰⁹ Theories of truth in Western epistemology include coherence, correspondence, performative and pragmatic theories of truth. See the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards, vol. 2, 130-133, 223-232; vol. 6, 88-90, 427-430.

¹¹⁰ S. TORRES, «Opening Address», in *African Theology en Route*, 5.

¹¹¹ James Cone gives an example of a radical form of this approach when he writes: «We do not begin our theology with a reflection on divine revelation as if the God of our faith is separate from the suffering of our peoples. We do not believe that revelation is a deposit of fixed doctrines or an objective word of God that is then applied to the human situation. On the contrary, we contend that there is no truth outside or beyond

claims by the Third World theologians raise a number of theological issues to do with truth and the extent to which their theology goes beyond the particularities of a given context. Discussion of these issues is not a simple matter. The Third World theologians feel that for too long their agenda has been determined by the West, which has supplied the rules and has acted as arbitrator, too. Their claim to an epistemological break is an attempt to emerge from their culture of silence and to face the needs of people in their own situation. However, dialogue with First World theology and Church teaching becomes problematic because of the need to establish a common basis for respective truth claims. This issue will reappear in later chapters.

5.2 *The Experience of Christopraxis*

Related to the epistemological break is the Third World theologians' claim to have found a new theological locus in the committed involvement of Christians in the struggle of the poor and the oppressed against all forms of injustice and domination¹¹². Traditionally a theological locus is a source of our understanding of the truth of revelation. The first locus is the Bible, but there are others, such as apostolic tradition, the church Fathers etc¹¹³. When revelation was thought of in propositional terms, *loci theologici* acted as useful storehouses for apologetic purposes¹¹⁴. Recently, given a more dynamic view of revelation, there have been attempts to find new loci because the traditional loci had been couched in ahistorical categories. The effort by the Third World theologians is a further attempt to reconcile the idea of *loci theologici* with a view of revelation as God acting in history. They put this in terms of making committed faith in action, or praxis, the first act of theology.

The subject of praxis is not just a matter of the theologians' wanting to emphasise practice over theory, the particular over the universal or the present over the past. It goes deeper than that. The consequence of taking history seriously as a locus of God's revelation is to realise that God can

the concrete historical events in which persons are engaged as agents. Truth is found in the histories, cultures, and religions of our peoples» (J. CONE, «Black Theology: Its Origin», 99).

¹¹² EATWOT, «Final Statement», no. 45, in *Irruption*, 199.

¹¹³ Melchior Cano (*De locis theologicis*, 1563) gave ten loci: sacred scripture, oral traditions of Christ and the apostles, the Catholic church, councils, the Roman church, Fathers, theologians, reason, philosophy and history (see M. SECKLER, «Il significato ecclesiologico del sistema dei "loci theologici"»; see also J. WICKS, «Loci theologici», 605-607).

¹¹⁴ G. RUGGERI, «Faith and History», 93-94.

act in «our» history. So the life of the church or in some cases christopraxis beyond the confines of the church, is seen as a locus for theology. Moreover, this means that history is a locus of continuing revelation today and that God is saying something new in our time.

It is necessary to be clear as to the range of meaning of the term praxis because its use is varied¹¹⁵. Sometimes praxis is opposed to theory, and seems to mean any form of practice. In this sense, theology uses the mediation of social analysis to reflect critically on praxis. At other times praxis specifically refers to faith in action or to christopraxis. In this sense the primary mediation is not so much the secular social sciences but the living gospel. The two senses of praxis illustrated above are not the same¹¹⁶. While the former is championed by some in Latin America, the latter sense, stressing practical engagement, is more common among the other Third World theologians. Thus reflecting on praxis means that theology arises out of the living, vital faith of the ecclesial community or the christopraxis of the «human» community, and it is only via this living faith that the theologian discovers the necessary conditions for thinking correctly.

With this second understanding of praxis, experience and the particularity of faith expression take on a new significance as mediums of revelation, for it means that revelation is encountered both in the gospel and in the christopraxis of the believing community. The starting point is the believing community rather than the revealing God, but this does not necessarily mean that transcendence is lost and that theology is reduced to a form of religious sociology. Theological reflection means discerning in praxis the divine creativity at work in human events, and attempting to discover its meaning for the transformation of the world¹¹⁷. Thus the issue of the relation of praxis and theology to revelation appears as one of two moments of revelation: continuing revelation and foundational revelation. The Third World theologians insist that there is an integral relationship between these two forms of revelation and that one should begin with continuing

¹¹⁵ C. DAVIS discusses various interpretations of the term praxis in «Theology and Praxis», 158-159.

¹¹⁶ C. BOFF, *Theology and Praxis*, 216-219. Boff calls the first, socio-analytic mediation and the second, hermeneutic mediation.

¹¹⁷ For discussion on this point see M. MINELLA, «Praxis and the Question of Revelation», 23.

revelation in present day praxis because there is the possibility of discovering something new¹¹⁸.

5.3 *Scripture and Other Sources of Our Knowledge of Revelation*

All through the EATWOT meetings there has been a debate concerning the sources of revelation. Because EATWOT is an ecumenical body there is added interest in the Bible as one of the principal sources of our knowledge of Christian revelation. However, particularly in the Asian conferences, there has been a tendency to broaden the base of our knowledge. For example, at the Conference in Sri Lanka in 1979, Sebastian Kappen said that two modes of encountering the divine — in Jesus and in the world today — form «a unity in tension». To theologise «is to try to understand the Gospel in the light of our encounter with God today and, conversely to understand our encounter with God in contemporary history in the light of the Gospel»¹¹⁹. Unity in tension does not mean that the Gospel exercises absolute authority¹²⁰. The Bible is treated as an important source for doing theology, but it is not entirely clear to what extent the Bible can exercise authority over Asian history.

In Latin America, too, there have been debates about how to understand the Bible as a source of our knowledge of revelation. In his paper for the conference in 1981 in New Delhi, J. Severino Croatto treated the self-revelation of God as continuing today. He says that to think that God would not reveal Godself in more salvation events is to contradict the very essence of the biblical message. God is saying something new in the struggles of

¹¹⁸ So, while their methodology is different, a continuity with Western theology remains because of their use of foundational revelation in the «second act» of doing theology. Sergio Torres comments, «both theologies read the same scriptures and confess the same God of Jesus Christ» (S. TORRES in the «Preface» to *Doing Theology*, x).

¹¹⁹ S. KAPPEN, «Orientations for an Asian Theology», 121.

¹²⁰ At the same conference Bp Lakshman Wickremesinghe said that scriptural testimony is authoritative as a guide in the face of new developments in the ongoing history of the church. At least, contemporary testimony must not undermine scriptural insights. But «this [scriptural] testimony must be seen in its proper perspective, especially in regard to the relation of Christianity to other religions» (L. WICKREMESINGHE, «Christianity in the Context of Other Faiths», 34-35). In his assessment of the conference, James Cone says: «While there was not much discussion about the relation of Asian and biblical histories, there was an underlying assumption that the latter could not exercise an absolute authority over the former [...]. Therefore they affirmed the authority of the Bible in the context of Asia's struggle and not separate from it» (J. CONE, «A Black American Perspective», 186-187).

oppressed peoples and in the processes of liberation¹²¹. Croatto thinks that the idea of «closed revelation» sets up a short circuit in the revelation process because it leaves out the «event» in the process God→event→word. Before the Bible was God's word it was God's event. So today it is a matter of seeing the face of God as God enters present historical events. The Bible can orient us within these events and teach us «to recognise him as he manifests himself right now — not as a repetition of the past»¹²².

This approach to biblical hermeneutics helps to justify the Third World theologians' approach to rereading the Bible and discovering in it possibilities that were «unsaid» in previous readings. This is more than using the biblical message to «shed light» on socio-historical reality. Rather, the praxis of faith in a context of oppression–liberation is contributing to the meaning of the Bible by opening it up precisely in its quality as the word of God today¹²³.

5.4 *The Role of the Holy Spirit*

In recent EATWOT meetings a greater emphasis has been given to the role of the holy Spirit in the revelation of God's presence. The provisional final document of the 1986 Mexico conference proposes going beyond texts to «the Spirit of the living God»¹²⁴. How to understand the Spirit is a matter of debate. The Asian report for the same conference says that the cosmic-human spirits and images of other religions are not identical with «The Spirit» but can be «understood in the light of the freedom of the Holy Spirit» and can thus become more liberating¹²⁵. Here the holy Spirit is understood as the spirit which is the basis of that life in its fullness which is sought throughout the Third World.

The provisional final document from Mexico notes that just as the Spirit was not confined to the incarnation of Christ but was active in the resurrection, so too, the Spirit plays an active part in the dialectic of incarnation–death–resurrection in history today. Thus they see the passion of Jesus in the struggles of people and the resurrection in people's growing emancipation and fellowship. These historical realities are events that

¹²¹ J.S. CROATTO, «Biblical Hermeneutics», 162.

¹²² J.S. CROATTO, «Biblical Hermeneutics», 162.

¹²³ J.S. CROATTO, «Biblical Hermeneutics», 160.

¹²⁴ See EATWOT, «Commonalities, Divergences», 206.

¹²⁵ See EATWOT, «Asian Report», 22.

manifest the liberating power of God, as the Spirit, moving in the depths of history, bringing «all particular incarnations into the Realm of God»¹²⁶.

The appreciation of revelation and grace on the basis of the Spirit opens up new possibilities for the theology of revelation and God's presence in the world. However a lot of work needs to be done to reconcile the understanding of the action of the Spirit today as a locus of revelation, and the scriptures, particularly the Christian scriptures as the word of God and the norm of Christian theology.

5.5 *The God of Life*

The theme of the God of life has been developing since the early years of EATWOT. The 1977 conference in Ghana ended its «Final Communiqué» with the words of Jn 10,10. The participants wanted all in their lands «to have life and live abundantly». This was an appropriate ending because the theme entered into a number of the presentations. For example, Mercy Amba Odoyoye noted that for Africans the supreme Being is believed to be the source of life, «so the search after the life-force is itself a groping for a closer and more personal relationship with Being Itself». Desmond Tutu referred to God saving from a death-dealing situation for a life-giving one. Allan Boesak said that theology must refer to what has been a reality in African heritage and African traditional thinking for centuries, namely, «the concept of the wholeness of life, which is also a biblical concept»¹²⁷.

Attention to this theme has come not only from the Africans. The Asian Theological Conference in Korea in 1989 said that Asian spirituality «is bound up with life and all that life involves [...]. It is creativity and celebration of the God of life and liberation»¹²⁸. At the 1980 Brazil conference the participants noted how the unconditional affirmation of life may be seen today in the option for the poor¹²⁹. In bearing witness to a just life and in surrendering their lives «on the Calvary of the world», the poor are serving to build the kingdom of God and to reveal the presence of the God of

¹²⁶ See, EATWOT, «Commonalities, Divergences», 206.

¹²⁷ M.A. ODOYOYE, «The Value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices», 116; D. TUTU, «The Theology of Liberation in Africa», 166; A. BOESAK, «Liberation Theology in South Africa», 175. There were other references to the life theme; for example, Bp T. Tshibangu mentions the Colloquium on African Theology at Kinshasa which focused on the notion of life (see T. TSHIBANGU, «The Task of African Theologians», 77).

¹²⁸ EATWOT, «The Search for a Liberation Spirituality in Asia», 152.

¹²⁹ See EATWOT, «Final Document», no. 21, in *The Challenge*, 234.

life¹³⁰. The importance of this theme for the women in EATWOT been noted already¹³¹.

The theology of life and the God of life have been linked to the African understanding of existence, Asian resistance, Latin American proclamation and women's covenant with life. As noted already, the theme was developed in the 1992 conference in Nairobi. In effect, life in its fullness can be seen as a metaphor for God's revelation. The cry for life is a cry for God, and the creative response to the cry for life is really a response to God¹³². Saying yes to life gives hope. Saying yes to life means an increasingly committed faith in God. Saying yes to life means an experience of connectedness to God, to others and to nature. The 1992 Statement asserts: «God IS PRESENT in the third-world cry for life!»¹³³.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how the local churches have continued the innovative intentions of Vatican II regarding openness to non-Western religions and cultures and the problems of the Third World. Such committed involvement in their various contexts has led the local churches to renewed efforts to understand the faith-life relationship. This has meant some theological innovation not anticipated by Vatican II; for example, in theological method and in images of God, such as the God of life.

What difference does it make to the understanding of divine revelation when it is received by people whose experience is radically different from that of Europe or North America? One must be on guard against simplistic caricatures and generalisations. However this chapter has presented substantial evidence to show how diverse experiences have been an

¹³⁰ EATWOT, «Letter to Christians», 247.

¹³¹ Virginia Fabella, commenting on the Womens' Conference in 1986 in Mexico, says that the «key to the theology done by Third World women is the word *life*. In doing theology, women in the three continents find themselves committed to all the vital elements that compose human life» (V. FABELLA, *Beyond Bonding*, 53).

¹³² The link is made explicitly in the theological reflections of the Statement (see, EATWOT, «A Cry for Life», 55). The Theology Commission in its Reflections in preparation for the Assembly also links the cry for life with the revelation of God. They write: «The cry is also to discover and take conscious possession of the relation which struggles for freedom and justice have to the Presence that enjoins liberation, to the Ultimate Horizon of meaning and Ground of Existence, to the Absolute Justice whose demand for interpersonal justice our earth cannot be fought nor silenced» [sic]; (EATWOT THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, «A Cry for Life», 4).

¹³³ See EATWOT, «A Cry for Life», 48.

important factor in producing theological approaches which use different hermeneutics for interpreting the same Christian mystery. While the differences are significant among the three main regions, a comparison of the statements of the bishops and EATWOT within each of the three regions shows a similarity which can best be explained by the particularity of the context and the life experience of their communities.

In Latin America, God's action in history is the basic hermeneutical principle for both bishops and theologians. There is a fundamental unity in their option for the poor and in the importance given to the «signs of the times» today.

In Africa, the incarnation of the gospel is the basic hermeneutical principle for both groups. Culture and life, and the importance of the human person are fundamental to their theology.

In Asia, the divine presence through the power of the Spirit is the fundamental hermeneutical principle. Thus dialogue and openness to the Spirit working both within and beyond the Christian communities is a common feature.

While differences among the regions are striking, there are also similarities which come from their common experience of being part of the Third World. The inductive method is standard. The most common starting point for both bishops and theologians in all the regions is life experience and the problems of the churches or communities of which they are a part. The focus is on the present and future rather than the past, and their hermeneutics is concerned not so much with the problem of past and present but with theory and practice.

There are similarities in the way the regions see the source of our knowledge of revelation. God's self-communication requires human mediation. In the free, creative response in praxis, human persons are seen as co-creators in history, with the task of co-operating in establishing the kingdom of God. People, and especially those who are treated as less than human, are not just the objects of concern but also the subject of theology as the revealers of the God of the poor and the God of life.

There are similarities also in the content of the three regions' theology. Especially in recent years there are repeated references to life and the God of life. There is also a growing interest in the Spirit as source and sustainer of that life. The core of Vatican II's theology was its ecclesiology. Having opened up new possibilities for the people of God in the churches throughout the world, there is now new interest in the quality of faith life and the sustenance and the growth of faith communities through the power of the Spirit.

A consequence of the Council is an uncentering of theology. If revelation occurs in human history then the whole of human history must be taken into account and not just the history of one people. If all people are under the salvific, life-giving plan of God then traditional loci of revelation must be kept in perspective. Allowance must be made for the possibility of various forms of revelation with unification being the work of the Spirit in the on-going process of history. With revelation seen as God's self-communication, the emphasis can be more on God's relationship with people and less on the mediating symbolic structures.

Revelation in scripture remains a norm for theological reflection but attitudes to tradition differ. Here the bishops naturally take a more conservative stance concerning the handing on of the apostolic deposit of faith. The EATWOT theologians, with their rejection of Western theology, give little mention of Christian tradition or Christian heritage. It seems that on-going revelation takes its place. This can be seen by comparing their view with *Dei verbum* 8 where it says that «the church, in its teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to every generation all that it is and all that it believes». Here *Dei verbum* is referring to faith praxis. The difference is that the orthodox view sees tradition as the passing on of a living deposit of faith, whereas the EATWOT view in terms of orthopraxis sees faith praxis as a form of ongoing revelation which is an ever-present reality. For them living tradition means not focusing on symbolic structures of the past but on the present act of revelation of God still speaking and endlessly acting. Structurally the two perspectives are not so different, though the reality experienced may be as different as life and death.

The next chapters will go into these matters in more depth in the study of the work of three theologians from the Third World.

CHAPTER III

Jean-Marc Éla's Understanding of Divine Revelation

1. Introduction

The Giziga people of North Cameroon have a myth about «God's withdrawal». In the beginning people lived with God, but due to the impetuosity and innovation of a young girl, heaven and earth were separated, and God no longer comes to settle people's arguments. The myth is as follows.

Jadis le Ciel était proche de la Terre, Bumbulvun vivait avec les hommes. Si proche même que les hommes ne pouvaient se déplacer que le dos courbé. Par contre, ils n'avaient pas de soucis à se faire pour leur subsistance: il leur suffisait de tendre la main pour déchirer des lambeaux de ciel et les manger.

Mais un jour, une jeune fille, une fille de chef, qui était une *mukuwan* (une « méchante » qui fait tout à l'envers, qui fait le contraire des autres), au lieu de prendre des morceaux de voûte céleste pour se nourrir commença à regarder à terre et à choisir les graines qu'elle y trouvait. Elle se fit un mortier et un pilon pour écraser les graines qu'elle avait choisies sur le sol. A genoux à terre, chaque fois qu'elle levait son pilon, celui-ci allait frapper le ciel et Dieu. Gênée dans son travail, la jeune fille dit au ciel: « Dieu, ne vas-tu pas t'éloigner un peu? »

Le Ciel s'éloigna un peu et la jeune fille put se tenir debout. Elle continua et à mesure qu'elle pilait ses graines, elle levait son pilon un peu plus haut. Elle implora le Ciel une deuxième fois: le Ciel s'éloigna encore un peu. Alors elle commença à lancer son pilon en l'air. A la troisième imploration, le Ciel, outré, s'en alla au loin, là où il est maintenant.

Depuis ce temps-là les hommes marchent et se tiennent debout. Ils ne se nourrissent plus de lambeaux du ciel: ils sont devenus mangeurs de mil. De plus, Dieu ne se montre plus aux hommes comme jadis où, tous les soirs, il

venait régler leurs palabres; maintenant les hommes sont seuls avec leurs palabres: c'est la guerre¹.

Jean-Marc Éla, during his time working among the people of North Cameroon, was impressed by the influence of the myth of God's withdrawal on the outlook of people there. In an essay in *Voici le temps des héritiers*, Éla relates the words of an old man at Tokombéré in Northern Cameroon: «Autrefois, Dieu a parlé aux hommes, maintenant, il s'est tu, laissant les hommes en proie à la faim, à la maladie et à la mort»². Éla asserts that this sense of estrangement between God and humanity is found in many parts of Africa. It raises the issue of how to talk about God in a context where people think that God is silent, having turned humanity over to drought, suffering, and death. In addition, as living conditions worsen in post-independence Africa, Éla asks how one can speak about God in African societies torn apart by many forms of neo-colonial violence³. This issue lies behind much of Éla's theological work⁴.

Jean-Marc Éla comes from Ebolowa in Southern Cameroon⁵. He studied theology and sociology in France and Belgium, and served thirteen years in North Cameroon. There he worked for four years with Baba Simon, who was a well-known figure among the people of the North. For a number of years Éla taught at the University of Yaoundé. In August 1995, after the assassination of his colleague Fr. Engelbert Mveng, Éla fled to Canada,

¹ The myth of the retreat of Bumbulvun from the Giziga of North Cameroon is cited in L.-V. THOMAS – R. LUNEAU, *La terre africaine et ses religions*, 136. It also appears in ID., *Les sages dépossédés*, 147-148.

² J.-M. ÉLA, *Voici le temps*, 170. Also see ID., *Foi*, 125 [E.T., 94], 203 [167]. References will normally be from the French language original (except for *Fede e liberazione in Africa* which is originally in Italian). However, to facilitate further investigation, references to Éla's principal theological works, *Ma foi d'Africain* and *Le cri de l'homme africain* will include in [] the page number of the English edition.

³ *Foi*, 19 [xvii].

⁴ Éla is not saying that God is «dead» or totally absent. The nature of his understanding of God's relationship to humanity will be clarified in the course of this chapter.

⁵ Jean-Marc Éla was born in 1936. He describes himself as «the son of a cocoa planter who was an avid reader of the Bible» (*Foi*, 23 [3]). He studied theology under the Benedictines in Cameroon and was ordained as a diocesan priest in 1964. For further personal details, see J. HEIJKE, *Kameroanse bevrijdingstheologia*, 93-105; also the interview with Thomas Seiterich-Kreuzkamp, «Wie die Kirdi den Tod Gottes überwand», 21.

seeking political asylum⁶. His writing is deeply influenced by his pastoral experience with Baba Simon and the difficulties experienced by the youth who migrate to the urban areas, and people remaining in the rural communities. His writing has attracted interest because he offers a critique of attempts so far to reflect theologically on the relation between faith and contemporary culture in the African context. Éla insists that the sociopolitical dimension must be taken into account, and he says that divine revelation must be seen in relation to social changes and political issues in present-day Africa.

Éla prefers not to use the term «inculturation» because it too easily connotes the efforts of those who focus on traditional culture at the expense of contemporary culture. Still, the underlying theological issue remains the same, for it comes down to the mystery of the incarnation⁷. Éla is inspired by *kenosis*: the dynamic of the divine coming to us in Christ, who became poor for our sake. The good news of the identification of Christ with the poor and the oppressed is not merely a good idea. It involves a prophetic proclamation of the gospel in communities that hear the word and act to implement the liberating potential of the gospel.

Éla's writing is characterised by provocative statements and questions in relatively brief articles in journals and newspapers, and it requires some ingenuity on the part of the researcher to see their continuity and to understand what lies behind them. Following up references in footnotes has been one way of gaining a deeper understanding of the issues concerned. This attempt to systematise Éla's work tries not to force his thought into categories foreign to it, but rather to respect his categories, metaphors and images as far as possible. It is important to keep in mind Éla's distinction between words *about* God and the word *of* God⁸. The first refers to theology. The second refers to revelation which is the principal topic of investigation here.

This chapter is divided into four parts. After some introductory comments there is an overview of Éla's basic argument and his theology. Then the chapter will focus directly on the understanding of divine revelation that

⁶ Concerning Éla's recent flight to Canada, see *ADISTA* 62 (16 settembre 1995) 2-9.

⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, in 1974 the African bishops said that they were adopting a theology of incarnation. This was meant to go beyond adaptation or indigenisation, which were considered superficial and motivated by Western missionaries (see A. SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 213; also, E. MARTEY, *African Theology*, 66).

⁸ J.-M. ÉLA, «Avec les "damnés de la terre"» (1984a) 55.

lies behind Éla's thinking. In the final part there is an attempt to take an objective stance and to evaluate Éla's theological contribution.

1.1 *Antecedents*

Éla is writing during a time of rapid change in Africa. It is necessary to outline some of these changes so as to understand better his thinking.

In the 1960s and 1970s many African nations gained formal independence, black leadership took over control of the state, and religion became a prime area for the implementation of a programme for cultural authenticity⁹. New stress was put on the value of African religion, tradition, and culture and their continuity with Christianity. In anglophone Africa, writers like Edward Blyden wrote about the *African personality* as the body of qualities which make up the distinctiveness of the people of Africa¹⁰. Meanwhile the *négritude* movement flourished in francophone intellectual circles¹¹. Within the Catholic Church a work entitled *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* drew attention to the notion of the indigenisation of the faith¹². From 1956 onwards, many other works appeared, following a similar line of thought¹³.

There are many reasons for the emergence of African theologies at that time. No doubt they were influenced by the cultural struggle which was occurring throughout Africa. In the same year as the publication of *Des*

⁹ Ghana gained independence in 1957, and Zimbabwe in 1980. Many other countries became independent during this period. Adrian Hastings divides the history of the interaction of gospel and culture in Africa into five periods. The fifth period, beginning in the 1980s, has been a time of political tensions and economic difficulties (see A. HASTINGS, *African Catholicism*, 21-35).

¹⁰ See V.Y. MUDIMBE, *The Invention of Africa*. Cited in E. MARTEY, *African Theology*, 14-15.

¹¹ For a detailed description of this movement, see O. BIMWENYI-KWESHI, *Discours théologique négro-africain*, 190-262.

¹² *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* (1956) is considered by many to be the beginning of African theology (see B. BUJO, «Des Prêtres noirs s'interrogent» 286-297). Some consider that the movement towards an African theology began with Placid Tempels and the publication of *La philosophie Bantoue* in 1948. For a concise description of the birth of African theology, see B. BUJO, *African Theology in its Social Context*, 56-73.

¹³ Examples of such works are: A. KAGAME, *La philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise*; V. MULAGO, *Un visage africain du christianisme*. (Part of Mulago's thesis from the Urban University, Rome, was published as «L'union vitale Bantu»). Other writers include: C. Nyamiti, J. Mbiti, E.B. Idowu, Bp T. Tshibangu, and N. Mushete.

prêtres noirs (1956), the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists, with the theme, «The Crisis of Black Culture,» was held in Paris. In their works, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Cheikh Anta Diop, and Amilcar Cabral spoke out against cultural domination. At the time, Franz Fanon was influential as a critic of colonialism and supporter of the revolution in Algeria¹⁴.

From the names and titles mentioned so far, it is evident that, in the early stages, the major theological developments occurred in francophone Africa, influenced particularly by those who had studied in France or Belgium. This was the period before the Second Vatican Council, and with the *nouvelle théologie*, a time of creativity in French-speaking Europe. Theology was seen not so much as an explanation of dogmas, but rather as the realisation of the meaning of divine revelation in relation to the actual experience of men and women. Dogmatic statements and their theological elaborations were considered more in their cultural and religious contexts, and this naturally provoked questions from the Africans coming from their own situation. Later, with the Second Vatican Council there was a general mood of optimism and greater openness to new expressions of faith. The theme and reality of inculturation became an issue of vital importance for the church in Africa¹⁵.

In the 1980s, the mood in Africa changed (as also in Europe and elsewhere). Africa has been crippled by political tensions, bureaucratic corruption, and inefficiency. Added to this are economic depression, droughts, famine, and the impact of AIDS and other health hazards. Theology cannot ignore this changing context. The African theology of the post-independence period tended to be ahistorical and uncritical in its attitude to traditional culture. In the 1980s one witnesses the emergence of a critical approach which views the *négritude* movement as an ideological disguise for African alienation. Where previously the principal issue had been seen as the relationship between the gospel and culture, other issues began to emerge. The inculturationists have been accused of ignoring the reality of oppression, not only in areas of race and gender, but also of class, because they failed to see the bourgeois culture they had identified with¹⁶.

¹⁴ See F. FANON, *Peau noire*; also, ID., *Les damnés de la terre*.

¹⁵ For a brief but lucid description of inculturation in Africa, see J.M. WALIGGO, «Making a Church That Is Truly African».

¹⁶ Bénézet Bujo writes: «The theology of inculturation, so often preached triumphantly in African churches, is a pompous irrelevance, truly an ideological superstructure at the service of the bourgeoisie» (B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, 71).

Since the 1980s the major issue is the relationship of the gospel and justice in a situation of growing poverty and in the struggle against dictatorship, both domestic and foreign¹⁷.

Jean-Marc Éla is one of the first proponents of this critical theology. In some of his early works in the wake of Cameroon's political independence he appears to defend the movement for black authenticity¹⁸. However, even at this initial stage he is calling for the «liberation» of the «black soul» from a state of alienation¹⁹ refers frequently to Frantz Fanon of Algeria who published *Les damnés de la terre* in 1961²⁰. As a Christian theologian Éla does not share Fanon's view supporting violent revolution. His intention is to propose a Christian alternative. For Éla, if the church in Africa wants to respond to the generation who are influenced by Fanon, then it must emphasise the liberating potential of the gospel²¹.

1.2 *Éla's Basic Argument*²²

Éla argues that African nations have gained political independence, but this has not meant a better life for the majority of the people. In most countries there is now an African elite while the majority of the people

¹⁷ Many authors refer to the situation of poverty and oppression. These two terms can be understood in various ways, for example, see Engelbert Mveng's understanding of «anthropological poverty» mentioned in chapter II. Bénézet Bujo refers to the struggle against dictatorship (see B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, 15).

¹⁸ For example in «L'Église, le monde noir» (1963a), Éla calls for openness to the values of the black world at the Council. For example: «Nous n'attendons pas des recettes magiques et des structures toute faites, mais plutôt un esprit d'ouverture et d'accueil aux valeurs de civilisation du Monde noir» (*Ibid.*, 80).

¹⁹ «Une bonne décolonisation, c'est une affaire d'ordre, de justice et de dignité de l'homme. Cela implique, à la limite, la libération intégrale de la race noire» («L'Église, le monde noir» [1963a] 62). «Le problème que pose cette situation conflictuelle est celui de la libération en profondeur de l'âme noire» (*Ibid.*, 63). Éla's critique of the *négritude* movement, which he calls a system belonging to ivory-tower intellectuals, appears in chapter 8 of *Cri*, entitled, «Authenticité et aliénation».

²⁰ Frantz Fanon from Martinique became one of the most eloquent spokespersons of the revolution in Algeria. Éla refers frequently to Fanon and to his expression «les damnés de la terre».

²¹ For Éla's summary of Fanon's ideas and his proposal for alternatives, see chapter 5 of *Cri*, entitled, «Afin que renaisse l'espoir».

²² Éla is normally referring to the situation in «Afrique noire» (sub-Saharan Africa not including South Africa), particularly Cameroon in West Africa.

remain dependent and oppressed²³. In this situation the church appears to side with the elite. Church schools, hospitals, and various development projects form part of a structure whereby the professional people in the towns monopolise a major part of the resources while the rural people are neglected. Internally too the church suffers from clericalism that keeps Christian communities in a state of neo-colonial dependence²⁴.

Efforts at Africanisation that treat cultural data as «stepping stones» or a «preparation for the gospel» tend to ignore questions of justice or the challenges of history²⁵. The church is concerned with internal matters such as baptism, marriage, and vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Meanwhile the people are posing existential questions about poverty and sickness and the alienation of modern youth. Éla says that it is precisely in facing questions such as these — in the conflict between hope and the meaninglessness of poverty — that we will grasp the meaning of revelation²⁶.

Éla's view of the contemporary African situation may be summarised in three terms: death, injustice, slavery. The associated theological questions are: Who is the Lord of life for those caught in a situation of death, whether it be death by famine, sickness, or violence? How can one speak of God when so many experience God as silent in the face of injustice? How does God free people from new forms of slavery, including slavery to fatalism, fear, and parasitic bureaucracies?

Éla says that God's message collides with the injustice of the present situation. In response to the condition of death, injustice, and slavery Éla proposes that the church must try to help people come to know a God who listens to humanity in the midst of its problems. If the biggest problem people have is lack of food or an unjust situation, then God will meet them there. This must be their point of departure in their search for God²⁷. In the

²³ For a sociological analysis see Éla's works, *L'Afrique des villages; La ville en Afrique noire; Quand l'État pénètre en brousse*. The new poor include deposed chiefs, ethnic minorities serving as scapegoats, and outlawed opposition movements (see *Cri*, 67 [52]).

²⁴ *Cri*, 35 [24].

²⁵ *Foi*, 211 [174].

²⁶ *Foi*, 33 [11]. Elsewhere he writes, «Tout ce qui rythme la vie quotidienne, au fil des jours et de l'année, doit être relié au territoire de la Révélation divine» (*Voici le temps*, 175).

²⁷ «La recherche d'une nouvelle manière d'exister ensemble, des efforts pour imaginer des formules nouvelles, tous les processus de changement, de développement,

incarnation God identified with the poor and rejected. We must learn to speak of God from the position of such people: the «wretched of the earth». The privileged place for this is in the small groups where people band together to resist resignation in the face of misery and hunger. When such people read the Bible they discover a God who not only speaks, but who intervenes in favour of the poor. This is the subversive force of the gospel and as such they will discover the God of the Magnificat who fills the hungry with good things.

It is noteworthy that in the article «L'Église, le monde noir et le Concile», Éla is using the term «liberation» prior to Vatican II and before the term became popular in theology from Latin America²⁸. Admittedly at this stage the term appears to have little explicit theological content. It is used in terms of the struggle of African people against colonialism²⁹. Nevertheless, the confrontation is not simply political. The implication is that black culture must be respected as a worthy recipient for the incarnation of the gospel message³⁰. One also notices a broader viewpoint somewhat similar to that of the conclusion to Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved*

du travail agricole, de l'éducation des jeunes, de la médecine en milieu rural, tout cela rentre dans une dynamique d'ensemble, où nous semble-t-il, Dieu vient aujourd'hui nous rencontrer dans nos débats, dans nos enjeux» («Avec les "damnés de la terre"» [1984a] 53).

²⁸ Engelbert Mveng traces the beginnings of a theology of liberation in Africa back to the 17th century with Beatriz of Congo and the Antonian movement (see the interview by F. Carrera – J.G. Núñez, «Teología de liberación en Africa», 39).

²⁹ Éla refers to cultural liberation, the liberation of black awareness, the complete liberation of the black race, and the liberation in its depths of the black soul (see «L'Église, le monde noir» [1963a] 61-63, 72). In this context, liberation refers to the rehabilitation of the values of black people so that they can be treated as equals by others, especially Europeans. He refers to Franz Fanon and his description of Blacks being enslaved by their inferiority and Whites being enslaved by their superiority. Thus liberation is not just for Blacks. It is a matter of justice and dignity affecting the whole of humanity.

³⁰ Éla quoting V. Mulago asks, «Le Christ est-il incorporé, incarné dans l'Africain?» («L'Église, le monde noir» [1963a] 71). In an application to the liturgy Éla maintains a form-content distinction in his image of a tree with its branches. The trunk of the tree represents the divine element in the liturgy which is unchangeable and transcendent. The branches are the different human forms which are particular to each cultural situation. So the liberation of black culture and the acceptance of the dignity of black values would mean that it is possible to create an African liturgy while preserving the «essential and unchangeable rites instituted by Christ» (*Ibid.*, 75).

Country: «Deliver us, O Lord, from the fear of slavery and from the slavery of fear». Éla is calling for a liberation so that people can be free to express themselves without fear³¹.

As his work has developed it has become obvious that Éla sees the liberation of the oppressed as the primary condition for any authentic inculturation of the Christian message in Africa³². This requires a «fresh examination of all revelation and Christian tradition»³³. According to Éla, if God speaks through history then theology cannot be a matter of defined doctrines or ideas passed on from one generation to another. We learn to speak about God as we participate in the event of liberating the poor³⁴.

The above paragraphs highlight some of the main points in Éla's work. The task now is to delve deeper into his theology and, in particular, to discern what understanding of divine revelation lies behind his thinking.

1.3 *Locus for Theology: Culture, Economics, Politics*

Éla says that his principal concern is «a critical approach to problems of faith from a point of departure in the African culture, economics, and politics that permeate them»³⁵. For this reason he considers the social sciences to be important *loci theologici* because of their potential for examining the social basis of reality³⁶. Theology must not only be relevant to the contemporary situation but must emerge from the very predicament in which people and groups in villages and shanty-towns are resisting forces of dependency and injustice³⁷.

In a situation of violence and contempt for humanity the church cannot remain aloof, concerned only with transcendence and the «spirit». It must

³¹ *Cri*, 95 [75].

³² *Foi*, 17 [xvi].

³³ *Foi*, 15 [xiv]. In support of this claim he refers to *Ad gentes* 22.

³⁴ «Si Dieu se dit dans l'histoire, la théologie ne s'apprend plus dans la lettre de manuels qui restitueraient de génération en génération un contenu de foi défini une fois pour toutes, mais dans l'acte de la libération des pauvres» (*Foi*, 216 [180]).

³⁵ *Cri*, 17 [8].

³⁶ «Penso che sia importante tener conto di questa corrente perché ci si è accorti che le scienze umane e l'antropologia in generale possono essere considerate per l'Africa un luogo teologico» (*Fede e liberazione*, 173-174).

³⁷ «La force de rupture des personnes ou des groupes travaillant dans les villages et les bidonvilles pour sortir de la dépendance et de l'injustice constitue le lieu d'émergence d'une théologie qui renonce à parler de Dieu et de la foi à partir d'une "Révélation" toute faite» (*Foi*, 216 [180]).

renew its commitment to the people of God and their concerns³⁸. This means addressing the total situation. People suffer not only cultural deprivation. They are also experiencing socioeconomic and political oppression and this, too, must be included in any attempt to engage in theological reflection on the situation of the «wretched of the earth»³⁹.

Éla says that the church in Africa must move from catechism to revelation⁴⁰. In other words, the mere repetition of doctrines is not sufficient to face the tensions and conflicts people are experiencing. Therefore he prefers to reinterpret the traditional «three-dimensional universe» of sin, sacraments, and grace in terms of contemporary questions. The situation in the Third World shows us what *sin* is⁴¹. The *sacramental* nature of the Christian mystery needs to be rediscovered from the point of view of African symbolism⁴². The liberating message of the God of life degenerates into a religion of «cheap grace» if it is detached from the creation of the kingdom of God⁴³. So Éla tries to find a theological response to existential questions at the level of culture, economics, and politics. It is a difficult task because there is really no ready-made faith language in this area⁴⁴. However he believes that the Christian message of salvation must somehow be brought to bear on such questions. To do otherwise would be to ignore the message of the gospel⁴⁵.

³⁸ «L'Église ne peut ici planer au-dessus de la mêlée, aspirant à la transcendance de l'Esprit: il lui faut retrouver le contact avec la terre africaine, non seulement avec ses religions et sa culture, mais avec les humiliations, la violence et l'impérialisme et des pouvoirs, les résistances et les luttes du peuple» (*Foi*, 191 [154]).

³⁹ Following Engelbert Mveng, some refer to a situation of «anthropological poverty» in Africa (see chapter II). Éla refers to the expression, but normally does not use it himself (see *Fede e liberazione*, 38). He feels that the expression is easily open to misinterpretation and maintains that Africans have retained a cultural richness which the colonial experience has not succeeded in destroying. He prefers the term «poor» or more often the expression from Franz Fanon, «wretched of the earth». While entering fully into sociological research, Éla preserves a certain distance from anthropology. For example, he infers that often those who study people's folkways seem unconcerned about the same people's marginalisation (see *Foi*, 210 [173]).

⁴⁰ *Foi*, 28-29 [8].

⁴¹ *Foi*, 130 [99].

⁴² *Foi*, 179 [144]. Also chapter 3, «L'art de raconter la révélation de Dieu».

⁴³ *Foi*, 168 [133].

⁴⁴ *Cri*, 156 [131].

⁴⁵ «Ignorare i problemi a partire dai quali le nostre Chiese confessano Gesù Cristo in una storia attraversata da tensioni e conflitti significa, in definitiva, ignorare la

1.4 *Theology and African History*

In his books *Cheikh Anta Diop ou l'honneur de penser, Afrique — L'irruption des pauvres* and *Restituer l'histoire aux sociétés africaines*, Éla challenges what he sees as a tendency to minimise African history. He gives examples of early explorers and missionaries who counted the African people along with the fauna just ahead of the hippopotamus and the elephant, and of anthropologists who relegated Africans to the lower stages of evolution. He says that it was convenient to portray Africans as primitive and savage because it made it easier to rationalise colonial domination. Portraying them as barbarous helped justify their domestication. Thus history was used as a weapon of European imperialism.

African people were depicted as having no history and no memory. But such a condition, according to Éla, means they have no future either. Thus the project of the scientist Cheikh Anta Diop was important, for he sought to reverse this trend with his theory that human reason first arose in Africa. Diop sought to show this with reference to the rise of civilisation in the Nile valley. He claimed that Greece usurped the place of Egypt, which was the real cradle of civilisation⁴⁶. Egyptians were Africans. So the light came to Europe, not only from the East, but from the South: from Africa⁴⁷.

Éla supports Diop's effort to make African people the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge. This means entering into politics because cultural alienation is closely linked with political and economic alienation. The forgotten of the earth are also the wretched of the earth or the non-persons of marginalised groups⁴⁸.

Éla, through Diop, wants to counter the amnesia of Africans because he realises that it is hard for people to be aware of God working in people's history if they are not aware of their history. He says that it has been conveniently forgotten that according to the gospel accounts, Jesus spent

dottrina del Vangelo» (*Fede e liberazione*, 93).

⁴⁶ «Ch. A. Diop s'engage dans ce "Combat pour l'histoire" pour remettre les nègres à la place que la Grèce a longtemps usurpée dans l'abrégé de l'histoire générale de l'humanité édifié par Hegel et ses disciples» (J.-M. ÉLA, *Cheikh Anta Diop*, 52).

⁴⁷ See *Cheikh Anta Diop*, 53. Éla quotes Diop as follows: «Alors que l'Europe était habitée par les cannibales, des hommes nus, sauvages et païens, l'Afrique était peuplée par une race d'hommes de couleur, maîtres dans le domaine des sciences, des arts, de la littérature, cultivés et raffinés, pareils à des dieux même, les Anciens comparaient les Ethiopiens aux Dieux» (*Ibid.*, 108).

⁴⁸ For the link between the «damnés de la terre» and «non-hommes», see *Voici le temps*, 187.

part of his childhood in Egypt, as had Moses and Joseph before him⁴⁹. So not only is Africa indispensable for the development of civilisation, but it also played an essential part in the history of Christianity.

Éla claims that the God proclaimed to Africans in colonial times was a supreme, eternal idea divorced from history. God was all-powerful and unchanging and had little involvement in the human drama. Recent efforts at developing African theology concentrate on African culture in an ahistorical way and reduce the faith to a «religion of nature»⁵⁰. The Christian message has been isolated from the political realm «where, precisely, the living God is revealed»⁵¹. For example, he says, the way Christian doctrine was taught, people had no idea of the living relationship between revelation and history as found in the Exodus story. Éla says that the meaning of the Exodus event and the history of the fulfilment of God's promise of salvation is an essential part of rethinking revelation in the Christian communities of Africa today.

1.5 *Theology: How Can We Speak about God?*

Éla calls his theology: «theology under the tree». There are several meanings attached to such a notion. Firstly it summons up the image of the tree in the village where people gather for protection from the sun and where they meet, talk, and sometimes make important decisions. Thus the image lends itself to a theology that develops among brothers and sisters and unlettered people searching together for the meaning of the word of God in situations in which this word touches them⁵². Another meaning of the image is that under the tree there is a measure of light and darkness. The tree provides shade from the sun and ensures an appropriate amount of light for daily activities. Light and darkness is a recurrent biblical and theological image. Éla himself refers to people searching for well-being both in the shadow of the ancestors and in the light of holy scripture⁵³. In the theology under the tree the ancestors and scripture are important structural components. The living dead and the word of life, culture and faith, are key elements in the search for how to speak of God in Africa today.

⁴⁹ *Chiekh Anta Diop*, 52.

⁵⁰ *Cri*, 122 [100].

⁵¹ *Cri*, 43 [31].

⁵² *Cri*, 8 [vi]. His expression is «la théologie sous l'arbre». See also *Foi*, 216 [180].

⁵³ *Cri*, 136 [112].

The image of the tree also refers to the cross of Christ. In Christ the tree of defeat becomes the tree of victory; where life was lost there life has been restored⁵⁴. The image of the tree of the cross is important for Éla who sees the church as the body of the Crucified One of Golgotha⁵⁵.

Éla himself says that the principal inspiration for his theology comes from Baba Simon, and his experience with the people at Tokombéré in North Cameroon⁵⁶. Baba Simon had begun with a form of popular education commonly known as «school under the tree». It was his conviction that such education was the best way to prepare young people for the task of building their future. The school *sous l'arbre* and theology *sous l'arbre* share the same approach: the perspective from below (*la perspective d'en bas*). Theology under the tree emphasises the communitarian element where people relate the good news and the situation from which they need to be liberated. It also capitalises on the richness of African oral expression and emphasises the power of the word as a privileged means of communication⁵⁷.

For Éla, theology means deciphering the meaning of revelation in the historical context of people's lived experience⁵⁸. He declares:

No church tradition has yet exhausted the depths of expression in divine revelation. We must search divine revelation for a way to tell about God in Jesus Christ with the words of our own land and culture. We must patiently elicit from the life of gospel communities an African writing of the Word of God that will be meaningful for the African of today. The reading of the gospel is not yet finished, nor is it our sole task to repeat what others have discovered, thought, and organized, like those parrots captured in our virgin forests⁵⁹.

⁵⁴ *Foi*, 70 [43].

⁵⁵ *Foi*, 190 [153]. Also J.-M. ÉLA, «The Memory of the African People» (1992a).

⁵⁶ «Baba Simon war das große Vorbild für mich» (interview with T. Seiterich-Kreuzkamp, «Wie die Kirdi den Tod Gottes überwandten», 21). Jean Paul Messina, a historian from the Archdiocese of Yaoundé notes, «A partir de ces initiatives se dessina un souci: libérer l'homme de l'ignorance, de la misère, de la maladie. Baba Simon est donc apparu comme un partisan de la théologie sous l'arbre, un théologien de la pratique. Ce sont d'ailleurs ses méthodes pastorales qui inspirèrent à Jean Marc Éla, un autre jeune prêtre du Sud venu le seconder à Tokombéré, les théories de la théologie de libération» (*L'Effort Camerounais* 17 [août 1989] 10).

⁵⁷ E. DOMCHÉ covers these points in his «Pour une théologie sous l'arbre», 9-11.

⁵⁸ *Cri*, 40-41 [28-29].

⁵⁹ *Foi*, 177-178 [142].

Thus, theology, or the word about God, has a hermeneutic function whereby one tries to find the contemporary meaning of the word of God, beginning with the historical understanding that Africans have of themselves and their world. This task is central to the treatment of revelation in the sections which follow.

2. Revelation: God's Word for Us

As has been noted in chapter I, according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, divine revelation is the progressive self-communication of God in deed and word leading to a climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The truth revealed is the mystery of God's will for communion. God's saving purpose is manifest in God's transforming presence in history.

In order to appreciate the significance of this revelation, the Council called for theological investigation in the various socio-cultural regions whereby the deeds and words revealed by God and recorded in scripture and tradition would be subjected to fresh investigation (AG 22). Jean-Marc Éla refers to *Ad gentes* in support of his enquiry⁶⁰. He says that the churches of Africa must «take up the gospel once again, and rethink it so they can announce the Good News in a new way»⁶¹.

What does Éla mean by «gospel»? Is the gospel for Africa different from that in other socio-cultural regions? What characterises Éla's view of what God is saying to Africa? In order to have a better understanding of his view of revelation it may be helpful to consider what images he uses for God.

2.1 Images of God

The myth of God's withdrawal was given in the introduction to this chapter. While God may be silent, it does not mean that the Kirdi consider God as totally absent from their lives. Éla notes other occasions when

⁶⁰ *Foi*, 197 [162]. *Fede e liberazione*, 158. It should be noted that the last section of AG 22 says that this should be the work of the collegial collaboration of Bishops' Conferences. The Instruction for implementing the decree also calls for cooperation with the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (see POPE PAUL VI, *Ecclesia sanctae* III, 18).

⁶¹ *Foi*, 200 [164]. Elsewhere he says, «Dans la mesure où aucune tradition ecclésiale n'a épuisé jusqu'ici le fonds d'expressivité de la Révélation divine, il nous faut chercher à dire Dieu en Jésus-Christ avec les mots de notre terre et de notre culture» (J.-M. ÉLA, «De l'assistance à la liberation» [1981a] 3).

people show a certain intimacy with God. He tells the story of people being forced to pull up their millet in order to plant cotton. They hold up the stalks and say: «My God, you can see that I am not the one who is doing it; my God, it's not me»⁶². They have to apologise to God who according to tradition told them to plant millet so that they would have sustenance.

There appears to be a sense of both God's presence and absence. The myth of God's withdrawal tells of the people's sense of the distance that exists between humanity and God. No doubt for the old men this is accentuated by the experience of encroaching modernity and situations of injustice. Before, people could not abuse others with impunity. The world of the «invisible» would intervene against atrocities. In a world becoming secularised it appears that God does not intervene and a state of injustice prevails⁶³. Moreover, the young people are going to the cities and forgetting the ancestors, who traditionally have been mediators between people and God.

Besides the image of a distant God, there is an image of the God of life. Among the Kirdi people, a new-born child is presented to the sun because the sun is the symbol of God as Father of Life⁶⁴. Also, in front of the house the Kirdi have a *pietre de Dieu* upon which they offer sacrifices to God⁶⁵.

Yet, God was silent. According to Éla, the novelty of Christian revelation is the news that God has spoken. Christians have come to be known as those who have received the word of God. This is radically new for people like the Kirdi, who were used to the silence from a God who had withdrawn, or the mute presence of God symbolised by the sun⁶⁶. The Christian revelation opens up new possibilities to communicate with «God the potter», «God the worker», and «God the shepherd of the people»⁶⁷. Éla stresses particularly that God is the God of life, who «has a weakness for the weak» and who hears the cry of the poor⁶⁸. What Éla is totally opposed

⁶² *Foi*, 118 [88].

⁶³ Éla says that in the face of humiliations and sufferings many feel that God has rejected them (see *Foi*, 195 [160]).

⁶⁴ *Foi*, 41 [18].

⁶⁵ See appendix I, R. 3.

⁶⁶ This is true not only among the Kirdi. Englebert Mveng says that «the God of African monotheism is a God who is worshipped only in silence» (E. MVENG, «African Liberation Theology», 28).

⁶⁷ *Foi*, 29 [8].

⁶⁸ For God as «Lord of life», see *Foi*, 32 [11], 123 [93]; *Fede e liberazione*, 142. In *Fede e liberazione*, p. 64, Éla says, «il Dio della Rivelazione ha un debole per i deboli!».

to is the tendency to create false images of God based on wealth, power, and bourgeois values.

Until it was assumed into people's historical existence, God's revelation remained the hearing of a word coming from elsewhere⁶⁹. Now in Jesus Christ the distance between God and humanity has been overcome. Through the incarnation, Jesus shows us a new image of God who is on the side of the downtrodden and who is victorious in weakness⁷⁰.

2.2 *Locus of Revelation*

Éla stresses that history is the place of God's revealing activity⁷¹. African people must come to know that the message of salvation is received in the context in which they live, taking into account their own creative efforts to construct a future that will be different from their past⁷². The kingdom of God is being built in history. Therefore revelation is to be found in the progressive fulfilment of God's promises in history⁷³. So human experience is important. As has been noted previously, Éla says that the contemporary African experience *d'en bas*, is largely one of death, injustice, and forms of slavery. This is the very situation in which people must look for God's revelation today, because it is precisely in such situations that God's promise of liberation is renewed⁷⁴.

Each moment can be a locus of revelation, and one must read the signs of this revelation in relation to the African pursuit of dignity and autonomy⁷⁵. Thus it is possible to discover God's revelation while considering matters of health, access to land, food, or the power to speak

Concerning the one who hears the cry of the poor, see *Fede e liberazione*, 172.

⁶⁹ «La Rivelazione, finché non si cala nel tessuto di un'esistenza concreta, storica, rimane il semplice ascolto di una parola venuta da altrove» (*Fede e liberazione*, 79).

⁷⁰ *Foi*, 136 [105].

⁷¹ «L'histoire est le lieu de l'activité révélatrice de Dieu» (J.-M ÉLA, «Jésus-Christ, Dieu des philosophes?» [1975] 289).

⁷² *Cri*, 50 [37].

⁷³ *Cri*, 47 [35].

⁷⁴ *Foi*, 134 [103].

⁷⁵ «Il nous apparaît clairement que chaque moment de notre vie et de notre histoire est un lieu où Dieu se révèle et nous sauve, attentif au cri de ceux que Fanon appelait "Les damnés de la terre"» (*Cri*, 126). Also, «La naissance, les relevailles, le mariage, les situations de maladie et de guérison, les funérailles, les semailles et les récoltes, etc. Tout ce qui rythme la vie quotidienne, au fil des jours et de l'année, doit être relié au territoire de la Révélation divine» (*Voici le temps*, 175).

out, for all of these have a dimension of hope or meaninglessness⁷⁶. For Éla this dimension is particularly relevant to the God of hope who takes up the cause of the defenceless⁷⁷.

The privileged locus of God's revelation is the African Christian community. Éla gives the example of «living revelation» in the community where «God begins to speak through an apostle of a base community, using an African style to speak to Africans»⁷⁸. This form of communication is particularly relevant to Africa because African religion is a *religion de l'instant*, which responds to questions posed by the critical moments of life⁷⁹.

2.3 Terms Used for Revelation

Éla uses expressions such as «God speaks», or «God's plan», which indicate features of Éla's approach to divine revelation. For example, when he says that «it is possible that our questions are the best way for God to speak to the people of today», Éla shows a readiness to recognise on-going revelation as God responds to the quest for hope and human dignity⁸⁰. Furthermore, in reference to «God's plan for Africa today», he places great importance on the historical dimension of that plan⁸¹. God's plan is not only incompatible with structures of injustice and misery but is itself a motivating force for people to participate in the «transformation of this badly made world»⁸².

The two expressions illustrated above are used infrequently. The terms Éla uses more often are «revelation», «word», and «gospel». What is the meaning of these terms? What is the relationship between them? How do they contribute to his understanding of revelation?

2.3.1 Revelation

One may distinguish five ways in which Éla uses the term revelation:

- In the verbal form: God reveals X, or God is revealed in Y
- As an event

⁷⁶ *Foi*, 33 [11].

⁷⁷ *Cri*, 115 [93].

⁷⁸ *Foi*, 72 [45].

⁷⁹ *Voici le temps*, 191.

⁸⁰ *Foi*, 148 [116].

⁸¹ *Foi*, 112 [82].

⁸² *Foi*, 112 [82].

- As God's message
- As God's will
- As the self-communication of God

a) Sometimes Éla uses a form of the verb «to reveal» to refer to God revealing or being revealed. Jesus is acknowledged as the ultimate revealer, and the church reveals the living God when it shows people the face of Jesus the Liberator⁸³. Events may also be revelatory when seen as God taking sides with the poor and the oppressed. For example, Éla refers to the Exodus event as an «intervention of God revealing the divine power and love»⁸⁴.

b) Revelation is closely associated with events of history and the dynamism leading to the transformation of the world. Éla notes that «revelation in its plenitude coincides with the end of the process of transformation of the world»⁸⁵. From the events recorded in the Bible, he observes that divine revelation emerges as a freeing of humanity from every form of slavery⁸⁶. The primary example of this is the death and resurrection of Christ. This event reveals the power of God in those who are weak and rejected⁸⁷.

c) Éla often uses the term «revelation» to refer to a message from God. In this sense revelation is a promise and the fulfilment of a promise. It is a promise of salvation which is «the expectation of another world [which] calls for another kind of world»⁸⁸. Éla often refers to a «rereading» of revelation. He is not referring simply to the written word but rather to a reinterpretation of the message of salvation, particularly the good news that a commitment has been made to the poor⁸⁹.

d) Sometimes the message of revelation refers directly to God's will. God's revelation in history carries with it a sense in which the divine design is being accomplished⁹⁰. God's will is that humanity should be fed (Gn 42,1-2; 43,1-2) and God identifies with the hungry (Mt 25,35-42). This

⁸³ *Foi*, 197 [161-162]; *Cri*, 68 [53].

⁸⁴ *Cri*, 51 [38].

⁸⁵ *Cri*, 48 [36].

⁸⁶ *Foi*, 161 [127].

⁸⁷ *Foi*, 162 [128].

⁸⁸ *Cri*, 48 [36].

⁸⁹ *Foi*, 133-134 [102].

⁹⁰ *Cri*, 45 [33].

is because God is the God of life who requires us to oppose a system that results in empty granaries, which are signs of death⁹¹. Questions of health and well-being constitute a locus of the revelation of God's design⁹².

e) The term «revelation» often refers to the self-communication of God. Éla is interested in the question of where we can find and hear God today and emphasises that God is not revealed outside of the events and tensions that constitute our existence⁹³. It is within this social and temporal reality that God is revealed as the God of hope and the God of life. God's loving power is revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this revelation is ongoing in the events which lead to new life and the transformation of the world⁹⁴.

2.3.2 Word

Éla employs the term «word» in a way which complements the term «revelation». One may distinguish five shades of meaning in his use of the term «word»:

- As scripture
- As the pre-existent Word
- As God's will
- As the act of God's communication
- As God's message

a) Éla refers to people gathering under a tree to hear the word of God. He also refers to the poor and their use of the Bible in such a way that one comes to know the force of the word of God and how disturbing it can be⁹⁵.

b) Alluding to the pre-existent Word of Jn 1,9, Éla says that the ancestors cannot be withdrawn from the action of the Word which «enlightens every one that comes into the world»⁹⁶. Through the mystery of the incarnate

⁹¹ *Foi*, 123 [92].

⁹² J.-M. ÉLA, «Christianity and Liberation in Africa» (1994b) 148.

⁹³ *Cri*, 113 [91].

⁹⁴ *Cri*, 47 [35].

⁹⁵ *Foi*, 32-33 [11], 126 [95-96].

⁹⁶ *Foi*, 54 [29].

Word, the concrete human level of our existence has become a place where we can find God⁹⁷.

c) Éla frequently uses the term «word» in a wider sense than the word in scripture or the pre-existent Word. Sometimes it refers to God's intention for the world. Éla points out how the poor and oppressed are «reclaiming the Word of God» and changing the structures in a world «that is incompatible with God's plan»⁹⁸. Thus, in what he calls «the logic of revelation», the hope of salvation in the future, generated by the word of God in the past, becomes a driving force in history⁹⁹.

d) The word also refers to the act of God's communication. This is found in a special way in Jesus of Nazareth, who is God's final word to us¹⁰⁰. Éla refers to the presence of the divine reality of the word and how the divine Word meets us at the deepest part of our being¹⁰¹.

e) Most often the term *parole* refers to God's message. This is the word proclaimed by the church and celebrated in the liturgy. Éla laments that «the Word has been made text»¹⁰². He wants to discover the word expressed in other forms. An African «writing» of the word of God, coming out of the experience of African communities living the novelty of the message of Christ, may well be expressed in oral form¹⁰³.

2.3.3 Gospel

Éla's use of the term «gospel» is fundamental in his understanding of revelation. The term occurs over 200 times in *Le cri de l'homme africain* and *Ma foi d'Africain*. One may distinguish many different shades of meaning in the occurrences of the term «gospel» in his work. It may refer to the following:

⁹⁷ *Foi*, 70-71 [43-44]. On a few occasions he uses the term «Verbe» rather than «Parole» (see *Voici le temps*, 172; J.-M. ÉLA, *Prêcher l'évangile*, 14).

⁹⁸ *Foi*, 122 [91].

⁹⁹ «Dans la logique de la Révélation, le développement de la Parole de Dieu se fait par la projection sur l'avenir attendu de l'histoire passée. Car, dans les premiers hauts faits de Dieu, l'espérance messianique discerne l'annonce de l'acte définitif qui achèvera la révélation de Dieu dans l'histoire» (*Cri*, 44 [32]).

¹⁰⁰ *Foi*, 136 [105], 197 [161].

¹⁰¹ J.-M. ÉLA, *Le message de Jean-Baptiste*, 55; *Prêcher l'évangile*, 22.

¹⁰² *Foi*, 217 [181].

¹⁰³ *Cri*, 139 [115]; *Foi*, 177-178 [142].

- The accounts of Jesus' life in the four gospels
- Jesus' way of life
- The Christ event, particularly Jesus' death and resurrection
- The mystery of God's plan for communion
- A prophetic call to action
- The content of the Christian message

a) Éla refers to the practice of Jesus described in the gospel narratives¹⁰⁴. The gospels also record Jesus's words, for example his directive to us to heal the sick¹⁰⁵. For Éla, the gospel accounts are important as sources of information and inspiration for those who want to commit themselves to following Jesus' way of life.

b) Sometimes his use of the term «gospel» corresponds to Jesus' way of life itself. He refers to «gospel communities» in which the gospel as a leaven enables people to live their lives with reference to the life and practice of Jesus of Nazareth¹⁰⁶. Such a way of life involves struggle because the «logic of the gospel» is that of the stone rejected by the builders. Those rejected by society will be the creators of the future¹⁰⁷.

c) The term «gospel» is also used to refer to the Christ event, especially Jesus' death and resurrection. A genuine relationship with the gospel involves the believer in the experience of both the confrontation with sin and fullness of life¹⁰⁸. The gospel is at the root of life-giving activities where Christ intervenes with all the power of the cross in the tragic situations in which people find themselves¹⁰⁹. Christian faith means that we are reborn to life by the force of the gospel¹¹⁰.

d) Éla's use of the term «gospel» frequently refers to the mystery of God's plan. This is the meaning behind the recurrent references to the «incarnation of the gospel» in Africa¹¹¹. There is a sense in which the incarnation of the gospel is not a human task. Rather it is people's responsibility to discover what God is saying today in Africa. Éla says that

¹⁰⁴ *Foi*, 192 [155].

¹⁰⁵ *Foi*, 176 [141].

¹⁰⁶ *Foi*, 28 [7].

¹⁰⁷ *Foi*, 163 [129].

¹⁰⁸ *Foi*, 163-164 [129-130].

¹⁰⁹ *Foi*, 18 [xvii].

¹¹⁰ *Foi*, 108 [78].

¹¹¹ *Foi*, 175 [140].

when people reread the gospel in the African context today they will come to know God's will which is to liberate people for a new relationship with God and humankind. God's plan is that the world should be «reinvented» or remade by the power of the gospel¹¹².

e) The term «gospel» is often used to mean a prophetic call to action. African society must be confronted with the challenge of the gospel to poverty and injustice. But in order for this to happen the gospel must be liberated from the prison of structures of power and injustice, which reduce it to silence¹¹³. In Éla's view, it is the African Messianic Movements which are most effective in revealing the prophetic kernel of the gospel today¹¹⁴.

f) A frequent meaning of the term «gospel» is that of the content of the Christian message. Since interpretation of the gospel never exhausts the potential of meaning inherent in the message and practice of Jesus, there is always something new to discover. A «Christianity of the museum» risks reducing the gospel to an opium and prevents Christians from reactualising the liberating message of Jesus¹¹⁵. Our task is to reread the gospel message so that it becomes a force for transformation in a world of injustice and oppression¹¹⁶.

2.4 *Synthesis*

As can be seen from the examples given above, there is considerable overlap in Éla's use of terms like revelation, word, and gospel. How is one to differentiate between them?

A possible way of distinguishing the meaning of the terms would be to compare them in the same paragraph. For instance, in one place, referring to the proclamation of the *word of God* in Africa today, Éla says, «a new reading of *revelation* must disclose the dynamism of the *gospel* and the critical demands inherent in the faith. For Christians of Africa, [...] this rereading of the *message of Jesus Christ* could restore reasons to live and

¹¹² *Cri*, 115 [93].

¹¹³ *Fede e liberazione*, 94-95; *Foi*, 214 [177].

¹¹⁴ *Cri*, 64-65 [49-50].

¹¹⁵ «Cosa può essere in questa prospettiva l'impatto storico di un cristianesimo da museo che rischia di ridurre il Vangelo a vero oppio ed impedisce ai cristiani e alle comunità di fede di riattualizzare il potenziale liberatore del messaggio di Gesù?» (*Fede e liberazione*, 92).

¹¹⁶ *Fede e liberazione*, 101.

to hope for millions of men and women»¹¹⁷. Here there is no clear difference in the meaning of the terms since one could substitute either «revelation» or «gospel» for the other italicised words without any appreciable change of meaning. Apart from his preference for «revelation» when referring to events from the Old Testament, it is difficult to see why he chose one term rather than another¹¹⁸. It appears that the terms are complementary and all three provide clues to his understanding of revelation.

Another possibility is to compare the different senses of the terms as given above in the analysis of his use of the terms revelation, word and gospel. Figure 1 (overleaf) summarises the analysis and helps illustrate the structure of the various aspects of Éla's understanding of revelation.

Up to this point the analysis has been largely textual. The figure helps illustrate how a deeper analysis is required in order to come to a proper theological understanding. For instance, it can be seen how, even though Éla does not often use the terms, «God's will» and «God's message» are central to his understanding since these connotations occur in the meaning of all three terms¹¹⁹. The analysis which follows will show how for Éla, God wills life, communion, and freedom as opposed to death, injustice, and slavery.

¹¹⁷ «Al termine delle riflessioni fin qui svolte si precisa una idea guida: la Parola di Dio è un fermento di liberazione. È in questo modo che essa deve essere proclamata e vissuta nell'Africa d'oggi. [...] Di fronte all'aggravamento delle condizioni di vita, [...] una nuova lettura della Rivelazione deve mettere in luce il dinamismo del vangelo e le esigenze critiche inerenti alla fede. Per i cristiani d'Africa, [...] questa rilettura del messaggio di Gesù Cristo può restituire a milioni di uomini e di donne ragioni per vivere e sperare» (*Fede e liberazione*, 104). (Italics added in the English translation.)

¹¹⁸ Of the 73 occurrences of the term «revelation» or «reveal» in the three books *Cri*, *Foi* and *Fede e liberazione*, almost one third (23) occur in one chapter on the Exodus in *Cri*. This indicates Éla's preference for the term «revelation» when dealing with events from the O.T.

¹¹⁹ K.C. Anyanwu, writing about African religious experience, says that «the African God is will rather than pure reason» (E.A. RUCH – K.C. ANYANWU, *African Philosophy*, 169). God was never pure reason except in the minds of some philosophers, but it is an interesting coincidence that Anyanwu settles on will.

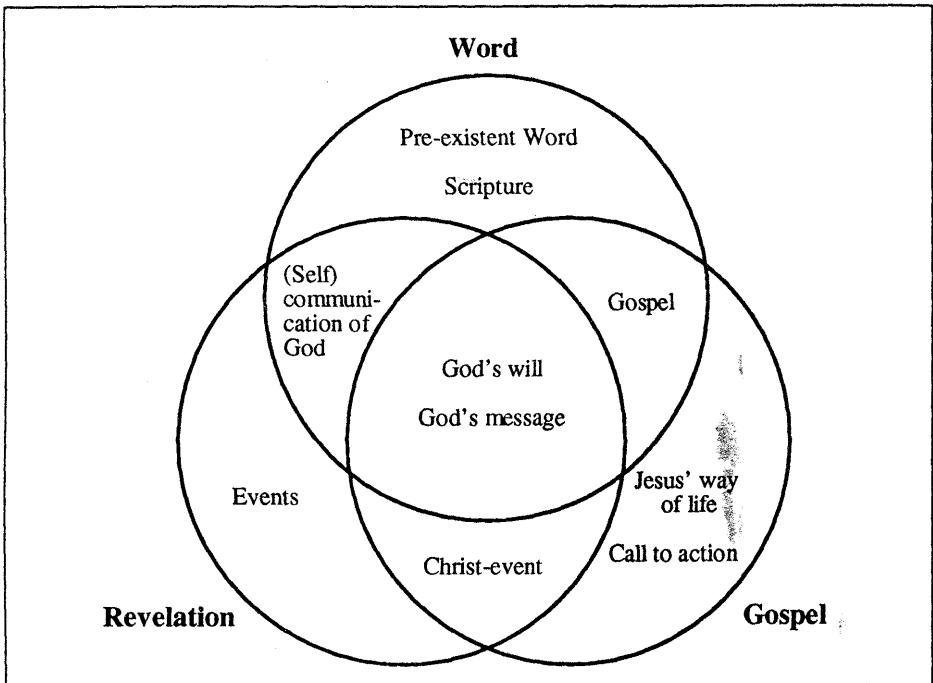


Fig. 1: Revelation, Word, Gospel in the Theology of Jean-Marc Éla

2.5 *Revelation: The God of Life*

Éla's use of the term «revelation» alone does not convey the fullness of the significance of the mystery of God's saving purpose and the self-communication of God. However his use of the term does include some important features which will be considered here.

To begin with it might be helpful to compare his understanding of the term with models of revelation such as those proposed by Avery Dulles or Max Seckler¹²⁰. Dulles classifies the different perceptions of revelation according to how or where it occurs. Éla's use of the term appears to fit best with the model of revelation as history. He repeatedly comes back to the Exodus and continuing revelation today. However one could also find

¹²⁰ M. SECKLER, «Il concetto di rivelazione», 66-75; A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*.

aspects of all of Dulles's other models in his work¹²¹. Dulles does not really enter into how the divine and the human interact in the drama of experience whereas this life-death struggle is central to Éla's work.

Seckler arranges three paradigms of revelation according to the way revelation is connected with salvation. Éla's view fits best with Seckler's third (*communio*) model since Seckler brings out the self-communication of God in the accomplishment of God's design for communion¹²². As illustrated above, God's will is central to Éla's understanding of revelation. Also Seckler brings out people's participation in truth, justice, and peace, which are part of the reign of God, thus highlighting the social component which is important for Éla.

Nevertheless, Éla appears to be developing a different model of revelation from Dulles or Seckler. With his emphasis on God's involvement in daily life struggles and the confrontational function of revelation, Éla is assuming what could be called an «incarnation-liberation» model of revelation. This will become clearer in the course of this chapter.

Éla laments that the God proclaimed in colonial times was indifferent to political, social, economic, and cultural matters¹²³. This merely leads people to live «a relationship to God under the rubric of absence»¹²⁴. Éla points to the God of the Exodus who gives people hope and enables them to criticise the existing situation. Ultimately, «revelation stirs up a community in exodus, whose mission is not only to live in expectation of the fulfillment of the promise, but also to promote the historical transformation of the

¹²¹ Examples of how Éla's usage would fit with Dulles' other models are: his reference to God's message and to God's will (doctrine); the way salvation is closely linked to a sense of identity, both personal and communal (inner experience); his not trying to harmonise but pointing to the tensions that exist (dialectical); his seeing God as present in the transcendent dimension of movements of secular history (new awareness).

¹²² Seckler proposes three models: *epifanica, teoretico-istruttiva, autocomunicazione di Dio*. The third model is characterised by a personal relationship of communion and also our participation by taking part in the *bona divina*, that is to say, «alla verità, alla giustizia, all'amore, alla pace [...] e alle loro componenti oggettive e sociali (cf. i beni del regno di Dio)» (M. SECKLER, «Il concetto di rivelazione», 74).

¹²³ *Cri*, 42 [30]. Éla wrote his paper on the Exodus for a formation meeting in Cameroon. His main references were Negro Spirituals and also Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*. He was working quite independently of the theology being developed in Latin America. See appendix I, R. 4.

¹²⁴ *Cri*, 41 [29].

world and of life»¹²⁵. The expectation of another world in the future calls for another kind of world now. God's revelation helps illuminate existing reality, and in so doing, it initiates a dynamic toward the fulfilment of the promise¹²⁶. Éla sees this dynamic active in the Messianic Movements in Africa today. In these movements, elements of African traditional religions and the liberative elements of biblical Christianity come together to resist oppression and domination. They reject colonialism and are suspicious of missionary preaching because these are seen as linked to cultural and political alienation and economic oppression¹²⁷. Éla sees African Messianic Movements as «the incarnation of the dynamism of revelation in the history of today's Africa»¹²⁸. The prophets who lead the Movements have read the Bible, particularly the Exodus account, and their reading of the Bible acts as a stimulus for them to do something new in African history¹²⁹. The Messianic Movements are recovering the prophetic dimension of revelation which gives people hope and motivates them to come together in the quest for a life of dignity and freedom.

Éla's emphasis on life-struggles leads him to link life and liberation¹³⁰. He sees salvation as concerning the whole person, called to the fullness of life, not only for eternity, but here and now¹³¹. This holistic point of view is common in Africa. Éla focuses not only on the categories of

¹²⁵ *Cri*, 47 [35].

¹²⁶ For an African woman's interpretation of the Exodus in relation to liberation from colonialism, see M.A. ODUYOYE, *Hearing and Knowing*, 79-89. She says that «the Exodus is a well-rehearsed event, and in Africa it has not grown stale» (*Ibid.*, 82).

¹²⁷ *Cri*, 63 [48].

¹²⁸ *Foi*, 79 [51].

¹²⁹ «Les missions ont tu à l'homme africain le message de libération propre à la révélation du Dieu de l'Exode. Tout l'enjeu des mouvements prophétiques est de faire entendre ce message à l'Afrique colonisée. Il semble aux prophètes noirs que les Églises coloniales confisquent la révélation de Dieu au profit d'un système de domination; il leur faut donc revenir au Dieu de la Révélation qui prend parti pour les pauvres et les opprimés» (*Cri*, 64 [49]).

¹³⁰ Éla says it is a question of «un être humain qui a droit à la vie ou bien un esclave à vie» (*Cri*, 166 [139]). The link between liberation and life appears in many of today's works from Africa. For example, see J.S. UKPONG, «The Emergence of African Theologies», 531-533).

¹³¹ J.-M. ÉLA, *From Charity to Liberation*, 17. Elsewhere he says: «La plénitude de vie pour les pauvres et les opprimés constitue un projet inhérent à la confession chrétienne» (*Foi*, 164 [130]). In support, Éla refers to *Evangelii nuntiandi* (see *Fede e liberazione*, 97).

anthropology, but contributes a sensitivity to the sociopolitical dimension of life. In his view, it is in the vital experience of the communities and of their striving for life, freedom, and justice that reference to God's message will have genuine meaning.

Éla's concern is «how one can announce the Lord of Life to men and women who live in situations close to death»¹³². Liberation means life¹³³. Talk of life corresponds well with biblical accounts of God's concern for the poor, the hungry, the sick. It also lends itself to reflection on the paschal mystery. Christ is the Lord of Life and the first-born from the dead (Col 1,18). Human existence, as Éla describes it is very much a drama of life and death¹³⁴. In fact life is seen in relation to death and can be considered the positive pole of a life-death tension¹³⁵. The message of revelation is not immortality but resurrection, and resurrection presupposes death. Thus, though people live in a situation of death, divine revelation brings a promise of life already present in Jesus Christ. «The tree of our defeat became our tree of victory; where life was lost, there life has been restored»¹³⁶.

2.6 *God's Word and Human Language*

Éla says that the focus of his work is to «find a Kiridi “scripture” in the Word of God»¹³⁷. In other words, what language is God using to speak to the Kiridi people, presuming that God's word is relevant to a people's fundamental concerns? Here one is confronted by the basic question of language and the symbols and gestures that are used to communicate the message.

One serious attempt to confront the issue of language and faith in Africa is the work of Oscar Bimwenyi-Kweshi in *Discours théologique négro-*

¹³² *Foi*, 32 [11].

¹³³ See appendix I, R. 4.

¹³⁴ *Foi*, 204 [168]. See also his comments in appendix I, R. 1.

¹³⁵ «L'homme a conscience que la vie ne serait rien sans la mort» (*Foi*, 67 [40]).

¹³⁶ *Foi*, 70 [43]. This is from the preface in the liturgy on the feast of the Triumph of the Cross.

¹³⁷ «Tout traduit la volonté de sortir d'une problématique de chrétienté pour faire jaillir de la vie, patiemment, un nouveau langage de l'Évangile en s'efforçant de trouver à la Parole de Dieu un écriture *kiridi*, à partir des situations fondamentales, des questions et des aspirations des hommes d'un quartier ou d'une montagne» (*Voici le temps*, 168; also, *Foi*, 26 [5]).

*africain*¹³⁸. Bimwenyi holds that Africans have their own unique experience and their own way of reflecting on that experience with their symbols and concepts¹³⁹. This *africanité* forms the human pole of divine-human communication and as such is one of the constitutive elements of revelation¹⁴⁰. *Africanité* is characterised by *oralité*. Images and sounds, gestures and words, along with their accompanying rhythms not only inform but form persons on their life journey¹⁴¹. This applies particularly to African religious language. At its deepest level, in as much as they express the basic human experience of Africans, African forms of language are the privileged domain for communication with God.

Éla does not go to the same theoretical depth as Bimwenyi but he does insist on the importance of oral expression¹⁴². He notes that in Africa, religion is a system of signs and symbols that attributes primacy to the spoken word¹⁴³. He laments that so often missionary Christianity is a religion of the book leaving untapped the African resources of oral tradition¹⁴⁴. Therefore he calls for a rediscovery of these resources «in order to tell of the love of God who gathers together and liberates»¹⁴⁵.

Éla says that there is no universal language for expressing God's revelation to humankind¹⁴⁶. The West has developed rational discourse. But *poesis* can express reality as well as *ratio*¹⁴⁷. Thus in African culture, where knowledge is transmitted orally the language of symbols is more appropriate. Proverbs, myths, and rituals are part of a rich symbolic tradition that can serve as a basis for theological language if they are reread in the light of African life today¹⁴⁸. This is a richness that Africa can offer

¹³⁸ Also, O. BIMWENYI-KWESHI, «Théandricité du langage», 25-36.

¹³⁹ O. BIMWENYI-KWESHI, *Discours théologique*, 280, 504.

¹⁴⁰ O. BIMWENYI-KWESHI, *Discours théologique*, 392.

¹⁴¹ O. BIMWENYI-KWESHI, *Discours théologique*, 502.

¹⁴² Éla refers to Bimwenyi-Kweshi in *Fede e liberazione*, 112.

¹⁴³ *Foi*, 60 [35].

¹⁴⁴ *Cri*, 37 [25].

¹⁴⁵ *Foi*, 31 [10].

¹⁴⁶ *Fede e liberazione*, 82.

¹⁴⁷ *Foi*, 70 [43].

¹⁴⁸ *Fede e liberazione*, 85.

to the West¹⁴⁹. However, it is not a simple matter because of the plurality of languages and the multivalence of symbols¹⁵⁰.

A particular example Éla gives of the use of the African oral tradition today is in the *palabre évangélique*¹⁵¹. In African life a *palabre* is a way of mediating conflict by means of a community meeting¹⁵². Éla takes this well-known African event and applies it to the word of God. He explains how this occasion involves much more than simply the reading of a sacred text. Rather, «it is a festival of language shared by the whole community, which involves grasping the Word, searching for its meaning, questions and answers, prayers and chants»¹⁵³. The community sets about discovering the meaning of God's message for their particular circumstances. If it is a real *palabre* then there will be opportunity for agreement or disagreement. «Everyone's voice is heard and the rhythm of everyone's feet is felt»¹⁵⁴. In the *palabre évangélique* one seeks a resolution to the conflict between African life and culture, and Christianity as it has been presented in the past¹⁵⁵. It is a moment of discernment and decision-making. Éla sees this as forshadowing the great *palabre* where, under the tree of the Kingdom, God calls people from north and south to meet for building a new world¹⁵⁶.

The *palabre* is an example of people employing an oral tradition to come to a fuller appreciation of the word of God. In two recent works, on preaching and on the message of John the Baptist, Éla provides further

¹⁴⁹ «Noi scopriamo oggi che il simbolo fa riflettere, come ha detto Paul Ricoeur; per conseguenze c'è tutto un aspetto simbolico del linguaggio della fede che la teologia africana può sviluppare e offrire all'occidente come un linguaggio, un linguaggio che sia appropriato per dire il mistero cristiano» (*Fede e liberazione*, 175).

¹⁵⁰ Éla comments on the usefulness of symbols for expressing God's revelation in a meaningful way; however, apart from an example of the word in a liturgical (sacramental) setting, he does not go into the hermeneutics of the symbol, that is, how the symbol is disclosive of something beyond itself.

¹⁵¹ *Foi*, 26 [6], 73 [46]; *Voici le temps*, 242.

¹⁵² In *Fede e liberazione in Africa* the editor has added a note to the effect that *palabre* is a large shade-tree under which people can sit and talk and discuss matters with the village leaders (see *Fede e liberazione*, 36, 48). The present writer believes that *palabre*, rather, refers not so much to the tree as to what happens under it.

¹⁵³ *Foi*, 73-74 [47].

¹⁵⁴ *Foi*, 74 [46].

¹⁵⁵ *Fede e liberazione*, 104-105.

¹⁵⁶ «Le piste di riflessione che qui propongo portano un contributo modesto alla grande "palabre" dove, sotto l'albero del Regno in cammino, Dio chiama gli uomini del Sud e del Nord ad incontrarsi per costruire un mondo nuovo» (*Fede e liberazione*, 106).

insights into how he understands the word of God. He observes how with modern mass media and political slogans there has been an inflation in the use of words leading to a devaluation of the word itself. Words degenerate into a system of signs without profound meaning. According to Éla, this has contributed to «a crisis in the meaning of the Word of God and of divine revelation»¹⁵⁷.

Éla's response is to emphasise the sacramental nature of the word, that is, the way the human word as an outward sign can reveal the word of God. His point is that the person preaching, especially in the context of the liturgy, is participating in the mystery of living revelation¹⁵⁸. Éla continually refers to the dynamic whereby the human word «becomes» the word of God. By remaining close to the Bible, preaching «becomes» the word of God through the mediation of human words¹⁵⁹. Through being heard in relation to life experience and fundamental human concerns, the word becomes an encounter with God who speaks in Jesus Christ¹⁶⁰. Thus the word is considered not so much in its written form as scripture, or as tradition, but rather in the dynamic of communicating God's plan of salvation in the here and now. One is confronted by the word, and through the word one encounters Christ who is the «supreme word»¹⁶¹.

It will be necessary to return to the hermeneutical question of how Éla sees the rereading or rewriting of the word of God so that the word is truly incarnate or rooted in history. What is established so far is that God is no longer silent. There is the possibility of a «Kiridi scripture». Through the Word, African Christians can encounter the living God speaking to them in their situation.

2.7 *Gospel: God Frees People for a New Life in Christ*

Éla frequently uses the term «gospel». As illustrated previously, the term can refer to Jesus' life, to the Christ event, the plan of God, a prophetic call to action or simply to the content of the Christian message. The issue here is how his use of the term illustrates his understanding of revelation. What

¹⁵⁷ Note the use of both «la Parole de Dieu», and «la révélation divine», implying a link but a distinction between the two (see *Prêcher l'évangile*, 5).

¹⁵⁸ *Prêcher l'évangile*, 7-8.

¹⁵⁹ «C'est en restant le plus près de la Bible que la prédication devient Parole de Dieu par la médiation de la parole humaine» (*Prêcher l'évangile*, 6-7).

¹⁶⁰ *Prêcher l'évangile*, 22.

¹⁶¹ *Prêcher l'évangile*, 15.

is special to Éla is the way he links gospel with God's continuing revelation, and especially the way the gospel liberates people for a new relationship with God and humankind.

In an article published before Vatican II, Éla gives a clue to his early understanding of the gospel and revelation. He asks: «Comment l'Église envisage ses responsabilités, à partir de la conscience qu'elle a des exigences de la Révélation, de Jésus-Christ et son Evangile, face au monde noir»¹⁶²? Does he mean that Jesus Christ and the gospel are considered distinct from revelation, or in the second phrase above is he merely explaining further what he means by revelation? The latter is more likely. He goes on to refer to Jesus Christ, the gospel, the sacred message, and revealed truth, but there is no other explicit mention of the term «revelation». At this stage in his theological development it appears that revelation comprises Jesus Christ and his gospel. During the years of study at Strasbourg and particularly with the experience in North Cameroon, Éla's perception of the gospel became more nuanced. His theological study, in which he concentrated on Luther's work, also provided an opportunity to delve more deeply into the way Pauline theology links Jesus Christ and the gospel¹⁶³. The thirteen years with the Kirdi allowed Éla to experience the limitations of academic theology and brought him face to face with a situation where the gospel had to confront a condition of injustice and alienation.

Paul's use of the term gospel is defined in Rm 1,3-4. The gospel is the disclosure of Jesus Christ as God's Son and our Lord by his resurrection from the dead. This disclosure implies a new life characterised by a change from slavery and death to freedom and life. Éla employs a similar terminology, but provides his own interpretation. He applies the paschal mystery, which he calls the «*Evangile par excellence*», to the contemporary African situation¹⁶⁴. Africans are undergoing a calvary experience, but through this ordeal of suffering they will find life. The cross has an element of victory for with the cross there is also the promise of the resurrection. This association of the cross and resurrection, central to Paul, is essential to Éla's understanding of revelation. Through the power of the cross Christ intervenes in the tragic situations of people today¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶² «L'Église, le monde noir» (1963a) 59.

¹⁶³ See appendix I, R. 2 in which Éla acknowledges his debt to Pauline theology.

¹⁶⁴ *Prêcher l'évangile*, 9.

¹⁶⁵ *Foi*, 18 [xvii]. Also see «The Memory of the African People» (1992a) 28-32.

For Éla, faith risks being disincarnate if it does not take into account the issues of economics and power¹⁶⁶. Thus he attempts to reinterpret theological issues from a sociological point of view. The relationship between Africa and the gospel means confronting sin and death as a sociopolitical phenomenon. People are struggling with the laws of liberal economics¹⁶⁷. The socioeconomic system dominating today's world results in new forms of slavery¹⁶⁸. Alienation involves not just a breakdown in relationship with God, but a social state of dependence and domination. By contrast, the gospel is a «message of the de-alienation of the human being in Jesus Christ»¹⁶⁹. Thus faith impels people to build a society in which the human being will be «reborn to a life of freedom and communion»¹⁷⁰.

Éla supports his sociopolitical approach with his understanding of the gospel as being basically a gospel of liberation¹⁷¹. Faith proclaims a liberation already attained by Christ's victory over sin and death¹⁷². The issue is how to live one's faith in Jesus Christ today so that the words of Isaiah with which Jesus identified (Lk 4,17-21) may be fulfilled¹⁷³. Good news for the poor means release for captives, sight for the blind, and freedom for the oppressed.

It comes down to the basic question of from what and for what has Jesus set us free? What is really meant by the salvation he offers? Paul writes about the freedom of the gospel as freedom from sin and the law, and freedom for love. The result of this freedom is new life through participating in the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus the gospel is the word of life (Ph 2,16; 2Cor 2,16). For Éla the word of life in Africa today must be a word of liberation because people's concrete experience is the very opposite. The domination and dependency that overshadow people's

¹⁶⁶ *Cri*, 113 [92].

¹⁶⁷ *Cri*, 109 [88]. Also see Éla's address to the SEDOS symposium in Rome, 13 April 1994 («Église: sacrement de libération» [1994c]).

¹⁶⁸ *Cri*, 164 [137].

¹⁶⁹ *Cri*, 68 [53].

¹⁷⁰ *Cri*, 120 [98].

¹⁷¹ «En Afrique Noire, une question essentielle se pose: *Quel signe de l'Évangile sommes-nous à travers le message que nous annonçons? Sommes-nous la Bonne Nouvelle? Ce message est-il perçu comme une vraie libération selon Jésus-Christ ou bien comme l'observance d'une Loi?*» (*Cri*, 38 [26]); (italics in original).

¹⁷² *Cri*, 126 [103].

¹⁷³ *Cri*, 116 [94].

experience destroy communion and unity, which are an essential part of God's design.

Liberation is seen as an option for life. People come to see Christ as the Lord of life and come to understand that the gospel message is challenging them to reject alienation and servitude and anything that leads to death rather than life. Christians receive from the risen Christ their new energy for this option. They believe that God is at the side of human beings «as they struggle to stand up erect in the image of the Risen One»¹⁷⁴. For Éla the resurrection justifies the struggle for life. It is the principle of transformation of the universe, a principle of change in social structures, and a mobilising force.

The time he spent with Baba Simon in North Cameroon was very important for Jean-Marc Éla¹⁷⁵. Éla quotes Baba Simon as saying that the time has come «to reinvent Christianity, so as to live it with our African soul»¹⁷⁶. One sees the spirit of this statement influencing Éla; for example, the dynamism and novelty of the gospel is a theme underlying much of his work. Baba Simon was a much respected pastor and missionary to the poor. Éla in turn attempts to read the gospel through the perspective of the «little ones of the earth»¹⁷⁷. He emphasises that Jesus identified with the lowly and disinherited and that the gospel is good news for the poor. Éla also points out the simplicity of the gospel. Jesus' manner of speech echoed that of peasants and shepherds¹⁷⁸. For the rich and powerful Jesus' message was such bad news that he had to be silenced.

With this background of study and pastoral experience Éla has been able to develop the theological dimension of his pastoral and prophetic manner

¹⁷⁴ *Foi*, 132 [101].

¹⁷⁵ Baba Simon was a prophetic figure both for the Christians and non-Christians. Jean-Baptiste Baskouda writes about the time Baba Simon aroused the anger of some of the non-Christian leaders who then threw a spear at the church. When it came time for reconciliation, Baba Simon pointed to the spear embedded in the church wall and said: «Les dégâts matériels, ce n'est rien. Les portes et les fenêtres, on les refera. Mais dites-donc, l'offense faite à Dieu, comment réparer ça? Moi, je ne sais pas. Vos anciens, vos sages savent, eux. Remontez au village et voyez entre vous». A few days later they returned to sacrifice a sheep in front of the church and then remained to hear Baba Simon share with them the word of God (see J.-B. BASKOUDA, *Baba Simon*, 88).

¹⁷⁶ *Cri*, 144 [120].

¹⁷⁷ *Foi*, 19 [xviii].

¹⁷⁸ *Foi*, 68 [42].

of proclaiming new life in Jesus Christ¹⁷⁹. His approach to the gospel of liberation finds a source in the prophets of the Old Testament and prophetic references in the New Testament¹⁸⁰. He notes how the prophets spoke out against cases of injustice and oppression, and how Jesus, in whom the promises of the past have found their incarnation, «has spoken an everlasting *no* to human horror and suffering»¹⁸¹. As followers of Christ «our relationship to the gospel obliges us to assume a critical role, inherent in our faith, of judging society»¹⁸². The church must «invest the liberation project of the African man and woman with an evangelical content»¹⁸³. The gospel must say something directly to the African person's struggle for dignity and autonomy today.

2.8 *The Revelation of God's Will*

The study of the meaning of the terms «revelation», «word», and «gospel» has concentrated on three facets of God's plan: of life, communion, and freedom for humankind. Revelation brings a promise of life and hope to people caught up in the drama of life and death. The word enables people to encounter God. In a special way in Jesus Christ, God is saying: «I have heard the cry of my people». The gospel is the good news of liberty to those enslaved by dependence, domination, and forms of alienation.

For Éla, God is not a *Deus absconditus*. His is not a *theologia crucis* in which the revelation of God is concealed under its contrary. Rather, for Éla, God intervenes in history to confront situations of death, alienation, and slavery. God speaks anew when, motivated by the gospel, people form communities and seek ways out of their miserable situation¹⁸⁴. For Éla, God's word is a prophetic word for it speaks to particular circumstances. It is a message, not about God in general, but about what God is doing in

¹⁷⁹ Jean-Baptiste Baskouda notes: «Pour Baba Simon, Jean-Marc Éla n'était pas un simple collaborateur dans la foi, il était aussi un homme de lettres, un intellectuel capable de comprendre les problèmes de l'homme kirdi. Il représentait un véritable espoir» (J.-B. BASKOUDA, *Baba Simon*, 98).

¹⁸⁰ This prophetic dimension accords with the origins of the term good news in the Old Testament. The author of the second part of the book of Isaiah uses the expression to describe his prophecy of liberation from exile and slavery in Babylon (Is 52,7).

¹⁸¹ *Cri*, 121 [99].

¹⁸² *Cri*, 121 [99].

¹⁸³ *Cri*, 123 [101].

¹⁸⁴ *Foi*, 125 [94].

these times. The good news is not something from the past that is applied to today. Rather, it is about what God is doing here and now in the light of what God has done in the past. Therefore, according to Éla, understanding God's revelation today «requires a fresh rereading of revelation»¹⁸⁵.

3. An African Interpretation of Revelation

According to Éla, an African rereading of the gospel will mean searching for a new faith language so as to announce the gospel in a new way. One cannot take refuge in what has been believed «everywhere, always, and by everyone»¹⁸⁶. Language is mediated by sociocultural factors so it is not simply a question of words and concepts but the very awareness that society has of itself that influences faith language. Éla says that Christian tradition and church teaching reflect the major questions, needs, and concerns of people in particular sociohistorical settings. Now one must be open to the risk of an African interpretation of revelation¹⁸⁷. Faith language will emerge from gospel communities that endeavour to respond to contemporary African questions.

3.1 Rereading

Contemporary faith experience is an important part of Éla's understanding of revelation. Through reading the «signs of the times», the Christian community discovers God alive and active in contemporary events. At the same time, what God is saying today is guaranteed and normatively shaped by the message of Jesus to his contemporaries and by all that is revealed about God in the Bible.

In reference to rereading, Éla appears to use the terms, «Bible», «word», «gospel», and «revelation» with little to indicate any difference in meaning. So no attempt will be made to distinguish the terms at this point¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁵ *Foi*, 132 [101].

¹⁸⁶ He is citing Vincent of Lérins (*Foi*, 199 [163]).

¹⁸⁷ *Foi*, 201 [165].

¹⁸⁸ Éla associates rereading with the various terms related to revelation considered in the previous sections. He refers to the rereading of the Bible in history (*Cri*, 112 [90]), rereading the message of Jesus (*Fede e liberazione*, 165), and a liberational reading of the word of God (*Fede e liberazione*, 106). He says that faith in the risen Christ requires a fresh «rereading of revelation», (*Foi*, 132 [101]) and that God's revelation must be reread in the context of liberation (*Fede e liberazione*, 105). He refers to a «gospel rereading» which will establish real links with the poor (*Cri*, 68 [53]), and

Rereading the gospel in Africa is not simply a transfer of the contents of the good news to a different (African) form. Rather, it means learning about the purpose of God's will from the Bible and tradition — that is, the basic shape of the gospel — as an aid to discovering the contents of the gospel in the particular context¹⁸⁹. So it is not adapting the content of the gospel to African thought patterns, but «allowing the gospel to be reborn in Africa»¹⁹⁰. People do not incarnate the gospel. God does. People discover what the word of God is saying and doing today. Prophets do not apply a message to their situation. They have it revealed to them through the «signs of the times»¹⁹¹.

3.2 *An Example of Rereading*

Éla's paper on the *Grenier vide* (Empty Granary) provides an example of the rereading process. Here he links food and faith, revelation and liberation in a way which amounts to a theological reflection on African agriculture.

He begins by looking at the current reality in Africa. Some people have an abundance of food while others starve. Because of the interests of foreign capital, Africans are being forced to pull out food crops in order to plant cash crops. People are the victims of «here today, gone tomorrow» development schemes which only contribute to the development of undevelopment. Éla asks how this situation can be in accord with God's plan¹⁹².

Having looked at reality he turns to evaluate and judge the situation. It appears that the presence of Christianity is not having much influence. Perhaps «we must rethink God»¹⁹³. Society is sick. We cannot be like the priest and Levite and pass by the man who fell among robbers¹⁹⁴. If justice, peace, and freedom are the heart of the Christian message, then the gospel

to our finding new ways to «read the gospel» in ways related to the experience of the community (*Foi*, 53 [29]).

¹⁸⁹ A. NOLAN explains this point in *God in South Africa*, 26.

¹⁹⁰ *Cri*, 139 [115].

¹⁹¹ At the opening of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII spoke about the form of doctrine changing and the content remaining the same. Here one is talking about the content changing and the basic form or shape of the gospel remaining the same.

¹⁹² «Est-ce le dessein de Dieu de faire de notre continent cette terre d'oppression, de pauvreté et d'injustice?» (*Foi*, 120 [90]).

¹⁹³ *Foi*, 121 [90].

¹⁹⁴ *Foi*, 121 [90].

could help people ask hard questions and empower them to change the situation¹⁹⁵.

The next part of Éla's see-judge-act dynamic is a consideration of what people can do, based upon his reflection on the «dynamics of revelation as it is read in Genesis through Matthew»¹⁹⁶. He cites Gn 42,1-2; 43,1-2 as evidence that God wills that humanity should be fed. Perhaps more convincing is his citation of Mt 25,35-42 to show that God identifies with the hungry. God is the God of life who requires one to oppose a system that results in empty granaries which are signs of death. Éla points out that Matthew 25 (the judgement of the nations) is usually read so as to emphasise charity, whereas a better way to read the passage is in terms of liberation, for hunger is a question of injustice¹⁹⁷. Moreover, the matter of food is directly linked to people's relationship to the God of life.

For the hungry and the isolated it is as if God is absent. But people can hear God speaking again when they gather together to hear the gospel and recite it by heart and when they make efforts to take charge of their own community life. Éla says that we encounter the living God «when and where God hears the cry of the poor and remembers the covenant»¹⁹⁸.

Éla links the situation of hunger to the Eucharist. The Eucharist celebrates and anticipates a relationship among human beings of communion willed by God. Thus it puts into question structures of injustice which divide and exploit people. Éla says that the scandal of empty granaries is such that the church exposes us «to the dangers of atheism each time we celebrate the Eucharist in areas where no one is working to create conditions that would allow hungry people to feed themselves»¹⁹⁹.

In his reflection on empty granaries Éla gives an example of rereading on two levels. On one level he shows the possibility of people communally reflecting on the word of God so as to come to an understanding of God's will that people should enjoy the fruits of the earth. This realisation, based on their sharing of the scripture, is an example of the potential force of the word of God.

On another level Éla offers his own reflection on God's revelation. In the metaphor of African agriculture, God is portrayed as the God of life, and

¹⁹⁵ *Foi*, 122 [91].

¹⁹⁶ *Foi*, 123 [92].

¹⁹⁷ It is surprising that Éla does not bring in the Beatitudes here: «Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness» (Mt 5,6).

¹⁹⁸ *Foi*, 129 [98].

¹⁹⁹ *Foi*, 118 [88].

God's will is that people should live unimpeded by injustice. Salvation is what is referred to in the Magnificat. The God of Life has lifted up the lowly and has filled the hungry with good things (Lk 1,52b-53). The point is that today the Magnificat needs to be sung in deeds. It will be sung where the «truth of God» is fully engaged in both the countries of hunger and in the dominating societies²⁰⁰. One observes here a view of revelation in which God's will is realised as people are empowered to struggle for freedom and justice. «God transforms people while transforming the world through the provocative power of the gospel»²⁰¹.

3.3 *Éla's Hermeneutic*

Éla wants to discover the significance of the word of God in light of contemporary experience in Africa. What are the principal elements in his hermeneutic? One must consider the African context, the Bible, and the faith community.

For Éla, God's will or design must be the primary focus for understanding God's revelation. However, one does not discover God's will in a vacuum. Rather, one is called to «read the word of God in the world»²⁰². The African experience forms the context and shapes the content of an African reading of the word. The problems people encounter, whether they be slavery in colonial times, or new forms of alienation in our time, are seen as privileged areas for an encounter with God²⁰³. Deciphering what God is saying in the «signs of the times» is a special way of knowing God's revelation today²⁰⁴.

The memory of the people of God as found in the Bible is one of the principal sources of our knowledge of the word of God. Éla wants to discover God's will through reading the Bible from the perspective of the

²⁰⁰ *Foi*, 132 [101].

²⁰¹ *Foi*, 130 [99].

²⁰² *Cri*, 41 [29].

²⁰³ Sr Ch. Buhan and P.E. Kange Essiben present the difficult experience of Africans through the centuries as a «lieu théologique» (C. BUHAN – P.E. KANGE ESSIBEN, «Parole de Dieu», 80).

²⁰⁴ «C'est pourquoi il semble difficile de faire entendre la Parole de Dieu sans chercher à déchiffrer en même temps les signes des temps [...]. Dans ce contexte, il convient de s'appropriier ce que Dieu dit aujourd'hui, de mettre à jour ce qui, dans sa parole, remet en cause, dérange et construit» (*Prêcher l'évangile*, 21-22).

realities of salvation in the contemporary African situation²⁰⁵. Éla recognises that scripture is a partial witness to the fullness of revelation, which belongs to the eschatological order of God's design. Thus Éla's principal interest is not to reconstitute the original meaning of the scriptural message, but rather through rereading the word in scripture, to recognise and grasp the meaning of revelation in the situations and events that people experience today. An African reading of the Bible looks for what God is saying to the African people, concerning their life and destiny, in the situation of poverty and injustice today.

Rereading the Bible recognises a continuity between the original experience of the people of God and contemporary experience. The Exodus experience is one of release from slavery and oppression. The New Testament experience is typified in the Beatitudes which reveal a God who cannot remain neutral in the face of concrete situations in which people find themselves²⁰⁶. The resurrection of Jesus is the summit of revelation, the central event of the history of salvation, and the basis of the faith of the first Christian community. Rereading the Bible entails a correlation between these fundamental experiences of faith and the experience of the struggle for life of people today. Both experiences must be taken into account. Both biblical and African symbols must be examined²⁰⁷.

The third element in Éla's hermeneutic is the faith community. Nowhere does Éla refer to one person alone rereading the word of God. The *lieu de lecture* is always the community, and usually the «gospel community». The community is also important as the location for the action of the Spirit. While not rejecting the importance of scholarship, Éla's pastoral focus leads him to emphasise the life of the community as a *lieu théologique*.

The key to Éla's hermeneutic is the conviction that God has a weakness for the weak. He says that the whole of scripture can be seen as a rereading of the Exodus, with the basic message that God is the last refuge of people

²⁰⁵ «Il ne suffit plus de relire la Bible en nous rappelant que l'Afrique est un des lieux de la terre où Dieu parle au monde et à son Église, il faut aussi tenter une expérience spécifique des réalités du salut à partir de notre situation d'Africains» (*Le message de Jean-Baptiste*, 26).

²⁰⁶ *Cri*, 115 [93].

²⁰⁷ *Cri*, 136-137 [113]. One must ask, as does I. de Souza, «de quelle Afrique entendons-nous parler?» (I. DE SOUZA, «Bible et culture africaine», 81). Éla's approach is different from that of the works in K.A. DICKSON – P. ELLINGWORTH, ed., *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, because his concern is more the situation in contemporary Africa rather than traditional beliefs.

subject to exploitation, violence, and misery²⁰⁸. The other foundational event is seen in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, which «reveals God's omnipotence in weakness and establishes a form of conspiracy between God and the downtrodden»²⁰⁹. Thus the measure of the truth of revelation is to be found, not in some datum handed down, but in the liberating relationship between God and humankind as seen in the Exodus, and particularly as established through the incarnation in Jesus Christ.

Three features characterise Éla's hermeneutic. It is engaged, critical, and includes elements which are typically African.

According to Éla, an African reading of the Bible must be an engaged reading, not concerned solely with reading a text, but rather with its use in transforming society. One must find ways to see where God is and what kind of commitment the risen Christ and the Spirit are calling forth from the people of God. Rereading the gospel must provoke a form of commitment that actualises the way in which Jesus lived among the people of his time²¹⁰.

The novelty of the message of salvation introduces a «confrontation» between the gospel and contemporary history. In such a confrontation the efforts of people today to build a new future for themselves should be compared with the practice of Jesus as described in the gospel²¹¹. Obviously such a rereading is not neutral. It reflects the ideological bias and commitment of the people engaged in interpretation²¹². Instead of trying to be neutral, Éla chooses the image of God who hears the cry of the poor as the key to his reading of the Bible, and the sociohistorical context as the principal locus for his theology²¹³.

²⁰⁸ *Foi*, 134 [103].

²⁰⁹ *Foi*, 136 [105].

²¹⁰ *Foi*, 192 [155].

²¹¹ *Foi*, 192 [155].

²¹² Éla claims that God's word must be liberated from «religious concubinage» and the limitations of Western interpretation (see *Foi*, 174 [139]). He does not deal explicitly with the issue of his ideological bias. In a helpful paper, Mugaruka Mugarukira Ngabo says: «Si on pose à un texte des questions théorétiques, il ne peut nous livrer que de réponses théoriques. Si on lui pose des questions existentielles, il livre des réponses existentielles. La précompréhension que suppose toute herméneutique met en relief le caractère subjectif de celle-ci et la nécessité de retour réflexif et critique que doit s'assurer toute interprétation et de la confrontation avec d'autres» (M.N. MUGARUKA, «Y a-t-il une approche négro-africaine de la Bible?», 18).

²¹³ Third World theologians say that hermeneutical neutrality is impossible in a divided world. Either one is part of the solution or one is going to be part of the

How characteristically African is Éla's hermeneutic? To what extent does African experience enter into his interpretation? He points to the experience of suffering and hunger, which is the common plight throughout much of Africa today²¹⁴. Millions of Africans live with malnutrition and starvation. A «peasant reading of the Bible» reveals a God who brings life, and our faith requires us to reject systems that produce empty granaries — signs of famine and death²¹⁵. However, the experience of suffering and misery is not confined to Africa, for, as has been noted in chapter II, this experience forms an integral part of much of the theology coming from the Third World.

More characteristically African is Éla's approach to sickness and dreams. An African reading of the Bible may start with the link in the gospel between healing and deliverance from possession and move to address the social mechanisms «that enclose human beings in a circle of misery and sickness»²¹⁶. Dreams are important as the language of the «beyond». Night is the time when people are more likely to experience the mysterious forces of the invisible world. Both sickness and dreams illustrate the relational quality of Éla's hermeneutic. In Africa sickness belongs in the realm of evil and misfortune since it is inextricably involved in the relationship of human beings with each other and with the universe²¹⁷. Dreams form part of the relationship between people and the invisible world. Éla's concern for right relations, for communion, and for life are all part of his characteristically African vision of the relational nature of salvation²¹⁸. That is why it is so important to show that God is not distant and withdrawn, that God has heard the people's cry and responded in an offer of communion in Jesus Christ.

problem (see R.S. SUGIRTHARAJAH, «Postscript: Achievements and Items for a Future Agenda», 438). An alternative approach is that of South African, Itumeleng J. Mosala who has chosen a Marxist hermeneutic (see I.J. MOSALA, «The Use of the Bible in Black Theology»).

²¹⁴ Éla says that Africans have been introduced to the Christian God by means of a misguided theology of suffering. He refers to the «curse on Canaan» being applied to black people in catechisms and in preaching (see *Foi*, 133 [102]).

²¹⁵ *Foi*, 123 [93].

²¹⁶ *Foi*, 111-112 [81].

²¹⁷ *Foi*, 78 [50].

²¹⁸ On the relational nature of the African vision, see M.N. MUGARUKA, «Y a-t-il une approche négro-africaine de la Bible?», 26.

According to Éla the reading of the gospel is not yet finished, and no church tradition has yet exhausted the depths of expression of divine revelation. Hence the importance and urgency of eliciting a writing of the word of God which will be a source of inspiration and liberation in contemporary Africa²¹⁹.

4. The Human Pole of Revelation

In highlighting the relational dimension of revelation (e.g. *DV 2*), Vatican II, recognises the place of the human pole of revelation. Éla stresses the importance of the human dimension and says that we must consider our humanity a constitutive pole of revelation²²⁰. Revelation is received within human history and resonates in the very depths of our human experience, especially the communal experience of striving for life, liberty, and justice. Thus theological reflection must always have an anthropological dimension, for it does not only consider God's divinity but also the humanity of God, especially as this is revealed in Jesus Christ²²¹.

4.1 Faith and Human Experience

The incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth establishes a new relationship between God and our humanity. It means that now humanity itself is the place for communication between God and humankind²²². The Word incarnate did not take on only the positive experiences of the human condition but the negative ones also²²³. Thus it is possible for Africans to

²¹⁹ *Foi*, 178 [142]. Occasionally Éla uses the expression «writing» or «rewriting» rather than «rereading». It seems that «rewriting» refers to an African theology, whereas «rereading» refers more to the task of interpretation.

²²⁰ «*Per trovare un linguaggio credibile, la nostra fede deve considerare l'umanità dell'uomo africano come un polo costitutivo della Rivelazione. Questa è la sfida fondamentale che si impone alle nostre Chiese nello stadio attuale dell'evangelizzazione in profondità del continente nero*» (*Fede e liberazione*, 86); (italics in original).

²²¹ «Dès lors, non seulement il n'y a pas de théologie sans anthropologie, mais la théologie elle-même apparaît comme une anthropologie pour Dieu et une théologie pour l'homme» («Jésus-Christ, Dieu des philosophes?» [1975] 290).

²²² «Così l'avvento di Gesù segna una svolta nella storia del linguaggio religioso: *il luogo di ogni comunicazione tra Dio e l'uomo è ormai l'umanità dell'uomo stesso*» (*Fede e liberazione*, 78); (italics in original).

²²³ «Le Verbe incarné n'a pas seulement assumé les expériences positives de la condition humaine, mais aussi les expériences négatives. En lui, le Logos a pris à son compte la déraison elle-même, le non-sens et la mort» («Jésus-Christ, Dieu des

encounter Christ's lifegiving message today even while they are living out the passion of Jesus in history²²⁴. This is the reason why the church must be inserted into the sociohistorical dimension of daily life, especially the struggle of those seeking human dignity²²⁵. Divine revelation offers deliverance from alienation and allows people to become more aware of the deeper meaning of the situations and events which mark their historical destiny²²⁶.

Éla focuses on social consciousness and the social conditions of African humanity, but pays little attention to other aspects of anthropology such as the individual in relation to society, man and woman, the *imago dei* in humanity, and the roots of human freedom. Some of these aspects of the human being seen from an African perspective have been developed by fellow Cameroonian Engelbert Mveng²²⁷.

Éla's anthropology is basically a sociology²²⁸. To be human means being in relationship, with the world, with people, and with God. This relationship extends to both the visible and invisible realms. Human life is portrayed as a search for right relationships. One's relationship with the world differs depending on whether it is the world of the day or the night. Symbolism is

philosophes?» [1975] 290). Éla also refers to this point in appendix I, R. 2, where he speaks of using the concept of «récapitulation» from Irenaeus.

²²⁴ *Foi*, 141 [110]. Éla identifies the suffering Christ with Africans today. «Queste domande invitano le chiese d'Africa [...] ad identificarsi con la gente in "basso" che riconosce a se stessa una sorte di parentela nell'umiliazione con il Crocifisso del Golgota. *In un certo senso il Cristo oppresso è l'africano di oggi, di cui si potrebbe dire che è il più grande proletario della storia contemporanea*» (*Fede e liberazione*, 39); (italics in original). Also see «The Memory of the African People and the Cross of Christ» (1992a) 31. Life is linked to Christ's resurrection. See appendix I, R. 2, where he speaks of Christ as «la figure de l'homme eschatologique».

²²⁵ *Fede e liberazione*, 169.

²²⁶ *Foi*, 202 [166].

²²⁷ See E. MVENG, «African Liberation Theology», 29-30. For other views on African anthropology from a theological and philosophical perspective, see A. ODUYOYE, «"In the Image of God [...]"»; also E.A. RUCH – K.C. ANYANWU, *African Philosophy*.

²²⁸ Éla is not concerned with the anthropological concepts developed in other parts of francophone Africa, for example, the notion of *force-vitale* from P. Tempels, or of *mntu* (intelligent being) developed by A. Kagame. For a discussion of these concepts, see E.A. RUCH – K.C. ANYANWU, *African Philosophy*, 148-160.

a means of relating to the invisible realm and the world of the night²²⁹. Relationship with other people is essential for happiness because individual liberty is realised only in communion. People's knowledge of God comes first from cultural traditions based on epiphanies and myths of an original proximity with God before the primordial rupture. Then there is the word of revelation where God speaks anew to humankind.

Éla portrays a rather grim picture of oppression in contemporary Africa. People express their belonging to God «in a continent that does not belong to itself», where master-slave relationships dominate²³⁰. This situation is linked to God's withdrawal and the human plight of hunger, sickness, and death. Is this situation the cause or the result of God's withdrawal? In other words, was there an original sin, or are sinful situations a consequence of God's withdrawal? Christian tradition points to an «original sin» which was the source of the human predicament. The Giziga myth at the beginning of this chapter contains elements which bring to mind the story of the Fall in Genesis. Yet, there are some significant differences from the Genesis accounts. In the first Genesis account, God creates Adam and puts him in the garden to till it and keep it (Gn 2,15). Thus culture and gardening are not seen as a break with God as in the Giziga myth. In the second account in Genesis (Gn 3), God sends Adam and Eve away from the garden²³¹. In the Giziga myth God moves away from the earth. Humanity is left to its own devices, social life begins, and people are left alone, responsible for their own arguments.

The focus of the African story is not on «the death of God» or an «original sin», but rather on the consequences of God's withdrawal. From an African perspective, before the withdrawal, God would have intervened

²²⁹ Éla refers to the study of African symbolism by fellow Cameroonian Englebert Mveng (see *Foi*, 62 [53], fn. 13). Mveng develops an anthropology based on African art forms. One of his insights is that the human being can be seen as *monad*, *dyad*, or *triad*. As monad the human being is the bare outline of a person. As dyad the human being appears as male-female. The triad represents fertility: father-mother-infant. Mveng says that in the triad's creative function the human being appears in the image of God (see E. MVENG, *Art d'Afrique noire*, 75-76).

²³⁰ *From Charity to Liberation*, 12. Englebert Mveng points out how the master-slave relationship does not fit with the structure of African symbolism (see M. MVENG, *Art d'Afrique noire*, 121).

²³¹ In fact, Éla gives an example where people identify with the Adam and Eve story. «Nous sommes ceux qu'on a chassés loin du jardin, dans la montagne» (*Foi*, 125 [94]).

to stop human wickedness. God's withdrawal has left humankind at war with itself. This is the point of the Christian revelation centered on right relations and the fullness of life. Humankind is not condemned to live with its own arguments. God has spoken a word which, if heard, ensures life-giving relationships for God's children²³².

Éla's understanding of the human person influences his perception of faith²³³. For him it is not a matter of faith and reason, or faith and works, but rather faith and collective human promotion. Faith in God cannot be a privatised relationship with God *in absoluto* outside of the events and tensions of human existence. Rather, it is faith in God who has a design for the world, who intervenes to make things new, and who gives humanity the task of developing an unfinished world. Faith calls for a profound conversion to the good news of what it means to be truly human²³⁴. Therefore human development is not just an earthly affair about which faith has nothing to say. On the contrary, problems of suffering and injustice are seen as the best point of departure for hearing God's response to the «African cry».

4.2 Culture

One of the principal debates in African theology concerns the relationship of faith and culture. To what extent is African culture a medium for God's revelation? A key element in the debate is one's understanding of culture.

²³² Here one might expect Éla to refer to S. Paul with regard to the «new man», but, in fact, he quotes the same expression from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, 255 (see *African Cry*, 101). The quotation in the French edition appears to be somewhat different at this point (see *Cri*, 123).

²³³ Éla develops some of his ideas on faith in chapter 6 of *Cri*, entitled, «Pratique de la foi et libération de l'homme».

²³⁴ Éla explains as follows: «La foi est exigence d'une incarnation de l'Évangile dans une société en quête d'elle-même et affectée par les transformations radicales. Elle se vit avec la conscience d'un homme à inventer et d'un monde à construire. Elle est l'engagement d'une communauté d'hommes qui, dans l'acte même par lequel ils regardent ensemble vers Jésus, se sentent responsables de l'Évangile dans tout rassemblement à susciter, dans tout échange à promouvoir, partout où les hommes s'éveillent, se lèvent, parlent et cherchent une nouvelle manière d'être dans le monde. Bref, la foi se vérifie et s'actualise là où l'avenir se cherche et s'invente, dans les lieux de tension de la société. Elle reste une foi désincarnée si elle ne prend pas en compte la question économique, ainsi que les réalités du pouvoir et celles corrélatives du manque de pouvoir» (*Cri*, 113 [91-92]).

Opinions vary as to how material items, behaviour, ideas, and symbols interact to mold people's way of living. It is also necessary to ask: «Whose culture?» There was always cultural diversity in Africa, and modern changes make the continent even more multicultural.

Éla contends that for many years an «indigenist» approach has dominated research in Africa. He is critical of this method because all too often it means that theology follows in the wake of ethnology with its concentration on beliefs and rites²³⁵. In his view, «African culture is what we live»²³⁶. This means joining Africans in their daily life with all its tragedies, struggles, and contradictions²³⁷. He is not opposed to traditional culture. On several occasions he points out the importance of the wisdom of the older generations who «carry the message of a millennium-old Africa to new generations»²³⁸. His concern is that cultural traditions be relevant to contemporary culture and not be limited by a traditionalist viewpoint.

Éla is convinced that African expressions of faith must take into account not only biblical symbolism but African symbols, too, since «basic symbols reveal God more concretely than clear and distinct ideas»²³⁹. An area rich in cultural symbolism is the world of the invisible which he calls the «centre of gravity» of the African world²⁴⁰. In section 3.3, reference was made to the relation between the world of the night and sickness and dreams. Éla says that until now, the church has not appreciated the importance of the invisible in black culture²⁴¹. By this he means beliefs associated with sickness and death, the living dead (ancestors), and also the world of the occult. Theology must take these beliefs and practices into account if it is to «stay in communion with the people of God»²⁴². Éla says

²³⁵ *Foi*, 210 [173].

²³⁶ *Foi*, 208 [171]. On several occasions Éla appears to use the term culture in a very bourgeois sense. For example, he says, «I contadini senza cultura sono sconcertati dinanzi a una religione che sembra rimuovere l'essenziale della loro vita profonda [...]» (*Fede e liberazione*, 149).

²³⁷ *Foi*, 185 [148].

²³⁸ *Foi*, 32 [11].

²³⁹ *Foi*, 70 [43].

²⁴⁰ *Foi*, 14 [xiv].

²⁴¹ Éla brings in again the theme of the distant God, this time in relation to the way the missionaries have related to the world of the invisible. He says, «C'est pourquoi les convertis éprouvent le sentiment que Dieu est un étranger, comme ses messagers d'outre-mer» (*Voici le temps*, 198).

²⁴² *Foi*, 205 [169].

that these matters call for a new examination of revelation because the good news must address questions of liberation from occult forces and the sense of resignation and fatalism that they provoke²⁴³. How can people live the drama of existence in a way that recognises the world of the night and at the same time the light of the gospel?

Éla notes that communion with the ancestors is an essential dimension of African culture which must be taken into account in African Christian faith²⁴⁴. Éla interprets the passage from 1Pt 3,19-20 about the descent of Christ to Hades as referring to Jesus announcing the good news of salvation to those who had died, including the African ancestors. So he proposes that in looking for an African way to read the gospel, the Christian community must take into account their experience of communicating with the ancestors²⁴⁵.

Communion with the ancestors is not irrelevant to the revelation of God's desire for communion with humanity, for the fate of the ancestors is of great importance in the formation of people's image of God. To relegate the ancestors to some ill-defined limbo or even to damnation would not harmonise easily with the message of a loving Father. Thus, how the ancestors are treated by Christian faith will have a bearing on how the good news is received.

²⁴³ «En Afrique noire, le monde de la Nuit ou de l'Invisible est peut-être le lieu privilégié où il nous faut entendre la Bonne Nouvelle de la Descente de Jésus aux Enfers (1Pt 3,19-20) afin d'annoncer la libération à l'homme africain menacé par le pouvoir occulte» (*Foi*, 177 [141]).

²⁴⁴ See especially the second chapter in *Foi*, entitled, «Les ancêtres et la foi chrétienne». This chapter appeared originally in *Concilium* (1977). Also see the third chapter in *Foi*, entitled, «L'art de raconter la révélation de Dieu». This chapter appeared originally in *Les quatre fleuves* (1979). There have been problems in the past because missionaries confused the ancestors and «spirits». Éla says that offerings to the ancestors are not religious in a strict sense of the term. The ancestors do not replace the divinity. Rather, ancestor veneration employs symbols which pertain to the continuity of the family. So it comes down to a sense of the family in all its dimensions.

²⁴⁵ «Que penser finalement des Ancêtres quand on essaie de retrouver une nouvelle manière de lire l'Évangile, d'une façon organiquement liée à une expérience de communauté qui se cherche et s'invente? Tout ce qu'on peut dire à propos de l'attitude à prendre vis-à-vis des offrandes et des libations aux Ancêtres, des funérailles commémoratives annuelles, des modes de communication avec les défunts, dépend de cette question radicale qui, on le devine, impose un nouvel examen de l'Évangile et de la tradition» (*Foi*, 53 [29]). Further on he calls for «un nouveau langage de l'Évangile» where «la croyance aux ancêtres est profondément enracinée» (*Ibid.*, 56 [31]).

A more complex issue is whether the ancestors participate in some way in divine revelation. A number of African theologians state that in the traditional African worldview, the ancestors act as mediators between God and their living relatives²⁴⁶. This role as mediator is such that Bénézet Bujo presents Christ as a «proto-ancestor»²⁴⁷. Referring to Hb 1,1-2, Bujo says that having spoken in various ways through their forbears, God now speaks in his Son whom he has appointed unique ancestor, from whom proceeds all life for posterity. In bringing life in its fullness, Christ assures the future that the ancestors have sought to guarantee.

Christian theologians point to God's direct intervention and also declare that Christ is now the principal mediator between God and humankind. But this does not mean that the ancestors do not continue to be mediators in some way. Éla argues for a genuine encounter with the value of non-Christian religions and for situating the ancestors within the mystery of Christian faith²⁴⁸. He notes that with the peoples of Northern Cameroon, the funerary jar containing the remains of an ancestor «has a truly revelatory function» in that it helps establish a channel of communication between the living and the dead²⁴⁹. However he does not develop the issue of whether the language of symbols in such practices would also help in establishing communication with God. The ancestors remain as part of the invisible world, important in itself, but the object of a confrontation with the Christian message. For Éla the main issue is how to «celebrate the presence of the Risen One in a land of symbolic forces where the mystery of the African "night" is revealed in a concrete and sensitive way»²⁵⁰. In other words, he is searching for a fruitful confrontation between Christian revelation and African culture in its depths.

4.3 *The Silent God Speaks*

Éla refers frequently to the drama of the primordial break between God and the world. But there are other myths about God's omnipresence. Jean-

²⁴⁶ For example, Charles Nyamiti says clearly that «an ancestor is a mediator between God and his earthly relatives» (C. NYAMITI, *Christ as Our Ancestor*, 15). Éla also applies the term *médiateur* to the ancestors (see *Foi*, 55 [30]).

²⁴⁷ See B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, 75-92. Also, ID., «A Christocentric ethic for black Africa».

²⁴⁸ *Foi*, 52-53 [28-29].

²⁴⁹ *Foi*, 39 [16]. Éla uses the term «rôle hiérophanique».

²⁵⁰ *Foi*, 59 [34].

Baptiste Baskouda, himself from North Cameroon, tells how the first priest among the Kirdi, Baba Simon, considered relinquishing his mission because the Kirdi already lived in union with God²⁵¹. In fact, Éla himself in his dissertation for the doctorate in sociology reports how the people in the North believe in a supreme God who is directly interested in people and who intervenes in their lives²⁵². Does this contradict the myth of the primordial break and the elderly man who lamented that God is now silent? The apparent contradiction requires an explanation which goes to the heart of Éla's understanding of God's revelation.

The Kirdi believe in God and offer sacrifices to God. Their priests say that God speaks to them. However when questioned further by Baba Simon, a tribal priest clarified that God spoke to him by way of his great, great grandfather²⁵³. He identified so closely with his ancestors, that his belief in God having appeared to his ancestor could be applied to himself as though it were happening in the present. The Kirdis' understanding of God is associated with the myths of the past, and their communication with God is mediated principally by their ancestors.

It is at this point that the novelty of the Christian revelation becomes apparent. The Christian revelation communicates not just knowledge about God, but the will of God. God spoke through the ancestors, but now God speaks through his Son Jesus Christ (Heb 1,1), communicating the salvific plan of God in a new way²⁵⁴. The Christian revelation is not a mythical

²⁵¹ Baskouda quotes Baba Simon as saying, «chez les kirdis, Dieu n'est pas le Père lointain de tous les hommes, mais mon Père à moi [...]. Un Père qui a plusieurs enfants et que chacun peut invoquer comme le sien. C'est quelque chose de formidable!» «Les kirdis croient autant que les juifs» (J.-B. BASKOUDA, *Baba Simon*, 36, 39).

²⁵² «Enfin, la croyance en un dieu suprême d'où l'homme et l'univers sont "sortis", et qui s'intéresse directement aux hommes et intervient dans leur vie. Cette croyance est profondément enracinée avant l'arrivée des Peuls et la conversion des Mandara à l'Islam. Elle se traduit par une institution comme le sacerdoce, puisque le prêtre de la montagne est considéré [sic] comme "l'homme de Dieu"» (J.-M. ÉLA, *Structures sociales traditionnelles*, 150-151).

²⁵³ «"Mais quand Nglissa affirme: 'Dieu m'a dit' et que vous lui demandez si c'est à lui-même que Dieu a parlé, il répond: 'Non, c'est à mon arrière-arrière-grand-père, mais c'est toujours à moi'. Ils sont des fils qui s'identifient à leurs pères et à qui Dieu apparaît", conclut Baba Simon» (J.-B. BASKOUDA, *Baba Simon*, 66).

²⁵⁴ This is confirmed by Englebert Mveng who says that the Judeo-Christian revelation provides a language whereby dialogue with God is possible (see E. MVENG, *Art d'Afrique noire*, 121). This is also the reason why Baba Simon decided to remain for the rest of his life among the Kirdi because: «Pour moi, Jésus-Christ, c'est tout [...].

tradition passed on through the ancestors. Rather it is a living word addressed to people in their situation in all times and all places. Moreover it is a dynamic word about people moving from oppression to freedom, from injustice to communion, and from death to life. So Éla is making a theological point. Without the Christian revelation it was as though God were silent.

Éla's theological studies in France must have left a lasting impression. Reading the three volumes of his theological dissertation, the result of six years' study of Luther, one gets the impression that he had imbibed so much of Luther's ideas and the theological controversies of the Reformation that he required the thousand-plus pages (not double-spaced) to express even part of what he had learned. In the dissertation Éla preserves a balance between empathy and critique. Nevertheless, is it merely a coincidence that he discovered among the Kirdi a *Deus absconditus*? Moreover, should it come as a surprise that one so familiar with Luther's works would place so much importance on humanity addressed by the word of God?

Throughout his theological dissertation Éla endeavored to explain how for Luther the relationship with the all-holy God is characterised by an experience of distance or separation between sinful humanity and the transcendent God. In this tragic situation God has taken the initiative and has spoken a word of judgement and of salvation. Revelation of the living God is through the word addressed to humankind «hidden» in the incarnation of Jesus Christ²⁵⁵. Éla says that the idea of the hidden God is a way of affirming God's transcendence and the impossibility of perceiving God's revelation except through faith²⁵⁶.

Jésus-Christ n'est pas l'incarnation d'un juif, c'est l'incarnation de l'humanité. Je voudrais que tous voient Jésus-Christ, que tous voient Dieu comme je le vois, que tous voient les hommes comme je les vois» (J.-B. BASKOUDA, *Baba Simon*, 38).

²⁵⁵ «L'idée de Révélation suggère une sorte de phénoménologie de la parole qui mettrait en lumière la relation vivante de Dieu et de sa Parole» (J.-M. ÉLA, *Transcendance de Dieu*, 563); «Il y a chez Luther, une conscience aiguë de lien ontologique entre Dieu et sa Parole. Or, Luther saisit sans cesse le mystère de Dieu à travers sa révélation dans le Verbe incarné» (*Ibid.*, 577). «Dieu est caché dans l'homme méprisé qu'est le Christ dans son obscurité, dans sa souffrance et sa mort acceptées volontairement» (*Ibid.*, 1010).

²⁵⁶ «L'idée du Dieu caché n'est pas seulement pour Luther un locus theologicus mais la manière d'affirmer la transcendence de Dieu à la lumière d'une théologie de la Croix qui, à l'encontre d'une théologie de la gloire, renonce à toute spéculation pour s'appuyer sur la révélation divine qui, toujours indirecte, et toujours voilée, ne peut être appréhendée que par la foi» (*Transcendance de Dieu*, 1039).

Though Lutheran theology no doubt served as a background, Éla's perspective is more «Catholic» in its approach to human existence. The title of his dissertation is: *Transcendance de Dieu et existence humaine selon Luther*. He points out that the main issue is whether the *et* in the relation between God and human existence implies a conjunction or a rupture²⁵⁷. Éla argues that Luther's insistence on the sovereignty of God leads to a position that stresses the rupture between God and humanity²⁵⁸. According to Éla, Luther understood an *ou* instead of an *et*. This caused the crisis for both Luther's theology and his anthropology because God is not revealed without revealing also the truth about the human person. Fear of attributing God's immanence to created realities in turn affected the status of transcendence in Luther's theology²⁵⁹. Here Éla parts company with Luther because Éla's theology is very much a theology of the word incarnate. Justification is not by faith alone but by faith incarnate. The basic structure of Éla's argument revolves around *kenosis* whereby God came down to us in Christ becoming incarnate as one of the poor. It is through the incarnation that Éla sees humanity as a *milieu de rencontre* with God. The universe becomes a temple, humanity itself becomes the sacrament of Jesus, and human history becomes a medium for divine revelation. Luther insisted on the word of God as the central medium of God's saving communication²⁶⁰. A major part of this chapter has been devoted to investigating how Éla understands God's saving word (expressed as revelation, word, and gospel) in the encounter with life experience in Africa today.

Éla wants to avoid disembodied spiritualism and approaches that tend to make an idol of transcendence in an attempt to safeguard the omnipotence of God²⁶¹. He says that to really appreciate the incarnation an effort is required «to restore a taste for the things of earth»²⁶². Jesus Christ is

²⁵⁷ *Transcendance de Dieu*, vii.

²⁵⁸ «La souveraineté de Dieu s'incarne dans le créé sans éliminer la distance entre le créateur et la créature. Précisément, la dialectique de rupture inhérente à la théologie protestante met en lumière la valeur et les limites de la problématique luthérienne de la *Transcendance de Dieu*» (*Transcendance de Dieu*, 1105).

²⁵⁹ *Transcendance de Dieu*, vii, 1107.

²⁶⁰ Éla comments at length on Luther's difficulty with the reduction of the word to scripture. Scripture is only the word of God when it is a «témoignage vivant» (*Transcendance de Dieu*, 543, 557).

²⁶¹ J.-M. ÉLA, «Le rôle des Églises» (1984e) 282.

²⁶² *Cri*, 109 [88].

referred to as the transcendence of the «here-below»²⁶³. Grace builds on nature. However, the transformation of this world is not «a merely human affair». It involves a «transcendent horizon» because of its relevance to «our becoming, our genesis» and because it leads to full humanity which is part of God's design²⁶⁴. Faith speaks to this situation because, Éla is convinced, only through a profound conversion to the gospel will people be able to proclaim Jesus Christ through an active but humble involvement in the dynamics of African society²⁶⁵.

Does Éla run the risk of emphasising the incarnation at the expense of God's transcendence? Thomas and Luneau make the point that humankind has *need* of the absence of God²⁶⁶. Death, infertility, and famine are recurrent aspects of African reality. How is one to understand these and other scandals? If God were present and apparently condoning the absurdities of life, then how could people hope for something better? The «absent presence» of God is like a last recourse which assures people that life is meaningful even if one might be experiencing chaos in a particular instance. Does the stress on God's immanent presence through the incarnation lead to the conclusion that life is absurd after all?

Éla avoids this problem because his theology of incarnation is also a theology of liberation. Christ took on our humanity. But the majority of humanity (in Africa at least) is poor and oppressed. So Christ became poor, and through his death and resurrection freed humanity from bondage and showed the way to life in its fullness. In other words, Éla admits the reality of evil, suffering, and death but proposes a way out of it. The liberation

²⁶³ «En effet, Jésus-Christ, c'est la transcendance de l'ici-bas» («Jésus-Christ, Dieu des philosophes?») [1975] 290).

²⁶⁴ *Cri*, 110 [88].

²⁶⁵ *Cri*, 109 [87]. Éla makes a rather surprising statement that «the whole question for the Christian is the meaning of a relationship with God in a world where all persons gradually become aware, in virtue of their activity, that their relationship with the world must be like that of gods» (*African Cry*, 89). Luther made a similar point, emphasising that human beings are placed mid-way between God and their neighbour, receiving from above in faith and giving out below in love. Those conformed to God receive all that God has to give, and in their turn, as though they were Gods [Luther uses an irregular plural, implying something different from the ordinary form, which would mean «gods»], tender the benefits to others. See discussion on this point in G. EBELING, *Luther: an Introduction to His Thought*, 159-160. Where Luther's interest was on the distinction between faith and love, Éla is pointing out how in contributing to God's design for full humanity we are participating with God in a collective labour of creation.

²⁶⁶ See L.-V. THOMAS – R. LUNEAU, *Les sages dépossédés*, 165, 293, fn. 253.

brought by Christ is not simply a deliverance from the death-dealing forces of alienation that enslave persons. It is also a freedom for serving one's sisters and brothers in an attempt to build a society with a human face²⁶⁷.

5. Evaluation and Critique

In evaluating Éla's contribution to the theology of revelation, several comments can be made. Firstly, Éla's approach highlights the importance of human freedom and responsibility. He asks: «How can I free each person I meet to truly encounter the Word of God and to become a vital part of God's ongoing creation?»²⁶⁸. This approach places importance on the human participation in the redeeming work of Christ. Thus God's message of life is revealed when people live their lives «as an extension of the incarnation»²⁶⁹. Christians are to join Jesus among the poor and to «translate the gospel into social changes»²⁷⁰. Lest it appear that this is solely a human task, Éla adds that in the last analysis, the first initiative in our liberation is God's²⁷¹.

Secondly, Éla prefers not to use theological terms like sin and grace. He refers, rather, to the rupture of relationships and the life that comes from a restoration of communion and unity with the world, with other persons, and with God. There is little indication of a theological anthropology which would help towards a deeper theological understanding of what Éla means by the incarnation. What does it mean to say that humanity is formed in the image and likeness of God²⁷²? Éla implies that Christology gives meaning to anthropology. Humankind has been created in Adam and re-created in the image of the Risen One²⁷³. He notes that this is not simply an interior change but a total transformation which includes the social dimension. But

²⁶⁷ *Cri*, 126 [103].

²⁶⁸ *Foi*, 28 [8].

²⁶⁹ *Foi*, 163 [129].

²⁷⁰ *Foi*, 164 [130].

²⁷¹ «La foi authentique doit s'inscrire dans le processus historique où les hommes, sur la base de notre certitude de la victoire du Christ sur notre condition aliénée, contribuent à leur libération dont Dieu, en dernière analyse, a l'initiative première» (*Cri*, 126 [103]).

²⁷² *Fede e liberazione*, 137. Amba Oduyoye from Nigeria shows how being made in the image of God, that is, seeing all humanity as bearing one destiny and being related to God, is not a Christian imposition on African beliefs (see A. ODOYOYE, «“In the Image of God [...]”», 53).

²⁷³ *Cri*, 110 [88], 111 [90].

the question remains open as to what «full humanity» really means in the light of divine revelation.

Éla's sociological orientation is both a strength and a liability. Being grounded in social and economic reality his insights have an immediate relevance to people's everyday lives. However the use of sociological language, while useful, requires care lest it reduce God's word to the political, economic, and social dimensions of reality. When it comes to the theological subtleties necessary to distinguish sociopolitical liberation from Christian liberation, or to the resources for discussing the relationship between the divine and human poles of revelation, then sociological language is found wanting and there is a danger of falling into the very rationalism that Éla wants to avoid. Éla says that God's liberation of humankind cannot be reduced to the political, economic, and social dimensions, but at the same time he is struggling to develop a faith language capable of responding to the situations of injustice in African society²⁷⁴. This is the theological challenge — to develop such a language true to sociological reality yet addressing theological issues such as transcendence and human freedom before God.

Thirdly, it is necessary to consider the validity of Éla's hermeneutical principles for rereading God's word. Éla points out how revelation was distorted in the colonialist era and continues to be manipulated by dominant interests today. To what extent does Éla take a critical stance towards his own position? What precisely is the relation between the particular horizon of oppressed Africans and their claim to truth? An «epistemological shift» does not absolve a theologian from norms or criteria for verifying an interpretation so as to avoid subjectivism or relativism. Éla says that it is not possible to remain neutral in the face of death and injustice. Thus he has made the choice to see God as the one who hears the cry of the poor. This claim is supported by scripture. However the question remains whether such a choice, while valid, is at the same time reductive, and to what extent scripture would bear alternative interpretations.

Also, Éla says that one's norm for action must be the practice of Jesus as described in the gospel. This is similar to the proposal by some theologians that orthopraxis be the criterion for truth. Éla tends towards this solution by linking faith and justice rather than faith and reason. However his particular contribution is found in his emphasis on the communal, relational, and oral means whereby such orthopraxis is achieved. His aversion to a universalist answer or doctrinal solutions leads him to stress

²⁷⁴ *Cri*, 156 [131].

the importance of the believing African community as a norm for truth claims. His African identity leads him naturally to see issues in terms of relationships. Because of the strongly oral character of African culture, he stresses the union between the word and life in black Africa. To illustrate the move «from catechism to revelation», Éla gives an example of a gospel *palaver* which involves grasping the word and searching for its meaning. The emphasis on the communal dimension of faith is a desirable contribution on Éla's part, for *Dei verbum* tends to be quite individualistic on the matter of faith. However one would wish that Éla could provide some more detailed examples of how «living revelation» can be expressed today when the community is confronted by the story of the Exodus event and the message of the gospel.

Fourthly, does not Éla come close to denying the value of tradition as understood in *Dei verbum* 7-10? If tradition and scripture together form a single deposit of the word of God (DV 10), then tradition must be considered seriously and if necessary reinterpreted according to the sociohistorical context in which it has developed. Commenting on Éla's work, Léopold Senghor points out that taking tradition seriously would open up possibilities for a valid African contribution to that tradition now and in the future²⁷⁵. Is this not the «African writing of the Word of God» that Éla is calling for? Éla acknowledges the practice of the institutional church to read the word in an authoritative way. However he insists that Africans are faced with a different situation and different questions. To reread the Bible with African eyes, it is important to establish a direct relationship with scripture. Instead of referring to tradition which draws on particular readings of the scriptural witness, it is better to go straight to the source where there is always something new to discover²⁷⁶. Éla thinks that the interpretations of the church in former times were valid for their time and place. They continue to be valid, but need to be reinterpreted for today. Since he considers tradition to be *une lecture seconde*, that is, an interpretation, he prefers to go directly to scripture²⁷⁷.

²⁷⁵ L.S. SENGHOR, «Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent et suggèrent», 291.

²⁷⁶ Éla addresses this issue in appendix I, R. 5

²⁷⁷ «Je ne pense pas qu'il faille mettre sur le même plan la parole de Dieu et la réflexion de l'Église au cours des siècles. Seule est révélée la parole de Dieu même si l'Esprit travaille quand l'Église lit la Bible. Ce travail en tant que tel n'est pas la révélation. Donc je voudrais bien qu'on marque la différence entre ce qui est parole de Dieu et ce qui est lecture de l'Église, c'est à dire, qui est parole de l'Église. Et les deux ne se confondent pas» (appendix I, R. 5).

Perhaps Éla is being too quick to purify African theology of «alien forms» of theology²⁷⁸. There is tradition and there are traditions. He is basically correct in seeing traditions in the history of theology as interpretations of the word as found in scripture. However the living tradition of the church, passed on in teaching, life, and worship, is more than the interpretations of the Fathers or theologians or popes. *Dei verbum* 10 declares that scripture and tradition together form a living deposit of the word of God²⁷⁹. So, to underestimate tradition would be to risk an impoverished understanding of revelation itself. Éla is in good company in his critique of a propositional dogmatic view of revelation. However there are other possibilities for understanding God's revelation, for example, from other parts of the Third World. The church waits expectantly for a further African contribution to its tradition and its understanding of God's word²⁸⁰.

5.1 *Relationship to Other Theologies*

How does Éla's view relate to the wider context of theology today? In company with many African theologians his starting point is not a universal message, but the particularity of God's revelation. In seeking relevant answers to human questions in the light of revelation, Éla makes his mark, for he gives priority to sociopolitical issues as well as cultural questions. Éla does not deny the importance of inculturation. However he is determined that efforts to develop African forms of faith should include the issue of how the word can enlighten the lives of those who struggle for justice and human dignity. «Is this not also part of salvation?» Éla asks. Surely it is the struggle of the poor that makes visible today salvation in Jesus Christ? The resistance of those bent under misery and oppression

²⁷⁸ Éla says: «Nous devons apprendre à passer de la médiation des formes étrangères si nous ne voulons pas vivre notre relation à l'Évangile avec une personnalité d'emprunt» («De l'assistance à la libération» [1981a] 3).

²⁷⁹ Éla's view of tradition as *une lecture seconde* perhaps owes more to a two-source theory of revelation than the more dynamic view of tradition appearing in *Dei verbum*. See discussion on this point in chapter I, section 3.6. In *Dei verbum* 8, scripture is placed within the framework of tradition and in *Dei verbum* 9 and 10, scripture and tradition are linked so closely that they are seen to form the one living deposit of the word of God.

²⁸⁰ Éla assures us: «Il existe tout un réservoir de mots, d'images et de symboles, de catégories concrètes susceptibles de faire éclater le vocabulaire chrétien à partir de la rencontre entre l'Église et la société africaine» («De l'assistance à la libération» [1981a] 4).

today testifies to the crucified one in our midst. It is here that we find Jesus our «contemporary»²⁸¹.

Éla is not alone in his desire to recognise theologically the sociopolitical realities of modern-day Africa. For example, such thinking characterises much of the theology coming from South Africa²⁸². Also, fellow Cameroonians Engelbert Mveng, and Eboussi Boulaga, and Meinrad Hebga raise similar questions²⁸³. Éla's special contribution is in the way he considers working for justice and transforming the world as a constituent part, not only of evangelisation, but of our knowledge of revelation itself²⁸⁴. He relates this task to the revelation of the design of God in Jesus Christ. People sleep with empty stomachs because their government must raise cotton to sell rather than grain to feed people. Éla claims that the faith community will discover what God is saying in such a situation when people confront their plight with the requirements of the gospel. Éla says: «Each moment of our life and history is a locus of the revelation and the salvation of a God who attends to the cry of Fanon's "wretched of the earth". It is up to us to read the signs of this revelation and this salvation from the situation in which the African, in pursuit of an identity to be redefined and invented, sets out in quest of dignity and autonomy»²⁸⁵.

²⁸¹ Éla develops this line of thought in *Fede e liberazione*, 115-120. On several occasions he asks the question, «Comment l'homme africain peut-il être contemporain de Jésus-Christ?» (J.-M. ÉLA, «Identité propre d'une théologie africaine», 30).

²⁸² For example, see G. SETILOANE, *African Theology*, or A. BOESAK, *Farewell to Innocence*.

²⁸³ See for example, F. E. BOULAGA, *Christianisme sans fétiche*; E. MVENG, ed., *Spiritualité et libération en Afrique*; M. HEBGA, *Émancipation d'Églises sous tutelle*. Boulaga takes a more philosophical approach and questions the whole basis of Christian revelation. Mveng is more open to issues of culture and identity. He was secretary to the Association Oecuménique des Théologiens Africains and remains a supporter of African liberation theology. See his «African Liberation Theology». For a comparison of Éla, Eboussi and Mveng, see *Theologie in de context van de Derde Wereld*, ed. B.K. Goldewijk – J. Van Nieuwenhove, 182-188.

²⁸⁴ The bishops at the 1971 Synod said, «Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation». See SYNOD OF BISHOPS, (1971), «Justice in the World», in *Catholic Social Thought*, ed. D.J. O'Brien – T.A. Shannon, 289.

²⁸⁵ *Cri*, 126 [103].

Éla's relationship with First World theology is rather ambiguous. He notes that Vatican II calls for a dialogue with the modern world, but he says that a mere dialogue is not enough in a world with so many oppressed people. One might establish such a dialogue, but what would be its value? Followers of Christ must *confront* the modern world on behalf of the «wretched of the earth»²⁸⁶. Elsewhere he says that African theology needs a dialogue in the form of a confrontation with Western theology. If one takes into account the modern world and the implications of relations between the different countries, then a purely African theology without European theology is impossible. «Le Nord et le Sud se rejoignent ici tous les jours devant une tasse de café»²⁸⁷.

6. Summary and Final Comments

Éla does not present a comprehensive study of divine revelation. His «theme with many variations» is to «reflect critically on the questions of culture, liberation, and of the gospel that comes today from the Africa of the little ones»²⁸⁸. Nevertheless, this study has shown how his perception of God's revelation is a significant component in his work. In particular the following four points may be noted.

Firstly, underlying Éla's «theology under a tree» is the premise that the good news of salvation is received in the context in which people live. Contemporary African experience *d'en bas* is portrayed as one of death, injustice, and slavery. God, who became incarnate as one of the poor, meets people today in the depths of such problems. God hears the «African cry», and the good news of God's design in such a situation is a promise of life, communion, and freedom. This has been shown in the analysis of Éla's use of terms such as «revelation», «word», and «gospel».

Secondly, the reception of revelation is seen primarily in terms of «rereading» the Bible in the context of the concerns of the community. By letting the word challenge them in the midst of their problems and

²⁸⁶ See *Fede e liberazione*, 115. Apart from an article written shortly before Vatican II and reference to *Ad gentes* 22 which calls for a study of revelation and tradition in the different sociocultural regions, Éla makes little explicit reference to the Second Vatican Council. At one point he does acknowledge that the orientations developed by the Council «are a positive response to the major concerns of African Catholics» (*Cri*, 145 [121]).

²⁸⁷ See J.-M. ÉLA, «Théologie chrétienne et diversité culturelle» (1984d) 70.

²⁸⁸ *Foi*, 19 [xviii], 20 [xix].

questions, people are moved by the «dynamism of revelation» to exercise their responsibility in history and to actualise the life and freedom that is at the heart of the message of the gospel. In the confrontation between God's plan and their historical situation, people learn to read the «signs of the times» and come to know what God is saying and doing today.

Thirdly, Éla's proposal for rereading the word or rethinking the gospel appears to be an orthodox attempt to discover the significance of revelation today. However, a distinctive feature of his approach is his emphasis on «living revelation» in the faith community. Thus rereading the word involves more than a mere reinterpretation of foundational revelation. Revelation is also now just as salvation is also now²⁸⁹. By means of his inductive method and with the importance he assigns to history as a locus of revelation, Éla gives prominence to on-going revelation. In the African quest for dignity and autonomy the gospel is «reborn» in Africa and the faith community discovers what God is saying today. God continues to reveal Godself as the God of life who has a weakness for the weak. As Jan Heijke notes, Éla is occupied by the question of where we can find and hear God today. For Heijke, Éla looks for God «on the scene of the accident»²⁹⁰. Revelation continues to be a promise of life, communion, and freedom. But the content of that message is specific to the situation.

Fourthly, this view of on-going revelation is very different from the propositional model of revelation in which foundational revelation takes on different forms as its content is passed on unchanged. In their bid to find an alternative model, the authors of *Dei verbum* attributed the growth in understanding of revelation to the development of tradition in the church²⁹¹. Éla is not referring to tradition when he says that God hears the African cry, or that God speaks through prophetic voices in the community. His view is closer to *Gaudium et spes* 58, which says that God continues to speak to humanity through the life of the church and the events of history. Revelation is a continuing process and must be newly expressed for every age in prophetic witness.

²⁸⁹ On this point see G. O COLLINS, «Revelation now», 616.

²⁹⁰ The title of an article by J. HEIJKE suggests the importance of the locus of God in Éla's work: «Op de plaats des onheils. Het theologisch uitgangspunt van Jean-Marc Ela». [«On the Scene of the Accident/Calamity. The Theological Starting Point of Jean-Marc Éla».]

²⁹¹ In *Dei verbum* 8 God's «uninterrupted conversation with the bride of his beloved Son», pertains to tradition. Through the holy Spirit God continues to speak in the church and tradition progresses.

In comparison with Éla's bid to discover what God is saying today to African people in their Calvary experience, theories about form/content distinctions or concerns that one cannot add anything to God's revelation in Christ appear excessively theoretical. There is a shift of perception with different questions and answers. Éla's principal concern is with what God is doing now in Africa. Admittedly this experience of revelation is shaped by the life and message of Jesus and all that is revealed about God in the Bible. Nevertheless, he realises that scripture and tradition are not in themselves revelation but rather mediations of it. Aside from loci such as scripture and tradition, he sees culture, economics, and politics as important loci for understanding the social basis of reality and, therefore, for being the foundation for God's intervention in human history.

Dei verbum 2 begins: «It has pleased God [...] to reveal himself and to make known the secret purpose of his will». Éla's concern is with the dynamic of this revelation of God through the realisation of God's design in Africa today. Thus Éla appears to be developing a model of revelation as «incarnation-liberation». The Word became flesh in human history, dwelt among us, and took on the whole of suffering humanity. God has broken the silence and spoken again. God's word is expressed, not just as speech, but in the person of Jesus Christ. Today one encounters Christ in Africans who are following the path of Calvary.

In linking inculturation and liberation Éla overcomes many of the inadequacies of a purely inculturation model²⁹². The liberation dimension includes the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, making real God's promise of salvation. It also highlights ongoing confrontation as the incarnation continues to occur in the life-death struggle of the body of Christ today. By contributing to the accomplishment of God's design, people participate with Christ in the logic of the incarnation. This participation includes involvement in cultural, political, and economic issues; otherwise faith would be disincarnate²⁹³. An active commitment to transforming the world is an essential part of our knowledge of God's revelation. Éla says:

²⁹² Alward Shorter points out some of the inadequacies of the incarnational model of inculturation. Ongoing dialogue between gospel and culture is more or less overlooked. One is tempted to think in terms of a disembodied essence being injected into a concrete human culture. One may succumb to culturalism and forget how Jesus challenged the culture of his time (see A. SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 81-82).

²⁹³ *Cri*, 113 [92].

The real world of the gospel is one of hunger, wealth and injustice, sickness, rejection, slavery, and death. It is precisely through the structures of such a world that God is revealed. God is present through Jesus of Nazareth, who, in the incarnation, reveals God's omnipotence in weakness and establishes a form of conspiracy between God and the downtrodden²⁹⁴.

So how can Africans talk about God in a context in which it seems God has abandoned them? According to Éla, Africans can only talk about God in response to what God is saying to them in their experience of God's saving presence in history. Africans will come to know that the God of life is speaking to them through the engagement of a community of women and men who, in the very act of looking to Jesus, discover the gospel, feel responsible for it, and promote a new manner of being-in-the-world²⁹⁵.

²⁹⁴ *Foi*, 136 [105].

²⁹⁵ *Cri*, 68 [53], 113 [91-92].

CHAPTER IV

Aloysius Pieris' Understanding of Divine Revelation

1. Introduction

Anyone visiting Aloysius Pieris at Tulana, his centre near Colombo, will soon notice a striking sculpture there — *Pietà Lanka*. The work, by Sri Lankan artist Kingsley Gunatilleke, features a woman with a lifeless young man in her arms. There is an obvious similarity to scenes from the Christian tradition of Mary at the foot of the cross holding the dead body of her Son. Behind the woman is a grotesque tank. The cannon of the tank forms a cross with a lamp-post which rises like a great cobra over the tragic scene. The woman represents Mother Lanka, and the corpse, the tragedy of Sri Lankan youth. The tank depicts military force, and the lamp-post, militancy in the North and South of the island. Initially the militant youth used to tie to lamp-posts the dead bodies of those killed, together with a placard announcing their crime. The cobra coiling under the woman and covering her with its hood illustrates how an oppressive force can be tamed for the good of Mother Lanka. In a legendary story of the Buddha, the cobra coiled beneath him, covering him with its hood to protect him from mud and rain¹.

The themes brought together in *Pietà Lanka* help illustrate one of the main features of Pieris' work at Tulana: conversations with Buddhists and with youth in joint attempts to establish dialogue, and to interpret the social situation so as to find alternatives to injustice and violence.

¹ On explanation of this and other pieces of art at Tulana, see A. PIERIS, «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 59-71.

Aloysius Pieris was born in 1934 at Ampitiya, Sri Lanka. He entered the Jesuits, studied philosophy in Shemaganur, South India, and during the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1966) studied theology in Naples, Italy². Later he became the first Christian to obtain a doctorate in Buddhist philosophy from the University of Sri Lanka³. In 1974 he founded Tulana, and since then has been engaged there in research, teaching, and praxis-oriented dialogue among Buddhists, Marxists, and Christians⁴.

Aloysius Pieris is a leading figure in the theory and practice of interreligious dialogue in Asia. Fellow Jesuit Michael Barnes is of the opinion that Pieris «is arguably the most important Christian thinker in Asia and certainly the most creative»⁵. Pieris' work deals mostly with Asian theology and Christian-Buddhist dialogue. This area requires a particular

² Pieris' thesis for the S.T.L. was on the liturgical use of Psalms in the Latin Rite. His supervisor was A. Canizzo. Pieris writes: «The fact that I was next door to Rome, meeting many *periti* during their weekends in Naples, and entering a new climate of academic freedom which stormed into our faculty by the end of the first year of my theology [...] did have an impact on me» (letter from Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 May 1994).

³ Pieris' doctoral thesis is entitled: *Some Salient Aspects of Consciousness and Reality in Pāli Scholasticism as reflected in the Commentaries of Ācariya Dhammapāla*, Vidyodaya, 1972. A revised version of the introduction of the thesis is published as: «The Colophon to the Paramattamañjusā and the Discussion on the Date of Ācariya Dhammapāla» (A. PIERIS [1978a]).

⁴ Aloysius Pieris has a B.A.Hons. in Pāli and Sanskrit (London); L.Ph. (Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur); S.T.L. (Pontifical Theological Faculty, Naples); Diploma in Prepolyphonic Music (Fond. Cini, Venice); Ph.D. (Buddhist Philosophy, University of Sri Lanka); and Th.D. (Tilburg). He was ordained priest in 1965. Besides his work at Tulana, he has taught at the Gregorian University in Rome, the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Münster, the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and the University of California Santa Cruz. He was Teape Wescott Lecturer at the University of Cambridge (1984), held the Franciscan Chair of Missiology at Washington Theological Union (1987), the Henry Luce Chair of World Christianity at Union Theological Seminary, New York (1988), and the Ann Potter Wilson Distinguished Chair of Theology at Vanderbilt University, Nashville (1992). For many years he has been Professor of Asian Philosophies and Religions at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila.

⁵ M. BARNES, «Review of *An Asian Theology of Liberation*», 233. William McConville finds Pieris «radically Catholic» (W. MCCONVILLE, «Local Theologies in a World Church», 85).

sensitivity because it means going beyond theological questions that presuppose faith in Jesus Christ⁶.

Pieris seeks to discover an Asian theology emerging from participation in contemporary Asian reality. With this in mind he does not ask how one can speak about God in Asia, for in a Buddhist context where the ultimate reality is seen in nontheistic terms, God-talk is not a universally valid starting point⁷. Rather, he asks how one can talk about the experience of salvation in Asia. In other words, he directs his attention to soteriology because at this level Christianity and Buddhism can enter into dialogue. Such a starting point presents a challenge for conventional Christian approaches to divine revelation. How Pieris deals with this challenge will be one of the principal issues in this chapter.

This study of Pieris' work is limited because it does not include what he has written in the Sinhala language. Also, apart from a recorded interview with Pieris, this study will not draw on oral sources. Pieris himself notes how only a part of what he imparts in lectures and discussions ever appears printed in English⁸. Thus it should be borne in mind that this study refers principally to what Pieris has published in European languages.

Attempting to systematise Pieris' work is a challenge for the researcher. Most of his writing is in response to specific requests for conferences, or from journals, and this influences the topics and scope of his writing⁹. He

⁶ See J. DUPUIS, «Alleanza e salvezza», 150.

⁷ Pieris says that Buddhism in its various forms is the most representative of the religions in Asia. It is pan-Asian in cultural integration, numerical strength, geographical extension, and political maturity (see A. PIERIS, «Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation» [1979c] *ATL*, 72-73).

⁸ Pieris writes: «What I write in English is only little of what I impart in the vernacular to the Buddhist-Christian groups (including workers, students and Buddhist monks). What I write in English is restricted to what I am requested to write on» (letter from Pieris to this writer, 1 May 1994). In his writing he refers to material given in his lectures, which has never passed into print (see A. PIERIS, «Woman and Religion in Asia» [1992b] 119).

⁹ Pieris himself says that to reap the maximum profit from his book[s] one should locate each chapter in the historical context in which it first originated, the nature of the occasion, the audience or readership, and the particular focus that defines the limits within which its theme is developed (see A. PIERIS, *LMW*, xii). Most of Pieris' writing is addressed to Christians, but, as he himself writes, he is «thinking aloud [...] in the hearing of Buddhists» (A. PIERIS, «Doctrinal, Legal, and Cultural Factors» [1978b] *LMW*, 97).

often uses evocative and innovative language along with word-plays and wit. At times he can be vague with a rather fluid vocabulary. In such moments, trying to really grasp the full significance of what he is saying is like trying to grip mercury. He himself admits that his published work represents a stage in his pilgrimage which has continually widening horizons, so the positions expressed are not conclusive¹⁰.

This chapter has three principal parts: introductory, expository (2-4.3), and evaluative. The principal focus is the development of Pieris' thinking in so far as it pertains to his understanding of revelation.

1.1 *Socioecclesial Context*

Sri Lanka gained independence from England in 1948¹¹. Even before independence, Catholics (who comprise approximately 7% of the population) were accused of playing an excessively important role in the civil service, in national policy, the economy, and education¹². After the 1956 elections, with the victory of parties sympathetic to traditional elements in Buddhist society, measures were taken to put this situation to an end. In 1960-61 the government nationalised all primary schools and withdrew financial aid from all secondary schools¹³. Because of Catholics' reliance on church schools, this move had a dramatic effect on their Catholic identity. Previously Catholics had formed an isolated community. However with increasing pressure from Buddhist groups and with the «schools crisis», Catholics had to face the issue of how far they were to be integrated as fully accepted members of Sri Lankan society.

After the elections of 1956, Sri Lanka was faced with a situation of growing social and racial turmoil. In 1971 there was a youth insurrection

¹⁰ «Preface», *LMW*, xii.

¹¹ For an account of Sri Lankan history prior to independence, see S. ABEYASINGHA, «Contextualizing Theology», 226-227. Also see N. ABEYASINGHA, *The Radical Tradition*; P. CASPERSZ, «The Role of the Christian Church».

¹² For a historical survey of these developments, see U. DORNBERG, *Searching*, 29-82. Dornberg provides the following figures for religious allegiance in Sri Lanka (from *Pro Mundi Vita*, 1984): Buddhist 69.3%; Hindu 15.5%; Moslem 7.6%; Christian 7.6% (*Ibid.*, 17, fn. 7).

¹³ The nationalisation of schools reduced the number of Catholic schools from 764 to 47 and put a greater financial burden on the church and the pupils' parents. From the Sinhalese-speaking, Buddhist point of view, the church schools were a symbol of foreign domination (see U. DORNBERG, *Searching*, 37-38).

led by the JVP (People's Liberation Front). Thousands of young people were killed or disappeared¹⁴. Most of the supporters of the insurrection were Buddhists, including Buddhist monks¹⁵. In 1983 there were outbreaks of ethnic clashes between Sinhalese and Tamils — a conflict which has continued until today. Tissa Balasuriya summarises the events of the five years from 1987 until 1992 as follows: «They have seen two insurrections, continuous war, Indian military intervention, innumerable killings, over a million refugees, emergency rule and more recently rapid changes in the economy at the behest of foreign powers»¹⁶. The assassination of a presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake in 1994, and thwarted peace efforts of Prime Minister and President Chandrika Kumaratunga, indicate a continuing situation of political unrest in the country.

Such difficult times present a challenge to the churches. Ulrich Dornberg lists four major issues that the Catholic church has to confront¹⁷. Firstly, the ethnic conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils threatens to split the church. In the North, Tamil Christians identify strongly with Tamil culture, whereas in the South, inculturation of Catholics into Sinhalese culture has been significant. The challenge is for Catholics to find an identity which is both particular and universal. Secondly, social and economic problems present a challenge for the church to help bring about conditions to relieve the impoverishment of the rural masses. Thirdly, the presence of Buddhism and other religions presents a challenge for the church. For a start, the Catholic church has to deal with its heritage as one that worked hand in hand with the colonisers. Then it must find appropriate forms of cooperation and dialogue with the leaders and lay people of the other religious groups. The fourth challenge is that of finding suitable structures and pastoral approaches. According to Dornberg, «the greatest challenge to the Sri Lankan Church means to develop and live a “contextual Christianity”»¹⁸.

The situation in Sri Lanka has had a major influence on Aloysius Pieris. He is particularly concerned that Christians should discover their proper mission and Asian identity in relation to the realities of Asia, and of Sri Lanka in particular. His is not simply an academic quest. Having arrived

¹⁴ For an interpretation of the 1971 insurrection, see Y. DEVANANDA, *Violent Lanka*.

¹⁵ The Catholic bishops, except for Bp Nanayakkara, backed the government and condemned the insurrection (see U. DORNBERG, *Searching*, 54-55).

¹⁶ T. BALASURIYA, «Epilogue 1987-1992», 193.

¹⁷ See U. DORNBERG, *Searching*, 74-82. He notes the help of S. ABEYASINGHA, *The Loud Whisper*.

¹⁸ U. DORNBERG, *Searching*, 82.

back in Sri Lanka from Italy in 1966 to begin doctoral studies, he started work in the Colombo slums with a group of university students, and simultaneously, participated in culturally meaningful liturgical celebrations. He also joined groups such as the Christian Workers' Fellowship, which were involved with the other religions and in the life-struggles of the poor¹⁹.

1.2 *Theravāda Buddhism*

Aloysius Pieris places great value on dialogue between Christianity: the religion of the word, and Buddhism: the way of silence²⁰. There are different schools of Buddhism. One of the major divisions is between «Southern» Theravāda Buddhism of Southeast Asia, whose scriptures are written in Pāli and the «Northern» Mahāyāna Buddhism of Central and East Asia, which uses Sanskrit. Buddhism of Sri Lanka is of the Theravāda school²¹.

¹⁹ These and other attempts on Pieris' part to face the challenges of the Sri Lankan situation have not always met with enthusiastic support from his superiors or from the bishops (from a letter of Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 May 1994).

²⁰ «Doctrinal, Legal, and Cultural Factors» (1978b) *LMW*, 108. Buddhism arose in the sixth century B.C.E. when Siddhartha Gautama, a young man from a warrior caste in Northern India, became dissatisfied with the secular society and the Brahmanic clericalism of his time and set out in search of a different way of life (see L.D. LEFEBURE, *The Buddha and the Christ*, 5). Eventually he had a decisive experience of enlightenment. This realisation is known also as *bodhi*, hence the epithet «Buddha»: He who has been awakened to the ultimate truth (see A. PIERIS, «Buddhism as Doctrine» [1973a] *LMW*, 57-58). Buddhism is the one religion that is pan-Asian. In Sri Lanka approximately 70% of the population are Buddhist. Pieris gives the following statistics for Sri Lanka (from the Department of Cultural Affairs in the 1960s): 6,172 temples having 18,670 monks; 152 hermitages having 548 hermits; 187 convents with 413 «nuns». The proportion of monks to lay persons was about 1:400 (see A. PIERIS «The Spirituality of the Buddhist Monk» [1977a] *LMW*, 69).

²¹ Theravāda means «Way of the Elders». An important difference between Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism is the way they see the Buddha. The Theravāda school sees the Buddha as a human being who has reached a state that makes him a category of his own. Mahāyāna Buddhism equates the Buddha with the eternal pre-existent *dharma*. For Northern Buddhism, Gautama would be the human manifestation or incarnation of this revelatory medium of salvation (see A. PIERIS, «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 133). See also, A. PIERIS «Buddhist Political Visioning» (1983c) 134, where he notes the difference between the two forms of Buddhism.

The Buddha, the *sangha* (monastic order), the *dhamma* are the three pivotal points of reference in the religious framework of Buddhism²². *Dhamma* is often understood as a threefold salvific truth: teaching, way of life, and *nibbāna*. Commentaries speak of the Buddha having many eyes. The Buddha's wisdom-eye (*paññācakkhu*) is his *dhamma*-eye or vision of *dhamma*²³.

In Buddhism truth comes with enlightenment when one sees things as they are²⁴. Once the truth is encountered one does not possess it. It is like a raft for crossing a river, you use it, but you do not hold onto it. One should not carry the raft wherever one goes after crossing the river. For the Buddhist, absolute truth is that there is nothing absolute in the world. Everything is relative and impermanent. There is no unchanging self, no soul, and no God²⁵. Thus Buddhism is quite different from Christianity. The emphasis is on understanding, not on faith or belief. The mind is not something «spiritual» as opposed to the body, rather it is a faculty like the eye or ear. One organ senses colours or sounds, the other ideas. There is no

²² *Sangha* literally means «community». In Buddhism the term denotes the community of Buddhist monks (see W. RAHULA, *What the Buddha Taught*, 2). The term *dhamma* is not easy to define. Rahula says: «There is no term in Buddhist terminology wider than *dhamma*» (*Ibid.*, 58). Ross Carter provides a comprehensive study of the various meanings of the term (see R. CARTER, *Dhamma*). He notes how in the Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary, one is presented with over fifty English terms and concepts for the one Pāli term, *dhamma* (*Ibid.*, 16). Carter comes to the conclusion that the term represents «the salvific Truth in the teachings of the Buddha, the authoritative teaching (*dhamma* that is *pariyatti*), salvific Truth in the way of living (*dhamma* that is *paṭipatti*), and salvific Truth, Reality, rediscovered by the Buddha and the objective for mankind (*dhamma* that is *adhigama, paṭivedha: nibbāna*)» (*Ibid.*, 179). The threefold classification is a simplification of «ninefold *dhamma* that transcends the world» (*navavidhalokuttaradhamma*); (*Ibid.*, 116, 119).

Pieris and other Sri Lankan writers refer to religious concepts in at least three languages: Sanskrit, Pāli, and Sinhala. Thus one encounters terms like *dharma* in Sanskrit, and *dhamma* in Pāli; *nirvāna* in Sanskrit and Sinhala and *nibbāna* in Pāli. In quotations the authors' usage will be followed. If referring to a particular work, the usage of that work will be used. Otherwise, if the reference is in the context of Theravāda Buddhism, preference will be given to the Pāli term.

²³ *Dhamma* can be «seen» in the sense of being «perceived», and in another sense *dhamma* is visible in that it can be realised personally (see J.R. CARTER, *Dhamma*, 162). *Dhamma* can also be heard as preaching (*Ibid.*, 96, 110, 142, 147).

²⁴ W. RAHULA, *What the Buddha Taught*, 41.

²⁵ See «Core-to-Core-Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 116-118.

permanent «I». There is no thinker behind the thought. The Absolute is a nonpersonal «it» to be realised within oneself rather than a personal «Thou» to be loved and revered. This implies a mode of discourse having a logic and grammar and syntax quite different from Christian religious discourse²⁶.

Pieris says that the West suffers from the Weberian caricature of Buddhism and Hinduism²⁷. The distorted image portrays Eastern religion as world-denying when in reality it is a world-relativising affirmation of the Absolute²⁸. Pieris stresses that Buddhism is best not seen in terms of doctrine or beliefs. It is a view of life (truth) and a way of life (path). It is an ethos sustained by an institutional framework and a salvific experience²⁹.

1.3 *Developments in Pieris' Writing*

Considering Aloysius Pieris' work written over almost thirty years, one can see an unfolding of various themes³⁰. His first published article is a rather factual one on Hinduism, written while still a student in Naples. At the end of this article in Italian Pieris refers to «baptising» the religious heritage of India — a term that recurs frequently in his later work³¹.

Pieris has a deep interest in the liturgy and once home, several of his early published works concerned liturgy in Sri Lanka³². His interest was not

²⁶ A. PIERIS, «Buddhism as a Challenge» (1986a) *LMW*, 85.

²⁷ A. PIERIS, «East in the West» (1988b) *LMW*, 10.

²⁸ Pieris provides a helpful summary of Buddhist doctrine in «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 123.

²⁹ «Buddhism as Doctrine» (1973a) *LMW*, 45.

³⁰ For a survey of Pieris' work until the late 1980s, see M. HUIJBREGTS, «Armoede en religie». Also see D.R. SHELTON FERNANDO, *Contextual Theology in Sri Lanka*.

³¹ «Però, il giorno in cui verrà battezzato questo patrimonio religioso degli Indiani — come diceva Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, — la Sposa di Cristo comincerà a cantare un cantico nuovo!» (A. PIERIS, «L'Induismo» [1966] 119). It appears that here Pieris is using the term baptism in a way that he would later criticise in the fulfilment theory of mission.

³² Reflecting on the importance of liturgy on his theological thinking Pieris writes: «As [a] scholastic still in philosophy (1956-1959) I remember listening to a series of talks given by Fr. Hoffinger on the "catechetical value of the Liturgy". It opened a new vision for me, and prepared me for Vatican II which was to come in three years time. During my regency, [...] I had finished reading all the then available important works on liturgy written by Parsch, Jungmann and Vagaggini. I realized that liturgy had to be more than just a church-rite *ex opere operato*, and that it has a nexus with spirituality and social action» (letter of Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 May 1994).

purely academic, and attempts at liturgical inculturation resulted in friction and his being denounced in Rome³³. Later, Pieris' association with the Christian Workers' Fellowship resulted again in controversy³⁴.

In 1970 Pieris produced his first theological paper about the church, the kingdom and other religions. This paper contains seeds of much that he would develop in later years³⁵. Pieris continued in dialogue with Buddhism, Marxism, and issues of national interest. Then, in 1979 he was thrust onto the world stage with his seminal paper: «Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation», at the Asian Theological Conference (ATC) at Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka, sponsored by EATWOT. The paper has been referred to already in chapter II. His ideas about poverty and what he calls «religiosity» were a source of debate for a long time by the respective supporters of theologies of liberation and of inculturation.

Another important occasion was at the Fifth Workshop on Theology of Religions in 1987 at St. Gabriel, Mödling, Austria, where Pieris presented a paper on «Christianity in a Core-to-Core Dialogue with Buddhism». In showing how the Spirit speaks through both Christianity and Buddhism, Pieris brought together in a new synthesis many of the themes that he had been dealing with since the 1979 ATC conference³⁶.

³³ Pieris gives a humorous account of the events concerning the so-called «Pilimatalawa experiment» in A. PIERIS, «Inculturation» (1993c) 641-643.

³⁴ Pieris writes to the Bishop: «Let me also insist that this is the first time that a priest ever stepped into the Ceramic Factory and proclaimed the mystery of redemption to a class of people who have been long alienated from the Church. Yes, the scandal for them was the Church — and not our liturgy which reintroduced some of the alienated people again into the Eucharistic Life» (A. PIERIS, «The Workers' Mass at a Factory», 111).

³⁵ Reflecting on these events, after a span of over twenty years, Pieris writes: «This was the very first theological article I ever published, and it created a chain reaction. It was taken up by many theological reviews in English as well as in other languages. Before I knew I found myself compelled to write further articles to clarify my position, answer objections, expand seminal statements, and correct inadequately articulated ideas. Before I knew I was caught up in a writing career which has landed me today in a theological world from which I cannot get out» (A. PIERIS, «Whither New Evangelism?» [1993h]; [From p. 2 of the text delivered at a meeting of Sri Lankan Jesuits, Lewella, Kandy, 15-18 November, 1993 — not included in the version published in *Pacifica*]).

³⁶ Delegates at the conference included Wolfhart Pannenberg and Walter Kasper.

In 1989 Pieris began a series of articles on religious life. These were written after many years of teaching comparative spirituality, and draw on Pieris' own experience of religious life³⁷.

Since the publication of *Redemptoris missio* (1990), Pieris has been offering an Asian perspective on evangelisation. His most recent work in English is about inculturation, based on a theology of the Spirit and of the Word³⁸. His theology of the universal Word is an attempt to develop new ways of understanding revelation both within and beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition.

1.4 *Basic Premises*

Before investigating Pieris' understanding of revelation, it is necessary to explain some points which are basic to his theology. These include: the Asian context, the role of religion, the cosmic and metacosmic dimensions of religion, and the Third World³⁹.

In his address to the 1979 ATC conference, Pieris argued that the Asian context is distinguished by its Third Worldness characterised by poverty, and its peculiarly Asian character seen in its multifaceted religiousness. These two inseparable realities must form the matrix for any truly Asian theology. Poverty and religiousness can have both enslaving and liberating consequences. For instance, enforced poverty is dehumanising, whereas voluntary poverty can be a liberating force against mammon. Religion can bind people to the status quo, or it can be a force to unite people against oppressive situations. So it is important in Asia today to participate in poverty and religiousness in a positive sense — both at the individual and sociopolitical levels.

³⁷ A good example is A. PIERIS, «The Three Ingredients» (1993a).

³⁸ As noted in the introduction, capitalisation with the term «word» presents a difficulty. In his manuscripts Pieris makes frequent use of capitalisation; however editors reduce the use of capitals, but not entirely (eg., the use of, «revelatory word», «Jesus as the word», but the «Word of God», in A. PIERIS, «The Problem of Universality and Inculturation» [1994c]). In this chapter, where the referent is uncertain, but could refer to the incarnate Logos/God/Theos/ ultimate Reality, a capital will be used.

³⁹ Other basic principles could be mentioned, for instance, *gnosis* and *agape* as the twofold language of the Spirit. Topics such as this will be treated later in the text. For example, see section 2.2.

A continual point of reference is Pieris' analysis of religion in terms of cosmic religion and metacosmic soteriology⁴⁰. Cosmic religiosity is the type often found in Africa, Asia and Oceania, sometimes called «animism» by ethnologists. Characteristically it is a this-worldly spirituality which reveres nature and its forces, and also forms a basis for popular religiosity⁴¹. Pieris points out that cosmic religiosity is present in various forms throughout the world for it represents a basic psychological posture that *homo religiosus* adopts subconsciously toward the mysteries of life⁴².

Metacosmic soteriologies postulate the existence of a transcendental horizon to human life. The so-called great religions refer to the metacosmic in different ways. For example Buddhism refers to *nibbāna* which is realised through liberating knowledge, whereas Christianity refers to God, salvifically encountered in redemptive love. These metacosmic soteriologies are not found in abstract form, but contextualised within the worldview of the cosmic religion of a given culture, thus creating a twofold level of religious experience⁴³.

Pieris refers often to the interaction between cosmic and metacosmic religiosity. He maintains that authentic human development in Asia requires that the relationship between the two continue. A metacosmic soteriology without the cosmic dimension would exist only in the imagination. On the other hand, belief in a cosmocentric closed world with no transcendental horizon leads to technocracy and irreligion⁴⁴. According to Pieris, with the

⁴⁰ The analysis appears for the first time in Pieris' presentation to the ATC conference in 1979. However he had been using the term «metacosmic» earlier, for example, in his paper on «The Spirituality of the Buddhist Monk» (1977a) *LMW*, 62.

⁴¹ Pieris provides a description of seven liberative features of the cosmic religiosity of the poor in his paper, «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 131-132.

⁴² «Toward an Asian Theology» (1979c) *ATL*, 71.

⁴³ Pieris says that the distinction between the two forms of religiosity is derived from Buddhist self-understanding. In Sri Lanka one distinguishes *laukika* and *lokottara*. Pieris explains the minimal acceptance of Christianity in Asia by what he calls «the helicopter theory of religious expansion». Like a helicopter on a landing pad a metacosmic religion finds its natural point of insertion in a cosmic religion. Once a helicopter has landed, another cannot land on the same pad. Mass conversion from one metacosmic religion to the other is improbable. Only where a cosmic religiosity still prevails, for example in tribal regions of India, is there evidence of a Christian breakthrough (see A. PIERIS, «Does Christ Have a Place in Asia?» [1993a] 34-35).

⁴⁴ Pieris describes a dehumanised technocracy as «a reversal of the evolutionary trajectory, a cosmological disaster, an irreligious undevelopment, though boorishly

invasion of Western developmentalism backed by capitalist technocracy, the cosmic dimension becomes desacralised by secularism. This only leads to new forms of slavery. People are treated as means of production and slaves of man-made tools. For Pieris, true liberation must include the balance of people's control of nature and harmony with nature, or knowledge and love. Only technological changes which respect Asian religion in both its cosmic and metacosmic dimensions can achieve this balance⁴⁵.

While his emphasis is on the religiocultural dimension of the Asian context, Pieris also touches on the socioeconomic concerns of the Third World. In his address to the EATWOT Conference in New Delhi in 1981, Pieris pointed out how the term «Third World» is not merely an economic category. The Third World happens wherever and whenever socioeconomic dependence in terms of race, class, or sex generates political and cultural slavery⁴⁶. Recently he has shown how the term «Third World» is also a theological category⁴⁷. It points to a «third» or «alternative» way requiring a new political spirituality and a new order of values. Often the First World, pursuing a developmentalist ideology, sees the only future for the Third World in developing to be more like itself. The alternative, which Pieris sides with, is a liberationist hope that the future of the Third World lies in liberation from the First World.

1.5 *Pieris' Theological Vision*

Aloysius Pieris wants to discover an Asian theology⁴⁸. Hence he has devoted considerable energy to showing how this theology differs from other approaches. Three examples will be given here:

- his critique of missiological approaches,
- his critique of Christology,
- his critique of models of theology.

advertised in Asian countries as “international culture”, modernization, and progress — if not also as pre-evangelization!» (A. PIERIS, «The Place of Non-Christian Religions» [1982d] *ATL*, 108).

⁴⁵ This argument is developed at length in Pieris' paper on Asian feminism (see «Woman and Religion in Asia» [1992b] 176-194).

⁴⁶ «The Place of Non-Christian Religions» (1982d) *ATL*, 87.

⁴⁷ See A. PIERIS, «Three Inadequacies in the Social Encyclicals» (1993f) 75-80. Also, «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 41-42.

⁴⁸ Pieris says that theology is a discovery rather than an invention, that is, a christic «explicitation» of reality (see «The Place of Non-Christian Religions» [1982d] *ATL*, 88).

a) In his first theological paper, published in 1970, Pieris offered a critique of four missiological approaches which he considered to be critical points in the evolution of attitudes to other religions. The first, the conquest theory, considers other religions as anti-Christian and seeks to save «the pagans» by bringing them into Christ's kingdom, which is equated with the visible church. Pieris sees the second, the adaptation theory, as little better than the first. It involves deception because «it seems to imply robbing a culture of its religious content, to slip in the Christian message in its place»⁴⁹. The third, the fulfilment theory, relegates other religions to a pre-Christian category to be fulfilled through the missionary work of the church. Thus the other religions have salvific value only in so far as they are a preparation for the gospel. The fourth, the sacramental theory, sees the role of the church as being a sign of the kingdom. Conversion would imply a conscious acceptance of the kingdom and not necessarily the acceptance of the church which is its sacramental form. At this early stage, Pieris supports this fourth sacramental theory which he links to the theory of «anonymous Christianity». He sees the Old Testament as a model of Christ's anonymous presence in history, thus helping one «to recognize God's voice and to read His word in Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam»⁵⁰.

In the 1970 paper Pieris makes a point about the church dipping into the waters of the other religions, as Jesus was baptised by John⁵¹. In later articles, he has developed this point into a paradigm of «immersion» or «baptism». Pieris is not referring to baptism in a literal sense⁵². He sees baptism as a universal call to live for others to the point of self-immolation⁵³. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan was his first prophetic gesture. By losing his identity among those repentant sinners at the Jordan, Jesus identified with the «religious poor» and in so doing discovered his authentic selfhood. Jesus' last prophetic gesture was his «baptism» on Calvary⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ A. PIERIS, «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 4.

⁵⁰ «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 7.

⁵¹ «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 5.

⁵² Pieris disagrees with the proponents of the fulfilment theory who refer to the need to «baptize» pre-Christian religions and cultures (see A. PIERIS, «Asia's Non-Semitic Religions» [1982c] *ATL*, 47). He says that taking baptism so literally, ritualistically, and ecclesiocentrically, «waters down the mission of Jesus so clearly set forth by Jesus himself in Luke 4» (A. PIERIS, «Evangelization and Our Nation» [1993b] 6).

⁵³ «Doctrinal, Legal and Cultural Factors» (1978b) *LMW*, 109.

⁵⁴ Pieris explains this double baptism at length in «Asia's Non-Semitic Religions» (1982c) *ATL*, 45-50.

Pieris' point is that the only authentic option for the church in Asia today is not to baptise but to be baptised. The church must plunge into the Jordan of Asian religiosity, and let itself be baptised on the cross of Asian poverty. Only through such an experience will the church be able to discover its true identity in Asia and be able to speak in an authoritative way about God's revelation⁵⁵.

b) Pieris' critique of missiological approaches leads also to a critique of christologies. He relegates them to two opposing positions: *Christ-against-religions* and *Christ-of-religions*. Pieris assigns various theologies to the two positions, including liberationists under the former position and inculturationists under the latter⁵⁶. His point is that liberationists with their Marxist approach to religion and Barthian approach to the Bible, often completely miss the liberative potential of religion⁵⁷. Likewise he accuses

⁵⁵ Aloysius Pieris links the theological point to his own experience. He tells of how when he began to study Buddhist philosophy he felt that he was not accepted by the monks and that he did not really accept them. So one day «garbed in my cassock as a Catholic priest, I took a basket of fruit and flowers and, in the presence of a Buddhist leader, fell prostrate. I worshiped him and asked to be accepted as his pupil. From that day, after this act of humility, I have had no problem with Buddhist monks». He continues: «It was only when Jesus was humble enough to choose John the Baptist as His *guru* and *bend down* in the Jordan that His mission was proclaimed [...]. Translated for our times, baptism is not to pour water on somebody and bring him into the Church — which does not do service to anybody — but to pass through the act of humility by which the Church is baptised into the Asian environment. So this conviction came to me, and it determined the one pole that is my religious experience» (A. PIERIS, «Toward a Liberating Asian Theology» [1984c] 5).

⁵⁶ Within the former *Christ-against-religions* position, Pieris includes those described above under the conquest and adaptation theories of mission. He also includes the developmentalists with their «neo-colonialist Christ», and more recently liberationists who link non-Christian religions to the structural poverty of the Third World. In the *Christ-of-religions* position he includes the «Gnostic Christ» of nineteenth century India, the «Ashramic Christ» of this century, and the «Universal Christ» of the inculturationists (see «The Place of Non-Christian Religions» [1982d] *ATL*, 89, 94-96).

⁵⁷ A short passage will illustrate what Pieris is saying and his distinctive style. «It was at this time that Latin American theology (equated here with liberation theology), with ten years of maturity behind it, began to awaken the Afro-Asian «indigenizers» from their ethnocentric stupor, just as it had earlier shocked the Euro-American theoreticians from their dogmatic slumber. It is understandable that some Asian theologians with leftist leanings began to sing the liberation song out of beat with the non-Latin rhythm of their own cultures. The «lord of the dance» was the liberator Christ

the inculturationists of missing the scandal of institutionalised misery. Pieris insists that a truly Asian theology/christology must take both religion and poverty seriously, particularly in their liberative dimensions. One should not start with church magisterium or «God-talk», but rather with the liberative impulse that one discovers in the «magisterium of the poor»⁵⁸. It is here, among the poor, who are predominantly non-Christian, that one will discover the «non-Christian Christ», that is, the body of those who are struggling unto death to usher in God's reign on earth⁵⁹.

In identifying the liberating aspect of Asian religiosity, Pieris seeks to show that liberation and inculturation occur together in Asia⁶⁰. To treat one without the other is to engage in a form of reductionism that fails to appreciate the Asian context in its totality. Asian religiosity cannot be reduced to the great religions. Taking both religion and poverty together, the focus must be on the religiousness of Asia's poor. Pieris' unique contribution is his location of Asian theology in this context.

c) In order to resolve the problem of the tension between inculturationists and liberationists, Pieris calls for an all-embracing christology which will bring together the different patterns of theological thinking. He distinguishes three theological patterns⁶¹. Firstly he distinguishes the *logos* model of philosophical or scholastic theology. In this view, salvation is knowledge of God, and theology is the explanation of revelation. Secondly there is the *dabar* model of liberation theology. Here the word of salvation is continually heard in history; not only in the history of Israel and of Jesus, but in the continuing history of the world. Thirdly there is the *hodos* model of theology. Salvation lies in identifying with Christ who is the medium or path on the way to the mystery of God. Pieris' point is that the *logos* model

who redeemed the poor not only from their poverty but also from their traditional religions, which sustained sinful systems» («The Place of Non-Christian Religions» [1982d] *ATL*, 95).

⁵⁸ For Pieris' discussion of the three *magisteria*, including the academic magisterium, pastoral magisterium of the bishops, and magisterium of the poor, see his article «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d).

⁵⁹ «Does Christ have a Place?» (1993a) 43.

⁶⁰ Pieris is critical of both terms when not taken together. He thinks both liberationists and inculturationists take too narrow a view, for the former do not appreciate the positive aspects of poverty and religiousness, and the latter do not see the negative aspects of both (see A. PIERIS, «The Dynamics of the ATC» [1979b] 25-26).

⁶¹ See «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 72-78.

in isolation tends to neo-gnosticism, as can be seen in scholasticism and some highly speculative branches of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The *hodos* model of religious thought and practice, reflecting the mutuality between the *truth* and the *path*, can be seen in the mystical tradition in the West and in ashrams and their equivalents in the East. He says that what has been missing until now is the *dabar* idiom, which one discovers in the voice of the poor. Pieris wants to give a special place in his theology to this voice, which he calls the «third magisterium», distinct from the official academic and pastoral magisteria of the church⁶².

Pieris' theology is closely related to his personal life experience. His reference to «baptism» in Asian spirituality is linked to his own experience under a Buddhist master⁶³. A powerful experience of Asian poverty was his encounter with a poor student who was later killed in the youth insurrection of 1971. Pieris writes: «Still, his face comes to me regularly, asking where I get my money»⁶⁴. In 1971, when he had been a Jesuit for 18 years, he let his hair and beard grow long, clothed appropriately as a pilgrim, and set out to visit places in the North of India that were important in the life of the Buddha. He tells how after he was refused entry to a temple at Benares, he went to bathe in the River Ganges⁶⁵.

⁶² «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 130.

⁶³ See «Toward a Liberating Asian Theology» (1984c) 5. Also see fn. 55.

⁶⁴ «Toward a Liberating Asian Theology» (1984c) 10. Pieris tells how he had lunch with the poor student who asked him, «From where do you get your money?» Pieris replied, «God gives me», which was the wrong answer. «After this, I began to think what this student may have thought — that this must be a funny god who gives to the priest and not to him. It struck me that each time I am faced with this situation wherein I have something and somebody doesn't, and I proclaim God and my belief in God, I am preaching about an unjust god who doesn't exist. In a way, I am preaching atheism — because God is just and nobody is just if he is not favorable to the poor; he has to be favorable to the poor, otherwise, he is not just; and if he is not just, he is not God. So each time this situation occurs, it is anti-theistic, anti-religious. And it has been worrying me ever since» (*Ibid.*, 9).

⁶⁵ Pieris describes the river, which unlike the temple, was not guarded. «I watched what the people did and did exactly what they did as I dipped into the water, but soon I noticed that I was attracting attention [...]. Everybody was looking at me and some asked, «Where are you from?» «I come from Sri Lanka», I said [...]. Then I realized it was the cross hanging on my neck that had caught people's eye. They knew that the symbol was not a symbol of theirs. That is why they asked where I was from» (A. PIERIS, «In the Buddha's Footsteps» [1987c] 13).

In this atmosphere of absolute tolerance I felt that I was free to speak, free to act and free to worship. I suddenly realized that this bathing was God's sacrament, not human perversity polluting religion in the name of ritual purity. In that vast expanse of space, with people communing with nature, with water and with God, I felt that I had really touched something beyond religion and therefore had touched the core of true religion⁶⁶.

2. The Locus of Revelation

Before investigating where Pieris encounters divine revelation, there is a slight logical difficulty to be overcome. Is it not necessary first to identify or define the object of the investigation? An interim definition will suffice at this point. Divine revelation will be understood provisionally as «God's word». This is the closest Pieris comes to a definition of revelation in his early work⁶⁷.

Pieris sees history as the locus of divine revelation. History includes the history of Israel and the church, and the history of people in Asia today. Revelation in the Bible comes to us through the history of Israel. But God is seen as continuing to speak in the context of the history of today's people. As Pieris says: «Scriptural History and our History are together the Revelatory Word»⁶⁸.

Pieris sees the whole of the Bible as a record of the struggle of a «non-people», with Yahweh as an intimate partner⁶⁹. Two convictions which

⁶⁶ «In the Buddha's Footsteps» (1987c) 13. Pieris continues: «When I came out, I celebrated the Eucharist as I always do whenever something meaningful happens [...]. Indeed in the contrast between the temple and the river I saw again how the Eucharist can be a sign of segregation — and how it can also be a sacrament of liberation to all. If the temple was a symbol of law-bound religion, the river was a symbol of the kingdom [...]. I chose the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan as my text, and I read it aloud and slowly from my Hindi missal, and many people listened [...]. Jesus [...] had the humility to walk into the Jordan and become a disciple of John, the revered guru of Israel, by bathing in the waters of Asian religiosity. That act of humility resulted in the bestowal of the great Messianic authority before human beings and before God: "Hear ye him"» (*Ibid.*).

⁶⁷ Referring to biblical soteriology, Pieris writes: «It is a source of revelation; *it is God's word*; it is our authoritative past as well as our norm of orthodoxy for the present» (italics added); (A. PIERIS, «A Theology of Liberation?» [1986b] *ATL*, 113). In later writings Pieris describes revelation in a way that avoids theistic language.

⁶⁸ «Inculturation» (1993c) 649.

⁶⁹ «A Theology of Liberation?» (1986b) *ATL*, 124.

recur throughout his work are, the antinomy between God and mammon, and the covenant between God and the poor⁷⁰. These convictions are derived from biblical revelation. The first is linked to Jesus' life and spirituality, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, and Matthew 6,24: «You cannot serve God and mammon». The covenantal identification of God with slaves is seen particularly in the incarnation (Ph 2,6-11) and in the life and message of Jesus as recorded in the Christian scriptures⁷¹.

Pieris points to two important elements in the history of Asian people: the poor in their religiosity, and the religions, particularly in their practice of voluntary poverty. Pieris says that the poor, the voiceless, and the powerless are the principal addressees of the Word. They in turn mediate God's presence to others⁷². Thus, the poor and the slaves of today, as the voiceless transmitters of the Word, are a continuation of biblical revelation⁷³. Moreover, the poor reveal Christ through his continuing sacramental presence in the flesh and blood of human beings crying and striving for the dawn of the kingdom of justice⁷⁴.

Pieris also maintains that the religious aspiration for freedom on the part of the poor has great liberative potential when it is mobilised in an appropriate way⁷⁵. This religiousness of the Asian poor could be «a new source of revelation for the Asian church»⁷⁶. In other words, there is a soteriological nucleus in Asian culture, found particularly in the

⁷⁰ For example, A. PIERIS, «Monastic Poverty» (1980b) *LMW*, 90. Pieris defines mammon as the source and sustenance of social structures in which the powerful control the beliefs and behaviour of others. Mammon either dethrones God (atheistic states), divinises money (capitalism), or invokes God as the authority behind power (church); (see A. PIERIS, «The Religious Vows», [1989e] 5).

⁷¹ Pieris refers to Jesus' «revealing the Father» and thus helping us correct our understanding of «divine» and «human» (see A. PIERIS, «Christology in Asia [1989b] 162).

⁷² «If God is mediated by the poor who are God's sacrament, then the struggle against mammon is not merely a struggle for God, but is at the same time a struggle for the poor» («Monastic Poverty» [1980b] *LMW*, 91).

⁷³ See A. PIERIS, «Human Rights Language» (1988c) 308. Also see «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60.

⁷⁴ A. PIERIS, «Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective» (1983f) *ATL*, 12.

⁷⁵ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 132.

⁷⁶ «A Theology of Liberation?» (1986b) *ATL*, 125.

revolutionary potential of the cosmic religiosity of the poor, which is waiting to be discovered by Asian Christians⁷⁷.

Pieris notes how the metacosmic religions have a part to play in divine revelation in history. For example, he says that in the late 1960s he was «discovering the Word in Buddhism»⁷⁸. In his more recent work he refers to the Word of revelation which is available to all tribes, races, and peoples, having been recognised by various names: *Dharma*, *Mārga*, *Tao*, and so on⁷⁹. In our day, members of other religions who have an inner affinity with the universal Word can teach Christians the language of the Spirit in contemporary Asia⁸⁰.

Church tradition and the teaching magisterium are noticeably absent from the examples given above of mediations of divine revelation in history⁸¹. Pieris acknowledges the normative history of Israel and the church. However he concentrates on the testimony to divine revelation in the paschal mystery encountered in people's lives. Pieris declares that the prophetic basic human communities, which are instruments with the poor in their liberation, are today a «readable word of revelation»⁸². Such communities are a privileged place where the biblical word, poverty, religiosity, and the praxis of liberation may come together⁸³.

⁷⁷ «Toward an Asian Theology» (1979c) *ATL*, 71.

⁷⁸ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 63.

⁷⁹ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 71.

⁸⁰ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 71. Pieris notes that a mediatory or revelatory expression of the Absolute is necessary if God or the Absolute is to become accessible or comprehensible to us. This mediatory expression is given different names depending on the culture. *Dharma* and *Logos* are among the names given in Buddhism and Christianity (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 132).

⁸¹ Pieris acknowledges the importance of tradition as the collective memory making the original experience available to contemporary society (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] 119-122). (Also see section 2.3 in this chapter). However, Pieris devotes little space in his writings to tradition in the sense normally attributed to the term in Christian theology. There are various reasons for this, including his acute sense of the cultural and historical particularity of doctrinal positions, and his desire to explicate an Asian theology not bound by the traditions of the West. Pieris' approach to traditions is also influenced by his understanding of the Word. A strong sense of continuing revelation, and the importance of discerning what God is saying now, means that he pays less attention to the handing on of what God has said to others in the past.

⁸² «Asia's Non-Semitic Religions» (1982c) *ATL*, 47.

⁸³ «Asia's Non-Semitic Religions» (1982c) *ATL*, 35.

2.1 *Revelation and the Three Levels of Religion*

Having seen the principal mediations which give testimony to divine revelation in history, one may now investigate Pieris' understanding of revelation in greater depth. The study demands clarification on two important points: Pieris' perception of religion, and his understanding of Christ. These two points will be treated in the sections which follow.

Pieris distinguishes different levels at which one can approach religion:

- the core experience of a given religion (experiential level),
- the memory of the experience stored in religious traditions, practices, and beliefs (religious level),
- the interpretation of the experience (theological level)⁸⁴.

The three levels require explanation for one to appreciate how they influence Pieris' understanding of divine revelation⁸⁵.

2.2 *The Experiential Level*

Aloysius Pieris assumes that all religions have a soteriological nucleus or a core salvific experience which is liberative. He says that the Buddhist core experience is expressed in a *gnostic* idiom as liberative knowledge or enlightenment. The Christian core experience is that of a liberating God, expressed in the *agapeic* terms of redemptive love.

From a Christian perspective, gnosis or the Buddhist nirvanic experience, amounts to the *absence of the absence* of agape⁸⁶. Without referring to «God» or «the soul», the Buddhist posture towards the world may be

⁸⁴ Pieris attributes the initial perception of this division to an intervention by Raimundo Panikkar at the Second Asian Monks' Congress in Bangalore in 1973 (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 120). Pieris comments that later he found that the threefold division had a parallel in the three levels of the Buddhist approach to liberative truth (In Pali: *pariyatti*, *patipada*, *pativedha*). «Then I began to develop this into a methodology as well as a model for understanding religions» (letter of Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 12 January 1995).

⁸⁵ Andrew Hamilton says that Pieris' distinction of the three levels, while helpful, «begs to be set within a fuller doctrine of revelation through Christ» (A. HAMILTON, «What has Asia to do with Australia», 312). This chapter offers a partial response to Hamilton.

⁸⁶ Pieris explains how *nirvāna* is most frequently «defined» as the nonexistence of the three roots of evil: *rāga* (erotic, sensual, selfish, and acquisitive «love»); *dosa* (hatred and ill will); *moha* (delusion, slowness of mind).

summed up as wisdom and love — gnostic detachment (*prajñā*) and compassionate involvement (*karunā*). The two must be taken together for *karunā* itself would not be salvific⁸⁷. It is, rather, the prelude, accompaniment, and manifestation of gnosis. The complementarity between knowledge and love is what Pieris calls Buddhist *gnostic agape*.

Pieris explains how knowledge and love work together in Christian faith. In Christian terms, to *know* God amounts to a faithful adherence to the covenantal obligation to *love*. Thus loving one's neighbour is really a Christian way of *knowing* God (1Jn 4,7-21)⁸⁸. He also draws attention to the Thomistic notion of the knowledge of God producing a love of God. This idea relies on the distinction between speculative and affective knowledge, the latter being equated with wisdom or *sapientia*⁸⁹. Sapiential or affective knowledge, given as a grace by the holy Spirit, is a form of mystical awareness or an experiential knowledge of God⁹⁰. The inherent relationship between the love and knowledge of God is what Pieris refers to as Christian *agapeic gnosis*⁹¹.

Agape and gnosis are two different experiences of the ultimate source of liberation. In Christian terms they are «two eyes of the soul»⁹². Pieris' point is that Buddhism has an important contribution to make to Asian theology. The Buddhist core experience challenges Christians to realise that there is another way of viewing reality. The Buddhist experience can open up new

⁸⁷ «Love has no salvific value in itself, so to say, except in terms of knowledge, which alone liberates but always in and through love» («Core-to-core Dialogue», [1987b] *LMW*, 118). Also see «Buddhism as a Challenge» (1986a) *LMW*, 85.

⁸⁸ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 114.

⁸⁹ *Summa Theol.* Ia, q.64, a.1.

⁹⁰ Thomas links «connaturality» or the «habit» of faith, with wisdom and love in *Summa Theol.* II. II. q.45 a.2, «To judge aright through a certain fellowship [*connaturalitatem*] with them belongs to that wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Spirit [...]. Now this sympathy, or connaturality with divine things, results from charity which unites us to God». Note also Thomas' distinction between *credere Deum*, *credere Deo* and *credere in Deum* (*Summa Theol.* II. II. q.2 a.2), the last being believing «into» God in a dynamic sense of vital union, a dynamic relationship whereby the intellect has priority in the order of knowledge but the will has priority in the order of action. Pieris' argument could perhaps benefit from reference to Pierre Rousselot who refers to the relationship in terms of a reciprocal causality between knowing and loving (see P. ROUSSELOT, «Les yeux de la foi»).

⁹¹ See discussion of this in «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 116.

⁹² «Buddhism as a Challenge» (1986a) *LMW*, 86.

ways of experiencing God as silence, and the Spirit «as the harmony between Word and Silence»⁹³. Christians refer in personal terms to the liberating experience of «knowing» God, whereas Buddhist gnostic agape revolves around the sense of change in a person who experiences liberation as enlightenment⁹⁴. Pieris maintains that integral liberation will be realised when agapeic praxis and gnostic wisdom are taken together. It is at the level of experience that Buddhist reference to enlightenment and Christian reference to the revelation of God can find common ground⁹⁵.

2.3 *The Religious Level*

The second level of approach to religion is that of collective memory, and *communicatio in sacris*. Each religion has developed its own system of doctrines, rites, and institutions which can make the original experience available to contemporary society. Pieris calls it the «spiritual sap that continuously flows through the vein of tradition»⁹⁶. Thus the *nirvāna* experience of Gautama Buddha has been passed on in the Buddhist tradition, and this is reinterpreted in the various streams of Buddhism today. Likewise, the salvific experience of Christianity is passed on in Christian tradition, particularly by its biblical testimony, and this is reinterpreted today in an attempt to make its core experience meaningful in a given sociopolitical and cultural context.

By *communicatio in sacris* Pieris means sharing with members of other religions their experience of salvation. For the Christian this will entail a «baptismal entry» into Buddhist tradition in which one would «plunge into the Jordan of Buddhist spirituality in the presence of an authoritative guide»⁹⁷. Pieris compares a Christian's entering into the Buddhist process

⁹³ A. PIERIS, «Inculturation» (1993c), in *Jahrbuch für kontextuelle Theologien*, 139. This version includes a line that was missed from the version in *Vidyajyoti* 57 (1993) 647.

⁹⁴ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 118-119.

⁹⁵ Pieris makes the interesting point that Buddhism, because it is not inclined to adore the Absolute, tends to attribute a quasi-personalist character to all that is not Absolute, whereas Christian theism in which the Absolute is adored and loved as a person tends to instrumentalise everything else to be used in the human quest for God (see «Buddhism as a Challenge for Christians» [1986a] *LMW*, 86).

⁹⁶ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 119.

⁹⁷ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 123. This point was illustrated in the section on «Pieris' Theological Vision». In particular, see fn. 55. Another example he

of «interiorizing the truth» and «treading the path» to Jesus' submitting to John the Baptist. The contemporary counterpart is the «liturgy of life», that is, the daily struggle of people in their lay vocation, trying to live the demands of the kingdom⁹⁸.

Pieris refers often to *basic human communities*, where Buddhists and Christians «share life and life's most articulate self-expression: religious experience»⁹⁹. He points out how practicing the Beatitudes and witnessing

gives is the Christian Workers' Fellowship where ideological and cultural elements came together in joint celebrations: Buddhists celebrating the Easter rites with Christians, and Christians joining Buddhists in the *Vesak* festival. A further example is the «Workers' Mass» normally celebrated on the eve of May 1st. There, Christian mysteries are proclaimed in Sinhala, sung to tunes composed by the Buddhist musician, Austin Munasingha. The mass combines Buddhist and socialist components relevant to the emergent generation in Sri Lanka (see CWF, *A Sri Lankan Workers' Theology*, 111).

⁹⁸ For discussion on the «liturgy of life», see «Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective» (1983f) *ATL*, 4-7; also «Inculturation» (1993c) 643-647. One might well ask at this point if Pieris is talking about «two forms of the same faith» — an expression used by Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri le Saux) who Pieris refers to approvingly in several places as an example of immersion in two forms of religious experience (see J. DUPUIS, «Swami Abhishiktananda», chap. 3 in *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 67-90). Pieris does not use the term «faith» in reference to Buddhism, but he does advocate a shared life where members of different religions share the same goals and ideals.

⁹⁹ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 120. These communities are not comparable to the *comunidades de base* in Latin America or the *communautés chrétiennes de base* in Africa. They are an assortment of prophetic groups and communities oriented to the total liberation of non-persons and non-peoples (see «An Asian Paradigm» [1993d] 132). In one place Pieris says that the communities are few and far between and on the periphery (see A. PIERIS, «Speaking of the Son of God» [1982f] *ATL*, 64). In another place they are said to be «mushrooming» (see «A Theology of Liberation?» [1986b] *ATL*, 121). Ulrich Dornberg describes some of these groups in his *Searching*, 83-132. In one paper Pieris refers to four examples of the communities (see A. PIERIS, «Western Models of Inculturation» [1984a] *ATL*, 57). The present writer visited and stayed in three of them. The fourth was impossible to visit because the founder, Fr. Rodrigo, had been murdered. *Gami Seva Sevana* is a rural service centre related to the Christian Workers' Fellowship. *Satyodaya* specialises in political and community-building awareness work. *Devasarana* is now a community devoted to dialogue and community organisation especially with peasant farmers. *Devasarana* is an interesting example of a Basic Human Community. It began in 1957 as an Ashram community led by Anglican priest Johan Devananda. It evolved into a community promoting justice and peace along with the rural peasants. Community members include

to evangelical poverty in solidarity with non-Christians amounts to living a common denominator between the religions. Joining with the poor and incorporating them in the story of God's plan to transform this world into a new heaven and a new earth, reveals something unique about the Christian message. The paradox is that often it is the non-Christians who realise that uniqueness. Pieris gives the example of how a Buddhist Marxist who had laboured with workers of a sugar factory and who «had learned from the "little ones" of the earth their language of liberation» was able to capture the liberative essence of the gospel for his Christian colleagues¹⁰⁰. Pieris also provides intriguing descriptions of the way Buddhist artists have used their own experience and the Buddhist cultural idiom to express their understanding of the uniqueness of Christ.

2.4 *The Interpretative/Theological Level*

The third level of approach to religion is the interpretative level where philosophical, exegetical, and theological skills are operative. This is the level where Pieris treats the Buddha and the Christ. Jesus Christ as savior is part of the Christian *kerygma*. In orthodox Theravāda Buddhism, the Buddha is not regarded as a savior. His soteriological role lies in his discovering and preaching the *dhamma* — the eternal salvific truth that preexists him, and to his forming the *sangha* or community¹⁰¹. Since both

Christians, Buddhists and Hindus. The «New World Liturgy» was developed there, drawing on the resources of the major religions and ideologies, on the common theme of development-justice-liberation. Because it has tried to be open to different races and ideologies the centre has been the target of both government forces and the military arm of the People's Liberation Front. A book produced for the 30th anniversary of the community concludes as follows: «In the common search for a new spirituality with Buddhists, secular humanists and Marxists, theists must be prepared to shed, or at least be detached enough to re-interpret certain transcendental theological forms and concepts which are not of the essence of dharma or doctrine. But, always, there must be unrelenting search for the truth — not only "beyond-the-beyond" but "beyond in the midst" — "ever further beyond and ever deeper within!" And always, it must be through "praxis", action-reflection and living dialogue» (Y. DEVANANDA, *Living Dialogue*, 127). Also see, Y. DEVANANDA – S. FERNANDO, «Dialogue in the Context of Development».

¹⁰⁰ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 113.

¹⁰¹ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 128. In some forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism the Buddha became the Savior who grants the grace of salvation to those who invoke him in faith.

the Buddha and the Christ, in their own way, play a soteriological role in the lives of their followers, are both agents of divine revelation?

In facing this question, Pieris compares the Buddhist and Christian understanding of truth and path (*dharmallogos*, and *mārgalhodos*)¹⁰². Pieris claims that these terms refer to an underlying mediating reality which is universal, unlike «titles» such as «Christ» or «Buddha». Pieris' distinction between the title and mediating reality is a significant point to be investigated further in a later section. At this stage it may be seen that Pieris wishes to interpret the Buddha and the Christ in terms of the soteriological reality that was operative in them. *Dharma* and *logos* refer to the one salvific «Word» which underlies both terms. *Mārga* and *hodos* are attempts to refer to the one path of liberation/salvation. The Buddha seated under the tree of gnosis is complemented by Jesus on the tree of agape¹⁰³. From a Christian perspective, both *logos* and *hodos* are found in the *via crucis*: in Jesus' renunciation (his struggle *to be* poor), and in his denunciation (his struggle *for* the poor). The task of the Christian is to follow Jesus who was poor then, and to serve Christ who is in the poor now. In this way, the path that Jesus revealed is authenticated in transforming praxis showing that the medium of salvation is operative in the story of Jesus that continues in his followers¹⁰⁴.

Christian faith maintains that the historical Christ-event made a definitive difference in the history of salvation. Jesus Christ himself completes the work of revelation and accomplishes the work of salvation (*DV* 4). Considering the explanation of Jesus' soteriological role above, is Pieris putting Jesus Christ on par with the Buddha as one who discovered and preached the truth that pre-existed him, and as one who showed the path to liberation/salvation? Does this imply that Jesus Christ is not necessarily a

¹⁰² «Salvation implies a paradox: the inaccessible “beyond” (source) becomes one's salvific “within” (force), and the incomprehensible comes within the grasp of human insight. This is possible only because the Absolute contains within its own bosom a *mediatory* and *revelatory self-expression*, an *accessible dimension*: the *dharmallogos*. The transhuman horizon stops receding only because there is a path (*mārga/hodos*) leading toward it. For in the beginning was the Word by which Absolute Silence came to be *heard*; and the Icon by which the Invisible was brought within our *sight!*» (emphasis as in the original); («Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 132).

¹⁰³ See «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 134. A complementary view of Buddhist liberation/salvation may be found in the doctoral thesis of Fr. Michael Rodrigo (see *Fr. Mike and His Thought. Logos* 27 [September 1988] 51-68).

¹⁰⁴ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 134.

constituent part of the mystery of salvation? In order to understand what Pieris is saying it is necessary to study more closely how his christology has developed.

3. Developments in Pieris' Christology

It is now twenty-five years since Pieris' first major theological article: «The Church, the Kingdom, and the Other Religions». Naturally his ideas have developed and matured since then. This includes his understanding of the meaning of Jesus Christ, who in *Dei verbum* 2, is called «the fullness of all revelation». For clarity this investigation of Pieris' christology will distinguish five «moments» in the development of his understanding of Jesus Christ. These should not be taken as strict divisions but as successive waves of interest in the development of his thinking.

3.1 *Christ as Sacrament*

In the first moment, in the early 1970s, the emphasis is on Christ and there is little attention given to the historical Jesus. For example, Pieris writes that the gospels record «Christ's» preaching¹⁰⁵. Pieris appears to support a sacramental model of Christ similar to that found in Vatican II teaching (e.g., *LG* 5-8). Taking the Council teaching to its logical conclusion, he says that the kingdom is God's saving presence operating through Christ everywhere and at all times. Thus, making a born Hindu a better Hindu amounts to making that person a «Christian» because by participating in their own religion in a genuine search for salvation, they are participating in the kingdom of God's saving presence which operates through Christ¹⁰⁶.

At the end of the 1970s Pieris was following a similar line: there is only one order in the world and that is the order of Christ¹⁰⁷. However he comments on the inadequacy of the fulfilment theory of religions which was one of the principal theories promoted at the time of the Council. He points out that it is not so much that other religions find fulfilment in the church, but rather that Christ fulfills the church and along with it, all

¹⁰⁵ «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 3.

¹⁰⁶ «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 5. In this article, Pieris refers in a positive way to the expression «anonymous Christianity» from Karl Rahner.

¹⁰⁷ A. PIERIS, «Western Christianity» (1980d) *LMW*, 33.

religions¹⁰⁸. Again the implication is that helping Buddhists to become better Buddhists is a way of furthering the kingdom of God since the universal thrust of the kingdom, preached by Christ, is already operating in them¹⁰⁹.

3.2 *Human Dimension of Christ*

In the first moment, Jesus of Nazareth did not figure much in Pieris' writing. In the second moment, the confrontation with Latin American liberation theology made a difference. Liberation theology puts one in touch with a new perspective on Christ as victim: hungry, thirsty, sick, and homeless¹¹⁰. At the same time there is a renewed interest in the humanity of the historical Jesus, «the incarnate Christ of history»¹¹¹. While Pieris criticised Latin American liberation theology as being too Western, yet he appreciated its methodology as being more relevant for Asia than that of classic Western theology. This meant a new interest in the importance of knowing «Jesus the truth by following Jesus the way»¹¹². God in Jesus the Son has gathered «as God's body» a new people comprising the poor by option who are the followers of Jesus, and the poor by birth who are the proxies of Christ. According to Pieris, Christian spirituality must always preserve the link between the struggle *to be* poor and the struggle *for* the poor. Not to make the link would be to «fail to proclaim Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ and the Lord of history»¹¹³.

One might expect Pieris to use the expression «Christ's body» or even «Jesus' body» (in a sacramental sense), but as noted above, he refers to «God's body». This is apparently to emphasise his point that we are united

¹⁰⁸ «Western Christianity» (1980d) *LMW*, 33.

¹⁰⁹ «Western Christianity» (1980d) *LMW*, 34.

¹¹⁰ «Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective» (1983f) 13-14. Pieris refers not only to Mt 25, but gives many other references: Christ the laborer's son (Mt 13,55), Christ without a place to be born (Lk 2,7), to lay his head (Mt 8,20), or to be buried (Mt 27,60), Christ who was a threat to Herod's security and so hunted down by him (Mt 2,13), Christ calumniated before the court of law (Lk 23,1-8), Christ in chains in the praetorium (Mk 15,16), Christ tortured by the army (Mt 27,26), Christ a criminal among criminals (Lk 23,39), Christ the victim of priestly fanaticism and political opportunism (Mt 27,11-23), Christ the unwanted leader (Jn 19,14-15).

¹¹¹ «Spirituality in a Liberative Pers'ctive» (1983f) 12.

¹¹² «Towards an Asian Theology» (1979c) *ATL*, 82.

¹¹³ «Buddhism as a Challenge» (1986a) *LMW*, 88.

with God to the degree that our poverty drives us to appropriate God's concern for the poor. This concern is expressed in God's covenant with the poor in which God «assumes the struggle of the poor as God's own so that it becomes the divine struggle for the poor»¹¹⁴.

3.3 *Cosmic Dimension of Christ*

In the third moment, in the latter part of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Christ assumes renewed importance in a wider, cosmic sense. Pieris says that we (humanity) are being changed gradually into the body of Christ by the creative power of the Spirit¹¹⁵. He refers to the cyclic nature of history and the rhythm of the «cosmic dance» in an attempt to explain the active presence of the Spirit in history and the position of Christ at the centre¹¹⁶. He employs expressions such as «christogenesis», and «the cosmic-human-divine continuum called Christ»¹¹⁷.

The renewed focus on Christ does not mean that Jesus is ignored. Pieris points out that Jesus is wholly Christ (*totus Christus*) but not yet the whole of Christ (*totum Christi*). Raimundo Panikkar used a similar expression in his book *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*¹¹⁸. For Panikkar, the

¹¹⁴ A. PIERIS, «To be Poor?» (1984b) *ATL*, 23. Later Pieris would say that Jesus is the irrevocable pact between God and the poor (see «An Asian Paradigm» [1993d] 133).

¹¹⁵ A. PIERIS, «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 35.

¹¹⁶ «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 39.

¹¹⁷ «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 36. The influence of Teilhard de Chardin is obvious. Elsewhere Pieris refers to Teilhard de Chardin as follows: «Neither Christianity in its present form nor technocracy can put us in touch with that cosmic-human-divine continuum that St. Paul called "Christ", the salvific ethos, the *milieu divin* that the *Homo religiosus* instinctively seeks as a plant seeks water and light. Was it not such a Christ that Teilhard de Chardin [...] restored to the Christian West after he had integrated into his own "Occidental" conscience the gnostic perceptiveness of the East?» («East in the West» [1988b] *LMW*, 15-16).

¹¹⁸ R. PANIKKAR, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, 14. There are certain parallels between Pieris' reference to Christ and the Word, and R. Panikkar's reference to Christ and the Mystery. Panikkar says that «Jesus is the Christ» is not the same as «the Christ is Jesus». Similarly «Christ is the Lord» cannot be simply reversed. One can say that Christ is Jesus but not «is only» Jesus. There is identification but not identity (*Ibid.*, 14). Also Panikkar says, «In this book Christ stands for that centre of reality, that crystallization-point around which the human, the divine and the material can grow. Rāma may be another such name, or Krishna, or (as I maintain) Ívara, or Purusha, or even Humanity» (*Ibid.*, 27). Again: «The Mystery cannot be totally identified with

identification (but not identity) of Jesus with Christ, leaves open the possibility of other manifestations of Christ. Pieris is making a different point, for he uses the expression «not yet», implying that one day this will be accomplished «when all are christified in him»¹¹⁹. «Jesus has died, Jesus is risen, but Christ will come again when we have died and risen with him»¹²⁰.

3.4 *Asian Christ*

In a recent article entitled, «Does Christ Have a Place in Asia?» Pieris illustrates the «Asian Christ» with the images of four categories of Asians who can reveal the Asian features of Christ¹²¹. The four are: the «Broken Christ» of Indian outcasts who find their identity in brokenness rather than christianness; the «*han*-ridden body» of the Korean Christ of Minjung theology; the «breast-feeding *Christa*» of Asian womanhood; and the «Third World Christ» of Asia. The majority of those who form the body of the Asian Christ are non-Christian.

With this focus on the «non-Christian Christ», one witnesses an approach to christology rather different from that of Pieris' early writings. He admits that «Christ» is a compendious title which «has absorbed all that we believers have attributed to Jesus ever since the Easter experience»¹²². He then offers his own contribution explaining that «Jesus cannot grow to the full stature of Christ unless all his members (most of whom are non-Christians) together with the cosmos struggle like him, even unto death, in ushering in God's reign on earth»¹²³. The reference to Jesus growing to «the full stature of Christ» is not referring simply to the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is identified with suffering humanity. Thus Jesus is not fully risen while humanity which forms his body-members suffer. Christ will be fully risen when all of humanity is liberated, that is, when the «not

Christ. Christ is but one aspect of the Mystery as a whole, even though he is *the Way* when we are on that way» (*Ibid.*, 24-25).

¹¹⁹ «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 36.

¹²⁰ «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 37.

¹²¹ See «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a).

¹²² «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 42. Pieris goes on to illustrate how the term «Christ», as God's salvific presence in history, overlaps with the name of the Trinity; as the Risen Jesus bound to his earthly body, is the church; in the lives of the victims of human neglect, is also the eschatological judge of nations.

¹²³ «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 43.

yet» culminates in the realisation of God's reign. For the present it is a matter of discovering the Christhood of the Asian poor who like Jesus, have no decent place to be born (Lk 2,7), no reputable place to live and work (Jn 1,46), and no honourable place to die (Lk 23,23)¹²⁴. Hence Pieris' startling conclusion that Christ is the one who has no place in Asia¹²⁵.

The identification of Jesus with suffering humanity today comes as a result of Pieris' fundamental belief in the efficacy of the incarnation. Pieris' understanding of the incarnation will be addressed in greater depth in a later section; however his basic view is that through the incarnation Jesus and the oppressed are united in a «covenanted togetherness». Telling the story of Jesus and getting involved in it as an actor (witnessing to its truth with our lives) means becoming involved with those struggling to live in the face of injustice and death. Such involvement will usually result in the exercise of political power and religious authority against the involved storyteller. Precisely at this moment the story begins to make sense and one discovers that Jesus is still suffering and dying in those living out the paschal mystery today¹²⁶.

3.5 *Christ and the Word*

A fifth moment appears in Pieris' most recent work. The Word has always had a certain fascination for Pieris. As early as 1968 he was referring to «the signs of the time» as God's word addressed especially to the Church¹²⁷. Recently Pieris has related Jesus Christ to the Spirit and the Word in a rather new way. He says that our only link to the Ultimate is the Word, which is what the «Unspoken Speaker» (*pneuma*) utters about the «Unspeakable One» (*Theos*). This is the «illuminating word of Revelation, the sure means of Salvation and the sole path to transformation: *Logos/Dabar/Hodos/Marga/Tao/Dharma/Vac*»¹²⁸. Jesus Christ is he whom Christians recognise as the Word that has been seen, heard, and touched with human senses¹²⁹. In another place Pieris refers to the word of revelation which is the medium of salvation and the path to intimacy with

¹²⁴ «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 44.

¹²⁵ «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 43.

¹²⁶ «Evangelization and Our Nation» (1993b) 10.

¹²⁷ A. PIERIS, «Liturgy and the New Breed» (1968b) 43.

¹²⁸ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60.

¹²⁹ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60.

the Ultimate¹³⁰. From this perspective Jesus is «the enfleshed historical manifestation of this word-medium-path»¹³¹.

Pieris appears to be making two different points here. On the one hand he is concerned about the non-Christian Christ of Asia, that is, the Asian body of Christ who is «the vast suffering peoples of Asia»¹³². They are proxies of Christ because in their oppression they live out the paschal mystery. On the other hand, he stresses that it is the word-medium-path that saves, not the name one gives to it¹³³. It has been recognised by various names: *Dharma*, *Mārga*, *Tao*, etc¹³⁴. He adds, «Christ is the name we give to a UNIVERSAL word not unknown to our people»¹³⁵. The first point stresses the universality of Christ (Christian and non-Christian). The second, stresses the universality of the Word and leaves open the possibility of giving a name other than Christ to the saving reality. The two points are related but different, since Pieris is not equating the *dharma* with (the non-Christian) Christ.

4. Jesus Christ and Revelation

The survey of Pieris' Christology in the previous sections discloses substantial developments in Pieris' work over a twenty-five year period. This section will review the christological developments from the perspective of revelation. With his understanding of revelation clarified, it will be possible to delve deeper into the theology of the Word which appears in his latest work.

As noted above, in his early writings Pieris appears to follow the fundamental Vatican II teaching on Christ as sacrament based on a descending christology. God's revelation and salvation come to us through Jesus Christ who in the incarnation accomplished salvation and completed revelation. Human nature is fulfilled in the «hypostatic union»¹³⁶. However, within the context of a developing liberation theology, there was a move to

¹³⁰ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 71.

¹³¹ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 72.

¹³² «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 61. Obviously referring to the encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, Pieris says that the church is talking loud and irritatingly to the non-Christians to accept Christ. But which Christ? (*Ibid.* [1994b] 66).

¹³³ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 72.

¹³⁴ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 71.

¹³⁵ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 67.

¹³⁶ «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 4.

an ascending christology with its focus on Jesus' earthly life and work. Revelation comes through human history and is manifest in a special way in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In both approaches the soteriological model remains christocentric and the Chalcedonian paradigm of the incarnation is implied.

Then comes a development with: *Jesus est totus Christus, non totum Christi*. A way is opened to develop the mystery of Christ beyond the incarnation in Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth is «already» but in another sense Jesus is «not yet» because as the suffering poor living out the *via crucis* Jesus is still growing into Christ. The fullness of Christ is seen as the cosmos and the whole of humanity fully redeemed. The fullness of revelation is found in Christ, but the fullness of Christ lies in the future. So revelation too is still in a process of becoming, along with Christ. While the language is innovative, the basic soteriological model is still christocentric.

Pieris then turned to a more socially compelling reading of the incarnation. It appeared to him that Chalcedonian categories have resulted in «a Word that is incarnate primarily in Greek philosophy and anthropology»¹³⁷. The Chalcedonian doctrine was a philosophical solution to a pseudo-problem about two separate realities called the divine and the human. What if the separation was not considered a problem? Pieris sought ways to express the universal dimension of the incarnation in terms of becoming fully human. He tried linking the incarnation and God's reign in terms of what he calls the *humanum*¹³⁸. The *humanum* is the «divine», or the ultimate horizon of our striving to be fully human¹³⁹. Though he does

¹³⁷ Letter from Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 Nov 1994.

¹³⁸ The *humanum* is «the ultimate horizon of our societal strivings; our absolute future (total liberation) which draws us from a purely "hominial" seed-stage to the full flowering of a "humanised" cosmos, that is to say the birth of the cosmic wo/man» («The Three Ingredients» [1992a] 74). In another place Pieris writes: «The *humanum* is also that which is anticipated in any "Easter Person" [a Christian who lives the life of the Risen One] or in a "Nirvanic Person" [a Buddhist who has followed the path of the Awakened One] and their equivalents in other religions» («Woman and Religion» [1992b] 180).

¹³⁹ Pieris says that our growth towards the *humanum* is an «eccentric» movement because it lies outside our «hominial» circumference, that is, beyond the realm of humankind as an unredeemed rational animal. «Jesus is God's eccentricity» («The Three Ingredients» [1992a] 74). In Jesus we all become human by being «eccentric», that is, by leaving aside the dehumanising «hominised beast» and by striving to make God our human centre (*Ibid.*). Jesus is the nucleus of the *humanum*, ever growing towards the

not refer to revelation in relation to the *humanum* Pieris is arguing against secularism and for a salvific horizon whereby the human can transcend the cosmos while remaining within it. In this context, revelation would be the source of our consciousness of a «beyond» and of the possibility of liberation.

In an attempt to develop this more universal understanding of revelation Pieris looks to the Word, which was always heard and known in history before it was identified by Christians in Jesus. The Word, which is the medium of revelation is present even to those who have not heard about Jesus. In an effort to reconcile such a universal understanding of revelation with a christocentric soteriology some have developed inclusivists theories like Karl Rahner's «anonymous Christianity». However Pieris says he is embarrassed when asked if he is an inclusivist or a pluralist because he is adopting a paradigm in which such categories do not make sense¹⁴⁰. In order to see what Pieris means it is necessary to study more closely his understanding of the Word.

4.1 *The Illuminating Word of Revelation*

In one of his most recent publications Pieris declares: «All discourse about the unspeakable One is the revelatory word uttered by the unspoken speaker»¹⁴¹. What does he mean by this rather abstract statement? The different elements in the sentence will be taken in turn. In order to see how Pieris' idea compares with official Catholic teaching, reference will be made to *Dei verbum 2*.

Dei verbum 2 uses the visual image of God being «invisible». Pieris prefers the auditory image of discourse which emerges from silence¹⁴². For

fullness of Christ. So following Jesus the man in his eccentricity, «we, together with all creation, are becoming in him and with him the epiphany of full humanity». Therefore to strive towards the *humanum* is to play our part in christogenesis (*Ibid.*). Pieris often refers to Teilhard de Chardin, for example: «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 3, 5, 7; «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 38. He says, «Teilhard is an author I treasured as a source of inspiration» (letter from Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 May 1994).

¹⁴⁰ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 130.

¹⁴¹ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 71.

¹⁴² Pieris characterises Christianity as a religion of the word and Buddhism as a way of silence (see «Doctrinal, Legal, and Cultural Factors» [1978b] *LMW*, 108). R. Panikkar writes: «Silence is the *locus* of God» (R. PANIKKAR, *The Silence of God*, 171). Pieris does not enter into Panikkar's argument that according to the Buddha, God's silence is

Pieris, a truly Asian theology should be characterised by harmony between word and silence. «Silence is the word unspoken and the word is silence heard»¹⁴³. This is not a silence of absence because the Word springs from silence and leads to silence through the eternal energy of the Spirit. For Pieris, revelation which is the discourse of the Spirit «blows all words towards the mystery of ultimate silence»¹⁴⁴.

The «unspeakable One»: *Theos*, or God in the Christian context, is the ultimate Truth and the ultimate Goal. Pieris tries to avoid theistic terminology since for Buddhists the ultimate Truth cannot be conceived in personalist terms¹⁴⁵. While Christians normally use terms such as «God» for the ultimate Truth/Goal, Buddhists refer to the *dhamma* as the «salvific truth and *nibbāna* as the ultimate goal»¹⁴⁶. As noted previously, sometimes Pieris uses the term *humanum* as a neutral term to refer to our final destiny or the ultimate horizon of our striving to be fully human. In christocentric terms, the *humanum*, like the reign of God, serves as the image for the new dimension when humankind will discover that its true destiny/goal is liberation in Christ¹⁴⁷. *Dei verbum* 2 refers to the revelation of truth about God and about the salvation of humankind, in Christ who is both the mediator and fullness of revelation. In his recent work, Pieris differs somewhat because he relegates Christ to the «name» of the Word of revelation that mediates salvation¹⁴⁸.

a silence of being.

¹⁴³ «Western Christianity» (1980d) *LMW*, 41.

¹⁴⁴ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 72.

¹⁴⁵ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 117.

¹⁴⁶ Pieris glosses the term *dhamma* as «salvific truth» in the glossary of *LMW*. The reference to *nibbāna* as the ultimate goal may be found in «Buddhism as Doctrine» (1973a) *LMW*, 55.

¹⁴⁷ See Pieris' response to Q. 5 in appendix II. In the context of an article on religious life Pieris writes as follows: «In our journey we swerve from right to left, but the deviations are not dangerous if we correct and re-correct our path with the aid of the information ever communicated to us from the One Who is the sole source of our life, the Fount of our freedom, the Goal of our Long March: Yahweh, who gathers all of us within herself as a resurgent cosmos, as a human bundle of ecstatic intimacy for which we already have a name: "Christ"» («The Three Ingredients» [1992a] 121). He uses the term «information» to harmonise with a prior example of a rocket zeroing in on its target. However, it is also an image for on-going revelation.

¹⁴⁸ «Christ is the name we give to a UNIVERSAL word not unknown to our people» («Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 67).

The «unspoken speaker» is Pieris' term for *pneuma* or the Spirit. *Dei verbum 2* refers to the holy Spirit (along with Christ, the Word made flesh) as being instrumental in bringing about communion with God which is the purpose of God's revelation. Pieris emphasises the power of the Spirit in our being transformed into the body of Christ¹⁴⁹. He used to make the creative word the subject of this transformation¹⁵⁰. However in his latest work Pieris adopts what he calls a «pneumatological approach» in which the Spirit is the subject of all discourse including the word of revelation. Rather than God's Word made flesh being the fullness of God's revelation, as taught in *Dei verbum 2*, Pieris emphasises the eternal word «which is the great discourse of the Spirit heard and recognised by every person who walks with the same Spirit»¹⁵¹. The Spirit here is not identified as the Spirit of Christ.

Thus the revelatory Word is not limited to the «Word made flesh». Pieris gives examples from the Christian tradition and the traditions of other religions: *logos/dabar/hodos/mārga/tao/dharma/vāc*. He stresses that the Word of revelation is also the medium of salvation and the path to intimacy with the Ultimate. Thus the eternal Word is assigned the task of word-medium-path, traditionally attributed to Christ. For Pieris, the word-medium-path is too profound to be exhausted by one single utterance. The Word of revelation is present wherever and whenever there is evidence of the Spirit speaking in non-persons covenanted with God. Sometimes this will be seen as the utterance of Jesus. At other times it will be recognised as *dharma, mārga, tao* etc.

From this perspective the revelatory Word is still being formed as the Spirit speaks in God and in people in history. Pieris says that it is

¹⁴⁹ «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 35.

¹⁵⁰ The Word as subject can be seen in expressions such as the following: «[...] that creative word which calls down the Spirit can be uttered by the human heart to change all cosmic dust into the body of Christ» («The Spirit Dimension» [1988f] 35). Prior to 1994 Pieris normally linked the Spirit to Jesus; for example, he refers to christologies «conceived of the Spirit of Jesus» («Christology in Asia» [1989b] 164). Also he tells of Jesus revealing himself in the *kenosis* of the cross, «as the giver of the Spirit» (A. PIERIS, «The Ignatian Exercises» [1990a] 111). The two modes are not in conflict if the imagery is taken into account. In speech, the word emits breath in as much as the breath emits the word. Thus the Spirit is as much the giver of the word as the word is the giver of the spirit (from a letter by Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 12 January 1995).

¹⁵¹ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60.

«something/someone growing»¹⁵². This emphasis on revelation through the discourse of the unspoken speaker today requires Pieris to reformulate his understanding of Jesus Christ. The attempted reformulation leaves room for further clarification¹⁵³. It seems that what Pieris wants to say is that non-Christian Asians through their openness to the Spirit, can help all people to come to a new appreciation of what God is saying and doing today in the on-going mystery of salvation. This opinion does not conflict with the spirit of Vatican II, with its positive attitude to other religious traditions¹⁵⁴. Perhaps they can teach Christians something of the mystery of Christ¹⁵⁵. However such an affirmation needs also to be harmonised with the insistence of the Council that Christ is the primordial sacrament of the encounter with God, and that through his incarnation the Son of God united himself in some sense with every human being (*GS* 22). While not denying the christocentric model, Pieris' emphasis on the Spirit and the saving Word appears to be introducing a logocentric model of salvation. The question for

¹⁵² «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 71. Pieris writes: «It [the Word] still makes sense to the simple and wise Asians who have *inner affinity with the universal Spirit* that speaks in all of us. Such people hear the Word in the Spirit and are inspired to give It back to us in its new found fullness» (*Ibid.*, 64-65).

¹⁵³ For example Pieris writes: «Jesus as the discourse of the Spirit, is not a polished sentence that has dropped from the sky; it is a word that grows in history as it receives meaning from other words and gives meaning to them, until it becomes woven into one coherent discourse together with others, a communication through which the Ultimacy of the Unspeaking One and the intimacy of the Unspoken Speaker become reconciled. To reach the end of that process, the church has to monitor with all Asians of goodwill, the growth of the Word whom we have recognised in Jesus. The Spirit is this incessant and accumulative process of salvific communication by which the Word (Jesus) is ever growing towards its final and all comprehensive expression: The Total Christ, as Christians call It» («Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 71).

¹⁵⁴ The Second Vatican Council did not explicitly express the salvific value of other religious traditions for their members. However it did admit the «secret presence of God» in «the truth and grace» to be found among peoples beyond the church (*AG* 9). The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, are more explicit when they say that the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ reaches people of other religions «in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions» (PCID – CEvP, *Dialogue and Proclamation* 29).

¹⁵⁵ «Other religions are mediators of divine grace, if not in the same manner: In them, too, Christ is present» (J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 151).

Christian theology is whether the revelatory word is present to other religions through the Spirit, independently of Jesus Christ¹⁵⁶.

4.2 Logos and Dharma

Where, concretely, is the revelatory word to be found in a religion such as Buddhism? Pieris says that the word-medium-path of salvation has been available to all people and has been recognised as *dharma*, *mārga*, etc. If one admits the presence of the *logos* beyond the Christian and Jewish traditions, does it act elsewhere in the same fashion¹⁵⁷. Pieris notes that the Absolute contains within itself a mediatory and revelatory self-expression which he refers to as the *dharma/logos*.¹⁵⁸ What is the relation between the Christian understanding of revelation and the Buddhist concept of *dharma*¹⁵⁹?

¹⁵⁶ The issue is similar to that of whether Jesus is only one particular historical manifestation of the Christic mystery, and whether other mediations of salvation are possible with no relationship to the mystery of Christ. For discussion on these points, see J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 183-190. Dupuis quotes R. Smet: «The Christian can perfectly well admit a presence of the *Logos* outside of the Christian and Jewish traditions, but is not disposed to believe that the *Logos* acts elsewhere in identical fashion» (*Ibid.*, 188).

¹⁵⁷ This is a debatable issue. In 1982, Avery Dulles wrote: «On the other hand, it need not be denied that the eternal Logos could manifest itself to other peoples through other religious symbols. Raimundo Panikkar, who proposes a “universal Christology”, stands in continuity with a long Christian tradition of Logos-theology that goes back as far as Justin Martyr. On Christian grounds, it may be held that the divine person who appears in Jesus is not exhausted by that historical appearance. The symbols and myths of other religions may point to the one whom Christians recognise as the Christ» (A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, 190). A decade later, Dulles noted that the debate is still in process and quotes Cardinal Tomko who said that the idea that «the Logos can appear in other religions and be hidden in other historical figures», so that the founders of other religions might be called «saviors in whom the infinite mystery of God is at work or is historically incarnated» is a deviation (ID., *Assurance*, 269). Cardinal Tomko is quoted from *Origins* 20.46 (1991) 754.

¹⁵⁸ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 132.

¹⁵⁹ A pamphlet by the Christian Workers' Fellowship links the Word and *dharma* as follows: «This dynamic action [of Christ in our world] is described in St. John's Gospel as the “Logos” (i.e. “Word” in John 1,1-3, 14), which term has been rightly rendered in the new Sinhala (Sri Lankan) and Burmese Bible translations as “Dharma” personalised» (CWF, *For a Real Sri Lankan Church*, 15). For a contemporary account

In his book *Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism*, Peter Masefield takes up the matter of the Buddha's message¹⁶⁰. He claims that the *dhamma* was originally conceived and experienced as an inner sound. For example, he refers to Andrew Rawlinson who maintains that the original message of the Lotus Sūtra was not simply a message apprehended intellectually, but an inner transcendental entity manifesting itself, through the Buddha, as sound¹⁶¹. Masefield claims that if the initial entrance upon the «path» is dependent, not on one's own efforts, but on the act of hearing the Buddha, then originally Buddhism had more to do with «grace» than self-development, and one is dealing with something much closer to Christian revelation than would normally be held¹⁶².

This is not the place to pass judgement on Masefield's theory. However he does help highlight an important dimension of *dhamma*, that is, its status as pre-existent truth. The Buddha himself sought *dhamma*, honoured *dhamma*, and listened to it¹⁶³. Initially the Buddha discovered *dhamma*, and spoke about it¹⁶⁴. The account of the Buddha's experience has been passed down through the centuries and subsequently Buddhists have formulated *dhamma* into a body of doctrine. However *dhamma* as the «ninefold *dhamma* that transcends the world» (*navavidhalokuttaradhamma*) involves much more than doctrine¹⁶⁵. In this understanding *dhamma* has a transcendent, timeless dimension. *Dhamma* in the form of the Buddha's teachings is in time. *Dhamma* in the form of practice is also in time in the sense that it is a way of life. However *dhamma* as attainment and penetration, is where one is in the world but not limited by the world, and *dhamma* as *nibbāna* is outside time¹⁶⁶.

With his interest in Buddhism and the Word, one might expect Pieris to develop the possibilities of the *dhamma*, since it plays such a prominent part in Theravāda soteriology. Pieris agrees that salvation is possible

of *dharma*, see M. PALIHAWADANA, «*Dhamma* Today and Tomorrow», 129-147.

¹⁶⁰ P. MASEFIELD, *Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism*.

¹⁶¹ See P. HARRISON, «Buddhism», 259. Harrison notes how the insight came from Andrew Rawlinson's work on the *Saddharmapundarikasūtra*.

¹⁶² P. MASEFIELD, *Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism*, 136.

¹⁶³ J.R. CARTER, *Dhamma*, 147.

¹⁶⁴ Pieris notes how Mahāyāna Buddhism has equated Buddha with *Dharma* similar to the way Jesus of Nazareth was recognised as the pre-existent *Logos* (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 126).

¹⁶⁵ J.R. CARTER, *Dhamma*, 116.

¹⁶⁶ J.R. CARTER, *Dhamma*, 165-166.

through hearing, practicing, and realising *dhamma*, and that so long as one does not try to force the Buddhist concept into a Christian framework, *dhamma* as eternal truth can be regarded as a form of revelation¹⁶⁷. As pre-existent truth, *dhamma* could be considered homologous to *logos*. However Pieris gives little time to the *dhamma*¹⁶⁸. This is because he is not greatly concerned with doctrinal matters, and also, more importantly, because his principal interest lies, not in projecting a Christian concept like revelation onto Buddhism, but the contrary: in investigating what Asian religiosity can say to Christian life. The issue is not whether Christ is present anonymously in Buddhism, rather, how the universal Word of the Spirit, operating in both Buddhism and Christianity, draws all people towards final liberation¹⁶⁹.

4.3 *Revelation as Language of the Universal Spirit*

Pieris points out how the Word still speaks in both Christians and non-Christians who have an inner affinity with the universal Spirit¹⁷⁰. If this is so, how does this occur in Buddhism? Could one say that the Spirit is at work in what Buddhists call enlightenment?

Pieris says that there is a close relationship between the experience of enlightenment from a gnostic perspective and the experience of ultimate Reality or God from the agapeic point of view¹⁷¹. The one uses the language of silence, the other prefers the language of communication or the

¹⁶⁷ See J.R. CARTER, *Dhamma*, 153. Also see Pieris' response to Q. 1 in appendix II. Clearly there are differences from the Christian understanding of revelation. Christ, the *Logos* incarnate is portrayed as the life, the truth, and the way. The Buddha, on the contrary, is clearly to be distinguished from *dhamma*, which he discovered and preached. Western scholars sometimes point to the integral relation between the Buddha and *dhamma*, quoting the passage, «He who sees *dhamma* sees me» (J.R. CARTER, *Dhamma*, 174).

¹⁶⁸ Pieris mentions the *dhamma* briefly in *LMW*, 48, 62, 74. He refers to the encounter between gospel and *dharma* in *LMW*, 84, 86. He relates *dabar* and *dharma* in *LMW*, 103, 128, 131.

¹⁶⁹ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 132.

¹⁷⁰ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 71. Note the christocentric stance of *Gaudium et spes* 22: «Since Christ died for everyone, and since the ultimate calling of each of us comes from God and is therefore a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God».

¹⁷¹ A. PIERIS, «God-Talk» (1975b) 122.

word¹⁷². From a Christian perspective they are languages that the same divine Spirit speaks alternately in each one of us¹⁷³.

Does this mean that these two experiences, while expressed in different languages, are essentially the same experience? Pieris implies that they are different experiences with a similar (salvific) meaning¹⁷⁴. Nevertheless there are many similarities between the two experiences. For the Buddhist, the experience of *nirvāna* is never produced. It is «realised». Before the realisation of *nirvāna* there is a blank phase called *nirodha-samāpatti* so that *nirvāna* implies a saltus from the phenomenal to the transphenomenal. Likewise, for the Christian, the saltus which guarantees the absolute character of the ultimate Truth is experienced as a free initiative of the saving Truth which manifests itself to the seeker. Pieris notes that this free self-gift or illumination is often called «grace»¹⁷⁵. Thus, according to Pieris, «what is “enlightenment” from the gnostic point of view, is “revelation” from the agapeic point of view»¹⁷⁶.

Is the Spirit active in the gnostic experience of the Buddhists? Reference has already been made to the salvific significance of the *dhamma*. Pieris includes «dharma» as an example of the word of revelation and salvation¹⁷⁷. Therefore *Dhamma* could be one example of the discourse of the Spirit.

However Pieris does not concentrate on *dhamma* because he has a much broader vision of the revelatory action of the Spirit¹⁷⁸. Pieris holds that the core experience of all religions is a liberative one and that «the religious

¹⁷² «God-Talk» (1975b) 122.

¹⁷³ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 111.

¹⁷⁴ Pieris says that there is «an indefinable contrast» between the experiences, symbolised by the trees used in both traditions. The tree beneath which the Indian mystic sits bears the fruit of wisdom; the tree upon which the Hebrew prophet hangs bares the cost of love (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 111).

¹⁷⁵ «God-Talk» (1975b) 122.

¹⁷⁶ «God-Talk» (1975b) 122.

¹⁷⁷ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60.

¹⁷⁸ Pieris tries to take a point of view which appreciates Buddhism in its own terms. Many theological studies view Buddhism from within a Christian stance. A good example is the study of Peggy Starkey who claims that other religions contain «truth» to the extent that they contain revelation that requires a human response of agape toward other human beings. She says that in Buddhism, actions conveyed by the terms *mettā*, *karuṇā* and *mudita* are expressions of the action Christians call *agape*. So with such evidence she is able to say that Buddhism contains truth (see P. STARKEY, «Agape»).

instinct should be defined as a revolutionary urge»¹⁷⁹. Thus all religions should be judged in terms of their potential for liberative transformation¹⁸⁰. In Asia, religion must be seen in the context of both religiousness and poverty. To the extent that Buddhist gnosis contributes to integral human liberation, it is participating in the reality of salvation, present and operative in history in response to the impetus of the Spirit. Buddhism teaches us that the truth sets us free from being tied to things that cannot give us freedom¹⁸¹. Buddhism also provides a model of religious socialism in which one may experience the «freedom that comes from poverty»¹⁸². Moreover, popular Buddhism provides a locus for the liberative dimension of cosmic religiosity.

Pieris places particular importance on the way cosmic religiosity contributes to the liberating potential of Asian religion. Cosmic religiosity offers a balance to some forms of spirituality which emphasise the interior emancipation from bonds of spiritual slavery. Cosmic religiosity offers a spirituality which does not focus on some metacosmic «beyond» but rather on contemporary reality: the sacred, the womanly, the earthly. Pieris maintains that a great many social transformations in Asia have taken place

¹⁷⁹ Pieris adds, it is «a psycho-social impulse, to generate a new humanity» («The Place of Non-Christian Religions» [1982d] *ATL*, 107).

¹⁸⁰ Pieris understands *liberation* on both the micro-level (interior purification) and the macro-level (justice on the sociopolitical level). Liberation on both levels together responds to the religious quest for full humanity (see «The Place of the Non-Christian Religions» [1982d] *ATL*, 107; «A Theology of Liberation?» [1986b] *ATL*, 111). Pieris distinguishes four perceptions of liberation. He offers a critique of the first three, namely: The *Stoic* perception which sees liberation primarily as spiritual and interior; the perception of the *Roman* church which includes a plea for a change of evil sinful social structures, but still considers such changes as a consequence of interior spiritual liberation; the *Marxist* view which restricts liberation to the class struggle aimed at socioeconomic justice. He advocates what he calls a *Biblical* view of liberation which unites the personal and social, spiritual and material, internal, and structural dimensions (*Ibid.*, 123). A significant point is the way Pieris links the Biblical view of liberation with the religiousness of the poor and their aspiration for freedom. The Bible «is the record of a religious experience of a “nonpeople” struggling to be a “people”, a struggle in which God is an intimate partner» (*Ibid.*, 124). From this perspective, «liberation does not mean aping the rich; it means teaching the rich nations the justice of Yahweh» (*Ibid.*, 125).

¹⁸¹ «Whither New Evangelism?» (1993h) 330.

¹⁸² «Toward an Asian Theology» (1979c) *ATL*, 80.

thanks to the power of cosmic religiosity¹⁸³. Also today, many adherents of metacosmic religions (Buddhists and Christians) are beginning to reinterpret their beliefs according to the liberative elements in the cosmic religiosity of their co-believers who belong to the poorer classes¹⁸⁴. This does not mean reducing their faith to a form of cosmic religiosity. Rather, cosmic religiosity opens up new possibilities to see the presence of ultimate reality reflected in a just society¹⁸⁵. The liberative impulse in the poor enables them to religiously experience the justice of God. This is what the Asian poor can teach the church. For this reason Pieris says that «the religiousness of the Asian poor (who are largely non-Christian) could be a new source of revelation for the Asian church»¹⁸⁶.

As developed so far, these ideas raise a number of fundamental questions relevant to the theology of revelation. If, as Pieris claims, salvation is through the Word, is he referring to the Word incarnate? What is the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Word? Is he proposing parallel ways to salvation? If the Word can have other names, does this relativise the position of Jesus Christ as the medium of revelation and salvation? Such issues are a theological minefield and it is not possible to deal with them fully in this work. However, in the evaluative part which follows, they will be addressed in so far as they are relevant to Pieris' understanding of divine revelation.

¹⁸³ «Their “this-worldliness” as well as their faith in a God of justice, far from being an opiate (as some Asian Marxists thought), has often been a stimulant in revolutionary situations whenever it is mobilized in an appropriate way» («An Asian Paradigm» [1993d] 132).

¹⁸⁴ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 132.

¹⁸⁵ In appendix II, R. 3, Pieris explains how Buddhists recognise a certain god concept in their own popular religiosity. The Christian understanding of a just God can bring out the metacosmic possibilities of their cosmic religiosity.

¹⁸⁶ «A Theology of Liberation?» (1986b) *ATL*, 125. Pieris' claim that the religiousness of the Asian poor «could be a new source of revelation for the Asian church», appears problematic because normally in theology the only «source» of revelation is God present in the Word, or the «divine wellspring» (*DV* 9). The Word or Gospel, then has many mediations such as personal mediators or the testimonies left in loci such as scripture, tradition, history and the like. Pieris is arguing that the religiousness of the Asian poor is an important locus for discovering the liberating word today. Thus it would perhaps be better to use the term «resource» of revelation rather than «source» which is best reserved for the Word itself. There is no difficulty in considering the religiousness of the Asian poor as a theological source.

5. Evaluation: One's Standpoint Influences One's Viewpoint¹⁸⁷

The historical and cultural influence on religious statements presents a problem for the evaluation and critique of Pieris' work because it raises the question: «From whose perspective?» What hermeneutical mediation is required if one would apply principles developed in the West to evaluate Asian theology?

Raimundo Panikkar illustrates the difference between the Semitic and Indic approaches, arguing that Christian theology seeks to understand the ultimate Mystery by ascending to it from its historical and visible manifestation in Jesus Christ. In contrast, the Aryan mind of Hindu theology affirms the ultimately ungraspable Mystery by descending to each of its concrete and visible manifestations, such as Rāma, Krishna, and so on. For Hindus, recognising several identifications does not destroy the identity of the ultimate Mystery¹⁸⁸. Moreover, Panikkar says that the Buddha helps us to recognise the futility of any pretension to have an absolute language, whether such a symbol or mystery goes by the name of God or anything else¹⁸⁹.

Pieris' attitude to Western theology and Semitic thought is rather complex. He points out how Western theological discussion on non-Christian religions is limited by the West's academic approach which isolates ideas from their practice, by the way the West tends to instrumentalise non-Christian thought in favor of Christianity, and by the power consciousness of the Christian church. Vestiges of power remain even in the dialogic approach which is more in favor in the twentieth century¹⁹⁰. Thus Pieris defends the right of Asia to develop a theology

¹⁸⁷ The words are used by Pieris on the relevance of Christian social teaching for Asia (see «Three Inadequacies» [1993f] 83).

¹⁸⁸ R. PANIKKAR, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, 52.

¹⁸⁹ R. PANIKKAR, *The Silence of God*, xxv. Leo Lefebure notes that from the Buddhist point of view, even the desire to speculate on God is an indication that one is still caught in illusion (see L. LEFEBURE, *The Buddha and the Christ*, 38). An example of claims to a uniquely Asian perspective may be seen in a recent paper by Felix Wilfred who uses the example of the uniqueness of Christ to argue that the Semitic and Indic points of view are quite different. He argues that the concern for the uniqueness of Christ is part of an inner-Western discussion which is not relevant to the Indic and other Asian traditions. «The discourse about uniqueness and absoluteness does not bespeak to peoples of Indic religious traditions which represents quite a different religious universe» (F. WILFRED, «Some Tentative Reflections» 47).

¹⁹⁰ «Western Christianity» (1980d) *LMW*, 21-23.

which is not dependant on the West. A radical *caesura* or rupture with the West will allow for new interpretations of faith and the birth of a truly universal church¹⁹¹.

While Pieris is critical of foisting Western ideas and practices onto Asians, he sometimes uses the terms «east» and «west», not in a geographical sense but in terms of different mystical moods regardless of their geographical provenance. He claims that the «Western» content of Christianity is the agapeic idiom which is an import from the Semitic culture of the East, whereas the «Eastern» content (gnosis) is a product of the Hellenic culture of the West¹⁹². He takes a positive attitude towards elements of Semitic thought as found in biblical soteriology. What he finds particularly attractive is the way the Bible documents the religious experience of a colonised and exploited people¹⁹³.

Notwithstanding Pieris' paradoxical attitude to Semitic thought («Western», but from the East!), his criticism of Western theology presents a problem for the researcher. Are the norms of Christian tradition to be dismissed as «Western» and therefore limited in their relevance to Asian theology¹⁹⁴? Pieris sees the need of a theology of religions that will «expand the existing boundaries of orthodoxy» as Christian theology encounters other religions and cultures¹⁹⁵. In such a case, reference to the existing boundaries of orthodoxy will naturally lead to tension.

Taking into account the challenge of different perspectives, the following three principles will be followed here. Firstly, if the source of revelation is the one word of God, then when that word in Asia is pronounced with a

¹⁹¹ Pieris refers to Karl Rahner's thesis in «Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II» in support of his view that a radical rupture with the West is a *conditio sine qua non* for the birth of a truly universal church (see «Human Rights Language» [1988c] 536).

¹⁹² «East in the West» (1988b) *LMW*, 9. Also see «Western Christianity (1980d) *LMW*, 23-42.

¹⁹³ «A Theology of Liberation» (1986b) *ATL*, 113, 125.

¹⁹⁴ For example, Pieris writes: «This Roman theology [...] is a *valid* theology — that is to say, a “liberation theology” in its own right. It has, from its inception, spelled out the what and how of liberation (= redemption = salvation = coming of the kingdom, etc.) in terms of a distinctively Roman experience» («A Theology of Liberation» [1986b] *ATL*, 112). However he says that a problem arises when this «local theology» of the local church of Rome is imposed on others as a universal theology. For example, see «Human Rights Language» (1988c) 536.

¹⁹⁵ «The Place of Non-Christian Religions» (1982d) *ATL*, 87.

different «accent», it should not contradict the word heard in other places. Secondly, official (Roman) church teaching, even if couched in Western logic and thought patterns, should be taken seriously as part of an on-going dialogue with Eastern thinking. The authority of that magisterium should be based, not on power, but on its function in service of the word of God¹⁹⁶. Thirdly, this study is an exercise in Christian theology¹⁹⁷. Therefore, there must be continuity with the message and person of Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition inasmuch as that tradition has been guided by the Spirit through the centuries¹⁹⁸.

The focus of this study also should be kept in mind. The inquiry is not concerned with the validity or adequacy of Pieris' analysis of Asian society or his opinion on Marxism or on Western society. Pertinent issues here are the hermeneutic by which he arrives at his conclusions and the validity of his understanding of the Word.

Pieris is breaking new ground in explicating complex issues and he does not claim to have the last word. His current position is part of a vital exchange between Christian faith and Asian realities. This moment of on-going dialogue is more pronounced than with the other two theologians in this study. For this reason, in some sections, the evaluation will take the form of questions which still need more definite answers.

5.1 *Pieris' Hermeneutic*

Pieris' theology as a whole has a definite hermeneutical tendency since he relegates theology to the interpretative level of religion (section 2.4). Even his second (religious) level has an interpretative dimension because in remembering an experience, it is already framed in terms of certain historical and cultural categories. Interpretation is a continual process whereby a living religion tries to make its core experience meaningful in any new sociohistorical situation.

¹⁹⁶ Pieris says that as Christians, our words meant to teach God's ways to the nations must serve the living Word rather than substitute for it (see «Three Inadequacies» [1993f] 89). He refers to the magisterium being at the service of the Word and gives the reference «VD 9». Probably he means *DV 10* (see «Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 63).

¹⁹⁷ J. Dupuis notes how there can be a Christian theology about Judaism, but not a Judeo-Christian theology. The same would apply even more to Buddhism (see J. DUPUIS, «Alleanza e salvezza», 151).

¹⁹⁸ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 71.

As a Christian in Asia Pieris is searching for an Asian theology, including a non-Christian interpretation of the saving Word. The principal elements in his hermeneutic are:

- The Asian context, including cosmic religiosity
- The underlying importance of biblical revelation
- The basic human communities and the liturgy of life.

a) Pieris is not trying to adapt the Christian gospel using Asian idioms. Rather, his is an attempt to rethink what salvation means in the light of Asian realities. His contention that the Asian context is characterised by poverty and multifaceted religiousness underlies much of his work. Of the two, Pieris puts more effort into the analysis of religiosity¹⁹⁹. Pieris' background in both Christianity and Buddhism means that he is already experiencing Buddhist-Christian dialogue in himself²⁰⁰. Such an experience must influence his interpretation of Christianity and Buddhism on a theological level²⁰¹.

Pieris stresses that this-worldly (cosmic) religiosity is a valuable resource for theological reflection. He gives an example of different interpretations of the virginity of Mary²⁰². Some theologians try to explain it away. But to the poor women whose body and sexuality is under the domination of males, the story of Mary's virginity is liberating. It says to them: «At last

¹⁹⁹ The emphasis on religiosity could be influenced by the history of his intervention at the ATC conference in 1979. The organisers of the conference assigned Matthew Kurien from India to focus on an analysis of poverty, while Pieris was invited to do an analysis of culture-religiosity. Pieris agreed that both poverty and religiosity are important, but wanted to correct what he saw as undue emphasis on the sociopolitical dimension, influenced by theology from Latin America.

²⁰⁰ Pieris tells of his reaction to a passion play written by a Buddhist scholar and poet Shree Charles de Silva, Pieris writes: «I was so moved by the text that the Sinhala culture in me and the Christian faith in me simultaneously discovered the Buddhist in me hearing a Word that was ever ancient and ever new» («Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 65).

²⁰¹ In comparison with some of his colleagues, the treatment of poverty in Pieris' writing remains at a rather theoretical level. Paul Caspersz at the Satyodaya Center for Social Research, and Tissa Balasuriya at the Center for Society and Religion have made more extensive studies of the reality of poverty in Sri Lanka. Different opinions on how to deal with poverty have led to misunderstandings (see Caspersz's critique of Pieris in, P. CASPERSZ, «Liberation and Culture in a Pincer Movement», 73; also Pieris' reply: «The Dynamics of the ATC» [1979b] 23-28).

²⁰² See appendix II, R. 2.

there is a God who can do away with these demanding brutal men!» «This domination is not necessary!» Such an interpretation is the result of rereading the scriptural text in the context of a story-telling culture where people can look for the symbolic message of the story. In Buddhism, for example, there is a tradition of *jātaka* stories about the past lives of the Buddha, full of cosmic forces common to popular religiosity. Pieris' point is that cosmic religiosity is a resource which can be an aid to the interpretation of the texts of the metacosmic religions.

b) Biblical revelation is an important underlying factor in Pieris' theology²⁰³. He stresses that scripture is not the word of God. It is the sacrament of the word of God. Divine revelation in the Bible «unfolds itself» in the history of a people. Still, God continues to speak in the context of the history of today's people. Thus «Scriptural History and our History are together the Revelatory Word»²⁰⁴. Hermeneutics means interpreting God's word uttered in history²⁰⁵.

God's dealings with the poor as recorded in the Bible form an essential key to Pieris' interpretation of the word today. He explains that «the Bible, when made accessible to the oppressed in Asia, easily becomes the seed of an authentically Asian Christianity, as it allows the best of Asia's (non-Christian) liberative traditions to be absorbed into the church's conscience»²⁰⁶. Giving the example of the Minjung from Korea, he says that the Bible helped evoke in them an understanding of their own liberative traditions²⁰⁷.

Pieris is not perturbed by interpretations which are different from those of the Western tradition. He points out that Jesus' message was modified by the inspired authors of the New Testament and was influenced by different cultural paradigms throughout history. The Asian theologians are

²⁰³ Pieris acknowledges that the two convictions, about the irreconcilable antinomy between God and mammon, and the irrevocable covenant between God and the poor, are derived from biblical revelation. These have no explicit doctrinal parallel in other monastic religions (see «Monastic Poverty» [1980b] *LMW*, 90).

²⁰⁴ Pieris attributes this insight to *Dei verbum*. He says that by insisting that revelation is both word and event the Vatican II constitution indicates that history is not just a setting for God's word to be expressed, but rather history itself is revelatory. God still speaks today in history (see «Inculturation» [1993c] 649).

²⁰⁵ See appendix II, R. 6.

²⁰⁶ «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 40.

²⁰⁷ See appendix II, R. 2.

merely continuing this process for their sociocultural region²⁰⁸. He says that the norm to follow is not any one particular model, but the church's manner of using particular cultural models to confess, celebrate, and proclaim its faith in a culturally meaningful way.

What Pieris sees as central to Christian faith is the message and practice of opposition to idols such as mammon, and of God's special relationship with the poor. Pieris says that the Bible is the record of a religious experience of an exploited people. This experience is «an excellent paradigm of a God-encounter (that is, liberation) for the Asian poor». The Bible was written by and for an oppressed people who found God to be their covenant partner, thus today the poor find that their situation «resonates with the Word»²⁰⁹. This resonance with the word, based in the biblical message is the second major element in Pieris' hermeneutic.

c) Pieris often refers to the basic human communities as the locus for interpreting the Word in Asia. The Christian members in such communities retell the story of Jesus in word and deed, liturgy and life. Pieris maintains that the basic human communities are the best place for listening to the Word in the context of what he calls the liturgy of life, which is the paschal mystery of Christ continued in the deaths, triumphs, and struggles of peoples' secular lives²¹⁰. Thus the liturgy of the word (as exemplified in the history of Israel) and the liturgy of life (our involvement in the history of

²⁰⁸ Pieris writes: «But His [Jesus'] revelation itself was made within a cultural paradigm which, we repeat, was boldly modified later by the inspired authors of the N.T., according to new categories of thought [...]. Why should one be apprehensive, then, about Asian theologians who find both the Hebrew concept of God and the Greco-Roman elaborations of Chalcedon pedagogically misleading and culturally meaningless in the context of Asia's multifarious perceptions of the Absolute? What has happened in the New Testament itself gives us the freedom to affirm the necessity as well as the relativity of such concepts in Christology» («Christology in Asia» [1989b] 162).

²⁰⁹ «Three Inadequacies» (1993f) 87.

²¹⁰ «Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective» (1983f) 5. Pieris stresses the «liturgy of life» as the *fons et culmen* of Christian life in contrast to *Sacrosanctum concilium* of Vatican II, which claims the sacramental liturgy as the source and summit of Christian existence (*Ibid.*, 4). In a letter to this writer (1 May 1994), Pieris explains: «The Paschal Mystery which is the central salvific event in history at any given time, is neither a contemplative state nor a sacramental act but our personal-and-communitarian involvement in the human struggle of Jesus in his body (the Asian Christ). This is the Liturgy of Life».

our times) cannot be separated²¹¹. It is important to actualise the potential of God's word to liberate people from greed and slavery to mammon. To know Christ and follow Jesus in and through the practice of poverty is «the "hermeneutical circle" between theory and praxis that animates the various grassroot communes on the fringes of the church especially in the Third World»²¹². Through involvement with the paschal mystery of Christ continued in the suffering and struggles of the poor, one will be able to hear the voice of the Spirit speaking today. This is why Pieris says that such communities are «the *credible words of revelation*, the readable signs of *salvation*, effective instruments of *liberation*» in Asia²¹³.

Pieris' hermeneutic has a specifically Asian quality, not simply because of the Asian setting. The Asian quality can be seen in his attempt to interpret the meaning of Christ, not through Jesus' metaphysical constitution, but through an encounter with Jesus' «path» (*hodos/mārga*). Pieris says that the mutual inclusiveness of the path and the truth as advocated by Buddhists is one of the characteristics of any authentic Asian theology²¹⁴. Thus Jesus' path or way, which is a path from Jordan to Calvary, will lead to a disclosure of his being and truth²¹⁵. So today, an Asian style of theology includes the mutuality of the path and the truth, praxis and theory. The locus of this praxis/path is to be found in a dynamic

²¹¹ «Inculturation» (1993c) 649.

²¹² «To be Poor» (1984b) *ATL*, 22.

²¹³ «Asia's Non-Semitic Religions» (1982c) *ATL*, 50. The basic human communities (which he calls «little laboratories of hope» [*ATL*, 64]) are not very numerous and involve only a small number of people on the periphery of the institutional church. However Pieris sees this as their strength because it enables them to avoid what he sees as a common tendency of the church to compete with the Spirit. «Wherever evangelization amounts to ranting without listening and learning [...] the Word gets drowned in the din of our own many words» («Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 62).

²¹⁴ For further elaboration on the fourfold truth and eightfold path (truth and way) in Buddhism, see «The Spirituality of the Buddhist Monk» (1977a) *LMW*, 64.

²¹⁵ «Western Christianity» (1980d) *LMW*, 41. Pieris notes that this harmonises with Oriental philosophy in which philosophy and religion are not separated (see A. PIERIS, «Ideology and Religion» [1983g] *ATL*, 25). He says that both classic Marxism and classic theology have failed to appreciate this point (see «Towards an Asian Theology» [1979c] *ATL*, 83). See also F. WILFRED, «Some Tentative Reflections», 55.

participation with the little ones who are the paschal body of Christ, and in non-Christian experiences of liberation²¹⁶.

These new perspectives, particularly that of cosmic religiosity, reflect a down-to-earth relevance and urgency in their interpretation of God's word and contribute to what Pieris calls an «Asian reading of the Bible»²¹⁷. However, the norms for evaluating truth-claims are limited, since the Christian memory has been confined to the one norm of liberation. The interpreter must assess how history-in-the-making resonates with the scriptural word in a liberation key. While valid, such an approach would be helped by a greater depth and precision with key terms such as «poor», «slaves», «liberation», and the like²¹⁸. Pieris appreciates that the Word reveals itself in the process of liberating. With this in mind he wants to avoid metaphysics and dogmatic tradition and to discover a new paradigm for salvation in Asia²¹⁹. Yet, in restricting the links with the great Tradition, including the full breadth of the New Testament, does he not run the risk of overlooking much of the content of Christian revelation? Thus Pieris' focus on non-Christian experiences is both a contribution and a liability in his hermeneutic.

5.2 Comparison with *Dei Verbum* 2-5

In order to evaluate Pieris' understanding of the revealing Word, his view will be compared with the Vatican II teaching as found in articles 2-5 of the first chapter of *Dei verbum*²²⁰.

²¹⁶ «Towards an Asian Theology» (1979c) *ATL*, 86. Previously, Pieris said that christology would receive its authenticity from a transforming praxis proving that the medium of salvation is operative in the followers of Jesus. Both Christians and Buddhists could acknowledge the one path of liberation in their *gnostic detachment and agapeic involvement* (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 134-135). However in his more recent work he has begun to use the term «path» in a more speculative manner in which the term «path» is seen together with the medium of salvation and word of revelation to form the basis of religious discourse (see «The Problem of Universality» [1994c] 71).

²¹⁷ «A Theology of Liberation?» (1986b) *ATL*, 124.

²¹⁸ Pieris' understanding of liberation was outlined in fn. 180. Further details may be found particularly in «A Theology of Liberation?» (1986b) *ATL*, 111-126.

²¹⁹ Ian Barbour notes that a paradigm is a tradition that sets the limits on the range of acceptable models (see I. BARBOUR, *Myths, Models and Paradigms*, 124).

²²⁰ The Second Vatican Council is for Pieris a point of departure rather than a point of arrival (see «Preface», *ATL*, xv). He makes only passing reference to Vatican II. He

The Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation preserves a Judeo-Christian focus in its teaching about the progressive communication of God in word and deed leading to a climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. While it proclaims God's will for universal salvation, there is no discussion of whether the salvific plan of God has a place in other religions. As has been demonstrated in chapter I, other documents such as *Nostra aetate* and *Ad gentes* show evidence of a more comprehensive view of revelation. Therefore, *Dei verbum* by no means exhausts what can be said about divine revelation. There remains the possibility of developing other dimensions, especially if one takes into account the different social, cultural, and historical circumstances of Asia. Nevertheless, *Dei verbum* can act as a helpful norm of Catholic teaching on revelation.

a) *Dei verbum* 2 presents a personal conception of God who «in his great love speaks to humankind as friends». Revelation is seen as an invitation to dialogue and to communion with God. Pieris' use of terms such as «Word» and «unspeakable One» tend to convey a more impersonal understanding of ultimate Reality. Admittedly Pieris is trying to use terminology which is meaningful to non-theists. Personal images of God such as loving Father may not be prominent in Pieris' theology, but he reintroduces God's image in a different way as Yahweh of the *anawim*: the just God who has established a covenant with the little ones²²¹.

Dei verbum 2 teaches that the content of divine revelation is God's will for communion with humankind. The text is complemented by *Dei verbum* 4 where we learn that Jesus' message is that God is with us «to deliver us from the darkness of sin and death [...]». Pieris summarises the content in

recognises the Council as a significant achievement and notes that the Council's ethos of theological freedom and ecclesiological pluralism may have prepared the ground for genuine renewal. However Pieris thinks that the Council was limited by its point of reference to the Western technocratic First World. Pieris thinks that too often in Vatican II teaching the link between the divine and human is not made, and the sacramental, contemplative, and active dimensions of Christian life are considered separately. They need to be synthesised in the one «liturgy of life» in Christ's sacramental presence in the flesh and blood of human beings crying for justice (see «Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective» [1983f] *ATL*, 6, 12). Prompted by the Japanese bishops, Vatican II, in *Nostra aetate* 2, made a fairly open statement that «Buddhism [...] proposes a way of life by which men can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help» (see H. DUMOULIN, «Buddhism», 29).

²²¹ «The Place of Non-Christian Religions» (1982d) *ATL*, 110.

a concrete way saying that God's message can be summarised in two axioms: The irreconcilable antinomy between God and mammon (the spirituality of God's reign in the Sermon on the Mount), and the irrevocable covenant between God and the poor (Jesus' manifesto in the words of Isaiah, at the synagogue of Nazareth). To ignore these two axioms would be to miss an important theme in the First Testament and to distort both the image and the message of Christ²²². The first axiom is to be found in the liberative dimension of Christianity and of other religions such as Buddhism. The second axiom gives a specific identity to the Christian gospel²²³. Pieris' choice of the two axioms above as the key to the whole of revelation does not contradict the Council teaching. Rather, he provides that teaching with a concrete focus paradigmatic for Christian praxis.

b) *Dei verbum 3* presents a view of salvation in which the history of the creation from our first parents to the people of Israel is the setting for the manifestation of God's plan for humankind. Pieris does not subscribe to such a linear view of history. Nevertheless, he does not propose a cyclic understanding as an alternative²²⁴. He mentions, but does not commit himself to, the Buddhist *paṭiccasamuppanna* or co-originating of things in which reality is seen as constantly becoming. This idea in which all realities are interdependent is quite different from the orthodox Christian view in which all things are dependent on God for their very being²²⁵. Occasionally Pieris uses the image, from Hindu thought, of the movement of a cosmic dance, in which by keeping in step with the Spirit (cf. Gal 5,25) we participate in nature's cyclic movement «towards Christ, her personal center»²²⁶. «God himself dances in the universe»²²⁷. How is one to compare

²²² «Whither New Evangelism?» (1993h) 329.

²²³ «Whither New Evangelism?» (1993h) 330-332. In Pieris' view, Western Christianity has compromised with capitalistic techniculture and so has failed to live up to the spirituality of the Beatitudes. Therefore he questions «with what authority do we dare to evangelise non-Christians, who may already be disciples of Christ, if we ourselves depend on Mammon for our missionary expansion?» (*Ibid.*, 331).

²²⁴ Pieris says that he disagrees with some biblical theologians who regard a cyclic theory of history as asocial or ahistorical (see «Buddhist Political Visioning» [1983c] *LMW*, 79).

²²⁵ Leo Lefebure says that the creation, and what he calls «dependent co-arising», appear as important structuring principles for the Christian and Buddhist traditions. For him the difference between the two raises the underlying question of the relation of language and reality (see L. LEFEBURE, *The Buddha and the Christ*, 194).

²²⁶ «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 39.

such ideas with the understanding of salvation history in *Dei verbum 3*? Pieris proposes the option of «symbiosis» in which each approach is challenged by the uniqueness of the other. Their mutual exposure reveals what is authentic in each²²⁸. The notion of a dancing God with Christ at the center does not contradict and could perhaps enrich our understanding of God's testimony to Godself in the created order²²⁹.

Besides proposing alternatives to a unilinear understanding of history, Pieris wants to redefine the very term history. He disagrees with those who oppose history and myth. For him, history can be raised to the power of myth. «The historical event becomes so true, so real, so eventful that it becomes universal truth»²³⁰. While the process of mythologisation which Pieris refers to is attested to in religious studies, there are inherent theological difficulties. What if the term myth is applied to the incarnation? Is the incarnation true «because it happens constantly», for example, as God's love becomes incarnate in men and women in whose lives God's inspiration, or grace, is effectively at work so that they become instruments of the divine purpose²³¹. Does the universal meaning of Jesus Christ come from the appeal that his message might have in terms of the aspirations of all men and women²³². The complexity of such issues demonstrates how the relationship between history and myth, the particular and the universal, cannot be treated lightly²³³. Pieris stresses the significance of Christ, not

²²⁷ See appendix II, R. 5.

²²⁸ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 134.

²²⁹ As Pieris himself notes, the Buddhist understanding of co-originating presents a conceptual problem which requires deeper reflection (see Pieris' response to Q. 4 in appendix II).

²³⁰ See appendix II, R. 4.

²³¹ See J. HICK, «The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity», 32. Also see J. HICK, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, 53, 62.

²³² The point is raised by J. DUPUIS, in *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 108.

²³³ For a discussion on some of the difficulties involved in interpreting the incarnation as myth, see A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, 189-192. Also see discussion on this point in J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 192-206, and by the same author, in briefer form in «Uniqueness and Universality», 1140-1144. Dupuis points out some misconceptions of the incarnation. Pre-existence is not an existence in a fictive time before time. Incarnation does not mean that the divine existence is transformed into a human existence. «What the incarnation of the Son of God does imply is that the Word really becomes a human being within history, while also having an eternal existence, independent of this becoming, in the mystery of God. That is what is literally meant by a word that is not reducible to a term out of myth» (*Ibid.*, 1141).

only for the salvation of human beings but for the whole universe. Christ acts as a final cause to which the cosmos is directed. The main problem is how to relate such a universal meaning to the particular event of the historical Jesus as constitutive of universal salvation²³⁴.

c) *Dei verbum* 4 presents Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who completes the work of revelation and confirms it by his life, death and resurrection. No new public revelation is to be expected before his glorious manifestation. Pieris stresses the meaning of death and resurrection in the suffering of the mostly non-Christian poor. While this is a valid and important interpretation of the contemporary significance of Christ, care must be taken to preserve the link between the transhistorical risen Christ, encountered in Christ's proxy living the paschal mystery in our day, and Jesus, the incarnate Word, who lived and died in history. After all, one cannot ignore the validity and normativity of the event which forms the basis of belief in Christ²³⁵. What is the link and how can such an event have universal significance?

Some would say that the universal significance of Jesus Christ is to be found in the mystery of Christ included in all the other manifestations of the Word in history²³⁶. As noted above (section 4), Pieris is not proposing a form of «anonymous Christianity». Sometimes he makes an explicit link between Christ and the Word. For example, he points out how the suffering poor (the proxies of Christ) are «the voiceless transmitters of this Word»²³⁷. Again, he says that the realisation of the Cosmic or Total Christ will mean a new dimension of history in the reign of God where the Word will have its «final and all comprehensive expression»²³⁸.

²³⁴ J. Dupuis considers a linear model of history essential. He writes: «It is scarcely evident how a cyclical or spiral concept of history might leave room for the decisive value that Christianity attributes to the historical, particular Jesus Christ event as representing God's final commitment to humanity. The linear model is inescapable here. Apart from it, history cannot take on the authentic sense of a dialogue between God and humanity through God's historical interventions or have a final destiny assigned to it by God» (J. DUPUIS, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 151).

²³⁵ Gavin D'Costa attempts to show the link between God's salvific will and the medium of Jesus Christ (see G. D'COSTA, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, 96-107).

²³⁶ See M. AMALADOSS, *Making All Things New*, 92. The logical consequence of such a supposition would be a form of «anonymous Christianity».

²³⁷ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60.

²³⁸ Pieris writes: «Jesus cannot grow to the full stature of Christ unless all his members (most of whom are non-Christians) together with the cosmos struggle like him,

However, at times Pieris stresses the universality of the Word and appears to leave open the possibility of other expressions of the Word (*marga, tao, dharma*, etc.), which do not necessarily include the mystery of Jesus Christ. There appears to be a tension between two soteriological models. In one, revelation is present in a unique way in the saving paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, and the paschal mystery continues to be revealed in the liberating event of following Jesus who was poor then by serving Christ who is in the poor now²³⁹. In the other model, Christ is a «name», and revelation is the discourse of the Spirit who speaks in God and in people, and particularly, in non-persons covenanted with God.

The difference in the two models is significant if one considers the relationship between the Word and Jesus. The Word is universal but Jesus is «he whom the Christians recognize as the Word that has been seen, heard and touched with human senses»²⁴⁰. Jesus' unique contribution is his manifestation, in his life, death, and resurrection, of God's covenant with humanity through the non-persons of the earth. This, the heart of the content of the Word, has been revealed in a unique way in Jesus. But it seems that in Pieris' thinking Jesus' significance is found, not in universalising the particularity of the historical Jesus, but in his unique contribution in manifesting the central tenet of revelation, the discourse of the Spirit, in the context of the universal salvific action of the Word²⁴¹. In his latest work Pieris focuses on the redeeming and transforming function of the Word, rather than on Jesus Christ²⁴². This apparent separation of

even unto death, in ushering in God's reign on earth» («Does Christ Have a Place?» [1993a] 43). Also: «The Spirit is this incessant and accumulative process of salvific communication by which the Word (Jesus) is ever growing towards its final and all comprehensive expression: The Total Christ, as Christians call It» («Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 71). See also appendix II, R. 5.

²³⁹ «To be Poor » (1984b) *ATL*, 21.

²⁴⁰ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60. Michael Amaladoss offers a similar argument when he says that the relationship between the universality of Christ and the historical Jesus «will be discovered, not by universalising the particularity of the historical Jesus but by setting it in the context of the universal action of the Word» (M. AMALADOSS, *Making All Things New*, 92).

²⁴¹ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 60, 71.

²⁴² «However, what reveals, saves and transforms is this Word Itself, not our "words" (e.g., Christ, Lord, and other human categories) by which we describe It» («Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 60). There seems a change here from Pieris' earlier work. Referring to Pieris' earlier work, Edward Schillebeeckx writes: «The Sri Lankan

Jesus Christ and the Word would not harmonise with traditional Catholic theology.

d) *Dei verbum* 5 refers to the «obedience of faith» with the help of God's grace and the assistance of the holy Spirit. The same holy Spirit perfects faith and brings about a deeper understanding of revelation. Pieris seldom refers to faith as such, though in some of his recent work on religious life he has touched on the subject in terms of obedience, that is, listening to the Word and doing God's will²⁴³. More pertinent to this study is his manner of seeing the relation between faith and revelation. If the salvific revelatory Word is universal then it follows that all people should have the possibility of faith²⁴⁴.

Faith in Pieris' work can best be seen in relation to human experience. Reference has already been made to the similarity between the blank phase before realising *nirvāna* and the saltus (of faith) signifying the gratuitous nature of Christian illumination (section 4.3). Pieris is trying to avoid theistic terminology, so he seldom uses faith language. Nevertheless he implies that gnostic agape in Buddhism and agapeic gnosis in Christianity are part of a basic religious attitude which is the equivalent of faith because they are languages that the same divine Spirit speaks in each person²⁴⁵.

Pieris' attempt to treat religious experience without using faith language raises some questions from the viewpoint of Christian theology. While the Christian tradition sees faith as a response to God in Jesus Christ, the response from a Buddhist point of view is in apophatic terms of contentless

theologian Aloysius Pieris in particular has pointed out, more strongly than I did in my *Jesus* book, that we are not redeemed by the honorific titles of Jesus but by the means of redemption itself, regardless of the linguistic framework within which that means is experienced and expressed. "Jesus" redeems us, not "Christ"» (W. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Church*, 168).

²⁴³ «The Religious Vows» (1989e) 6.

²⁴⁴ The link between universal salvation and faith is brought out clearly by Karl Rahner in «Christianity and Non-Christian Religions».

²⁴⁵ In the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* 29, Pope John Paul II confirms what he said in his address to the Cardinals and the Roman Curia (22 December 1986), that «every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit who is mysteriously present in every human heart». The Pope also refers to the Spirit present in other religions, saying that the Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by «a respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man» (AAS 83 [1991] 275).

knowing²⁴⁶. Nevertheless, for both, the response is self-transcending and therefore liberating²⁴⁷. Is it enough to say that faith is a human response of self-transcendence and leave the object of faith undefined? Would this mean contentless faith²⁴⁸? Scholastic theology uses terms such as «formal» and «material» object in reference to the *prima veritas* (God) and the content of faith. Faith is the «full submission of intellect and will to God as he reveals»²⁴⁹. According to that system, the revealing God is both the formal and material object of faith. Such an approach would find it difficult to recognise faith in a nontheistic religion like Buddhism. Therefore Pieris takes a different approach.

Pieris identifies revelation with the great discourse of the Spirit addressed to all. What disposes one to hear this discourse? Pieris says that those who «have an inner affinity with the universal Spirit» or those who «walk with the Spirit» will recognise the illuminating word of revelation. Hearing the voice of the Spirit (even as absolute silence), in turn, arouses a response. The human response to the universal Word is not merely an intellectual response but «a costly faith-response», that is, one of agapeic involvement²⁵⁰. So a prerequisite for the reception of revelation is a certain affinity with the Spirit and the response in faith is one of obedience to the voice of the Spirit which comes through the suffering peoples of the world. This is a subjective approach to faith, but not merely subjective as though there was no object outside the self. Faith entails being acted upon by the

²⁴⁶ «It is knowing that does not admit a knower or a known. This means that to talk of the personhood of the (finite) knower and the (infinite) Known (or vice versa: the personhood of the infinite Knower and the finite known) is non-sense. There is no God; no soul!» («Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 118).

²⁴⁷ Pieris says that both Buddhist gnosis and Christian redemptive love are salvific in that each is a self-transcending event that radically transforms the human person affected by that experience (see A. PIERIS, «The Buddha and the Christ» [1987a] 163).

²⁴⁸ J. Dupuis raises this point in his discussion of Panikkar's work (see J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 187).

²⁴⁹ Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*, ch. 3. The expression is included in *Dei verbum* 5.

²⁵⁰ For example, Pieris says that inculturation is the costly faith-response by which the church — as a community that claims to be the voice of Spirit — recognizes this voice in the Asian body of Christ (see «Inculturation in Asia» [1994b] 61). Pieris' «walking with the Spirit» or having an «inner affinity with the Spirit» is similar to what Pierre Rousselot calls a spiritual sympathy for the object of our belief, which he calls the supernatural grace of faith, and which gives us new eyes to see what is revealed (see P. ROUSSELOT, «Les yeux de la foi»).

Spirit, and in turn means an engagement of the person or the community as a «plunge into the paschal mystery of people's struggles»²⁵¹. Thus the universal revealing activity of God is not limited by the historical mediation of Jesus. It may be discovered wherever the Spirit arouses, and is present to, the self-transcending movement of human liberation²⁵².

It is obvious that Pieris is approaching divine revelation from a rather different point of view than that of *Dei verbum*. The Council constitution begins with God's universal will for communion. Pieris begins with the word of revelation as God's response to humankind's universal aspiration for liberation. The God of justice, the suffering poor as the proxies of Christ, the mythical potential of history, revelation as the discourse of the Spirit, and faith as an obedient response to the universal Word are dimensions of revelation typical of Pieris' theology. These views raise questions, particularly concerning the incarnation of the Word and the uniqueness of Christ.

5.3 *Jesus Christ and the Incarnation*

In his early writing Pieris appears to be following the orthodox view that the incarnation has universal significance because in the man Jesus, God established, once and for all, a special relationship with humankind²⁵³. Using Chalcedon-type language he writes: «In the incarnation of Christ the Logos did not just appear to be man, but assumed human nature: perfecting, completing and fulfilling it»²⁵⁴.

Two decades later one observes a change. Pieris is of the opinion that «at Chalcedon, we solved a non-problem by debating about the hypostatic union in philosophical categories which sound nonsensical when translated

²⁵¹ «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 62. Also see «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 45.

²⁵² The revealing activity of God in the experience of self-transcendence is discussed by R. HAIGHT in *Dynamics of Theology*, 59-61.

²⁵³ «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 5.

²⁵⁴ «The Church, the Kingdom» (1970a) 4. The incarnation forms the basis of Christ's sacramental presence in the poor. Pieris writes: «Christ, in whose company the authentic church is found, is clearly perceived as the incarnate Christ of history continuing his presence «sacramentally» in the flesh and blood of human beings (his least brethren) crying [...] for the dawn of the kingdom of justice» («Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective» [1983f] *ATL*, 12).

into Asian languages»²⁵⁵. He says that the doctrine of the incarnation should not have depended to such an extent on the single Johannine sentence «The *logos* was made flesh». In the hymn in Ph 2,6-11, for example, what is degrading for God «is not so much God's becoming a human being but God's becoming a slave of human tyrants»²⁵⁶.

Pieris says that the Jesus-story reveals the Word as one «of salvation addressed by Yahweh to the slaves of all times, and simultaneously the Word of complaint that the slaves of all times cry out to Yahweh. In Jesus these are not two words but ONE WORD which constitutes the exchange between Yahweh and the slaves»²⁵⁷. So for Pieris the principal meaning of the incarnation pertains to the covenantal identification of God with all who are victims of slavery. Slavery here is seen as the effect of human greed and the fruit of sin. God calls the victims of slavery to be partners in the establishment of God's reign.

How valid is this interpretation in terms of slavery? Considering Ph 2,6-11, some scholars prefer to interpret the *doulos* of v. 7 as «servant» rather than «slave» because they see a link with the Deutero-Isaian figure of the Servant of God²⁵⁸. However others prefer to interpret the term as «slave» because the passage is referring to unredeemed human existence which is essentially a slavery to spiritual powers, ending in death²⁵⁹.

²⁵⁵ «Whither New Evangelism?» (1993h) 333. Also see «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 134.

²⁵⁶ «God did not find it demeaning to be human. God could have become a flower without lowering Himself [...]. I personally believe that this christological hymn [Phil 2,6-11] was composed in the communities of converted slaves, the principle [sic] addressees of the Good News» («Whither New Evangelism?» [1993h] 333).

²⁵⁷ Letter from Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 Nov 1994. Also see A. PIERIS, «Chastity as Total Consecration», (1994a) 548-550.

²⁵⁸ For example, J. DUPUIS, *Who do You Say I Am?*, 69.

²⁵⁹ Referring to Ph 2,6-11, Brendan Byrne notes: «Some translate *doulos* here as «servant» rather than «slave», finding also in the preceding phrase an allusion to the «Servant» of Is 53,12 [...]. Although linguistically plausible, this disturbs the sequence of ideas in that it precedes rather than follows the reference to becoming human in the next phrase; it also nullifies the contrast the hymn appears to be setting up between the extremities of lordship (vv 9-11) and slavery» (B. BYRNE, «Philippians», 794). L.E. Keck observes that some see a reference to the suffering servant of Isa 53, but this is improbable, for the hymn uses terms which are generally more at home in Greek than in Old Testament thought. «A better clue to what "servant" means is Gal 4,3, where human existence is described as slavery to "the elemental spirits of the universe" — the invisible hostile powers which were believed to inhabit planets and to control the

Redemption requires dealing with the world's tyrannies which is what the hymn celebrates as having happened. The identification of God with victims in the hymn is primarily about a change of status from the highest thinkable to the lowest known. As Rudolf Schnackenburg notes, the reference to the form (*morphe*) of God and the form of servant, refers to status rather than nature. He adds that the expression «equal with God» should not be seen in the light of later Councils²⁶⁰. The hymn is not a paragraph of systematic theology and is as much mythical and poetic as it is historical, so one would have to be very discerning in using it as a basis for theology. However it does provide support for Pieris' interpretation of the incarnation in terms of slavery, provided that it be seen as part of a more comprehensive christology, including the christology of Jn 1,1-18.

Pieris wants to avoid the philosophical debates of Councils such as Chalcedon. Yet one does not have to wait for Chalcedon to encounter interpretations of who Jesus was. The New Testament illustrates a continuity between *what* Jesus is for us and *who* he is. Admittedly the early *kerygma* as recorded in the New Testament (for example, the missionary speeches of Peter and Paul recorded in the Acts of the Apostles) centres on the action of God for our sake, that is, it takes a functional approach. Later writings draw attention not merely to the unique role assigned to him by God in the plan of salvation, but to the person of Jesus and his divine Sonship (Mt 16,15; Jn 1,1-18)²⁶¹. So there is a certain theological pluralism in the New Testament itself. Naturally interpretations differ on the data from the New Testament. For example, R. Bultmann claims that the statements about Jesus' divinity are really statements about salvation, not

destinies of men. What the hymn celebrates therefore is the movement of Christ from sovereignty over the cosmos to slavery within it» (L.E. KECK, «Philippians», 50). Rudolf Schnackenburg writes that there could be an indirect link with the «servant» of Is 53,7-8. However he sees no relation to Is 52,13-53,12, because Philippians contains quite a different terminology and theology from Isaiah. «Queste ed altre caratteristiche citate nella spiegazione indicano piuttosto una formazione dell'inno negli ambienti ellenistici del cristianesimo primitivo, un influsso giudeo-ellenistico se non persino un ambiente pagano-ellenistico» (R. SCHNACKENBURG, in *Mysterium Salutis* III.1, 407).

²⁶⁰ R. Schnackenburg says that the hymn does not refer to two natures of Christ, but to two modes of existence which are the «via salvifica per coloro che credono al Kyrios Gesù Cristo» (R. SCHNACKENBURG, in *Mysterium Salutis* III.1, 408).

²⁶¹ This point is discussed in the third chapter of J. DUPUIS, *Who Do You Say I Am?*.

about his nature²⁶². However there is a strong body of opinion that the dynamism of Easter faith leads to interpretations of who Jesus is and eventually to new interpretations of the term «God»²⁶³. Whether or not one wants to debate Jesus' *physis*, one must seriously consider whether he is what he is for us because of who he is in himself²⁶⁴.

However, in claiming that Jesus is a word of salvation addressed to slaves Pieris appears to be adopting a paradigm that is different from the classical *fides quaerens intellectum*. It is a paradigm that cannot be developed into a doctrine without being translated into praxis: *fides quaerens justitiam et libertatem*²⁶⁵. The incarnation is not to be explained in terms of ontology or function, but in terms of redemption and liberation. The Word is a creative and communicative event (*dabar*), and the incarnation is the identification of Jesus with those suffering today. Through the incarnation Jesus and the oppressed are united in a «covenanted togetherness».

The interpretation of the incarnation as the word of God addressed to the slaves of all times raises questions in relation to the classical theology of the Word made flesh. If, as Pieris claims, salvation is through the Word, is he referring to the Word incarnate? There are several possibilities. Salvation could be through the universal Word which is not incarnate. Or it could be incarnate in various ways which leaves open the possibility of giving a name other than Christ to the saving reality. Or the Word could be present in other religious traditions but ordered to the plenary revelation that would take place in Christ. Recent Roman magisterium follows the latter option²⁶⁶.

²⁶² «Man darf sagen, daß im Neuen Testament, jedenfalls a parte potiori, die Aussagen über Jesu Göttlichkeit oder Gottheit in der Tat Aussagen sind, die nicht seine Natur, sondern seine Bedeutsamkeit zum Ausdruck bringen wollen» (R. BULTMANN, *Glauben und Verstehen*, 252-253). Bultmann puts the question: «Hilft er mir, weil er der Sohn Gottes ist, oder ist er der Sohn Gottes, weil er mir hilft?» (*Ibid.*, 252).

²⁶³ See W. KASPER, *Jesus the Christ*, 175.

²⁶⁴ J. Dupuis concludes that function and ontology are mutually interdependent (see J. DUPUIS, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 95).

²⁶⁵ This is an approach mentioned in the Final Statement of the first FABC International Theological Colloquium, Pattaya, Thailand, April 10-16, 1994: «Theologising thus becomes more than faith seeking understanding, but faith fostering life and love, justice and freedom» (FABC, «Being Church in Asia», *Vidyajyoti* 58, 388).

²⁶⁶ «Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value *only* from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his» (*Redemptoris missio* 5).

Pieris also supports the latter option in his early work, but recently appears to favour one or both of the first two options.

Christian theology recognises the activity of the Word (*Logos*) in the world and in salvation history prior to the incarnation in Jesus Christ. For example, Irenaeus of Lyon distinguished various covenants made by God with human beings prior to the incarnation, all showing the universal operative presence in salvation history of a nonincarnate *Verbum*²⁶⁷. However the Word is always linked in some way to the mystery of the incarnation²⁶⁸. It is one thing to point out the sacramental presence of Christ in the flesh and blood of slaves. But this sacramental presence is disclosive of a meaning inherent in the Christ event itself. Can there be a Word of faith without a Jesus of history²⁶⁹? Pieris does not deny this, but he is rather ambivalent in explaining the link between the Word and Jesus. He writes:

But the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is *the* enfleshed historical manifestation of this word-medium-path turns Christian theology into a christology. Such naming, however, is not a condition for salvation demanded by the Word which, being universal, operates even among those who do not recognize it by that name. It is the word-medium-path that saves, not the name one gives to it. Naming which belongs to theology cannot be universal»²⁷⁰.

From a christocentric point of view the above statement would support a theory of «anonymous Christianity». However if one takes it from a logocentric point of view, it would allow for the possibility of the salvific Word operating under a different name independently of Jesus Christ. What

²⁶⁷ See discussion on this point in J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 134. Dupuis quotes Irenaeus as saying that those who have not received Christian preaching «possess salvation written, without paper or ink, by the Spirit in their heart» (IRENÆUS, *Adversus Haereses* 3, 4, 2). Dupuis also points out how Clement of Alexandria «develops a Logocentrism, asserting that the Logos was at work in Judaism, in the best of what the Greek philosophers and poets have to offer, as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism» (J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 135).

²⁶⁸ J. Dupuis writes: «One may not separate, then, in the divine plan, the anticipated activity of the *Logos* from the Jesus Christ event in which this plan is accomplished. The *Logos* destined to become incarnate and the *Logos* incarnate are one and indivisible. Jesus Christ, Word incarnate, remains, at the center of the divine plan, the mystery of salvation» (J. DUPUIS, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter*, 189).

²⁶⁹ «To introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ is contrary to the Christian faith» (*Redemptoris missio* 6).

²⁷⁰ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 72.

is Pieris' viewpoint? It may help to see how he responds to the issue of the uniqueness of Christ.

5.4 *Uniqueness of Christ*

In a 1982 article in *Concilium* Pieris notes that some Asian theologians refuse to admit the uniqueness of Christ. He goes on to show what he understands as the real uniqueness of Christ in the Asian context. He argues that «Christ» is «only a title», which is culture specific²⁷¹. What is «absolute and unique» is not the title, but the mystery of salvation underlying it. Moreover, Jesus' «unique identity» within the mystery of salvation will be discovered in Asia by retracing the steps that he took, that is, by «baptismal immersion» into Asian reality. The reference here is to Jesus' first prophetic gesture at the Jordan and his last prophetic gesture on Calvary. Pieris is convinced that the uniquely Asian face of Christ will be discovered when the story of Jesus is retold by Asian Christians who have dared to traverse Jesus' own path from Jordan to Calvary, that is, who have dared to participate in Asian religiosity and poverty²⁷².

Pieris addressed the uniqueness issue again in 1989. Felipe Gomez, in an article in the *East Asian Pastoral Review* had accused Asian theologians of relativising the Christian religion and of eroding the church's teaching on the uniqueness of Christ. In reply, Pieris accuses Gomez of cultural colonialism²⁷³. Pieris argues that Jesus' revelation was made within a cultural paradigm which was modified later by the inspired authors of the New Testament, according to new categories of thought. Chalcedon, too, is an example of how the church reformulated the Christ-mystery in the Greco-Roman idiom of the fifth century intelligensia²⁷⁴. Pieris says that to impose that model on other cultures amounts to theological imperialism. All images of Christ are relative to their respective worldview or conceptual idioms. Pieris insists that no single paradigm can exhaust the

²⁷¹ «Speaking of the Son of God» (1982f) *ATL*, 62.

²⁷² Obviously Pieris' main focus is on Jesus and Jesus' meaning today. For example, in 1987, he says that the «obsession» of some theologians with the uniqueness of Christ is a false start that leads theologians into blind alleys. He clarifies that the real debate is about the uniqueness of *Jesus* in terms of whether Jesus or Gautama is «unique» in the sense of being the exclusive medium of salvation for all (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue» [1987b] *LMW*, 131).

²⁷³ «Christology in Asia» (1989b) 170.

²⁷⁴ «Christology in Asia» (1989b) 164.

comprehensibility of Christ and no paradigm is the patrimony of one single church. In other words, the mystery of Christ can be explained using different idioms, including those of Asia. Pieris points out that rather than preconceive Jesus' uniqueness in the language and idiom of traditional Western Christology, Asians want to discover what is unique about Jesus in the Asian setting²⁷⁵.

Recently, in 1993, Pieris said that he finds himself gradually adopting a paradigm where the starting point is not the uniqueness of Christ or Christianity or of any other religion²⁷⁶. He does not name the paradigm but describes it in soteriological terms²⁷⁷. God has made a defence pact with the (mostly) non-Christian oppressed, and Jesus whom Christians follow is this pact²⁷⁸. Pieris claims that this Asian paradigm is different from the ontology of the God-Man-Saviour model of the official church. In the Asian paradigm «Jesus comes out convincingly as God's story in the lives of her covenant partners (the Asian poor) rather than as a subtle combination of natures and persons»²⁷⁹.

Pieris says that non-Christians are indispensable in helping Christians understand the unique contribution of Jesus. Through the understanding of the Word in their own tradition, non-Christians recognise a common heritage in the call to voluntary poverty and the rejection of mammon. However, from their perspective non-Christians also recognise something unique in Jesus' prophetic message: that in Jesus, God has made a defence-pact with the poor. Pieris provides examples of how non-Christians — poets, artists, monks — have been able to point out what is unique about Jesus, particularly Jesus' part in God's special relationship with the poor.

Pieris' opinion needs to be seen in the context of the various covenants recorded in the Christian scriptures. Is there a qualitative difference between the defence pact of Jesus and the Mosaic covenant of the Old Testament?

²⁷⁵ Who are the «Asians» that Pieris is referring to? In this paper he does not refer specifically to any Asian theologians. Perhaps he is referring to those Sri Lankans in the basic human communities.

²⁷⁶ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 130.

²⁷⁷ He describes the paradigm in terms of three overlapping concerns: the «third magisterium» of the poor, the liberational thrust of (cosmic) religiosity, and the role of the basic human communities (see «An Asian Paradigm» [1993d] 130-133).

²⁷⁸ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 133. Pieris' idea is taken up by J. NEUNER in «Mission Theology after Vatican II», 213-214.

²⁷⁹ «An Asian Paradigm» (1993d) 134.

For the people of Israel Yahweh was their redeemer and liberator²⁸⁰. *Dei verbum* 14-15 affirms the permanent value of the Old Testament. The second covenant was not a substitute for the first²⁸¹. How did Jesus' prophetic ministry differ from that of the Old Testament prophets? Certainly from a functional perspective there is a continuity between the two. So what is unique about Jesus' prophetic gesture? Pieris notes how Jesus «is» the covenant between God and the poor. However this affirmation leads to «who» (ontological) questions which Pieris prefers to avoid. Further scripture-based study is necessary to surmount the present gap between traditional doctrinal interpretations of the uniqueness of Christ and Pieris' attempt to develop a new paradigm more suited to the Asian setting.

5.5 *What's in a Name?*

In the discussion above, Pieris is referring more to the uniqueness of Jesus than the uniqueness of Christ. In his latest work he says that Christ is a name Christians give to the universal Word. This view raises some theological and philosophical difficulties. Pieris points out a difference in the Hellenistic and Hebrew understanding of a name²⁸². He notes: «What saves is not the “name” of Jesus in the Hellenistic sense of the term “name”, but the name of Jesus in the Hebrew sense of the reality that was seen to be operative in Jesus, independent of the name or designation we may attach to it»²⁸³. In the Semitic understanding there is a certain power in names because names both participate in and give identity to that

²⁸⁰ For example: «I am the Lord and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God» (Ex 6,6-7). Also: «For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing» (Dt 10,17-18).

²⁸¹ Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill the law and the prophets (Mt 5,17).

²⁸² It is difficult to generalise about Greek philosophy; however it is understood that in Semitic (biblical) thought, a name is not a mere label of identification, but an expression of the essential nature of its bearer. To know the name of God is to know God as revealed (Ps 9,10). In the Old Testament, «name» denotes essential being. The name of God is frequently used as a synonym for the reality of God. Similarly in the NT the name of Jesus is a synonymous term for Jesus himself (see R. ABBA, *IDB*, vol. 3, 506).

²⁸³ «Core-to-Core Dialogue» (1987b) *LMW*, 133.

reality²⁸⁴. One cannot separate the name from the underlying reality it refers to. The name Jesus, refers not so much to a concept or a general category, but to a historic individual person. «Jesus» and «Gautama» are not merely names for they refer to different individual persons and to some extent the name and the named exist in a mutual relationship in which the power of the former is shared with the being of the latter²⁸⁵.

Therefore, while one could agree that the Word mediates salvation, it is difficult to fully accept Pieris' statement that Christ is the «name» by which we Christians recognise the great Word of revelation. Surely it is true that the name itself does not save. But Christ is more than a name as a label. Jesus of Nazareth was a person born in Palestine. Christ is the title attributed to Jesus in a profession of faith. Wolfhart Pannenberg raised this matter when Pieris presented the idea at a conference in St. Gabriel in Austria in 1987. He felt that Pieris was relativising the name of Jesus. Christians are united with Jesus Christ in Baptism and the Eucharist and so one cannot put this name on the same level as other names²⁸⁶. Pieris felt that Pannenberg was placing too much importance on the name itself and thus using the term «name» in a Greek sense. It seems that in focussing on the reality behind the name rather than the name and the reality linked

²⁸⁴ Except in cases of onomatopoeia the relationship between a word and its meaning is quite arbitrary. The English word *dog* and the French word *chien* are arbitrary symbols for the same thing. However once named the sense of identity between something and its name can run very deep. The naming of animals in Gn 2,18 is like a creative act which gives them independent existence. See the discussion in E. LEACH, *Culture and Communication*, 17-22. Raimundo Panikkar goes so far as to say that the reality of cosmotheandric mystery «is many names and each name is a new aspect, a new manifestation and revelation of it» (R. PANIKKAR, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, 29).

²⁸⁵ There is a further issue. The names, Jesus and Gautama, are not simply names for they began as a form of confession of faith. According to Jacques Dupuis, «Jesus is the Christ» evolved semantically into the apposition «Jesus-the-Christ» and further into the compound name «Jesus Christ». Similarly, Buddhist tradition has honoured Gautama with the title «the Buddha» (the enlightened one). So the Christian tradition evolved from the Yeshua of history to the Christ of faith, and the other from the Gautama of history to the Buddha of faith (see J. DUPUIS, *Who Do You Say I am?*, 1). There is a difference, however, from the Christian perspective, for if Gautama shows others the way to liberation, Jesus *is* the way. In other words, with this affirmation, the apostolic church was announcing what God had done for humankind in the person and the event of Jesus Christ.

²⁸⁶ See A. BSTEH, ed., *Glaube, der Begegnung sucht*, 71-72.

together, Pieris is undermining his support for a Semitic understanding of «name» and is running the danger of emptying the name itself of its full significance.

5.6 *Jesus Christ and Salvation*

A great deal hinges on how to reconcile the orthodox Christian credo that we are saved in Jesus Christ (Eph 1,5-7; 1Tm 2,5; 2Tm 1,10) with Pieris' statement that «the Word saves». Can one hold both a christocentric and logocentric soteriology at the same time? Pieris insists that Christ is the centre of our humanity and the *pleroma* of our future. Salvation means entering into the cosmic-human-divine continuum called Christ. He also asserts that we have recognised the Word in Jesus, but it is the Word that mediates salvation and that Christ is a «name» for the Word. In other words, the universality of Christ is accepted but the particularity of the event of Jesus Christ is of salvific value in so far as it names the Word.

In some of his writing Pieris opts for what he calls a biblical perception of salvation, that is, a vision in which serving God, one another, and the earth are taken together²⁸⁷. Salvation and liberation are integrated as one²⁸⁸. As the prophets reminded Israel, true worship of Yahweh is justice practiced towards the poor. Right relations with Yahweh imply the praxis of liberation in opposition to mammon and greed. The struggle of the non-Christian poor for liberation coincides with Yahweh's salvific action. Does this mean that all such forms of liberation can be related to Jesus Christ?

Pieris wants to emphasise that salvation is not to do with God «above» but confronting us as the «God-in-Christ who clamours for my recognition in the [sic] humans»²⁸⁹. Moreover he says that Christ will be the «victim-judge» of all the nations²⁹⁰. To this extent his vision of salvation appears to be a christocentric view. At other times Pieris appears to support a much broader notion of the salvation mystery. What saves «is the mediating

²⁸⁷ «Evangelization and Our Nation» (1993b) 2.

²⁸⁸ In several places Pieris implies a close relationship, if not identity between salvation and liberation. For example, he refers to prophetic communities as both «the readable signs of salvation» and the «effective instruments of liberation» («Asia's Non-Semitic Religions» [1982c] *ATL*, 50). Elsewhere he writes about the «what and how of liberation (= redemption = salvation = coming of the kingdom, etc.)» («A Theology of Liberation?» [1986b] *ATL*, 112).

²⁸⁹ «Evangelization and Our Nation» (1993b) 2.

²⁹⁰ «A Theology of Liberation?» (1986b) *ATL*, 124.

reality to which one culture as much as another can decide what name to give: Christ, Son of God, and the like, or *dhamma*, *tathāgata*, and the like»²⁹¹. Pieris says that such titles are limited but the saving Word is universal and operates even among those who do not recognise it in a Christian sense²⁹². He appears to be saying that Jesus is the Word, but not (yet) the whole expression of the Word for which Christians have learnt to give the name Christ. Christ may be recognised in Jesus, or in the non-Christian slaves of this earth. This understanding of the Word as the discourse of the Spirit would leave open the possibility of the Word being recognised in other religions independent of Jesus Christ.

What Pieris is saying can best be seen in terms of two models: a christocentric model and a logocentric model. In the former, Christ is the *pleroma* of the cosmic-human-divine continuum. In the latter Christ is a human category: a «name» or «title». Both are present in Pieris' work to a greater or lesser extent. The christocentric model is obvious right from the beginning. However the *Logos* which takes a more prominent place in Pieris' recent work, has been present also from the beginning. For example, in 1970 he refers to «reading God's Word» in Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam²⁹³. Depending on his readers or dialogue partners, Pieris gives more emphasis to one or the other. Thus dialogue finds a place not only in the content of his work but also as part of its method.

To say that the Word saves may surprise those who are used to the christocentric expression of the same mystery. In his concern to respect the non-theistic stand of Buddhism, Pieris has sought an area of common understanding on the soteriological level. Does this mean betraying the essence of Christian revelation? How successful has he been in discovering genuine common ground in one liberative path to salvation?

Pieris has chosen the term «Word» to express the mystery of salvation. This is intriguing because the term carries with it a tradition associated with divine revelation, for example, in the Johannine *Logos* and patristic writing including that of Justin and Irenaeus.

How is one to envisage the Word of salvation in Asia? Pieris seeks a mutual enrichment of the soteriological horizon of Asian religiosity and the event of Jesus. He writes:

²⁹¹ «Core-to-Core Dialogue», (1987b) *LMW*, 133.

²⁹² «The Problem of Universality», (1994c) 72.

²⁹³ «The Church, the Kingdom», (1970a) 7.

One thing is certain: if the revelatory and mediational dimension of the salvation-mystery (which has never ceased to shine like an unsetting sun on the soteriological horizon of Asia) is to manifest itself unambiguously for Asians in the human event of Jesus, then that event is, preeminently, the trajectory that *today* links the Jordan of Asian religion with the Calvary of Asian poverty. If this is done, the Asian cultures will open their repertoire of titles, symbols, and formulas to express their new discovery; the Asian church will sing not one but a thousand new canticles to its Spouse and Lord²⁹⁴.

What is new here is the assertion that religiousness and poverty *together* can be salvific, and that this has been enacted in a unique way in Jesus of Nazareth. Pieris is affirming Asian religiosity and the tradition of voluntary poverty inasmuch as they are liberative. He maintains that these constitute the one path towards the *humanum* which is the salvific horizon of both Buddhism and Christianity. Unlike the world of secularism which is a closed world that denies a transcendental horizon, Christianity and Buddhism both touch on the self-conscious, other-oriented, dreaming component of the cosmos which is an openness to the metacosmic or *humanum*. This is what is anticipated by a Christian who lives the life of the risen One or a Buddhist who has followed the path of the awakened One²⁹⁵.

What is the significance of Jesus? Jesus is the good news in two ways. There is the message of the Sermon on the Mount which translates into non-addictiveness or freedom from accumulativeness and consumerism. There is also the good news that Jesus is the incarnation of God's public arrangement with the poor to ensure that they will be free from want²⁹⁶. The first message is a spirituality common to all religions²⁹⁷. Every religion understands holy life as freedom from needs. However the good news in its second sense: that the liberative activity of God and the liberative activity of the poor are one indivisible saving reality, is indeed new and continues

²⁹⁴ «Speaking of the Son of God», (1982f) *ATL*, 63.

²⁹⁵ «Woman and Religion», (1992b) 180.

²⁹⁶ Pieris defines «want» as the absence of basic needs. «Freedom» from needs or «greedlessness» is a voluntary act of freedom (see A. PIERIS, «Universality of Christianity?» [1993g] 594). Pieris insists: «The whole Revelation in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures gives a simple but profound message: that (1) Jesus is the contradiction between Mammon and Yahweh; (2) Jesus is the defense pact between the oppressed and Yahweh» (*Ibid.*, 594-595).

²⁹⁷ Pieris says that Jesus' poverty is an «endorsement» of Buddhist ascesis (see «Buddhism as a Challenge», [1986a] *LMW*, 87).

to be good news in those who follow Jesus' path from Jordan to Calvary. That path, which is the path of the paschal mystery, is enacted in the sociohistorical context of the «liturgy of life»²⁹⁸.

Does this mean that Jesus Christ is the source of salvation also for Buddhists? Pieris says that what saves is the Word Itself²⁹⁹. He holds that the Word of revelation is also the medium of salvation and the path to intimacy with the Ultimate. Thus the eternal Word acts as word-medium-path. This idea is rather elusive if one tries to understand it philosophically. However Pieris appears to be seeing it more from the perspective of liberative praxis³⁰⁰. The truth is revealed in liberation. To hear (obey) the Word is to share in the Spirit's work of manifesting a transformed world, both now and in the future³⁰¹. The Word is still being formed as the Spirit speaks in God and in people in history. It is present and operative also in those who have no knowledge of Jesus Christ³⁰². This is possible because though Jesus is Yahweh's Word, there is no identity between Jesus and the Word.

From a christological perspective the Word recognised in Jesus is growing towards its fullest expression which is Christ. From a logocentric perspective the universal Word which is the voice of the Spirit «blows all words towards the mystery of ultimate silence»³⁰³. Is the revelatory Word fulfilled in Christ or in silence, or both? There is a tension here and that is where the dialogue must continue.

²⁹⁸ «The Problem of Universality», (1994c) 75.

²⁹⁹ «Inculturation in Asia», (1994b) 60.

³⁰⁰ See Pieris' response to Q. 5 in appendix II.

³⁰¹ Pieris distinguishes three dimensions of the mystery of salvation: the source, the medium, and the force of salvation (see «Core-to-Core Dialogue», [1987b] *LMW*, 131-132). He attempts to show parallels in Christianity and Buddhism with the Absolute future/further shore, *dharmallogos*, and the given human potentiality for liberation common to all. The explanation is brief and condensed and needs to be elaborated further.

³⁰² Pieris writes: «But belief that Jesus of Nazareth is *the* enfleshed historical manifestation of this word-medium-path turns Christian theology into a christology. Such naming, however, is not a condition for salvation demanded by the Word which, being universal, operates even among those who do not recognize it by that name» («The Problem of Universality», [1994c] 72.)

³⁰³ «The Problem of Universality», (1994c) 72.

6. Conclusion

A Christian theology of revelation in an interreligious context has to manage a tension between two axioms: the universal salvific will of God, and the mediation of Jesus Christ in the mystery of salvation. Debates over inclusivism, pluralism, and the like, are largely efforts to find an acceptable balance between the two axioms³⁰⁴. Karl Rahner tried to harmonise the two in his theory of «anonymous Christianity». Aloysius Pieris faces a similar tension, but unlike Rahner, he is not offering a Christian interpretation of another World Religion. On the contrary, Pieris wants to show the value of a non-Christian interpretation of the Word for Christianity. Also, Pieris is personally immersed in a situation which comprises Christianity and other religions, particularly Buddhism. It appears as though he has one foot in each camp so that the dialogue is taking place within himself. The dialogue can be seen within Pieris' work as a tension between two soteriological models: one Christ-centered and the other model based on the Word. From a christocentric perspective, Christ is served in the poor now in the hope of future fulfilment in the total Christ. The logocentric model exhibits a different perspective in which Christ is the name Christians give to the Word which mediates salvation. The two models are not always separate and at times occur together.

Figure 2 (on the next page) illustrates Pieris' understanding of revelation combining the two models of salvation.

As has been explained in this chapter, Pieris sees revelation as the word of reconciliation between the ultimacy of the unspeakable One (*Theos*) and the intimacy of the unspoken Speaker (*Pneuma*). It may also be seen as a salvific/liberative exchange between God and the poor. Jesus as *logos*/slave is the personification of that exchange. The total Christ is the final expression of that exchange, seen from a Christian perspective.

Pieris' work amounts to a Christian's search for a non-Christian interpretation of the saving Word in an Asian (Buddhist) context. Beginning with the premise that all religions have a core liberative experience, Pieris has uncovered common ground between the Buddhist experience of liberative knowledge and the Christian experience of redemptive love.

³⁰⁴ The two axioms are treated by Karl Rahner in «Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions», 122-123. Also see G. D'COSTA, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, 16.

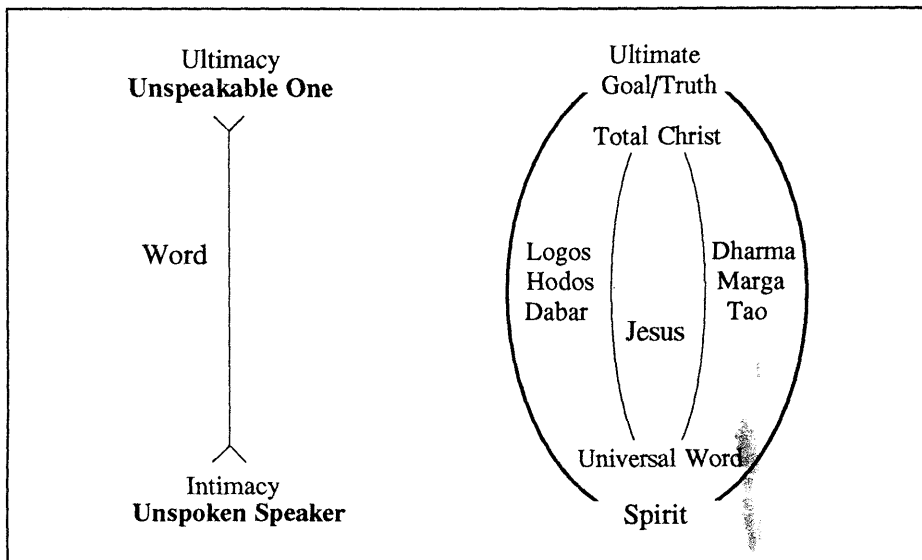


Fig. 2: Revelation from a Pneumatological Viewpoint

Furthermore Pieris points out ways in which dialogue with (non-Christian) Asians can help Christians learn what the Spirit is saying in contemporary Asia. Pieris places particular importance on the way cosmic religiosity, associated with the poor, contributes to the liberating potential of Asian religion. Adherents of metacosmic religions (Buddhists and Christians) may reinterpret their beliefs according to the liberative elements in the cosmic religiosity of their co-believers who belong to the poorer classes³⁰⁵.

Pieris' effort to find an Asian expression of the Word results in an understanding of divine revelation with a rather different perspective from that of *Dei verbum*. In particular, six points may be noted.

Firstly, by focusing on the saving word uttered by the Spirit, Pieris helps point to the danger of absolutising the symbolic structures that mediate revelation³⁰⁶. Religions do not save for they are mediations of the saving

³⁰⁵ «God's saving power erupts from the earth's slaving poor» («The Place of Non-Christian Religions» [1982d] 110).

³⁰⁶ In his response to Q. 6 in appendix II, Pieris comments that one must not identify God's word with scripture. God's word is what God speaks now. What was said to

Mystery which we call God. Pieris includes terms such as «Christ» or «Son of God» as traditions of the Christian church which could possibly reify revelation in past tradition, and in so doing, hide the actuality of God's continuing presence in life and in history.

Secondly, Pieris shows how the Buddhist core experience challenges Christians to realise that their agapeic orientation is not the only way of viewing reality. The Buddhist gnostic experience can open up new ways of experiencing God as silence. Pieris maintains that it is at the level of experience that Buddhist reference to enlightenment and Christian reference to God's revelation can find common ground.

Thirdly, in stressing the universal action of the Spirit Pieris features the cosmic magnitude of salvation and of revelation. Salvation is not merely the deliverance of an individual. One is liberated in one's relatedness. Salvation is the creation of a new order of love³⁰⁷. Humanity is the substance and the agent of this transformation initiated by God. This very salvific process is understood to be revelatory in character.

Fourthly, Pieris asserts that the religiousness of the non-Christian poor can be a new medium of revelation and source for theology³⁰⁸. Through the poor the Word is actualised and encountered in a religious experience of liberation expressed in an Asian idiom. The poor have a special role in salvation because it is through them that God's reign comes about. They encounter the saving mystery, which we call God, in the experience of liberation. Their continuing struggle may involve social conflict, but conflict with idols such as power and profit can itself be seen as a revelatory action of God³⁰⁹.

Fifthly, the religiousness of the poor opens up new possibilities to see the presence of ultimate reality reflected in a just society. Thus the religious aspiration for freedom of the Asian poor is theologically important because it contains the seed of the revelation of the justice of God. Their emphasis on a religious basis for social justice coincides with the biblical view. Yet

Moses and Abraham is a pattern by which we can learn to attune ourselves to God in history.

³⁰⁷ «The Spirit Dimension» (1988f) 34.

³⁰⁸ By the participation of the non-Christian poor in the paschal mystery, theology becomes «the Christic apocalypse of the non-Christian experiences of liberation» («Toward an Asian Theology» [1979c] *ATL*, 86).

³⁰⁹ «Evangelization and Our Nation» (1993b) 6-7.

there is a particularly Asian character about their association of religiousness and poverty in the praxis of liberation.

Sixthly, Pieris points out the unique role of Jesus in the revelation of God's defence pact between God and slaves. Pieris says that no one has ever claimed this for any other founder of a religion, nor has this unique claim been a threat to any other religion³¹⁰. Moreover he points out how non-Christians may be in a special position to identify the uniqueness of this revelation in Jesus because they become aware of what is different from the experience of their own religion.

In some respects, for example in its cosmic, interreligious dimension, Pieris' understanding of revelation is broader than that of Vatican II. In other respects his view is more restrictive because of his choice to perceive revelation from a particular viewpoint, that is, from the perspective of liberation. One might well ask to what degree Pieris' view expresses the fullness of the mystery of Jesus Christ. However his intention is not to develop a comprehensive christology, rather, to discover (his term is «explicitate») the salvific word of the Spirit in Asia today.

Pieris' interpretation raises many questions in its variance from the Vatican II viewpoint as seen in *Dei verbum*. The centrality given to the Word and the loosening of the ties between Jesus Christ and the Word create an inevitable tension with orthodox Christian tradition. Sometimes Pieris' response is a typically Buddhist one: It is not that he refuses to speak but that he declines to answer³¹¹. When he does answer, he maintains

³¹⁰ Communicated in a letter from Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 Nov 1994. Pieris continues: «I have had the privilege of teaching comparative study of Buddhism and Christianity to the post-graduate students, mostly Buddhist monks, in the Pāli and Buddhist University of Sri Lanka, and they have not renounced even an iota of Buddhism to go along with this explanation of the uniqueness of Jesus. Rather they have been deeply moved by this Christology, moved to reflect over our obligations as religious people in contemporary society. This is what Christology should do if it is soteriology and not just ontology. It is neither proselytizing nor philosophizing, but saving and transforming».

³¹¹ R. Panikkar writes: «The gentle, smiling Buddha does not refuse to speak, but [...] he surely refuses to answer» (R. PANIKKAR, *The Silence of God*, 62). Mervyn Fernando explains: «The more one talks about God the more he eludes one's grasp. In the eastern religious traditions, it would be meaningless to talk about God without having experienced him. But the one who has experienced the Absolute will not talk about it, because — like the Buddha — he cannot» (M. FERNANDO, «The Buddhist Challenge», 94).

that he is working with a paradigm different from that of classical Western theology. His is a paradigm based not on philosophy but on *soteria*: Yahweh's Word which reveals itself in the process of liberating³¹².

Pieris does not concern himself with incarnations of the *Logos* other than that in Jesus, or about the content of other interpretations of the Word, such as the *dharma*. His interest is in the soteriological nucleus or liberative core of other religions and the way the Spirit is speaking, particularly through the religiosity of the poor in Asia today. He points out that though this voice of the Spirit may be communicated through a non-Christian medium, it can contribute something very important to Christianity. This Word «ever ancient and ever new» may have an accent, intonation, and innuendos which are different from the way the Word has been expressed in Western Christianity. However this is the way the Spirit can teach anew the meaning of Christ today.

To what extent the Word in other religions is a «new» source for theology could be debated. Pieris does not indicate that the content of this revelation is qualitatively different from that of Biblical revelation. It is an ancient revelation which seems new in the sense that this Asian resource has not been acknowledged previously³¹³. Also, the novelty of the people's religion containing the seeds of God's revelation can be a new source for hermeneutics and help provide new insights and revitalise the textual religions in Asia³¹⁴.

An issue which recurs is how to preserve a link with the particularity of the Jesus Christ event as recorded in the Christian scriptures. What does it mean for an Asian Christian to believe that Jesus Christ is the fullness of revelation and the Savior of the world? Pieris adopts a pneumatological approach to the mystery of salvation, and uses a «faith seeking justice and liberation» paradigm to explain the significance of Jesus. The faith assertion that Jesus is the defence pact between Yahweh and the oppressed

³¹² Pieris writes, «Do we see that we have been hi-jacked by Chalcedon, and Chalcedon itself hi-jacked by the social class that did not experience the status of slaves but only profited by it? [...] Jesus was NOT understood at Chalcedon. Incarnation was NOT understood there. We are dealing with *soteria*, Yaweh's Word which reveals itself in the process of liberating» (from a letter of Aloysius Pieris to this writer, 1 Nov. 1994).

³¹³ Pieris comments that the «recovery of an ancient revelation is indeed a new creation» («Toward an Asian Theology» (1979c) *ATL*, 71).

³¹⁴ «A Theology of Liberation?» (1986b) *ATL*, 25.

constitutes «a Christology that can be translated into a praxis in Asia, and in fact in any other part of the world, as well»³¹⁵. God's revelation must receive its authority, not from text or tradition, but from its competence to «actualize God's Word», that is, to mediate liberation for the peoples of Asia³¹⁶. The good news is not simply gnosis, but an event which continues in our day leading to the «not yet» which Christians call the totality of Christ.

Inasmuch as non-Christians are part of that event, they too contribute to the growth of the Word, for the Word is not simply *logos* (the explanatory word), but also *dabar* (the medium), and *hodos* (the way)³¹⁷. God's Word reveals itself in the process of liberating. The Spirit speaks while helping people to recognise, preserve, and develop the seeds of the reign of God in their lives³¹⁸. In logocentric language, the Word of revelation and salvation is heard not only in the history of Israel and of Jesus, but in the continuing history of the world³¹⁹. In christocentric language, the voice of the universal Spirit, heard through non-Christian theologies with their roots in the cosmic religiosity of Asia, may be seen as a new source of revelation, manifesting the Asian Christ.

It is important to note that Pieris is not trying to resolve the tension between salvation in other religions and the unique role of Jesus in the mystery of salvation by resorting to a theory like that of «anonymous Christianity». There remains a tension between the non-Christian Christ and the Word which saves. Members of other religions must be respected in their identity as Buddhists, Hindus, or Muslims, but, inasmuch as they participate in the liberation of slaves and non-persons, they reveal the «non-Christian Christ». Pieris says that the Asian Christ, sometimes called the non-Christian Christ, «is the *true body*, even if it has not yet named its

³¹⁵ «Universality of Christianity?» (1993g) 595.

³¹⁶ See «Asia's Non-Semitic Religions» (1982c) *ATL*, 35, 37. Also see «Three Inadequacies» (1993f) 88.

³¹⁷ «An all-embracing christology (call it universal if you like) is one that weaves together all the three aspects of Christian discourse: Jesus as the word that interprets reality, the medium that transforms history, and the way that leads to the cessation of all discourse» («The Problem of Universality» [1994c] 78.

³¹⁸ «Evangelization and Our Nation» (1993b) 9.

³¹⁹ «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 74. Pieris continues: «*Extra historiam nulla salus*. To obey the Word is [...] to share in the Spirit's work of manifesting, here and now, a transformed world».

head»³²⁰. In other words, the non-Christian Christ is truly part of the body of Christ, but it does not necessarily recognise a link with Jesus of Nazareth. Pieris does not give the head another name, but leaves it open, admitting that this view conflicts with traditional Christology and that «Asian Christians need both time and freedom to resolve these conflicts in their own way»³²¹.

³²⁰ The text of the full paragraph is as follows. «Christ of the official church is not only European but also *ecclesiastical*; i.e., a clumsy body that hides its head which is Jesus. But the non-European Christ of the Asian elite suffers from the other extreme of not being *ecclesial*; it is a head minus the body, a Jesus truncated from the total Christ. In contrast to both of these, the Asian Christ (as recognised, announced and served in the basic human communities) — at times called the non-Christian Christ — is the *true body*, even if it has not yet named its head» («Does Christ Have a Place?» [1993a] 43).

³²¹ «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 42.

CHAPTER V

Gustavo Gutiérrez's Understanding of Divine Revelation

1. Introduction

The Peruvian writer José María Arguedas, in *¿Último Diario?*, uses the *calandria*, a species of South American lark, to symbolise the dynamics of Peruvian history. The *calandria consoladora* is a symbol of fatalistic suffering, while the *calandria de fuego* is a symbol of fire and passion. Gustavo Gutiérrez takes up the contrasting Arguedian symbols in his small book: *Entre las calandrias*¹. The *calandria consoladora* and the *calandria de fuego* symbolise two cycles of history and at the same time two visions of God: *Dios inquisidor* and *Dios liberador*. The *calandria consoladora* represents the inquisitorial God of ongoing exploitation, removed from the plight of the people. Gutiérrez sees the *calandria de fuego* as representing the liberator God who rejoins the popular struggles for liberation and the hope of the exploited². Gutiérrez often refers to Arguedas, and no doubt the Arguedian vision of Peruvian history and his poetic appreciation of the poor

¹ Gutiérrez cites a text from Arguedas where he elaborates on the symbol of the *calandria* which flies not from the *pisonay* trees, but in people's bloodied hearts. «La solitaria calandria voló del pisonay [...] su vuelo, lento, ante los ojos intranquilos del gran señor a quien le interrogaba un indio, iluminó a la multitud. Ni el agua de los manantiales cristalinos, ni el lucero del amanecer que alcanza con su luz el corazón de la gente, consuela tanto, ahonda la armonía en el ser conturbado o atento del hombre. La calandria vuela y canta no en el pisonay sino en el pecho ensangrentado de Carhuamayo, acariciándolo» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Calandrias* [1989c] 59, fn. 26).

² Gutiérrez further explains the Arguedian symbolism, in his essay «Freedom and Salvation» (1977a) 93.

contributed to Gutiérrez's views at the time he was developing what has become known as «liberation theology»³.

As the frontispiece to his book *Teología de la liberación* Gustavo Gutiérrez included an episode from Arguedas's work, *Todas las sangres*, in which a priest blandly assures his sacristan that «God is everywhere». The sacristan (who, Gutiérrez reminds us, «knows no metaphysics, but is well acquainted with injustice and oppression») asks, «Was God in the heart of those who broke the body of the innocent teacher Bellido? Is God in the bodies of the engineers who are killing "La Esmeralda"? In the official who took the corn fields away from their owners [...]?»⁴. In the face of the suffering of innocent people, language deduced from philosophical principles could easily become «windy arguments» providing people with answers to questions they do not ask. Instead, Gutiérrez begins with questions that arise from contemporary faith experience: «How are we to proclaim the resurrection of the Lord where death reigns, and especially the death of children, women, the poor, indigenes, and the "unimportant" members of our society?»⁵.

How we can talk about God amid suffering and oppression is a question repeated often by Gustavo Gutiérrez. It is a question not only about language but also about our understanding of faith that is inseparable from specific conditions and particular contexts. To ask such a question implies a theology that intimately connects our world with our knowledge of God. It reveals the need for a theology of revelation that relates salvation to the human condition. It indicates a sensitivity to that anthropological aspect of revelation where in revealing God to us, the Gospel message reveals us to ourselves in our situation before the Lord and before people⁶.

³ For a description of the significance of Arguedas for Gutiérrez see C. CADORETTE, *From the Heart of the People*, 67-75. Cadorette says that «the relationship between the thought of Arguedas and Gutiérrez is basic to understanding the evolution of the latter's theology» (ID., «Peru and the Mystery of Liberation, 52). Robert McFee Brown notes how Arguedas and Gustavo met in 1968 just after Gustavo's lecture at Chimbote where he first presented his ideas on liberation. «A mutual friend arranged a meeting, and deep bonds were immediately established» (R.M. BROWN, *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, 28).

⁴ From the frontispiece to G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Teología de la liberación* (1971b). It appears again in the same book on pp. 297-298 [111]. Page references are to the Spanish edition, normally with the page number of the English translation in [].

⁵ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Job* (1986a) 223 [102].

⁶ *Liberación*, 74 [6]. For an example of Gutiérrez's initial question see *Ibid.*, 40 [xxxiv].

Gustavo Gutiérrez was born in 1928 in Lima, Peru. He studied medicine and later philosophy in Lima, philosophy and psychology in Louvain, Belgium, and theology in Lyon, France, the Gregorian University, Rome, and the Institut Catholique, Paris. He was ordained priest in 1959 and has since been involved as a student chaplain, in study and research, and in lecturing. He is a pastor in Rímac, Lima, and director of the Centro Bartolomé de Las Casas, Lima, Peru⁷.

Studying Gustavo Gutiérrez's work is a challenge because, as «father» of contemporary liberation theology, he has provoked both praise and opposition both within and beyond the theological domain⁸. Interpretations and critiques abound, but quality in-depth studies are not so common⁹. This study will therefore seek to maintain a critical distance from the many controversies and will be based principally on Gustavo Gutiérrez's own work, rather than the opinions of others.

Gutiérrez's written works vary greatly, and for a proper understanding, their origin and purpose should be taken into account. For example, his book *La Fuerza histórica de los pobres* is a collection of essays written over a decade. His book *El Dios de la Vida* has its origin in bible-studies prepared for the annual Summer School in Lima. The book *La verdad los hará libres* contains the account of a discussion and two lengthy essays, written at a time when Gutiérrez was experiencing strong criticism. Some of his work appeared first in articles in the journal *Páginas* and was then revised and published separately at a later date. Due to this diversity, one must take care not to use a «proof text» method with isolated passages

⁷ Gutiérrez's thesis for the master's degree in philosophy and psychology (1955) was on «The Psychic Conflict in Freud». For his master's degree in theology (1959) his thesis was on «Religious Liberty». His doctorate in theology from the University of Lyon (1986) was based on the corpus of his writings. For other personal and biographical details, see R.M. BROWN, *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, 22-49.

⁸ For a resumé of the opposition to Gustavo Gutiérrez's work see fn. 64. A sustained critique of his work may be found in two books by Bp R. DURAND FLOREZ, *Observaciones a «Teología de la Liberación»* and *La Utopía de la Liberación*. Gustavo Gutiérrez is well known outside theological circles. Mary Hynes reports on an informal poll in Lima Peru in February 1988, in which 16/75 of those questioned in a wealthy suburb (San Isidro) said they were familiar with Gutiérrez and his work, and 120/120 in two poor areas (Canto Grande and San Germán) responded that they knew the name, and general area of Gustavo Gutiérrez's work (see M.J. HYNES, *Gustavo Gutiérrez's Concepts and Images of God*, 61, fn. 68).

⁹ An excellent, though very brief commentary on, and interpretation of, Gustavo Gutiérrez's work is by C. CADORETTE, *From the Heart of the People*.

taken from various works. Where required, texts will be considered in their context.

This chapter falls into five parts: an introductory section, a study of his understanding of revelation using the diachronic method, then a deeper analysis of his understanding from the synchronic perspective. Then follows an appraisal of his contribution to the theology of revelation and finally a part with evaluation and critique.

1.1 *Socioecclesial Context*

Francisco Pizarro's Spanish expedition from Panama reached northern Peru in 1532 and proceeded to conquer the Inca empire. Spanish rule continued until Peru declared its independence from Spain in 1821 and defeated the royalist forces at Ayacucho three years later. Since then Peru has experienced periods of democratic government interrupted by dictatorships¹⁰. There has been a similar pattern of history throughout most of Latin America.

¹⁰ Swings of political fortune have been common in recent history. After a brief military regime (1962-63), Fernando Belaúnde Terry took over as President of Peru in 1963. His term of office ended abruptly in October 1968 when he was deposed by a military coup led by Juan Velasco Alvarado. Opposition from peasants who failed to benefit from agrarian reform, caused riots and rural rebellion in 1973 and 1975. An internal military coup deposed General Velasco in August 1975, and civilian rule was established again. Ex-president Belaúnde had a second term from 1980-1985. However the government encountered increasing difficulties with economic recession, inflation, and terrorism. (The Sendero Luminoso revolutionary movement began their armed struggle at the beginning of the 1980s.) In 1985 Alán García Pérez of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana party took over as president. But he encountered grave problems; for example, more than 50 bomb explosions in Lima in one week in 1985. There were prison mutinies and many inmates were killed. Amidst economic woes and civil unrest Alberto Fujimori was elected president in 1990. He began with a neo-liberal austerity programme including a 40% decrease in the number of state employees. In 1991, during a cholera epidemic, with the support of the army, Fujimori, claiming to be frustrated by delays imposed by Congress, led an *autogolpe* against the Congress on 5 April 1992. Later that same year, Abimael Guzmán Reynoso, leader of the Sendero Luminoso, was captured by security forces. Under Fujimori the constitution was changed to allow him to run for a second consecutive term of office. In 1995, with military skirmishes against neighbouring Ecuador, Fujimori was elected again as president. Peru is not an isolated case. Most of the other countries in Latin America have experienced serious political instability in recent decades (principal source: C.T. SMITH, «History», 522-523).

In the years 1950-60, thrust into contact with the forces of the modern world, Latin America experienced rapid and profound changes. People poured from their rural environments into the suburbs around the big cities. Urban conditions, new pressures, social alienation and ideological pluralism led to a break with the traditional patterns of life. The rapid and conflictive changes revealed the need for the church to redefine its identity in the continent.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council the church in Latin America maintained strong ties with established authority, thus enjoying the latter's support. However, the CELAM conference at Medellín introduced a different approach. Naturally there were differences of opinion; however, the documents of the Medellín conference illustrate how the assembly of Latin American bishops began from an analysis of the concrete situation in Latin America, and made a commitment to solidarity with the poor and to helping the poor to become agents of their own development¹¹. Ever since the turbulent times of Bartolomé de Las Casas and his colleagues in the 16th century, there has been a presence in the church trying to put God before gold and the gospel before guns. Thus the defence of the poor in Medellín was the recovery of a tradition that had been present in Latin America since the time of the conquest.

The poverty of so many people led to a debate on the causes of such misery and the possibilities of integral human development. Different perspectives were a source of tension within the Latin American church. During the 1960s, disillusioned with the model of development proposed by the architects of the «Alianza para el Progreso» some Brazilian and Chilean social scientists began to propose a dependence theory¹². Gustavo

¹¹ For example, the bishops declared that the situation of injustice in many parts of Latin America was one of «institutionalized violence» (see COMISIÓN EPISCOPAL DE ACCIÓN SOCIAL, «Paz» 16 [E.T., in *Between Honesty and Hope*, 206]).

¹² Gregorio Iriarte describes different ways of viewing the socio-political situation. *Development* theories distinguish between the developed and undeveloped countries. Often the proposed solution is for the underdeveloped country to become «modern» or «industrialised». Such forms of developmentalism fit well with neoliberal economic theories thus promoting monetarism, free market, and the diminution of the state. In contrast, *dependence* theories hold that countries of the Third World have become dependent economically, politically and culturally. Wealth and poverty are seen as two sides of the same coin. The proposed solution is not growth (developmentalism), but liberation from the state of dependence or oppression. Iriarte gives an example. Christian charity used to say, «Give a fish to the hungry». Development theories say, «Teach him to fish». The liberation approach says, «The river for the fisherfolk!» (G. IRIARTE, *Para*

Gutiérrez saw the dependence theory as a better tool for grasping the real causes of the misery of the poor and the conflictual nature of human history. He came to see that the situation in Latin America was one of external dependency and internal domination, hence Gutiérrez's proposal for a theology of liberation which would not merely provide new insights, but which would be a part of the process by which the poor could become artisans of their own liberation¹³.

The sociopolitical situation has changed considerably in the thirty years since dependency theories were first proposed. Yet the gap between the rich and the poor grows greater¹⁴. Significant social and ecclesial developments in recent years in Latin America include: democratisation, dreadful turns in socioeconomic trends, religious vitality and competition, and the effect of Roman influence on the church¹⁵. After fostering protection and support for opposition movements to authoritarian regimes, the church is now having to learn a new role as democracy gets a new start in Latin America. Most Latin American countries have experienced disastrous socioeconomic problems with high inflation and crippling external debt. Today the external debt is a new form of dependence on the countries of the North¹⁶. The poor feel more acutely the social debt which is the consequence of structural adjustment and austerity programmes designed to repay the financial debt.

comprender América Latina, 151-162, 173).

¹³ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Fuerza* (1979b) 63 [45]. At that stage, in the early 1970s, Gutiérrez uses language which would obviously threaten those linked to the established social and ecclesial structures. He writes, «Sólo la superación de una sociedad dividida en clases, sólo un poder político al servicio de las grandes mayorías populares, sólo la eliminación de la apropiación privada de la riqueza creada por el trabajo humano, puede darnos las bases de una sociedad más justa[...]. De allí la búsqueda revolucionaria y combativa de condiciones reales para la construcción de una sociedad libre y justa y la sospecha crítica frente a toda justificación ideológica que quiera esconder una situación cruel y conflictual» (*Ibid.*, 63-64 [46]).

¹⁴ For a critique of the use of dependency theories in liberation theology, see P.G. MOLL, «Liberating Liberation Theology», 25-40. Moll claims that the liberation theologians' fondness for dependency theory not only obscured their understanding of economic justice but also diverted attention from issues of national policy.

¹⁵ The four factors are those singled out by Edward L. Cleary in his report on the preparations for the Bishops' Conference in Santo Domingo. Cleary also notes a new focus on ethnicity and women's concerns as «signs of the times» found in the preparatory documents for Santo Domingo (see E.L. CLEARY, «The Journey to Santo Domingo», 3-23).

¹⁶ See C. DEL VALLE, *La deuda externa de América Latina*, 643-644.

At the moment the only economic option in Latin America seems to be neoliberal capitalism¹⁷. Catholic church leaders are threatened by rapid growth in non-Catholic religious groups in Latin America. Meanwhile, there has been increasing opposition to the Catholic church and polarisation within the church itself¹⁸. Gustavo Gutiérrez has not escaped those tensions and the situation forms the context for his theology¹⁹.

1.2 *Some Basic Premises*

In 1988 Gustavo Gutiérrez published an article «Mirar Lejos», which became the new introduction to the revised edition of *Teología de la liberación*²⁰. In this article Gutiérrez reviews the development of his

¹⁷ In Peru during the 1980s inflation became endemic. Consumer prices in Lima doubled, on average, every year from 1983 to 1987. The rate of inflation was 667% in 1988; 3,398% in 1989; 7,481% in 1990; 409% in 1991 (C. SMITH, «Economy», 525-531). The economic situation has improved recently, with inflation reduced to 15% in 1994 (see *International Herald Tribune*, April 29-30, 1995, 13). At least 30,000 Peruvians were killed by Peruvians in thirteen years of struggle with Sendero Luminoso (see C. TAPIA, «Adiós a las armas» *Diario, La República*, Lima, martes, 22 junio, 1993, 8).

¹⁸ An example of opposition from the USA is the 1980 Santa Fe Document prepared within the Republican Party to help President Reagan set a course for dealing with Latin America. The document recommends that liberation theology be opposed, discredited, and attacked (see, R.M. BROWN, *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, 134). For an example of tension within the Latin American church, see DECLARATION OF LOS ANDES «Communion "Declaration of Los Andes"», 444-450. E.L. Cleary and Alfred T. Hennelly both report tensions within the church (for example, between CELAM and the Rome-based Comisión América Latina [CAL]) in the preparations for Santo Domingo (see A.T. HENNELLY, ed., *Santo Domingo and Beyond*, 17-18, 29). For a brief history of the church in Peru, see J. KLAIBER, «The Church in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia». For a fuller view of church history in Latin America, sympathetic to liberation theology, see E. DUSSEL, *A History of the Church in Latin America*. Dussel sees liberation theology as a sixth epoch in the history of theology in Latin America.

¹⁹ Gutiérrez writes about opposition and martyrdom in the Latin American church in *Liberación*, 11, 51-56 [xviii, xli-xliv]. In 1990 the archbishop of Lima expressed his satisfaction with the changes Gustavo Gutiérrez had made in the revised edition of *Teología de la liberación*, and noted an agreement whereby the archbishop would receive his future work prior to its publication. The archbishop also notes that the agreement does not exclude other questions about Gutiérrez's writings («Nota de prensa del Arzobispado de Lima», Lima, 17 September 1990). Also see R. MARLÉ, «Théologiens en procès».

²⁰ See G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Mirar lejos» (1988c); also (1971b rev. ed.).

theology and expands on several themes that he felt to be particularly important²¹. The themes he considers «basic» to liberation theology are: the viewpoint of the poor, theological work, and the proclamation of the kingdom of life²². The three themes serve as a framework for outlining some of the foundational ideas behind Gutiérrez's approach.

The «irruption» of the poor in Latin America, due to the sociopolitical changes outlined in the previous section, amounts to a «sign of the times» for Gutiérrez. Poverty is a complex issue and Gutiérrez distinguishes three meanings of the term²³. First, it can mean *material poverty* or lack of the necessities of human life. In this sense poverty is degrading and something to be avoided. Secondly, poverty can mean *spiritual poverty*, often understood as an attitude of unattachment to the goods of this world and the readiness to do God's will. Thirdly, it can mean *solidarity* with the poor, along with the protest against the conditions under which they suffer. Solidarity implies a prophetic option for the poor which is rooted in the love of God and demanded by God's love.

Gutiérrez combines concern for the poor with a method whereby reflection is the *second act* for doing theology, the *first act* being a people's way of being Christian²⁴. What does it mean to be christian? Gutiérrez describes it as following Jesus in commitment and prayer²⁵. A radical self-giving includes a sense of gratuitousness which is really a form of prayer²⁶. The second stage of theological work is critical reflection in which the community allows the light of God's Word to illuminate and challenge the

²¹ For insights into the early influences on Gutiérrez's theology, see G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Quehacer teológico y experiencia eclesial» (1984b) 401-402. See also his response to the first question in appendix III. In the interview «Fuera de la asamblea» 58, Gutiérrez tells how his approach changed in the years 1965-68.

²² Gutiérrez's views have obviously evolved with the kingdom of life being given greater prominence. In 1977 he distinguished only two fundamental insights of liberation theology: theological method and the perspective of the poor (*Fuerza*, 257 [200]).

²³ Gutiérrez's understanding of poverty is developed in chap. 13 of *Liberación*.

²⁴ Gutiérrez clarifies that «first» and «second» refer not to chronology but to priorities. «The first priority is to be Christian and after that comes theology» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «New Evangelization» [1992e] 186).

²⁵ «Seguir a Jesús define al cristiano. Reflexionar sobre esa experiencia es el tema central de toda sana teología». These are the opening words to Gutiérrez's book, *Beber en su propio pozo* (1983a) 9 [1].

²⁶ Gutiérrez gives the example of Mary in the Magnificat (*Liberación*, 33 [xxxii], and *Beber*, 144 [111]).

way it lives the Christian faith²⁷. Gutiérrez is not concerned with an «otherworldly» faith, but rather «lived faith» which is inseparable from concrete conditions. So theological reflection must take those conditions into account and address questions that arise out of that context²⁸.

Gutiérrez looks at the situation in Latin America and concludes that the poor, living in the face of death, experience the urgent need of a gospel of radical liberation. This profound longing for liberation from all forms of oppression, may be seen in the light of biblical revelation as a sign of the active presence of the Spirit inspiring people to opt for life rather than death.

Gutiérrez distinguishes between three dimensions of liberation²⁹. Firstly, there is liberation from social situations and structures of oppression and marginalisation. Such situations, which may be political, economic or cultural, force people to live in inhuman conditions contrary to full personhood. Secondly, there is personal liberation «by which we live with profound inner freedom in the face of every kind of servitude»³⁰. This is a liberation from the power of fate and the sense that one can do nothing about one's situation in life. The third level of liberation is from sin. This goes to the very source of social injustice and other forms of human

²⁷ Gutiérrez defines liberation theology as «una reflexión crítica sobre la praxis a la luz de la Palabra de Dios» [«a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word of God»]; (*Liberación*, 31 [xxix]). Six pages later there is a similar reference as follows: «En tanto reflexión crítica a la luz de la Palabra acogida en la Iglesia, ella explicitará los valores de fe, esperanza y caridad que animan la práctica de los cristianos». This has been translated as: «Since liberation theology is a critical reflection on the word of God received in the church, it will make explicit the values of faith, hope, and love that inspire the praxis of Christians» (*Ibid.*, 37 [xxxiii]). The expression, «in the light of the word of God» would be a more correct translation and also more consistent with the first definition and the definition two pages further on (*Ibid.*, 39 [xxxiv]).

²⁸ For Gutiérrez, one of the principal challenges today is to find a way to speak about God in the face of suffering and death. Referring to a Peruvian city buffeted by poverty and violence he asks: How is it possible to do theology «while Ayacucho lasts»? (*Liberación*, 40 [xxxiv]). In fn. 27 [24], Gutiérrez explains that Ayacucho means «rincón de los muertos» [corner of the dead] in the Quechua language. Ayacucho is a city in Peru well known for poverty and violence and a symbol of the suffering and death of the poor.

²⁹ Gutiérrez relates how a passage in the encyclical *Populorum progressio* helped him establish the distinction between the three levels of the single process of liberation (G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Verdad* [1986b] 169 [119]).

³⁰ *Liberación*, 47 [xxxviii].

oppression. Liberation then is a journey towards *communion*, reconciling us with God, our fellow human beings, and ourselves³¹.

The themes considered above: the poor, theological work, and the kingdom of life were those which Gutiérrez felt were necessary to emphasise fifteen years after first publishing *Teología de la liberación*. Understandably, his work has shown some developments over the years, for example: a more nuanced attitude to socialism and a greater emphasis on spirituality. Nevertheless the themes outlined above act as a basis for Gutiérrez's understanding of God's particular life-giving love for the poor and his contention that «the real theophany, or revelation of God, is in the liberation of the person who is poor»³².

2. Principal Ideas on Revelation

Gutiérrez does not provide a systematic treatment of divine revelation, but his understanding of it is a significant element underlying much of his theology. Poverty and injustice are not simply social problems. They are faith issues. Hence Gutiérrez endeavours to relate faith and the human situation. There is an obvious relation between religious faith and the revealing presence of God. However the link between revelation and the human situation is less obvious, and the way Gutiérrez treats the issue is one of the principal points in this study.

This section will first examine Gutiérrez's terminology. That will be followed by an account of how his understanding of revelation has developed. Then the study will treat how Gutiérrez sees the locus of divine revelation and its content. At times the focus is on the source of revelation: God. Alternatively the focus is on the recipients and mediums of that revelation: the poor. In all cases the content has to do with the gratuitous love of the God of life.

³¹ See *Verdad*, 148 [105-106]. In treating the three dimensions of integral liberation Gutiérrez stresses that they are interdependent and should be considered together. The second dimension is particularly important as a mediator between the political and religious levels, otherwise there is too easily a juxtaposition that impoverishes both. The second level unites both dimensions at the human level. A unified view is important because it fits with the understanding of the unity of history.

³² *Fuerza*, 17 [7].

2.1 Use of the Term «Revelation»

Gustavo Gutiérrez makes frequent use of forms of the term «revelation». Sometimes it appears in verbal form with no reference to divine revelation, but rather in the sense of: «to show» or «to disclose». For example he refers to the church «revealing» the plan of salvation³³.

Gutiérrez often uses the substantive form in expressions like «biblical revelation», or «Christian revelation». Sometimes he employs a verbal form: «God reveals himself in history». Often the verb in the reflexive form is translated into English in the passive voice: «God who is revealed». On a few occasions different connotations occur together; for instance, Gutiérrez remarks that in revealing Godself, God reveals us to ourselves³⁴.

Sometimes the term revelation appears as a modifier. For example, Gutiérrez refers to «the revealed word», «revealed truth», and the «revelatory potential» of the cross³⁵.

Occasionally contrast with other terms helps accentuate the meaning of the term revelation, for example: revelation and history, revelation and experience; or metonymy is used, for instance: revelation and tradition, revelation and gratuitousness³⁶.

The examples above illustrate how Gustavo Gutiérrez uses the term «revelation» or its equivalent in a variety of ways³⁷. Although the word «revelation» in its various forms is employed frequently, there are other

³³ *Liberación*, 377 [147]. In one place Gutiérrez compares personal revelations to God's revelation through the Christian faith. He says, «Liberation theology is not a new revelation. In life few people, only the very holy, ever have revelations. I have only one revelation and it is the one faith» («New Evangelization» [1992e] 185).

³⁴ «Dios se revela en la historia» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «La fuerza histórica de los pobres» [1978a] xli [*Power*, 105]); «Dios que se revela» (ID, *Vida* [1989b] 212 [108]); «Dios al revelarse nos revela a nosotros mismos» (ID, *Líneas* [1968b] 87).

³⁵ «La palabra revelada» (*Líneas*, 6); «La verdad revelada» (*Liberación*, 39 [xxxiv]); «su capacidad reveladora» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Los límites de la teología moderna» [1979c] 231 [*Power*, 230]).

³⁶ «Revelación e historia» (*Liberación*, 37 [xxxiii]); «la acción liberadora de Dios y la experiencia del hombre» (*Verdad*, 174 [123]); «la revelación y la tradición» (*Liberación*, 92 [10]); «revelación y gratuidad» (*Job*, 12-13 [xi]).

³⁷ In his book *Teología de la liberación* (1971), Gutiérrez uses the substantive form «revelación» at least 34 times, the verbal form, at least 8 times and the term as a modifier at least once. There are also expressions such as «la autocomunicación de Dios» (x3+), and «la Palabra de Dios» (x7+). In the book *El Dios de la vida* (1989), he uses the substantive form at least 38 times, and the verbal form at least 39 times.

expressions which convey a similar meaning, for example: the (self)-manifestation of God, and the self-communication of God. Gutiérrez also refers to God's active presence, and to God's word³⁸.

2.2 *The Development in Gutiérrez's Understanding*

Over the past 25 years Gutiérrez has emphasised different aspects of divine revelation. There are no clear-cut divisions as his thought has evolved. However it is possible to distinguish five phases in the development of his understanding of revelation³⁹. The five phases are as follows:

- Human emancipation in the light of God's word.
- God revealed in the liberation of the poor.
- The gratuitous love of the God of life.
- Revealed truth and the deposit of faith.
- Religious freedom: the «neuralgic point» of Christian revelation.

2.3 *Human Emancipation in the Light of God's Word*

Gustavo Gutiérrez has long been interested in the relationship between faith and life, particularly in terms of pastoral theology for Latin America⁴⁰.

³⁸ «Manifestación de Dios» (*Vida*, 200 [101]); «La autocomunicación de Dios» (*Liberación*, 259 [92]); «La presencia activa de Dios» (*Ibid.*, 290 [106]); «La Palabra de Dios» (*Ibid.*, 16 [xxi]).

³⁹ It is methodologically problematic to assign particular works to any one era because they have been developed over time. For example, material on freedom and salvation in his latest book, *En busca de los pobres de Jesucristo* (1992) is similar to that which appeared in «Freedom and Salvation» (1977a), and could be traced back to Gutiérrez's work for the master's degree in Lyon in the 1950s (see R.M. BROWN, *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, 187).

⁴⁰ Gutiérrez recounts how during his theological studies he was interested above all in «the meaning and function of our understanding of the faith in Christian and ecclesial life [...]. I was passionately devoted to the study of the first question in St Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, Melchor Cano's contribution to the places for theology (*loci theologici*) and the classic book by Gardeil on these issues. Over several vacations I devoured the article "Theology" by Y. Congar (in the *Dictionary of Catholic Theology*). [...] My discreet reading of the book by M. D. Chenu *The Saulchoir School* revealed the whole scope of human history to me and the life of the Church itself as a place for theology. One result of this interest was that in the theological treatises I read afterwards I paid close attention to the methodological aspect and to the relation between theology and the sources of revelation» («The Task of Theology and Ecclesial

At the close of the Second Vatican Council, he was concerned that the poverty and conflict, experienced by the Latin American people, had not found enough place in the Council⁴¹. So he set about trying to apply the challenge of the Council to the Latin American context. In 1966, at a meeting in Santiago, Chile, Gutiérrez addressed the issue of religious liberty and salvation. Roused by some of the ideas in the Council Declaration on Religious Liberty, he spoke about «revealed truth» being communicated in a divine-human dialogue which calls for a free human response⁴². The image is of God «speaking», and Gutiérrez's question is whether the church allows everyone, particularly «the little ones» (*los menores*) free access to this revealed truth⁴³.

The theme of «the little ones» or the poor was not taken up as a major theme at the Council⁴⁴. Shortly after, however, the social and economic order was addressed by Paul VI in *Populorum progressio* (1967). In

Experience» [1984b] 61-62). This interest, at first academic, became more focused on the Latin American context after Gutiérrez's return from Europe to Peru in 1960.

⁴¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez attended the fourth session of Vatican II, and was working with the then president of CELAM, Bp Manuel Larraín from Chile. At the close of the Council Gutiérrez says: «My European side could be satisfied [with the results of the Council], but my Latin American side, more Indian or mestizo, remained at odds as if expecting something else [...]. Those two days of spiritual experience [at the time of the closing ceremony] [...] were when I began to take a certain distance from the theology which I had so fervently read and worked on until then» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Option for the Poor» [1994b] 12).

⁴² «Frente a la verdad revelada por Dios "camino por el cual los hombres pueden salvarse" se sitúa la libertad humana. La vida cristiana es un diálogo entre un Dios que llama y un hombre que responde, pero que responde libremente, como libre es el don que Dios quiere hacer de sí mismo» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Libertad religiosa y diálogo salvador» [1966] 27).

⁴³ In 1964, considerably before the end of the Vatican Council, Gutiérrez addressed a meeting of theologians in Petrópolis, Brazil. There he spoke about a new pastoral focus which would investigate how the word of God comes to human beings (see A.T. HENNELLY, ed., *Liberation Theology*, 46. Gutiérrez developed this theme further in his first book, *Líneas pastorales* (see especially pp. 69-70). One sees here the earliest formulations of his concern for the poor, and what he would define as «critical reflection on lived faith in the light of God's Word».

⁴⁴ Gutiérrez comments on the interest of Pope John XXIII, and Cardinal Lercaro in the issue of poverty (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Vaticano II y la Iglesia Latino Americana» [1985d] 2-12 [175-182]). Gutiérrez notes that the issue appears only in *Lumen gentium* 8 and *Ad gentes* 5, with «a few allusions scattered through the other documents» (*Ibid.*, 7 [181]).

response to the encyclical, in July 1968, at a meeting of priests and lay-people in Chimbote, Peru, Gustavo Gutiérrez spoke about the theology of development. While preparing the talk, the insight came to him that from a biblical and theological point of view it would be more appropriate to talk about liberation than development⁴⁵. Thus he addressed the question of the relationship between salvation and human emancipation.

Gutiérrez observed that if one understands faith not only in terms of truths to be affirmed but also as a commitment to God and to human beings, then theology can be seen as an effort to understand faith commitment in the light of revelation. Theology accompanies action «to help it to be faithful to the word of God, which is the light for theology»⁴⁶. Christ is the sign of God's commitment to human history. Through faith in Christ, history may be seen «as the progressive revelation of the human face of God»⁴⁷.

In 1971 Gutiérrez published *Teología de la liberación*⁴⁸. In that book he maintained that the word of God provides the basis for a critique of society and the Church. In the light of God's word, theology may fulfil a prophetic function, interpreting historical events with the intention of revealing and proclaiming their profound meaning⁴⁹. Such a critique requires reflection on

⁴⁵ A. Hennelly quotes Pablo Richard as saying that «this conference marked the explicit break, the qualitative leap, from a worldvision tied to a "developmentalist" kind of practice to one tied to a practice of "liberation"» (see A. HENNELLY, ed., *Liberation Theology*, 62). Hennelly provides an English translation of Gutiérrez's talk (pp. 62-76). References to the Spanish original, «Hacia una teología de la liberación», will be from a manuscript obtained through A. Hennelly from the archives of the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, Lima.

⁴⁶ «Cuando hablamos de teología hablamos de la inteligencia, no de una verdad abstracta, intemporal, sino de una postura existencial, que trata de comprender y ver este compromiso a la luz de la revelación. [...] La teología acompañará [la pastoral de la Iglesia] [...] continuamente, para ayudarla a ser fiel a la Palabra del Señor, que es la luz de la teología» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Hacia una teología» [1968a] 1-2 [63-64]).

⁴⁷ «Hacia una teología» (1968a) 10 [74]. Gutiérrez adds: «Dios está delante de nosotros revelándose en las mil caras que encontramos en los hombres, en las diferentes circunstancias» (*Ibid.*, 10 [74]).

⁴⁸ For the most part, *Teología de la liberación* is a development of the insights from the Chimbote meeting and others which followed. A significant meeting was the Consultation on Theology and Development held by Sodepax in Cartigny, Switzerland in 1969.

⁴⁹ *Liberación*, 83 [10]. Gutiérrez writes, «Ser cristiano es, en efecto, aceptar y vivir solidariamente en la fe, la esperanza y la caridad, el sentido que la Palabra del Señor y

the presence and action of the Christian in the world both within and beyond the visible boundaries of the Church. Citing Yves Congar he says that instead of focusing on revelation and tradition as starting points, theological reflection must start with facts and questions derived from the world and from history⁵⁰.

2.4 *God Revealed in the Liberation of the Poor*

Having begun to study the relation between faith and life, in the 1970s Gutiérrez began to examine more closely the experience of life of the people around him. Thus he began to focus more intently on the poor and to study in greater depth the issue of the «non-person» as the «interlocuter» of liberation theology⁵¹. At that time the sociopolitical situation in Latin America was becoming more difficult, especially for the poor⁵². The poor were «dying before their time» because of their marginalisation by the powerful and the wealthy. So the question was how to proclaim to people living in increasingly inhuman conditions «that God is love and that this love makes us all brothers and sisters»⁵³.

el encuentro con El dan al devenir histórico de la humanidad en marcha hacia la comunión total» (*Ibid.*, 125 [32]). Again, «A través de quienes aceptan explícitamente su palabra, el Señor revela el mundo a sí mismo y lo saca del anonimato haciéndole conocer el sentido último de su devenir histórico y el valor de comunión de cada acto humano» (*Ibid.*, 378, [147]).

⁵⁰ *Liberación*, 82 [9-10].

⁵¹ Gutiérrez had pointed out theological and sociohistorical differences between Latin America and Europe, for example, in their experience of secularisation (*Liberación*, 340 [129-130]). However the insight was developed further in the 1970s, after the publication of *Teología de la liberación*.

⁵² In 1978, Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote: «Cuando se empezó a trabajar teológicamente en la perspectiva de la liberación, la cuestión [¿Tiene sentido seguir haciendo teología en un mundo de miseria y opresión?] no se nos presentó con la urgencia y dureza de ahora. El impulso fue más espontáneo, las reflexiones surgían de las comunidades cristianas populares y más o menos intuitivamente se consideró importante intentar un cierto nivel de sistematización. Pero hoy cuando cierto resultado se acumula, cuando nuevos problemas aparecen, cuando se comienza a tener un lugar — nos guste o no — en el mapa de la teología contemporánea y que una cierta publicidad acompaña estos esfuerzos, es sano preguntarnos en términos presentes por el porqué y el para qué de lo que tenemos entre manos» («La fuerza histórica» [1978a] xxxvi [*Power*, 99]). Antonio Pernia, detects a shift in Gutiérrez's language in the late 1970s, related to the worsening situation in LA at the time (see A. PERNIA, *God's Kingdom and Human Liberation*, 29-30).

⁵³ *Fuerza*, 248 [193].

With the renewed interest in the poor as the interlocuters of theology, Gutiérrez became more aware of their mediating role in divine revelation⁵⁴. Not only should history be read from the viewpoint of the poor, but God reveals Godself through those despoiled of their dignity as a people and as human beings⁵⁵. Citing Mt 11,25, Gutiérrez contends that God's revelation has been given to the «little ones» and hidden from the learned and the clever. The wise do not understand the illogical language of the cross, but the word of God is given to the lowly so that they can go and proclaim the kingdom⁵⁶. At a conference in 1976, Gutiérrez went so far as to say that «liberation theology's second central intuition is that God is a liberating God, revealed only in the concrete historical context of liberation of the poor and oppressed»⁵⁷.

2.5 *The Gratuitous Love of the God of life*

By the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s Gutiérrez began to highlight the relationship between revelation and life⁵⁸. He saw that in Latin America people were confronted not so much by atheism's negation of God's existence as the negation of the «God of life» in a life and death tension. In this context Gutiérrez notes the text from Deuteronomy (Dt 30,19-20) where the people of Israel are asked to make a choice: life or death. To choose life means to choose God, to hold fast to God as a child does to its parents, who are the source and protectors of its life⁵⁹. The resurrection of Jesus is the Father's confirmation of the gift of life made in the Son. Liberation embodies a will to life; consequently, by liberating us

⁵⁴ Essays containing these reflections are found in his *La fuerza histórica de los pobres*, published in 1979 shortly after the CELAM conference in Puebla.

⁵⁵ «El Dios de la Biblia se revela a través de los despojados de su dignidad de pueblo y de seres humanos, se manifiesta por medio de aquellos que el evangelio llama "los pobres y los pequeños"» (*Fuerza*, 275 [213]).

⁵⁶ «La fuerza histórica» (1978a) xxxix [*Power*, 103]. Gutiérrez would later develop his ideas on Mt 11,25 in a biblical reflection entitled, «Gratuidad y revelación» (1985a). Keeping in mind God's disagreement with the accepted and canonised ways of this world, Gutiérrez says that in God's defence of the poor, «se manifiesta la verdadera trascendencia de Dios» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, preface to H. Echeagaray, *La Práctica de Jesús* [1979a] 17 [xiii]).

⁵⁷ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Two Theological Perspectives» (1978c) 247. The first intuition is that active commitment to liberation comes first and theology develops from it.

⁵⁸ Gutiérrez's talks at the Lima summer institute in February 1981 were published as «El Dios de la vida» (1981a) and in revised form in *El Dios de la Vida* (1989b).

⁵⁹ «El Dios de la vida» (1981a) 33.

God is revealed to be a liberating God, a living God, and the friend of life⁶⁰.

Gutiérrez also stressed the un-merited, grace-filled quality of the revelation of the God of life. In 1985 he published a brief commentary entitled «Gratuidad y revelación». There he pointed out that the poor are the privileged recipients of God's revelation, not because of any moral or spiritual disposition on their part, but because of their human situation⁶¹. Gutiérrez discounted the objection that Jesus offered his message of God's love to the poor only after it was rejected by the mighty. The scorned (*despreciados*) were the privileged addressees of the good news right from the start, due solely to the free and gratuitous love of God. This is the very essence of Christian revelation⁶². The ultimate basis for God's preference for the poor and despised, is not any goodness on their part, but rather God's goodness⁶³.

2.6 *Revealed Truth and the Deposit of Faith*

By the early 1980s Gustavo Gutiérrez's work was encountering strong opposition from some quarters⁶⁴. In 1986 Gutiérrez published *La verdad los*

⁶⁰ «La liberación expresa voluntad de vivir, y, entonces, liberando Dios se revela como un Dios liberador, como un Dios vivo, como el Dios de la vida» («El Dios de la vida» [1981a] 33). In the revised edition of *El Dios de la vida*, published in book form in 1989, Gutiérrez adds a comment on the importance, not just of liberation from oppression, servitude, and death, but also from sin (*Vida*, 61-62 [19]).

⁶¹ «Por consiguiente ser destinatario privilegiado de la revelación no viene — en primer lugar — de disposiciones morales o espirituales, sino de una situación humana. El despreciado de este mundo, ése es el preferido de Dios» («Gratuidad y revelación» [1985a] 51).

⁶² «El hecho del ocultamiento a los sabios y de la revelación a los simples, es la ocasión concreta para comprender lo que está detrás de él y que le da su sentido: el amor libre y gratuito de Dios. [...] la oración condensada en estos versículos [Mt 11, 25-26] recoge el meollo de la revelación cristiana» («Gratuidad y revelación» [1985a] 51). The theme of the revelation of the gratuitous quality of God's love features in Gutiérrez's two books: *Beber en su propio pozo* (1983), and *Hablar de Dios* (1986).

⁶³ *Job*, 16 [xiii].

⁶⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez and some other theologians were expressly excluded from the official preparation for the Puebla conference and the conference itself. In Rome, criticism came from meetings such as the one in 1982: «La concepción cristiana de la política económica mundial frente al marxismo», with the participation of Card. Höffner and Bp A. López Trujillo. Gustavo Gutiérrez was not summoned to Rome, however Card. Ratzinger spoke to the Peruvian Episcopal Conference in Rome, and in March

hará libres, which contains his defence against some of the accusations against him, particularly those from Rome. For example, in his essay «The Truth Shall Make You Free», he gives his view on terms like «revealed truth» and the «deposit of faith». The language is quite different from that in earlier works such as *La fuerza histórica de los pobres*, or *Teología de la liberación*⁶⁵.

One way to assess the development in Gutiérrez's thinking during the 1970s and 1980s is to study the changes in the revised edition of *Teología de la liberación*. There are some additional footnotes, a new introduction, and a major change in chapter 12⁶⁶.

A significant number of the additional notes in the revised edition of *Teología de la liberación* are clarifications about divine revelation. Of the four additions in the first chapter, one refers to the ultimate criteria for judgment coming from revelation and not from praxis itself. Another, is about the primacy in theology of the revealed word⁶⁷. The new introduction

1983, the CDF produced a paper entitled: «Observaciones sobre la teología de la liberación de Gustavo Gutiérrez» (E.T., «Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez»). In March 1984, the monthly *30 Giorni* published an article citing Card. Ratzinger as saying that liberation theology represented a fundamental danger for the faith of the church (E.T., *Liberation Theology*, ed. A. Hennesley, 367-374). Then in August of that year the CDF published its critical *Libertatis nuntius* or «Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"». Gustavo Gutiérrez was not explicitly mentioned in the Instruction, but as the «father» of liberation theology he was obviously implicated. For Gutiérrez's comment see the interview, «Criticism Will Deepen, Clarify Liberation Theology».

⁶⁵ Commenting on J.B. Metz answering his critics, Gutiérrez writes: «In formulating these responses he has had to enter into his critics' point of view and so he has perhaps lost some of his initial aggressiveness» (*Liberación*, 339 [129]). Perhaps that could be applied also to Gutiérrez?

In his doctoral defence in Lyon (May 1985) Gustavo Gutiérrez was asked how his ideas had changed. He replied that he still identified with the basic ideas written 15 years earlier. However if he had to write then, in 1985, he would have some different formulations and themes, for example connected with the concrete condition of the poor, theological method, social analysis, the situation of women, spirituality, the present tasks of the church, and human rights (*Verdad*, 59-60 [41]).

⁶⁶ The change in a section of chapter 12 is from a focus on class struggle, to social conflict in a wider sense. Gutiérrez explains the reason for the change in a note in the revised edition of *Liberación*, 396 [156], and in *Verdad*, 95-112 [67-80].

⁶⁷ In the first chapter of the revised edition of *Liberación* there are four additional footnotes (3 endnotes in the English edition.): one (33a) [34], referring to revelation and not praxis as the ultimate criterion of judgement; another (39b) [40], on the primacy of the revealed word in theology; a third (45c) concerning traditions and the cultural

is an excellent summary of his views at the time (1988). The tone is conciliatory. Gutiérrez notes the Peruvian bishops' statement that «every theology must be based on revelation as contained in the deposit of faith. With that as its starting point it can reflect on anything and everything, including praxis, which is always subordinate to revelation»⁶⁸.

2.7 *The «Neuralgic Point» of Christian Revelation*

After the difficult years of the early 1980s, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Gutiérrez concentrated on historical studies, which culminated in an immense work on Bartolomé de Las Casas: *En busca de los pobres de Jesucristo*. The book does not fit easily into any chronological schema because it is a product of work ever since the time of his theological studies. Gutiérrez portrays the life of Las Casas as an example of a continual interaction between reflection and concrete commitment. Through his commitment, Las Casas challenges and questions the church of his time to practice a greater fidelity to revelation and witness to salvation in Jesus Christ⁶⁹.

For Las Casas, the Indian, whether Christian or not, is a member of the body of Christ⁷⁰. «The scourged Christ of the Indies» reveals Christ in a special way. There is such an identification that Las Casas can write: «I leave, in the Indies, Jesus Christ, our God, scourged and afflicted and buffeted and crucified, not once but millions of times»⁷¹.

Gutiérrez began his theological studies in Lyon with a thesis on «Religious Liberty», and his latest book takes up the theme, applying it to

richness in Latin America; and a fourth (45d) [48]), giving a bibliographical update. In chapter 2 there are three additional footnotes (17a [18], 35b [37], 52c [55]); on development, socialism, and immanentism. In chapter 6 there are two additional footnotes (30a [31], 42b [44]); on challenges to the dependency theory, and on socialism. The additions to the notes in other chapters are mainly bibliographical updates.

⁶⁸ *Liberación* (rev. ed.), 39, fn. 24 [177, fn. 21].

⁶⁹ *Las Casas*, 18-19 [6].

⁷⁰ *Las Casas*, 97 [64]. Gutiérrez notes that on the basis of his affirmation of the presence of God's salvific grace in every person, Las Casas departed from Thomistic teaching, maintaining that unbelievers such as the Indians can be active members of the body of Christ (*Ibid.*, 350-351 [255-256]).

This writer is aware of diverse opinions about the use of the term «Indian». However the term will be used, following Gutiérrez (and the translator) who defend the use of the term in the introduction to *Las Casas*, fn. 8.

⁷¹ *Las Casas*, 95 [62].

the situation of the Indians of the 16th century, and implicitly to their descendents in Latin America today. Respect for religious liberty is linked to other basic human rights, including the right to life. In going to the roots of human freedom, Gutiérrez's study of Las Casas confirms what he had written before, that God's gratuitousness and «the truth that makes us free» is at the heart of Christian revelation. He notes that the issue of religious freedom has been constant as a «neuralgic point of Christian revelation» throughout the history of the church and that «its urgency on our continent today has not waned since the time of Bartolomé de Las Casas»⁷². God's offer of salvation is a gift and must be presented in accordance with the transcendence of faith and the dignity of the human person⁷³. Salvation is a grace, and gifts are not imposed but accepted⁷⁴. Hence the need for what he calls «liberating evangelisation» today⁷⁵.

Summing up this and the previous four sections: the development of Gutiérrez's thought illustrates the variety in Gutiérrez's understanding of revelation. From an initial concern with applying the challenge of the Council to the Latin American context he started looking for ways of relating the word of God to human action in history. Struck by the paradox of God's word of life and the lives of so many people living in the face of death, Gutiérrez turned to look again at God's revelation from the perspective of the poor. Then he realised that there is a message that God wants to reveal to us through poor and oppressed people. We can encounter God in solidarity with their struggles for liberation and in their faith full of hope and gladness⁷⁶. God has a particular concern for the poor and the oppressed, not through any merit on their part, but because of the gratuitous love of the God of life. This is confirmed in Christ's resurrection which is at the heart of the gospel message. Despite opposition which has forced him to clarify some points Gutiérrez has maintained his position that liberation is at the heart of Christian revelation and that human history is the location

⁷² *Las Casas*, 360-374 [263-273].

⁷³ *Las Casas*, 370 [271].

⁷⁴ *Las Casas*, 374 [273].

⁷⁵ *Las Casas*, 360 [264]. Thus in his latest major work, Gutiérrez links the preferential option for the poor and the new evangelisation. «The preferential option for the poor is the axis of what is called the *new evangelisation*» («Option for the Poor» [1994b] 17).

⁷⁶ «La fuerza histórica» (1978a) xxxiv-xxxv [*Power*, 98].

of our encounter with God in Christ⁷⁷. The locus of that revelation and its content will be clarified in the two sections which follow.

2.8 *The Locus of Divine Revelation*

Gutiérrez's says repeatedly that the concrete history of men and women is the locus of our encounter with God and it is in history that God is revealed⁷⁸. That is nothing new. What is characteristic of Gutiérrez is the way he looks at history. Historical events must be interpreted, and he points out that in the interpretative task it is not possible to maintain a neutral stance. History can be seen from the point of view of the winners or the losers. Gutiérrez insists that history must be reread from the point of view of the poor, because Jesus Christ is God become poor, so they are the privileged addressees of Gods revelation⁷⁹.

From a theological perspective Gutiérrez focuses on historical events in three ways. Firstly there are the events of God's interventions in history. The God of the Bible orientates history in the direction of establishment of justice for the poor⁸⁰. The prophets teach that God will be absent until there is commitment to the rights of the poor. God is present when people accept to do their part to bring about God's reign in history⁸¹. Secondly, there is the event of the incarnation and the revelation of God in history in Jesus Christ⁸². In a statement which has brought him accusations of immanentism, Gutiérrez says that in Jesus God is not only revealed in history, but becomes history⁸³. Thirdly, we meet Christ in the midst of historical conflict in our needy fellow humans: the poor⁸⁴. Gutiérrez maintains that God is revealed in Jesus Christ and through him, in those who are the poorest and of the least value in human history⁸⁵.

⁷⁷ *Liberación*, 289-290 [106]. Gutiérrez adds, «lo "pro-fano," lo que está fuera del templo, no existe más» (*Ibid.*, 296 [110]).

⁷⁸ *Fuerza*, 31 [20].

⁷⁹ «Jesucristo es precisamente *Dios hecho pobre* porque ésa fue la vida humana que asumió y a partir de la cual lo reconocemos como Hijo del Padre» (*Fuerza*, 24 [13]).

⁸⁰ *Fuerza*, 17 [7].

⁸¹ «Su palabra llega a nosotros en la medida de nuestra inserción en el devenir histórico» (*Fuerza*, 71 [52]).

⁸² *Liberación*, 289-290 [106].

⁸³ «En Jesús, Dios no sólo se revela en la historia, sino que se hace historia, pone su tienda en medio de ella» (*Fuerza*, 23 [13]).

⁸⁴ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «The Irruption of the Poor» (1981d) 119.

⁸⁵ *Vida*, 171-172 [85].

2.9 *The Content of Revelation: The Mystery of God's Love*

Gutiérrez says that the phrase «God is love» (1Jn 4,8) «sums up the biblical revelation about God»⁸⁶. Revelation is an encounter with the love of the God of hope who liberates and gives life. In his book *El Dios de la vida* he singles out three ways by which God's gratuitous love is revealed: God liberates, God does justice, and God enters into a covenant with people in history⁸⁷. The three will be considered in turn.

God acts in history to set people free and to give life. For example, Gutiérrez says that the immediate context of the revelation of God's name in the Book of Exodus is the commissioning of Moses for an historic mission of liberation⁸⁸. «I AM sent me to you» (Ex 3,14). By revealing God's name, Yahweh makes known the decision to intervene in history and tells us about the will of God to liberate and give life⁸⁹. Then as they were about to enter the promised land the people of Israel are confronted by the choice: life or death (Dt 30,19-20). To choose life meant to choose God. Gutiérrez includes these and other examples to illustrate how God is a liberating God, a living God and the friend of life⁹⁰.

God is just because God acts as the national protector of Israel, and above all, as the defender or *go'el* of the poor within the Jewish nation⁹¹. Gutiérrez also notes that God is revealed as God precisely by siding with those without rights because this is in accordance with the plan of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ, «who came to bring good news to the poor» (Lk 4,18)⁹². Gutiérrez notes that anthropomorphic images like protector and defender must be seen along with theophanies which help preserve an image of transcendence and otherness in the God of Biblical revelation.

⁸⁶ *Vida*, 29 [1]. For Gutiérrez, God is a «liberating God», yet he uses the expression infrequently, applying the term «liberating» to God's actions rather than to God's being. In one of the few occasions where Gutiérrez refers to God as liberator, he is wanting to bring out the transcendence of God, and is making the point that God's being gives meaning to God's action, that is, God liberates because God is a liberator, and not *visa versa* (*Ibid.*, 30-31 [2]).

⁸⁷ «El Dios de la vida expresa su amor al forjarse una familia de seres iguales con un acto de liberación, haciendo y exigiendo justicia en medio de su pueblo, estableciendo con él un pacto irrenunciable en la historia» (*Vida*, 31 [2]).

⁸⁸ *Vida*, 48 [11].

⁸⁹ *Vida*, 50 [12].

⁹⁰ *Vida*, 61-62 [19].

⁹¹ *Vida*, 66 [21].

⁹² *Verdad*, 246 [173].

God's justice is to be understood only in the context of prior and gratuitous love⁹³. God enters into a covenant with people in history revealing a God who is faithful⁹⁴. But God's faithfulness makes demands upon us for, according to the prophets, worship of the God of the covenant is inseparable from the practice of justice (Is 58,6-7). So the covenant compels us to responsibly exercise our solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

The importance given to history in Gutiérrez's theology makes it impossible to have a neutral image of God. People's involvement exercises a prior influence on their understanding. An option for the poor is an option for a different God⁹⁵. *Dios inquisidor* and *Dios liberador* noted in the introduction are just two of the images that illustrate the difference. Gutiérrez usually tries to use images from the Bible. However the poor interpret the Bible according to their experience. Thus, for example, Gutiérrez notes that from the perspective of the materially poor, the first of the Beatitudes is not so much about the poor as about the mystery of God's revelation: about a God of love and justice who offers the poor a special part in God's reign⁹⁶.

The question arises whether Gutiérrez with his presuppositions about history is imposing inappropriate limits on thinking about God. In trying to avoid ahistorical reasoning, is his thinking then reduced to some form of historical positivism? As will be shown in a later section, he is not trying to isolate history from the transcendent. He hints at this in a phrase which he often quotes from Jose María Arguedas: «Es mucho menos lo que

⁹³ *Job*, 148 [66].

⁹⁴ *Vida*, 99 [42].

⁹⁵ C. CADORETTE, *From the Heart of the People*, 75. Cadorette quotes Gutiérrez from an interview by Luis Peirano in *Quehacer* (marzo 1980) 115, as follows: «I believe José María [Arguedas] was right [...]. The God of the oppressors, of those who pillage and kill people, is not the God of the poor, not the same God at all». In another place Gutiérrez writes, «The God of the lords and masters is not the same God in whom the poor and the exploited believe» («Two Theological Perspectives» [1978c] 250).

⁹⁶ «Si “espiritualizamos” el pobre antes de tiempo [...] “humanizamos” a Dios, lo hacemos más accesible para la inteligencia humana,[...] Si por el contrario mantenemos el sentido primero y directo del amor de Dios por los pobres en tanto que pobres — materialmente hablando, si se quiere usar ese vocabulario — nos situamos ante el misterio de la revelación de Dios y del don de su Reino de amor y justicia» («La fuerza histórica» [1978a] 33 [*Power*, 95]).

sabemos que la gran esperanza que sentimos». God is an object less of knowledge than of hope⁹⁷.

Up until this point the study has been mainly a survey of Gutiérrez's ideas. The survey has included his terminology, the various phases in the development of his understanding of revelation, his view on the locus of revelation, and his image of God. The study will continue by probing more deeply into his understanding of revelation by examining more closely how he tries to integrate divine revelation and historical events.

3. God's Word and Historical Processes

In the introduction to the revised edition of *Teología de la liberación*, Gustavo Gutiérrez includes a dense but rich statement which amounts to a précis of the inquiry up to this point, and which provides a guide for further analysis of his understanding of revelation. The statement is as follows:

The historical womb from which liberation theology has emerged is the life of the poor and, in particular, of the Christian communities that have arisen within the bosom of the present-day Latin American church. This experience is the setting in which liberation theology tries to read the word of God and be alert to the challenges that faith issues to the historical process in which that people is engaged. Revelation and history, faith in Christ and the life of a people, eschatology and praxis: these are the factors that, when set in motion, give rise to what has been called the hermeneutical circle. The aim is to enter more deeply into faith in a God who became one of us, and to do so on the basis of the faith-filled experience and commitment of those who acknowledge this God as their liberator⁹⁸.

The principal issue here is the value and meaning of human activity in the world and its relation to divine revelation, which is the topic of chapter 3 of *Gaudium et spes*. The church «as guardian of the deposit of

⁹⁷ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Un lenguaje sobre Dios» (1984a) 54-55 [28]; *Job*, 11 [xi]; *Verdad*, 12 [3].

⁹⁸ *Liberación*, 37 [xxxiii]. The statement bears resemblance to the statement by the bishops at Medellín: «Sin caer en confusiones o en identificaciones simplistas, se debe manifestar siempre la unidad profunda que existe entre el proyecto salvífico de Dios, realizado en Cristo, y las aspiraciones del hombre; entre la historia de la salvación y la historia humana, entre la Iglesia, Pueblo de Dios, y las comunidades temporales; entre la acción reveladora de Dios y la experiencia del hombre; entre los dones y carismas sobrenaturales y los valores humanos» (see CELAM, *La Iglesia en la actual transformación*, «Catequesis» 4). Gutiérrez cites the statement in *Verdad*, 174 [122].

God's word» has tried to discern religious and moral principles by combining «the light of revelation with universal experience» (GS 33). However there are no ready answers to particular questions about the salvific value of human effort. This study will continue with an analysis of how Gutiérrez deals with the issue. It requires examining how he understands the relation between revelation and history, faith in Christ and the life of a people, and eschatology and praxis. Gutiérrez's ideas will be located in the context of contemporary developments in theology.

3.1 *Revelation and History*

Gutiérrez maintains that human history is the locus of our encounter with God and the locus of God's revelation. A distinctive feature of this approach is the way it treats salvation as an intrahistorical reality so that there is one history of salvation at the very heart of human history⁹⁹. Divine revelation is understood, not as an intervention from the divine into a profane world, but in terms of the revelation of God's love as an integral part of historical events. Even the final complete encounter with the Lord will take place in history¹⁰⁰.

Such an understanding of history pertains to a worldview different from the classical worldview in which there are various realms of being, unrelated except for the possibility of spirits from one realm entering the other¹⁰¹. In that view the value of earthly life and activity achieves its value in terms of a transcendent end beyond the present life.

The alternative followed by Gutiérrez is to feature the presence of grace in history¹⁰². This view gives priority to a qualitative rather than a quantitative view of salvation. It is not concerned so much with who will

⁹⁹ *Liberación*, 245 [86].

¹⁰⁰ *Liberación*, 271 [97].

¹⁰¹ Burton Cooper writes: «The modern consciousness can make nothing of talk of divine activity which persists in its dependence on the language of intervention in or interruption of the realm of nature. [...] We must learn to talk about how God acts in ordinary and special events without contradicting that interrelated notion of the character of things which is simply part of our modernity» (see B. COOPER, «How Does God Act?», 28).

¹⁰² In not separating the sacred and profane, Gutiérrez is not denying the existence of the transcendent. Francis Fiorenza says that by stressing solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, Gutiérrez avoids the risk of reverting to a Constantinian model in which the profane was sacralised, and secular reality became subject to the church's interests (see F.P. FIORENZA, «Latin American Liberation Theology», 452-455).

be saved, as with how salvation embraces all human reality, transforming it and leading it to its fullness in Christ. Considered in this way, salvation, gives new religious significance to human action in history¹⁰³.

Gutiérrez acknowledges his indebtedness to theologians such as Yves de Montcheuil, Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Juan Alfaro and others¹⁰⁴. These scholars have been leaders in a renewed debate about the relationship of grace and nature. If God is transcendent, how do human beings have a capacity for accepting freely the gift of God's self-communication? The traditional Catholic answer is that there is a «natural desire» for direct union with God. By nature humankind is ordained to the vision of God as grace, as the unmerited and gratuitous self-gift of God¹⁰⁵. The outcome of the debate has been a renewed emphasis on the biblical view which sees human history as permeated at every point by the opposition between grace and sin. It is then possible to move away from an interventionist view of the action of grace and to see a greater unity in the order of creation (nature) and the order of salvation (grace)¹⁰⁶. There is one single history characterised by sin and grace, and the history of revelation is coextensive with the history of the world¹⁰⁷. The issue then revolves around God's involvement in human history.

¹⁰³ *Liberación*, 244 [85].

¹⁰⁴ See Gutiérrez's response to the first question in the interview in appendix III. Also see *Verdad*, 175-176 [124]. Sources for Gutiérrez include a long article by L. MALEVEZ, «La gratuité du surnaturel», and an equally comprehensive article by J. ALFARO, «Transcendencia e inmanencia de lo sobrenatural».

¹⁰⁵ For a summary of the debate concerning Aquinas's view of nature and grace, see the first chapter of H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 1-24.

¹⁰⁶ Karl Barth refers to «lost time» and «fulfilled time». Donald Bloesch notes some of the similarities between Barth's approach and that of liberation theology. He writes: «He [Barth] anticipates liberation theology by acknowledging that divine justification is integrally related to the cause of human justice, that the gospel has far-reaching social and political implications». He continues: «Barth is more congenial to liberation theologians, because they see in him (and rightly) a millennial or utopian dimension that holds out the promise of an entirely new and just social order within history» (see D.G. BLOESCH, «Soteriology in Contemporary Christian Thought», 134-135). Gutiérrez mentions his interest in Karl Barth's theology, in the appendix 3, R. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Gutiérrez quotes from K. Rahner (*Foundations of Christian Faith*, p. 144): «The universal history of salvation, which as the categorical mediation of man's supernatural transcendentality is coexistent with the history of the world, is also and at the same time the history of *revelation*. This too, then, is coextensive with the whole history of the world and of salvation» (*Verdad*, 178-179, fn. 44 [190, fn. 93]).

Gutiérrez does not dwell on the philosophical issues but instead turns to scripture. Referring to the work of Gerhard Von Rad, Gutiérrez notes a close link between the order of creation and the order of salvation in the Bible. Creation may be seen in terms of the Exodus as part of the salvific process¹⁰⁸. The God who made the cosmos from chaos is the same God who led Israel from alienation to liberation¹⁰⁹. Moreover the salvific work of Christ is a new creation. Gutiérrez stresses that the link between creation and the salvific process means that efforts to build a better world are not merely «humanisation» but are part of a saving process which embraces the whole of humanity and all of human history¹¹⁰. Human liberation, directed to the communion of human beings with God and among themselves is salvific work which reveals the kingdom of God¹¹¹.

The unity of history in terms of creation and salvation, does not deny the conflictual reality of that history¹¹². This very situation is important for revealing God as the One who takes the part of the losers in that conflict¹¹³. Striving for freedom in the midst of conflictual history allows one to «meet Christ who reveals God to us as Father and reveals our neighbors to us as our sisters and brothers»¹¹⁴.

Gutiérrez says that in Jesus Christ, God is not only revealed in history, but becomes history¹¹⁵. Such a statement could be taken as a sign of

¹⁰⁸ *Liberación*, 248 [87]. An alternative is to view creation in terms of Christ. For example, Karl Barth contends that already at creation Christ demonstrated his will to liberate by defeating the chaos that was in opposition to creation (see D. BLOESCH, «Soteriology in Contemporary Christian Thought», 133).

¹⁰⁹ «Creación y liberación de Egipto son un solo acto salvífico» (*Liberación*, 250 [88]).

¹¹⁰ *Liberación*, 256-257 [91].

¹¹¹ One must always distinguish between the establishment of the reign of God and its eschatological fullness; the «already» and the «not yet».

¹¹² *Fuerza*, 71 [52]. One of Gutiérrez's problems with developmentalism is that it does not acknowledge the conflict which is part of the economic, social, political and cultural dependence of some countries upon others (*Liberación*, 97 [17]; *Fuerza*, 59 [43]). Gutiérrez also points out the limitations in Vatican II which «embodied Catholicism's acknowledgement of the modern world's values and disregarded of its defects. [...] poverty injustice, inequality, and class conflict were barely touched on» («Two Theological Perspectives» [1978c] 234).

¹¹³ «La fuerza histórica» (1978a) xli [*Power*, 106].

¹¹⁴ *Fuerza*, 54 [38].

¹¹⁵ *Fuerza*, 270, [209].

immanentism in which God is reduced to history¹¹⁶. However there are also many instances where Gutiérrez appears to be in accord with the traditional Catholic view that God is not reducible to human history, but is revealed in it¹¹⁷. He refers to the incarnation as an «irruption» of God into history and of liberation as the «intervention» of God in history¹¹⁸. Such statements imply the existence of God independent of history. The incarnation is the Word «breaking into» human existence, so that all of history may now be seen as the living temple of God¹¹⁹. Gutiérrez finds the meaning of history not in any metaphysic, but rather in the link between the human condition and God's design as revealed in the word¹²⁰. History is one because there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history¹²¹.

Admittedly there is a tension in the understanding of God independent of history yet working within it. Similarly there is a tension between salvation *in* history and the salvation *of* history itself. The tension may be seen in terms of a displacement of *loci theologici* in recent times. When Melchior Cano set out the ten *loci* he made a distinction between those which were intrinsically appropriate for theological reflection because of their link with revelation and those which were extrinsic to theology. History, along with reason and philosophy, was classed in the latter category¹²². So while history was a *locus theologicus*, it was not a *locus revelationis*. In stressing that christian praxis in history is playing a part in structuring the elaboration of the Gospel message Gutiérrez is instrumental in forcing a reevaluation of the sources of theological reflection¹²³. In this displacement of theological places, does history assume a role in the

¹¹⁶ Liberation theologians have been accused of immanentism. See the commentary on such accusations in F. PASTOR, «Orthopraxis y ortodoxia», 735-738. Gutiérrez is trying to avoid abstract and idealist interpretations of history, hence his emphasis on experience and historical praxis (see «Freedom and Salvation» [1977a] 80-83).

¹¹⁷ *Liberación*, 376 [146].

¹¹⁸ *Life*, 85; *Verdad*, 169 [119].

¹¹⁹ See G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Praxis de liberación» (1974c) 360 [64]; *Liberación*, 293-295 [108-109]; *Fuerza*, 69 [50].

¹²⁰ Christian Duquoc notes how modern philosophers have distanced themselves from the Hegelian view because it does not take the human condition sufficiently into account (see C. DUQUOC, «Eschatologie et réalités terrestres», 15).

¹²¹ *Liberación*, 245 [86]. «Hay una sola historia. Una historia cristofinalizada» (*Ibid.*, 246 [86]).

¹²² See M.-D. CHENU, «Les lieux théologiques chez Melchior Cano», 47.

¹²³ C. GEFFRÉ, «Du savoir à l'interprétation», 62.

elaboration of the Gospel message such that it becomes intrinsically linked to divine revelation? The question will reoccur in the examination of Gutiérrez's treatment of eschatology and praxis.

3.2 *Faith in Christ and the Life of a People*

Gutiérrez sees faith, not as an intellectual adherence to a message but as «a vital acceptance of the gift of the word»¹²⁴. Such a living faith makes possible «a reflection in, and on, faith as liberation praxis»¹²⁵. Thus for Gutiérrez, theology is not simply reflection on liberation praxis as such, but liberation praxis as experienced in the context of faith. The link between faith and experience in the light of the word, allows Gutiérrez to include a dynamic dimension in his understanding of revelation in Jesus Christ¹²⁶.

Some theologians suspect that to accept experience means rejecting the normative authority of revelation. As noted already in chapter II, there are historical reasons for being uneasy about recognising theologically the human pole of revelation. However, revelation is a form of communication, and a revelation not received by anyone could hardly be a revelation. Thus the experience of the recipient plays a part in the reception and interpretation of God's word. Are not the different gospel accounts evidence that the faith experience of the first Christian community formed a constituent part of what was recorded in the Second Testament? Catholic tradition has always held that revelation is not the experience per se, but occurs with it and points beyond it. This is Gutiérrez's position. When he says that «the real theophany, or revelation of God, is in the liberation of the person who is poor», he is providing a concrete example of the way historical experience is the medium for the self-communication of God who takes sides with the poor¹²⁷.

Faith cannot be detached from life. Gutiérrez notes the opinion of some, that «the more a reflection takes its distance from the hodgepodge of the everyday and from the ambiguity of action, the more authentic and serious it is». However, he contends that «from the first Christian centuries onward, theology was done in intimate, constant interconnection with Christian existence and the mission of the church, which it challenged and questioned

¹²⁴ *Fuerza*, 75 [55].

¹²⁵ *Fuerza*, 81 [60].

¹²⁶ The relationship between theological reflection and the following of Jesus (spirituality) is a central theme in Gutiérrez's book *Beber en su propio pozo*.

¹²⁷ See *Fuerza*, 17 [7].

with a view to contributing to a greater fidelity to revelation and to giving witness to salvation in Jesus Christ»¹²⁸. Thus theological reflection that is not located in the context of the experience of faith «is in danger of turning into a kind of religious metaphysics or a wheel that turns in the air without making the cart advance»¹²⁹.

Combining the light of revelation with human experience results in more questions than answers, as the council fathers admit in *Gaudium et spes* 33. Theological reflection has often been limited to looking for a «spiritual» meaning in worldly affairs, and social, cultural and scientific institutions have been seen primarily in terms of their «moral» significance. Gutiérrez argues against such an approach, saying that it suffers from dualistic thinking and an unhelpful separation of «temporal» and «spiritual» realms. His proposal is to look at the world, not as something to sanctify, but as the locus of the partnership with God in salvific work¹³⁰. It is only in and through temporal, earthly, and historical events that one witnesses the «partial fulfilments» of God's promises, which are signs of the coming of God's reign¹³¹.

The stress on lived faith experience has implications for a theology of revelation. It means that the world must be taken seriously in theological reflection and that faith commitment is the condition of our encounter with God today.

Taking the world seriously means having to establish links with sciences such as sociology, anthropology, and economics, because these are means of studying intra-historical affairs. Does this mean that theological reflection is reduced to a social science? No, says Gutiérrez. Theology must take into account the contribution of the social sciences, but in its work it must always appeal to its own sources. Theology «positions itself in the light of faith and not in the light of sociology»¹³².

¹²⁸ *Las Casas*, 18-19 [6].

¹²⁹ *Beber*, 53 [38].

¹³⁰ Gutiérrez stresses that salvation applies to all forms of alienation: whatever prevents us from living in communion with others, with God, and in the inmost depths of the human person (*Liberación*, 286 [104]; *Verdad*, 180-202 [127-141]).

¹³¹ *Liberación*, 269-270 [96-97]. Gutiérrez admits the risk of either falling back into dualistic thinking or of not sufficiently safeguarding transcendence. «La teología contemporánea no ha logrado todavía forjar las categorías que permitan pensar y expresar en forma adecuada la perspectiva unitaria de la historia» (*Ibid.*, 246 [86]).

¹³² *Verdad*, 93 [65].

As a commitment to God and neighbour lived faith is «a commitment, an attitude, a posture toward life, in the light of the revealed Word»¹³³. Faith commitment implies action. The God revealed by Jesus is One who expresses preferential love for the humiliated, oppressed, and marginalised people of history¹³⁴. Thus «we should take up our commitment to the process of change, to revolution, to human emancipation in the light of faith»¹³⁵. Christian faith commitment means following Jesus. Through him, action is not mere activism, but is placed in the deeper context of the human Word in whom we read the word of the Lord¹³⁶. Through faith, God is revealed in Jesus Christ and through him, in those who are the weakest and poorest ones¹³⁷. For Gutiérrez, it is not enough to say that love of God is inseparable from love of one's neighbour, rather, to love one's neighbour *is* to love God.

While laudable in its intention, the emphasis on faith experience leaves unanswered questions about divine revelation. If committed faith, rather than academic analysis without prior commitment, leads to a true grasp of what God is saying today, what are the criteria for interpreting such events? Traditionally the church has monitored particular interpretations by means of scripture and tradition. Is Gutiérrez varying the method by substituting a procedure whereby truth is judged in terms of orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy? Certainly one cannot reduce the mystery of Jesus Christ and his saving mediation to a critical reflection on current reality. Thus it needs to

¹³³ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Notes for a Theology of Liberation» (1970a) 244.

¹³⁴ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Comunidades cristianas de base» (1980a) 10 [1981d 117].

¹³⁵ «La fe debe alimentar y criticar a nuestro compromiso en la historia. Debemos tomar nuestro compromiso en el proceso de cambio, de revolución, de emancipación del hombre, a la luz de la fe» («Hacia una teología» [1968a] 12 [75]). At this stage (1968) Gutiérrez makes occasional reference to «revolution». Later he ceased using the term. At about the same time he began to point out the importance of silence and contemplation as well as practice.

¹³⁶ The passage is a very rich one. «El gran principio hermenéutico de la fe, y por lo tanto fundamento de todo discurso teológico es Jesucristo. En Jesús encontramos a Dios, en la palabra humana leemos la palabra del Señor. [...] Ese es pues el círculo hermenéutico fundamental: del ser humano a Dios y de Dios al ser humano, de la historia a la fe y de la fe a la historia, de la palabra humana a la palabra del Señor y de la palabra del Señor a la palabra humana [...]» (*Fuerza*, 81-82 [61]).

¹³⁷ *Vida*, 171-172 [85]. «Cuadros evangelizadores, [...] allí donde encontramos a Cristo en el hermano necesitado, en el pobre» («Comunidades cristianas» (1980a) 11 [1981d 119]. Gutiérrez says that the theology of liberation is «un intento de comprender la fe desde la praxis histórica, liberadora y subversiva de los pobres de este mundo, de las clases explotadas, razas despreciadas, culturas marginadas» (*Fuerza*, 52 [37]).

be clarified what Gutiérrez really means by reflection «in the light of the word of God». Such issues will reappear, especially in section 4.3.

3.3 *Eschatology and Praxis*

God's promise of love and redemption as found in scripture reveals the ultimate meaning of history in terms of God's will for communion and the establishment of God's reign. This eschatological perspective gives new significance to present history. Gutiérrez notes how, in the light of the unfolding of God's promise, human activity which is oriented towards the construction of a more just society has salvific value¹³⁸. The issue here is how God's promise and human activity: eschatology and praxis, are seen as distinct but united.

From *Gaudium et spes* 39 it is clear that human activity cannot directly achieve salvation, but it can bring about conditions which encourage its growth. Gutiérrez agrees that while building a just society is salvific work, it is not *the* coming of the kingdom, or *all* of salvation. However, he insists that the growth of the kingdom occurs historically, and that without liberating historical events there would be no growth of the kingdom of God¹³⁹. Gutiérrez regrets that the unified vision of history proposed during the Council was not incorporated sufficiently into the text of *Gaudium et spes*¹⁴⁰. He prefers the view found in the encyclical *Populorum progressio*, affirming a single vocation to the grace of communion with God. According to that view, salvation does not affect only one sector of human life. God's love is all-embracing, and so salvation is a single complex process which leads to the fullness of all that is human¹⁴¹.

How are God's eschatological promise and human work held together in the one vocation? The question is important for appreciating Gutiérrez's understanding of revelation. In his preface to Hugo Echegaray's book *La práctica de Jesús*, Gutiérrez comments on two focuses in the message of Jesus: the kingdom as an eschatological gift, and the call to prepare for it

¹³⁸ *Liberación*, 363 [139].

¹³⁹ *Liberación*, 285 [104].

¹⁴⁰ Gutiérrez is referring to the «Schema of Ariccia» which he says was «watered down» (*suavizado*); (*Liberación*, 275 [99]).

¹⁴¹ See POPE PAUL VI, *Populorum progressio* 21.

by the effort to transform history. He points out that the revelation of God as Father comes from the interaction between the gift and the task¹⁴².

Clearly, the starting point for liberation and the reign of God is the divine initiative¹⁴³. This was Christ's revelation. Communion and fellowship which comprise the deepest meaning of human life, find their ultimate basis in the gratuitous love of God¹⁴⁴. God's reign is above all a gift¹⁴⁵. However, peace, justice, love, and freedom — the fruits of God's reign — are social realities with human consequences. Thus Christian life is located between the gratuitous gift of God's love and the obligations which result from it¹⁴⁶. The coming of the kingdom is not merely «spiritual» but a historical, temporal, earthly, social, and material reality. In this context the human task is the creation of a more humane society¹⁴⁷. Jesus reveals God as One who loves the poor, oppressed, and marginalised in a special way. Salvation for such people means changing the death-dealing situations and alienating conditions. It includes opposing sin which is not just an impediment to salvation in an afterlife, but a breach of communion and an obstacle to the reign of God¹⁴⁸. Thus Christian praxis, influenced and illumined by the practice of Jesus, is oriented to the transformation of the world and the establishment of relationships that are fraternal and just¹⁴⁹.

The gift and the task are closely linked. It is commonly held that since God's love is freely given us we have a moral obligation to use that gift for

¹⁴² «Da un lado hay el Reino como don escatológico, es decir definitivo y último de la salvación, ofrecido gratuitamente por Dios sin mediación de nuestro esfuerzo para obtenerlo; de otro lado, el llamado insistente a ponerse en marcha hacia el Reino y prepararlo asumiendo el esfuerzo transformador de nuestra historia que el Reino mismo simultáneamente impulsa, promete y supone». Estos aspectos son difíciles de vivir y pensar en conjunto, pero de su interacción surge la revelación de Dios como Padre («Caminando con el pueblo» [1979a] 16-17 [xii]).

¹⁴³ *Verdad*, 52 [35].

¹⁴⁴ *Liberación*, 302 [113].

¹⁴⁵ Gutiérrez often refers to the kingdom as «gift» (see *Liberación*, 285 [104], 425 [170-171]; *Vida*, 202 [102]).

¹⁴⁶ *Verdad*, 53 [36].

¹⁴⁷ Gutiérrez says that we must seek the kingdom, which means «to wait for it actively» (*Vida*, 205 [104]).

¹⁴⁸ *Liberación*, 243-244 [85]. «La pobreza es un mal, y por ello, incompatible con el Reino de Dios; con un Reino de Dios que entra de lleno en la historia y abarca la totalidad de la existencia humana» (*Ibid.*, 426 [171]).

¹⁴⁹ See *Liberación*, 77-78 [8]; *Vida*, 202 [102]. Gutiérrez calls praxis «transforming action» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Statement by Gustavo Gutiérrez» [1976c] 310).

developing temporal life¹⁵⁰. Here the human task originates with an authority extrinsic to itself. In contrast Gutiérrez appears to say that human beings accept God's free gift precisely in working to establish the reign of God¹⁵¹. Here there is an intrinsic relationship between the two. The gift of the kingdom calls for effective action, and the giftedness of what is achieved may be experienced as more than what was directly intended: «Lord, when did we see you hungry [...]!»

Therefore Christian praxis is not merely secular work and God's reign is not watered down into history¹⁵². Liberation from injustice and oppression which brings about true communion has worth in terms of the kingdom of God and is salvific work. The political is grafted onto the eternal, and liberating praxis possesses a transcendent purpose¹⁵³. Human love, in the light of the Gospel is precisely where the God of love and life is revealed¹⁵⁴.

Gutiérrez's understanding of the link between God's gift and the human task is illustrated in the way he regards prayer as an essential dimension of praxis¹⁵⁵. This point is important for understanding the link between praxis and revelation. The insight was highlighted during the 1980s as Gutiérrez developed his views on a spirituality of liberation. Particularly in his study

¹⁵⁰ CDF, *Libertatis conscientia* 60.

¹⁵¹ The gift of becoming daughters and sons of God is not a gift in word, but in deed when we make ourselves brothers and sisters to one another (*Fuerza*, 267 [207]).

¹⁵² *Vida*, 211 [107].

¹⁵³ *Liberación*, 353 [135]; *Vida*, 211 [107]. Antonio Pernia summarises Gutiérrez's view as follows: «Seen in the light of the Kingdom of God, the struggle for liberation is no longer just a response to the economic, social and political situation of poverty and oppression. Neither is it simply an expression of the contemporary awareness of the human being's capacity to transform history. Rather, it is fidelity to God's will and fidelity to the practice of Jesus, whose proclamation of the Kingdom reveals God as Father and human beings as one another's brothers and sisters» (see A. PERNIA, *God's Kingdom and Human Liberation*, 58).

¹⁵⁴ «Si la utopía da una faz humana a la liberación económica, social y política, a la luz del Evangelio esa faz humana es reveladora de Dios». Gutiérrez continues, «El Evangelio no nos proporciona una utopía, ésta es obra humana, la Palabra es un don gratuito del Señor. Pero el Evangelio no es ajeno al proyecto histórico, por el contrario, proyecto humano y don de Dios se implican mutuamente» (*Liberación*, 363-364 [139]).

¹⁵⁵ «Prayer, worship, contemplation is one dimension of praxis. Praxis does not only mean to be committed in a very active manner with other persons. To pray is also praxis» («New Evangelization» [1992e] 186).

of the book of Job, Gutiérrez develops the notion that contemplation and practice together make up a stage of «silence» before God¹⁵⁶.

The language of prophecy is a language that talks about God on the basis of commitment to the poor: from the experience of suffering and injustice. Solidarity with the lot of the marginalised and suffering raises the question about the relationship between a just God and the suffering of the innocent. Gutiérrez points out that such a prophetic approach to talking about God is inadequate.

The other way of talking about God is the language of contemplation. While his friends continue to talk *about* God, Job addresses himself *to* God. He comes to realise that God's free and gratuitous love cannot be imprisoned in theological concepts. Justice alone does not have the final say about how we are to speak of God. Only when we have come to realise that God's love is freely bestowed do we enter fully into the presence of the God of faith¹⁵⁷. God's love operates in a world not of cause and effect, but of freedom and gratuitousness.

Gutiérrez insists that to talk about God, prophetic and contemplative languages must become one. Mystical language acknowledges the gratuitousness of our relationship to God. Prophetic language expresses the demands of that love¹⁵⁸. As with the integral relationship between the gift and the task with the reign of God, so too the openness to God's love (prayer) and the demands of that love (prophecy) are united in Christian praxis. Gutiérrez writes:

We need a language rooted in the unjust poverty that surrounds that [sic] vast majorities, but also nurtured by the faith and hope of a people struggling for its liberation. We need a language that is both contemplative and prophetic: contemplative because it ponders a God who is love; prophetic because it talks about a liberator God who rejects the situation of injustice in which the poor live, and also the structural causes of that situation. As was the case in the book of Job, both idioms arise in Third World countries out of the suffering and hope of innocent victims¹⁵⁹.

Gutiérrez's understanding of the unity of the gift and the task, and of contemplative and prophetic ways of speaking about God, help shed light

¹⁵⁶ *Job*, 16 [xiii].

¹⁵⁷ *Job*, 192 [87].

¹⁵⁸ Both languages are necessary and therefore inseparable; they also feed and correct each other (see *Job*, 207 [95]).

¹⁵⁹ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Reflections from a Latin American Perspective» (1983c) 232.

on the link between praxis and revelation. Gutiérrez finds in the situation of the poor the questions that he puts to the scriptural text; questions concerning justice for the suffering innocent; questions concerning divine retribution and the interpretation of misfortune as God's punishment for moral wrongdoing. His initial theological silence allows him to hear the questions from Christian praxis that theology seeks to answer.

4. Contribution to Our Understanding of Revelation

How does Gutiérrez contribute to our understanding of divine revelation. Is he saying anything new? Three points will be considered here.

- The perspective from which he views divine revelation: from the «underside of history».
- The affirmation of the faith community as a locus of revelation.
- A dynamic notion of God's word in history.

4.1 *Revelation from the Underside of History*

Gutiérrez maintains that people have recently come to a new awareness of their human potential as free and creative subjects of history. Despite the growing awareness of their capacity to play an active role in the transformation of history, the majority of humankind are not free, and in fact suffer from their dependence on the self-interested power and control maintained by others. God does not will such a situation; hence God's self-communication revealed particularly «in the life and suffering, the struggles, the death, and the hopes of the condemned of the earth»¹⁶⁰. The liberating message is as old as revelation itself, but the majority of people have not been disposed to receive it. Gutiérrez comments that the gospel will invariably be «new» when read from the standpoint of the poor¹⁶¹.

What is new here is not just a rediscovery of human experience in the reception of God's revelation, but also a new understanding of the experience of human suffering, particularly the suffering of the innocent. Suffering is not a sign of divine wrath. Nor is it evidence for the absence of God, for God has not abandoned the poor. On the contrary, Gutiérrez maintains that the poor are the primary addressees of the word. God continues to inspire hope and the determination to overcome evil in all its forms. God's word in Christ reveals a God of hope and life who loves the

¹⁶⁰ *Vida*, 181 [90].

¹⁶¹ *Las Casas*, 82 [52].

poor precisely because they are poor and living in inhuman situations. The scorned of this world are those whom the God of love prefers¹⁶². This is seen particularly in Jesus through whom God enters into loving solidarity with those who suffer in order to lead them beyond suffering to new life. Only by living the mystery of the cross can one find the light of Easter.

The mystery of the revelation of God's love to the poor is difficult for the non-poor to appreciate. However, those who make a commitment to the poor and oppressed will come to a new realisation of how God wants people to be free. Activities to liberate people from suffering and oppression are not only in accord with God's will, but contribute to establishing the reign of God. Thus Gutiérrez brings together two important theological insights: the revelation of the gratuitous love of God, and the realisation of who God is and what God is doing by those who conform their lives to God's emancipatory project. God's loving and liberating presence is mediated through the human presence and actions of people of faith who resist injustice and struggle against all forms of alienation.

4.2 *The Life of the Faith Community*

With his emphasis on liberating praxis as an essential ingredient of genuine theological reflection, Gutiérrez highlights the life of the Christian community as a *locus theologicus*¹⁶³. Christ saves, yet the church has a part to play in the salvific process by revealing the active presence of salvation in terms of communion with God. These events, in the light of faith, may be seen as «signs of the times» and efficacious signs of the reign of God.

As noted in chapter I, the «signs of the times» are a means of discerning the demands of God's will. Contemporary «signs of the times» may thus be considered as revealing the coming of God's reign in history¹⁶⁴. Gutiérrez refers to the following as signs of God's reign today: gestures of solidarity among the poor, expressions of respect for the human person, the

¹⁶² *Job*, 14 [xii].

¹⁶³ «Una inteligencia de la fe que no parta de cómo el Evangelio es vivido hoy en la Iglesia, y en particular por el pueblo pobre a través de las comunidades eclesiales de base, dejaría de lado un dato fundamental de nuestra fe: la vida de la Iglesia como lugar teológico» (*Verdad*, 122-123 [90]). For other references to the community as a *locus theologicus*, see *Liberación*, 82 [9]; *Fuerza*, 52 [37]; *Verdad*, 123 [90].

¹⁶⁴ Gutiérrez admits that the notion of the «signs of the times» is far from being well-defined (*Liberación*, 76, fn. 29 [180, fn. 29]). For discussion on how Gutiérrez treats the «signs of the times» see M. MINELLA «Praxis and the Question of Revelation».

joy and hope of poor people in the midst of suffering, and the development of deep prayer in the depths of a struggle for liberation¹⁶⁵.

The new element here is a recognition of such historical events as signs of a *kairos*: «a moment of heightened revelation both of God and of new paths on the journey of fidelity to the word of God»¹⁶⁶. In the «signs of the times» God's gift and the human task are linked in a single liberating event. Gutiérrez says that the event where one encounters the «real» (*verdadera*) revelation of God is in the liberation of the person who is poor¹⁶⁷.

The reign of God reveals who God is, so the partial realisations of God's reign in historical events are salvific works and thus loci of revelation. For example: The will of God, and hence God, is negated by situations of poverty and violence. To struggle to bring human fellowship and to free people in such situations, is to do the will of God and to put the reign of God into practice. «Waiting actively» for the reign of God enables one to discover the God of life¹⁶⁸.

Thus the life in the faith community is not only a *locus theologicus*, but also a *locus revelationis* because of the intimate association of Christian praxis with the «signs of the times» and the reign of God. When the Christian community plays an active liberating role it can be a sign of God's gratuitous love and thus be a medium of revelation. For Gutiérrez the faith community is an efficacious sign of the reign of God which has already begun in history¹⁶⁹. The life of the faith community presents the mystery of salvation, not in an intellectual sense, but through its own experience of God's gratuitous love and its witness of communion among people. This view of the church is basically a sacramental one, and Gutiérrez calls the church a «sacrament of history». By this he wants to

¹⁶⁵ «Atención al juicio de Dios acerca de la situación que viven las grandes mayorías de América Latina y de nuestro país. Atención también a lo que señala una reacción contra un estado de cosas contrario al Reino de vida, a los gestos de solidaridad entre los pobres, al testimonio de comunidades cristianas que surgen entre los pobres y marginados de este mundo, a las expresiones de respeto por todas las dimensiones de la persona humana, a la alegría y la esperanza del pueblo pobre en medio del sufrimiento, al aprendizaje de una oración profunda en el seno de una lucha por la liberación. Todo eso son signos de la presencia del Reino en nuestra propia historia» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Signos* 8, 13 [15 enero 1988] 7).

¹⁶⁶ *Beber*, 15 [8]. Also see G. GUTIÉRREZ, «El reino está cerca» (1983d); *Vida* 199-200 [101].

¹⁶⁷ *Fuerza*, 17 [7].

¹⁶⁸ *Vida*, 205 [103-104].

¹⁶⁹ *Liberación*, 380 [148].

stress that people encounter God through the church, not in some mysterious way, but because of the church's participation in the salvation of the world. The church «is humanity itself attentive to the Word»¹⁷⁰. By being an efficacious sign of «the Word which liberates» the faith community reveals the call to communion with God and to the unity of all humankind¹⁷¹.

4.3 *God's Word in History*

The term *Palabra* (Word) in Gutiérrez's work may be associated with the incarnate Word, which «breaks into» and transforms human existence¹⁷². It is the foundation and the meaning of all existence, and an encounter with it leads to life¹⁷³. However Gutiérrez also uses the term in a wider sense than the incarnate Word. The word is God's life-giving, liberating word¹⁷⁴. It is revealed in history independently of the church, yet it resides in the church when the faith community accepts and follows the Word¹⁷⁵. Like God's love the word is a gift which must be accepted in faith¹⁷⁶. The «little ones» are the privileged recipients of the word¹⁷⁷. In turn, the option for the poor leads to a new understanding of the word¹⁷⁸.

Gutiérrez says that theological reflection is done «in the light of the word of God». It is not always obvious what he means by the expression. He could be referring to the word in scripture; however, by the expression «word of God» he means much more than simply the written word.

¹⁷⁰ *Liberación*, 378 [147].

¹⁷¹ *Liberación*, 376 [146].

¹⁷² «Praxis de liberación» (1974c) 360 [64].

¹⁷³ *Liberación*, 364 [140].

¹⁷⁴ See *Liberación*, 379 [148]; «Un lenguaje sobre Dios» (1984a) 61 [31]; *Verdad*, 112 [81].

¹⁷⁵ See *Líneas*, 75; *Liberación*, 377-378 [147].

¹⁷⁶ See *Liberación*, 67 [3], 80 [9], 364 [139]; «Praxis de liberación» (1974c) 360 [64]. Gutiérrez notes that he often uses the phrase «in the light of the word» as a synonym for «in the light of faith» (*Verdad*, 143, fn. 35 [103, fn. 49]). Probably because of its link with faith, Gutiérrez associates «illumination» with the word. History is «illuminated by the Word of the Lord of history» (*Liberación*, 87 [12]).

¹⁷⁷ See «Gratuidad y revelación» (1985a) 2; *Job*, 13 [xii]. Gutiérrez says that the word «makes» us poor as opposed to being rich intellectually (*Líneas*, 70).

¹⁷⁸ *Fuerza*, 69 [50].

Scripture is «the Lord's living word» communicated through the mediation of human words¹⁷⁹.

Gutiérrez uses the expression «word of God» particularly when he is alluding to the prophetic dimension of revelation. The word of God presents the church with a prophetic mission of denouncing the agents of oppression and announcing the coming of the kingdom¹⁸⁰. The church and society are addressed and judged by the word of God, not only at an intellectual or theoretical level, but at the level of concrete history¹⁸¹. The word of God is a judgement upon situations which are hardly human and a force for changing the historical and sociopolitical situation in which people suffer¹⁸². God's word is a word of life confronting poverty's legacy of death.

The intimate connection between history and «the word of the Lord of history» is characteristic of Gutiérrez's thinking¹⁸³. He defends his stand theologically with reference to the incarnation; however, his critics notice the obvious parallel with the Marxist critique of philosophy and religion. Gutiérrez says that God's word, accepted in faith, is inspired by a practical purpose. It inspires us not only «to think history» but to make or create it¹⁸⁴. As Gutiérrez notes, «We have here a political hermeneutics of the Gospel»¹⁸⁵.

The novelty of Gutiérrez's understanding of the word may be seen in the way he situates God's word in human history¹⁸⁶. The option for the poor

¹⁷⁹ *Verdad*, 122 [89]. In the response to the third question in the interview in the appendix, Gutiérrez distinguishes between a narrow understanding of revelation as found in the Bible, and a broader understanding of revelation as found in history.

¹⁸⁰ See *Líneas*, 70; *Liberación*, 390 [153].

¹⁸¹ «La palabra de Dios es siempre un juicio sobre nuestra acción humana e histórica» (see the interview «Fuera de la asamblea», 59).

¹⁸² «Proclamar ese amor en una sociedad profundamente desigual, marcada por la injusticia y la explotación de unos pueblos por otros, de una clase social por otra clase social, convertirá ese «hacerse historia» en algo interpelante y conflictual. Es por eso que decíamos que la dimensión política está en el dinamismo mismo de una Palabra que busca encarnarse en la historia» («Praxis de liberación» [1974c] 369 [73]).

¹⁸³ *Liberación*, 87 [12].

¹⁸⁴ *Liberación*, 81, fn. 36 [9, fn. 37]. Gutiérrez's reference here is to José Carlos Mariátegui. There is an obvious parallel with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: The task is not simply to interpret the world, but to change it (see L.S. FEUER, ed., *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, 245).

¹⁸⁵ *Liberación*, 84 [11] Gutiérrez refers to Jürgen Moltmann's article, «Towards a Political Hermeneutics of the Gospel», *USQR* 23 (1968) 303-323.

¹⁸⁶ While indebted to Karl Barth in some respects, Gutiérrez comments that Barth's emphasis on revelation resulted in a neglect of the world («Two Theological

leads to a new spiritual experience and a new understanding of the word of God¹⁸⁷. History is so essential that he discounts ahistorical interpretations of the word. God is revealed in history, and «God's word reaches us in the measure of our involvement in the evolution of history»¹⁸⁸.

For Gutiérrez, revelation is the liberating self-communication of the God of life. The Word of the God of life breaks into human history in the person of Jesus Christ. Acceptance of that gift (grace) amounts to the recognition of communion with God (filiation). The Word invites a faith commitment which leads to the task of working for unity among men and women (fellowship). God's word confronts death-dealing situations, and the poor person recognises God's word as a word of life in situations of suffering and death. In identifying with Christ, the poor one who suffered, died and rose again, people perceive a word of hope which opens them to the coming of the kingdom of God. Gutiérrez is attempting to bring together the gift of God's word of life, and the active role of the human person in the reception of the word and the expression of its demands in Christian praxis¹⁸⁹. In his understanding of history, with its one human destiny (the fullness of the kingdom of God), God's revelation and Christian praxis are closely linked. Revelation, with its origin in God, is known not only through Christ, but in human work, which puts God's love revealed in Christ into practice. Christian praxis is not merely secular work but possesses a salvific dimension in relation to the kingdom. Revelation is the moving force behind this salvific-liberating dynamic¹⁹⁰. The dynamic

Perspectives» [1978c] 233).

¹⁸⁷ *Fuerza*, 69 [50].

¹⁸⁸ «Praxis de liberación» (1974c) 362 [66]; *Fuerza*, 71 [52].

¹⁸⁹ In a meditation on Christmas, Gutiérrez expresses the meaning of the incarnation in terms of the Word announcing the reign of life. «La Navidad nos invita a celebrar el compromiso del Señor con la historia humana, con lo más insignificante y pobre de ella [...]. Entrar en nuestra historia, la de aquí y ahora, alimentar nuestra esperanza con la voluntad de vida de los pobres de nuestro país, son condiciones ineludibles para habitar en la tienda que el Hijo puso en medio de nosotros. De este modo experimentaremos en su carne, y en la de tantos hermanos nuestros — aquí y en El Salvador por ejemplo — el encuentro con la Palabra que anuncia el Reino de Vida» (G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Signos*, no. 11 [diciembre 1989]).

¹⁹⁰ «La aventura histórica, el sentido de la historia será el encuentro con Dios, será la revelación de Dios» («Hacia una teología» [1968a] 10 [74]).

of the kingdom-liberation model of salvation is illustrated in the figure below¹⁹¹.

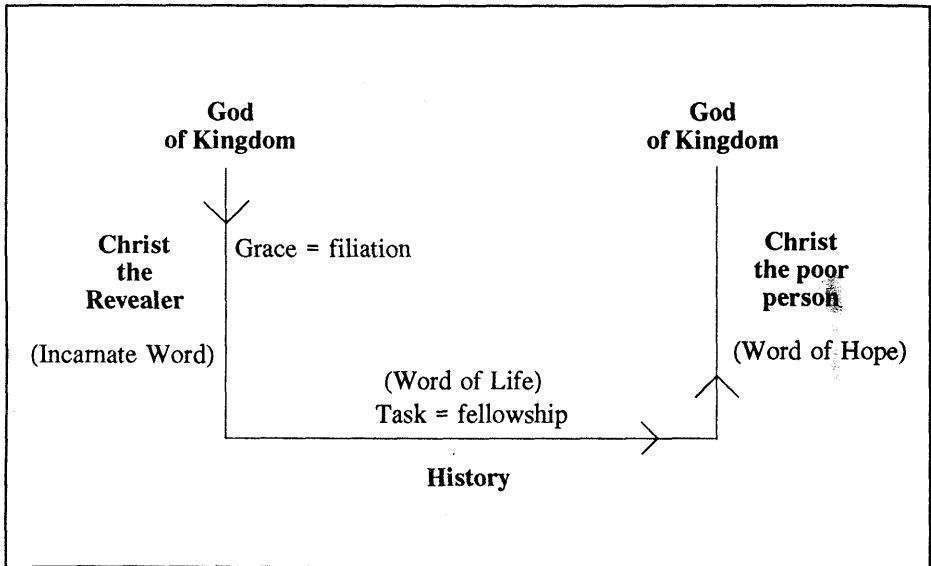


Fig. 3: Revelatory Dynamic in Kingdom-Liberation Model

5. Evaluation

Gutiérrez states that he is trying to find a response to the question about «how we are to tell people who are scarcely human that God is love and that God's love makes us one family»¹⁹². He finds his quest necessary because in his view traditional theology appears not to even face such a question, let alone respond to it. He sees his work as part of a stream of theology «welling up periodically in the desert of academic theology»¹⁹³. Thus, he claims that both the context of his theology and his method are quite different from those of the theology done in the major theological

¹⁹¹ Compare the figure Gutiérrez's provides in «The Irruption of the Poor» (1981d) 122.

¹⁹² «Two Theological Perspectives» (1978c) 241.

¹⁹³ «Two Theological Perspectives» (1978c) 249.

centres in Europe and North America¹⁹⁴. Given the alleged novelty of his method and the contextual nature of his theology, how is one to engage him in dialogue in order to evaluate his ideas? Does one need to identify with the questions coming from the experience of the poor in order to appreciate answers to those questions?

One should, however, not overlook the fact that Gutiérrez preserves a substantial continuity with the wider theological tradition. Vatican II and the CELAM conference at Medellín form a backdrop to his early work, and despite his critical stance concerning Church authority finding support in the ruling classes, Gutiérrez is not criticising authority per se, but the ideological role which it plays historically¹⁹⁵. Criticism of his work has centred on theological issues, with supporters claiming that his thought is recognisably Catholic, and critics implying that his criteria for truth are relativised and divorced from church tradition¹⁹⁶.

Taking the challenge of discontinuity and continuity with tradition into account, the following four principles will be followed here. Firstly, a difference of worldviews must be considered in evaluating Gutiérrez's work. Secondly, even while taking a critical stance, valid theological work

¹⁹⁴ Referring to the «epistemological break» proposed by the EATWOT theologians, Gutiérrez notes that such a radical break will mean «forcing us out of our old certainties and opening up new pathways that we must travel one step at a time» («Reflections from a Latin American Perspective» [1983c] 224).

¹⁹⁵ In his early work, in some of the infrequent references to documents from Vatican II, Gutiérrez was critical of the way Vatican II did not question seriously the individualism found in Western society (see G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Los pobres en la Iglesia» [1977b] 104 [12]). The theological references in *Teología de la liberación* came mainly from Latin American sources or those of the *nouvelle théologie* from France. Gutiérrez often refers to the CELAM conference at Medellín (1968), which was meant to define the presence of the Church in the actual transformation of Latin America in the light of Vatican Council II. The conference followed an inductive approach and was selective in its use of material from Vatican II. For instance there are many references to *Gaudium et spes* (and Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum progressio*), but of the 294 references there is only one from *Dei verbum* (DV 24 about the ability to hear faithfully the Word of God). The reference is in the Medellín document «Formation of Clergy» 10. The attention given to some documents rather than to others reflects the new approach taken by the Conference — an inductive approach, as in *Gaudium et spes*, concerned with questions and problems arising in the contemporary world.

¹⁹⁶ Roberto Goizueta notes the paradox of theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez along with his critics like Card. Trujillo, both being criticised by Michael Novak because they are so thoroughly Catholic and therefore dangerous to individualistic democratic capitalism (see R. GOIZUETA, «Liberation Theology», 39).

should preserve sufficient continuity with other forms of theology to enable a dialogue to begin. Thirdly, Gutiérrez's basic question about how to talk about God in inhuman situations is a thoroughly valid theological question and so his response merits a proper theological evaluation. Fourthly, one may learn from Gutiérrez's own attempts to dialogue with the wider theological tradition, for example, in his essay «La verdad los hará libres».

The evaluation will not be concerned with the validity or accuracy of Gutiérrez's analysis of the socioeconomic situation in Latin America. His use of Marxist analysis, which has been a hotly debated issue, will be of interest only insofar as it is relevant to the topic — Gutiérrez's understanding of revelation.

In the two previous chapters, on Jean-Marc Éla and Aloysius Pieris, *Dei verbum* was used as the principal «inter-text» for the evaluation. However Gutiérrez's theology has attracted the attention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). The conclusions of the CDF provide a rich source of opinions for any evaluation of Gutiérrez's work. So while not excluding the teaching of decrees like *Dei verbum*, the views of the CDF will be the starting point for this evaluation. The CDF view is particularly relevant for this study since one of the principal CDF concerns has been Gutiérrez's treatment of revelation.

5.1 *The Roman «Observations» and «Instructions»*

By the beginning of the 1980s, with divisions in the Latin American church, the CDF intervened¹⁹⁷. In March 1983 a paper entitled, «Observaciones sobre la teología de la liberación de Gustavo Gutiérrez» was sent to the Peruvian Episcopal Conference. Of the ten observations, the seventh is particularly relevant to the present topic. There Gutiérrez is accused of:

- following a Marxist understanding of truth in which orthodoxy is replaced by orthopraxis.
- having an understanding of experience which amounts to an attack on the transcendence of revelation and on its normative value.
- espousing a formula such as «God becomes history», which leads to relativism and puts in question the unity between the meaning of God's word and the reality of tradition¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁷ See fn. 64 for further details.

¹⁹⁸ See CDF, «Observations», 33-35, [348-350].

Gutiérrez's theology is described as one which could pervert the consciousness and hopes of the poor.

In August 1984, the CDF published the «Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation» (*Libertatis nuntius*). Though no theologian was named in the Instruction, Gutiérrez was obviously implicated. Some of the criticisms were similar to those in the «Observations» above. It is pointed out that:

- liberation theology runs the risk of reducing the Gospel to a purely earthly gospel (VI.4).
- the ultimate criterion for truth can only be a criterion which is itself theological (VII.10).
- there is a risk of historical immanentism (IX.3).
- there is a tendency in theologies of liberation to misunderstand or to eliminate the transcendence and gratuity of liberation in Jesus Christ (XI.17).

Liberation theology is said to propose an interpretation of the faith «which seriously departs from the faith of the church and, in fact, actually constitutes a practical negation» (VI.9).

In April 1986, the CDF published the «Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation» (*Libertatis conscientia*). The second «Instruction» is more positive, highlighting Jesus' words, «the truth will make you free» (Jn 8,32). However it warns of the danger of theories of «historical praxis», of projecting onto the word of God a meaning which it does not contain, and points out that the distinction between the supernatural order of salvation and the temporal order of human life must always be seen in the context of God's one plan accomplished in Jesus Christ¹⁹⁹.

Gustavo Gutiérrez has replied to all three documents²⁰⁰. The fundamental issue raised by Rome is whether he subordinates divine revelation to a rational hermeneutics²⁰¹. The following section will therefore examine and evaluate Gutiérrez's hermeneutical approach.

¹⁹⁹ See *Libertatis conscientia* 27, 70, and 80.

²⁰⁰ Gutiérrez says that the «Observations» do not correspond to the basic ideas of his theology, and concerning the first «Instruction» he replies, «I can say in conscience that the excesses referred to in the Instruction are not found in what I have written» (see the interview, «In Reply to the Vatican "Instruction"» 6; «Respuesta a las observaciones» [1985c] 37; the interview, «Criticism Will Deepen»; also «La verdad los hará libres» in his book by the same name, pp. 115-249 [85-200]).

²⁰¹ See F.A. PASTOR, «Ortopraxis y ortodoxia», 711, 715-720.

5.2 *Gutiérrez's Hermeneutical Approach*

The Christian community, in each historical phase through which it passes, faces new situations and new questions. Gutiérrez is attempting to answer questions coming from the particular experience of the poverty in contemporary Latin America²⁰². There are two principal elements in his hermeneutic:

- The Latin American context, especially the poverty there.
- His method in which commitment comes first.

These two elements influence the way he interprets biblical revelation, and in a broader sense, his whole theological hermeneutic²⁰³.

a) Firstly, considering his interpretation of biblical revelation, Gutiérrez says that reading the Bible is a dialogue between a *close* and a *distant* reading of the text²⁰⁴. A close reading means interpreting scripture in the light of the present context so that it speaks directly to people's lives. A distant reading means that we study the biblical texts «in their context and penetrate their meaning with all the help that the life of the church has supplied down through the centuries»²⁰⁵. Thus scripture is read historically both in terms of the particular context of the reader and in terms of the context of the living tradition of the church²⁰⁶. In this way Gutiérrez tries to bridge the hermeneutical gap between biblical revelation and what the Bible is saying to people today²⁰⁷. A detached ahistorical approach is

²⁰² «Reflexionamos siempre marcados por las realidades que vivimos, y por los cuestionamientos que ellas nos plantean; además, en el caso del discurso teológico se trata de tener una referencia a la fe vivida en y por la Iglesia en el momento histórico que atraviesa» (*Verdad*, 160 [114]).

²⁰³ Gutiérrez refers to these two elements as the «very backbone» of his theology (see *Fuerza*, 257 [200]).

²⁰⁴ *Vida*, 23-24 [xvii].

²⁰⁵ *Verdad*, 68 [48].

²⁰⁶ Gutiérrez writes: «Para unos el esfuerzo de la lectura de la Biblia debe orientarse a adaptar su mensaje y su lenguaje al hombre de hoy. Para otros, en cambio, se trata de una reinterpretación desde nuestro propio mundo, de una lectura desde nuestra experiencia humana y creyente. Esta segunda perspectiva es más radical, es decir, va más a la raíz de lo que es la Biblia, de lo que es la revelación de Dios en la historia. [...] Dios se revela en la historia del pueblo que creyó y esperó en él, esto nos lleva a repensar la palabra desde nuestra propia historia» (*Fuerza*, 14 [4]).

²⁰⁷ This «new reading» of the bible is based on a form of hermeneutics that holds that we bring who we are to our reading of the scripture and that this influences the way we read the Bible and the way the Bible «reads us» (see *Vida*, 24 [xvii], and *Verdad*,

considered neither valid nor desirable. Any reading of the Bible must be made in the context of «a committed, active, militant Christian life»²⁰⁸. Thus interpreting scripture becomes an interpretation of life according to the scripture. For Gutiérrez it is important not to ignore or conceal social and political commitments, but to acknowledge their part in one's interpretation of the text.

b) The context and method also play an important part in Gutiérrez's theological hermeneutic. Since the Latin American situation is very different from that of Europe, Gutiérrez maintains that the Latin American faith experience cannot be interpreted in terms of European history²⁰⁹. History may be «one», but it is not the same for everybody, especially those on the «underside» of history. In Gutiérrez's view, God identifies with the poor and the forgotten, seen particularly in the preference Christ shows for the poor as he reveals the Father's all-embracing love. The entire Bible mirrors God's predilection for the weak and abused of history²¹⁰. As a consequence Gutiérrez makes an option for the poor a fundamental element in his theology.

Gutiérrez's defends his option in two ways. Referring to passages like Mt 25,31-46, he says that the option for the poor is really an option for Christ²¹¹. The second way he justifies his option leaves him vulnerable to accusations of using praxis as a norm for orthodoxy. Gutiérrez says that his option is *veri-fied* — made to be true — in involvement in the liberation process²¹². By making a preferential option for the poor and the oppressed one comes to realise that such people are the first objects of the gratuitous love of the God of Jesus Christ, which is at the centre of biblical revelation.

223, fn. 24 [198, fn. 152]). A helpful summary of this method is in S.J. CROATTO, «Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theologies of Liberation».

²⁰⁸ *Verdad*, 69 [48].

²⁰⁹ Gutiérrez writes, «Nuestra convicción es que esa reflexión parte de una realidad social, cultural y religiosa diferente a la europea; ella da una posibilidad histórica inédita que debemos percibir y desarrollar» (see *Verdad*, 163 [115]). The context of his theology is the converse of the triumph of liberalism and individualism.

²¹⁰ *Vida*, 228 [116].

²¹¹ «Respuesta a las observaciones» (1985c) 51. He refers to the passage in *La fuerza histórica de los pobres* in which he says that Jesus Christ is the hermeneutical principle of the faith and the basis and foundation of all theological reasoning (see *Fuerza*, 81 [61]).

²¹² *Fuerza*, 258 [201].

The circular logic and the insistence on committed involvement with the poor are characteristic of Gutiérrez's approach. He maintains that his argument forms a hermeneutical circle founded on faith in Jesus Christ who is «the great hermeneutical principle of faith, and therefore of all theological discourse»²¹³. However, Gutiérrez's proposal for entering into the circle by going beyond reflection and becoming part of the process through which the world is transformed has led to controversy, for such action demands commitment to certain options, and this in turn leads to the accusation of particularism and ideological bias. Such accusations are unavoidable because Gutiérrez wants to go beyond interpretation, which would retrieve the meaning of the Christian tradition, to a critique which would unmask its distortions and help rectify them.

Ever-present is the Marxist critique that Christian faith leads to alienation because it is based on an understanding of truth unrelated to historical reality. Gutiérrez adopts the term *praxis*, used by Marx among others, as the starting point of his own critique. The use of the Greek term is not without its ambiguities. Some, including the CDF, question whether the importance given to praxis allows revelation to preserve its rightful priority. The issue will be considered in the following section.

5.3 *Theory and Praxis*

The CDF is correct in observing that Gutiérrez utilises a methodological analysis similar to that of Marx. However the theological consequences of such a shared perspective must be ascertained. Gutiérrez has tried to defuse the issue, pointing out that the term «praxis» has a long history going back to Greek thought²¹⁴. The main concern is whether divine revelation is subordinated to praxis. Three questions need to be considered.

- How does Gutiérrez relate theory and practice?
- Does Gutiérrez have a theological criterion of truth?
- How does Gutiérrez understand the transcendent in history?

These questions are the subject of this and the next two sections.

Like Marx, Gutiérrez holds that theory independent of praxis masks reality and easily becomes a form of ideology²¹⁵. Theology as critical

²¹³ *Verdad*, 13 [4].

²¹⁴ *Verdad*, 125 [91-92].

²¹⁵ Gutiérrez says that the protection which the church receives from the social class which is the beneficiary and defender of the status quo in Latin America contributes to the Christian message becoming a part of the dominant ideology. Thus claims to

reflection is a critique of theology as ideology. Critical reflection begins not with theory, but «with the facts and questions derived from the world and from history»²¹⁶. From this perspective revelation is seen as the event of God being revealed in history through the fulfilment of God's promise of love and redemption²¹⁷.

Gutiérrez understands salvation as the communion of human beings with God and among themselves, in contrast to the breach of that communion — which is sin. Therefore liberation (in its various levels), while not the whole of salvation, is salvific work because it reveals the reign of God. Unlike Marx who emphasised the control of economic, political and ideological relationships in history, Gutiérrez gives priority to the reign of God and holds that history is subject to God's call and the free response of human beings²¹⁸.

Just how Gutiérrez understands the relation between theory and praxis is a complex matter to determine as his language has changed over time²¹⁹.

noninvolvement in politics are nothing but a subterfuge to keep things as they are (see *Liberación*, 387 [151]). It is important to note that there are many interpretations of «Marxism». In particular, on the matter of the primacy of theory and praxis there are those who give primacy to praxis, citing Marx: «It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness». Others give primacy to theory citing Marx: «The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it» (see J. KROGER, «Prophetic-Critical and Practical-Strategic Tasks», 6).

²¹⁶ *Liberación*, 82 [9-10].

²¹⁷ *Verdad*, 131 [95]. Charles Davis writes: «To suppose a once-for-all revelation, to anticipate that faith will remain identical with itself, is for Marx to fall into ideology because it is in effect a denial of concrete history and an escape into abstraction» (see C. DAVIS, «Theology and Praxis»).

²¹⁸ *Verdad*, 149 [106].

²¹⁹ If theory and praxis must inform each other as Gutiérrez maintains, which has priority? His talk of «first» and «second» stage or act, might lead one to think that praxis has chronological priority. However Gutiérrez corrects such a misunderstanding. «It is not a question of being a Christian in the morning and doing theology in the afternoon. It is a question of priorities» («New Evangelization» [1992e] 186). Does praxis have normative priority? Gutiérrez clarifies that the ultimate criteria for judgement come from revelation and not from praxis itself (see *Liberación*, 79, fn. a [180, fn. 34]; *Verdad*, 140 [101]). He adds in a note: «I am therefore far from holding what the Peruvian bishops call “another aspect of Marxist thought”, which they describe as “the primacy of praxis: praxis that gives rise to truth or becomes the fundamental criterion of truth”» (*Ibid.*, 140-141, fn. 31 [181, fn. 45]). Carl Braaten comments that the idea of freedom cannot be derived from the existing state of affairs. Rather freedom

In his early work, for example in some of the essays in *La fuerza histórica de los pobres*, Gutiérrez places great importance on practice (*práctica*), or what at other times he calls praxis. He writes: «Practice is the locus of verification of our faith in God, who liberates by establishing justice and right in favor of the poor [...]. In the deed our faith becomes truth, not only for others, but for ourselves as well»²²⁰. The theology of liberation is defined as «an attempt to understand the faith from within the concrete historical, liberating, and subversive praxis of the poor of this world — the exploited classes, despised ethnic groups, and marginalised cultures»²²¹.

Later, in the revised edition of *Teología de la liberación* and in his essay «La verdad los hará libres», Gutiérrez's language is restrained and more orthodox. For example, where previously theology was said to be «critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word», in «La verdad los hará libres» Gutiérrez says that theology «is talk about God», or «discourse on revelation»²²². He also notes how theology has its proper autonomy, «which it derives from the revealed source (the scriptures as they live on in tradition)»²²³. Despite the changes and the numerous clarifications, his work is still recognisable as a theology of liberation. Often parallel to a very orthodox statement he will add a qualification. For example, after defining theology as talk about God he goes on to say that «a Latin American theology which prescind[s] from unjust suffering cannot speak of God and expect to be heard»²²⁴.

The changing language indicates a shift of perspective as Gutiérrez has tried to respond to criticism of his theology. The CDF has accused

has been released into history through the promises of God and the person and activity of Jesus Christ. «The Christian gospel generates its own form of freedom: it does not wait upon a liberating praxis to make it true and meaningful». So from the point of view of freedom, praxis is really a second step (see C.E. BRAATEN, «Praxis: The Trojan Horse of Liberation Theology», 278). One must conclude that the priority is a methodological one which identifies the starting point in the ongoing theory-praxis cycle. Christian praxis shapes the horizon or preunderstanding from which theological reflection is done.

²²⁰ *Fuerza*, 28 [17].

²²¹ *Fuerza*, 52 [37].

²²² *Verdad*, 121 [89], 130, fn. 10 [179, fn. 24].

²²³ *Verdad*, 122 [89].

²²⁴ *Verdad*, 123 [90]. Bp Oscar Alzamora of Lima contends that Gutiérrez's practice of making statements which can have separate interpretations at different theoretical levels, makes it very hard to respond to Gutiérrez's work (personal communication. Parroquia S.M. Reina, Lima, 24 June 1993).

liberation theology of using Marxist dialectics with its associated conflictive view of reality²²⁵. In his early work Gutiérrez refers to class divisions in dialectical terms²²⁶. In more recent works Gutiérrez has explained that he sees the conflictive predicament of the poor as a social fact, not as part of a metaphysic that conceives human beings caught up in laws of history beyond their control²²⁷. His dialectical approach to theory and praxis is meant not as an explanation of, but as a solution to that conflict. Because of ideological manipulation Christian theory is not informed by praxis and no longer explains the world of the poor and oppressed. What is called for is a critical intervention (theory) which leads to an active transformation (praxis) of the situation²²⁸. Such an intervention would restore a dialectical relationship in which theory and practice inform each other. The theologian must be active in the liberative process, otherwise the result would not be a theology of authentic liberation²²⁹. Thus, while there has been a change in his view of the dynamics of history, Gutiérrez applies a dialectical method to theory and praxis, and perceives the kingdom in terms of a dialectic of gift and demand²³⁰.

²²⁵ See CDF, *Libertatis nuntius* VIII, 2-8, and X, 2-3.

²²⁶ For example, Gutiérrez says that liberation theology is an expression of a «dialectical opposition» to bourgeois ideology, coming up out of the popular classes (see «La fuerza histórica» [1978a] xxxi [*Power*, 93]; also *Fuerza*, 54 [38], 71 [52]).

²²⁷ Gutiérrez explains the difference between conflict as a social fact and as a law of history in *Verdad*, 98-102 [69-72].

²²⁸ The dynamic is explained well in D.B. BATSTONE, *From Conquest to Struggle*, 266-273. Basing his argument on Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Batstone notes that when praxis gives rise to an anomaly which contradicts the perceptual field offered by its paradigm, the community is thrown into a state of theoretical dissonance. The cognitive dissonance may be so great that an entire paradigm is scrapped, thereby instigating a «revolution».

²²⁹ «Si la teología es una reflexión desde y sobre la praxis, es importante tener presente que se trata de la praxis de liberación de los oprimidos de este mundo. Aislar el método teológico de esta perspectiva es perder el nervio de la cuestión y recaer en el academicismo» (*Fuerza*, 258 [200-201]).

²³⁰ In a section on the kingdom of God he writes: «Las bienaventuranzas están netamente enmarcadas en la dialéctica gracia-exigencia» (*Vida*, 235 [120]). Gutiérrez's use of dialectics has generated criticism beyond CDF circles. Some point to the wider issue of beliefs in harmonious and conflictive views of society (see P. SIGMUND, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads*, 87-88). Dennis McCann sees a dialectical vision as incompatible with the religious vision of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular (see D. MCCANN, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology*, 165-166).

Christian tradition recognises conflict present between good and evil, but proposes the resolution of that conflict in the kingdom of God. Gutiérrez is trying to follow the same dynamic, though grounding it in intrahistorical reality where Christian theory is contradicted by oppressive praxis. The solution is again found in the kingdom of God where the gift (God's salvific promise) and the task (human work) in a fruitful tension reveal the God of life. Gutiérrez is not opposing theory or making theory subject to praxis. Rather he is opposing theory divorced from praxis and stressing that the good news is not about a theoretical, otherworldly salvation, but an intrahistorical reality in which God's love is revealed.

5.4 *Praxis and Truth*

Gutiérrez distances himself from the so-called Hellenistic understanding of truth residing in the essences of things, and follows a concept of truth closer to the Semitic understanding in which truth has the connotation of fidelity or trustworthiness. Truth is a relation not between things and concepts, but rather between promise and fulfilment²³¹.

Does orthopraxis become the norm for orthodoxy? In his early work, with statements like «true orthodoxy is orthopraxis», Gutiérrez left himself open to charges of subordinating truth to praxis²³². Referring to the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, he said that truth is something *verified* or «made true». Knowledge of reality that does not transform that reality is not verified and does not become true. He then applied the idea to the gospel. Gospel truth is «veri-fied». «It happens, it becomes»²³³. Gospel truth is something which one has to work at²³⁴.

In later works Gutiérrez has clarified his position and has confirmed that truth is «saving truth», and that the ultimate criteria of truth are derived from the «deposit of faith»²³⁵. As with the relation between theory and

²³¹ *Verdad*, 131 [94-95]. Truth is seen not as *epiphaneia* or manifestation, but as *epangelia* or promise which is verified in time (see *Verdad*, 132-133, fn. 16 and 17 [95, fn. 30 and 31]).

²³² *Verdad*, 80 [60]. Gutiérrez says that by taking the part of the poor, «we verify God, we make God to be true» (*Ibid.*, 268 [208]).

²³³ *Verdad*, 79 [59].

²³⁴ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Movimientos de liberación y teología» (1974b) 454 [143].

²³⁵ *Verdad*, 138 [99], 146 [104], 160 [114]). In a footnote in the introduction to the revised edition of *Liberación* Gutiérrez says that there must be a balance between orthodoxy and orthopraxis and that there is a need to criticise sharply «the tendency to a quasi-exclusive emphasis on orthopraxis» (*Liberación*, 79, fn. a [8 fn. 34]).

praxis, Gutiérrez appears to be searching for a fruitful balance between truth which exists (theory) and truth which must be done (praxis.) He affirms that theology is dealing with truth that has been given to us, but also truth which is discovered by doing deeds in accord with God's will. Thus the truth which the Lord reveals to us, when accepted, is not simply believed, but leads to commitment, so that the truth is verified by praxis²³⁶. «The truth that the Lord reveals to us "is done" or "practised" in the activity of the disciple who thus welcomes the gift of the word»²³⁷.

Considered in this way there is a revelatory dimension to truth because God is revealed in the fulfilment of God's promise of love and redemption. As was noted above in sections 3.3 and 4.2, Gutiérrez's characteristic emphasis on history as the locus of revelation implies that historical praxis can play an integral part in the revelation of the God of life. Thus, to the extent that historical praxis «does» the truth and «verifies» the promise of the Gospel, it participates in the revelation of God who loves us and calls us to the gift of full communion with God and fellowship with others²³⁸.

The interrelation between truth and works in Gutiérrez's view, displays a dynamic similar to that given in *Dei verbum* 2, which outlines the inner dynamism of revelation by which «God's works, effected during the course of the history of salvation, show forth and confirm the doctrine and the realities signified by the words, while the words in turn proclaim the works and throw light on the meaning hidden in them». Gutiérrez's contribution is to introduce the eschatological dimension of the reign of God and to bring out the importance of human participation in God's gift of salvation. To exclude temporal progress from the growth of the kingdom would be an unacceptable reduction of the salvific process to a «religious» sphere. For Gutiérrez the challenge is to preserve the link between the gift and the task, and what he terms the «circular relationship» between orthodoxy and orthopraxis, and the nourishment of each by the other²³⁹.

5.5 *Transcendence and History*

Gutiérrez's treatment of history is not without its ambiguities. Particularly in his earlier work, knowledge is linked to historical change. History can

²³⁶ *Verdad*, 136 [98]; *Fuerza*, 268 [208].

²³⁷ *Verdad*, 136 [98].

²³⁸ *Liberación*, 78 [8].

²³⁹ *Verdad*, 145 [104].

be known only by transforming it and oneself²⁴⁰. Yet Gutiérrez insists that history has a transcendent meaning and that liberation is a way to a fullness that lies *beyond* history²⁴¹. We live in a Christo-finalised (*crisofinalizada*) history and this elevates history beyond itself²⁴². In his essay «La verdad los hará libres», he says that the stress in liberation theology «is on the work of Christ that liberates us from sin and brings us into communion with him»²⁴³. The clarification of his priorities is necessary due to his habitual emphasis on the social and personal dimensions of liberation.

Gutiérrez has not succeeded in achieving total clarity in his various attempts to explain the difference between his view of the unity of history and that of the «separation of planes». Terms like «level», «plane» and «order» are ambiguous. For example, one is told that at Vatican II the temporal and spiritual were separated so that the church (spiritual order) would evangelise and inspire the temporal order²⁴⁴. He rejects this conception of «the existence of two juxtaposed “orders” [*órdenes*], closely connected or convergent, but deep down different from each other»²⁴⁵. Then on the next page one reads: I am saying only that «in the actual order [*el orden actual*] of the economy of salvation there is not a history of nature and another history of grace [...]». Gutiérrez's intention is clear. He wants to affirm an «integral» Christian vocation. However the terminology lacks clarity. He himself admits that «contemporary theology has not yet fashioned the categories that would allow us to think through and express adequately this unified approach to history»²⁴⁶.

Gutiérrez looks for signs of transcendence within history, such as the «signs of the times»²⁴⁷. His christology is incarnationalist, though stripped of its overtly supernatural connotations. In the incarnate Word, God «becomes» history. However, the idea of one history, and the intent to

²⁴⁰ *Fuerza*, 79 [59].

²⁴¹ «Sentido último a la historia» (*Verdad*, 144 [104], 148 [105]).

²⁴² *Verdad*, 166 [117].

²⁴³ *Verdad*, 173 [122].

²⁴⁴ *Liberación*, 134 [37]. Presumably Gutiérrez is trying to use Vatican II terminology when he says that «the pope is simply reminding us of an ancient Christian theme: complete human fulfillment comes only through elevation to the order of grace» (*Verdad*, 171 [120]).

²⁴⁵ *Verdad*, 177 [125].

²⁴⁶ *Liberación*, 246 [86].

²⁴⁷ Gutiérrez says that the defence of the poor by God brings to light God's «real transcendence» («Caminando con el pueblo» [1979a] 17 [xiii]).

avoid dualistic language, makes it difficult to deal with any form of reality beyond history. Do such presuppositions make the incarnation a myth? Is there no qualitative difference between «partial» fulfilments (liberation) and the «total» fulfilment of God's promises (salvation)? Gutiérrez affirms the reality of the incarnation and that liberation «is not all» of salvation²⁴⁸. Yet the theological silence about «the fullness that lies beyond» history leaves many unanswered questions.

Gutiérrez's insistence on one history requires him to look for transcendence in eschatology rather than metaphysics²⁴⁹. However he cautions against the risk of replacing a «christianity of the beyond» with a «christianity of the future». He accuses Jürgen Moltmann of taking the promise of the future rather than the experience of the present as the basis of his critique of society. In his opinion Moltmann fails to develop a vocabulary sufficiently rooted in contemporary human historical experience²⁵⁰. However is Gutiérrez's reference to a «Christo-finalised history» any improvement over Moltmann's idea²⁵¹? Despite his descriptions of the suffering of the poor, in his publications Gutiérrez himself remains mainly at an abstract level without concrete societal, economic and political analyses. The difficulty of finding a concrete theological language based on present experience indicates the fundamental problem of expressing adequately the relation between revelation and historical events²⁵².

5.6 *A Question of Language*

Gutiérrez has tried to overcome the language problem in several ways. One way is to refer to various dimensions of key terms. For example, he says that with the term «liberation», one may distinguish three levels of meaning which are part of «a single complex process». Thus the term may refer to political liberation, personal freedom, or liberation from sin. Seeing key terms in their various dimensions expands the potential for expression

²⁴⁸ Gutiérrez says that the incarnation has its meaning within history. He says that the incarnation does not deprive God of transcendence but reveals to us what kind of holiness pertains to God (see *Vida*, 341 [181]).

²⁴⁹ *Fuerza*, 265-266 [95].

²⁵⁰ *Liberación*, 327 [124].

²⁵¹ *Verdad*, 180 [126].

²⁵² Francis Fiorenza notes the irony of liberation theology being criticised for being both too abstract, and too immediately related to praxis (see F. FIORENZA, «Latin American Liberation Theology», 456).

and provides new ways of including a transcendent dimension in a term which might not normally have such connotations. However it also heightens the danger of ambiguity. It is not always clear which dimension(s) Gutiérrez is referring to, so there is the possibility of confusing semantic fields and of creating relationships merely with words²⁵³.

Another way Gutiérrez has tried to overcome the language limitations is through a combination of analogical and dialectical language. For some critics, the two languages betray a «conceptual instability» in Gutiérrez's theology of history²⁵⁴. Perhaps Gutiérrez's critics have not fully appreciated the way his blend of languages fits in with his expression of transcendence and God's self revelation.

David Tracy has argued that there are two major conceptual languages in theology: analogy and dialectics²⁵⁵. The former articulates similarity-in-difference, the latter, the tensive power of radical negations upon all claims to similarity, continuity and ordered relations. Dialectics in Tracy's schema is best considered as «negative» dialectics, because he also notes the importance of the dialectical process within analogy itself²⁵⁶.

Gutiérrez's use of dialectics varies. As noted already in section 5.3, there has been a shift in perspective in his application of dialectics to class divisions in society. Particularly since the 1980s, Gutiérrez's use of dialectics is situated within an analogical approach to theology. For example, considering his image of God, Gutiérrez acknowledges a dialectical relationship between God's promise and its fulfilments, life and death, and the universality and particularity of God's love²⁵⁷. Occasionally he refers in dialectical terms to God's presence and God's revelation. The Lord «hides his presence in history, and at the same time reveals it, in the life and suffering, the struggles, the death, and the hopes of the condemned of

²⁵³ K. LEHMANN, in «Problemas metodológicos y hermenéuticos», 39-40, points out the problem of overlapping semantic fields.

²⁵⁴ D. McCANN, *Christian Realism*, 206. McCann argues that liberation theology «is plagued from the beginning by a crucial ambiguity, stemming primarily from an incompatibility between its method and its content» (*Ibid.*, 230).

²⁵⁵ See D. TRACY, *The Analogical Imagination*, 408.

²⁵⁶ Tracy writes, «Where analogical theologies lose that sense for the negative, that dialectical sense within analogy itself, they produce not a believable harmony among various likenesses in all reality but the theological equivalent of "cheap grace": boredom, sterility and an atheological vision of a deadening univocity» (D. TRACY, *The Analogical Imagination*, 413).

²⁵⁷ *Liberación*, 259 [92]; «Reflections» (1983c) 232; *Beber*, 43 [30]; *Verdad*, 236 [166].

the earth»²⁵⁸. However God is not part of a divine dialectic grappling with the history of the world²⁵⁹. Very occasionally Gutiérrez refers to God suffering in Jesus Christ²⁶⁰. However, when he does so it is usually within a discussion of secularisation found in Europe and the West. As noted in section 2.9, Gutiérrez highlights the faithful, holy God who liberates and gives life²⁶¹. God wills life and not death, joy and not suffering. Thus, unlike the dialectics of scholars like Moltmann, Gutiérrez's understanding of God is more in keeping with the analogical imagination of Catholic tradition which preserves God's transcendence and freedom²⁶².

Gutiérrez's insistence on the combination of mystical and prophetic dimensions of Christian praxis provides an example of his blend of languages. Mystical language comes from the experience of God's

²⁵⁸ For reference to God's transcendence and God's presence in history in dialectical terms, see *Vida*, 181 [90].

²⁵⁹ Elizabeth Johnson describes J. Moltmann's view in those terms. «Thesis: There is suffering on the cross and in the world. Antithesis: This suffering affects God and even appears to overcome him (Jesus dies). Synthesis: God transforms the suffering into life (the resurrection in the Spirit). This theology of the trinitarian transactions in the event of the cross works itself out as a divine dialectic grappling with the history of the world» (see E. JOHNSON, *Consider Jesus*, 121-122).

²⁶⁰ «The Christian living in a world come of age — meaning a world without God — must share God's suffering» («Two Theological Perspectives» [1978c] 233). Again, «Lo que hace a un cristiano es compartir los sufrimientos mesiánicos de Dios en Jesucristo» («Los límites» [1979c] 231 [*Power*, 230]). Both of these statements are in the context of a discussion of Bonhoeffer's work. While he praises Bonhoeffer for having deplored unjust suffering, he notes that Bonhoeffer remained focused on the challenge of modernity and never really made the plight of the poor the centre of his theological discourse (*Ibid.*, 233-234 [232]). There is an isolated reference to the all-powerful God being also a «weak» God, e.g. *Job*, 171 [77]. Gutiérrez also raises the issue in an interview concerning the work of the Peruvian poet César Vallejo (see the interview «Vamos a hablar de Vallejo»).

²⁶¹ Contrasting views of God as seen from different perspectives are evident in the following passage: «En el contexto del fenómeno llamado secularización, aumenta la sensibilidad frente a un Dios que se revela en la humildad y el sufrimiento. Ante un ser humano consciente de su fuerza, la teología habla de un Dios "débil".

Desde la experiencia de muerte de los pobres se afirma, en cambio, un Dios que libera y da vida. Las vivencias y reflexiones sobre Dios que vienen de los sectores pobres y marginados de la humanidad acentúan esta perspectiva» (*Vida*, 20-21 [xv]).

²⁶² E. Johnson uses the expression applied to E. Schillebeeckx (see E. JOHNSON, *Consider Jesus*, 125). While there are differences between Gutiérrez and Schillebeeckx, they share the basic Thomist presumption of God's freedom in the face of evil. Rather than a suffering God, God is a God of love and compassion.

gratuitous love. It presumes a communication (in silence) between God and humankind. Prophetic language rejects situations that are contrary to the will of God and the good of humanity. It begins from the experience of the negation of God's love. Thus Gutiérrez's way of talking about God comes from the dialectics of the manifestation of God's love and its negation. If praxis were only an effort to transform history, it would be vulnerable to accusations of immanentism. However Gutiérrez's insistence on the contemplative dimension as an integral part of Christian praxis allows him to include God's gratuitousness, thus ensuring a place for the transcendent.

Particularly relevant to Gutiérrez's understanding of revelation is the way he combines dialectics and analogy in the gift and the task of God's reign. Gutiérrez makes it clear that he is not thinking of a synthesis of gratuitousness and effectiveness²⁶³. He says that the kingdom as treated in the Beatitudes is «clearly located in the dialectic of gift and demand»²⁶⁴. In other words, one lives the gratuitous love of God by committing oneself to the liberation of people. Effective action in history «will be sought with ever increasing fervour in the measure that it reveals to us the gratuitous love of God: God's preference for the poor»²⁶⁵. Within the dialectic of gift and task the historic dimension encounters something which though experienced in history, has its origin in the gratuitous love of God. Thus Gutiérrez preserves an image of God, not ahistorical, but independent of history, who «intervenes» in history and «breaks into» human existence.

Dialectical language is important for bringing out the paradoxes and contradictions in reality and for unmasking the negations in the structures of social life and of tradition. It helps Gutiérrez retrieve the subversive and liberating aspects of the Gospel. Analogous language allows him to preserve the sacramental or transcendent dimension of reality. There is a fundamental trust hidden in Christian praxis²⁶⁶. God is revealed in Christian praxis in history but is not contained by it. There is a «fullness» beyond history which bears a similarity-in-difference to the expressions of the kingdom already present.

The emphasis on God's revelation in present history in the growth of the kingdom of God raises a question about the status of that revelation in relation to God's word in the past as recorded in Scripture. The dialectic of God's transcendence and God's presence in history, as well as the dialectic

²⁶³ *Beber*, 141 [108-109].

²⁶⁴ *Vida*, 235 [120].

²⁶⁵ *Beber*, 147 [113].

²⁶⁶ D. TRACY, *The Analogical Imagination*, 390.

of revelation and hiddenness, are set forth in the Bible in a complex and fruitful way that calls for historical discernment²⁶⁷. The norm for that discernment is «the light of faith» or «the light of the divine word»²⁶⁸. Thus theological primacy belongs to the revealed word in scripture and the faith of the church²⁶⁹. The church can reveal the presence of salvation effected by Christ in virtue of being the depository of God's word²⁷⁰.

6. Summary and Conclusion

In his recent book on *Las Casas*, Gutiérrez writes, «The poor are even God's favorites because they find themselves in a situation altogether contrary to the divine design, which is a design of life»²⁷¹. The statement can be taken in different ways depending how one understands the term «because». Some would ask: «If the poor are preferred by God, why do they have to suffer so much? Such a response employs the logic of retributive justice in which the good are rewarded and evil-doers punished. Others, from a different perspective, would see the statement as an example of God's gratuitous love. As a loving father, God obviously has a preferential love for the smallest and the weakest.

²⁶⁷ *Vida*, 181 [90].

²⁶⁸ See *Liberación*, 76 [7], 79, fn. a [180, fn. 34].

²⁶⁹ See *Liberación*, 82, fn. b [181, fn. 40]. Gutiérrez says that our contemporary experiences must be measured against «the Bible, church tradition, and contemporary theological awareness» («Reflections» [1983c] 233).

²⁷⁰ «El que salva es Cristo. La Iglesia tiene una misión salvífica, sí, que consiste en revelar la presencia ya actuante de la salvación entre los hombres, la comunión con Dios. La Iglesia puede revelar a los hombres la presencia de la salvación operada por Cristo, en virtud de ser la depositaria de la palabra de Dios» (*Líneas*, 69). This does not mean that the church community can act as if it were the privileged repository of the word. Gutiérrez is against ecclesiocentrism, and is wary of the way the institutional church has sided with ruling elites. «Los propietarios de los bienes de este mundo dejarían de ser los "dueños" del Evangelio» (*Liberación*, 393 [155]). The community, in virtue of its faith in Christ, does not possess the gospel, but «reappropriates» it, so as to serve the poor rather than its own interests or those of the powerful. Gutiérrez realises that such a presentation of the gospel will not be acceptable to all. «It will be expressed in an unrefined manner, it will smell bad» («Freedom and Salvation» [1977a] 93). Gutiérrez says that theology should be seen as an expression of «the right to think» on the part of the «wretched of the earth» («La fuerza histórica» [1978a] xxxviii [*Power*, 102]).

²⁷¹ *Las Casas*, 33 [18].

In secularised cultures the scandal of suffering and poverty often leads to disbelief. But according to Gutiérrez, if the suffering innocent in Latin America did not believe it would not be such a problem. It is precisely because they do believe that they are perplexed²⁷². If God exists and does not will poverty and suffering, God must want to liberate people from that condition. This appears as the core of the good news revealed in Jesus Christ. To learn that they are loved by God, not despite, but because of their situation, arouses hope and joy which subverts a world of oppression, upsets those exercising domination, and reveals the love of the God who liberates and gives life. People of faith have a new task: to work towards unity and fellowship, «waiting actively» for the kingdom of God.

Gutiérrez's theology is an attempt to relate faith and the human condition. The condition of poverty is contrary to the reign of life and is therefore a faith issue. Participation in the praxis of liberation places us in the midst of tangible, conflictual history. There we meet Christ who reveals God to us as Father and our neighbours as our sisters and brothers. Liberating praxis is a sign of God's saving action working on history from within. Thus praxis has a revelatory dimension when it is an encounter with the God of life. The poor, striving for freedom in the midst of conflict, are not only the privileged recipients of God's revelation, but also the medium of that revelation. «The poor person, the other, becomes the revealer of the Utterly Other»²⁷³.

The kingdom of God revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, will be fulfilled at the end of time. Meanwhile in the «already» but «not yet» God continues to call people to communion. Revelation continues in the signs of the growth of God's reign in history. As Gutiérrez says, «God's presence, hidden in history, is revealed in «the life and suffering, the struggles, the death, and the hopes of the condemned of the earth»²⁷⁴.

Gutiérrez's attempt to relate God's word and historical processes in a kingdom-liberation model of salvation results in a distinctive view of revelation. In particular, the following may be noted.

Firstly, Gutiérrez recognises history as the locus of our encounter with God in Christ, but goes beyond that to imply that there is an intrinsic link between history and divine revelation. In the incarnation God «becomes» history. The signs of the kingdom of God are historical events, and faith

²⁷² *Job*, 21 [xv]. Gutiérrez says that suffering does not preclude joy and hope (see the interview «Vamos a hablar de Vallejo», 118).

²⁷³ *Vida*, 71 [52].

²⁷⁴ *Vida*, 181 [90].

praxis reveals the God of life. To love one's neighbour is to love God, so history is the progressive revelation of the human face of God.

Secondly, as has been noted, the poor are God's favorites because they find themselves in a situation altogether contrary to the divine design, which is a design of life. They are the primary addressees of the word. God's word in Christ reveals a God of hope and life who loves the poor, not because they are good, but because God is good. As they respond to God's call to life in the face of death, the poor in turn mediate God's liberating love to others.

Thirdly, Gutiérrez's understanding of the kingdom of God as a gift and a task illustrates how human activity can have a revelatory dimension. The kingdom is a gift not of word but of deed²⁷⁵. People accept God's gift of the kingdom precisely in Christian praxis. Liberation, *from* sin and oppression, *for* communion with God and other people, contributes to the growth of the kingdom and reveals the loving purpose of the God of life.

Fourthly, Gutiérrez's view of Christian praxis as the revelation of God's love gives renewed significance to human action in history. God does not act in history in place of human agents, but rather is present in human activity. This has implications for the reception of God's word. Gutiérrez stresses the link between faith commitment and the capacity to hear God's word, which reaches us in the measure of our involvement in historical becoming.

Fifthly, both word and event are important for Gutiérrez's understanding of revelation. The Word is God's life-giving, liberating word, in the light of which theological reflection is accomplished. However he stresses the link between God's word of life and the events which manifest God's love in history. Events include the active role of the human person in the reception of the Word and the expression of it in Christian praxis. Revelation is the moving force behind this salvific-liberating movement in history.

Sixthly, while acknowledging the importance of foundational revelation, Gutiérrez's attention to history results in a greater emphasis on on-going revelation. This affects his treatment of tradition. Usually the church monitors the interpretation of the sacred text and its application to historical situations through the medium of tradition. While verbally acknowledging the importance of tradition, Gutiérrez in fact varies the procedure by substituting the authority of the Word, guided by the holy Spirit active at

²⁷⁵ *Fuerza*, 90 [67].

the level of Christian communities, where «from their own wells» people drink from the experience of being church²⁷⁶.

Seventhly, Gutiérrez's use of language is significant in expressing his understanding of revelation. Dialectical language brings out the paradoxes and contradictions in reality allowing him to retrieve the subversive and liberating aspects of the Gospel. Analogous language permits him to preserve the sacramental or transcendent dimension of reality which facilitates the revelation of God as loving Father. The two languages allow him to refer to the Lord whose presence is both hidden and revealed in history.

The main concern of the CDF was to defend the transcendent dimension of the Christian mystery against any reduction of salvation to an intra-historical human liberation. By insisting that history is one, and then devoting most of his attention to the sociopolitical dimension of history, Gutiérrez leaves himself open to the criticism of the CDF. However as this study has shown, Gutiérrez does not eliminate the transcendent, nor does he consider intra-historical reality to be all that matters. God relativises history. By basing his theology on the gracious love of God revealed in scripture, Gutiérrez ensures the priority of God's grace²⁷⁷.

A great deal hinges on Gutiérrez's understanding of history as «one». His intention is not to impose a monolithic unity in which there is no distinction between grace and nature or the transcendent and the worldly. Rather he wants to avoid dualism which separates the two into different realms²⁷⁸. Thus he tries not to dismiss the transcendent but to see it in relation to human history. God's promise and human activity are distinct but united. The political is grafted onto the eternal. There is an intrinsic relation in the reign of God between the gift and the task. What for his critics amounts to reducing the transcendent to human history, is for Gutiérrez the complex unity of the presence of grace in history. He is not saying that God's promise and the kingdom of God are solely earthly, temporal realities.

²⁷⁶ See *Beber*, 177-178 [136-137]. In the 1980s Gutiérrez writes that the «deposit of faith» lives on in the church, where it stimulates action faithful to God's will, calls for proclamation, and provides criteria for discernment in relation to the world in which the church finds herself (see *Verdad*, 142 [102]).

²⁷⁷ Only from the perspective of grace is it possible to understand (or accept) God's predilection for the poor (see *Vida*, 306 [162]).

²⁷⁸ Gutiérrez cites the principle: «Distinguish in order to unite» (*Verdad*, 172-173 [121-122]).

Rather they are experienced in human history and should be considered in relation to that history and not separated from it.

If the transcendent was eliminated by the unity of history, then the CDF criticism of liberation theology would apply to Gutiérrez. However, as has been shown, there are many places where Gutiérrez refers to reality, not limited to history. History «has a transcendent meaning»²⁷⁹. Liberation begins within history, but leads «to a fullness that lies beyond it»²⁸⁰. The growth of the kingdom is a process that takes part in history, but complete salvation is a gift of total communion unlimited by the ambiguities of history²⁸¹. The theophanies of God preserve an image of transcendence and otherness in the God of biblical revelation. The «signs of the times» attract attention by the way they go against the flow of history and are therefore signs of something more.

Gutiérrez has always been concerned with the relation between faith and life. His Catholic sense informed him that there must be lasting points of contact in the real world between God and humanity²⁸². The issue then was to specify what was reality in the experience of the majority of people who are poor, and what those points of contact might be. This has led Gutiérrez to consider Christian praxis and the process of liberation as the points of contact today, because that is where the God of life is revealed. Revelation occurs precisely in the interaction between God's offer of salvation and the human liberative response. By focusing on the liberating, grace-filled moments in history, Gutiérrez locates God's revelation in our present experience, but with its source in God's gratuitousness which finds its origin beyond the ambiguity of history.

²⁷⁹ *Verdad*, 144 [104].

²⁸⁰ *Verdad*, 148 [105].

²⁸¹ *Verdad*, 27 [15-16].

²⁸² Thomas Franklin O'Meara says that the point of disagreement between the Catholic tradition and the Protestant idealism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is over the sacramental, that is, «original and lasting points of contact in the real world between God and man» (T.M. O'MEARA, «Toward a Subjective Theology of Revelation», 415).

CHAPTER VI

The Contribution to the Understanding of Divine Revelation of the Theology of Éla, Pieris, and Gutiérrez: A Critical Evaluation

1. Introduction

This study began with an examination of the Second Vatican Council's teaching on divine revelation. It showed how during the Council there was a move from a static understanding of revelation as propositional truth to a dynamic understanding based on the progressive self-communication of God in history, with its climax in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Then followed a survey of the understanding of revelation and human experience in the Third World, both from the perspective of the Bishops' Conferences and of EATWOT. The evidence provided showed how diverse experiences have led to different ways of interpreting the Christian mystery. Yet within each of the main cultural regions there is a similarity between the statements of the bishops and EATWOT which can best be explained by the particularity of the context and the life experience of the communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The detailed studies of Jean-Marc Éla, Aloysius Pieris, and Gustavo Gutiérrez presented in depth the development of their understanding of revelation and its significance for their theology. The dissimilarities reflect their personal interests, but even more, their different situations. Yet despite the divergences there is a remarkable accord in their starting point and method of theological reflection, their reference to scripture, and their understanding of where and how revelation occurs.

Evaluation and criticism formed part of the chapters devoted to the three principal theologians in this study. However, questions remain concerning wider issues, for example: To what degree are they influenced by their starting point? How does their theology incorporate both their lived experience and the Christian memory? Do they do justice to both questions from today's world and God's revelation passed down in Christian

tradition? To what extent do their views transcend cultural and historical factors? How is their work continuous or discontinuous with the teaching of Vatican II? What is their contribution to the theology of revelation? This chapter will address such matters.

The introduction to this study outlined three main issues to be addressed, namely: how the Third World theologians understand divine revelation, the strengths and weaknesses of their view, and how their understanding relates to official Catholic church teaching. These three issues form the basis of the three principal parts of this final chapter. Firstly there is a comparison of the theologians studied: a summary of what they have in common and their divergences. The next part addresses some of their strengths and weaknesses, particularly from the point of view of their theological hermeneutic. The third part is on the continuity and discontinuity of their understanding with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. That will be followed by a brief conclusion to this chapter.

2. A Comparison of Éla, Pieris, and Gutiérrez

2.1 Common Points

The three theologians studied have many ideas in common. For example, they focus on human history as the arena where the transcendent, or God's grace, is to be encountered. The historical context (social, political, cultural, religious) is therefore an indispensable locus for theological reflection. They stress that the historical context is always seen from a particular point of view. In the past the perspective of the powerful has taken precedence, but these theologians try to view history from the perspective of the weak and the poor. They also observe a preferential option for the poor in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, particularly in reference to the incarnation of the Word in Jesus. In their view God's word is a living word addressed to people in all times and places. Thus revelation is a continuing process which must be newly expressed for every age through the Spirit working in history, and in prophetic witness.

The three theologians acknowledge that revelation as recorded in scripture is the principal norm for theological reflection; but they insist that it must be accompanied by a valid hermeneutic which allows the scriptural word to shed light on the world, and also to provide the possibility of interpreting the Word in the light of their world.

In their view, human experience plays an essential part in coming to know God's revelation. As a living word, divine revelation enlightens and challenges human experience. All three theologians hold that God is saying

something new in the experience of oppressed peoples today. Theological loci, such as the liberation of the poor, are not so much places for understanding pre-given revelation, as new places for listening to what God is saying today. These “signs of the times” are efficacious signs of the reign of God revealing the active presence of salvation. Such signs are moments of heightened revelation of God and of fidelity to the word of God. The human response is seen as part of the divine-human dialogue; thus human effort is seen as playing an important part in our reception of revelation. God’s word reaches us to the extent that we are involved in “waiting actively” for the reign of God. One discovers God through engagement with the world and through promoting God’s will for life, communion and freedom.

The three theologians hold that faith is a vital acceptance of the gift of the Word and emphasise that theological reflection comes out of the living faith of the ecclesial community, or the christopraxis of the human community. Faith is a particular posture towards life. Thus poverty, for example, is a faith problem. Only through commitment in faith to God and neighbour will a theologian discover the necessary conditions for thinking correctly. Hence the principal concern of these theologians is the relationship between faith and life rather than between faith and reason.

Life is sometimes seen as a metaphor for God’s revelation. The recovery of this biblical theme of the God of life enriches our knowledge of the content of revelation. Affirming life leads to an experience of connectedness to God, to others and to nature. The theology of the God of life is linked to the African understanding of existence, Asian resistance, and Latin American proclamation.

2.2 Contrasting Points

Personal, historical and cultural differences all contribute to the specific approach of each of the theologians in this study. Experiences obviously differ between the three major geographical regions. Yet despite the differences, the present study demonstrates that the Third World experience which the three theologians have in common provides sufficient background to facilitate a comparison of their ideas. Some contrasting points are shown in the following table. Further common and contrasting points will surface in the course of this chapter.

ÉLA	PIERIS	GUTIÉRREZ
<i>Question being asked:</i> How to talk about God when it seems that God has abandoned suffering humanity?	How can we talk about salvation in Asia today?	How are we to talk about God in the face of death and violence?
<i>Starting point:</i> Situation of death, injustice, and slavery	Asian reality: religiousness and poverty	The conflictual historical situation in Latin America
<i>Context:</i> Poverty, alienation	Poverty, religiousness	Poverty, oppression
<i>Religious experience:</i> The realm of the invisible and the «African night».	Agapeic and gnostic forms of religious experience	Contemporary faith experience of life in the face of death
<i>Liberation:</i> Option for life in the face of domination, dependency, and death	Enlightenment and love taken together	3 levels: social, personal, inter-personal
<i>God:</i> The living God who hears the cry of the wretched of the earth	God of silence. The Ultimate. The Unspeakable One	God of life, present particularly in the liberation of the poor
<i>Revelation:</i> Good news of what God is doing now in the light of what God has done in the past	Discourse of the Spirit in response to humankind's universal aspiration for liberation	Liberating self-communication of the God of life, continuing in the growth of God's reign in history
<i>New source of revelation:</i> No new source, but new context for rereading biblical revelation	Asian poverty and religiosity, taken in a positive sense	New understanding of experience, particularly in the relationship between revelation and praxis
<i>Locus of revelation:</i> History: particularly the life of the African community	History: both of Israel and of people in Asia today	History: interventions of God, the incarnation, and conflictive situations

Table 1: Éla, Pieris, Gutiérrez: Contrasting Points

3. The Third World Approach: Contribution and Lacunae

The methodology of the three theologians studied has important consequences for their theology. With their focus on the encounter between faith and human experience, the role of the person of faith in history takes on new significance. The change comes about as the fruit of a development in attitudes to the place of the human person in history.

Thomas O'Meara writes: «From Hegel and Marx to Paolo Freire, thinkers are intent on showing that humankind is the subject of history rather than the object of world events»¹. Hegel put forward a view of history as the enactment of the divine purpose, and humanity as having advanced far enough to see that purpose as the gradual realisation of human freedom. His was an idealist view and alienation was seen as a form of self-negation. No doubt the post-Enlightenment freeing of reason from authoritarianism was liberating for intellectual elites. Marx in turn criticised Hegel's view that ideas make history. According to Marx it is not consciousness that determines existence, but rather social existence that determines consciousness. Liberation was seen as the freeing of reality from suffering, and the principal point was not rationality but transformation. Religion was seen as a form of ideological alienation and an obstacle to change. Freire turned Marx around. By bringing in the life experience of the poor of the Third World he introduced a non-Western, less analytical human subject.

The Third World theologians contribute an important dimension to the Hegel-Marx-Freire development because they are proposing faith as the path to true freedom. Thus they hope to avoid Hegelian alienation or Marxist dialectical materialism. All three theologians studied point out the importance of religion for social change, thus exposing the inadequacy of the Marxist analysis of religion. The faith they are proposing is not an idealistic form of faith based on a form of «revealed truth» prior to and independent of the world. Rather they understand faith as taking the world and the human subject seriously so that faith commitment is prior and truth is discovered within committed praxis in a particular context². The

¹ T. F. O'MEARA, «Toward a Subjective Theology», 412.

² The idea that people are the subject or the agents of their own history is important for all three authors. We must reread God's revelation from the «underside of history» (Gutiérrez). The poor are a dynamic group who are not the passive victims of history but those through whom God shapes our salvation history (Pieris). The rise of an African «we-subject» is part of a Copernican revolution whereby Africa has begun to revolve about itself (Éla).

theological consequence of this change of perspective is a particular hermeneutical approach and new importance given to the interpreter in our knowledge of the partnership between God and humankind.

Revelation does not come to us in some «naked» form, but is always mediated by some object, person, or event. In being experienced and expressed by human beings, revelation receives a historical «seal», dependent on time and place³. Thus there is an interrelationship between culture and the gospel, or context and “text”, which requires interpretation⁴. These three elements: culture, gospel, and church; or context, text, and interpreter, form a hermeneutical circle (or triangle) by which divine revelation comes to be known. The task in section 3 of this chapter will be to evaluate how this hermeneutical triangle is treated from the perspective of the Third World in the work of Éla, Pieris, and Gutiérrez. Each element will be discussed, the contribution of the theologians acknowledged, and weaknesses or areas needing clarification or further development will be noted.

3.1 *First Element in the Hermeneutical Circle: Context*

The three theologians studied do not begin with Christian tradition. Rather they begin with what Éla calls the «word from below»: questions arising from people’s historical experience⁵. Thus the context influences their starting point. Éla asks how one can speak about God in the living conditions of the poor in African societies torn apart by many forms of neo-colonial violence. Pieris wants to find a credible symbol of God’s saving presence from a source of revelation universally recognised as such in Asia. Gutiérrez asks how one can speak of God from the situation of the suffering of the innocent in Latin America. Obviously the starting point and the opening questions influence the response. When does that influence become a distortion of the message of revelation, or predetermine a particular interpretation of the gospel?

The differences in the thinking of the three theologians, summarised in section 2 of this chapter, may be attributed to personal factors, but perhaps

³ See E. SCHILLEBEECKX, «The Role of History», 241.

⁴ See J. DUPUIS, *Who Do You Say I Am?*, 9; also, R. SCHREITER, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 20-21.

⁵ J.-M. ÉLA, «Christianity and Liberation in Africa» (1994b) 149.

to a greater extent to their different situations⁶. The influence of those situations has been noted in the chapters on their work. It may however be helpful to review them here.

Éla's stress on sociopolitical contextual factors leads him to play down «traditional» African culture as a factor today, because it too easily promotes values from the past, with little relevance to the new forms of alienation in contemporary African experience. That experience is a privileged area for people's encounter with God. Éla points to important African events such as healing, and typically African media of communication such as dreams. In the African context the relational dimension assumes great importance. Éla's concern for right relations, for communion, and for life are all part of his African vision of the relational nature of salvation. In Africa, with the importance given to forms of oral communication, silence connotes absence, broken relationships, and thus «sin». The novelty of the Christian revelation is the news that God has spoken. God's word condemns the death, injustice, and slavery which form a major part of the present African context.

In contrast to Éla, Pieris emphasises the «silence» of God's word. Silence is the word unspoken and the word is silence heard. For Pieris, a truly Asian theology would be characterised by harmony between word and silence. The importance given to silence comes from Buddhism: «the way of silence», which plays a significant part in the context of Pieris' work. Non-Christian experiences of liberation can contribute to our understanding of Christ. The truth of the resurrection is not just for those who make claims about it, but for everyone who follows Jesus' path. So especially in Asia the path to the full reality of the risen Christ must include an encounter with the saving word in other religions and particularly the cosmic religiosity which forms an underlying stratum of those religions. For Pieris, the cosmic religious context acts as an important key for interpreting the texts of a metacosmic religion such as Christianity.

The Latin American context is a significant factor in Gutiérrez's theological option for the poor and oppressed. He is concerned not so much with the word or silence, as with who speaks and who is addressed. Those reduced to silence by the misuse of power are shown to be the addressees of Yahweh's liberating word. God's word is a word of life confronting

⁶ The profound differences represented in the various contexts may be recognized in the differing understanding of human identity. For example, compare the Western Cartesian «I think, therefore I am», with, «I am related therefore we are» (Africa), «I am not» (Asian Buddhist), and «We are non-persons» (Latin America).

poverty's legacy of death. Gutiérrez's stress on the connection between the Word and history is significant for the Latin American church which has often proclaimed a transcendence detached from history. That is why the reign of God is so prominent in Gutiérrez's theology, for it evokes the signs of justice, fraternity, freedom, and a preferential option for the poor, which indicate the salvific presence of God in history because they are the opposite of what the oppressed are experiencing. Where Éla is concerned with the gospel and African values, and Pieris looks for Yahweh's revelation in the Spirit as the harmony between word and silence, Gutiérrez looks at Latin American reality and declares that God's word reaches us to the extent that we are involved in history. In other words, our understanding of God's revelation depends on our participation in the reign of God⁷.

The three theologians, along with many Third World theologians, are trying to be faithful both to today's world and to Christian revelation. They begin with human experience, and then ask how one can understand that experience in the light of God's word. For example, Gustavo Gutiérrez asks, «Where are the poor to sleep?». It is a simple question, but leads to a discussion of how an act of helping the poor can be an encounter with the Lord⁸. Gutiérrez comments that those who claim to find God while being uninterested in their neighbour will perhaps find a God who is first mover of all being, but not the God of the Bible. Challenges posed by concrete human situations thus take one to the sources of Christian life. In the light of the word of God, historical processes provide the means for entering more deeply into faith in God who became one of us.

The encounter is two-way. It is not only a matter of reflecting on experience in the light of the Word, for it is obvious that these theologians are also reinterpreting revelation in the light of their world. The possibilities and dangers of such reinterpretation raise many questions because although the process begins with the Word, it also suggests that faith is inseparable from specific conditions and particular contexts. The main theological issue here is the historicity of revealed truth. How do they deal with the value and normativeness of mediations of revelation that are subject to the influence of history and culture?

⁷ Jon Sobrino explains that the reign of God is more suitable than the resurrection for its capacity to unify transcendence and history (see J. SOBRINO, «Central Position of the Reign of God», 350-388).

⁸ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Vida*, 268 [138].

3.1.1 Historicity and Truth

In recent years there has been a gradual change in the official Catholic church attitude towards the influence of historical and cultural factors on our understanding of revealed truth. An indication of that change was Pope John XXIII's words at the opening session of the Second Vatican Council: «The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another»⁹. The idea of distinguishing between form and content was later incorporated into *Gaudium et spes* 62. A few years later the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith acknowledged the possibility of historical conditioning in dogmatic formulas. In *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (1973) the Congregation distinguished between formulas which may change, and their meaning which «remains ever true and constant»¹⁰.

In 1990, the International Theological Commission published a document about how dogmas can be understood in the context of contemporary hermeneutical theology¹¹. The Commission takes a more cautious approach to the plurality of expression in dogmatic statements. It sees a theoretical difference between the content of dogmas and their formulation, but points out how in practice no clear-cut separation can be made between the content and form of the statement. Expressions of faith are not to be revised if one does not wish to lose sight of the «reality» manifest in them. So the truth of revelation nevertheless remains always the same «not only in its real substance (content), but also in its decisive linguistic formulations»¹². The Commission's main concern was that the unity and catholicity of faith be strengthened and promoted, «as a sign as well as an instrument of the unity and peace of the world»¹³.

From the perspective of the CTI, the basic problem is the relation between truth and history. The CTI is concerned with how can one take seriously the hermeneutical circle between revelation and history without

⁹ POPE JOHN XXIII, «Gaudet mater Ecclesia», AAS 54, 792; E.T., Abbott, 715.

¹⁰ CDF, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, AAS 65, 403; E.T., Flannery II, 434.

¹¹ CTI, «On the Interpretation of Dogmas».

¹² CTI, «On the Interpretation of Dogmas», C.III.3.

¹³ CTI, «On the Interpretation of Dogmas», C.III.6. Not all would agree with the CTI statement. It could be argued to the contrary that the close link between content and formulation shows that relativism is unavoidable. In a reply to *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, Karl Rahner said that if there can ever be dogmatic formulations using historically conditioned terminology, then it is not difficult theologically to concede this to all theological statements (see K. RAHNER, «*Mysterium Ecclesiae*», 150).

falling into a «relativism» in which there are only interpretations of interpretations¹⁴. According to the CTI, the weakness of some forms of liberation theology lies in their shifting «the hermeneutical center from the truth of being [...] as a source of meaning to an element [socioeconomic reality] which is legitimate in itself but which is also specific and which is then made the center and criterion of the whole»¹⁵.

How does the criticism of the CTI apply to the three theologians in this study? What is the status of revealed truth in relation to social or economic factors? How adequate is the theologians' view on the relative value of expressions of faith? Does their reinterpretation of the Word in the light of their world mean reducing revelation to the particularity of historical situations?

Gutiérrez admits that all talk about God «uses human words that have a particular historical and cultural setting. All references to revelation must use this mediation and with its help disclose the meaning of the Lord's living word and its demands upon the period through which we are passing»¹⁶. Thus for Gutiérrez, the context is not simply a factor to be isolated or eliminated. The context has a christological basis and forms an essential relationship with the truth. One must search for Christ active within the context rather than bringing in Christ from the outside. One begins with the context, and looks for the «signs of the times» within it. Gutiérrez recognises the saving activity of God in our own concrete historical reality and says that this is the only valid place in which theology can be done in a world marked by massive poverty and oppression.

Éla notes that the new sociocultural context in Africa requires a fresh examination of all revelation and Christian tradition. Theology, then, is a labour of deciphering the sense of revelation in the historical context in which people become aware of themselves and their situation in the world¹⁷. Highlighting the poverty and alienation in Africa Éla calls for a

¹⁴ Having pointed out the inadequacies of various types of hermeneutics such as positivist, anthropocentric, and cultural hermeneutics, the CTI proposes «metaphysical hermeneutics» as the way to the truth of reality itself. Metaphysical hermeneutics «takes as a premise that truth reveals itself in and through human reason, so that the truth of reality itself shines in the light of human reason» (see CTI, «On the Interpretation of Dogmas», A.I.3).

¹⁵ CTI, «On the Interpretation of Dogmas», A.II.3.

¹⁶ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Verdad*, 122 [89].

¹⁷ J.-M. ÉLA, *Cri*, 40 [29].

reinterpretation of the whole of the revealed message in the context of the liberation of the oppressed.

Pieris takes a different perspective on revelation because of his involvement with Buddhism and with cosmic religiousness. He is concerned with the way the Christian tradition, particularly in its biblical testimony, can be reinterpreted today so as to make its core experience meaningful in an Asian sociopolitical and cultural context. Pieris maintains that reinterpreting beliefs according to the liberative elements in the cosmic religiosity of the poor can open up new possibilities for seeing the presence of ultimate reality reflected in a just society. The Asian poor can teach the church how to religiously experience the justice of God. Pieris' view goes beyond a reinterpretation of the traditional media of revelation. The religiousness of the non-Christian poor becomes a new medium of revelation and a new source for theology. Thus the religious and cultural context plays an essential part in the revelation of the Word today.

The three theologians in this study agree that the content and form of revealed truth should not be separated, but for different reasons from the CTI. Where the CTI argues at the level of faith and reason, the Third World theologians take a broader view of the interaction between Christian tradition and human experience. With their emphasis on history as a locus of revelation they insist that truth cannot be treated apart from praxis. For the Third World theologians, truth claims cannot be resolved by better theories, for the highest level of knowing is intelligent and responsible doing which leads to human freedom. From the perspective of the victims, history is full of untruth and violence. So the way to truth is not to try to isolate oneself from cultural and historical change, but rather to be committed to being part of it in a way that makes a difference. Thus the historical context acts not merely as a setting for applying revealed truth, but plays an integral part in the understanding of God's word today. Truth is a dimension of reality, grasped by experience and praxis, and made explicit through reflection.

The different views depend largely on the presuppositions and the underlying models involved. The content/form distinction of Pope John XXIII lends itself to a propositional understanding of revealed truth and a «kernel and husk» model in which the kernel of truth is obtainable if one removes the layers of cultural and historical covering¹⁸. The CTI was

¹⁸ For comments on the kernel and husk theory, see R. SCHREITER, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 8.

concerned to highlight the unity of verbal expressions of faith for the church through time and across cultural differences. The Third World theologians have a different agenda. Wary of claims to timeless truth and neutral data, they call into question speculative knowledge and truth based on metaphysics, and declare that true catholicity is found in universal openness to particular situations¹⁹. The importance given to praxis as a *locus theologicus* signals a significant change in their view of God's revelation in history.

The Third World theologians emphasise the internal relationship between revelation and history. Perhaps a suitable image would be leaven from the parables of the kingdom (Lk 13,21) rather than the kernel of a nut. The image of a kernel and husk presumes that revealed truth can be isolated in some privileged supracultural sphere. They question such a method for arriving at «universal truth». Can bare facts be abstracted from the tradition so as to be reinterpreted, when the tradition is itself shaped by events as well as thoughts? Gutiérrez points out how the historical situation of the poor and the eschatological gift of the kingdom are linked realities. It is not despite the historical situation, but in virtue of its relationship to the kingdom that the Father's gratuitous love is revealed²⁰.

The Third World theologians' view appears at first to be foreign to orthodox church teaching, but it need not be so if one takes into account the change in the understanding of revelation during the Council. *Dei verbum* 8 refers to the «living voice of the gospel» which rings out in the church, and through it in the world. In his concluding discourse (7 December 1965), Pope Paul VI referred to the legacy from Christ as a «living deposit» able to vivify whoever receives it and takes from it

¹⁹ This point receives support in Europe from Edward Schillebeeckx. He writes: «Sadly, the institutional church has had a tendency to universalize precisely its non-universal, historically inherited, particular features tied up with a particular culture and time, and to apply them uniformly to the whole of the Catholic world: in catechesis (think of the "world catechism"), in liturgy and in church order, also in theology and until recently even in a uniform language (Latin). However, universality — which in Greek is "catholicity" — means that the Christian faith is open (critically) to all, to every people and to every culture [...]. Now within the present context of grinding structural world poverty, the universal openness and universal challenge of the message of the gospel takes on a very specific social dimension and as it were a new context. I am inspired to say this above all by Latin American, Asian and African forms of liberation theology, and for a long time this has also been a theme of my own theological quest» (see E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Church*, 169).

²⁰ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «The Irruption of the Poor» (1981d) 121.

nourishment for life²¹. The move away from understanding the apostolic patrimony as a doctrinal corpus, to a source of living, dynamic faith under the guidance of the holy Spirit has opened up new possibilities for considering the historical context in which that faith is exercised. At this point the three theologians studied make an important contribution, for they point out the two-way relationship between truth and history. Not only is the gospel encountered in specific contexts, but the gospel must offer a critique of those contexts and provide a way for their transformation. The context and human activity help shape the expressions of the Word, but in turn are judged by it.

Éla says that a peasant's reading of the Bible can show us «how disturbing the Word of God is»²². If Christian communities really grasp the word of God they will have to re-examine their practice of faith, and particularly the way that practice can contribute to dependence on foreign interests. Pieris says that the incarnation is the identification of Jesus with those suffering today, and that God's word is a word of protest against idolatry and slavery. The word as *dabar* is a transformative, prophetic word, which courts social conflict and risks a *via crucis*²³. The Asian Christ is a sign of contradiction and is the victim-judge of societies dominated by greed and injustice. Gutierrez's whole theology is an example of a critique of the situation in Latin America using the biblical notion of liberation as a key. He stresses the critical function of the revealed word and maintains that the Word is a judgement upon situations which are hardly human, and a force for changing the historical and sociopolitical situation in which people suffer²⁴.

The importance that the three theologians place on judging contemporary experience by the Word, indicates how they understand a two-way dialectic in the relation between revelation and history. On the one hand there is an intrinsic relation between faith and history so that revelation is indeed reinterpreted in the light of their world. But at the same time their world is judged by the Word. With the understanding of a circular or two-way relationship the theologians studied circumvent the danger of subjecting the

²¹ POPE PAUL VI, «Hodie Concilium», *AS*, IV, VII, 655; E.T., *CMind*, 64 (April 1966) 58. The pope was referring to the saving truth as it liberates humanity from every form of enslavement.

²² J.-M. ÉLA, *Foi*, 126 [95-96].

²³ A. PIERIS, «The Problem of Universality» (1994c) 74-75.

²⁴ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Líneas*, 6; ID, «Praxis de liberación (1974c) 369 [73].

gospel to social factors, or of reducing revelation to the particularity of historical situations.

The mediations of God's revelation, limited and particular though they might be, are relevant beyond those limitations both for our present and for all of humanity²⁵. The whole of the message is not explained by historical factors, and the meaning uncovered by historical critical studies does not exhaust its significance for today. Thus the Christian tradition has a power to challenge and shape our current human experience.

3.1.2 How to Express the Nature of Humanity before God?

One recurring weakness in the work of the theologians is the difficulty they have in finding a suitable way to express theological concepts in the language of present experience. For example, Éla uses sociological language to describe the experience of people in Africa today, but using this «word from below», he obviously finds it difficult to specify the distinction between salvation and sociopolitical liberation. Gutiérrez himself admits that contemporary theology has not yet fashioned categories which would allow us to express adequately his unified approach to history. Pieris' changing terminology, often evocative rather than analytical, has more the tenor of intelligent theological gropings than discourse with precise distinctions. Further work is necessary for a clearer and more comprehensive language about the Word. Biblical language is one possibility, but that needs to be blended with the narrative forms people use today to communicate their experience of God's presence. A start has been made by Gutiérrez in his reflections on scripture in *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente* and *El Dios de la vida*, and also by Pieris in his use of art forms. Sadly, in recent years, Éla has found it necessary to devote his creative energy to the field of sociology rather than theology.

A further problem is the level of abstractness in their writing. The theologians studied wish to avoid abstract theology, and claim to begin with concrete human experience. Despite their assertions, they maintain a certain level of abstractness. They refer to poverty, suffering, violence, and so on, but rarely link these references to concrete sociological data or to narrative accounts of historical events. For example, Éla's sociological work is normally quite separate from his theological reflection. Gutiérrez's published scientific research has focused more on historical than on contemporary data. At times Pieris can be as abstract as the best

²⁵ This is explained by R. HAIGHT in *An Alternative Vision*, 59.

metaphysicians. This level of abstractness has been important for the theologians to preserve their independence from particular political and social movements. However one would hope that they could establish more obvious links with factual data and actual historical events. This is necessary to give greater credibility to their efforts to link life experience with God's word today in history.

With their focus on the human person, the anthropology of the three theologians would benefit from further development on a theological level. If the human person is a symbol of God or *imago Dei*, then the depths of what it means to be human, both as an individual and in society, can be a privileged place for religious experience and a medium of revelation. Words and deeds which seek the deepest truth for humanity will provide unique opportunities for God's self-communication. The *imago Dei* is important, both where it is negated in oppressive situations, and where it is honored in human expression which seeks to give form to the symbol. The theologians studied refer to the incarnation, and use concepts such as the *humanum* to refer to the salvific horizon of humanity, but more work is required to relate their anthropology to a biblical understanding of humanity in relation to God. The prospect of liberation opens humanity to the possibility of being a free agent in history; however biblical revelation tells of the human desire to be autonomous as the basis of sin. There is a need to address such dilemmas in greater depth and to clarify further the nature of humanity before God.

3.2 *Second Element in the Hermeneutical Circle: Gospel*

The gospel, or Christian «text», is the second element in the hermeneutical circle by which divine revelation comes to be known. This element comprises not only revelation as recorded in scripture, but also the various interpretations of the religious or ecclesial tradition. The official Catholic position is summarised in *Dei verbum*. The starting point of faith is the good news of salvation in Christ (*DV 7*); it is a living gospel passed on in the teaching life and worship of the church (*DV 8*); scripture and tradition come from the same divine wellspring (*DV 9*); they, together with the magisterium, preserve and transmit the word of God (*DV 10*).

When the Third World theologians start to reread the Bible and Christian tradition from the perspective of their own experience, they begin to discover matters which have been forgotten or ignored. For example, they note how the struggle for freedom contributed to the biblical message, and how the good news of the reign of God is particularly applicable to the

poor and oppressed. In rereading the scriptures, Jesus' message is seen in terms of the liberation of slaves for freedom and life (Éla), God's defence-pact with the poor (Pieris), or of God's gratuitous love addressed to the poor (Gutiérrez). Such themes are not foreign to the Bible, but they betray a different perspective from much of the theology coming from the North Atlantic region.

While the three theologians (especially Gutiérrez) refer often to scripture, their handling of Christian tradition is less obvious. What place do tradition and scripture have in their work, and how does their treatment of tradition and scripture influence their understanding of the gospel?

Éla is acutely aware that church tradition, as the reinterpretation of the gospel through the centuries, is valid in a particular time and place but requires interpretation to be meaningful for today. However he is not really prepared to engage in any such reinterpretation. Church tradition is dismissed as «la lecture de l'Église» or «une lecture seconde». He prefers to refer to scripture, which he considers closer to the source of the gospel. There one is confronted directly with the question: «Pour toi qui suis-je?»²⁶. Western Christians respond to that question out of their experience. Likewise Africans must respond from their situation today. Africans must «reread» the gospel in the African context so that the gospel can be «reborn in Africa»²⁷.

Éla's attitude to tradition is influenced by his understanding of revelation as God's saving word in the encounter with life experience in contemporary Africa. As shown in the example of the empty granary (chap. III, section 3.2) God is seen as the God of life who wants people to live unimpeded by injustice. God lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. «God transforms people while transforming the world through the provocative power of the gospel»²⁸. Revelation is recognised not only in the good news as recorded in scripture, but also in an encounter with the living God when and where God hears the cry of the poor. The God of life is revealed in those who strive to discover the concrete signs of the presence of God's reign²⁹.

Pieris wants to develop new ways of understanding revelation both within and beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus he is keenly aware of

²⁶ See Jean-Marc Éla's reply to Q. 5 in appendix I.

²⁷ J.-M. ÉLA, *Cri*, 139 [115].

²⁸ J.-M. ÉLA, *Foi*, 130 [99].

²⁹ J.-M. ÉLA, «Christianity and Liberation in Africa» (1994b) 149.

cultural and historical influences on the formation and interpretation of that tradition. As shown in chap. IV, section 2.3 Pieris finds a place for tradition at the level of collective memory by which a religion makes the original experience available to contemporary society. The *nirvāna* experience is passed on in the Buddhist tradition, and the salvific experience of Christianity is passed on in the Christian tradition, particularly by its biblical testimony. However, tradition must be seen in relation to the experiential and interpretative levels of religion. For example, Pieris cannot simply accept the tradition concerning Christ, without enquiring into the origin of the term, and the many semantic nuances that had to be developed and changed in the process of its absorbing «all that we believers have attributed to Jesus ever since the Easter experience»³⁰. He suspects that a term such as «Christ» could possibly reify revelation in past tradition, and thus hide the actuality of God's continuing presence in life and in history.

Yahweh's dealings with slaves as recorded in the Bible is an important source for Pieris' interpretation of the Word today. Pieris' conviction about opposition to idols such as mammon, and Yahweh's special relationship with slaves and the poor is based on biblical revelation. However he says that the scriptural word must be seen together with God's word heard today in history. Scriptural history and our history together are the locus of the revelatory word. Pieris notes some key points in the Judeo-Christian scriptures; however he has not yet incorporated the full breadth of those scriptures into his work, thereby considerably restricting the content of Christian revelation in his reflection.

Gutiérrez refers more to scripture and tradition than do Éla and Pieris. Nevertheless, his method allows him to be quite selective, especially with reference to church tradition. He refers often to the magisterium of the Latin American bishops, encouraged perhaps by his own contribution to their deliberations.

Gutiérrez maintains that theological reflection should be done «in the light of the word of God». As noted in chap. V, section 4.3, he understands the Word as a word of life confronting poverty's heritage of death. The God of life was revealed in saving historical events before their memory was preserved in the Bible. Biblical revelation serves to provide an account of God's saving actions in the past and God's promises for the future. The scriptures «as they live on in tradition» take theological primacy in the discernment of God's word today; nevertheless any proclamation of the

³⁰ A. PIERIS, «Does Christ Have a Place?» (1993a) 42.

gospel must take as its starting point the experiences and questions of those who hear the word of God³¹.

So Gutiérrez begins with questions derived from the world and its history and then tries to relate such questions to scripture. There, in the liberation of Israel under Moses, the message of God's gratuitous love in the story of Job, the signs of salvation present at the heart of human history in Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of God's predilection for the poor, the hungry and the suffering in the Magnificat and the Beatitudes, Gutiérrez discovers a message of God's goodness towards undeserving humankind³². However he notes that the gift of communion with God is not separate from the obligations which result from it. Hence the human participation in the revelation of God's love. Human love in the light of the Gospel is precisely where the God of love and life is revealed.

All three theologians desire to be faithful witnesses to the gospel in their own circumstances. They form their initial questions from their experience and then attempt to relate that experience to the Christian tradition taken in a broad sense of the term. Do they do justice to both poles: experience and the gospel? The major issue at this point is the acceptability of their understanding of the gospel, and whether they go beyond the existing bounds of orthodoxy

3.2.1 The Credibility of the Gospel

Behind the initial questions of the three authors there is a strong sense that the gospel as it has been preached and lived in the past is no longer credible in the face of suffering, violence and poverty today.

The First Vatican Council referred to internal helps of the holy Spirit and external arguments, particularly miracles and prophecies³³. It also presented the church as an example of a moral and sociological miracle³⁴. The theologians in this study prefer the christological orientation of Vatican II, but in their stress on faith experience, also include external signs, namely

³¹ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Verdad*, 122 [89].

³² Gutiérrez says that the entire Bible, beginning with the story of Cain and Abel, mirrors God's predilection for the weak and abused of human history. This preference brings out the gratuitous character of God's love. The Beatitudes too tell us how God's predilection for the poor, the hungry, and the suffering is based on God's goodness to undeserving humankind (see G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Liberación*, 27 [xxvii]).

³³ First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, chap. 3.

³⁴ A. DULLES, *Assurance*, 209.

the «signs of the times». Here one may see the specific contribution of these theologians. They recognise the internal dimension, experienced as a desire for freedom, and the external dimension: acts of liberation which amount to modern miracles. Their emphasis on the «signs of the times» is in accord with the significance given to external signs in traditional theology. However, unlike the traditional theology, they hold that credibility has as much if not more to do with justice as it has to do with reason.

Pieris gives the example of the Buddhist-Marxist Sarath Mallika who, when he heard about God who has made a defence pact with the oppressed, declared, «If I ever have to believe in a God, this is the only one worth believing in»³⁵. For Gustavo Gutiérrez, the love of God, expressed through Jesus Christ in the paschal mystery, guarantees the ultimate meaning of history, and is expressed anew today in those struggling to live in the face of death. Likewise, Éla says that faith today must be based on «the God of hope who went out of himself to place himself at the side of human beings as they struggle to stand up erect in the image of the Risen One»³⁶. For these theologians there is a recovery of the biblical view that *pistis* is an act that is at once faith, knowledge, and action³⁷. In their view, Christian revelation will be credible when it is relevant to struggles for justice.

The three theologians in this study are vitally concerned with the credibility of the gospel, but interpret it, not in terms of the Enlightenment (faith and reason), but in terms of the liberation of the poor (faith and justice). Church tradition is seen not so much as a deposit of truths to be handed on, as a truth that must be put into practice. Gutiérrez notes that the orthodox doctrine of reputable Christian circles is supported by authority, «but it is so static and devitalized that it is not even strong enough to abandon the Gospel. It is the Gospel which is disowning it»³⁸.

The Third World theologians appear to stand back and to view the Christian tradition from the perspective of an «outsider», thus adopting a critical and somewhat relativising attitude to the «texts» of tradition. They utilise historical critical approaches, and judge the relative value of the

³⁵ A. PIERIS, «Interreligious Dialogue» (1993d) 133.

³⁶ J.-M. ÉLA, *Foi*, 132 [101]. Éla asks how a credible Christianity can be created while so many factors «are tightening a noose around Africa's neck» (see ID, «Christianity and Liberation» [1994b] 137).

³⁷ In contrast to analytic and abstract studies of faith common in pre-Vatican II theology, the biblical and patristic concept of faith tends to see faith as an organic whole of personal relations (see R. FISICHELLA, «Credibility», 196).

³⁸ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Liberación*, 312 [117].

Christian «texts» according to their adequacy to explain the situation and respond to the questions being raised. Thus credibility is based more on efficacy and the ability to deal with a wide range of problems than on magisterial authority. Robert Schreiter points out the difference of perspective between the «speaker» who is concerned with the intelligibility and integrity of the tradition received and the «hearer» of the message who focuses on the problem of rhyming tradition and the environment so as to maintain the tradition's credibility³⁹. The Third World theologians adopt the latter perspective. Their approach treats history as a matter of life and death, freedom and slavery, grace and sin. In this context, truth is seen in terms of its salvific importance — «at the level of history, not in the realm of ideas»⁴⁰.

How valid is the treatment of tradition by the theologians in this study? Hermann Pottmeyer proposes four hermeneutical criteria for determining the meaning and significance of religious tradition, namely, historical inquiry, redemptive significance, «hierarchy of truths», and the «signs of the times»⁴¹. The approach of the three theologians compares favourably with at least three of Pottmeyer's criteria so long as the primary purpose of the theologians is taken into account, that is: to find a credible way to understand and present the saving message of the gospel in the face of suffering, violence and poverty. Their understanding of truth and redemption centres around the efficacy of the salvific message of Christ for the poor. Likewise, the principal «signs of the times» are interpreted in terms of their significance for the poor and the oppressed. Nevertheless, they have not resolved all the difficulties involved. Reading the «signs of the times» means interpreting the meaning of history itself in the light of faith, in the conviction that God's salvific will is revealed in contemporary historical events. A greater clarification is needed, for the «signs of the times» can rarely be interpreted unequivocally, and even if their interpretation is agreed upon, their status as revelation cannot simply be presumed.

³⁹ R. SCHREITER, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 113.

⁴⁰ The quotation is from Bonino, but it applies to all three theologians studied (see J. MIGUEZ BONINO, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, 72).

⁴¹ H. POTTMEYER, «Tradition», 1125. Pottmeyer says that historical enquiry must clarify the historical conditions behind the emergence and formulation of a tradition; redemptive significance relates tradition to God's redemptive intention; the «hierarchy of truths» considers tradition in the context of tradition as a whole; the «signs of the times» enable tradition to be interpreted with a view to present-day conditions.

The criterion of historical enquiry is somewhat problematic for the theologians studied. With their focus on contemporary experience, the faith experience of the church through the centuries remains in the background. This exposes a weak point in the logic of their argument, for if God speaks a word of life and liberation in history, then the whole of history is important, not just the present. Appeals to christopraxis, or to the «gospel», are no substitute for fruitful links with the apostolic legacy and the testimony of faith and way of life handed on through the centuries. A comprehensive theological understanding of faith must include the *fides quae* or God's word expressed in the content of faith found in ecclesial sources. More attention to this issue would enrich their theological perception of God's word and provide clearer norms for the discernment of God's active presence today.

3.2.2 Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis

One somewhat controversial contribution made by these theologians is their insight into the significance of orthopraxis. Edward Schillebeeckx summed up the issue when he wrote: «The basic hermeneutic problem of theology, then, is not so much the question of the relationship between the past (scripture and tradition) and the present, but between theory and practice, and this relationship can no longer be solved idealistically, by a theory of Kantian pure reason from which consequences flow for the practical reason, but it will have to be shown how the theory appears in the praxis itself»⁴².

As was shown in chapter 5, the relationship between theory and practice is a significant issue in Gutiérrez's work. He stresses that critical reflection begins where Christian theory is contradicted by oppressive praxis. He finds the solution in the reign of God where God's salvific promise and the human task together reveal the God of life. God is revealed in the fulfilment of God's promise of love and redemption. Thus, to the extent that historical praxis «does» the truth, and «verifies» the promise of the gospel, it participates in the revelation of God who calls all people to the gift of full communion with God and fellowship with others.

The central issue is the theological value of liberation in history. The Second Vatican Council acknowledged the historical character of revelation, and there were tentative moves towards acknowledging the theological value of history. For example, *Dei verbum* 4 refers to the signs of God's

⁴² E. SCHILLEBEECKX, «Orthopraxis as a Criterion», 116.

saving presence, and to union with God in terms of deliverance from evil and death for light and life. However, it has been theologians like Moltmann and Pannenberg in Europe and Third World theologians like those of this study that have developed the implications of those developments by taking seriously the intrinsic theological value of history. Allied to this development is the renewed emphasis on the reign of God as the eschatological ideal for Christian praxis in history.

The emphasis on human effort in history raises a number of theological problems. Does orthopraxis secularise Christian anthropology so that faith is subordinate to forms of rationalism? Is eschatology reduced to historical immanence? Is the reign of God identified with human emancipation in history? These are important questions warning of possible distortions of the message of revelation⁴³. The frequent response is that history has no theological value in itself, but only as a medium of divine revelation. For example, theologians readily point out that the deposit of faith is a «living» deposit, but add that this is so not because of praxis and experience, but by reason of the force of divine truth and grace which constitute it⁴⁴. What must be clarified is that while history may be seen as a source for theological reflection (*locus theologicus*), it is a medium and not a source of revelation. The ultimate source of revelation is the divine mystery, sometimes called the Word.

How can human effort mediate the divine Word? If it can be shown that human praxis is a means of God's self-communication, then obviously it has considerable theological significance. The three theologians studied make a contribution on this point.

Éla stresses the importance of rereading the gospel message. That in itself does not necessarily involve action in history. However he also notes that revelation is a continuing process which must be newly expressed for every age in prophetic witness. He refers to «the dynamics of revelation» whereby God's will is put into practice by people inspired by the gospel. God speaks again when people gather together, hear the gospel anew, and put it into practice by struggling to build a society in which the human being is «reborn to a life of freedom and communion»⁴⁵. For Éla revelation

⁴³ See CDF, *Libertatis nuntius*, VI.10, X.3. Some of these issues are discussed in F.A. PASTOR, «Ortopraxis y Ortodoxia», 689-739.

⁴⁴ J. WICKS, «Deposit of Faith», 235.

⁴⁵ J.-M. ÉLA, *Cri*, 120 [98].

is meaningful only within the vital experience of African communities striving for life, freedom, and justice.

Pieris illustrates the importance of praxis as christopraxis. He maintains that Jesus will grow to the full stature of Christ when all his members (which includes non-Christians) together with the cosmos struggle like him, even unto death, in ushering in God's reign on earth. In other words, Jesus is identified with suffering humanity and Christ will be fully risen when all of humanity is liberated, and the «not yet» culminates in the realisation of God's reign. For Pieris the principal meaning of the incarnation pertains to the covenantal identification of God with all the poor. Through the incarnation Jesus became that «defence pact» with the poor. Consequently those who struggle to honour that pact mediate liberation and actualise God's covenant for the poor today.

The three theologians studied do not put an exclusive emphasis on orthopraxis; however their stress on the power of present history to mediate God's will for freedom and communion does highlight how Christian praxis, or christopraxis, can mediate God's self-communication to people today. The theological justification for this is found either in the presence of the reign of God or in the incarnation. Gutiérrez locates revelation in the present experience of God's reign with its source in gratuitousness beyond the ambiguities of history. Pieris focuses on the sacramental identification of Christ with those living out the paschal mystery today. Éla points out the importance of the incarnation and how humanity is now the *milieu de rencontre* with God.

3.2.3 Links with the Universality of Christian Faith?

While the three theologians stress on the presence of Christ in the suffering poor they sometimes leave a hiatus between the mystery of Christ and the historical Jesus. Linking Christ and the suffering poor, while valid, requires a careful grounding in biblical and sacramental theology if the symbolic dimension of that link is to be appreciated. Otherwise there is a danger of undervaluing the fundamental importance of the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth as the primary referent in the identification of Jesus Christ and the poor. When Gutiérrez refers to the scourged Christ of the Indies, or when Éla says that Jesus is crucified in the oppressed African, or when Pieris refers to the non-Christian Christ in contemporary Asia, a symbolic link across time and sociocultural boundaries is required. If the link is vague, there is a risk of obscuring the difference between revelation

in Jesus Christ as recorded in scripture, and the revelation of God's word today in contemporary historical events.

The care required to make the link is illustrated in a recent study by Norbert Lohfink, who maintains that the poor in Matthew 25 are not the poor in a universal sense, but only those who have come to Jesus and have entered with him into the reign of God⁴⁶. Admittedly, the ecclesial reading of the passage through the centuries may go beyond the author's intention; nevertheless, applying a biblical passage like Matthew 25 to a universal understanding of the poor would benefit from a clear theological justification which is not readily apparent in the work of the theologians studied.

To dwell only on the present experience of a particular community would risk ideological bias in the interpretation of the Word. Thus in moving beyond the *Sitz im Leben* of the biblical text to the *Sitz im Kampf*, that is, to the struggles taking place in history, Third World theologians must seek the Word which opens a community to a reality beyond itself and its history. Taking history seriously highlights the importance of God's interaction with the whole of human history. In other words, all theology (whether from the East or West, North or South) must maintain links with the universality of Christian faith.

3.3 *The Third Element in the Hermeneutical Circle: Interpreter*

The interpreter is the third element in the hermeneutical circle by which revelation comes to be known. The three theologians in this study stress the interpretative role of local communities in the Third World. Gutiérrez writes that the poor have a «right to think». From the perspective of the Third World theologians, the «periphery» (the poor) or what is happening on the periphery is now a privileged place for theological understanding. What is often perceived from the «centre» as a challenge to authority may be seen as a call for a restructuring of the relationship between the «centre» and the «periphery». In the spirit of emancipation, the churches of the Third World want to be partners in dialogue rather than obedient younger siblings⁴⁷.

In the Third World the emerging basic communities play a significant part in facilitating the participation of the poor in the local church⁴⁸. In their

⁴⁶ See N. LOHFINK, *Option for the Poor*, 76-77.

⁴⁷ F. HOUTART, «Theoretical and Institutional Bases», 270.

⁴⁸ Vatican II was not consistent in its use of the term «local». Sometimes the term «particular» church designates a diocese, although it is also used to refer to groupings

study of the «signs of the times» and in their reflective and critical response to specific situations, the basic communities are trying to interpret and faithfully live out the gospel. Such communities are important for the three theologians, however the composition of the communities differs in the different contexts. Gutiérrez refers principally to the poor in urban settings. For Éla ecclesial communities could be among the poor in the towns, but also in the villages where family and clan ties predominate. Pieris refers to communities composed of people from different religions and ideologies committed to the integral liberation of the poor. It would not be accurate to label such communities «Christian», though they could be called «faith communities» in the sense of faith as a response to the voice of the Spirit heard through the cries of suffering people.

What is the role of a theologian in the communities? The community itself plays an important role as interpreter, which means that the theologian, if present, acts as a «travelling companion, alert for the signs of God»⁴⁹. Theology is seen as a response to real questions raised in the contemporary world, so a prerequisite for doing theology is being a part of the locus for theological reflection, which in the Third World is primarily the struggle of the poor. According to Gutiérrez, «one is a theologian insofar as one is linked to the life and commitments of a Christian community. Only with such a community does one have a theological function to carry out»⁵⁰.

of churches into «rites» (*OE* 2-4). «Local church» is used of dioceses (*AG* 19, 27) and of patriarchal churches (*LG* 23). In one passage, «particular» and «local» are both used, without distinction, to refer to dioceses in Eastern rites (*UR* 14); (see J. A. KOMONCHAK, *Towards a Theology of the Local Church*). The one and universal church is represented and active in the particular churches. It comes to be in and out of them (*LG* 23). The importance given to the local community finds support in the model of church as a communion of local churches. Church documents since the Council, particularly those from the Synods of bishops, refer to the church as communion. In the Final Report of the 1985 Synod, the bishops write, «Because the church is communion, the new “basic communities”, if they truly live in unity with the Church, are a true expression of communion and a means for the construction of a more profound communion. They are the cause for great hope for the life of the Church» (see SYNOD OF BISHOPS, 1985, «Final Report», II.C.6).

⁴⁹ J.-M. ÉLA, *Foi*, 33 [11].

⁵⁰ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Reflections from a Latin American Perspective» (1983c) 224.

3.3.1 Faith Experience of the Local Community

The life of the faith community is an obvious starting point for theological reflection if one considers the life of the committed community as a medium for discerning what God is saying today. The theologians studied agree that if God acts in history, that includes «our» history. So the community interprets God's word on the basis of its contemporary experience, which in the Third World means the community's involvement with the poor.

The theological justification for the role played by the faith community lies in the activity of the Spirit. With the guidance of the Spirit, and in union with the universal church, the local church has the task of interpreting the gospel so that universal Christian love may become a vital energy in people's lives and in society. Éla says that the theologian must be alert for the faintest murmurs of the Spirit who speaks to the church in the African context⁵¹. Gutiérrez highlights the communal dimension of the action of the Spirit, noting how the Spirit sets us free for communion with God and with others⁵². Pieris is developing an ingenious theology of the Spirit as the «Unspoken Speaker», the source of the word of revelation. On the one hand Pieris' remarks about the «universal» Spirit are quite abstract, yet on the other hand he notes how the Spirit may be heard today in the faith response of involvement with the paschal mystery of Christ continued in the suffering and struggles of the poor. That response is at the community level where the members of Christ gather to celebrate the «liturgy of life».

The three theologians, using their own terminology, are developing what has been termed the *sensus fidei* or *sensus fidelium*. The Constitution *Lumen gentium* teaches that through the supernatural sense of the faith (*supernaturali sensu fidei*) aroused by the Spirit of truth, the community of the faithful receives the word of God, «penetrates more deeply into that same faith through right judgment and applies it more fully to life» (LG 12). *Dei verbum* refers to the assistance of the holy Spirit and to the growth in understanding of Christian tradition resulting partly from the intimate understanding of spiritual things which the believers experience (DV 8)⁵³.

⁵¹ J.-M. ÉLA, *Foi*, 27 [6].

⁵² G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Verdad*, 27 [15].

⁵³ Another significant reference to the *sensus fidelium* is in the theses of the CTI (1976) on the relationship between the magisterium and theology. In thesis 3 it is acknowledged that both magisterium and theologians should draw on what the Word of God has communicated to the Church «*e communi sensu fidelium*» (see F. SULLIVAN,

The Third World theologians add some interesting perspectives to our understanding of the *sensus fidei*. With their concern for the interpenetration of faith and life they highlight the importance of the *fides qua* or experience permeated by faith. Pieris uses the term «third magisterium». Besides the academic magisterium of theologians and the pastoral magisterium of the bishops, he includes the third «magisterium of the poor», through which the poor can teach the church about liberation and God's reign. The concern of the poor is for something to live on (food), to live by (work), and to live for (dignity). Hence their faith experience is characterised by total reliance on God. Gutiérrez stresses how, inspired by the Spirit, people discover a spirituality or a definite way of living the gospel. Walking in the Spirit means following Jesus in history and struggling for communion against the causes of division⁵⁴.

The Third World theologians emphasise that truth is not simply believed, but is done. The interpretive process does not lead simply to understanding, but to more effective efforts to transform the human condition. The process of interpreting the truth must be in the form of a dialogue involving the living practice of the whole church. Thus the *sensus fidelium* is not merely interpretation under the guidance of the Spirit, but interpretation while acting in accordance with the Spirit. A consequence would be that if one takes seriously the practice of faith that is peculiar to the local church, insofar as it is conditioned by culture and specific historical movements, one would have to be very careful in making universal statements about «revealed truth».

Magisterium, 186-188). The CTI document «On the Interpretation of Dogmas» refers to the «*consensus fidelium*» in which «God's people "from the bishops to the last believing lay person" express their universal agreement in matters of faith and morals» (C.II.4). In a prior section (C.II.1) the same document refers to the *sensus fidelium* as «that inner sense by which God's people under the guidance of the church's magisterium acknowledges, assents to and firmly adheres to *what* is proclaimed — and this is not as to the word of human beings but to God's own word». The same document states how the Gospel has not been handed down to the Church merely in the form of lifeless documents but written in the hearts of believers by the holy Spirit. In this way the Gospel is present in the communion of the church in the latter's teachings, its life, and its liturgy (C.II.1).

⁵⁴ «Únicamente desde esa caminar según el Espíritu es posible pensar y anunciar el amor gratuito del Padre por toda persona humana» (see G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Beber*, 178 [136]).

3.3.2 Revelation as the Work of the Spirit?

If the practice of faith means acting in accordance with the Spirit who makes the gospel a living voice in the world, then one would expect to find pneumatology a significant theme in the theology of the Third World theologians. As noted in chapter II (section 5.4), the EATWOT theologians in recent years have been giving greater emphasis to the role of the Spirit in the revelation of God's presence. However, of the three theologians studied here only Pieris is following that trend by treating the discourse of the Spirit as a basis for revelation. Gutiérrez and Éla identify the Spirit with the Spirit of Christ active in the Christian community; however, Pieris has a broader vision of the revelatory action of the universal Spirit. Pieris' pneumatology is still developing; however, more needs to be done to reconcile his view with traditional views of the Spirit of Christ so as to understand better the active role of the Spirit as a source of our knowledge of revelation.

A better developed pneumatology would contribute to their theology of faith and revelation. The theologians studied stress the act of faith and how faith is authentic when it leads to committed action. When they highlight how the gospel is verified in faith practice they are referring to faith primarily as *fides qua*. However, a statement of faith does not become true because it is put into practice or untrue because it is not put into practice, since consistent praxis does not determine the truth value of a theory. Faith must be considered in its totality as both *fides qua* (act), and *fides quae* (content). Sometimes their writings give the mistaken impression that action is prior to faith, and they need to clarify further how «the light of faith» both precedes and follows praxis. Gutiérrez notes how faith is the vital acceptance of the gift of the Word. Acceptance of that gift includes assenting to the content of the Word, which includes faith in Jesus Christ. Thus both assent and a committed faith response are part of the single act of faith. The stress on lived faith experience should not conceal the importance of the work of the Spirit perfecting faith, thereby leading to an ever deeper understanding of revelation (DV 5).

4. Continuity and Discontinuity with Vatican II

The three theologians studied are familiar with the theological heritage of the Second Vatican Council. All three studied theology in Europe around the time of the Council, and were influenced by the theological trends that brought new life to European theology at that time. They are foremost

among those who tried to follow in the spirit of the Council and to apply that spirit to the challenges of the Third World in the following decades.

The Council deliberations took place in Europe over a period of four years. While it opened up new avenues, it did not always supply directives on how to achieve the changes required. The three theologians studied illustrate an attempt to take up the Council challenge to dialogue with the world, particularly the Third World, and to apply in a practical way what was only implicit in the Council: taking seriously history and present-day human experience. Moreover, they have not backed away from some of the difficult issues left unresolved by the Council, such as, the question of ongoing revelation, of church tradition being judged by the Word, and the implications of grace seen as a form of revelation.

4.1 *Themes Developed from the Council*

Chapter I presented some important distinguishing features of the understanding of revelation in Vatican II, including a positive view of history, a christological perspective, an interpersonal approach, and attention to the human faith response, all of which contributed to a more personal dynamic understanding of revelation. This development has had important consequences for our perception of the transmission of revelation, revelation in scripture, ongoing revelation, the significance of the «signs of the times», the kingdom of God, and revelation in the history of those beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition. The inclusion of such attributes by the theologians in this study is obvious; however some particular links may be noted.

The Council in its move from an ahistorical to a dynamic understanding of revelation, opened up new possibilities for seeing God's revelation in history. The word of God is not a set of abstract atemporal truths, but rather *dabar-logos*: word-event. The Third World theologians focus on contemporary human history as a locus of revelation and stress the historical dimension of salvation. There is one single history characterised by both sin and grace, bondage and liberation, and hence a causal connection between the use of human freedom now and what will remain in the kingdom of God.

The Council Constitution *Dei verbum* opens with the biblical testimony to God's revealing activity which culminates in Christ. The three theologians rely heavily on the accounts of God's intervention in history as recorded in the Old Testament, and the witness to the life of Jesus in the New Testament. They take their cue from the biblical notion of liberation,

but then treat biblical revelation as a norm for interpreting ongoing revelation in liberating events today. *Dei verbum* begins with a statement about the revelation of the secret purpose of God's will, and then shows how God's will is a secret no more. God's revelation and address to humanity in Jesus is a manifestation and confirmation of God's love for human beings and a sign that God is with us, to liberate us from the darkness of sin and death (DV 4). This insight recurs repeatedly in the work of the three theologians in this study. They stress that the message of the gospel concerns the basic elements of human existence: good and evil, darkness and light, bondage and deliverance, death and life. They link God's will for salvation and God's reign of life, and declare that Christian praxis continues the work of Christ, thus revealing the love of the God of life.

In quoting Vatican I on «the obedience of faith» (DV 5), the Second Vatican Council calls attention to the three dimensions of faith: assent, trust, and commitment. The Third World theologians stress the importance of faith as commitment and refer to «lived faith», that is, not simply an intellectual acceptance of the gospel, but a «vital reception of the gift of the divine word heard in the ecclesial community»⁵⁵. In its teaching, life and worship, the Christian community passes on the living deposit of faith (DV 8). The three theologians focus their attention on the life dimension. Pieris' reference to living out the paschal mystery in the «liturgy of life» is one example. The theologians' concern is less with doctrinal matters and more on faith arising out of the experience of struggling to be human in inhuman situations. Faith, then, becomes a principle of action.

The three theologians have taken up several themes mentioned in the Council but not developed: for example the «signs of the times», the reign of God, and the eschatological dimension of revelation. One begins with the context, and looks for the «signs of the times» or the signs of God's reign within that context. The findings in chapters III-V of this study have shown that such themes play an important part in the understanding of revelation of the three theologians studied.

⁵⁵ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 6. A. Dulles comments that with the *nouvelle théologie*, (which forms a significant part of Gutiérrez's theological heritage), «a Blondelian philosophy of action was being substituted for an orthodox philosophy of being» (see A. DULLES, *Assurance*, 136).

4.1.1 In Harmony with Vatican II

There may be more continuity with the Council than the Third World theologians would care to admit. They tend to be critical of Western theology, but when their work is studied closely one sees that they are usually opposing scholasticism, or manualistic theology from the theology common prior to the Council, characterised by a propositional understanding of revelation and a dogmatic approach to theological tradition. Generally, their work is in harmony with the theology of the Council. Previously the common approach had been to apply the universal message of the gospel to different situations, that is, to read the situation in the light of church tradition. Here, with a more dynamic view of revelation and a broader understanding of tradition as the faith community passing on «everything that helps the people of God to live a holy life and to grow in faith» (DV 8), they have tried to discover in practice what was implied in the Council teaching.

4.2 *Beyond Vatican II*

In some matters the theologians studied have gone beyond the Vatican II teaching on revelation. Some points have been noted already in this chapter, for example, the way the three theologians have gone beyond thinking in terms of the content and form of revealed truth (section 3.1.1). Three further examples will be given here: their point of view, their concern for revelation now, and their openness to other religions.

Firstly, the three theologians stress the perspective of the poor, or the «underside», which was not a major theme at the Council. They maintain that the human questioning illustrated in the Council documents is culture-bound, and they raise a new form of questioning from the «underside of history». There is one history, but it is not the same for everyone. The Third World theologians are sometimes accused of reductionism, but from their point of view their emphasis on God entering into history preserves God's transcendence, because it avoids an illusory ahistorical universality that they perceive in First World theology. They maintain that God will be found among the victims of those systems and institutions which, through their use of power, have succumbed to idolatry. In the histories of the suffering they are affirming the transcendence of God, in opposition to

forms of Christianity which turn God into an emperor or a security blanket⁵⁶.

The second example pertains to the theologians' concern for what God is saying today. *Dei verbum* teaches that God is with us, to deliver us from sin and death (*DV* 4), and alludes to God's «uninterrupted conversation with the bride of his beloved Son» (*DV* 8); however the Constitution does not dwell on the issue of ongoing revelation. Other documents like *Ad gentes* and *Gaudium et spes* put more emphasis on God's continuing to speak to humanity through the life of the church and the events of history (e.g., *GS* 58). The three theologians go further and devote their attention to what is normally termed «ongoing» revelation, in contrast to «foundational» revelation. Foundational revelation as recorded in scripture serves as a norm and guide for discerning God's word today. Éla is concerned with what God is saying today to African people in their Calvary experience. Pieris says that the Word «still speaks» in both Christians and non-Christians who have an inner affinity with the universal Spirit. Gutiérrez, citing Mt 25, highlights our encounter today with Christ in the poor. The three theologians' approaches are influenced by their understanding of history as a locus of revelation, and particularly by the sacramental dimension of their christology. Through the incarnation God in Jesus became poor. Thus the poor not only represent Christ, but they are the new sacrament of Christ's presence today. These insights are not contrary to the teaching of the Council, but lead to insights not envisaged by the Council. For example, their view that the priority in hermeneutics is not to discover the Word in scripture, but rather to interpret the Word in the world today with the help of scripture⁵⁷.

Thirdly, the three theologians (particularly Pieris) seem to be going beyond the «fulfilment» theory of religions that predominated at the Council. In that theory the various religions are seen as representing humanity's desire for union with the divine, but Jesus Christ represents God's personal response to this universal aspiration. Christ is the one «in whom people find the fullness of religious life» (*NA* 2). The theory tends toward a negative evaluation of other religions because while they are considered as sincere quests for God, Christianity is seen as the only effective fulfilment of that quest.

⁵⁶ See R. S. GOIZUETA, «The History of Suffering» 32-47.

⁵⁷ See the interview with Aloysius Pieris, Q. 6 in the appendix.

Pieris clearly opposes any view that would diminish the salvific value of other religions. One of his principal aims is to demonstrate the value of Buddhist soteriology, and to show that to be authentic in Asia, Christianity must plunge into «the Jordan of Asian religiousness». Pieris devotes much of his attention to Buddhism and popular religiosity in Asia. In chap. IV, section 4.1 a comparison was made between *Dei verbum 2* and Pieris' understanding of the revelatory word as the discourse about the unspeakable One. Pieris opens up new possibilities for understanding revelation as enlightenment, and stimulates further insights by the way he links the *Logos* and the Spirit. For example, Pieris' understanding of the «great discourse of the Spirit addressed to all» could shed new light on our understanding of the universal work of the Spirit, mentioned in *Gaudium et spes 22*.

Éla and Gutiérrez are less directly involved in such issues. Éla makes occasional reference to the world of the «invisible» which plays an essential part in traditional religions in Africa. He also points out how the Independent churches in Africa attend to the real needs of people in their dreams and visions, their purification and public confession, and the commemoration of the «living dead». While professing Christ, their connection with African cultural and religious values gives the Independent churches an effectiveness lacking in the established churches. Éla mentions the way in which Islam presents a challenge to Christianity; however he does not really develop that issue⁵⁸. Gutiérrez mentions, but pays little attention to popular religiosity in Latin America. In his latest book he interprets Las Casas as saying that the Indians of America, even in their condition as unbelievers, are members of the Pauline body of Christ⁵⁹. Christ was in fact being maltreated and scourged in the Indians of America. In arguing for the value of religious freedom, Gutiérrez holds that there is no contradiction between Las Casas' opposition to idolatry of gold leading to the death of the Indians, and Las Casas' openness to the Indians' practice of offering human sacrifice. In offering to God the most precious thing they

⁵⁸ «L'expérience de Dieu dans l'Islam est une question capitale pour notre foi chrétienne. Dans plusieurs régions d'Afrique noire, il est urgent de renouveler notre langage de la foi: cela exige un approfondissement de la Révélation mais aussi une recherche sur les questions que le monde musulman nous pose» (see J.-M. ÉLA, *Voici le temps*, 194).

⁵⁹ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Las Casas*, 86 [55-56].

had, the Indians showed their profound understanding of the relationship between God and human life⁶⁰.

In sum, Vatican II developed a changed understanding of revelation: concrete, historical, biblical, ecumenical, and interpersonal. Despite differences within the documents themselves, overall there was a change to a dynamic view of revelation in history. The three theologians have taken many of these developments and elaborated on them. From a dynamic notion of revelation they have sought to discover God addressing humankind from within the historical changes today. To the personal dimension of revelation, they add the importance of the social dimension. They take their cue from the biblical notion of liberation, but then treat biblical revelation as a norm for interpreting ongoing revelation in liberating events today. They accept history as the locus of revelation and then point out the importance of human action in history. They accept the importance of reason and credibility for faith, but add that these must be seen in relation to human effort. A question remains: To what extent, and in what way do they expand the existing bounds of orthodoxy?

4.3 *Ressourcement or Aggiornamento?*

Éla, Pieris and Gutiérrez began their studies in Europe, at the time de Lubac, Congar, Rahner, Ratzinger and others were influencing the changes inspired by Vatican II. The above mentioned conciliar «progressives» were seeking renewal through «ressourcement», that is, a return to the patristic and biblical roots. In this way they sought to update the church and to escape from the rigidity of neo-Scholasticism and the anti-Modernist reactions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As George Lindbeck observes, «Paradoxically, they triumphed over the conservatives and advanced the cause of modernity by being more traditional than anyone else: they appealed to traditions earlier than the medieval and counter-Reformation ones the traditionalists favored»⁶¹

In the years since the Council, *ressourcement* has given way to «aggiornamento». The change does not mean a rejection of the Council as the term was used by Pope John XXIII to define the Council's purpose. However, it does mean that there has been a shift away from the sources

⁶⁰ G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Las Casas*, 256-257 [180-81]. To Gutiérrez, *Las Casas* was a prophetic voice for key insights contained in the Vatican II Declaration on Religious Freedom.

⁶¹ C. LINDBECK, «Two Kinds of Ecumenism», 650.

of faith to the needs of the world. Pieris illustrates both tendencies when he points out that «aggiornamento», when applied to inculturation, summons the church to its pentecostal origins and calls on the church to speak in such a way that people can understand the message of the Word relevant to present realities⁶². Aggiornamento shifts the focus to present realities and the task is to attune the church to the Word that illumines every one who comes into this world (Jn 1,9).

The different perspectives can be seen in comparing *Dei verbum* and *Gaudium et spes*. In the former, priority is given to the saving disclosure of God, particularly as mediated through scripture and tradition. Using an inductive method *Gaudium et spes* takes human experience as its starting point and asks how God's promise of salvation is related to our individual or collective experience as an intrahistorical reality. In general the Third World theologians follow this inductive approach, and it is not easy to reconcile this with the genetic approach of *Dei verbum* which begins with biblical themes. This does not mean a rejection of the constitution on Divine Revelation, but a different outlook, which gives priority to current needs. Their principal interest is in how divine revelation contributes to justice, liberation and life in our world. Thus the main issue as far as revelation is concerned is how to promote the presence of the life-giving word of God in contemporary history.

4.4 *Different Paradigms*

Are the differences simply due to changes in perspective, or are there deeper issues to face, for example, different opinions on how to legitimate different views? One of the difficulties of this study has been finding a common language and concepts so that ideas could be shared and compared. In this discussion which includes theologians from different continents and theological stances there is always the danger of talking past one another. Is this also due to different theological paradigms? The West has raised its post-Enlightenment, scientific experience to a paradigm, but many theologians would agree that this does not reflect their experience anymore in a post-modern world. Surely the Western scientific paradigm does not reflect the experience of the Third World. Their primary problem is not the death of God, but the death of humanity.

As Avery Dulles has shown in his book *Models of Revelation*, dissimilar paradigms indicate different root metaphors. To ignore such differences

⁶² A. PIERIS, «Inculturation in Asia», 59.

would risk confusion among distinct ways of doing theology. The three theologians considered communicate their understanding of revelation not only in concepts but also through underlying narrative patterns. For example, the parables they tell about people's experiences of the presence or absence of God challenge the assumptions of accepted myths and call for change. The theologians label as idolatry Western myths about technological progress. They challenge the right of ecclesial «centre» to interpret God's message for the «periphery», and call into question the neutrality and objectivity of theology coming from centres of power. Above all they contest theologies which dismiss suffering as of little theological consequence, and contend that suffering and poverty are the object of God's liberating message. God takes sides with the suffering victims of history. These are matters which *Dei verbum* did not consider and to which *Gaudium et spes* could not provide answers.

Pieris thinks that the Western Christian tradition about Christ has got stuck in the Chalcedonian philosophical-ontological, *theos-anēr* paradigm. He considers such a paradigm impotent when it comes to poverty and social questions, and proposes an alternative soteriological paradigm whereby Yahweh's Word, operative in history, is understood by slaves. Jesus, in whom Christians recognise the Word, assumed the condition of a slave through the incarnation, thus becoming a protest against greed and a defence-pact between God and slaves of all time. Obviously Pieris' suspicions about Chalcedon and his proposal for a different paradigm circumvent much of the Christian tradition and require an openness to expanding the existing bounds of orthodoxy.

Likewise, Gutiérrez's reference to the reign of God implies a different paradigm from theology as an intellectual discipline born of the meeting of faith and reason. His attempt to do justice to both the revelation of God and the historical liberation of the poor implies an encounter of faith and contemporary human experience. The capacity of Gutiérrez's approach to unify transcendence and history has consequences for his understanding of God's revelation. The self-revelation of God is perceived in the relationship between the gratuity of God's love and the human response reflecting that love in Christian praxis.

Éla's call for a new faith language reflects his desire to discover a different way for Africans to reread the gospel so that it can be reborn in Africa. There are indications of a new understanding of the incarnation in terms of the contemporary conflictual social dynamics of Africa. The suffering and death of Jesus is identified with the suffering and death of the

poor and the oppressed⁶³. Consequently revelation is understood as God's liberating answer to the drama of the crucified throughout history. «Theology under the tree» is an attempt to discover the response from the Lord of life to the African cry which echoes Jesus' cry on the cross. The importance Éla attributes to African experience and his stress on history as the locus for revelation indicates an approach similar to Pieris and Gutiérrez. However despite his calls for an African interpretation of revelation and glimpses in his work of the task of African theology, Éla has yet to formulate an integral theological response.

Different paradigms influence the three theologians' understanding of revelation. Revelation is understood as the word of God that people experience; the good news of the saving God in history; the liberating self-communication of God's reign. God's revelation is not a human product but is seen in its capacity to shed light on human experience. The modern world, which entered into theological considerations in a general way during the Council, is acknowledged with its ambivalence and contradictions. Reading the «signs of the times» implies taking history more seriously than the Council had assumed. Revelation has an historical dimension which treats the divine mystery in relation to our world and the realities of human existence, particularly the suffering experienced by the poor and the oppressed. Revelation is not simply passively received because with the three theologians the reception of revelation is closely associated with faith-praxis. One does not encounter the mystery of divine revelation in the metaphysical realm of faith and reason, but rather in the interaction of faith and life, seen particularly in praxis which leads to freedom and justice. God's gift does not cancel human freedom, but challenges people to struggle for the dignity and freedom which they can claim as children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. In that struggle they come to experience the God of life calling them to the fullness of life.

The three theologians illustrate a «praxis model» of doing theology⁶⁴. God is not «just there». God is revealed in history, calling all people of faith to cooperate with God's plan for communion and freedom. Theological reflection involves discerning in praxis the divine creativity at work in human events and attempting to discover its meaning for the transformation of the world. Jon Sobrino summarises it well when he

⁶³ «En un sens, Jésus, le Crucifié, c'est l'Africain humilié et opprimé depuis des siècles» (see J.-M. ÉLA, «La croix du Christ» 18 [31]).

⁶⁴ See S. BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 63-80.

writes: «To know the truth is to do the truth, to know Jesus is to follow Jesus, to know sin is to take away sin, to know suffering is to free the world from suffering, to know God is to go to God in justice»⁶⁵.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The Dogmatic Constitution *Dei verbum* encourages the use of historical methods, but it does not supply the directives needed to show how the word of God can be heard in history other than in the written word of scripture. The Constitution rightly asserts that the study of the sacred page should be the very soul of theology (*DV* 24). However, some theologians, particularly those from the Third World, are searching for ways to base their work on a broader understanding of the Word. They maintain that God continues to speak to people, not only through those events recorded in scripture, but through the events of history today. Revelation is understood as the good news of the saving, liberating God in history and these theologians seek to make that good news a reality in the life of the Christian or human community.

This final chapter has shown how the three theologians of this study have endeavoured to incorporate in their work both the Christian experience as found in traditional theological sources such as scripture and tradition, and the experience from their own historical context. The latter acts as their starting point and influences their interpretation of the Word. Guided by the written Word, they are searching for God's active presence within their historical and cultural situation. The search leads them to investigate mediums of revelation, such as the Spirit in the community, or the Word present in other forms of religiousness. The Word is not simply present in specific contexts, it also confronts each situation and provokes change. In this way the Word has the power to challenge and to shape human experience. Unlike some forms of theology that attempt to apply the universal message of the gospel to particular situations, the Third World theologians, aided by the gospel, try to discover the saving self-disclosure of God in the various historical situations today.

The three theologians are concerned about the credibility of Christian revelation in their particular situations. Behind their questioning lies a

⁶⁵ «Conocer la verdad es hacer la verdad, conocer a Jesús es seguir a Jesús, conocer el pecado es cargar con el pecado, conocer la miseria es liberar el mundo de miseria, conocer a Dios es ir a Dios en la justicia» (see J. SOBRINO, «El conocimiento teológico», 207).

conviction that the gospel as it has been presented and lived in the past is no longer credible in the encounter with poverty and suffering today. Christian revelation will be an intelligible authoritative word only if it illumines people's historical experience, and confronts inhuman situations. The holy Spirit working in the community helps people not only to understand Christian tradition and to penetrate more deeply into the faith but also to discover the truth by acting in accordance with that same Spirit. To the extent that Christians do the truth and thereby verify the promise of the gospel, they participate in the revelation of God who calls all people to communion and fellowship. Human love, illumined by the gospel, is where the God of love and life is revealed.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The young churches have continued, on the one hand, the innovative intentions of Vatican II regarding openness to non-Western religions and cultures and, on the other, the Council's reflections on North-South relations and the problems of the Third World. In their efforts at inculturation these churches are trying to be no longer mere assimilated appendages of a foreign religion, that of the West. They are likewise participating, and not without making original contributions, in the tasks of development and the struggles to overcome injustice, oppression, violence, and destitution. So serious an involvement is proving to be a source of profound conflicts within the ecclesial body, because in the last analysis it raises radical questions about the real loyalties of groups of believers and about the way they are accepted [...]. Inasmuch as cultures differ no less than do socio-economic and political contexts, these churches have produced varied theological approaches to the same Christian mystery¹.

This passage from Louis de Vaucelles summarises much of what has been covered in this study. He refers to the importance of the context, the desire of the Third World churches to face the problems around them, and their varied approaches to the same Christian mystery. The intent of this study was to investigate in depth examples of the Third World approach to the Christian mystery, particularly their understanding of revelation. It has been shown how their understanding is based primarily, not on sociological analysis, but on faith. As Bishop Desmond Tutu has said, «it is not our politics but our faith that inspires us»². For these theologians, faith as a vital activity is a fundamental resource for theological reflection.

Theology is often defined as *fides quaerens intellectum*. This applies equally to the theologians in this study, with one stipulation — that faith is «lived faith». The qualification is important because it means that the experience of faith commitment plays an integral part in one's

¹ L. DE VAUCELLES, «The Changing Social Contexts», 52.

² D. TUTU, «The Theology of Liberation in Africa», 168.

understanding of revelation. Lived faith is concerned with the deep questions people are asking (sometimes with a mute voice) in the struggle of life. Lived faith ensures that health, wellbeing, and justice are significant loci for theological reflection. The emphasis is not on applying revealed truth to life, but rather on viewing life in the light of the Word and on being part of historical events in a way that makes a difference. «Extra historiam nulla salus». Revelation which has its origin in God is known not only through Jesus Christ, but in human effort, which puts God's love revealed in Christ into practice.

In lived faith one hears God's word speaking through contemporary human experience. So it is important to have ways of understanding human experience in order to be able to discern and interpret divine revelation as it comes to us through these experiences. As noted at the beginning of this study, the Bishops' Conferences in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania have highlighted the importance of addressing the problems and difficulties of their people. The EATWOT theologians too take the experience of their world as the starting point for their reflections. The principal theological issue is, how to see the relation between faith and life, revelation and experience, God's gift and human effort.

Theology is said to have a double task of attentive listening (*auditus fidei*) and systematic explaining (*intellectus fidei*). The theologians in this study have emphasised the importance of lived experience as part of the listening phase. Highlighting the importance of history, they look not only to loci such as scripture and tradition for the positive data of theological reflection. The life of the community (hinted at in *Dei verbum* 8) is seen as a locus of God's word and work, and thus as a *locus revelationis*. So an *exercitatio fidei* which includes the existential efficacy of faith must accompany the *auditus fidei*.

Third World theologians want to distance themselves from the faith-reason dimension, which has dominated theological reflection for centuries. Whether faith and reason are integrated, juxtaposed, or one subordinated to the other, is not their principal concern. They focus on another dimension: revelation and life. The theologian listens to the yearnings and questions from human life and seeks a response in the light of the divine Word.

The first question, posed at the beginning of this study, was about the Third World theologians' understanding of revelation. The analysis has shown how the theologians studied understand revelation as the good news of the life-giving word of God in history. They try to discover the saving self-disclosure of God in the various situations today. What is novel about this approach is the place they give to human effort in the revelation of

God's love. Human love can be a way of revealing the gratuitous love of God, for example; opposing idols such as power and profit can be a medium of the revelatory action of God. The story of Jesus, appropriated as a struggle for life and liberation in the face of death and oppression, leads to the advancement of the reign of God. To the extent that such christopraxis does the truth and verifies the promise of the gospel, it participates in the revelation of God who calls all people to communion and fellowship.

Naturally the concept of revelation affects one's understanding of the mystery of God. Various images of God have surfaced in this study. The most frequently occurring image is that of the God who «speaks». From a Christian perspective, God is neither absent nor silent. God has spoken a Word, which if heard, ensures life-giving relationships. Hence the importance of listening to the Word, for the Word still speaks through those who have an inner affinity with the Spirit. However the image of the Word risks being limited to the rational, philosophical domain unless seen as the Word in Jesus. In Jesus Christ the Word became part of the human struggle in the events of history.

The theologians studied base their understanding of the efficacy of the Word on the incarnation whereby God's word was revealed in Jesus Christ. As a servant/slave Jesus established a covenant with the oppressed. Consequently, humanity, particularly suffering humanity, as a sacrament of Christ, becomes the meeting place with God. In this way the theologians see the liberative activity of God and the struggle of the poor as united in one saving reality. God does not act in the place of human agents, but is present in human activity. The personal and communitarian involvement in human struggles is understood as «living the incarnation», and thus as participating in the death and resurrection of Jesus. That is where the God of life and love is revealed.

The second question posed at the beginning of this study concerned the strengths and weaknesses of the theologians' understanding of revelation. The question was addressed in the chapters on the work of the three theologians, and in a more general way in chapter VI. As Avery Dulles has noted, these theologians have not elaborated a systematic theology of revelation³. However, their work is significant in its capacity for challenging conventional ideas about revelation and for making an important contribution to the wider Christian tradition. Their contribution

³ A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, 30.

may be seen in the attempt to establish a theological basis for relating revelation and human experience. Their bid to allow the Word to illumine people's concerns can give new credibility to the gospel within the diverse experiences of humankind.

The third question raised at the beginning of this study was about the theologians' understanding of revelation and church teaching. This study has shown points of continuity with the teaching of Vatican II. However the view of revelation through lived faith commitment, whereby the poor come to experience the God of life calling them to the fullness of life, is a different perspective on divine revelation from that of Vatican II. There has been a shift in the starting point for theology from the revealing God to the believing community. There has also been new recognition of the intrinsic theological value of liberation in history. The Third World theologians insist that Christian praxis, or christopraxis, can be a means of God's self-communication to people today, and that human effort can mediate the divine Word.

Do the theologians studied achieve a satisfactory balance between contemporary experience and the faith experience of the church through the centuries? Their attempt to establish links between faith and life has met with some success. However their ability to link faith and tradition is less apparent. Perhaps distancing themselves from tradition has been necessary to allow the Third World theologians to return to the Word in scripture and to seize the space to try out new paradigms and to develop their own particular approaches to the divine mystery. For example, they have little need for conventional terminology like «foundational revelation» or «on-going revelation». They refer to the presence of the life-giving Word of God in history; an expression comprehensive enough to include God's unsurpassable revelation in Jesus Christ and the divine presence in the struggle for life today. That understanding must surely serve as a basis for future dialogue between Third World theologians and those from other parts of the world.

APPENDIX I

Interview with Jean-Marc Éla¹

Question 1. *Les théologiens de EATWOT utilisent l'expression, «le Dieu de la vie» et la rencontre à Nairobi en 1992 s'appelait: «Un cri pour la vie». Que pensez-vous de ces deux expressions?*

Réponse 1. Le Dieu de la vie. Cette expression montre une évolution assez étonnante de la théologie du Tiers Monde parce qu'au départ cette théologie mettait l'accent sur le côté socio-politique. Par conséquent ce qui semblait être au centre des préoccupations c'étaient les structures, les institutions, les transformations sociales, c'est à dire un changement radical pour passer de la domination à la libération.

L'on a pensé que l'accent était beaucoup plus socio-politique et là, quand on voit l'évolution du langage, du vocabulaire utilisé par les théologiens d'EATWOT, on s'aperçoit que de plus en plus, c'est l'aspect vie, l'aspect existentiel qui revient au premier plan. Je comprends parfaitement cette évolution. Je crois qu'il y a là, à la fois, une sorte de réponse à ceux qui critiquent la théorie de la libération. On veut montrer ici que les revendications du Tiers Monde sont réellement des revendications qui sont fondées, c'est à dire qu'il s'agit de demandes qui portent sur la réalité humaine la plus concrète. Il ne faut pas y voir uniquement, je dirais, l'aspect structure, l'aspect institution, l'aspect mécanisme; il faut y voir le vécu humain, tel que nous le trouvons dans la Bible. Il y a un rapprochement avec le langage de la Bible pour parler de la libération. Voilà pourquoi l'idée de Dieu de la vie est revenue au centre des préoccupations. Je pense en particulier que cela est dû à toute une réinterprétation du concept même de libération. Libération signifie vie. Je pense qu'il y a des choses qu'on disait déjà dès 67, que Gustavo Gutiérrez avait commencé à exprimer; on retrouve là les grandes intuitions du Gutiérrez qui montre que libération signifie vie, c'est à dire qu'on revendique le droit à la vie. Par conséquent tout est situé en matière de libération autour de la

¹ With Philip Gibbs, Rome, 14 April 1994

vie. Il montrait que la Bible justement nous manifeste un Dieu qui est en faveur de la vie. Donc je crois qu'il y a là un aboutissement de tout un effort de réflexion au sein de la théologie du Tiers Monde. On se rend compte qu'il faut arriver à nous faire comprendre davantage des gens et en même temps à nous faire accepter et à écarter les critiques qui ne sont pas justifiées parce que, finalement ce que nous demandons, c'est tout à fait ce dont il est question dans la Bible quand on voit comment Dieu nourrit les hommes, Dieu guérit les malades, et Dieu s'occupe des pauvres. Il s'agit de ce qui est réellement propre à la révélation: Dieu lui-même, s'est manifesté comme le Seigneur de la vie. Personnellement, dès le début quand j'ai écrit *Ma foi d'Africain*, l'idée du Seigneur de la vie est restée assez présente dans ma pensée.

Je préfère parler du Seigneur de la vie en référence à la résurrection. Pour moi le concept est plus pascal, c'est plus christologique. Quand je parle du Seigneur de la vie je parle de Jésus Christ qui par sa mort et sa résurrection est devenu, comme dit le livre des Actes des Apôtres, le prince de la vie, ou encore le chant que nous chantons à Pâques: «La mort et la vie ont lutté dans un duel merveilleux, l'auteur de la vie était mort, voici qu'il vit et règne». Donc c'est cette hymne de Pâques qui m'a inspiré pour présenter Jésus Christ comme le Seigneur de la vie. Annoncer le Seigneur de la vie à des gens qui sont dans des situations de mort en sachant que la pauvreté conduit à la mort!

C'est pour cela que dans l'expression que vous mentionnez il y a une nuance que j'apporte parce que ma référence est plus pascale. Ce n'est pas simplement théocentrique, ce n'est pas simplement le Dieu de l'Ancien Testament. C'est réellement Jésus Christ qui par sa mort est devenu pour nous celui qui ouvre les chemins de la résurrection. Alors le cri pour la vie, le terme qui a été utilisé par la dernière rencontre d'EATWOT, c'est une manière de parler, de telle façon qu'on se rapproche davantage du langage de la révélation pour être mieux accepté par ceux qui contestent la théorie de la libération. Il est question d'une spiritualité pour la vie, d'un cri pour la vie. Tout cela traduit la même expression de libération, mais dans un sens beaucoup plus concret, beaucoup plus proche du langage biblique.

Q. 2. *Vous parlez du calvaire et de la passion en Afrique. Y-a-t-il aussi la pêche/l'espoir? Pouvez-vous me donner un exemple?*

R. 2. La croix a une très grande place dans ma théologie. J'aimerais beaucoup travailler sur la croix, faire une théologie de la croix. Je crois que nous sommes bien placés pour le faire, d'abord parce que j'ai beaucoup étudié la théologie protestante, la théologie de Luther en particulier. J'ai davantage découvert la théologie de la croix chez Luther: théologie de la gloire, théologie de la croix. C'est surtout à partir de Luther, thèse de Heildelberg en particulier, que la théologie de la croix m'a beaucoup impressionné. Je me suis rendu compte que les catholiques n'ont pas une vraie théologie de la croix. J'aimerais beaucoup

approfondir cette théologie-là. C'est pour cela que dans mes travaux j'esquisse un peu des éléments d'une théologie de la croix qui soit catholique. Alors je voudrais qu'elle soit une théologie en elle-même africaine, c'est à dire, du point de vue africain sur le Messie crucifié qui est au centre de la prédication de Saint Paul.

Donc dans ce contexte Paulinien je voudrais réfléchir davantage sur la place de la crucifixion dans le drame du salut en Jésus Christ. Je montrerai tout à l'heure que je ne sépare pas la croix de la résurrection. Dès le départ je pense qu'il faut montrer l'actualité de la croix de Jésus Christ dans l'Église et dans le monde. Cette réalité demeure, elle fait partie de la foi et de ce que j'appellerais le mystère de l'Église et de la foi.

La croix du Christ nous la retrouvons actuelle quand Jésus lui-même nous fait comprendre que le pauvre, le prisonnier, l'étranger, l'affamé, c'est Lui. Je dirai : l'opprimé, c'est Jésus Christ.

Il y a tout un développement dans la Bible qui inclut l'ancien testament et qui montre que Dieu est personnellement concerné par ce qui arrive au pauvre et à l'opprimé. Outrager et opprimer le pauvre c'est outrager son Créateur. Cela, c'est la base qui montre le lien étroit entre Dieu et le pauvre. Je crois que Jésus Christ va amener à son achèvement cette identification, cette assimilation, cette parenté entre Dieu et le pauvre quand il dit : «Ce que vous faites à un de ces petits, c'est à moi que vous le faites». Cela est l'aboutissement de ce que la Bible exprimait : Outrager, opprimer le pauvre, c'est outrager son Créateur.

Alors quand j'essaie de considérer la croix de Jésus Christ je dis que cette croix est actuelle. Partout où l'homme est humilié, torturé, opprimé, exploité, souffrant, le Christ est là parce que Jésus a souffert comme l'aîné entre les frères, comme dit l'Épître aux Hébreux qui considère Jésus comme le frère compatissant, Jésus qui souffre comme le frère des hommes, comme le frère universel de tous les hommes. Donc par l'incarnation, Jésus Christ est devenu non seulement l'un d'entre nous mais en même temps il récapitule en lui toute l'humanité souffrante, l'humanité dans le temps et dans l'espace. Je réutilise ici le concept patristique de Saint Irénée de récapitulation, pour montrer que Jésus Christ résume en Lui toute l'humanité souffrante, l'humanité d'avant comme l'humanité de maintenant. Voilà pourquoi le calvaire me paraît être une dimension de la souffrance de l'homme mais en même temps de la souffrance du Christ Lui-même. C'est là que je montre que le crucifié résume dans son expérience historique toutes les croix du monde, tous les calvaires.

Alors à ce moment-là la résurrection est un fait qui d'abord le concerne Lui seul, mais Jésus Christ ressuscite comme le premier-né d'entre les morts. Le Christ comme premier-né, est le premier à vaincre la mort. En même temps je vois en Lui la figure de l'homme eschatologique. De ce point de vue la résurrection du Christ est comme une anticipation de ce qui est annoncé pour l'homme; mais cela a commencé avec Lui.

La résurrection a commencé avec Lui. Je me sens concerné par cet événement de la résurrection lorsque je m'aperçois qu'il faut qu'avec la puissance qu'il a revêtu après sa résurrection, il faut, qu'avec cette puissance-là le chrétien, qui participe à la mort et à la résurrection de Jésus par le baptême, avec toute la puissance de la résurrection, puisse devenir en quelque sorte comme un moteur afin de faire passer le monde de la souffrance à la joie. La résurrection du Christ devient pour moi à la fois, un principe de transformation de l'univers, un principe de changement des structures sociales. En même temps cela devient pour moi une force mobilisatrice qui me permet de critiquer, c'est à dire de montrer que dans la résurrection il y a un appel à l'insurrection. La résurrection signifie pour nous qu'il faut absolument lutter pour vaincre. Cela veut dire que la résurrection justifie la lutte pour la vie. Elle justifie la lutte pour la vie parce qu'elle est un principe de transformation de la figure du monde, de l'état du monde.

Voyez-vous les gens qui ont vaincu ce défi?

Alors ceux qui ont réussi à vaincre ce défi, par exemple, les gens qui arrivent à triompher de toutes les situations de servitude, de mort, sont comme une concrétisation d'un projet de vie que Dieu a sur les hommes et montre que Jésus ressuscite là où un homme peut arriver à retrouver la parole, là où un homme peut arriver à se mettre debout. Ce sont autant de signes qui témoignent de l'actualité de la résurrection.

Autant la croix est présente dans l'humanité et dans l'Église, autant la résurrection aussi s'actualise chaque fois que la justice triomphe contre l'injustice, chaque fois que la liberté parvient à triompher contre l'oppression, chaque fois que l'amour peut triompher de la haine.

On trouve cela dans les communautés chrétiennes?

Il est certain qu'il faut savoir que c'est dans les communautés chrétiennes que normalement on peut arriver à trouver cela. Par exemple dans les communautés qui vivent la fraternité au delà des ethnies. Cela veut dire que la haine qui divise, les murs de séparation qui opposaient les individus, ces murs sont tombés. C'est un signe d'une communauté nouvelle, une communauté qui sera désormais marquée du sceau de la résurrection, c'est à dire du triomphe de l'amour sur la haine.

Dans les communautés où les hommes retrouvent le courage, où l'on retrouve l'audace, où on retrouve la capacité de s'entendre, toutes ces communautés-là sont l'expérience de la création nouvelle, par conséquent, une conséquence de la résurrection. Dans le monde aussi, en dehors du chrétien, là où on essaie de vivre un peu ces réalités, c'est autant la résurrection qui devient actuelle par les effets qu'elle comporte, car la résurrection est finalement quelque chose qui est appelé à nous faire entrer dans le monde nouveau; c'est une des dimensions du royaume

de Dieu. Là où la vie triomphe contre la mort, là le royaume de Dieu se laisse voir et entendre.

Je ne veux pas du tout qu'on réduise la résurrection à quelque chose qui soit du domaine de l'Église comme institution. Il faut vivre la résurrection comme une réalité du monde nouveau et par conséquent, réintégrer les effets de la résurrection dans l'ensemble du projet de Dieu, qui est finalement, le règne de Dieu. C'est pour cela que je cherche tous les signes non seulement de la crucifixion, mais aussi tous les signes de la résurrection dans le monde lui-même.

La joie, la vie, l'amour, la fraternité, la liberté, la communion, ce sont-là les signes d'une vie de résurrection. Mais quand on voit les communautés primitives qui vivent justement les transformations opérées par la venue de l'Esprit promis par le Ressuscité, c'est là que vous retrouvez comment on vit une communauté pascale, avec la force de l'Esprit qui permet que tous ces effets soient en quelque sorte réalisés au bénéfice des croyants. Donc je ne sais pas du tout séparer le calvaire et la croix de la résurrection. Ce sont, évidemment, deux moments importants mais déjà dans la croix il y a l'aspect victoire. Ce qui fait découvrir cela, c'est la descente de Jésus aux enfers. Jésus descend aux enfers pour annoncer aux esprits en prison la Bonne Nouvelle. Ça, c'est avant Pâques, dans Saint Pierre, quand Jésus descend aux enfers pour annoncer aux esprits en prison la Bonne Nouvelle. Quelle était cette Bonne Nouvelle? Comment comprendre qu'on parle de «Bonne Nouvelle» alors que Pâques n'est pas encore là? Cela veut dire que la croix est déjà vu comme un signe de victoire pour le Christ. C'est cette victoire qu'il va manifester aux gens qui sont encore sous l'emprise de la mort. C'est donc pour cela que je retrouve l'aspect joyeux dans la croix elle-même de Jésus Christ. Dans la première prière eucharistique d'autrefois, en liturgie latine, on parlait de la passion bienheureuse «Beata Passio». Vous avez la passion bienheureuse de Jésus Christ. Ce qui montre que dans la croix il y a déjà la victoire qui est manifestée. Dans l'iconographie orientale, vous avez le «Christus Victor», le crucifié dans la gloire. Donc l'aspect victoire est à partir de la croix. Il ne faut donc pas dissocier croix et victoire, croix et résurrection. Il m'intéresse de montrer comment dans la lutte que Jésus mène contre la mort, il nous entraîne déjà dans la victoire.

Q. 3. *Pouvez-vous me donner un exemple de «la symbolique de Dieu»?* (Voyez: Ma foi d'Africain, p. 72.)

R. 3. Ce que j'ai retrouvé surtout chez les Kirdi c'est Dieu comme celui qui est au-delà de tout. Celui dont on ne peut pas faire le tour — on ne peut pas faire le tour de Dieu — on ne peut pas l'embrasser, on ne peut pas le saisir, c'est à dire il est l'Insaisissable. Il est tellement grand. L'image traditionnelle que j'ai trouvée chez les Kirdi est celle de l'illimité. Il est partout, partout. Ce qu'on trouve c'est la pierre, la pierre de Dieu. On a l'idée qu'il y a un endroit consacré à Dieu. On Lui fait une pierre, on plante une pierre. Cet endroit est la terre de

Dieu, c'est le lieu qui est réservé, consacré à Dieu. Dieu est partout. Par contre le soleil est comme le symbole de Dieu, parce que le soleil est assimilé au symbole de la vie. On présente les enfants au soleil. Quand l'enfant est né on le sort dehors, la tête tournée vers le soleil, pour le présenter à Dieu. J'ai décrit cette cérémonie-là pour les chrétiens en disant que le vrai soleil est maintenant Jésus, le soleil de justice. Donc le soleil comme symbole, comme symbole de Dieu, c'est une image très forte. Pendant cette cérémonie réellement «On vient consacrer l'enfant à Dieu». Elle reste maintenant une vieille image.

L'absence de Dieu est un mythe à partir d'un mythe d'origine qui montre le drame qu'il y a eu entre Dieu et les hommes au début. Cela ne veut pas dire que Dieu est totalement inexistant; il n'est pas tout à fait absent. C'est un absent-présent. Il est absent en même temps qu'il est présent. Je crois que l'absence dont parle le mythe, c'est pour marquer la distance entre Dieu et l'homme. Quand l'homme en prend conscience, alors à ce moment-là il parle d'une absence. Cette absence n'est pas une disparition totale de Dieu parce que Dieu ne laisse pas le monde actuellement à lui-même. Donc je pense que l'absence de Dieu dont parle la pensée Kirdi ou le mythe Kirdi exprime le moment où l'homme prend conscience de la distance qui le sépare de Dieu. Cela ne veut pas dire que Dieu disparaît. En réalité Dieu reste présent dans la vie parce qu'il n'y a rien qui puisse exister sans Lui et que le Kirdi reconnaît que Dieu est en même temps la source de la vie. On ne peut pas laisser le monde comme ça sans Lui. La présence de Dieu se manifeste à travers les événements, à travers les situations fondamentales. Par conséquent on veut surtout insister sur l'aspect «transcendance» de Dieu. Cette transcendance de Dieu s'accompagne en même temps de l'immanence de Dieu. C'est pour cela qu'on revient toujours à Dieu comme source de la vie. Voilà pourquoi à la naissance d'un enfant on va se tourner vers Dieu pour le Lui consacrer parce qu'il est la source de la vie. L'image du soleil justement marque ainsi le lien entre l'homme et Celui qui est comme le père de la vie. En même temps comme un aspect de la symbolique de Dieu, il y a des pierres. Une pierre marque le lieu où on vient offrir le sacrifice à Dieu. Chez les Kirdi devant la maison, il y a une pierre qu'on plante. On l'appelle la pierre de Dieu pour offrir le sacrifice à Dieu seul. Comme sur un autel, sur cette pierre on vient verser de la bière en disant: «Mon Dieu ce sacrifice est pour toi». C'est l'endroit où on vient faire cela. C'est également un signe de la présence de Dieu, là où on fait le sacrifice parce qu'on sait que Dieu vient prendre l'âme du sacrifice.

L'Évangile comme message est totalement nouveau. D'abord l'incarnation vient tout-à-fait combler l'attente que les gens ont d'un Dieu qui soit présent au monde. Je crois que l'incarnation vient répondre à ce désir que l'homme a de vivre en communication avec Dieu étroitement. C'est alors une nouveauté radicale que d'apprendre que Dieu est revenu. Quand nous disons que Dieu est venu, voilà que cela est très très nouveau. Dieu parle de nouveau parce que souvent quand j'ai été à la montagne pour parler aux gens, pour dire que je venais annoncer l'Évangile,

je disais: «Je viens apporter la parole de Dieu». C'était une façon très simple pour moi de dire que je venais évangéliser. Pourtant pour les vieux, dire que quelqu'un vient apporter la parole de Dieu c'était une nouveauté parce qu'on savait que Dieu ne parlait plus, depuis qu'Il était parti. Alors quand on vient dire la parole de Dieu, cela change complètement la situation de l'homme. Il est de nouveau en contact avec un Dieu qui lui parle. C'est pour cela que les chrétiens de chez nous au Cameroun se reconnaissent comme ceux qui suivent la parole de Dieu. Ce sont des gens qui sont rassemblés par la parole de Dieu. Cela est très important. C'est la référence à la parole de Dieu, c'est une nouveauté qui fait partie de la nouveauté du christianisme pour les gens, de savoir que Dieu leur parle.

Evidemment c'est la parole définitive de Dieu en Jésus Christ. Je pense quand même qu'il s'agit du Nouveau Testament ou de l'Ancien Testament. C'est donc une grande nouveauté pour les Kirdi d'apprendre que Dieu parle maintenant: une nouveauté radicale. C'est la parole dans sa totalité, dans son unité: ancien et nouveau testament.

La tradition en est restée à un Dieu qui s'est tu, au silence de Dieu. Quand on vient leur parler de la révélation c'est comme s'il y avait un nouveau commencement pour eux. Tout recommence en quelque sorte entre Dieu et l'homme à partir de la révélation.

Q. 4. *Avez-vous beaucoup appris des théologiens de l'Amérique latine?*

R. 4. Je n'ai pas beaucoup lu la théologie latino-américaine. J'ai peu lu. J'ai découvert Gutiérrez très tard, c'est dans les années 80, que j'ai lu des articles de Gutiérrez. Quand j'ai écrit «L'Église, le monde noir et le Concile,» j'étais déjà préoccupé par l'idée de libération; mais je n'ai pas fait de travail systématique.

Comment cette idée de la libération vous est venue?

Comment m'est venue cette idée? C'est moi même, je voyais les choses comme ça quand j'ai essayé d'analyser la situation de l'Afrique à la lumière de ce que les écrivains de la négritude avaient dit, Césaire, Senghor et Diop. J'ai compris qu'il y avait un problème qui se posait à l'Afrique et que nous cherchions comment le Christianisme pouvait contribuer à cette libération totale de l'homme. Donc je n'avais jamais lu; je venais d'arriver à Strasbourg quand j'ai écrit l'article sur «L'Église, le monde noir et le Concile». J'étais en première année de théologie. Je n'avais pas encore ma licence. J'étais encore étudiant. En ce moment là j'avais écrit dans le journal des étudiants Catholiques africains qui s'appelait «Tam-tam» un article sur «L'Église à la rencontre du Tiers Monde».

J'avais participé à une session de formation de diacres, de catéchistes, aussi de prêtres. Le thème de la session portait sur l'Exode. Alors là je m'intéressais à la façon dont l'Exode pouvait être quelque chose de très parlant pour l'africain.

C'est comme ça que je venais à la lecture du livre de l'Exode à ce point de vue là. Comme seule référence, j'avais Moltmann. Je ne savais pas si en Amérique latine on s'était intéressé à l'Exode. Ce qui m'intéressait, c'est que les negro spirituals font beaucoup référence à Moïse. Donc c'est la référence que j'avais dans ma tête en souvenir de ce que j'avais chanté moi-même quand j'étais petit, c'étaient les negro spirituals et donc le récit de l'Exode, au temps de l'esclavage. Également je m'étais intéressé au messianisme africain et je m'étais rendu compte également de la place que l'Exode occupait dans la théologie populaire du mouvement messianique: toujours la figure de Moïse comme libérateur. C'est donc cela qui m'a été un peu comme le cadre de référence pour cette lecture de l'Exode que je voulais systématiser ici dans mon travail. Surtout j'avais comme but objectif en pastorale de chercher comment faire un travail d'évangélisation en référence à l'Exode. Chaque année, je prenais un thème pour toute l'année. Tout le travail pastoral portait sur ce thème là. Quand je travaillais en 80 sur l'Exode, j'avais pris comme thème «Le Dieu de l'Exode». Je n'ai découvert quelques articles de Gutiérrez que autour des années 80, et même un article de *Concilium* sur les pauvres dans l'Église, en 79 après Puebla. Donc, quand j'ai découvert cela, j'ai compris qu'il y avait beaucoup de choses en commun, par exemple la perspective d'en bas. Ça c'est une chose que moi j'avais essayé de souligner à partir des Kirdi. C'est quand j'ai lu que j'ai compris qu'eux aussi avaient fait ce choix d'une perspective d'en bas, le monde en bas.

Moi, je suis parti de l'Afrique du village, qui est l'Afrique d'en bas, des gens sans importance. Dans mon livre *Ma foi* je parle des gens sans importance. Donc c'est «ce bas» qui intéressait, comme on le rencontre dans la théologie latino-américaine. J'ai connu Dusserl, c'est un historien de l'Amérique latine; nous avons travaillé ensemble à Paris, au moment d'un colloque sur la théologie des cultures. Nous nous sommes retrouvés dans la même table ronde. Le texte du colloque a été publié par l'Édition du Cerf. D'ailleurs j'ai repris en partie ce que j'avais dit là-dedans à propos de l'identité d'une théologie africaine, dans *Ma foi*. Mais autrement les contacts avec les théologiens américains avaient été très limités. Ça m'a manqué.

Ma réflexion doit beaucoup à la jeunesse étudiante chrétienne parce que j'ai été invité à réfléchir avec le mouvement qu'on appelle JEC. C'est la jeunesse étudiante chrétienne aussi bien au niveau africain qu'au niveau international. Cette petite brochure: «De la charité à la libération», c'est un texte que j'avais donné pour la Jeunesse Pan Africaine qui devait se retrouver à Montréal lors d'un congrès mondial de la Jeunesse Etudiante Catholique Africaine. A cette époque la JEC travaillait autour du thème «option pour les pauvres et les opprimés». Ils m'avaient invité pour réfléchir avec eux dans la perspective de leur thème. Cela m'a donné l'occasion de réfléchir encore davantage pour essayer d'apporter aux jeunes chrétiens d'Afrique la contribution du théologien à partir de ce que je vivais justement parmi les paysans. Cela a été un événement important pour

l'approfondissement de ma propre réflexion théologique. Nous nous sommes rencontrés au Cameroun plusieurs fois au niveau pan-africain. Nous nous sommes rencontrés à Yaoundé et en même temps nous nous sommes rencontrés en Europe, en Belgique, pour la préparation du Conseil Mondial de la Jeunesse qui devait se tenir au Canada à Montréal. Pendant ces longues années-là j'ai été un peu comme leur père spirituel sur le plan théologique. Je les ai accompagnés dans leurs réflexions qui portaient sur la solidarité entre les unions et leurs peuples.

Q. 5. Si nous allons directement à l'écriture et nous la lisons à la lumière de la situation africaine, quelle importance a la tradition de l'Église?

R. 5. Ça c'est un gros problème que vous posez parce que je considère qu'il y a la tradition et les traditions. Je reprends là un peu une terminologie du père Congar; voilà. Alors à cet égard je pense que ce qui est normatif pour l'Église de manière générale c'est sa référence à l'écriture, donc au message biblique. C'est ça qui est normatif. C'est évident que l'Église est la lectrice autorisée de la Bible et de cette manière-là, il y a toute une tradition qui fait partie de sa lecture de l'écriture. Alors je pense que pour l'africain il vaut mieux d'abord entrer dans un rapport direct avec l'écriture parce que je dis souvent que nous devons apprendre à lire la Bible avec les yeux des africains; parce que ce que nous trouvons dans la tradition, c'est une lecture parmi d'autres et je pense que cette lecture n'est pas du tout une lecture unique. Ce n'est pas une lecture définitive. La Bible est toujours un livre nouveau à découvrir et je pense que ce qui a été fait par les chrétiens depuis 2000 ans, c'est une lecture qui a besoin d'être réadaptée continuellement. Alors moi je pense que au lieu de partir d'une lecture qui a besoin d'être réinterprétée en fonction des situations actuelles, il vaut mieux aller à la source.

Mais on ne peut pas oublier le travail de l'Esprit dans l'Église entière pendant 2000 ans.

Je sais bien que nous ne pourrions pas négliger, ignorer le travail de l'Esprit qui guide l'Église dans sa lecture de la Bible, mais je me dis que toute lecture de la Bible est toujours en fonction des questions du temps et des problèmes que les situations historiques posent à la foi chrétienne. De ce point de vue je me dis qu'aujourd'hui les chrétiens sont confrontés à d'autres situations. Par conséquent, ce qui importe à mon sens, à mon avis, c'est de voir comment l'Esprit peut nous amener maintenant à répondre aux questions que le temps nous pose, compte tenu de nos situations spécifiques, et je ne crois pas du tout que la façon dont les Pères de l'Église ont eu à réagir à leur société soit quelque chose qui peut, moi, m'aider à relire mes problèmes aujourd'hui de même que, même en Europe, dans la modernité contemporaine les solutions trouvées hier par les Pères de l'Église répondaient aux besoins du temps. Aujourd'hui on est confronté à d'autres

problèmes et si, bien sûr, on ne peut pas totalement ignorer l'apport des Pères de l'Église pour les chrétiens d'autrefois, je pense qu'il faut renouveler la compréhension de la Bible en tenant compte des nouveaux défis auxquels la foi est confrontée aujourd'hui. Pour moi c'est un problème d'interprétation ce qui fait que je voudrais davantage privilégier mon rapport à Jésus qui me pose la question: «Pour toi qui suis-je?» Parce que je me dis, la réponse à cette question a été donnée par Pierre, bien sûr, et tous les chrétiens sont confrontés à la même question; mais la façon dont l'Église en Occident lors de sa lecture de la Bible face aux situations a eu à répondre à la question de Jésus, ce n'est pas forcément la réponse qui sera la mienne parce que je me dis, le Christ m'interroge, me pose une question à partir de ma propre situation aujourd'hui. C'est pour ça que hier je disais que pendant très longtemps la préoccupation en Occident était de voir comment articuler foi et raison. Moi, je pense que c'est un problème typiquement occidental. Tout s'est posé au moment où Saint Thomas et les autres théologiens ont été confrontés à la pensée d'Aristote de même que des gens comme Teilhard de Chardin essayaient de voir comment faire une synthèse entre la foi et je dirais la science au vingtième siècle.

Mais pour Augustin, en Afrique du Nord, son problème n'était pas seulement la foi et la raison.

Il est certain que la réflexion faite par les Pères de l'Église peut nous servir énormément, mais je dis que ce travail fait par Augustin je dois encore le repenser en fonction de ma situation d'aujourd'hui parce que je ne prendrai jamais tel quel ce que Saint Augustin a dit, ou Léon le Grand, ou Saint Basile, ou Saint Jean Chrysostome. Il faudra que je me réapproprie cela. Cela suppose par conséquent tout un effort de compréhension et d'interprétation en tenant compte de ma propre situation. Je dis c'est une lecture seconde. Je considère la tradition comme une lecture seconde et de ce point de vue il y a toujours là un apport. Je suis intéressé de savoir comment eux à leur époque et dans leur situation ont eu à réagir à des problèmes qui peuvent être peut-être semblables aux miens et dans ce sens là ce qu'ils ont eu à dire peut m'aider, peut m'inspirer, peut même me servir de guide. Mais dans tous les cas je serais amené à être confronté directement à celui qui me pose la question: «Pour vous qui suis-je?» Je ne pense pas qu'il faille mettre sur le même plan la parole de Dieu et la réflexion de l'Église au cours des siècles. Seule est révélée la parole de Dieu, même si l'Esprit travaille quand l'Église lit la Bible. Ce travail en tant que tel n'est pas la révélation. Donc je voudrais bien qu'on marque la différence entre ce qui est parole de Dieu et ce qui est lecture de l'Église, c'est à dire, qui est parole de l'Église. Et les deux ne se confondent pas.

C'est pour cela que la tradition c'est la théologie chrétienne au cours de l'histoire, face à des situations tout à fait particulières. Et moi, quand je parle de révélation, je parle de Dieu qui intervient dans l'histoire. Dieu qui se révèle dans

l'histoire et c'est la raison pour laquelle je ne suis pas le seul. Beaucoup de théologiens du Tiers Monde disons, vont directement à la Bible. C'est rare que nous nous référions aux Pères de l'Église. Je peux le faire lorsque je prêche mais si on entend faire du travail théologique, je suis beaucoup plus intéressé de savoir comment il faut comprendre aujourd'hui l'Évangile de Jésus Christ dans ma situation. Evidemment c'est une des raisons pour lesquelles la théologie traditionnelle peut nous suspecter plus ou moins de vouloir nous écarter un peu de la tradition parce que on ne se situe pas dans la mouvance de lectures de la parole de Dieu faites par l'Église au cours de son histoire. Mais je pense qu'il y a un choix herméneutique à faire qui repose sur la priorité de la parole révélée et sa normativité, si vous voulez.

APPENDIX II

Interview with Aloysius Pieris¹

Question 1. *Can we think of dhamma as a Buddhist equivalent of revelation — that is, in the sense of pre-existent truth?*

Reply 1. The moment you speak about «Buddhist» you have to be very careful. The Theravāda (Southern) Buddhist is very particular about his identity as a non-theist. So the word revelation — they resist. The word revelation reminds them of *shruti* which means hearing — the word from somewhere coming to them. The Buddhist insists that it is not called divine revelation — for revelation implies a personal theism. This question comes up too with salvation — as long as there is not a saviour. In Sinhalese there is a word for salvation called *gelavēma* and a word for liberation called *vimukthi*. We always use the word liberation — *vimukthi* — because that is found in the Buddhist texts. The word *gelavēma* for salvation is a typically Christian term. There is a tendency to say: «Don't co-opt us with your categories».

So long as that idea is not there we can think of *dhamma* as the eternal truth which is available and which was pre-existent. It is very clearly told that the various Buddhas can discover it. They don't invent it. There are two kinds of Buddhas. One is the universal Buddha because he makes disciples. He creates a community. The others who discover the truth are called individual Buddhas. So in that sense you can consider *dhamma* as revelation. You might be helped by Ross Carter's book. He follows Wilhelm Geiger closely. He [Carter] gives an analysis of what *dhamma* is and how it is homologous to *logos*. Basically *dhamma* is something non-personal, discovered — the following of which is to receive salvation.

¹ With Philip Gibbs, at Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 7 September 1992

Q. 2. *To what degree is the revelation of the religiousness of the Asian poor a new revelation, or the recovery of an old revelation?*

R. 2. This is the whole question of cosmic religiosity — the religiosity of the poor. It always existed but was downgraded, firstly because of the way the metacosmic religions attracted the attention of most theologians; secondly, because of anthropologists who gave it a pejorative connotation by calling it animism, primitive religion, and also popular religion as opposed to religion that is rational; thirdly because Marxists in their analysis reduced everything to this type of religion. Anthropologists like Gael Ombret and others have shown that it is either the tribal religions or the cosmic side of the religious spectrum that was involved in revolutionary transformations that took place in Asia — like for example — all the Chinese revolutions were in the hands of the cosmic side of it. Because of their this-worldly spirituality, once they realise the religious motivation for a change, they would do it. So in that sense the affirmation of cosmic change required, is more in their religion. So there is the rediscovery of popular religiosity and the need to have a hermeneutics of the metacosmic religious texts in the light of popular religiosity. For instance, here in Buddhism, the logical positivists and the rationalist school, which were afraid to call Buddhism a religion, normally looked down on popular Buddhism as a deviation, and tried to bring out the religion of the «texts» as the ideal religion. There are two mistakes here. If you read the scriptures you see already Buddha allowing gods and cosmic forces to be appeased for needs. When you are living in this world you have these needs and so cosmic religiosity was allowed as something legitimate. So the idea that in the texts textual religion is metacosmic and the other religions are cosmic didn't exist. Already in the Buddhist texts you have both. That is why Buddhism travelled everywhere — it was so easy to enter into the cosmic religiosity. The point is that religiosity has developed certain techniques — it is bothered about this world. So when people are organised, the cosmic religiosity helps. In that sense, what we are advocating is that scriptural religions — the metacosmic religions — when they understand their texts, they should have cosmic religiosity not as something to be thrown out according to their hermeneutics, but something to be the source of hermeneutics of their texts. That is something new.

In my Von Hugel lecture in Cambridge I gave an example where Gabriel Dietrich takes the Virgin Birth.² I said in my lecture that the pastoral magisterium is carnally involved in this question, defending the virginity of Mary. And theologians — the academic magisterium — is carnally involved in trying to show

² Pieris' Theape Wescott lectures, delivered at the University of Cambridge, England, October 1982, have unfortunately never been published.

that it didn't exist or that it doesn't matter. Whereas the magisterium of the poor — they say: «At last there is a God who can do away with these demanding brutal men». These Indian women whose body and sexuality is under the domination of males found it liberating. That is not a carnal interpretation but a liberative interpretation. «These brutes, this domination is not necessary!» As I said in my lecture, this is the opposite of Mary Daly, who says that this is the rape by God and an unwanted pregnancy. See the way the intellectuals see it and how in their context the women saw it! That is the reading of the text in a story-telling culture. They saw the story and saw the message of the story. They saw immediately the symbolic value — and what a liberation!

There is a way of reading the texts — the reader meaning — like in the basic communities — fundamentally, allowing people to read. Christians said that the Bible was written for them and meant for them. In the other religions like Hinduism and Buddhism where there is a highly intellectual people and a spiritual elite that wrote, there is a need for a hermeneutic. It is more tricky than with the Bible — all the *jātaka* stories — the past lives of the Buddha, and the popular catechism. If you happen to be here on a *Vesak* day — a beautiful feast for the Buddhists — you will see *pendols* all illuminated where the past lives of the Buddha are recited. In the *pendols* one of the 550 lives of the Buddha is shown — his human struggle for perfection. Many say these lands have remained Buddhist because of these popular stories and they form part of the scripture — that part of the scripture which is the cosmic religiosity. It is the most powerful catechetical model that we have today — the *jātaka* stories. Even in the national drama, the most successful have been drama versions of the *jātaka* stories — the past lives of the Buddha. They have something humanistic and liberative that touches the people. I know a friend, Kuliyaipitiye Pranandu, who with Johan Devananda of Devasarana, started the Liberative *Dhamma* Centre. One of the things he did was to see the social potential of the *jātaka* stories. In that sense it is a revelation and that is where, for me, the biblical religion sort of exposes — see my paper «Does Christ have a place in Asia» referring to Minjung theology — how the Bible evoked in the poor their past liberative traditions — which are cosmic. It came out in a Christian way because the Bible evoked the cosmic liberative religiosity. So in that sense with this hermeneutics it is a revelation and we are discovering it, despite all the theological and anthropological interpretations — not to romanticise — they have their ritualisms — but within that they have this potential.

Q. 3. Could you give me an example of a non-Christian interpretation of Christian revelation or of non-Christians retelling the story of Jesus?

R. 3. When a Buddhist started writing a drama of the passion and one on the birth story, he discovered an appropriate term which would not be applied to Buddha but would clearly designate Christ who liberates. It comes from the

mythology of *taraka* and the child and so on. I feel that's what I do here — asking non-Christians to tell us who Christ is. There is a monk who is busy with the struggle for liberation-humanism, and I asked him to interpret Christ. In the TV room there is a painting with the theme: «Why this waste of innocent blood»³. In the picture the wine is flowing away and the apostles are refusing to drink. «Why do you want to give your blood? You are innocent and why should you be killed?» It was this problem when so many Tamils were killed in 1983. The monk was shocked by it. It was his interpretation of Christ. He is asking Christ: «Why?» He is making the apostles in the picture refuse to accept. That was his problem. Why should Christ die for us? Why should these people die for us? This is for him the problem of Christ and the problem of the situation in the country. It is interesting that he saw it through Christ.

Our Christian identity is not easy to find. In a basic human community we lose our identity in a common trust. Until then we don't find it. But in the finding process, the non-Christian, the other, has a way of saying: «That we have, that we have, but that is something new!» I still feel that the Beatitudes form the common identity of all religions. We lose our identity by being one in the community and the struggles and so on, and then we say, well, you had it before us. You have been teaching that for centuries, whether Jesus Christ came or not.

Our identity gets lost in certain things that we have gathered culturally over the years. For example we think that our identity is the Trinity with Father, Son and holy Spirit. If we say this is our identity, then our identity must mean something to them, otherwise it is subculture. It is in the basic human community that we lose ourselves in the common trust, in the Beatitudes and the struggle for the cross, that suddenly we realise what is unique to us. I spoke about the covenant between God and the oppressed. That is precisely what the new evangelisation does not stress because that is liberation theology. It is diluted. Yet when you work in a basic human community you are told: «All that you are trying to do you are duplicating — we have it. If you want to have it with us, fine, but what is unique and meaningful to us anew is precisely this: this new concept of God and this new understanding of Jesus' humanity». This has come out again and again in my seminars. When they hear this they say: «This is liberating! There is a God!» To say that it is the Ultimate Reality that reveals itself is a difficult step but it comes; for instance, in the case of the *Pattini-devu* cult where you have these female goddesses. In Colombo there is a place and people come and say: «Please do something!» If they were guilty they would not come because *Kaliyamma* knows if you have been unjust. If you are innocent there is one who will not let you suffer — again cosmic religiosity and interestingly a woman.

³ The painting is described and explained in Pieris' paper, «Inculturation in Asia» (1994b) 68-69.

The Buddhist says: «If there is a God then this kind of God. We don't have to believe it. That's your identity. That is what makes you what you are. We don't have it». If you say God, being, existence and so on, they will say: «This is something we are denying, but this kind of concept — in our cosmic religiosity in Buddhism, there is the possibility of such a god concept — only you say that this God is the Ultimate Reality. That is what makes it different from our cosmic religiosity and from the god that Buddha denies». That doesn't come straight away, but after long discussions, prayer, worship and all that. These gods and goddesses are manifestations of the belief that Ultimate Reality — its presence is reflected in a just society. We are linked with the Ultimate Reality, not with cosmic power only. The cosmic power is also metacosmic. That for me is precisely the intuition that doesn't come out in *Redemptoris missio*.

Q. 4. «History» doesn't seem to figure much in your writings — at least it is not given prominence as with the Latin Americans. Does this mean it does not have much importance? Maybe it means a different view of history? Does it need to be linear or can we think of it as circular or a spiral?

R. 4. Cosmic and metacosmic religion in Asia, in the gnostic idiom, have a different approach to history and myth, which I hinted at in my christology. When something has happened somewhere, it is history. When what has happened has cosmic proportions, then it is story. It is not just: «Once upon a time there was Adam and Eve». Once and for all, in every man and every woman, everywhere, there is Adam and Eve — something that happens always, in history. In contrast to history *opposed* to myth — it is *raised to the power of* story or myth. Myth is when an historical event is so invested with universality. The incarnation of Jesus is a myth. It is not opposed to history — this history/myth opposition. It is like the theologians who take cyclic religion as opposed to biblical religion. That terminology is misleading. The same way, history and myth have to be redefined. History — historical events — have a way of coming out powerfully as myths. It is not *mythos* as opposed to history, but history raised to the power of. The historical event becomes so true, so real, so eventful, that it becomes universal truth. It happens everywhere. The story of the fall of human beings — is it history? Yes — it is something that happens constantly. But that happening constantly, that universality, is what we call myth.

The Latin Americans oppose history and myth. Myth is where history starts speaking, changing — where it has the capacity to universal appeal, for transforming — then history has become myth.

St. Paul uses the term *saecula saeculorum* for eternity — aeon after aeon. He is using a circular linear word. When you are dealing with these religions, too much of the linear, and the cyclic is very difficult. How do you get to the concept of eternity? When you speak to a Buddhist about eternity, for him eternity is *samsāra* — this vale of tears — that is eternal. *Nirvāna* is out of time. Therefore

the Aristotelian concept of time — a sort of an aspect as Saint Thomas calls it — is something of movement. If movement stops, time stops, therefore history is movement and history is time. I don't deny that. But the Buddhist concept is *paticcasamuppanna* — continuous co-origination of things. It is not unilinear. It is things happening together. It is more complex. Therefore with that perception, reality is seen as rising, becoming constantly, time-bound things (events) which suddenly speak beyond time. Therefore the conception of the world is a purely arbitrary thing. It is like on a cycle. You are moving in a unilinear way but [...]. If I have to say eternity in singalese, *sadha kaalika* means non-stop time, which is equal to *samsāra* — this vale of tears, this reincarnation, which is all suffering. So eternal-life both together means the opposite of what we mean because eternity is simply the historical movement of society's people cyclically, but moving, eternally. You have a conceptual problem here — and we have to think a little deeper as to how to handle history and cyclic time and so on.

Q. 5. *What about norms for truth? Is it simply: «By their fruits you will know them,» that is, praxis? Gutiérrez says that praxis is not the norma normans, and that ultimately we have to go back to revelation. But surely this would not apply in an interreligious setting?*

R. 5. Liberation is the ultimate norm. A very interesting Buddhist text is the *kālāma sutta*. It is misunderstood in the West as a charter for rationalism because the Buddha says: «Don't go by what your teacher says, don't go by scriptures». But people forget that he also says: «Don't go by logic and reason, but go by their fruits». The fruit is human liberation. Like the kingdom of God, you can give examples, but the kingdom of God is never defined. It's like this — it's like this. The Buddha said it is like going into the desert and finding an oasis and jumping into it and enjoying it. We know that there is nothing that the human mind has not grasped so well as liberation. It is the very basis on which we can live and talk and exist together. It is the very framework in which human beings are human beings — liberation. That which constitutes the very core of humanity is this freedom, interior joy, all that we yearn for secretly. In spelling it out we have a problem but when we receive it we know infallibly we have got it.

In one of my stories I quote Thich Nhat Hanh and Ananda Thera — two Buddhist monks at a conference.⁴ One said: put the man in order and the world too will be in order. Then Thich Nhat Hanh got up and said: «Wait a minute! Just putting a man in order doesn't automatically set things right. It must be a man who carries the world — a human being in a dynamic relationship with others — not simply the person in isolation». The individual versus social emancipation is our way of dichotomising. I'm always related. My personality is

⁴ Pieris tells the story in «Ideology and Religion» (1983g) *ATL*, 28.

my relatedness. So it is in my relatedness that I am liberated. What constitutes me is my relatedness. Here there is an important dimension of Buddhism. The word for the sinner, the blind person, the non-liberated person who doesn't realise liberation, is *puthatjja* in Sanskrit or *puthujjana* in Singhalese. *Puthujjana* means the individual person — people separately taken. The opposite is the noble person, the *āriya*, and normally there is the *āriya sangha* — the community of noble persons. There is here liberation linked with community. The word for the non-liberated person is translated into English as the «commoner». Actually it may have been the Singhalese who first coined that word because in Singhalese *puthujjana* becomes *podujjana*. The word *podu* becomes common man. So the English translation is the individualistic person, the one who is self-centered, with a separate existence as opposed to one who is related. One who is noble, who is liberated is always related. So the idea of individual liberation and social liberation is perhaps a way of pointing to two dimensions, but in reality my liberation is in my relatedness and therefore nobody is liberated until all are liberated. Even Jesus cannot be Christ until all are. Otherwise it is impossible for Jesus to be Christ. Jesus is Christ with us and he is not with the full fruits of the resurrection unless we are resurrected, and that is what we mean by the totality of Christ. Therefore liberation is not just Jesus and individuals but the whole totality. Even classical christology makes that distinction. It is community, the totality of being.

So liberation is a practical fruitful way of the revelation of truth. The truth reveals only in liberating us. Where we can go wrong is in taking truth in the Latin/Greek sense — *veritas/aletheia* and not as *emet* which is being true to, truthfulness, fidelity, being faithful to the covenant. It is *fidelitas* not *veritas*. Being «true to» rather than truth. It is not truth that will make you free, but it is your fidelity to this covenant, this natural desire for the poor not to be poor, which is the covenant — the power we name not to be poor, which is God. I have a feeling that when we use European languages, we get back to the Graeco/Latin abstractions.

Being faithful is being true to. Truth is revealed in liberation. Praxis reveals liberation as truth. Liberation is that which you know first. When the Buddha decided to go and sit under the tree and said: «I will realise it». His first postulation was that, what he did, he didn't know, but that liberation he wanted, whatever it was. He faithfully stuck to it and took all the measures necessary — faithfulness. He made an option for truth. I make an option for Jesus, even though I don't know where he is. This is where faith is and hope. If a person knows the whole truth he wouldn't look for it. As Thomas would say, *finis est primus in intentione ultimus in executione*. It is that which comes first and leads you right through.

Gutiérrez talks about a christofinalised history. Does that ring a bell for you?

I have trouble talking about the end of history. For me the new heaven and the new earth is not the end of history. It is history in a new mode. History cannot stop. It is not a still picture that comes in at the *parousia*. There is growth and discovery and a new light. It is a process of understanding and so on. It is not that suddenly you become still. That is the Greek model of contemplation — because praxis is finished now. Awareness and discernment are more Oriental and more biblical. If you use the *praxis/theoria* model then this *praxis* ends at the *parousia* and you have the final *theoria*. Whereas with the other process you are coming to a stage when you are all in God and God in all and that process continues — the continuous discovery of goodness and joy — like a picture you see every day and you never get exhausted, music that you hear but you never get tired, authentic aesthetics which doesn't exhaust you, rather renews you. The end of history is one of those clichés that has never been questioned theologically but is used by everybody. In my Bible class I teach that the new heaven and the new earth is a breakthrough and a new history. Just as the coming of Jesus brought a new history for those who really understood it, and enjoyed it: Mary, John the Baptist, these people, simple people, it is a new history. History didn't stop with the coming of Jesus. So at the last, it's not going to stop — a new dimension, it will go on, a movement of the cycle, going constantly, richer than just going like this [...]. See my article «Spirit Dimension of Change» where I say that every step we take in the cosmic dance is a leap towards ultimate death. I had a quotation from Galatians, where Paul talks about walking in step with the Spirit. Get into the rhythm. There is nothing unilinear. You can never go straight. It is a zig-zag. I believe in tangential energy and the radial energy of Teilhard de Chardin, and St Paul's two forces. Its like surfing, one force drags you and the other force takes you. In a group it is more than zig-zag, we dance. This is the movement. It is not a receding horizon. It is a continuous retasting — going back again cyclically, going deeper into it as you move forward. It is much more complex than the unilinear. To make too much of the linear and the cyclic would be to destroy the whole way that the cosmos/earth has been founded by God. God Himself dances in the universe.

Q. 6. *Do you see much point in talking about «signs of the times»?*

R. 6. In my talks in Singhalese I mention history and the «signs of the times» in a different way. A transcription of a text in Singhalese shows that the difference between classical Western hermeneutics — interpreting the Bible — trying to get the word out of the Bible, and what we are doing is interpreting what is happening around us with the help of the Bible — which is what liberation hermeneutics is. We are not studying a book for its own sake. That is studying literature. I can go to literature class for that. If I am seeking the

liberation of people I am not busy studying a book. I am discerning my awareness of God in my day-to-day life and history and things around me. You use the term «signs of the times». My word of discernment and my appeal to the hearing idiom rather than the seeing idiom as far as possible is precisely the idea that God speaks primarily in history, and the Bible is just a help because it is a record of how He spoke in history. So it is not a question of studying a book. Hermeneutics is interpreting God's word uttered in history. Just interpreting a book is not the hermeneutics we are interested in. Book is for life, not life for book. That is common to any liberation theology and I agree with that.

The classical definition is, «a critical reflection on faith praxis in the light of the word,» is it not?

When you use the expression: «Interpreting in the light of God's word» — that use of God's word is tricky if you identify God's word with scripture. That is what perhaps is turned upside down in liberation theology. God's word is what He speaks now. What is said to Moses and Abraham is a kind of a pattern of revelation. It is a school in which you just learn how to attune yourself to God in history. But you never stay in school all your life — you have to get out and live, that's where you meet God. Revelation now is liberation truth showing itself as liberation here and now, and scripture helps me in that — not only scripture — church history, sacraments and everything else too. Scripture has a sacramental, relative value. What matters is the word now addressed to me and the demands it makes on me and my fidelity.

Does scripture have a revealing function in terms of what is happening now?

That was not settled properly theologically. According to some historians of the Council, after *Dei verbum*, Paul VI made an attempt at this in his talk to the biblical theologians, but the question of actualising the word has not been settled. See Enzo Bianchi's article in Alberigo's book on the reception of Vatican II. He shows the stages and the problem of history. I think liberation theology gives the answer to the question that Bianchi raises, namely, God's purpose. God's will is revealed here and now in events now. I know it already as liberative and the more I get involved with it — that is fidelity — it gives me more and more liberation, and that revelation in action is revelation of the Word and the scriptures that help me as a kind of a pattern — as something you can look back to, and as a locus of pedagogy where you are trained in the art of God who speaks in history. But it doesn't exhaust all the possibilities of God speaking in history.

APPENDIX III

Interview with Gustavo Gutiérrez¹

Pregunta 1. *¿Quién fue el teólogo más importante para Ud. durante sus estudios en Francia? ¿Después de su regreso al Perú y antes de la publicación de La teología de la liberación, quién tuvo mayor influjo en Ud — Arguedas o Las Casas? ¿Cuándo empezó a ser importante para Ud. el pensamiento de Las Casas?*

Respuesta 1. Durante mis estudios en Francia, yo diría que el teólogo dominante era, más bien, el Padre Congar. Pero, claro, cuando uno cita un nombre da la impresión que los demás no contarán. Para mí hubo otras personas importantes también, ¿no es cierto? Chenu ciertamente, o los libros del Padre de Montcheuil, un jesuita que murió en la segunda guerra y, a nivel de exégesis, el Padre Albert Gelin y otras personas más. Pero, en fin, si hubiera que decir el nombre más importante, es ciertamente Congar; su teología era la de mayores repercusiones. Pero de Lubac, con quien yo trabajé durante tres años, tuvo también mucha importancia para mí, ¿no? También llegué a conocer la teología de Rahner, pero debo reconocer que menos. Y luego, en un paso que hice por Roma, tuve ocasión de trabajar a Karl Barth, el teólogo suizo-alemán que también fue muy influyente para mí.

Bueno, diría que, si la comparación es entre Arguedas y Las Casas, yo diría que yo había leído más a Arguedas que a Las Casas antes de *La teología de la liberación*. Ciertamente. Y es por eso que Las Casas no es citado en *La teología de la liberación*. Claro, mi interés por Las Casas viene muy poco después. Era un hombre que ya me era importante, pero no lo conocía todavía mucho cuando escribí *La teología de la liberación*. Pero muy a comienzo de la década de los 70 yo me comencé a interesar por Las Casas y comencé a leer sobre Las Casas, que es lo que he terminado ahora en este libro.

¹ Interview with Philip Gibbs, at the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, Lima, Peru, 10 June 1993

P. 2. *Para mí, el sufrimiento del inocente es un escándalo. En él veo sólo el silencio de Dios. ¿Es diferente en la experiencia del pueblo? ¿En la realidad de las «invasiones» en Lima, cómo experimenta el pueblo el don del amor de Dios? En su libro Hablar de Dios, Ud. pregunta: «¿Cómo hablar de Dios desde la experiencia del sufrimiento del inocente?» Mi pregunta es: ¿Qué lenguaje usa Dios ahora para hablar con nosotros?*

R. 2. Indudablemente, el sufrimiento del inocente, que metafísicamente también, de alguna manera, es la presencia del mal en el mundo, es la cuestión más difícil, diría yo, en un terreno filosófico y en un terreno teológico. Y creo que no tenemos en verdad una respuesta completa a ese desafío. Yo también estoy de acuerdo que es un escándalo. Es muy difícil realmente decir, [...] bueno, uno puede dar pequeñas explicaciones, ¿no? o importantes explicaciones — la libertad humana, en fin, es ciertamente importante. Hay también una explicación de una pedagogía divina [...] yo soy menos partidario de eso, ¿no? Pero yo diría que el pueblo pobre vive el sufrimiento no como una protesta frente a Dios; creo, más bien, que se siente ayudado, consolado por Dios en su sufrimiento. No falta la pregunta también, cuando sucede algo, una muerte joven por ejemplo, inesperada, terrible, no falta la pregunta del pobre que diga: «Bueno y ¿porqué? ¿Dónde está Dios que ha permitido una cosa así?» Pero, eso yo diría que no es una cosa que va contra la fe. La Biblia está llena de protestas contra Dios.

Pero la gratitud de que Ud. habla en este libro; el silencio [...]

Yo creo que en el libro de Job eso es muy importante. No es una respuesta al problema del sufrimiento, pero es una manera de enfocar el problema del sufrimiento. Yo diría que los pobres también sienten eso. Sienten ese amor gratuito de Dios. Yo no pretendo que la afirmación del amor gratuito resuelva el problema y explique por qué sufren los pobres, no. Pero sí, coloca el problema del sufrimiento de los pobres en un contexto que ayuda, de alguna manera. Yo creo que Job nos hace ver lo que es el mensaje central de la Biblia, que es la gratitud del amor de Dios. Yo creo que para hablar desde la experiencia del sufrimiento del inocente, [...] yo trato de decir en el libro de Job que necesitamos dos lenguajes: el lenguaje profético que denuncia las injusticias y el lenguaje de la contemplación, el lenguaje de la gratitud. Creo que no basta, para hablar de Dios a partir de la experiencia del pobre, no basta el lenguaje de la profecía o el lenguaje de la justicia. Creo que toda la reflexión sobre la justicia debe estar enmarcada, encuadrada en la gratitud del amor de Dios.

Eso es en el caso de Job. ¿Ud. ve eso también en la respuesta de los pobres aquí, esta respuesta de dos lenguajes?

Los términos «profético» y «gratuidad», para la gente son un lenguaje muy teológico — pero de una manera más cotidiana, yo diría que sí. Es decir, hay en ellos, en forma creciente, la convicción de que la injusticia social no es querida por Dios; que la pobreza, Dios no la quiere. No es todavía una conciencia general, pero son muchos los pobres que comienzan a ver que la pobreza en que viven no es una fatalidad, que no es su destino, sino que es producto de estructuras sociales, producto de personas humanas y, entonces, a mí me parece que comienza a haber una reacción frente a eso. Pero para mí me admira mucho también, a nivel popular, el sentido de la oración. Si uno va, por ejemplo, a las iglesias del centro de esta ciudad de Lima — y tú puedes hacer esa experiencia, anda a una iglesia del centro y tú verás que durante el día no hay misas, pero hay un montón de personas rezando, arrodilladas o sentadas en una banca rezando. Hay un sentido de oración muy grande. Muchas veces esa oración seguramente es pedir, van a pedirle a Dios alguna cosa, es muy posible, pero hay un sentido de la oración que una sociedad más secularizada no tiene. Que esto sea mejor o peor, yo no quiero entrar ahora en eso. Es una realidad, sin embargo ¿no? Además mi reflexión sobre el libro de Job es una reflexión sobre la Biblia — sobre Job. En Job hay dos lenguajes. Mi libro es válido, si es que en Job hay dos lenguajes. Después de eso yo puedo ver qué cosa hay en mi pueblo, ¿no es verdad? Pero la teología reflexiona también sobre la revelación. Y me parece que los dos lenguajes están allí.

P. 3. ¿Piensa Ud. que ha habido un desarrollo en la relación: inculturación-liberación? Por ejemplo, veo el trabajo de Diego Irarrázaval el cual habla de la riqueza de la religiosidad popular como fuente de resistencia y crítica. Pienso que él vea la cultura como un lugar de revelación, mientras me parece que Ud. incluye la cultura de los indígenas dentro de la categoría de los pobres, y por tanto, la revelación a través de la liberación de los pobres. ¿Son dos puntos de vista diferentes?

R. 3. Yo creo que el evangelio necesita siempre encarnarse en una cultura, ¿no es verdad? Ahora llamamos esto «inculturación». La palabra es nueva, pero la realidad es antigua. Todo el evangelio siempre es encarnado en categorías culturales, en costumbres, en categorías mentales también. Cuando decimos que en el caso del pan, ¿no es cierto? que se convierte en el cuerpo de Cristo [...] cambia la substancia, no cambian los accidentes, eso es una inculturación. En este caso en la filosofía aristotélica. Pero eso es una cosa muy vieja. No sé que cosa quiere decir que la cultura sea un lugar de revelación. Es decir, en el sentido amplio, la historia es siempre un lugar de revelación. Ahora, depende lo que uno entienda por revelación. Hay una manera estricta de ver la revelación cuando se

dice que la revelación termina con el último escrito, cronológicamente hablando, de la Biblia. Es una manera de ver. En una manera mas amplia — la historia siempre es un lugar de revelación y la cultura no es sino un aspecto de la historia. Quiero decir que una lucha social también es histórica y que puede ser lugar de revelación — no solamente la cultura. Qué sé yo, por ejemplo, un personaje como Mons. Romero es un lugar de revelación. Cultura, bueno, su cultura no era indígena ¿no? pero es un lugar de revelación. En un sentido amplio, la historia nos revela la palabra del Señor. En ese sentido no hay oposición entre lo que diga Diego [Irrarázaval] y lo que digo yo. Ahora, si él dijera — pero no lo dice — que sólo la cultura es un lugar de la revelación, pero que un hecho social no lo es, entonces sí habría oposición. Pero es toda la historia lo que es [lugar de revelación], y la cultura es una [expresión de ella]. Pero la cultura, como todo hecho social, es un hecho humano con ambigüedades. No todo lo de las culturas es bueno. Tampoco en las culturas indígenas. Los sacrificios humanos entre los Aztecas no eran buenos y formaban parte de su cultura. Las Casas defendió a los Aztecas, incluso defendió esta costumbre, mejor dicho, intentó comprender su por qué, pero nunca dijo que era buena la costumbre. Entonces, hablando de la cultura indígena, hay que quitarse todo tipo de romanticismo. En general, la gente occidental o los latino-americanos más occidentales o más blancos tienen la tendencia a ser muy románticos. Tienen un poco complejo de inferioridad. Y entonces, las culturas indígenas — «¡ah!, ¡qué belleza!» Yo soy mitad blanco, mitad indígena, no tengo necesidad de decir eso [...], no tengo complejos. Soy un mestizo. Hay muchas costumbres del pueblo que son buenas, y otras no. Yo creo que la cultura europea también es un lugar de revelación — aunque sea cultura de blancos, también es un lugar de revelación, y también es ambigua. De otra manera caemos en una especie de dicotomía, ¿no es cierto?, de maniqueísmo: hay los buenos por un lado, que son los pobres y los indios, y los malos, por el otro lado, que son los ricos y los blancos. Eso es demasiado sencillo y no corresponde a la realidad.

Pero el problema es la relación entre el mito y la historia.

Ciertamente la noción de historia que tienen los pueblos indios, que eran orales, y no de tradición escrita, además es muy distinta a la occidental, y hay que saberla comprender. Pero la Biblia también tiene muchos mitos, porque presenta un pueblo rural, sencillo que se expresa a través de eso que llamamos mitos. Y hoy día, yo creo que hay mejores categorías para comprender que mito no significa mentira, sino una manera de entender las cosas. Eso es muy rico en las culturas indígenas, indígenas de todo el mundo, además; no solamente las de América, también en otros lugares, en Africa, por ejemplo o en Nueva Guinea. Pero al tiempo es (un tema) ambiguo. No creer que la cultura humana tiene ambivalencias es pensar que hay personas que están libres del pecado. El pecado y la gracia es lo que atraviesa el corazón humano, tanto del indio, del negro,

como del blanco. Yo sé muy bien la diferencia que hay que hacer. Yo insisto tanto en teología de la liberación, en la masa de pobres frente a la masa de explotadores. Yo sé eso; pero nunca pienso que, por el hecho de ser pobres, todos los pobres son buenos. Yo no creo que hay que estar comprometido con los pobres porque los *pobres* son buenos. Hay que estar comprometido con los pobres porque *Dios* es bueno. Esa es la razón fundamental. Tú me has escuchado insistir en eso muchas veces. Eso para mí es capital. Lo otro es romanticismo.

P. 4. *¿La reflexión en las CEBs es una reflexión sobre la realidad a la luz de la revelación o una reflexión sobre la revelación a la luz de la experiencia de la fe? En mi poca experiencia en Bolivia y Perú, la reflexión en las comunidades no empieza desde la realidad, y cuando la intentan, les falta un método para analizar la realidad. ¿Cómo es en su parroquia? ¿Me puede señalar una comunidad para que yo pueda ir a participar en una de sus reuniones?*

R. 4. Bueno, en las comunidades cristianas se hace una reflexión teológica, normalmente a partir de la Biblia. No haría yo una oposición entre reflexión sobre la realidad a la luz de la revelación y la revelación a la luz de la experiencia de fe, porque creo que eso va junto, ¿no? Creo que es más una reflexión sobre la realidad, pero el evangelio, la Biblia, y la fe son muy importantes para eso, ¿no? O sea que se deben usar las dos cosas.

Pero normalmente empiezan en un texto de la Biblia. ¿Con cual método pueden llegar a la realidad?

No hay que imaginar cada reunión de una comunidad cristiana como empleando un método extraordinario. A las comunidades hay que verlas a lo largo de tres años. Hay que decir: «Oye, en tres años, ¿ustedes han visto la realidad?» — «Sí». «¿Se han confrontado con la fe?» — «Sí». «¿Han visto que deben hacer?» — «Sí». Suficiente. Pero en una reunión aislada, a veces hablan de otra cosa. Se reúnen y [...]. «Bueno, y ahora [...] yo estoy pensando que nosotros aquí en el barrio deberíamos hacer esto». — «¡No, yo no!!» [...] Y se acabó, se acabó la reunión [...]. Entonces, ¿dónde está el método? El método no es de cada reunión, es del conjunto. Si solamente hicieran eso, estaría mal. Pero también habrá una reunión en la que digan: «Bueno, en esta reunión vamos a conversar sobre un texto del último retiro, y yo tengo acá los apuntes». Y discuten toda la hora sobre el texto bíblico. ¿Comprendes? El método no es de cada hora o de dos horas de reunión, sino del conjunto de la vida de la comunidad. Nunca hay una manera particular de ver una comunidad para ver como funciona, no hay manera; tendrías que quedarte tres años.

Tengo solamente tres semanas! ¿Y la relación entre realidad? [...]

Una sola reunión no es suficiente, [...] porque hay gente que todavía no sabe ver bien, distraen la reunión, hay otros más maduros. No hay manera de estar en una reunión y ver «¡ah! — perfecto — realidad y fe». Eso no existe, esas son ideas que la gente se hace. Yo creo que hay una mitificación de las comunidades cristianas de base; algo así. Tú habrás oído también decir eso de las cien mil comunidades en Brasil. Nadie sabe cuántas son. ¿Quién ha dicho que hay cien mil en Brasil, si nadie sabe? ¿Tú crees que hay un registro de comunidades para saber cuántas son? Hay una mitificación, un poco ¿no? Lo importante es que exista la convicción de un grupo de cristianos que saben que tienen que vivir su fe en comunidad, que consulten sus problemas, que traten de ver cómo actúan frente a otras personas en el barrio, que traten de profundizar la Biblia. Pero todo eso se hace en un período muy largo. No se hace en cada reunión. Hay todo tipo de reuniones.

P. 5. *¿Cómo combina Ud. la vida académica y el trabajo pastoral?*

R. 5. Yo no sé cómo puedo combinar la vida académica y el trabajo pastoral. No tengo una síntesis. Mi trabajo es fundamentalmente pastoral y trato de trabajar intelectualmente cuando puedo. Felizmente tengo mucha capacidad de trabajo. Felizmente puedo trabajar muchas horas, y entonces, hasta ahora he podido seguir, ¿no? Yo no publico mis cursos porque yo no doy clases de teología en el Perú. Aquí en mi Iglesia yo nunca he sido profesor de teología; en la facultad de teología, nunca. Nunca me han aceptado como profesor. Entonces yo publico los temas que trabajo con grupos laicos o los que me interesan. Pero yo no doy un curso y luego lo publico, porque desgraciadamente no doy cursos de teología. Entonces, yo no tengo una fórmula para combinar las dos cosas, pero he tratado de hacerlo hasta ahora. El último libro me exigió mucho. Fue un trabajo muy grande, leer muchas cosas y ponerlas en claro, ¿no? [...]

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
Abbott	W.M. ABBOTT, ed., <i>The Documents of Vatican II</i>
Abp	Archbishop
ActRel	<i>Actualité religieuse</i>
AEcR	<i>The American Ecclesiastical Review</i>
AfER	<i>African Ecclesial Review</i>
ALat	<i>Annali Lateranesi</i>
AqJ	<i>Aquinas Journal</i>
AS	<i>Acta Synodalia</i>
ASS	<i>Acta Sanctae Sedis</i>
ATC	Asian Theological Conference
ATL	A. PIERIS, <i>An Asian Theology of Liberation</i> (1988)
<i>Aujourd'hui</i>	<i>Aujourd'hui des chrétiens</i>
Bd.	Band (volume)
Beber	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>Beber en su propio pozo</i> (1983)
Bp	Bishop
BTF	<i>Bangalore Theological Forum</i>
BThA	<i>Bulletin de théologie africaine</i>
CaC	<i>Christianity and Crisis</i>
<i>Calandrias</i>	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>Entre las calandrias</i> (1982 [1990])
Card.	Cardinal
CCA	Christian Conference of Asia
CEB	<i>comunidad eclesial de base</i>
CELAM	Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano
CEP	Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones
CEPAC	Episcopal Conference of the Pacific
CEvP	Congregation for Evangelisation of Peoples
<i>CeyCh</i>	<i>Ceylon Churchman</i>
cf.	confer
Ch	Chinese
chap.	chapter
<i>Christus</i>	<i>Christus</i> (Mexico)

CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations (London)
<i>CivCatt</i>	<i>La Civiltà Cattolica</i>
<i>CMind</i>	<i>Catholic Mind</i>
col(s).	column(s)
<i>Com.</i>	<i>Communio</i> (US)
<i>Conc.</i>	<i>Concilium</i>
<i>Courrier</i>	<i>Le Courrier de l'UNESCO</i>
<i>Cri</i>	J-M. ÉLA, <i>Le cri de l'homme africain</i> (1980)
<i>CrossCur</i>	<i>Cross Currents</i>
<i>CrSoc</i>	<i>Cristianismo y sociedad</i>
<i>CTC B.</i>	<i>CTC Bulletin</i> (Singapore)
CTI	International Theological Commission
CWF	Christian Workers' Fellowship
<i>DC</i>	<i>La Documentation Catholique</i>
<i>Dialog</i>	<i>Dialog. A Journal of Theology</i> (Minneapolis)
<i>Dialogue</i>	<i>Dialogue</i> (Colombo)
<i>Diario</i>	<i>Diario, La República</i> (Lima)
<i>DTF</i>	<i>Dictionary of Fundamental Theology</i> , ed. R. Latourelle – R. Fisichella
<i>DV</i>	Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, <i>Dei verbum</i>
<i>EAPR</i>	<i>East Asian Pastoral Review</i>
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
ed.	editor(s)
<i>EE</i>	<i>Estudios eclesiasticos</i>
<i>EnchVat</i>	<i>Enchiridion Vaticanum</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>The Ecumenical Review</i>
E.T.	English translation
<i>ETR</i>	<i>Etudes théologiques et religieuses</i>
FABC	Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences
FCBCO	Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania
<i>FD</i>	<i>Foi et développement</i>
Flannery	A. FLANNERY, ed., <i>Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents</i>
Flannery II	A. FLANNERY, ed., <i>Vatican II. More Postconciliar Documents</i>
fn.	footnote
<i>Foi</i>	J-M. ÉLA, <i>Ma foi d'Africain</i> (1985)
<i>Fuerza</i>	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>Fuerza histórica de los pobres</i> (1979)
gen. ed.	general editor
Gk	Greek
<i>Gr.</i>	<i>Gregorianum</i>
GS	Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, <i>Gaudium et spes</i>

<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Lanka Guardian</i> (Colombo)
Heb	Hebrew
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>Horiz.</i>	<i>Horizons</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>IlliffRev</i>	<i>The Illiff Review</i>
<i>Impact</i>	<i>Impact</i> (Manila)
<i>IMR</i>	<i>Indian Missiological Review</i>
<i>InFra</i>	<i>Inter Fratres</i>
<i>Inseg.P.VI</i>	<i>Insegnamenti di Paolo VI</i>
<i>IntC</i>	<i>Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary</i>
<i>IntD</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>Interp.</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>IRM</i>	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
<i>IThQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JEC	La jeunesse étudiante Chrétienne
JES	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JKTh</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für kontextuelle Theologien</i>
<i>Job</i>	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente. Una reflexión sobre el libro de Job</i> (1986)
<i>JTSA</i>	<i>Journal of Theology for Southern Africa</i>
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front)
LA	Latin America
<i>LADOC</i>	Latin American Documentation, Washington/Lima
<i>Las Casas</i>	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>En busca de los pobres de Jesucristo. El pensamiento de Bartolome de Las Casas</i> (1992)
<i>LegEc</i>	<i>Leges Ecclesiae</i>
<i>Lettre</i>	<i>La lettre</i> (Paris)
<i>Lettre C.</i>	<i>Lettre aux communautés</i>
<i>LG</i>	Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, <i>Lumen gentium</i>
<i>Liberación</i>	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>Teología de la liberación</i> (1971)
<i>Líneas</i>	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>Líneas pastorales de la iglesia en América Latina</i> (1968 [1970])
<i>Logos</i>	<i>Logos</i> (Colombo)
<i>LMW</i>	A. PIERIS, <i>Love Meets Wisdom</i> (1988)
Lt	Latin
<i>LV</i>	<i>Lumière et vie</i> (Lyon)
<i>MisA</i>	<i>Misión abierta</i>
<i>MisE</i>	<i>Misiones extranjerías</i> (Madrid)
<i>MisSF</i>	<i>Misión sin fronteras</i>
<i>MisSt</i>	<i>Mission Studies</i>
<i>Month</i>	<i>The Month</i>

<i>MundoN</i>	<i>Mundo Negro</i>
<i>MySal</i>	<i>Mysterium Salutis</i>
<i>NBl</i>	<i>New Blackfriars</i>
n.d.	no date
new. ed.	new edition
N.J.	New Jersey
<i>NJBC</i>	<i>New Jerome Biblical Commentary</i>
n(n).	number(s)
<i>NReTh</i>	<i>Nouvelle revue théologique</i>
n.s.	new series
N.T.	New (Second) Testament
<i>NThR</i>	<i>New Theology Review</i>
N.Y.	New York (State)
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen</i>
<i>NZM</i>	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft</i>
<i>OE</i>	Vatican II, Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, <i>Orientalium Ecclesiarum</i>
<i>OmTer</i>	<i>Omnis Terra</i>
o.s.	old series
O.T.	Old (First) Testament
<i>Outlook</i>	<i>Outlook (Colombo)</i>
p.	page
P.	<i>pregunta</i>
<i>Pac.</i>	<i>Pacifica</i>
<i>Páginas</i>	<i>Páginas</i>
<i>Páginas S.</i>	<i>Páginas Separata</i>
par(s)	paragraph(s)
PCID	Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
<i>PCThSA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America</i>
<i>P.Forum</i>	<i>Publik-Forum</i>
<i>PhTh</i>	<i>Philosophy & Theology</i>
<i>PO</i>	Vatican II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, <i>Presbyterorum ordinis</i>
<i>PolAf</i>	<i>Politique africaine</i>
<i>Power</i>	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>The Power of the Poor in History</i> (1979 [1983])
<i>ProD B.</i>	<i>Pro Dialogo, Bulletin</i>
<i>ProJ</i>	<i>Promotio iustitiae</i>
PUG	Pontifical Gregorian University
Q.	question
<i>QF</i>	<i>Les quatre fleuves</i>
<i>Qoholet</i>	<i>Qoholet (Tilburg)</i>
<i>Quehacer</i>	<i>Quehacer (Peru)</i>

R.	response/ <i>réponse</i>
RAT	<i>Revue africaine de théologie</i>
RdT	<i>Rassegna de teologia</i>
República	<i>La República</i> (Lima)
rev.	revised (by)
rev. ed.	revised edition
RevSR	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
RLAT	<i>Revista Latinoamericana de teología</i>
RSPhTh	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
Sat B.	<i>Satyodaya Bulletin</i>
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SECAM	Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
SEDEC B.	<i>SEDEC Bulletin</i> (Colombo)
SEDOS	Servizio di documentazione e studi (Rome)
SEDOS B.	<i>SEDOS Bulletin</i>
SJTh	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SkT	Sanskrit
Snh	Sinhala
Sphead	<i>Spearhead</i> (Kenya)
StMiss	<i>Studia missionalia</i>
StTh	<i>Studia theologica</i>
SynEp. B.	<i>Synodus Episcoporum, Bulletin</i>
Tablet	<i>The Tablet</i> (London)
Tanner	N.P. TANNER, ed., <i>Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils</i>
Telema	<i>Telema</i> (Kinshasa)
ThD	<i>Theology Digest</i>
Th.Inv.	K. RAHNER, <i>Theological Investigations</i>
ThX	<i>Theologica Xaveriana</i>
TMs	Typed manuscript
TMsS	Typed manuscript, signed
TOS	<i>The Other Side</i>
trans.	translator/translated by
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TTam	<i>Tam-Tam</i> (Paris)
UR	Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, <i>Unitatis redintegratio</i>
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
Verdad	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>La verdad los hará libres</i> (1986)
VFTW	<i>Voices from the Third World</i>
Vida	G. GUTIÉRREZ, <i>El Dios de la vida</i> (1989)
VJTR	<i>Vidyajyoti</i>
vol(s).	volume(s)

<i>Way</i>	<i>The Way (London)</i>
<i>Way S.</i>	<i>The Way Supplement</i>
<i>WV</i>	<i>Worldview (New York)</i>
<i>ZMR</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft</i>

GLOSSARY

(Ch = Chinese; Esp = Spanish; Gk = Greek; Heb = Hebrew; K = Korean;
Lt = Latin; P = Pali; Por = Portuguese; Skt = Sanskrit; Snh = Sinhala)

- agapeic/agape*: (Gk) love
bodhi: (P) awakening, enlightenment
dabar: (Heb) word-event
dharma: (Skt) *dhamma* (Snh) Salvific Truth (see chap. IV, fn. 22)
dosa: (P) hatred, ill-will
gnostic/gnosis: (Gk) wisdom, salvific knowledge
han: (K) mixture of indignation, resignation, and anger
hodos: (Gk) way, mode of human or divine conduct
humanum: (Lt) ultimate horizon of our striving to be fully human
jātaka: (Snh) stories of the lives of the Buddha
karunā: (P) compassionate involvement
kenosis: (Gk) annihilation, self-denial (of Christ)
kerygma: (Gk) proclamation of the Word
laukika: (Snh) cosmic, worldly, secular
logos: (Gk) word, the explanatory word
lokottara: (Snh) transcendental, metacosmic
Mahāyāna: (Snh) refers to «Northern» Buddhism
mārga: (Skt) path
moha: (P) delusion, slowness of mind
navavidhalokuttaradhamma: (Snh) ninefold *dhamma* that transcends the world
nirvāna: (Skt) *nibbāna*: (P) extinction, internal liberation
palabre/palaver: (Esp/Por) In Cameroon, a way of mediating conflict in a community meeting
paññā: (P) gnosis, wisdom
paññācakkhu: (P) the Buddha's vision of *dhamma*
pariyatti: (P) study of doctrinal elaborations
paticcasamuppanna: (P) the co-originating of things
paṭipada: (P) following religion in its various expressions
pativedha: (P) penetrative insight into the ultimate Truth

- periti*: (Lt) (scholarly) experts
prajñā: (Skt) wisdom, salvific knowledge
rāga: (P) erotic, sensual, selfish, lust
samsāra: (P) worldly existence, suffering
sangha: (P) community, monastic community
soteriology: (from Gk *sōtēria*) study of salvation/redemption
tao: (Ch) road, way, Absolute
tathāgata: (P) one searching for *dhamma*
Theravāda: (Snh) «Way of the Elders». Refers to «Southern» Buddhism
Vāc: (Snh) the Word, speech, a sacred principle in the Veda
Verbum: (Lt) word
vimukthi: (Snh) liberation

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is divided into four main sections. The first three sections provide primary source bibliographical information on Jean-Marc Éla, Aloysius Pieris, and Gustavo Gutiérrez respectively. Interviews are listed at the end of each section. The fourth section, divided into two parts (church documents, and other books and articles), gives information on further works cited in the dissertation.

1. Jean-Marc Éla¹

- 1963a «L'Église, le monde noir et le Concile», in *Personnalité africaine et catholicisme*, Paris, 59-81.
- 1963b «Note sur le problème de l'oecuménisme en Afrique Noire», *TTam* 12, 48-52.
- 1963c «Le premier de tous les Conciles Oecuméniques (Actes XV, 1-35)», 2^e Prix du Concours Biblique des pays de langue française, Strasbourg.
- 1969 *Transcendance de Dieu et existence humaine selon Luther*. Essai d'introduction à la logique d'une théologie. Thèse pour le Doctorat d'État en théologie, Strasbourg.
- 1971 *La plume et la pioche*. Réflexion sur l'enseignement et la société dans le développement de l'Afrique Noire, Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- 1975 «Jésus Christ, Dieu des philosophes?», *RSPHTh* 49, 269-291.
- 1976 «Langage et temporalité», *RevSR* 50, 244-251.

¹ A note for the researcher. Some of Jean-Marc Éla's early works (for example, his two dissertations) are not catalogued under the name Éla, but under his father's name: Etoa. The entry entitled: «Le premier de tous les Conciles Oecuméniques (Actes XV, 1-35)» cannot be found in Strasbourg. It was a paper for the «Ligue Catholique de l'Évangile» in Lyon. A note at the beginning of his Italian book *Fede e liberazione in Africa*, says that the French original was: *Dire Dieu et libérer l'Afrique*. This is incorrect as there was no French original. The Italian book comprises a collection of papers delivered at conferences and some material prepared especially for the book itself.

- 1977a «Les ancêtres et la foi chrétienne. Une question africaine?», *Conc.* 122, 47-64; E.T., in *Liturgy and Cultural Religious Traditions*, ed. H. Schmidt – D. Power, New York; *Conc.* 102, 34-50. [Reprinted in *Foi*, chap. 2.]
- 1977b «Ministère ecclésial et problèmes des jeunes Églises», *Conc.* 126, 61-69; E.T., in *The Churches of Africa: Future Prospects*, ed. C. Geffré – B. Luneau, New York; *Conc.* 106, 45-52. [Reprinted in *Foi*, chap. 4.]
- 1978a «Ambiguïtés de la mission: le cas africain», *LV* 137, 17-32.
- 1978b «Le droit à la différence ou l'enjeu actuel des églises locales en Afrique noire», in *Civilisation noire et Église Catholique*, ed. L.P. Ngongo – al., Paris, 204-217. [Reprinted in *Cri*, chap. 7.]
- 1978c *Structures sociales traditionnelles et changements économiques chez les Montagnards du Nord-Cameroun. L'exemple de Tokombéré. Thèse pour le Doctorat de III^e Cycle, Université Paris V, René Descartes, Sciences Humaines-Sorbonne.*
- 1979 «Symbolique africaine et mystère chrétien», *QF* 10, 91-109. [Reprinted in *Foi*, chap. 3.]
- 1980 *Le cri de l'homme africain. Questions aux chrétiens et aux Églises d'Afrique*, Paris; E.T., *African Cry*, trans. R.R. Barr, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1986.
- 1981a «De l'assistance à la libération. Les tâches actuelles de l'Église en milieu africain», *FD* 83.4, Paris.
- 1981b *Voici le temps des héritiers*, Paris [in collaboration with R. Luneau].
- 1982a *L'Afrique des villages*, Paris.
- 1982b «La foi des pauvres en acte», Centre Leuret, Paris, 24 avril 1982. [Also in *Telega* 35 (1983) 45-72.]
- 1982c «Perspectives d'une mission au Nord-Cameroun», *Aujourd'hui* 34, 5-6.
- 1983a «Luttes pour la santé de l'homme et royaume de Dieu dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui», *BThA* 5.9, 65-84. [Reprinted in *Foi*, chap. 5.]
- 1983b «Paysans d'Afrique: peuple en marge ou en marche?», *Courrier* 306, 8-11.
- 1983c *La ville en Afrique noire*, Paris.
- 1984a «Avec les "damnés de la terre" apprendre à dire Dieu», *LettreC* 105, 50-55.
- 1984b «First colloquium of African and European theologians, Yaoundé – Cameroon, 4-11 April 1984 – General report» [in collaboration with S.E. Brown] *MisSt* 1, 57-59.
- 1984c *From Charity to Liberation*, CIIR, London.

- 1984d «Identité propre d'une théologie africaine», in *Théologie et choc des cultures*, ed. C. Geffré Paris, 23-54. [Reprinted in *Foi*, chap. 10 and conclusion.]
- 1984e «Le rôle des Églises dans la libération du continent africain», *BThA* 6.12, 281-302.
- 1984f «La théologie sous l'arbre», *Lettre* 314, 6-10. [From Éla's intervention at the colloquium «Théologie et choc des cultures» at the Institut Catholique de Paris, 27-29 January, 1982.]
- 1985 *Ma foi d'Africain*, Paris; E.T., *My Faith as an African*, trans. J. Pairman Brown – S. Perry, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988.
- 1986 *Fede e liberazione in Africa*, Assisi.
- 1989 *Cheikh Anta Diop ou l'honneur de penser*, Paris.
- 1990 *Quand l'État pénètre en brousse*, Paris.
- 1991 *Les villages de la périphérie de Yaoundé en agonie?.* Une Église s'interroge, Yaoundé, Cameroon. [No publisher given.]
- 1992a «La croix du Christ et la mémoire de l'homme africain», Université de Yaounde, 11 mai 1992, TMs; E.T., «The Memory of the African People and the Cross of Christ», in *The Scandal of a Crucified World. Perspectives on the Cross and Suffering*, ed. Y. Tesfai, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994, 17-35.
- 1992b *Le message de Jean-Baptiste. De la conversion à la réforme dans les Églises africaines*, Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- 1994a *Afrique — L'irruption des pauvres — Société contre ingérence, pouvoir et argent*, Paris.
- 1994b «Christianity and Liberation in Africa», in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. R. Gibelini, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994, 136-153. [Originally, «Christianisme et libération en Afrique», *Voies nouvelles pour l'évangélisation*, actes du Synode de Luishia 19-29 août 1984.]
- 1994c «Église: sacrement de libération», in *Africa — the Kairos of a Synod*. Sedos Symposium on Africa, April-May 1994, ed. W. von Holzen – S. Fagan, Rome, 105-116.
- 1994d *Restituer l'histoire aux sociétés africaines*, Paris.
- n.d.². *Prêcher l'évangile*, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

² The booklet *Prêcher l'évangile* shows no date of publication. However in it Éla refers to Pope John Paul II's «lettre sur la mission du Rédempteur», (*Redemptoris missio* is dated 7 December 1990) which indicates that Éla's booklet was published after that time.

- n.d. «Sorcellerie et changement social en Afrique noire: une hypothèse de travail», TMs.

Interviews with Éla

- «L'Église d'Afrique et le choc du futur», by P. Emonet – A. Longchamp, *Chosir* 265 (janvier 1982), 5-8.
- «“Le temps des héritiers”», by J.F. Bayart, *Lettre* 292 (février 1983), 23-26.
[Taken from *PolAf* (décembre 1982).]
- «Una teología desde el tercer mundo», by J.C. Rodríguez – J. González Núñez, *MundoN* (diciembre 1989) 19-22.
- «Sfida alla missione», by G. Capaccioni, *Nigrizia* (dicembre 1990), 40-41.
- «Una tappa verso il Concilio», by G. Cavallini, *Nigrizia* (novembre 1993), 46-50.
- «Wie die Kirdi den Tod Gottes überwinden», by T. Seiterich-Kreuzkamp, *P.Forum* (Mai 1984), 21-23.

2. Aloysius Pieris³

- 1966 «L'Induismo», in *Le grandi religioni*, ed. R. Coseglia, Napoli, 111-119.
- 1968a «Liturgy and Dialogue with Buddhism: An Experiment», *Dialogue* (o.s.) 15, 1-16.
- 1968b «Liturgy and the New Breed», *Logos* 9.4, 35-43.
- 1969a «The Indian Mass Controversy», *Worship* 43, 219-224.
- 1969b «Liturgy in God's World», *Outlook* 2, 10-12.
- 1970a «The Church, the Kingdom, and the Other Religions», *Dialogue* o.s. 22, 3-7.
- 1970b «Diplomacy? The Church Cannot Stomach it», *Outlook* 3, 5-8.
- 1970c «From Lilies to Roses», *Outlook* 3, 6-11.
- 1970d «From Mary of Nazareth to a Church in Crisis», *Outlook* 3, 5-7, 14.

³ This Bibliography contains only works published in European languages. Many of Pieris' articles have been reprinted in various journals or books. Where possible the reference will be to the original publication. It will be noted which works are included in his two books *An Asian Theology of Liberation (ATL)*, and *Love Meets Wisdom (LMW)*. Where material which is not from the original publication or from the two books has been used in preparing the text of Chapter IV, the details of publication will be noted.

- 1971a «Catholic Education and the Rehabilitation of the Misguided», *Outlook* 4, 8-12.
- 1971b «Confusion and Rebellion», *Outlook* 4, 5-9.
- 1971c «Ecumenism Today», *CeyCh* 67, 51-52.
- 1972a «A Mass for Republic Day», *Outlook* 5, 5-12.
- 1972b «Some Christian Reflections on Buddhism and Secularisation in Ceylon», *Dialogue* o.s. 24, 3-8.
- 1973a «Buddhism as Doctrine, Institution, and Experience», *Dialogue* o.s. 27-28, 1-22. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 45-60.]
- 1973b «Fringe Groups and the Dialectics of Church Renewal», *Outlook* 6, 9-13.
- 1973c «Religion, Politics and Jesus Christ», *Outlook* 6, 1-6.
- 1974a «Did Jesus come to India to Study Buddhism?», *Dialogue* New Series (n.s.) 1, 57-61.
- 1974b «Did Jesus Die in Kashmir?», *Dialogue* n.s. 1, 27-28.
- 1974c «Discussion on Nationalism, Politics and the Clergy», *Dialogue* n.s. 1, 80-83.
- 1974d «The Legitimacy and the Limitations of the Academic Approach to Inter-Faith Dialogue», *Dialogue* n.s. 1, 39-43. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 3-7.]
- 1974e «Monkhood: Sociological Analysis and Theological Perspectives», *Dialogue* n.s. 1, 93-99.
- 1974f «Monkhood: Some elementary facts about its origin and its place in a Buddhist-Christian dialogue», *Dialogue* n.s. 1, 4-10.
- 1975a «A Buddhist Critique and a Christian Response», *Dialogue* n.s. 2, 83-85. [Editorial]
- 1975b «God-Talk and God-Experience in a Christian Perspective», *Dialogue* n.s. 2, 116-128.
- 1975c «Mutual Exposure of Religions», *Dialogue* n.s. 2, 45-46. [Editorial]
- 1976a «Buddhist Christian Dialogue in Sri Lanka», *Impact* 11, 158-161.
- 1976b «Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ», in *Towards a Dialogue of Life*. Ecumenism in the Asian Context, ed. P. De Achutegui, Card. Bea Studies, IV, Manila, 154-174. [Reprinted in *Month* 11 (1978), 4-9.]
- 1976c «Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka — The Role of the Sinhala Monk», *Dialogue* n.s. 3, 113-116.
- 1976d «World Buddhism and Dialogue», *Dialogue* n.s. 3, 85-87. [Editorial]
- 1976e «The Zen-Christian Dialogue in Japan», *Dialogue* n.s. 3, 107-112.
- 1977a «The Spirituality of the Buddhist Monk in Sri Lanka», *InFra* 27, 121-132. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 61-72.]

- 1977b «The Workers' Mass at a Factory», in *A Sri Lanka Worker's Theology*, Christian Workers' Fellowship, Colombo, 107-112.
- 1978a «The Colophon to the Paramatthamañjusā and the Discussion on the Date of Ācariya Dhammapāla», in *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in Buddhist Countries*, ed. H. Bechert, Göttingen, 61-77.
- 1978b «Doctrinal, Legal, and Cultural Factors in Buddhist-Christian Mixed Marriages», *Dialogue* n.s. 5, 91-107. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 97-109.]
- 1978c «What the Secular Has Put Together, let No Religion Put Asunder», *Dialogue* n.s. 5, 57. [Editorial]
- 1979a «Buddhist Socialism», *Guardian* 2, 17-18.
- 1979b «The Dynamics of the ATC. A reply to the Editor of Satyodaya», *VFTW* 2.1, 23-28.
- 1979c «Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation», *Dialogue* n.s. 6, 29-52. [Reprinted in *ATL*, 69-86.]
- 1980a «The Monastic Conference at Kandy», *Dialogue* n.s. 7, 97-98. [Editorial]
- 1980b «Monastic Poverty in the Asian Setting», *Dialogue* n.s. 7, 104-118. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 89-96.]
- 1980c «The Notions of Citta, Attā and Attabhāva in the Pāli Exegetical Writings», in *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*, London, 213-222.
- 1980d «Western Christianity and Asian Buddhism: A Theological Reading of Historical Encounters», *Dialogue* n.s. 7, 49-85. [First appeared in 1979 as «Das Christentum des Westens und die Religionen des Ostens». Revised and reprinted in *LMW*, 17-42.]
- 1981a «Church Development in a Multireligious Sri Lanka», *SEDEC B.*, 52-56.
- 1981b «Jesus' Hands that Break the Bread», in *Souvenir of the Eucharistic Congress Held at Kandy, 26-28 June 1981*, 57-59.
- 1982a «Conversion, Controversy and Conversation», *Dialogue* n.s. 9, 1-2. [Editorial]
- 1982b «How Catholic is the Catholic's View of God, Man and the Universe?», *Dialogue* n.s. 9, 122-123. [Review]
- 1982c «Mission of the Local Church in Relation to Other Major Religious Traditions», *SEDOS B.*, 5, 92-96; 6, 103-109; 7, 123-127. [Reprinted in *ATL*, 35-50.]
- 1982d «The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of a Third-World Theology», *CTC B.* 3, 43-61. [Reprinted in *ATL*, 87-110.]
- 1982e «Rev. Dr. Lynn A. De Silva, 1919-1982. A Tribute», Supplement to *Dialogue* 9, 1-7.

- 1982f «Speaking of the Son of God in Non-Christian Cultures», in *Jesus, Son of God?*, ed. E. Schillebeeckx – J.-B. Metz, Edinburgh – New York; *Conc.* 153 (3/1982), 206-211. [Reprinted in *ATL*, 59-65.]
- 1983a «Asiens Kampf um volle Menschlichkeit — Unterwegs zu einer relevanten Theologie», introduction to *Herausgefordert durch die Armen. Dokumente der ökumenischen Vereinigung von Dritte-Welt-Theologen 1976-1983* (Theologie der Dritten Welt, 4) Freiburg, 63-67.
- 1983b «Buddhist Honours for Christian Priests», *Dialogue* n.s. 10, 1-3. [Editorial]
- 1983c «Buddhist Political Visioning in Sri Lanka», in *Towards the Sovereignty of the People*, Commission on Theological Concerns, CCA Singapore, 132-145. [Reprinted (part) in *LMW*, 73-79.]
- 1983d «Cult of the Sacred Tooth Relic — Its Origin and Meaning», *Dialogue* n.s. 10, 63-72. [Review]
- 1983e «Dom Leo Nanayakkara: Bishop and Monk», *Tjurunga* 25, 73-79.
- 1983f «La espiritualidad en una perspectiva de liberación», in *Vida y reflexión*, Lima, 179-199. [Reprinted as «Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective», in *ATL*, 3-14.]
- 1983g «Ideology and Religion: Some Debatable Points», *Dialogue* n.s. 10, 31-41. [Reprinted in *ATL*, 24-31.]
- 1983h «The Solitary Ascetic in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions. The Samnyasin and the Pacceka Buddha», *Dialogue* n.s. 10, 47-55. [Review]
- 1984a «L'Asie non-sémitique face aux modèles occidentaux d'inculturation», *LV* 33, 50-62. [Reprinted as: «Western Models of Inculturation: Applicable in Asia?», *ATL*, 51-58.]
- 1984b «To Be Poor as Jesus Was Poor?», *Way* 24, 6-14. [Reprinted in *ATL*, 15-23.]
- 1984c «Toward a Liberating Asian Theology and Spirituality», *Theology in the Third World*, series 5, year 4, Socio-Pastoral Institute, Manila.
- 1985a «Buddhism and Marxism in Dialogue: A Comment on Dr. Dharmasiri's Paper», *Dialogue* n.s. 12, 68-86.
- 1985b «Jesus Christ and Other Religions». Ecumenical Church Conference: Jesus Christ, the Life of the World, 8-19 August 1985, The National Seminary, Ampitiya.
- 1986a «Buddhism as a Challenge for Christians», in *Christianity among World Religions*, ed. H. Küng – J. Moltmann, Edinburgh; *Conc.* 183 (1/1986) 60-66. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 83-88.]
- 1986b «A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches?», *Month* 19 (1986) 231-239. [Reprinted in *ATL*, 111-126.]

- 1987a «The Buddha and the Christ: Mediators of Liberation», in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. J. Hick – P.F. Knitter, Maryknoll, N.Y., 162-177.
- 1987b «Christianity and Buddhism in Core-to-Core Dialogue», *CrossCur* 37, 47-75. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 110-135.]
- 1987c «In the Buddha's Footsteps», *Kosmos* 1.3, 12-13.
- 1988a *An Asian Theology of Liberation*. Edinburgh.
- 1988b «East in the West: Resolving a Spiritual Crisis», *Horiz.* 15, 337-346. [Reprinted in *LMW*, 8-16.]
- 1988c «Human Rights Language and Liberation Theology», *VJTR* 52, 522-536.
- 1988d *Love Meets Wisdom. A Christian Experience of Buddhism*, Maryknoll, N.Y.
- 1988e «The Reverend Father Michael Rodrigo: A Pioneer in Buddhist-Christian Dialogue», *Dialogue* n.s. 15, 1-6. [Editorial]
- 1988f «The Spirit Dimension of Change», *Way* 28, 34-41.
- 1989a «Buddhists and Christians for Justice: The Korean connection», *Dialogue* n.s. 16, 1-3. [Editorial]
- 1989b «Christology in Asia — A reply to Felipe Gomes», *VFTW* 11, 155-172.
- 1989c «Faith-Communities and Communalism», *EAPR* 26, 294-310.
- 1989d «The Recruitment Policy of Religious Congregations and Diocesan Clergy: A Lesson from a Medieval Experience», *AqJ* 6, 45-60.
- 1989e «The Religious Vows and The Reign of God», *Way S.* 65, 3-15.
- 1990a «Ignatian Exercises against a Buddhist Background», *Way S.* 68, 98-111.
- 1990b «Whence Comes the Authority to Teach Religion», *Dialogue* n.s. 17, i-v. [Editorial]
- 1991 «*Redemptoris Missio*», in *Rerum Novarum. A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching*, ed. J. Coleman – G. Baum, London – Philadelphia; *Conc.* (1991/5) xvii-xv.
- 1992a «The Three Ingredients of Authentic Humanism: An Autobiographical Essay on the Religious Vows», *Month* 25, 73-78, 114-121.
- 1992b «Woman and Religion in Asia: Towards a Buddhist and Christian Appropriation of the Feminist Critique», *Dialogue* n.s. 19-20 (1992-1993) 119-203.
- 1993a «Does Christ Have a Place in Asia? A Panoramic View», in *Any Room for Christ in Asia?*, ed. L. Boff – V. Elizondo, London – Maryknoll; *Conc.* (1993/2) 33-47.
- 1993b «Evangelization and (the Cultures of) Our Nation», TMs. Talk to meeting of the Sri Lankan Jesuits, Lewella, Kandy, 15-18 November 1983.

- 1993c «Inculturation: Some Critical Reflections», *VJTR* 57, 641-651. [A corrected version appears in *JKTh*, Missionswissenschaftliches Institut Missio e. V., Aachen 1993, 133-145.]
- 1993d «Interreligious Dialogue and Theology of Religions: An Asian Paradigm», *Month* 26, 129-134. [First published in *Qoholet* (1992).]
- 1993e «Reincarnation in Buddhism: A Christian Appraisal», in *Reincarnation or Resurrection?*, ed. H. Häring – J.-B. Metz, London – Maryknoll; *Conc.* (1993/5) 16-22.
- 1993f «Three Inadequacies in the Social Encyclicals», *VJTR* 57, 73-94.
- 1993g «Universality of Christianity?», *VJTR* 57, 591-595.
- 1993h «Whither New Evangelism?», Lakshman Wickramasingha Memorial Lecture, Kurunegala, 23 January 1993, *Pac.* 6, 327-334.
- 1994a «Chastity as Total Consecration to Service», *VJTR* 58, 545-558.
- 1994b «Inculturation in Asia: A Theological Reflection on an Experience», in *JKTh*, Missionswissenschaftliches Institut Missio e. V., Aachen, 59-71.
- 1994c «The Problem of Universality and Inculturation with Regard to Patterns of Theological Thinking», in *Why Theology?*, ed. C. Geffré – W. Jeanron, London – Maryknoll; *Conc.* (1994/6) 70-79.

3. Gustavo Gutiérrez⁴

- 1966 «Libertad religiosa y diálogo salvador», in *Salvación y construcción del mundo*, ed. G. Gutiérrez – al., Santiago 1968, 13-43.
- 1968a «Hacia una teología de la liberación». Address to meeting of priests and laity, 21-25 July, Chimbote, Peru; E.T., «Toward a Theology of Liberation», in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. A.T. Hennelly, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 62-76.
- 1968b *La pastoral de la Iglesia en América Latina*, Montevideo. [Republished in 1970 as *Líneas pastorales de la Iglesia en América Latina*, Lima.]

⁴ Concerning Gustavo Gutiérrez's writings, Robert McAfee Brown writes as follows: «Gustavo's own writings are a bibliographer's nightmare. He (understandably) uses similar lecture materials on different occasions in different parts of the world; one of these will be published in a given country and then a somewhat similar, but not identical, lecture will be published in another country. English translations of both articles may subsequently appear in the United States, and sometimes different translations of the same article will be published. The disentangling of these sources makes the "synoptic problem" in New Testament scholarship seem like child's play in comparison» (see R.M. BROWN, *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, 185).

- 1969a «The Meaning of Development (Notes on a theology of liberation)», in *In Search of a Theology of Development*. Papers from a Consultation on Theology and Development held by Sodepax in Cartigny, Switzerland, November, 1969, working paper 4, 116-179.
- 1969b Prologue to *Signos de renovación*. Recopilación de documentos post-conciliares de la Iglesia en América Latina. Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social, Lima, 6-16; E.T., introduction to *Between Honesty and Hope*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1970. [Revised text appears as chap. 2 of *Power*.]
- 1970a «Notes for a Theology of Liberation», *TS* 31, 243-261.
- 1971a «El fenómeno de la contestación en América Latina», *Conc.* 68, 193-207; E.T., Contestation in Latin America, in *Contestation in the Church*, ed. T. Jiménez Urresti, London; *Conc.* 8.7, 40-52.
- 1971b *Teología de la liberación*, Lima; E.T., *A Theology of Liberation*, rev. ed., trans. and ed. C. Inda – J. Eagleson, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988.
- 1973 «Evangelio y praxis de liberación», introduction to *Signos de liberación*. Testimonios de la Iglesia en América Latina, 1969-73, Lima; E.T., [revised], chap. 3 of *Power*.
- 1974a «The Hope of Liberation», *WV*, Council on Religion and International Affairs, New York. [Also in *Mission Trends No. 3*, ed. G.H. Anderson – T.F. Stransky, New York – Grand Rapids 1976, 64-69.]
- 1974b «Movimientos de liberación y teología», *Conc.* 93, 448-456; E.T., «Liberation movements and theology», in *Jesus Christ and Human Freedom*, ed. E. Schillebeeckx – B. van Iersel, London; *Conc.* 93, 135-146.
- 1974c «Praxis de liberación. Teología y anuncio», *Conc.* 96, 353-374; E.T., «Liberation, Theology and Proclamation», in *Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith*, ed. C. Geffré – G. Gutiérrez, London; *Conc.* 96, 57-77.
- 1976a «Bartolomé de Las Casas. Libertad y liberación», *Páginas* 5-6, 41-49.
- 1976b «Revelación y anuncio de Dios en la historia», *Páginas* S. 2, 1-12; E.T., «God's Revelation and Proclamation in History», in *Power*, chap. 1.
- 1976c «Statement by Gustavo Gutiérrez», in *Theology in the Americas*, ed. S. Torres – J. Eagleson, Maryknoll, N.Y., 309-313.
- 1977a «Freedom and Salvation: A Political Problem», in *Liberation and Change* [Co-authored with R. Shaul], ed. R.H. Stone, Atlanta, 3-94.
- 1977b «Los pobres en la Iglesia», *Conc.* 124, 103-109; E.T., «The Poor in the Church», in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. N. Greinacher – A. Müller, New York; *Conc.* 104, 11-16.

- 1977c *Teología desde el reverso de la historia*, Lima; E.T. [revised], *Power*, chap. 7.
- 1978a «La fuerza histórica de los pobres», introduction to *Signos de lucha y esperanza*. Testimonios de la Iglesia en América Latina 1973-78, Lima, xv-xlii; E.T., in *Power*, chap. 4.
- 1978b «Sobre el documento de consulta para Puebla», *MisE* 45, 168-198. Also in *Páginas* 16-17, 1-24; E.T. [condensed], «Preparatory document for Puebla: A retreat from commitment», *CaC* 38 (18 September 1978) 211-218. [Appears in revised form in *Power*, chap. 5.]
- 1978c «Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressivist Theology», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y., 227-255.
- 1979a «Caminando con el pueblo», *Páginas* 25, 1-11. Also as preface to H. Echegaray, *La Práctica de Jesús*, Lima 1980, 7-26; E.T., introduction to *The Practice of Jesus*, trans. M. O'Connell. Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980, vii-xx.
- 1979b *La fuerza histórica de los pobres*. Lima; E.T., *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. R.R. Barr, London 1983.
- 1979c «Los límites de la teología moderna. Un texto de Bonhoeffer», *Conc.* 145, 222-236 [Spanish ed. only]; E.T., in *Power*, chap. 8.
- 1979d «Oro y evangelio. El anónimo de Yucay», *Páginas S.* 20, 1-11. [Rewritten for *Páginas S.* 40 (1981) 1-20.]
- 1979e «Pobres y liberación en Puebla», *Páginas* 21-22, 1-32; E.T., *Power*, chap. 6.
- 1980a «Comunidades cristianas de base: (perspectivas eclesiológicas)», *Páginas* 29, 1-13; E.T., «Irruption of the Poor» [See 1981d].
- 1980b «Pobreza y Liberación en América Latina: (la opción preferencial por los pobres hecha en Puebla)», *CrSoc* 18.1, 53-85.
- 1980c «La violencia de un sistema», *Conc.* 160, 565-575; E.T., «The Violence of a System», in *Christian Ethics and Economics: The North-South Conflict*, ed. D. Mieth – J. Pohier, Edinburgh – New York; *Conc.* 140 (10/1980) 93-100.
- 1981a «El Dios de la vida», *Páginas S.* 40, 1-20. Also in *Christus* 47 (1982) 28-57. [Appeared later in book form in 1989.]
- 1981b «En busca de los pobres de Jesucristo. Evangelización y teología en el siglo XVI», in *Materiales para una historia de la teología en América Latina*. VIII Encuentro Latinoamericano de CEHILA, Lima, ed. P. Richard, Costa Rica, 137-163. [Also in revised form in *Páginas* 38 (1981) 2-12.]

- 1981c «La hora de Jesús», *Páginas* 36-37, 2, 55.
- 1981d «The Irruption of the Poor in Latin America and the Christian Communities of the Common People», in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, ed. S. Torres – J. Eagleson, Maryknoll, N.Y., 107-123.
- 1981e «Presentación. ¿Qué es hoy de la Iglesia?», *Conc.* 166, 317-320; E.T., editorial in *Where Does the Church Stand?*, ed. G. Alberigo – G. Gutiérrez, Edinburgh – New York; *Conc.* 146 (6/1981) 7-8.
- 1981f «Un pueblo oprimido y creyente, y las comunidades cristianas de base», *Puebla* 15, 926-933.
- 1982a «Beber en su propio pozo», *Conc.* 179, 351-363. Also *Páginas S.* 47, 1-7; E.T., «“Drink from your own Well”» in *Learning to Pray*, ed. C. Floristán – C. Duquoc, Edinburgh – New York; *Conc.* 159 (9/1982) 38-45.
- 1982b «Entre las calandrias», in *Arguedas: mito, historia y religión*, Lima, 239-277. [Revised form in 1989, in *Páginas* 100, and appeared in 1990 in book form.]
- 1983a *Beber en su propio pozo*. En el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo, Lima; E.T., *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, trans. M.J. O’Connell, London 1984.
- 1983b «Por el camino de la pobreza», *Páginas S.* 58, 1-16.
- 1983c «Reflections from a Latin American Perspective: Finding Our Way to Talk about God», in *Irruption of the Third World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y., 222-234.
- 1983d «El reino está cerca», *Páginas* 52, 2, 39.
- 1984a «Un lenguaje sobre Dios», *Conc.* 191, 53-61; E.T., «Speaking about God», in *Different Theologies, Common Responsibility: Babel or Pentecost?*, ed. C. Geffré – G. Gutiérrez – V. Elizondo, Edinburgh; *Conc.* 171 (1/1984) 27-31.
- 1984b «Quehacer teológico y experiencia eclesial», *Conc.* 196, 401-405; E.T., «The Task of Theology and Ecclesial Experience», in *The People of God Amidst the Poor*, ed. L. Boff – V. Elizondo, Edinburgh; *Conc.* 176 (6/1984) 61-64.
- 1984c «Resurrección y evangelización de los gentiles», *Páginas* 62, 2, 43.
- 1984d «Teología y ciencias sociales», *Páginas* 63-64, 4-15. Also in *Christus* 49, 9-20. [Appeared in 1986 in the book *La verdad los hará libres*, and in English in 1990.]
- 1985a «Gratuidad y revelación», *Páginas* 67, 2, 51.
- 1985b «Hambre de Dios: sí! Hambre de pan: no!» *Páginas* 68, 7-9.

- 1985c «Respuesta a las observaciones», *MisA* 1, 36-76.
- 1985d «Vaticano II y la Iglesia Latino Americana», *Páginas S.* 70, 2-12; E.T. [revised], «The Church and the Poor: A Latin American Perspective», in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo – J.-P. Jossua – J.A. Komonchak, Washington, D.C. 1987, 171-193.
- 1985e «La visita del Papa vista por Gustavo Gutiérrez», *Quehacer* 33, 17-25.
- 1986a *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente*. Una reflexión sobre el libro de Job. Lima; E.T., *On Job*. God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent, trans. M.J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, N.Y. 1987.
- 1986b *La verdad los hará libres*. Confrontaciones. Lima; E.T., *The Truth Shall Make You Free*. Confrontations, trans. M.J. O'Connell, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990.
- 1987a «But why Lord: On Job and the Suffering of the Innocent», *TOS* 23, 18-23.
- 1987b «¿Dónde van a dormir los pobres?», *Páginas* 87, 2, 35.
- 1987c «Señor, amigo de la vida», *Páginas* 83, 2, 39.
- 1988a «Cómo hablar de Dios desde Ayacucho», *RLAT* 15, 233-241; E.T., God-talk during Ayacucho», *ThD* 37 (1990) 227-230.
- 1988b Introduction to, *Signos de nueva evangelización*. Testimonios de la Iglesia en América Latina 1983-87, Lima, xvii-xxiii.
- 1988c «Mirar lejos», *Páginas* 93, 63-97. [This became the introduction to the new edition of *Teología de la liberación*.]
- 1988d «Perdonar es dar vida», *Páginas* 89-90, 6-9.
- 1988e «La primera declaración mesiánica», *Páginas* 92, 6-9.
- 1988f «Los primeros serán los últimos», *Páginas* 93, 7-11.
- 1988g «El Shalom de Dios», *Páginas* 91, 7-11.
- 1988h «Una tierra nueva», *Páginas* 94, 6-11.
- 1989a «The Church of the poor», *Month* 22, 263-267.
- 1989b *El Dios de la vida*, Lima; E.T., *The God of Life*, trans. M.J. O'Connell, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1991.
- 1989c «Entre las calandrias», *Páginas* 100, 91-122. [Published in book form as, *Entre las calandrias*. Un ensayo sobre José María Arguedas, Lima 1990.]
- 1989d «Hacia el quinto centenario», *Páginas* 99, 7-15.
- 1989e «Monseñor O. Romero: testigo de la vida», *Páginas* 95, 47-51.
- 1989f «Sermon on the liberating of the man born blind», *NBI* 70, 158-160.
- 1991a «Las cosas nuevas de hoy. Una relectura de la Rerum Novarum», *Páginas* 110, 7-22; E.T., «The "New Things" of Today. A Re-Reading of *Rerum Novarum*», *LADOC* 23 (January/February 1992) 1-28.

- 1991b «Las Casas y Paulo III», *Páginas* 107, 33-42; E.T., «Las Casas and Paul III», *LADOC* 21 (July-August) 7-12.
- 1991c «Monseñor Schmitz fue el prójimo más cercano de los pobres», *Páginas* 107, 81-84; E.T., «Bishop Schmitz, closest neighbor of the poor», *LADOC* 21 (March-April) 21-22.
- 1991d «En nuestras manos», in *El Perú del futuro*. Responsabilidad de hoy, Lima, 136-144.
- 1992a «500th Anniversary Reflections from Peru», *SEDOS B.* 24, 56-58.
- 1992b «Bartolomé de Las Casas: Defender of the Indians», *Pac.* 5, 263-273.
- 1992c *En busca de los pobres de Jesucristo*. El pensamiento de Bartolomé de Las Casas, Lima; E.T., *Las Casas. In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, trans. R.R. Barr, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993.
- 1992d «Germán Schmitz: testigo de una nueva evangelización», in *La nueva evangelización*. Reflexiones, experiencias, y testimonios desde el Perú, Lima, 269-290.
- 1992e «New Evangelization — A Theological Reflection on the Latin American Church — Santo Domingo», *SEDOS B.* 24, 182-197.
- 1993a «Una Agenda. La IV Conferencia de Santo Domingo», *Páginas* 119, 11-19.
- 1993b «Without Words», *LADOC* 23 (January/February) 15-19. [First published in *La República* (Lima) in July of 1992.]
- 1994a «No hay muertos ajenos», *Páginas* 126, 82-85
- 1994b «Option for the Poor: Review and Challenges», *ProJ* 57, 11-18. [The lecture is published in practically the same form as: «Preferential Option for the Poor», *SEDOS B.* 24, 176-181, and in *Month* 28 (1995) 5-10.]

Interviews with Gutiérrez

- «Conversación con Gustavo Gutiérrez», by T. Cabestrero, in *Conversaciones sobre la fe*, ed. T. Cabestrero, Salamanca 1977, 123-136.
- «Fuera de la asamblea», *ThX* 50 (1979) 55-87.
- «Gustavo Gutiérrez. Defender la vida es subversivo», by M. Campos, *Diario* (20 abril, 1984) 13-21.
- «In Reply to the Vatican "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation"», *LADOC* 15 (January/February 1984) 2-7. [From interview in *La República*, Lima, 14 septiembre 1984.]
- «Itinéraire d'un théologien de la libération», *DC* 81 (1984) 906-909.
- «Gustavo Gutiérrez: With the poor», by M.A. Lee – P. Gallegos, *CaC* 47 (6 April 1987) 113-115.

- «Criticism Will Deepen, Clarify Liberation Theology», in *Liberation Theology. A Documentary History*, ed. A.T. Hennelly, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 419-424.
- «Marx n'est pas la Bible», by B. Lauret – M. Estivales, *ActRel* 15 (octobre 1990) 26-28.
- «Entrevista con Gustavo Gutiérrez», by A. Villarino – G. Pacher, *MisSF* (setiembre 1991) 20-24.
- «Vamos a hablar de Vallejo», by C. Pérez – E. Urdanivia, *Páginas* 114-115 (1992) 116-123.
- «Mariátegui: un hombre libre», by C. Tovar – J. Casas, *Páginas* 127 (1994) 53-61.

4. Other Works Cited

Church Documents

- ABBOTT, W.M., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, New York 1966.
- CONSEJO EPISCOPAL LATINOAMERICANO (CELAM), *La Iglesia en la actual transformación de América Latina a la luz del Concilio*. I Ponencias; II Conclusiones, Segretariado General del CELAM, Bogotá 1970²; E.T., *The Church in the Present-day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*. I Position Papers; II Conclusions, NCCB Secretariat for Latin America, Washington, D.C. 1979³.
- , *Puebla*. III Conferencia general del episcopado Latinoamericano, Bogotá 1979; E.T., *Puebla and Beyond*, ed. J. Eagleson – P. Scharper, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979.
- , *Santo Domingo*. Conclusiones, Bogotá 1993; E.T., in *Santo Domingo and Beyond*, ed. A.T. Hennelly, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993, 71-155.
- COMISIÓN EPISCOPAL DE ACCIÓN SOCIAL, *Signos de renovación: recopilación de documentos post-conciliares de la Iglesia en América Latina*, Lima 1969; E.T., Peruvian Bishops' Commission for Social Action, *Between Honesty and Hope*, trans. J. Drury, New York 1970.
- CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH (CDF), *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, AAS 65 (1973) 396-408; E.T., *Vatican Council II. More Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery, New York, 428-440.
- , «Observaciones sobre la teología de la liberación de Gustavo Gutiérrez», *MisA* 1 (1985) 33-35; E.T., «Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez», in *Liberation Theology. A Documentary History*, ed. A. Hennelly, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 348-350.

- CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH (CDF), *Libertatis nuntius*, AAS 76 (1984) 876-909; E.T., «Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation», *Origins* 14 (13 September 1984) 193-204.
- , *Libertatis conscientia*, in *EnchVat* 10. Bologna 1989, 118-231; E.T., «Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation», *Origins* 15 (17 April 1986) 714-727.
- FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCES (FABC), Documents, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991, ed. G.B. Rosales – C.G. Arévalo, Quezon City, Philippines 1992.
- , «Being Church in Asia: Journeying with the Spirit into Fuller Life. Final Statement of the First FABC International Theological Colloquium, Pattaya, Thailand, April 10-16, 1994», *Vidjajyoti* 58 (1994) 379-390.
- FLANNERY, A., ed., *Vatican Council II*. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, New York 1979.
- FLANNERY, A., ed., *Vatican Council II*. More Post Conciliar Documents, New York 1982.
- OCHOA, X., ed., *Index verborum cum documentis Concilii Vaticani Secundi*, Rome 1967.
- INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *International Theological Commission*. Texts and Documents, 1969-1985, ed. M. Sharkey, San Francisco 1989.
- , «On the Interpretation of Dogmas», *Origins* 20 (17 May 1990) 2-14.
- JOHN XXIII, Pope, Apostolic Constitution, *Humanae salutis*, AAS 54 (1962) 6-13; E.T., Abbott, 703-709.
- , Address, «Gaudet mater Ecclesia», AAS 54 (1962) 786-796; E.T., Abbott, 710-719.
- , Encyclical Letter, *Pacem in Terris*, AAS 55 (1963) 257-304; E.T., in D. O'Brien – T. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992, 131-162.
- JOHN PAUL II, Pope, Encyclical Letter, *Dives et Misericordia*, AAS 72 (1980) 1177-1232; E.T., *Rich in Mercy*, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C. 1981.
- , Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris missio*, AAS 83 (1991) 249-340; E.T., in *Redemption and Dialogue*, ed. W.R. Burrows, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994, 5-55.
- , Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Vatican Press 1995.

- NEW ZEALAND EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, «The Role of the Church in the Development of the South Pacific». Paper presented at the Combined Meeting of the Bishops Conferences of Oceania, Sydney 1970.
- PAUL VI, Pope, Homily, «Hodie Concilium», *AS*, IV, VII, 654-663; E.T., *CMind* 64 (April, 1966) 57-64.
- , *Motu Proprio*, «Ecclesia sanctae», *AAS* 58 (1966) 758-787; E.T., [part] Flannery, 591-610.
- , Encyclical Letter, *Populorum progressio*, *AAS* 59 (1967) 257-299; E.T., in *Catholic Social Thought*, ed. D. O'Brien – T. Shannon, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992, 240-262.
- , «Allocution au symposium des évêques d'Afrique», *DC* 1546 (1969) 763-765; E.T., *OmTer* 23 (November 1969) 12-15.
- , Address, «We Have Come», *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI* 8 (1970) 1303-1307.
- , Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, *AAS* 68 (1976) 1-76; E.T., in *Catholic Social Thought*, ed. D. O'Brien – T. Shannon, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992, 301-345.
- PAUL VI, Pope, «Discurso de S.S. Pablo VI en la apertura de la Segunda conferencia», *La Iglesia en la actual transformación de América Latina a la luz del Concilio*. Conclusiones, Secretariado General del CELAM, Bogotá 1970³, 15-28; E.T., *The Church in the Present-day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*. Conclusions, NCCB Secretariat for Latin America, Washington, D.C. 1979³, 2-15.
- PIUS XII, Pope, Encyclical Letter, *Humani generis*, *AAS* 42 (1950) 561-578.
- PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE and CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, «Dialogue and Proclamation», *Origins* 21 (4 July 1991) 122-135.
- SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR (SECAM), *The Voice of SECAM for the Evangelization of Africa*, Accra, n.d.
- , «Resolutions of SECAM Assembly», *AfER* (1972) 362-363.
- SYNOD OF BISHOPS (1971), «Justice in the World», in *Catholic Social Thought*, ed. D.J. O'Brien – T.A. Shannon, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1992, 287-300.
- , (1985), «Ratio finalis», in *LegEc* 6, ed. X. Ochoa, cols. 9238-9247; E.T., «The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod», *Origins* 15 (19 December 1985) 444-450.

- SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Special Assembly for Africa. «The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000. Lineamenta and Questions», *AfER* 33.1-2 (1990).
- , Special Assembly for Africa. *The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000*. «You shall be my Witnesses» (Acts 1,8). *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 1993.
- , «Message of the Synod», *SynEp. B.* 35, 6 May 1994.
- TANNER, N.P., ed., *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols., London – Washington, D.C. 1990.
- VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de deposito fidei pure custodiendo», in *Schemata constitutionum et decretorum de quibus disceptabitur in Concilii sessionibus*, series 1, Roma 1962, 25-69.
- , «Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de fontibus revelationis», in *Schemata constitutionum et decretorum de quibus disceptabitur in Concilii sessionibus*, series 1, Roma 1962, 9-22.

Other Books and Articles

- ABBA, R., «Name» in *IntD*, vol. 3, New York – Nashville 1962, 500-508.
- ABESAMIS, C.J., «Doing Theological Reflection in a Philippine Context», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978, 112-123.
- , «Faith and Life Reflections from the Grassroots in the Philippines», in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980, 123-139.
- ABEYASINGHA, N., *The Radical Tradition. The Changing Shape of Theological Reflection in Sri Lanka*, The Ecumenical Institute, Colombo 1985.
- ABEYASINGHA, S., *The Loud Whisper. Theologizing in Sri Lanka Today*, *Quest* 60 (1980) 164-190.
- , «Contextualizing Theology in Sri Lanka — Some Reflections», *ZMR* 66 (1982) 226-228.
- ABRAHAM, K.C., ed., *Third World Theologies. Commonalities and Divergences*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990.
- ABRAHAM, K.C. – B. MBUY-BEYA, ed., *Spirituality of the Third World. A Cry for Life*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994.
- ALBERIGO, G. – J.-P. JOSSUA – J.A. KOMONCHAK, ed., *The Reception of Vatican II*, trans. M.J. O'Connell, Washington, D.C. 1987.

- ALFARO, J., «Transcendencia e inmanencia de lo sobrenatural», *Gr.* 38 (1957) 5-50.
- , «The Spirituality of Faith in St. Thomas», *ThD* 14 (1966) 111-116.
- ALSZEGHY, Z., «The *Sensus Fidei* and the Development of Dogma», in *Vatican II. Assessment and Perspectives*, ed. R. Latourelle, vol. 1, Mahwah, New Jersey 1988, 138-156.
- AMALADOSS, M., *Making All Things New*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990.
- AMALORPAVADASS, D.S., «The Indian Universe of a New Theology», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978, 137-156.
- APPIAH-KUBI, K. – S. TORRES, ed., *African Theology en Route*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979.
- ARELLANO, L. B., «Women's Experience of God in Emerging Spirituality», in *With Passion and Compassion*, ed. V. Fabella – M. A. Oduyoye, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988, 135-150.
- BAKKER, L., «Man's Place in Divine Revelation», *Conc.* 1.3 (January 1967) 11-19.
- BALASURIYA, T., «Epilogue 1987-1992», in U. Dornberg, *Searching through the Crisis*, *Logos* 31.3-4 (1992) 193-206.
- BARBOUR, I., *Myths, Models and Paradigms. A Comparative Study in Science and Religion*, San Francisco 1974.
- BARNES, M., «Review of *An Asian Theology of Liberation*», *Month* 22 (1989) 233.
- BASKOUDA, J.-B., *Baba Simon, le Père des Kirdis*, Paris 1988.
- BATSTONE, D.B., *From Conquest to Struggle. Jesus of Nazareth in the Liberation Christology of Latin America*. Doctoral dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley 1989.
- BECHERT, H., ed., *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in Buddhist Countries*, Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, Göttingen 1978.
- BENKO, S., «The Kingdom of God in the Documents of Vatican II», in *Gottesreich und Menschenreich*, ed. M. Geiger, Stuttgart 1969, 571-583.
- BETTI, U., *La dottrina del Concilio Vaticano II sulla trasmissione della Rivelazione. Il capitolo II della Costituzione dogmatica «Dei verbum»*, Rome 1985.
- BEVANS, S., *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992.
- BIANCHI, E., «The Centrality of the Word of God», in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo – al., Washington, D.C. 1987, 115-136.

- BIMWENYI-KWESHI, O., *Discours théologique négro-africain*, Paris 1981.
- , «Théandricité du langage théologique africain», in *Parole de Dieu et langages des hommes*. La rencontre de Yaoundé, Sept. 24-28, 1980. Association Oecuménique des Theologiens Africains, Yaoundé, Cameroon 1981, 25-36.
- , «The Origins of EATWOT», *VFTW* 4 (1981) 19-26.
- BLOESCH, D.G., «Soteriology in Contemporary Christian Thought», *Interp.* 35 (1981) 132-144.
- BLONDEL, M., *Histoire et dogme*. Les lacunes philosophiques de l'exégèse moderne. Extrait de «La Quinzaine» des 16 janvier, 1 et 16 février 1904, La Chapelle-Montligéon 1904.
- BOESAK, A., *Farewell to Innocence*. A Socio-Ethical Study in Black Theology and Power, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1977.
- , «Coming in out of the Wilderness», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978, 76-95.
- , «Liberation Theology in South Africa», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 169-175.
- BOFF, C., *Theology and Praxis*. Epistemological Foundations, trans. R.R. Barr, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1987.
- BONINO, J.M., *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, Philadelphia 1975.
- BOUILLARD, H., *Logique de la foi*, Paris 1964.
- BOULAGA, F.E., *Christianisme sans fétiche*, Paris 1981; E.T., *Christianity without Fetishes*. An African Critique and Recapture of Christianity, trans. R.R. Barr, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1984.
- BRAATEN, C.E., «Praxis: The Trojan Horse of Liberation Theology», *Dialog* 23.4 (1984) 276-280.
- BRANDEWIE, E., *When Giants Walked the Earth*. The Life and Times of Wilhelm Schmidt, SVD, Fribourg 1990.
- BROWN, R.M., *Gustavo Gutiérrez*. An Introduction to Liberation Theology, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990.
- BSTEH, A., ed., *Glaube, der Begegnung sucht*, Mödling 1992.
- BUHAN, C. – P.E. KANGE ESSIBEN, «Parole de Dieu et langages des hommes», in *Parole de Dieu et langages des hommes*. La rencontre de Yaoundé, Sept. 24-28, 1980. Association Oecuménique des Theologiens Africains, Yaoundé, Cameroon 1981, 73-81.
- BÜHLMANN, W., *The Coming of the Third Church*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1976.
- BUJO, B., «A Christocentric Ethic for Black Africa», *ThD* 30 (1982) 143-146.

- BUJO, B., «“Des Prêtres noirs s’interrogent”. Une théologie issue de la négritude?», *NZM* 46 (1990) 286-297.
- , *African Theology in its Social Context*, trans. J. O’Donohue, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992.
- BULTMANN, R., *Glauben und Verstehen*, Bd. 2, Tübingen 1952.
- BUTLER, C., *The Theology of Vatican II*, rev. ed., London 1967, 1981.
- BYRNE, B., «The Letter to the Philippians», in *NJBC*, ed. R. Brown – J. Fitzmeyer – R.E. Murphy, London – Dublin – Melbourne 1990, 791-797.
- CADORETTE, C., *From the Heart of the People. The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, Oak Park, Illinois 1988.
- , «Peru and the Mystery of Liberation: The Nexus and Logic of Gustavo Gutiérrez’s Theology», in *The Future of Liberation Theology*, ed. M.H. Ellis – O. Maduro, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1989, 49-58.
- CAPRILE, G., ed., *IL CONCILIO VATICANO II*, 5 VOLS, ROME 1966-69.
- CARRERA, F. – J.G. NÚÑEZ., «Teología de Liberación en Africa». Entrevista al P. Engelbert Mveng, secretario general de la Asociación de Teólogos Africanos, *MundoN* (diciembre 1988) 39-42.
- CARTER, R., *Dhamma. Western Academic and Sinhalese Buddhist Interpretations. A Study of a Religious Concept*, Tokyo 1978.
- , ed., *Religiousness in Sri Lanka*, Colombo 1979.
- CASPERSZ, P., «Liberation and Culture in a Pincer Movement of Asian Theology», *Sat B* 73 (April 1979) 4-5.
- , «The Role of the Christian Church in Contemporary Sri Lanka», *Vidjajyoti* 53 (1989) 289-298.
- CHARDIN, Teilhard de, *Le milieu divin*, Paris 1957.
- CHENU, B., *Théologies chrétiennes des tiers mondes*, Paris 1987.
- CHENU, M.-D., *Un école de théologie. Le Saulchoir, Kain-Lez-Tournai* 1937.
- , «I segni dei tempi», in *La chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo*, ed. E. Giammancheri, Brescia 1966, 85-102.
- , «Les lieux théologiques chez Melchior Cano», in *Le déplacement de la théologie*, Paris 1977.
- CHRISTIAN WORKERS’ FELLOWSHIP, *A Sri Lankan Workers’ Theology*, Christian Workers’ Fellowship, Colombo 1977.
- , *Rural Perspectives*, Christian Workers’ Fellowship, Colombo 1981.
- CLEARY, E.L., «The Journey to Santo Domingo», in *Santo Domingo and Beyond*, ed. A.T. Hennelly, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993, 3-23.

- Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, gen. ed. H. Vorgrimler, 5 vols., New York 1967-69.
- Commento alla Costituzione Dogmatica sulla Divina Rivelazione*, ed. U. Betti – E. Florit – A. Grillmeier – *al.*, Milano 1966.
- CONE, J., «A Black American Perspective on the Asian Search for a Full Humanity», in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980, 177-190.
- , «Black Theology: Its Origin, Methodology, and Relationship to Third World Theologies», in *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1985, 93-105.
- CONGAR, Y., *Le Concile au jour le jour*. Troisième session, Paris 1965.
- , *La Tradition et les traditions*, 2 vols., Paris 1960-63; E.T., *Tradition and Traditions*. An Historical and Theological Essay, London – New York 1966.
- , «La "Réception" comme réalité ecclésiologique», *RSPHTh* 56 (1972) 369-403.
- , *Challenge to the Church*, trans. P. Inwood, Huntington, Indiana 1976.
- COOK, M.L., «Revelation as Metaphoric Process», *TS* 47 (1986) 388-411.
- COOPER, B., «How does God act in our time? An Invitation to a Dialogue between Process and Liberation Theologies», *USQR* 32 (1976) 25-35.
- CROATTO, J.S., «Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theologies of Liberation», in *Irruption of the Third World*, V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1983, 140-168.
- CULLMANN, O., *La royauté du Christ et l'Église selon le Nouveau Testament*, Neuchâtel 1971.
- D'OSTA, G., *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, Oxford 1986.
- DALY, G., *Transcendence and Immanence*. A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism, Oxford 1980.
- DANIÉLOU, J., *Dieu et nous*, Paris 1956; E.T., *God and the Ways of Knowing*, trans. W. Roberts, New York 1957.
- DAVIS, C., «Theology and Praxis», *CrossCur* 23 (1973) 154-168.
- DE LA POTTERIE, I., «Le Christ comme figure de révélation d'après saint Jean», *StMiss* 20 (1971) 17-39.
- , «History and Truth», in *Problems and Perspectives of Fundamental Theology*, ed. R. Latourelle – G. O'Collins, trans. M. O'Connell, New York – Ramsey, N.J. 1982, 87-104.
- , «Truth», in *DTF*, 1132-1137.

- DECLARATION OF LOS ANDES, «Communion (Latin American Edition) "Declaration of Los Andes" (July 1985)», in *Liberation Theology. A Documentary History*, ed. A. Hennelly, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 444-450.
- DEL VALLE, C., *La deuda externa de América Latina. Relaciones norte-sur. Perspectiva ética*. Estella, Navarra 1992.
- Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent*, Paris 1957.
- DEVANANDA, Y., *Violent Lanka. The Day for Slaughter*, Colombo 1977.
- , *Living Dialogue*. Devasarana: Thirty Years alongside People, Devasarana, Ibbagamuwa, Sri Lanka 1987.
- DEVANANDA, Y. – S. FERNANDO, «Dialogue in the Context of Development: A Sri Lankan Experience», *ER* 37 (1985) 445-451.
- DICKSON, K.A., «Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 95-108.
- DICKSON, K.A. – P. ELLINGWORTH, *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1969.
- DOMCHÉ, E., «Pour une théologie sous l'arbre», *ETR* 58 (1983) 5-18.
- DORNBERG, U., *Searching through the Crisis*, *Logos* 31.3-4 (1992).
- DULLES, A., «The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective», *AEcR* 154 (1966) 217-231.
- , *Revelation Theology*, London 1970.
- , «The Problem of Revelation», *PCThSA* 29 (1974) 77-106.
- , *Models of Revelation*, Dublin 1983.
- , «The Reception of Vatican II at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985», in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo – *al.*, Washington, D.C. 1987, 349-363.
- , *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, New York – Oxford 1994.
- DUMOULIN, H., «Buddhism — A Religion of Liberation», in *Buddhism and Christianity*, ed. C. Geffré – M. Dhavamony, New York; *Conc.* (6/1978) 22-30.
- DUPUIS, J., *Jesus Christ and His Spirit*, Bangalore 1977.
- , *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, trans. R.R. Barr, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1991.
- , «Evangelization and Kingdom Values: The Church and the "Others"», *IMR* 14 (1992) 4-22.
- , «Alleanza e salvezza», *RdT* (1994) 148-171.

- DUPUIS, J., *Who Do You Say I Am?*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994.
- , «Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ», *DTF*, 1138-1144.
- DUQUOC, C., «Eschatologie et réalités terrestres», *LV* 9.50 (1960) 4-22.
- DURAND FLOREZ, R., *Observations a «Teología de la Liberación» y «La Fuerza Historica de los Pobres»*, Callao, Perú 1985.
- , *La Utopia de la Liberación. ¿Teología de los pobres?*, Callao, Perú 1988.
- DUSSEL, E., *A History of the Church in Latin America. Colonialism to Liberation (1492-1979)*, trans and rev. A. Neely, Grand Rapids 1981.
- EAGLESTON, J. – P. SCHARPER, ed., *Puebla and Beyond. Documentation and Commentary*, trans. J. Drury, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979.
- EATWOT, «Final Statement», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978, 259-271.
- , «Final Communiqué», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 189-195.
- , «Final Statement», in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980, 152-160.
- , «Letter to Christians in Popular Christian Communities in the Poor Countries and Regions of the World», in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, ed. S. Torres – J. Eagleson, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1981, 247-250.
- , «Final Document», in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, ed. S. Torres – J. Eagleson, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1981, 231-246.
- , «Final Statement», in *Irruption of the Third World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1983, 191-206.
- , «Final Statment», in *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1985, 179-193.
- , «Final Document: Intercontinental Women's Conference. Oaxtepec, Mexico 1986», in *With Passion and Compassion*, ed. V. Fabella – M.A. Oduyoye, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988, 184-190.
- , «Final Statement: Latin American Conference on Theology from the Perspective of Women — Buenos Aires, Argentina», in *With Passion and Compassion*, ed. V. Fabella – M.A. Oduyoye, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988, 181-183.
- , «Commonalities, Divergences, and Cross-fertilization among Third World Theologies», in *Third World Theologies*, ed. K.C. Abraham, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 195-213.

- EATWOT, «Asian Report», in *Third World Theologies*, ed. K.C. Abraham, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 3-27.
- , «The Search for a Liberation Spirituality in Asia», in *Asian Christian Spirituality*, ed. V. Fabella – P.K.H. Lee – D.K-s Suh, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992, 148-156.
- , «A Cry for Life: The Spirituality of the Third World. A Statement from the Third General Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, January 5-16, 1992, Nairobi, Africa», *BTF* 24.1-2 (1992) 45-66. [Also in *Spirituality of the Third World*, ed. K.C. Abraham – B. Mbuy-Beya, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994, 188-206.]
- EATWOT THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, «A Cry for Life: The Spirituality of the Third World», *VFTW* 14 (1991) 1-12.
- EATWOT WOMEN'S COMMISSION, «Women's Evaluation of EATWOT», in *Third World Theologies*, ed. K.C. Abraham, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 143-146.
- EBELING, G., *Luther. Einführung in sein Denken*, Tübingen 1964; E.T., *Luther. An Introduction to his Thought*, London 1970.
- EICHER, P., *Offenbarung. Prinzip neuzeitlicher Theologie*, München 1977.
- , «Administered Revelation: The Official Church and Experience», in *Revelation and Experience*, ed. E. Schillebeeckx – B. van Iersel, New York; *Conc.* 113 (1978) 3-17.
- ELLACURÍA, I. – J. SOBRINO, ed., *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993.
- ELLIS, M. – O. MADURO, ed., *The Future of Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1989.
- FABELLA, V., ed., *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity. Towards a Relevant Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980.
- , V., «Preface», in *Irruption of the Third World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1983, ix-xix.
- , «A Common Methodology for Diverse Christologies?», in *With Passion and Compassion*, ed. V. Fabella – M.A. Oduyoye, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988, 108-117.
- , *Beyond Bonding. A Third World Women's Theological Journey*, Manila 1993.
- FABELLA, V. – S. TORRES, ed., *Irruption of the Third World*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1983.
- , ed., *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1985.

- FABELLA, V. – M.A. ODUYOYE, ed., *With Passion and Compassion. Third World Women Doing Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988.
- FABELLA, V. – P.K.L. LEE – D.K-S. SUH, ed., *Asian Christian Spirituality. Reclaiming Traditions*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992.
- FANON, F., *Peau noire et masques blancs*, Paris 1952, 1971.
- , *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris 1961.
- FERNANDO, D.R.S., *Contextual Theology in Sri Lanka in the Light of the Contribution of Tissa Balasuriya, OMI and Aloysius Pieris, SJ*. S.T.L. thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 1987.
- FERNANDO, M., «The Buddhist Challenge to Christianity», in *Buddhism and Christianity*, ed. C. Geffré – M. Dhavamony, New York; *Conc.* (6/1978) 88-96.
- FESQUET, H., *Diario del Concilio*, ed. E. Masina, Milano 1967.
- FEUER, L.S., ed., *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, New York 1959.
- FIORENZA, F.P., «Latin American Liberation Theology», *Interp.* 28 (1974) 441-457.
- FISICHELLA, R., «Credibility», in *DTF*, 193-209.
- FORBES, D., «Notes on the Asian Theological Conference», in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980, 163-166.
- FRANZINI, A., *Tradizione e scrittura. Il contributo del Concilio Vaticano II*, Brescia 1978.
- FRIES, H., *Revelation*, London 1970.
- FROSTIN, P., «The Hermeneutics of the Poor — The Epistemological “Break” in Third World Theologies», *StTh* 39 (1985) 127-150.
- FUELLENBACH, J., *The Kingdom of God*, Manila 1989.
- GEFFRÉ, C., «Du savoir à l'interprétation», in *Le déplacement de la théologie*, Paris 1977.
- , «La rivelazione e l'esperienza storica degli uomini», in *Gesù Rivelatore*, ed. R. Fisichella, Monferrato 1988, 164-177.
- GIL HELLÍN, F., *Dei Verbum. Constitutio dogmatica de divina revelatione*, Vatican City 1993.
- GOIZUETA, R.S., «Liberation Theology: Retrospect and Prospect», *PhTh* 3 (1988) 25-43.
- , «The History of Suffering as Locus Theologicus», *VFTW* 12.2 (1989) 32-47.

- GOLDEWIJK, B.K. – J. VAN NIEUWENHOVE, ed., *Theologie in de context van de Derde Wereld*. Een vergelijkende studie, Kampen 1993.
- GREMILLION, J., ed., *The Church and Culture since Vatican II*, Notre Dame, Indiana 1985.
- HAIGHT, R., *An Alternative Vision*, New York – Mahwah, N.J. 1985.
- , *Dynamics of Theology*, New York – Mahwah, N.J. 1990.
- HAMILTON, A., «What has Asia to do with Australia: Reflections on the theology of Aloysius Pieris», *Pac.* 3 (1990) 304-322.
- HARRISON, P., «Buddhism: A Religion of Revelation After All?», *Numen* 34 (1987) 256-264.
- HASTINGS, A., *African Catholicism*, London 1989.
- HEARNE, B., «Theology and Revelation», in *Revelation. The Mystery of God's Self-gift to Humanity*, Eldoret, Kenya; *Sphead* 57 (1979) 26-50.
- HEBGA, M., *Émancipation d'Églises sous tutelle*, Paris 1976.
- HEIJKE, J., *Kameroanse bevrijdingstheologia*, Kampen 1990.
- , «Op de plaats des onheils. Het theologisch uitgangspunt van Jean-Marc Ela», in *Theologie in de context van de Derde Wereld*, ed. B.K. Goldewijk – J. Van Nieuwenhove, Kampen 1993, 72-88.
- HENNELLY, A., «Theological Method: The Southern Exposure», *TS* 38 (1977) 709-735.
- , ed., *Liberation Theology. A Documentary History*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990.
- , ed., *Santo Domingo and Beyond*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993.
- HICK, J., *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, London 1985.
- , «The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity», in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, ed. J. Hick – P. Knitter, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1987.
- HILKERT, M.C., «Discovery of the Living God: Revelation and Experience», in *The Praxis of Christian Experience*, ed. R. Schreiter – M.C. Hilbert, San Francisco 1989, 35-51.
- HOLZEN, W. von, – S. FAGAN, ed., *Africa — the Kairos of a Synod*, Rome 1994.
- HOUTART, F., *L'Église et le monde*, Paris 1964.
- HOUTART, F., «Theoretical and Institutional Bases of the Opposition to Liberation Theology», in *The Future of Liberation Theology*, ed. M.H. Ellis – O. Maduro, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1989, 261-271.
- HUIJBREGTS, M., «Armoede en religie. Aloysius Pieris: naar een theologie van de religies», in *Theologie in de Context van de Derde Wereld*, ed. B.K. Goldewijk – J. Van Nieuwenhove, Kampen 1993, 89-103.

- HYNES, M.J., *Gustavo Gutiérrez's Concepts and Images of God*. Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University 1991.
- IRIARTE, G., *Para comprender América Latina*, Estella, Navarra 1991.
- JOHNSON, E.A., *Consider Jesus. Waves of Renewal in Christology*, New York 1990.
- KAGAME, A., *La philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise*, Bruxelles 1956.
- KAPPEN, S., «Orientations for an Asian Theology», in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980, 108-122.
- KASPER, W., *Jesus the Christ*, London 1976.
- , *Theology and Church*, London 1989.
- KECK, L.E., «The Letter of Paul to the Philippians», in *IntC*, ed. C. Layman, Nashville – New York 1971, 845-855.
- KIBICHO, S.G., «Challenge from the Encounter of Christianity and African Religion to the Traditional Christian Idea of Revelation», in *Parole de Dieu et langages des hommes. La rencontre de Yaoundé*, Sept. 24-28, 1980. Association Oecuménique des Theologiens Africains, Yaoundé, Cameroon 1981, 115-122.
- KLAIBER, J., «The Church in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia», in *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992*, ed. E. Dussel, Tunbridge Wells 1992, 285-294.
- KNOX, Archbishop J.R., Position paper, «The Priesthood: Modern Challenges and Demands and Its Role in Today's World», Combined Meeting of the Bishops Conferences of Oceania, Sydney 1970.
- KOMONCHAK, J.A., *Towards a Theology of the Local Church*, FABC Papers 42, 1986.
- KROGER, J., «Prophetic-Critical and Practical-Strategic Tasks of Theology: Habermas and Liberation Theology», *TS* 46 (1985) 3-20.
- KÜNG, H., «On the State of the Catholic Church or *Why a Book Like This Is Necessary*», in *The Church in Anguish*, ed. H. Küng – L. Swidler, San Francisco 1987, 1-17.
- , *Theology for the Third Millennium*, London 1988.
- LAMB, M.L., «The Dialectics of Theory and Praxis within Paradigm Analysis», in *Paradigm Change in Theology*, ed. H. Küng – D. Tracy, Edinburgh 1989.
- LATOURELLE, R., *Theology of Revelation*, New York 1966.
- , «La Rivelazione come Storia», *CivCatt*, 20 settembre 1969, 482-484.
- , «La spécificité de la révélation chrétienne», *St.Miss* 20 (1971) 41-74.
- , «Dei Verbum — Commentary», in *DTF*, 218-224.

- LEACH, E., *Culture and Communication*. The Logic by Which Symbols Are Connected, London 1976.
- LEEUWEN, P. VAN, «The Genesis of the Constitution on Divine Revelation», *Conc.* 1.3 (1967) 4-10.
- LEFEBURE, L.D., *The Buddha and the Christ*. Explorations in Buddhist and Christian Dialogue, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993.
- LEHMANN, K., «Problemas metodológicos y hermenéuticos de la “teología de la liberación”» in *Teología de la liberación*, Comision Teológica Internacional, Madrid 1978, 3-42.
- LINDBECK, G., «Two Kinds of Ecumenism: Unitive and Interdenominational», *Gr.* 70 (1989) 647-660.
- LOHFINK, N., *Option for the Poor*, Berkeley 1987.
- LUBAC, H. de., «Le problème du développement du Dogme», *RSR* 35 (1948) 130-160.
- , *Le mystère du surnaturel*, Paris 1965; E.T., *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. R. Sheed, London 1967.
- MALEVEZ, L., «La gratuité du surnaturel», *NReTh* 75 (1953) 561-586, 673-689.
- MALLET, F., *Qu'est-ce que la foi?*, Paris 1908; E.T., M. Blondel, «What is Faith?», *Com.* 14 (1989) 162-192.
- MAQUEO, R.O., «“Meeting of Theologians at Petrópolis” (March 1964)», in *Liberation Theology*. A Documentary History, ed. A. Hennelly, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1990, 43-47.
- MARLÉ, R., «Théologiens en procès. La théologie de la libération dans ses rapports avec l'Europe et avec les instances magistérielles», *RSR* 74 (1986) 79-110.
- MARTEY, E., *African Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993.
- MARTINA, G., «The Historical Context in Which the Idea of a New Ecumenical Council Was Born», in *Vatican II*. Assessment and Perspectives, ed. R. Latourelle, vol. 1, New York – Mahwah, N.J. 1988, 3-73.
- MASEFIELD, P., *Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism*, The Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, Colombo 1986.
- McCANN, D.P., *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology*. Practical Theologies in Creative Conflict, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1981.
- McCONVILLE, W., «Local Theologies in a World Church: Aloysius Pieris and the Epiphany of Asian Christianity», *NThR* 1 (1988) 73-87.

- McGRATH, M., «Los signos de los tiempos en América Latina hoy», in *La Iglesia en la actual transformación de América Latina a la luz del Concilio*. I Ponencias, Segretariado General del CELAM, Bogotá 1970⁵, 75-100.
- , «The Puebla Final Document: Introduction and Commentary», in *Puebla and Beyond*, ed. J. Eagleston – P. Scharper, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 87-110.
- , «The Impact of *Gaudium et Spes*: Medellín, Puebla, and Pastoral Creativity», in *The Church and Culture since Vatican II. The Experience of North and Latin America*, ed. J. Gremillion, Notre Dame 1985, 61-73.
- McNAMARA, K., «Divine Revelation», *IThQ* 34 (1967) 3-19.
- MICHEL, M., «Le retour de l'eschatologie dans la théologie contemporaine», *RevSR* 58 (1984) 180-195.
- MIN, A.K., «Praxis and Theology in Recent Debates», *SJTh* 39 (1986) 529-549.
- MINEAR, P.S., ed., *Faith and Order Findings*, London 1963.
- MINELLA, M., «Praxis and the Question of Revelation», *IlfRev* 36 (1979) 17-29.
- MOELLER, C., «Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: History of the Constitution», in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, gen. ed. H. Vorgrimler, vol. 5, London 1969, 1-76.
- MOLL, P.G., «Liberating Liberation Theology: Towards Independence from Dependency Theory», *JTSA* 78 (1992) 25-40.
- MOLTMANN, J., *Theologie der Hoffnung*, München 1964; E.T., *Theology of Hope*, London 1967.
- , «Towards a Political Hermeneutics of the Gospel», *USQR* 23 (1968) 303-323.
- MORAN, G., *Theology of Revelation*, New York 1966.
- MOSALA, I.J., «The Use of the Bible in Black Theology», in *Voices from the Margin*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1991, 50-60.
- MOUROUX, J., *L'expérience chrétienne*, Paris 1952.
- MUDIMBE, V.Y., *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, Bloomington, Indiana 1988.
- MUGARUKA, M.N., «Y a-t-il une approche négro-africaine de la Bible?», *RAT* 14 (1990) 11-31.
- MULAGO, V., «L'union vitale Bantu, ou le principe de cohésion de la communauté chez les Bashi, les Banyarwanda et les Barundi», *ALat* 20 (1956) 61-263.
- , *Un visage africain du christianisme*, Paris 1965.

- MUSHETE, N., «Unity of Faith», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978, 50-55.
- , «The History of Theology in Africa», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 23-35.
- MVENG, E., *Art d'Afrique noire*. Liturgie cosmique et langage religieux, Tours 1964.
- , ed., *Spiritualité et libération en Afrique*, Paris 1987.
- , «African Liberation Theology», in *Convergences and Differences*, ed. L. Boff – V. Elizondo, Edinburgh; *Conc.* 199 (5/1988) 17-34.
- MVENG, E. – Z. WERBLOWSKY, ed., *L'Afrique noire et la Bible*, Interfaith Committee, Jerusalem 1974.
- NEUNER, J., «Mission Theology after Vatican II: Magisterial Teaching and Missiological Approaches in India», *VJTR* 58 (1994) 201-214.
- NEUNER, J. – J. DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith*, rev. ed., London – Blackburn – Auckland 1988.
- NEWMAN, J.H., «The Theory of Development in Religious Doctrine», *Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford between 1826 and 1843*, new ed., London, 1843, 1880.
- , *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, London – Notre Dame, Indiana, 1870, 1979.
- NICHOLS, A., *From Newman to Congar*. The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council, Edinburgh 1990.
- NIEUWENHOVE, J. VAN., «Bevrijding en culturele identiteit. Een spanningsveld in de theologie van Gustavo Gutiérrez», in *Theologie in de context van de Derde Wereld*, ed. B.K. Goldewijk – J. van Nieuwenhove, Kampen 1993, 127-147.
- NOLAN, A., *God in South Africa*. The Challenge of the Gospel, Cape Town – Johannesburg – Grand Rapids – Gweru – London 1988.
- NYAMITI, C., *Christ as Our Ancestor*. Christology from an African Perspective, Harare 1984.
- O'BRIEN, D.J. – T.A. SHANNON, ed., *Catholic Social Thought*. The Documentary Heritage, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1992.
- O'COLLINS, G., *Fundamental Theology*, New York – Mahwah, N.J. 1981.
- , «At the Origins of "Dei Verbum"», *HeyJ* 26 (1985) 5-13.
- , «Revelation Past and Present», in *Vatican II*. Assessment and Perspectives, ed. R. Latourelle, vol. 1, New York – Mahwah, N.J. 1988, 125-137.

- O'COLLINS, G., «The Pope's Theology», *Tablet*, 27 June 1992, 801.
- , *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, New York – Mahwah, N.J. 1993.
- , «Experience», in *DTF*, 306-308.
- , «Revelation now», *Tablet*, 21 May 1994, 616.
- ODOYOYE, M.A., «The Value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices for Christian Theology», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 109-116.
- , «Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies», in *Irruption of the Third World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1983, 246-255.
- , *Hearing and Knowing*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1986.
- , «“In the Image of God...”: A Theological Reflection from an African Perspective», *BThA* 4.7 (1992) 41-53.
- OKURE, T., «Women in the Bible», in *With Passion and Compassion*, V. Fabella – M.A. Oduyoye, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988, 47-59.
- O'MEARA, T.F., «Toward a Subjective Theology of Revelation», *TS* 36 (1975) 401-429.
- PALIHAWADANA, M., «Dhamma Today and Tomorrow», in *Religiousness in Sri Lanka*, ed. J.R. Carter, Marga Institute, Colombo 1979, 129-147.
- PANIKKAR, R., *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, rev. ed., Maryknoll, N.Y. 1964, 1981.
- , *El silencio del Dios*, Madrid, 1970; E.T., *The Silence of God. The Answer of the Buddha*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1989.
- PASTOR, F., «Ortopraxis y ortodoxia», *Gr.* 70 (1989) 689-739.
- , «El discurso del método en teología», *Gr.* 76 (1995) 69-94.
- PERNIA, A.M., *God's Kingdom and Human Liberation*, Manila 1990.
- PHILIPS, G., *L'Église et son mystère au IIème Concile du Vatican*, Paris 1967.
- PILLET, C., «Le Sensus Fidelium et son rapport avec le magistère et la théologie autour du Concile Vatican II», TMs., PUG, Rome, décembre 1989.
- PIRONIO, E., «Interpretación cristiana de los signos de los tiempos hoy en América Latina», in *La Iglesia en la actual transformación de América Latina a la luz del Concilio. I Ponencias*, Secretariado General del CELAM, Bogotá 1970⁵, 101-122.
- POTTMAYER, H.J., «A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II: Twenty Years of Interpretation of the Council», in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo – al., Washington, D.C. 1987, 7-43.
- POTTMAYER, H.J., «Tradition» in *DTF*, 1119-1126.

- RAHNER, K., «The Development of Dogma», *Th.Inv* I, trans. C. Ernst, London – New York 1961, 39-78.
- , «Current Problems in Christology», *Th.Inv.* I, trans. C. Ernst, London – New York 1961, 149-200.
- , «Considerations on the Development of Dogma», *Th.Inv.* IV, trans. K. Smyth, London – New York 1966, 3-35.
- , «Nature and Grace», *Th.Inv.* IV, trans. K. Smyth, London – New York 1966, 165-88.
- , «The Theology of the Symbol», *Th.Inv.* IV, trans. K. Smyth, London – New York 1966, 221-252.
- , «Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions», *Th.Inv.* V, trans. K.H. Kruger, London – New York 1966, 115-134.
- , «Scripture and Tradition», *Th.Inv.* VI, trans. K.H. – B. Kruger, London – Baltimore 1969, 98-112.
- , «The Death of Jesus and the Closing of Revelation», *ThD* 23 (1975) 320-329.
- , «Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II», *TS* 40 (1979) 716-727.
- , «On the “History of Revelation” according to the Second Vatican Council», *Th.Inv.* XVI, trans. D. Morland, London 1983, 191-198.
- , «*Mysterium Ecclesiae*», *Th.Inv.* XVII, trans. M. Kohl, London 1981, 139-155.
- , «Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council», in Concern for the Church. *Th.Inv.* XX, trans. E. Quinn, London 1981, 77-89.
- , «The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council», in Concern for the Church. *Th.Inv.* XX, trans. E. Quinn, London 1981, 90-102.
- RAHULA, W., *What the Buddha Taught*, rev. ed., Bedford 1967.
- RATZINGER, J., «Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Origin and Background», in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, gen. ed. H. Vorgrimler, vol. 3, New York 1968, 155-169.
- , «The Transmission of Divine Revelation», in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, gen. ed. H. Vorgrimler, vol. 3, New York 1968, 181-198.
- , «Revelation Itself», in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, gen. ed. H. Vorgrimler, vol. 3, New York 1968, 170-180.

- RICOEUR, P., «Herméneutique de l'idée de Révélation», in ID., *La Révélation*, Bruxelles 1977, 15-54; E.T., «Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation», in ID., *Essays in Biblical Interpretation*, Philadelphia 1980, 73-118.
- RODGERS, Bishop J., «Bringing Christ to the Peoples of the Pacific», Position Paper, Combined Meeting of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Australia, the Pacific (CEPAC), New Zealand and Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, Sydney 1970.
- ROUSSELOT, P., «Les yeux de la foi,» *RSR* 1 (1910) 241-259, 444-475.
 ———, «Petite théorie du développement du dogme», *RSR* 53 (1965) 355-390.
- RUCH, E.A. – K.C. ANYANWU, *African Philosophy*, rev. ed., Rome 1981, 1984.
- RUGGIERI, G., «Faith and History», in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo – *al.*, Washington, D.C. 1987, 91-114.
- SANGU, Bishop J.D., «SECAM and Evangelisation in Africa», *The Voice of SECAM for the Evangelization of Africa*, SECAM Secretariat, Accra, n.d., 65-71.
- SCHILLEBEECKX, E., *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, New York 1963.
 ———, *Vatican II — A Struggle of Minds*, Dublin 1963.
 ———, «Orthopraxis as a Criterion of Critical Theory», in *The Schillebeeckx Reader*, ed. R. Schreiter, New York 1984, 115-116.
 ———, *Church. The Human Story of God*, trans. J. Bowden, London 1990.
 ———, «The Role of History in What Is Called the New Paradigm», in ID., *The Language of Faith. Essays on Jesus, Theology, and the Church*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1995, 237-247.
- SCHNACKENBURG, R., «Christologia del Nuovo Testamento», *MySal* III.1, Brescia 1971, 289-491.
- SCHREITER, R.J., *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1985.
- SCHWERTNER, S.M., *International Glossary of Abbreviations for Theology and Related Subjects*, Berlin – New York 1992.
- SECKLER, M., «Il significato ecclesiologico del sistema dei "loci theologici"», in *Teologia, Scienza, Chiesa. Saggi di teologia fondamentale*, ed. G. Coffele, Brescia 1988, 171-206.
 ———, «Il concetto di rivelazione,» in *Corso di Teologia Fondamentale*, ed. W. Kern – H.J. Pottmeyer – M. Seckler, vol. 2, Brescia 1990, 66-94.

- SEGUNDO, J.L., «Revelation, Faith, Signs of the Times», in *Signs of the Times. Theological Reflections*, ed. A.T. Hennelly, trans. R.R. Barr, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993, 128-148.
- SENGHOR, L.S., «Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent et suggèrent», in *Personnalité africaine et catholicisme*, Paris 1963, 283-293.
- SETILOANE, G., *African Theology. An Introduction*, Johannesburg 1986.
- SHORTER, A., *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988.
- SIGMUND, P.E., *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads*, Oxford 1990.
- SMITH, C.T., «History», in *South America*, London 1992, 1993⁴, 522-523.
- SNYDER, H.A., *Models of the Kingdom*, Nashville 1991.
- SOARES-PRABHU, G., «The Jesus of Faith», *VFTW* 15.1 (1992) 46-89. [Also in *Spirituality of the Third World*, ed. K.C. Abraham – B. Mbuy-Beya, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994, 139-164.]
- SOBRINO, J., «El conocimiento teológico en la teología Europea y Latinoamericana», in *Liberación y cautiverio. Debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina*, Encuentro Latinoamericano de Teología, Mexico City 1975, 177-207.
- , «The Significance of Puebla for the Catholic Church in Latin America», in *Puebla and Beyond*, ed. J. Eagleston – P. Scharper, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 304-307.
- , «Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology», in *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. I. Ellacuría – J. Sobrino, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1993, 350-388.
- SOUZA, I. DE, «Bible et culture africaine», in *L'Afrique noire et la Bible*, ed. E. Mveng – Z. Werblowsky, Jerusalem 1974, 81-99.
- STARKEY, P., «Agape: A Christian Criterion for Truth in the Other World Religions», *IRM* 74.296 (1985) 425-463.
- SUGIRTHARAJAH, R.S., «Postscript: Achievements and Items for a Future Agenda», in *Voices from the Margin. Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1991, 434-444.
- SULLIVAN, F., *Magisterium*, Mahwah, N.J. 1983.
- TAVARD, G.H., «Commentary on *De Revelatione*», *JES* 3 (1966) 1-35.
- TEMPELS, P., *La philosophie Bantoue*, Paris 1959.
- TEPEDINO, A.M., «Feminist Theology as the Fruit of Passion and Compassion», in *With Passion and Compassion*, ed. V. Fabella – M.A. Oduyoye, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1988, 165-172.

- THISELTON, A.C., *The Two Horizons*. New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1980.
- THOMAS, L.-V. – R. LUNEAU, *Les sages déposés*, Paris 1977.
- , *La terre africaine et ses religions*. Traditions et changements, Paris 1975 1992².
- TINKER, G.E., «Spirituality, Native American Personhood, Sovereignty and Solidarity», *VFTW* 15 (1992) 22-45. [Also in *Spirituality of the Third World*, ed. K.C. Abraham – B. Mbuy-Beya, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1994, 119-132.
- TOMKO, Cardinal J., «On Relativizing Christ: Sects and the Church», *Origins* 20 (25 April 1991) 753-754.
- TORRES, S., «Opening Address», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978, 1-6.
- , «Introduction», in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. S. Torres – V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978, vii-xxiii.
- , «Opening Address», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 3-10.
- , «Preface», in *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, ed. V. Fabella – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1985, ix-xix.
- TORRES, S. – J. EAGLESON, ed., *Theology in the Americas*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1976.
- , ed., *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1981.
- TORRES, S. – V. FABELLA, ed., *The Emergent Gospel*, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1978.
- TRACY, D., «The Particularity and Universality of Christian Revelation», in *Revelation and Experience*, ed. E. Schillebeeckx – B. van Iersel, New York; *Conc.* 113 (1978) 106-116.
- , *The Analogical Imagination*, New York 1981.
- TSHIBANGU, Bishop T., «The Task of African Theologians», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 73-79.
- , Address to the 1972 Symposium of SECAM, *The Voice of SECAM for the Evangelization of Africa*, SECAM Secretariat, Accra, n.d., 47-53.
- TUTU, Bishop D., «The Theology of Liberation in Africa», in *African Theology en Route*, ed. K. Appiah-Kubi – S. Torres, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979, 162-168.
- UKPONG, J.S., «The Emergence of African Theologies», *TS* 45 (1984) 501-536.

- VAUCELLES, L. DE., «The Changing Social Contexts of Postconciliar Catholicism», in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo – *al.*, Washington, D.C. 1987, 44-58.
- VARGAS-MACHUCA, A., «Escritura y tradición en la constitución “Dei Verbum”, cap. II», *EE* 47 (1972) 189-204.
- WALDENFELS, H., *Offenbarung. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil auf dem Hintergrund der neueren Theologie*, München 1969.
- WALIGGO, J.M., «Making a Church That Is Truly African», in *Inculturation. Its Meaning and Urgency*, ed. J.M. Waliggo – *al.*, Kampala 1986, 11-30.
- WICKREMESINGHE, Bishop L., «Christianity in the Context of Other Faiths», in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. V. Fabella, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1980, 28-36.
- WICKS, J., «Deposit of Faith», in *DTF*, 229-239.
- , «Loci Theologici», in *DTF*, 605-607.
- WILFRED, F., «Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness: An Indian Perspective», *ProD B.* 85-86 (1984) 40-57.
- , «The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC): Orientations, Challenges and Impact», in *For all the Peoples of Asia*, ed. G.B. Rosales – C.G. Arévalo, Quezon City, Philippines 1992, xxiii-xxx.
- WILTGEN, R., *The Rhine flows into the Tiber*, New York 1967.

INDEX OF PERSONAL NAMES

- Abba: 223
Abbott: 16, 21, 25, 27, 44, 309, 371,
393-394
Abesamis: 77, 80
Abeyasingha, N.: 162
Abeyasingha, S.: 163
Abraham: 50, 231
Abraham, K.: 59
Alberigo: 21, 55, 64
Alfaro: 32, 262
Alszeghy: 33-34
Alvarado: 240
Amaladoss: 212-213
Amalorpavadass: 78
Ananda Thera: 361
Anyanwu: 119, 139
Appiah-kubi: 58
Arellano: 84
Arévalo: 70, 394
Arguedas: 237-238, 259, 365, 390-
391
Ascherman: 5
Baba Simon: 98-99, 109, 129-130,
145-146
Bakker: 27
Balasuriya: 163, 204
Ballan: 5
Balthasar: 262
Barbour: 208
Barlage: 5
Barnes: 160
Barth: 262-263, 276, 365
Basil: 354
Baskouda: 129-130, 145-146
Batstone: 287
Bayart: 382
Bechert: 384
Belaúde Terry: 240
Benko: 48
Betti: 15, 22, 34-35, 39-40
Bevans: 337
Bianchi: 22-23, 364
Bimwenyi-Kweshi: 76, 100, 123-124
Bloesch: 262-263
Blondel: 32, 37
Blyden: 100
Boesak: 77, 93, 153
Boff: 87-88, 90
Bonino: 320
Bouillard: 60
Boulaga: 153
Braaten: 285-286
Brandewie: 7
Brown: 238-239, 243, 248, 387
Bsteh: 224
Buhan: 134
Bühmann: 57
Bujo: 100-102, 144
Bultmann: 23, 31, 218-219
Burrows: 5
Butler: 21, 30
Byrne: 217
Cabestrero: 392
Cabral: 101
Cadorette: 238-239, 259
Campos: 392
Cano: 89, 264
Capaccioni: 382

- Caprile: 15
 Carrera: 103-104
 Carter: 165, 196-197
 Caspersz: 162, 204
 Cavallini: 382
 Césaire: 101, 351
 Chardin, de: 24, 186, 191, 354, 363
 Chenu, B.: 10, 12-13
 Chenu, M.-D.: 24, 44-46, 248, 264, 365
 Chrysostome: 354
 Cicognani: 18
 Cleary: 242-243
 Clement: 220
 Cone: 88-89, 91
 Congar: 17, 33-35, 37, 40, 46, 52-53, 248, 251, 334, 353, 365
 Cooper: 261
 Crépin: 5
 Croatto: 91-92, 283
 Cullmann: 23, 47
 D'Costa: 212, 229
 Daly: 358
 Daniélou: 24
 Davis: 90, 285
 de la Potterie: 25, 30
 del Valle: 242
 Devananda: 163, 181-182, 358
 Dickson: 79, 135
 Dietrich: 357
 Diop: 101, 107-108, 351, 381
 Dissanayake: 163
 Domché: 109
 Dornberg: 162-163, 181
 Dulles: 7-8, 16-17, 42-43, 46, 51-52, 54, 120-121, 195, 211, 318, 330, 335, 343
 Dumoulin: 209
 Dupuis: 5, 28, 47, 50-51, 62, 161, 181, 194-195, 203, 211-212, 215, 217-220, 224, 306
 Duquoc: 264
 Durand Florez: 239
 Dussel: 243
 Eagleson: 58
 Ebeling: 148
 Echegaray: 252, 389
 Eicher: 15, 60-61
 Éla: 5, 9-11, 97-157, 280, 301-302, 304-308, 310, 313-314, 316-317, 319, 322-323, 325-326, 328, 332-334, 337, 245-355, 372, 379-382
 Emonet: 382
 England: 5
 Estivales: 393
 Fabella: 5, 58-59, 76, 81-84, 94
 Fanon: 101-104, 106, 112
 Fernando, D.: 166
 Fernando, S.: 182
 Fernando, M.: 232
 Fesquet: 15
 Feuer: 276
 Fiorenza: 261, 291
 Fisichella: 319, 372
 Flannery: 16, 25, 29, 62, 309, 372, 393-395
 Florit: 15, 25
 Forbes: 80
 Förster: 5
 Franzini: 35-39, 41
 Freire: 305
 Fries: 15
 Frings: 40
 Frostin: 87
 Fuellenbach: 5, 49
 Fujimori: 240
 Gadamer: 34
 Gallegos: 392
 García Pérez: 240
 Geffré: 53, 61-62, 264, 380-381, 387-388, 390
 Geiger: 356
 Geiselman: 39

- Gelin: 365
 Gibbs, P.: 345, 356, 365
 Gibbs, R.: 6
 Giddings: 5
 Gil Hellín: 15, 22, 26, 41
 Goizueta: 279, 332
 Goldewijk: 10, 153
 Gomez: 221
 Gunatilleke: 159
 Gutiérrez: 5, 9-11, 46, 78, 83, 88,
 237-299, 301-302, 304-306, 308,
 310, 312-314, 316-319, 323-328,
 330, 332-334, 337, 345, 351-352,
 361, 363, 371-374, 376, 387-393
 Guzmán Reynoso: 240
 Haight: 32, 216, 314
 Hamilton: 178
 Harrison: 196
 Hastings: 9, 100
 Hearne: 61
 Hebga: 153
 Hegel: 107, 305
 Heijke: 98, 155
 Helder Câmara: 44
 Hennelly: 88, 243, 249-250
 Hick: 211
 Hilkert: 62
 Houtart: 45, 324
 Huijbregts: 166
 Hynes: 239
 Idowu: 100
 Irrarázaval: 367
 Irenaeus: 28, 139, 220, 226
 Iriarte: 241
 Casas: 393
 John XXIII: 21, 27, 44, 249, 309
 John Paul II: 63, 214, 381
 Johnson: 293
 Justin: 50, 195, 226
 Kagame: 100, 139
 Kange Essiben: 134
 Kappen: 91
 Kasper: 53, 57-58, 167, 219
 Kaufmann: 5
 Keck: 217-218
 Klaiber: 243
 Knitter: 5
 Knox: 74
 Komonchak: 325
 Kroger: 285
 Kuliypitiye: 358
 Kuhn: 287
 Küng: 16, 53
 Kurien: 204
 Las Casas: 239, 241, 250, 255-256,
 295, 333-334, 365, 368, 373, 388,
 392
 Latourelle: 15-16, 22-23, 38, 49, 53,
 372
 Lauret: 393
 Leach: 224
 Lee, P.: 59
 Lee, M.: 392
 Leeuwen: 15, 19, 25
 Lefebure: 164, 201, 210
 Lefebvre: 16
 Lehmann: 292
 Lindbeck: 334
 Lohfink: 324
 Longchamp: 382
 Lubac: 24-25, 37, 262, 334, 365
 Luneau: 98, 148, 380
 Luther: 146-148, 346, 379
 Malevez: 262
 Mallet: 32
 Mallika: 319
 Marlé: 243
 Martey: 99-100
 Martina: 63
 Marx: 276, 284-285, 305, 393
 Masfield: 196
 Mbiti: 100
 Mbuy-Beya: 59
 McCann: 287, 292

- McConville: 160
 McGrath: 44-45, 64-66
 McNamara: 15, 27
 Mendis: 5
 Messina: 109
 Meyer: 36
 Meynet: 6
 Michel: 48
 Min: 87-88
 Minear: 35-36
 Minella: 90, 273
 Moeller: 44-45
 Moll: 242
 Moltmann: 291, 293, 322, 352, 385
 Montcheuil: 262, 365
 Moran: 42
 Mosala: 137
 Moses: 108, 231, 258, 318, 364
 Mouroux: 61
 Mudimbe: 100
 Mudiso: 5
 Mugaruka: 136-137
 Mulago: 100, 103-104
 Munasingha: 181
 Mushete: 77, 79, 100
 Mveng: 82, 98, 103-104, 106, 111,
 139-140, 145, 153
 Neuner: 28, 222
 Newman: 28, 32, 37, 52-53
 Nichols: 37, 52-53
 Nicosia: 5
 Nieuwenhove: 10, 153
 Nolan: 132
 Núñez: 103-104, 382
 Nyamiti: 100, 144
 O'Brien: 153
 O'Collins: 5, 15-16, 22, 42-43, 46,
 51, 60-61, 63
 O'Meara: 31, 51, 299, 305
 Ochoa: 47
 Odoyoye: 82, 93, 149
 Okure: 84
 Ombret: 357
 Ottaviani: 18
 Pacher: 393
 Palihawadana: 196
 Panikkar: 178, 186, 191, 195, 201,
 224, 232
 Pannenberg: 167, 224, 322
 Pape: 5
 Pastor: 129, 239, 264, 281, 322
 Paul (Saint): 186, 218, 347, 360, 363
 Paul VI: 18, 27, 39, 50, 66-68, 73-75,
 110, 249, 268, 312-313, 364
 Pérez: 393
 Pernia: 5, 251, 270
 Perry: 5
 Philips: 33
 Pieris: 5, 9-11, 80, 82, 159-235, 280,
 301-302, 304-308, 311, 313-314,
 316-317, 319, 323, 325-328,
 332-337, 356-364, 371, 373, 382-
 387
 Pillet: 33
 Pironio: 65
 Pius XII: 28
 Pottmeyer: 17-19, 320
 Raabe: 6
 Rahner: 7, 25, 31-32, 37, 40, 42-43,
 49-51, 53, 55, 60-61, 184, 214,
 229, 262, 309, 334, 365, 375
 Rahula: 165, 384
 Ratzinger: 18, 21-23, 27, 35-36, 39,
 42, 253-254, 334
 Rawlinson: 196
 Ricoeur: 125
 Roche: 5
 Rodgers: 74
 Rodríguez: 382
 Romero: 80, 368, 391
 Rosales: 70, 394
 Rousselot: 32, 37, 179, 215
 Ruch: 119, 139
 Ruggieri: 21, 89

- Sangu: 69
Scharper: 393
Schillebeeckx: 25, 29, 52-53, 213-214, 293, 306, 312, 321
Schmidt: 7
Schmitt: 20
Schnackenburg: 218
Schreiter: 306, 311, 320
Seckler: 7, 89, 120-121
Seiterich-Kreuzkamp: 98, 109, 382
Senghor: 101, 151, 351
Sensi: 5
Setiloane: 153
Shannon: 153
Sharkey: 394
Shorter: 69, 99, 156
Sigmund: 287
Silva, S. de: 204
Silva, L. de: 384
Smith: 240, 243
Snyder: 47
Soares-Prabhu: 85
Sobrinho: 66-67, 87, 308, 337-338
Sodano: 67
Souza: 135
Starkey: 198
Suenens: 45
Sugirtharajah: 137
Sullivan: 29, 33, 326
Tanner: 15-16, 21, 25, 375
Tavard: 15, 33
Tempels: 100, 139
Tepedino: 84
Thic Nhat Hanh: 361
Thiselton: 30, 62
Thomas (Aquinas): 31-33, 248, 354, 361-362, 371
Thomas, L.-V.: 148
Tinker: 85
Tomko: 195
Torres: 58, 76, 78, 87-88, 91
Tovar: 393
Tracy: 53, 61, 292, 294
Tshibangu: 69, 93, 100
Tutu: 79, 93, 341
Ukpong: 122
Valentino: 6
Vargas-Machuca: 36
Vaucelles: 64, 341
Velasco: 240
Vico: 288
Villarino: 393
Vincent: 23, 131
Von Rad: 263
Waldenfels: 15
Waliggo: 101
Wickremesinghe: 91
Wicks: 5, 28, 89, 322
Wilfred: 71, 201, 207
Wiltgen: 40, 63
Wittgenstein: 62
Zoungrana: 68

SCRIPTURE INDEX

Genesis

2,15	140
18	224
3	140
9	24
42,1-2	114
43,1-2	114

Exodus

3,14	258
6,6-7	223

Deuteronomy

10,17-18	223
30,19-20	252, 258

Psalms

Ps 9,10	223
---------	-----

Isaiah

52,7	130
52,13-53,12	218
53,7-8	218
12	217
58,6-7	259

Matthew

1,23	26
2,13	185
5,2-11	81
6	133

(Matthew)

5,17	223
6,24	176
8,20	185
11,25	252
25-26	253
13,55	185
16,4	44
15	218
24,31-40	81
25	114, 133, 185, 283, 324, 332
31-46	283
35-42	114, 133
27,11-23	185
26	185
60	185

Mark

4,14	48
26	48
15,16	185

Luke

1,52b-53	134
2,7	185, 188
4,17-21	128
18	258
13,21	312
23,1-8	185
23	188
23,39	185

John

1,1	25, 218
1-3	195
1-18	218
9	115, 335
14	195
46	188
8,32	281
10,10	93
14,6	30
15,26	16
16,13	16
19,14-15	185

Acts

1,8	396
-----	-----

Romans

1,3-4	127
-------	-----

1Corinthians

1Cor 1,7	16
----------	----

2Corinthians

2,16	128
------	-----

Galatians

4,3	217
5,25	210

Ephesians

1,5-7	225
10	48
13	13

Philippians

2,6-11	176, 217
16	128

Colossians

1,16	71
18	123
3,4	16

1Thessalonians

2,13	33
------	----

2Thessalonians

1,7	16
-----	----

1Timothy

2,5	225
6,14	16
6,20	27

2Timothy

1,10	225
12-14	27

Titus

2,13	16
------	----

Hebrews

1,1	144
1-2	144
9,28	16

1Peter

3,19-20	143
---------	-----

1John

1,2	25
4,7-21	179
8	258

SUBJECT INDEX

- Ad gentes, 42-43, 47, 50-51, 105, 110, 154, 209, 249
adaptation theory, 171
Africa, 10-12, 57, 63, 67-70, 75, 77, 79, 82, 93, 95, 97-157, 169, 301, 305-307, 310, 314, 316, 333, 336, 341-342, 379-382, 394-396
African values, 69, 75, 308
agape, 168, 179-180, 198, 214, 377
agapeic gnosis, 214
aletheia, 362
Algeria, 102
alienation, 87, 101-103, 107, 122, 127-130, 139, 266, 284, 304-305
analogical imagination, 292-294
ancestors, 108, 111, 115, 142-146
animism, 169, 357
anonymous Christianity, 171, 184, 191, 212, 220, 229, 234
anthropology, 31, 55, 57, 106, 139-140, 149, 266, 315
apokalypsis, 16
apostles, 20, 22, 28, 34-36, 52
apostolic legacy, 321
Apostolicam actuositatem, 44
ascending christology, 190
Asia, 5, 10-12, 57, 63, 70-73, 79-80, 93, 95, 159-235, 301, 304, 306-307, 323, 333, 335, 342, 357-360, 382-387
Australia, 73, 84, 178, 405
authority:
 church, 279, 324
 experience, 59
 gospel, 91
 magisterial, 52, 87, 203, 319-320,
 of revelation, 59, 234, 265
 sacred, 59-60, 188
 Word, 297
baptism, 103, 166, 171-175, 224
basic human communities, 177, 181, 204, 206-207, 235
Belgium, 63, 98, 101, 239
Brazil, 44, 79-80, 93, 249
Buddha, 159, 164-165, 180, 182-183, 196-197, 205, 224, 356, 362
Buddhism, 161, 163-167, 171, 174, 179-182, 195-199, 203-205, 209, 226-229, 307, 357-358 362
Cameroon, 9, 97-98, 109, 351, 353, 377, 380
Canon Law, 74
Catholic church, 75, 89, 100, 163, 243, 309
CDF, 254, 280-281, 284, 286-287, 298-299, 309, 322
CELAM, 64-67, 71, 80, 241, 243, 249, 252, 260, 279, 371
Central America, 63
Chalcedon, 206, 218, 221, 233, 336
Christ:
 in Africa, 139, 156
 Asian, 187, 215, 221, 234-235, 313
 becoming, 190
 breast-feeding *Christa*, 187
 body of, 43, 186, 193, 208, 235, 255
 broken, 187

(Christ)

cosmic dimension, 186, 212, 225
 cross of, 109, 127, 347
 event, 38, 43, 117, 126, 220
 fullness of revelation, 19, 24-25,
 48-49, 190-192
 fullness of, 190-191, 323
 God become poor, 257
 God's Son, 127, 226
 gospel of, 21, 34, 73, 355
 & history, 46, 250, 263-264, 277
 incarnation of, 21, 26, 92, 136, 216
 Jesus &, 186-187, 190, 228, 362
 kingdom of, 47
 Korean, 187
 liberation in, 281, 290
 liberator, 172
 light of, 43
Logos &, 197, 220
 Lord of life, 123, 129
 as mediator, 144, 173, 192, 229
 message of, 116, 118
 mystery of, 18, 29-30, 36-38, 61,
 190, 195, 201, 206, 213, 222
 as «name», 192, 223-226, 229
 non-Christian, 189, 234-235, 323
 person of, 20, 25, 156
 became poor, 99, 148
 in poor, 72, 81, 99, 176, 185, 213,
 216, 229, 232, 257, 323, 326,
 332, 347
 presence of, 57, 65
 prophetic role of, 33
 reveals, 48, 296
 risen, 71, 114-115, 129, 131, 212,
 307, 347
 as sacrament, 184, 189, 194
 salvation &, 149, 152, 182, 225,
 258, 262, 295
seigneur de la vie, 346
 in slaves, 220
 Spirit &, 26, 51, 193, 233, 328
totus christus, 186, 190
 uniqueness of, 182, 221-222

universality of, 189, 211-213
 victim-judge, 225, 313
 Word &, 42, 126, 186, 188, 200,
 212, 214, 220, 228, 234, 272,
 297, 343, 351
 Christian Workers' Fellowship, 181,
 195, 384, 399
 christopraxis, 85, 89-90, 303, 321,
 323, 343-344
 church:
 as communion, 325
 experience of, 23, 65, 68, 344
 kingdom &, 43, 47, 171
 life of, 28, 36, 41-42, 60, 90, 155
 local, 74, 202, 324-327
 mission of, 65, 265, 276
 reveals, 114, 273, 295
 Spirit in, 26, 72-73, 326
 teaching of, 9, 13, 28, 36, 61, 89,
 203, 302
 tensions in, 241, 243, 280
 tradition, 9, 36, 78, 152, 177, 316
 universal, 52, 202
 circular logic, 284
 co-originating of things, 210
 colonialism, 101, 122, 402
communicatio in sceris, 180
 communion, 47-49, 54, 110, 117,
 119, 129-130, 140, 143, 149, 155,
 193, 209, 246, 263, 266, 268-270,
 273-275, 277, 285, 297, 303,
 321-323, 327, 339, 343,
comunidades (de base), 181, 251,
 260, 267, 273-274, 369-370
 confrontation, 61, 104, 117, 136, 144,
 153-156
 connaturality, 32-33, 179
 conquest theory, 171
 contemplation, 54, 72, 83, 267, 270-
 271, 363
 context, 11, 18, 62-64, 75, 95, 100-
 102, 162-164, 240-243, 306-315
 cosmic:
 covenant, 24

- continuum, 225-226
 dance, 186, 363
 dimension of Christ, 186-187, 212
 dimension of revelation, 49, 54, 232, 234
 religiosity, 168-170, 177, 199-200, 204-205, 208, 222, 230, 307, 311, 357-360
 covenant: 133, 220, 258-259, 362
 cosmic, 24
 with life, 84, 94
 with little ones, 209
 with poor, 176, 186, 193, 205-206, 210, 213, 222, 323, 343, 359
 with slaves, 176, 217
 creation: 25, 49, 77, 148, 191, 210
 new, 233, 263
 order of, 31, 262-263
 revelation in, 85-86
 credentia, 32
 credibility, 8, 30, 48, 315, 318-320, 334, 338, 344
 criterion of truth, 74, 88, 284-285
 CTI, 18, 309-311, 326-327, 372
culturas indígenas, 368
 culture of silence, 89

d'en bas, 109, 112, 154, 352
dabar, 173-174, 188, 193, 197, 219, 234, 313, 329, 377
damnés de la terre, 99, 101-104, 107, 380, 404
De fontibus revelationis, 19, 34, 396
 defence pact with poor, 222-233, 319
Dei Filius, 21, 24, 48, 215, 318
Dei verbum, 13, 15, 19, 20, 22-23, 25-28, 31-33, 35-36, 38-39, 41-42, 47-49, 52, 54, 61, 96, 151-152, 155-156, 184, 191-193, 208-212, 214-216, 223, 230, 232, 279-280, 289, 312, 315, 321, 326, 329-330, 332-333, 335-336, 338, 342, 364
 dependence, 130, 170, 241, 272, 313
 dependence theory, 241-242
 deposit:
 apostolic, 27, 36, 38
 of faith, 19-20, 27-30, 38, 96, 248, 253, 255, 309, 322
 living, 27, 322, 330
 of revelation, 24, 29, 35
 of truth, 319
 of the Word, 151-152, 260-261
 descending christology, 189
 development:
 of dogma, 21, 37
 issues, 73-75, 241
 theories, 241
 of tradition, 23, 33, 155
 of understanding, 12, 49, 155, 184, 248, 305
 developmentalist ideology, 170
dhamma, 165, 182, 192, 196-198, 226, 356, 358, 377-378
dharma, 164-165, 177, 182-183, 188-189, 193, 195-198, 228, 233, 377
 dialectic of gift and demand, 294
 dialectical:
 interplay, 88, 287
 materialism, 305
 method, 11, 88, 287
 process, 292
 terms, 287, 292-294
 dialogue: 228-229, 279, 282, 327
 divine-human, 27, 31, 145, 212, 249, 303
 of faith, 31, 43
 interreligious, 50, 71-72, 78, 95, 154, 160-161, 167, 204, 230
 of life, 72
 revelation &, 26-27, 209
 with world, 55, 71-73, 329
Dignitatis humanae, 42, 44
 divine presence, 73, 75, 95, 344
Divino afflante Spiritu, 21
 doctrine: 166, 182, 219, 289, 319
 Buddhist, 196

(doctrine)

- Chalcedonian, 190
- conditioned, 60
- as deposit, 28, 132, 309
- revealed, 28, 38, 68
- transmission of, 36
- dogma, 28, 37, 42, 53, 73, 397, 411
- dreams, 137, 142, 307, 333
- dualism, 45, 298
- dualistic thinking, 266
- dynamics of history, 287
- EATWOT, 10-11, 58-59, 76-86, 91-96, 279, 301, 328, 342, 345, 372
- Ecclesia sanctae*, 110, 395
- Ecclesiam suam*, 50
- ecology, 67
- ecumenical:
 - collaboration, 45
 - contribution, 58-59, 75
 - view of revelation, 54, 91, 334
- Egypt, 107-108
- engaged reading, 136
- enlightenment:
 - European, 59, 319, 335
 - religious, 164-165, 178, 180, 197, 231, 304, 333, 377
- epiphaneia*, 16, 288
- epistemological break, 86-89, 150, 279
- epistemology, 87-88
- eschatological:
 - dimension of reign, 289, 322
 - dimension of revelation, 48, 330
 - fullness, 263
 - gift, 268, 312
 - judge, 185
 - order, 135
 - perspective, 48-49, 268
 - promise, 268
 - sense, 44
- eschatology and praxis, 260-261, 268
- Europe, 10-11, 18, 24, 59, 63-64, 86, 94, 101, 107, 279, 293, 328-329, 334, 353

- evil, 26, 88, 137, 148, 178, 272, 288, 293, 295, 322, 330
- evil structures, 199
- Exodus, 81, 108, 114, 119-122, 135-136, 151, 258, 263, 351-352
- experience:
 - of the absence of God, 62
 - of christopraxis, 89-91
 - cultural, 60, 62
 - depth, 61
 - empirical, 60-61
 - of faith, 34, 266, 341
 - of God as silence, 180, 231
 - human, 53, 59-63, 138-141, 301-302, 308, 337, 342, 344
 - life, 11, 58, 61, 66, 126, 147, 174, 301, 315
 - nirvanic, 178
 - religious, 7, 119, 172, 181, 199, 202, 206, 214, 231, 304, 315
- external debt, 67, 242
- extra historiam nulla salus*, 234, 342
- extrinsicism, 32
- «eyes of faith», 32
- FABC, 70-73, 219, 372
- faith:
 - act of, 32, 328
 - African expression of, 142, 152
 - apostolic, 41, 52
 - auditus fidei*, 342
 - Christ of, 224
 - in Christ, 260-261, 265, 284, 328
 - Christian, 7, 36, 39, 71, 85, 117, 143, 179, 183, 204, 206, 284, 312, 323
 - commitment, 250, 266-267, 277, 297, 303, 305, 341
 - content of, 69, 88, 215, 321
 - critical role of, 130
 - culture &, 99-101, 108, 141, 156
 - demands of, 118, 141, 215
 - deposit of, 19-20, 27-30, 38, 96, 248, 253, 255, 309, 322

- dialogue of, 31, 43
 efficacy of, 342
 experience of, 34, 88, 58, 61, 72,
 78, 81, 131, 138, 214, 238, 260,
 265-267, 283, 305, 318, 321,
 326-327, 336, 341, 344
 growth of, 28, 30, 95
 history &, 46, 87, 313
 as human response, 20, 30-32, 54,
 214-215, 365, 329
intellectus fidei, 342
 justice &, 150, 319
 language, 106, 123, 131, 150, 214,
 312, 336
 life &, 8, 28, 34, 66, 87, 94, 128,
 219, 246, 248, 251, 265, 299,
 303, 327, 337, 344
 light of, 65, 266-267, 273, 295,
 320, 328
 lived, 245, 249, 267, 330, 341-344
 living, 90, 265, 303
 obedience of, 32, 214, 330
 object of, 33, 215
 praxis, 83, 86-89, 92, 96, 265, 337
 reason &, 7-8, 87, 141, 150, 303,
 311, 319, 336-337, 342
 response to the Spirit, 325
 response to the Word, 216, 303,
 328
 revelation &, 34, 51, 146, 214
 rule of, 41
 science &, 24, 49
 source of, 77
 theology of, 8, 31-32, 328
 unity of, 69, 73
 FCBCO, 73, 372
 feminine hermeneutic, 84
fides qua, 327-328
fides quae, 321, 328
fides quaerens intellectum, 219, 341,
fides quaerens justitiam et libertatem,
 219
 First World, 64, 73, 83, 86, 89, 154,
 170, 209, 331
 form and content of dogma, 29-30,
 156, 309
 France, 53, 63, 98, 146, 239, 279
 freedom and gratuitousness, 271
 full humanity, 80, 148, 150, 190, 199
Gaudium et spes, 23, 27, 42-45, 47-
 48, 55, 64-65, 68, 197, 260, 266,
 268, 279, 309, 332-333, 335-336
 Gautama (Buddha), 164, 180, 221,
 224
 Germany, 53, 63
 Ghana, 79, 93
 gnostic agape, 179-180, 214
 gnostic idiom, 178, 360
 God:
 absence of, 62, 272, 336
 «absent presence» of, 148
 active presence, 51, 248, 321, 338
 becomes history, 280
 dancing, 211, 363
 Deus absconditus, 130, 146
 Dieu de la vie, 345
 Dios inquisidor, 237, 259
 Dios liberador, 237, 259
 distant, 111, 142
 gratuitousness of, 256, 294, 299
 hears the cry of the poor, 133, 316
 of hope, 113, 115, 258, 272, 297,
 319
 image of, 84, 136, 143, 149, 191,
 259-260, 292, 294
 imago dei, 139, 315
 immanence, 147, 350
 liberator, 237, 271
 of life, 93-94, 120-123, 346
 of love and justice, 259, 270, 293,
 318, 339
 & mammon, 176, 205, 210
 message of, 103, 114-116, 119,
 121, 123, 125, 149, 210, 336
 & predilection for the weak, 283,
 318

(God)

- presence of, 31-32, 45, 61, 65, 72, 77-78, 81, 85-86, 92-93, 111, 176, 246, 292-296, 314, 328
 - revealed in Jesus Christ, 113, 115, 157, 253, 257, 267, 277, 289, 294, 321, 337
 - silence of, 98
 - transcendence of, 146
 - will of, 27, 47-48, 54, 77, 110, 114-115, 119, 121, 130-134, 209, 273, 289, 298, 303, 322-323, 330, 364
- Gospel:
- bonne nouvelle*, 128, 143, 349
 - challenge of, 74, 99, 118, 134, 136, 313
 - credibility of, 318-319, 344
 - of Christ, 21, 34
 - culture &, 68, 100-101, 306
 - incarnation of, 68, 70, 95, 104, 117, 132
 - liberating potential of, 102, 104, 118, 127, 130, 182, 245, 294
 - light of, 46, 52, 74, 91, 143, 270, 318
 - living, 315, 328
 - novelty of, 110, 129, 272
 - power of, 118, 134, 316
 - preparation of, 50, 103, 171
 - proclamation of, 99, 131, 153
 - (re)reading of, 109, 118, 138
 - reborn in Africa, 132, 155, 316
 - as saving force, 70, 320
 - tradition &, 38
 - truth of, 55, 71, 288
 - revelation &, 68, 75, 77, 79, 116, 127, 130-134
 - unchanging, 66
- grace, 31-32, 78, 93, 106, 198, 215, 253, 255, 261, 277, 298, 302, 329
 - gratuitous love of God, 252-253, 269, 273-274, 294, 343
 - Greece 107

- «han-ridden body», 187
- harmony between word and silence, 180, 192, 307-308
- hearer of the word, 31
- Hegelianism, 21, 264, 305
- hermeneutical circle, 88, 207, 260, 306, 315, 324
- hermeneutics, 8, 52-53, 92, 134-138, 203-208, 233, 276, 282-284, 310, 332, 357-358, 363-364
- hierarchy of truths, 18, 320
- Hinduism, 166, 171, 174, 186, 201, 220, 224, 226, 358, 410
- historical consciousness, 55, 261-265, 309-314
- historical positivism, 259
- historicity of revealed truth, 309
- historico-critical method, 21
- history:
 - ambiguity of, 299
 - God's action in, 58, 89-90, 95
 - myth &, 360-361
 - linear view of, 210, 350-361
 - revelation &, 20-24, 55, 60, 86-87, 112, 175-177, 257, 261-265, 275-278, 296, 302, 312, 329, 337, 364
 - theology of, 66, 87
 - transcendence &, 289-291, 336
 - underside of, 86-87, 272, 305, 331
- hodos*, 173-174, 183, 188, 193, 207, 234, 377
- human development, 73, 141, 169
- Humanae salutis*, 44, 394
- Humani generis*, 18, 28, 395
- humanum*, 190-192, 227, 315, 377
- ideology: 11, 77, 87
 - bourgeois, 287
 - developmentalist, 170
- illumination, 32, 198, 209, 214
- immanentism, 32, 257, 264, 281, 294
- incarnation:
 - continues, 156, 336, 343, 350

- of gospel, 70, 95, 117
- history &, 290-291, 296
- in Jesus Christ, 21, 92, 216, 302
- model, 121, 148, 156
- as myth, 360
- the poor &, 104, 112, 136, 157, 176, 219, 332
- slaves &, 217-218, 220, 264, 276, 302
- revelation &, 50, 257
- significance of, 26, 138, 188, 323, 343, 347
- theology of, 75
- universal dimension of, 190, 194
- of the Word, 216, 220, 264, 276, 302
- inclusivist theories, 191
- inculturation, 70, 80, 99, 105, 156, 172-173, 215, 335, 367
- Independent churches, 333
- India, 78, 81, 83, 160, 164, 166, 169, 172, 174, 204
- indigenous spiritualities, 85
- inspiration, 34, 78, 85, 211
- instinct, 32-33, 199
- interpersonal (approach to revelation), 20, 54, 329, 334
- interpretation:
 - African, 131, 337
 - of Council, 17-18
 - of experience, 178
 - of faith, 281
 - of gospel, 118
 - of life, 283
 - non-Christian, 204, 229, 358-359
 - of scripture, 21, 205, 297
 - of «signs of the times», 72, 320
 - Spirit &, 327
 - verifying, 150, 217-218, 306
 - of Word, 205, 208, 265, 317, 324, 338
- interpreter 208, 306, 324-325
- interventionist view, 262
- Islam, 171, 333
- Jainism, 174
- Jesus:
 - Buddha &, 183
 - as «defence-pact», 186, 233, 323
 - «our contemporary», 153
 - faith in, 128, 161, 214-216, 267
 - as good news, 227
 - historical, 117, 136, 185, 213, 323
 - incarnation &, 216-221, 232
 - not fully risen, 187, 323
 - not *totum Christi*, 186, 190, 323, 362
 - poor &, 129, 149, 159, 171, 210, 227, 257, 267, 337
 - resurrection of, 110, 135, 187, 343
 - revelation of, 24-26, 114, 189-191, 230, 233
 - suffering humanity &, 139, 187
 - the Word &, 225-228, 277, 302, 336, 343
 - uniqueness of, 221
- John XXIII 20-21, 27, 29, 44, 132, 249, 309, 311, 334
- kairos*, 274, 381
- karunā*, 179, 198, 377
- kenosis*, 99, 147, 193, 377
- kernel, 30, 118, 311-312
- kerygma*, 182, 218, 377
- kingdom, 47-49, 112, 175, 244, 268-270, 277-278, 296-297, 329, 361
- Kirdi, 98, 109-111, 123, 126-127, 130, 145-146, 349-352
- Korea,
- liberation:
 - cultural, 103-104
 - Éla &, 104
 - gnosis &, 199
 - Gutiérrez &, 245
 - inculturation &, 156, 173
 - life &, 122-123, 129, 245
 - Pieris &, 170, 180, 199, 361-362
 - as religious experience, 231, 307

(liberation)

- revelation &, 70, 234, 355, 364
- salvation &, 225, 291, 314, 356
- from sin, 245, 253, 290, 297
- as theological locus, 303
- in Third World, 80, 122, 251-252
- Liberation Theology, 76, 82, 104, 185, 239, 243-245, 281, 364
- language:
 - analogical and dialectical, 292
 - of contemplation, 271
 - faith &, 123
 - of the Spirit, 137, 168, 177, 197, 252
- liberative knowledge, 178, 229
- lieu théologique*, 134-135
- light:
 - of Christ, 43
 - of contemporary experience, 134, 204, 282
 - darkness &, 26, 108
 - of faith, 65, 266-267, 273, 295, 320, 328
 - of gospel, 46, 52, 74, 91, 143, 270, 318
 - of revelation, 65, 150, 152, 245, 250, 261, 266
 - of Word, 45, 71, 244-245, 248, 250, 265, 267-268, 275, 286, 295, 308, 317, 342, 364
 - in l. of world, 9, 302, 313
- «little ones», 129, 154, 182, 208, 249, 252, 275
- liturgy:
 - life &, 206
 - of life, 204, 206
 - sacred, 41, 116, 126, 327
- living the incarnation, 343
- locus of revelation: 75, 112, 264, 342
 - action of Spirit as, 93
 - history as, 23, 89-90, 136, 153, 175, 257, 261, 274, 296, 302, 304, 317, 329, 334

- life of community as, 90, 113, 206, 272, 342
- other religions as, 78
- religiousness as, 200
- silence as, 191
- locus theologicus*, 146, 264, 273-274, 312, 322
- Logos*, 25, 50-51, 138, 177, 183, 195-197, 216-217, 220, 226, 228-229, 233-234, 333, 356
- Logos* model, 173
- Lord of life, 103, 111, 123, 129, 337
- Lumen gentium*, 33, 47, 50, 249, 326, 373
- Madagascar, 67-68, 70, 75, 375
- magisterium:
 - academic, 173, 327, 357
 - of poor, 173, 327, 358
 - Roman, 219
 - «third», 174, 222
 - of Third World bishops, 63, 317
- Magnificat, 104, 134, 244, 318
- Mahāyāna*, 164, 182, 196, 377
- mammon, 168, 176, 205-207, 210, 222, 225, 227, 317
- manifest, 15-16, 110, 190, 227, 297
- manifestation: 15-16, 78
 - of Christ, 24, 187, 201, 212
 - of Christic mystery, 195
 - of creator, 16, 49
 - of Gautama, 164
 - of God, 26, 43, 81, 83, 248
 - of God's covenant, 213
 - of God's love, 25, 294, 330
 - of God's will/plan, 30, 210
 - of Jesus Christ, 42, 49
 - of mystery, 201, 224
 - of the Word, 212
 - of word-medium-path, 189, 220, 228
- mārga*, 177, 183, 189, 193, 195, 207, 377

- Marxist analysis, 82, 280, 305
 Marxist dialectics, 287
 Medellín, 64-66, 241, 260, 279
 mediator:
 of absolute, 177, 183, 195
 ancestors as, 111, 144
 Christ as, 25, 144, 192
 of grace, 194
 of Word, 200
 medium (of revelation):
 African culture, 141
 Christ, 173
 faith expression, 90
 Gautama, 164
 human history, 147, 265, 322
 imago dei, 315
 praxis of Jesus, 183, 208, 274, 343
 poor, 246, 296
 religions, 51
 religiousness of poor, 231, 311
 scripture, 60
 (Spirit in) community, 326, 338
 Word, 147, 191, 338
 medium (of salvation):
 dabar, 234
 dharma, 195
 Jesus, 189, 220-221
 Word of revelation, 188, 193, 228
 Messianic movements, 122
 metacosmic dimension of religion,
 168-170, 177, 199-200, 205, 227,
 230, 307, 357, 360, 377
 Mexico, 83, 87, 92, 94
milieu de rencontre with God, 147,
 323
 Minjung, 187, 205, 358
 miracles, 26, 48, 318-319
 model:
 logocentric, 194, 226, 229
 christocentric, 194, 226
 modernism, 8, 21, 28, 59
 Modernists, 55
Mysterium Ecclesiae, 29, 62, 309,
 393, 411
 Mystery (Panikkar), 186-187
 mystical language, 271, 293
 myth, 65, 97-98, 110-111, 124, 140,
 144-145, 211, 216-218, 291, 336,
 350, 359-360, 368
 natural and supernatural, 46, 55
 nature:
 (creation), 85-86, 94, 169-170,
 175, 210, 261, 303
 divine, 47, 87
 (grace &), 31, 55, 148, 262, 290
 human, 189, 216
négritude, 100-102, 351
 Netherlands, 63
 new creation, 233
 new heaven and new earth, 182
 New Zealand, 6, 73-74, 395, 412
 non-people, 175
 nonpersons, 87
 norm for orthodoxy, 283, 288
 normative history of Israel, 177
 North America, 63
Nostra aetate, 50, 209
 «not yet», 187, 190, 234, 296, 323
nouvelle théologie, 101, 279, 330
 obedience of faith, 32, 214, 330
 Oceania, 9-10, 57-58, 63, 73-75, 169,
 342, 372, 395, 406
 oppressive structures, 77
 option for the poor, 52, 66-67, 76, 81,
 93, 95, 244, 256, 259, 275-276,
 283, 302, 307-308, 352
oralité, 124
 order of creation, 262
 order of salvation, 262-263, 281
 orthopraxis, 96, 150, 264, 267, 280,
 288-289, 321-323
Pacem in terris, 44, 394
paticcasamuppanna, 210, 361, 377
pālabre évangélique, 125, 377
palaver, 151, 377

- Panama, 240
 Papua New Guinea, 5, 73, 412
 paradigm(s): 208, 287, 335
 Asian, 222
 Bible as, 206
 Chalcedonian, 190
 immersion, 171
 faith-seeking-justice, 219, 233
 new, 208, 222-223, 336-337, 344
 of revelation, 121
 theos-aner, 336
 Western scientific, 335
parousia, 47, 363
 «partial fulfilments» of promise, 266
 paschal mystery, 40, 123, 177, 188-189, 197, 206-207, 212-213, 216, 228, 231, 319, 326, 330
 Paul (Saint), 128, 141
 Pauline theology, 127-128, 333, 347
 personal freedom, 291
 Peru, 9, 11, 238-240, 243, 245, 249-250, 365, 369-370
la pierre de Dieu, 111 349-350
phanerosis, 16
 Pius XII, 21, 28, 395
 pluralism, 53, 55, 57, 68-69, 73, 75, 77, 218, 229
 poor: 66, 82, 106
 addressees of Word, 176, 222, 253, 257, 272
 covenant with, 186, 205, 210, 222, 323
 cry of, 111, 133, 136, 150, 316
 dialogue with, 71-72
 faces of, 67
 faith experience of, 81, 115, 259
 God's concern for, 123, 265, 269, 294-295, 318
 God's reign &, 231
 irruption of, 244
 liberation &, 200, 227, 231, 319
 liberation of poor reveals God, 246, 251-252, 265, 274, 319, 336, 343
 magisterium of, 173, 327, 358
 reveal Christ, 176
 reveal God, 95, 200, 256, 297, 311
 reveal voice of the Spirit, 207, 233
 reveal the Word, 176, 212, 277
 revelation of Christ &, 81, 283
 as sacrament of Christ, 72, 99, 147, 173, 176, 183, 188, 190, 216, 229, 267, 332
 poverty:
 anthropological, 82, 102, 106, 138-139, 238, 358
 cultural, 82
 of Jesus, 66, 207, 227
 reality of, 9, 68, 72, 80, 204, 241
 religiousness &, 168, 173, 199, 204, 232
 revelation &, 103, 274, 276, 317, 336
 political hermeneutics of Gospel, 276
 popular religiosity, 169, 200, 205, 333, 357
Populorum progressio, 70, 74-75, 245, 249, 268, 279
 post-modern, 335
prajñā, 179, 378
 praxis, 89-91, 268-272, 284-288, 321-323
 praxis and truth, 288-289
 prayer, 28, 72, 214, 270-271, 274, 360
 primitive religion, 357
 primordial break, 144-145
 prophecies, 48
 prophetic language, 271, 294
 prophetic witness, 42, 155, 322
 propositional understanding of revelation, 19, 24-25, 30, 32, 34, 38, 54, 89, 152, 155, 301, 311, 331
 Puebla, 66, 80, 252-253, 352
 racial discrimination, 68
 rationalism, 21, 86, 150, 322, 361

- reception:
 of Council, 17, 52, 364
 of revelation, 60, 62, 83, 154, 215, 265, 272, 277, 297, 303, 337
- redemption, 153, 167, 202, 214, 218-219, 225, 268, 289, 320-321
- refugees, 163
- reign:
 of God, 47, 121, 173, 187-188, 190, 192, 212-213, 217, 231, 257, 266, 268-274, 289, 296, 303-304, 315, 321-324, 336-337, 349
 of life, 277, 296, 330
- reincarnation, 361
- relative value, 165, 310, 319, 364
- relativism, 21, 150, 280, 309, 310
- religious metaphysics, 266
- resurrection:
 as gift of life, 252
 of Jesus, 24, 54, 61, 110, 114-115, 117, 127-129, 148, 156, 190, 209, 213, 238, 252
 kingdom of God &, 296, 308
 as message of revelation, 123, 256
 participating in, 343
 signs of, 80
 Spirit in, 92
 as summit of revelation, 135
 today, 92, 212, 362
- revealed doctrine, 38, 68
- revealed truth, 8-9, 25, 28, 45, 127, 247-249, 253-254, 305, 308-311, 327, 342
- revealed Word, 247, 254, 267, 295, 313
- revelation:
 beyond Judeo-Christian tradition, 49-51, 169-175, 189-200
 biblical, 79, 135, 176, 204-205, 233, 247, 258, 282-283, 299, 304, 315, 317, 330, 334
 continuing, 43, 90-91, 120, 127, 177, 231, 332
 as continuing process, 42, 155, 302, 322
 cosmic dimension of, 49, 54, 232, 234
 dependent, 43, 46, 49
 deposit &, 27-30, 35
 as dialogue, 20, 26-27, 209
 as divine self-communication, 43, 51
 dynamic view of, 20, 34-35, 89, 331, 334
 dynamism of, 122, 155, 289
 as enlightenment, 333, 197-198
 eschatological dimension, 48, 330
 foundational, 43, 46, 90-91, 155, 297, 332, 344
 God's love &, 258-260
 Jesus Christ &, 24-26, 189-195
 heightened (*kairos*), 274, 303
 history &, 20-24, 55, 86-87, 112, 175-177, 257, 261-265, 275-278, 296, 302, 312, 329, 364
 human experience &, 9, 59-63
 human pole of, 31-34, 60, 124, 138-141, 265
 kingdom &, 47-49, 268-270, 277-278, 296-297
 liberation &, 70, 234, 251, 335, 344, 364
 living, 113, 151, 155
 new source of, 176, 200, 233, 304
 on-going, 41-43, 96, 113, 155, 192, 297, 329, 344
 praxis &, 269-272, 297
 scripture &, 38-41, 91-92
 «signs of the times» &, 44-47
 source(s) of, 19, 22, 39, 85, 88, 91, 175-176, 200, 234, 248, 299, 304, 316, 322
 Spirit &, 39, 71-73, 92-93, 193, 302, 328
 transmission of, 34-38
- revolution
 in Algeria, 101-102

(revolution)

- Asian poor &, 177, 199-200, 357
- Copernican, 305
- of expectations, 74
- in LA, 64, 80, 240, 267
- scientific, 287
- right relations, 139, 141, 225, 307
- root metaphors, 335
- sacrament: 78
 - bathing as, 175
 - Christ as, 25, 184, 189, 194
 - church as, 48, 274
 - of church, 36, 106, 125, 206, 364
 - of history, 274
 - humanity as, 147, 343
 - Jesus as, 27
 - of liberation, 175
 - as mystery, 27, 106
 - poor as, 176, 216, 332
 - slaves as, 220
 - of Word, 126, 205
- sacramental:
 - act, 206
 - dimension, 209, 294, 299, 332
 - form of kingdom, 171
 - identification, 323
 - model, 184
 - presence, 176, 209, 216
 - revelation as, 24
 - scripture is, 364
 - theology, 323
 - theory, 171
- Sacrosanctum concilium*, 44, 206
- salvation: 19, 171-173, 204
 - as communion, 285
 - history, 22-24, 211
 - history of, 49, 183, 210, 261
 - of history, 264
 - Jesus Christ &, 225-229
 - kingdom &, 48-49, 202, 268, 299, 330
 - liberation &, 285-288, 291

- message of, 54, 106, 112, 114, 136
- models of, 229-235, 278, 296
- now, 126, 153, 155, 161, 183, 274, 298, 303
- order of, 31, 262-263, 281, 290
- other religions &, 50-51, 78, 180, 182-184, 195, 262, 356
- plan of, 21, 54, 209, 247
- of poor, 134, 152, 269
- promise of, 108, 114, 291
- revelation &, 51, 85, 116, 121, 153, 155, 189, 198-199, 207
- Word &, 188, 192-194, 200, 217, 219-220, 224
- salvific plan, 23, 54, 145, 209
- sangha*, 165, 182, 362, 378
- Santo Domingo, 67, 242, 243
- samsāra*, 360-361, 378
- saving Mystery, 231
- saving truth, 288
- scourged Christ of the Indies, 255, 323
- scripture, 38-41, 78, 91-92, 115, 123, 126, 131-136, 205, 282-283, 286, 294-295, 302, 314-318, 338, 244
- SECAM, 67-71, 375, 395, 412, 414
- secularisation, 65, 251, 293
- SEDOS, 5, 128, 375
- see, judge, act method, 65-66
- seeds of God's revelation, 233
- seeds of the kingdom, 48
- seeds of the Word, 50, 71
- self-communication of God, 7, 31-32, 42, 51, 54, 110, 114-115, 120-121, 248, 262 265, 277, 301, 315, 322-323, 337, 344
- self-transcendence, 215-216
- Semitic understanding, 223, 225
- sensus fidei*, 32-34, 55, 326-327
- sensus fidelium*, 33, 326-327
- Sermon on the Mount, 176, 210, 227
- sickness, 68, 103, 137, 140, 142, 157
- signs of salvation, 225, 207, 318

- «signs of the times», 20, 23, 44-46, 49, 52, 54, 65, 67, 70-72, 75, 95, 131-132, 134, 155, 188, 242, 273-274, 290, 299, 303, 310, 319-320, 325, 329-330, 337, 363-364
- sin: 106, 117, 217, 269, 338
 death &, 26, 128, 209, 330, 332
 freedom from, 128
 grace &, 149, 262, 320, 329
 liberation from, 245, 253, 290-291, 297
- slavery, 103, 105, 112, 119, 127, 130, 134-135, 154, 170, 217-218, 223, 304, 307, 313, 320
- slavery to sin, 26
- slavery to mammon, 207
- social analysis, 90, 254
- social sciences, 31, 90, 105, 266
- solidarity:
 with the poor, 81, 85-86, 241, 244, 256, 259, 261, 271
 with non-Christians, 182
- Solomon Islands, 73, 412
- South Africa, 11, 77, 82, 102, 132
- South America, 63, 240, 243
- Spain, 240
- Spirit:
 active in church, 26, 43, 135, 326, 353-354
 beyond church, 71-72, 95, 167, 197, 214, 233
 in Buddhism, 197-199
 of Christ, 38, 328
 discourse of, 193, 213, 215, 333
 of Jesus, 193
 as God's presence, 93, 95
 of God, 69
 holy S., 28, 179, 214, 339
 human, 32
 revealing God's presence, 92
 in history, 93, 186
 life &, 86, 92, 95
sensus fidei &, 326-327
 signs of, 65
 in «signs of the times», 71, 245
 as source of revelation, 39, 193, 302, 328
 of truth, 33, 326
 universal, 26, 194, 197-200, 230-231, 234, 363
 voice of, 71, 177, 207, 215
 in the world, 31
 Word &, 168, 180, 188, 194, 226, 228
- Sri Lanka, 9, 11, 79, 91, 160, 162-167, 169, 174, 181, 204, 356
- stepping stones, 103
- supernatural:
 grace, 215
 knowledge, 32, 50
 order of salvation, 281
 revelation, 21, 27, 53
 sense of faith, 326
- Switzerland, 53, 63, 83, 250, 388
- sybiosis, 211
- symbol(s):
 African, 106, 123-125, 135, 139-140, 142-144, 152
 Arguedian, 237
 biblical, 142
 of God's presence, 306
 of other religions, 195, 227
 of suffering, 245
 of Word/*Logos*, 27, 195
- symbolism, 25, 111, 125, 175, 201, 224, 315, 323, 349-350, 358
- Synod (1971), 153
- Synod (1974), 68
- Synod (1985), 17, 46, 51, 325
- Synod (Africa), 70
- Tanzania, 76
- Tao*, 177, 188-189, 193, 213, 378
- tathāgata*, 226, 378
- technocracy, 169-170, 186
- temporal and spiritual realms, 266
- testimony:
 biblical, 41, 91, 180, 311, 317, 329

- (*testimony*)
 in creation, 25, 49, 211
 of faith, 321
 of life of Christ, 48
 of people's lives, 177
- theology;
 of history, 66, 72, 75
 of incarnation, 75, 99, 148
 as second act, 244
- la théologie sous l'arbre*, 108-109, 337, 381
- theophany, 246, 265
- theory:
 praxis &, 207, 284-285, 287
 divorced from praxis, 288
 independent of praxis, 284
- Theravāda*, 164-165, 182, 196, 356, 378
- Third Church, 57, 398
- Third World: 8-9, 305, 345-346
 Christ, 187
 contribution, 305, 330, 338, 341-344
 (defence of term), 76
 experience, 57-96
- Tradition: 295-297, 316-318, 334-335, 344, 353-355
 church T., 9, 21, 96, 151-152, 155, 177, 231-232
 constitutive phase of, 35
 dynamic understanding of, 42
 Judeo-Christian, 20, 43, 49, 145, 168, 316, 329
 as *lecture seconde*, 151-152, 354
 living, 21, 23, 52, 96, 152, 282
 mythical, 145
 Scripture &, 19, 28, 151, 156, 286
 as transmission of revelation, 34-41
- traditional culture, 99, 101, 142
- traditions: 152, 353
 cultural, 142
 mystical, 174
 of other religions, 180, 193-194
- transcendence:
de l'ici bas, 48
 of faith, 256
 freedom &, 32, 150, 293
 gratuitousness &, 294
 language &, 292-294, 298
 of God, 146-148, 258, 299, 331, 350
 immanence &, 55
 revelation &, 191, 258, 280, 292
 self-t., 32, 215-216
- transcendent:
dhamma, 165, 196
 God as, 44, 146, 262
 history, 259-262, 289-291, 294, 298-299, 331, 336
 kingdom &, 270, 299
 Word, 27
- transcendental:
 experience, 60, 196
 horizon, 169, 227
 revelation, 43, 51, 77
 theology, 31, 61, 262
- transforming praxis, 183, 208
- transforming the world, 134, 153, 156, 316
- Trent, 15, 17-18, 34, 37-39
- truth:
 in Buddhism, 165, 182, 192, 197, 199, 207
 criterion of, 60, 74, 88, 150-151, 208, 279, 281, 361
 deposit of, 28
 dogmatic, 28
 doing the t., 321, 327, 338-339, 343
 as *emet*, 362
 gospel &, 55, 71, 77
 hierarchy of, 18, 320
 history &, 29, 308-314, 320
 Jesus the, 185
 liberation &, 178, 228, 362, 364
 path &, 166, 174, 183, 197
 praxis &, 285, 288-289, 311

- pre-existent, 183, 196-197, 356
 propositional, 42, 301, 311
 Marxist view of, 280
 in religions, 50, 78, 194, 198
 of resurrection, 307
 revealed, 8-9, 20, 25, 28, 45, 127,
 249, 253, 305, 327
 revelation as t., 16
 of revelation, 30, 87, 89, 110, 136
 saving, 30, 34, 51, 198
 Spirit of, 33, 326
 timeless, 22, 312, 329
 theories of, 88
 ultimate truth, 164, 192, 198
 universal, 211, 312, 360
 Word &, 54
 two-source theory, 34, 152
- Uganda, 67
 ultimate reality, 161, 168, 197, 200,
 209, 231, 311, 359-360
 uncentering of theology, 96
 uniqueness of Christ, 182, 201, 216,
 221-223
 uniqueness of Jesus, 223, 232
Unitatis redintegratio, 27, 44
 universality of Christ, 189, 213, 225
 unspeakable One, 188, 191-192, 194,
 209, 229, 304, 333
 unspoken Speaker, 188, 191, 193-
 194, 229, 326
- Vac*, 188
 Vatican Council I, 18, 24-25, 27, 38,
 49-50, 52, 318, 330
 Vatican Council II, 15-51, 63-64, 94-
 96, 208-216, 232, 263, 279, 328-
 334, 344
 verification of truth, 283, 288-289,
 328
veritas, 215, 362
via crucis, 183, 190
 voiceless transmitters of Word, 176
- witness:
 apostolic, 40
 of Christian community, 73, 274
 church as, 24
 of poor, 93
 of poverty, 182
 prophetic, 42, 155, 302, 322
 revelation as, 16
 scripture as, 135, 151
 Spirit as, 16, 71
 women's view, 84
 women's covenant with life, 94
- Word:
 actualise God's W., 234, 364
 being formed, 228
 from below, 306, 314
 biblical, 177, 205
 Christ the, 24, 26, 42, 126, 188
 Christ as name of W., 192, 229
 dabar, 234, 313
 deeds &, 22, 54, 110
 deposit of the, 151-152
 as discourse of Spirit, 193, 226
 divine W., 5, 7, 45, 50, 116, 295,
 322, 330, 342
 eternal, 42, 193, 228
 event &, 22, 41
 ever ancient ever new, 204, 233
 of faith, 220, 328
 as gift, 265, 270, 275
 as God's message, 116, 120
 as God's self-communication, 120
 as God's will, 116, 120, 264
 grows, 194
 as historical experience, 260, 296,
 315, 344
 in history, 275-277
 hodos, 234
 illuminating, 191, 215, 339, 344
 incarnate, 37, 138, 193, 200, 211-
 212, 219, 275, 290
 interpreting, 18, 326, 332, 364
 Jesus as, 194, 213, 217, 220, 226,
 228, 336, 343

(Word)

- judges, 9, 36, 313, 276
- liberating the W., 136, 275
- of liberation, 70, 128, 207, 297
- of life, 66, 108, 128, 256, 276, 307
- light of the, 45, 71, 245, 248, 265, 267, 275
- living, 62, 146, 203, 276, 302, 310
- Logos*, 25, 220, 226, 234
- non-Christian interpretation of, 229
- in other religions, 171, 177, 195-197, 219, 226
- the poor &, 206, 229, 231, 252, 272, 275
- power of, 109, 133
- pre-existent, 115-116, 120
- prophetic, 130, 276, 313
- resonance with the, 206
- revealed in process of liberating, 208, 233-234
- sacramental nature of, 126, 205
- saves, 213, 220, 225-226, 228
- saving, 173, 183, 204, 219, 316
- in scripture, 60, 93, 295, 315, 322
- Scripture not the W., 205, 230, 364
- silence &, 180, 192, 307
- to slaves, 219, 317
- as source of revelation, 200, 322
- Spirit &, 193, 197-200, 232, 297
- still speaks, 332, 343
- table of the W., 41
- teaching magisterium &, 28, 36
- today, 70, 92, 126, 310, 317, 364
- tradition &, 38, 40, 280, 315
- universal, 189, 213, 168, 177, 192, 223, 226
- in the world, 134
- word-medium-path, 183, 195, 220, 228
- World Council of Churches, 45
- world of the night, 142-143
- Zimbabwe, 100

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
INTRODUCTION	7
1. The Object of This Study	7
2. The Method	10
CHAPTER I: Vatican II Teaching on Divine Revelation	15
1. Introduction	15
2. Interpreting the Second Vatican Council	16
2.1 <i>Principles for Interpreting the Council Documents</i>	17
2.2 <i>The Conciliar Starting Point</i>	19
3. Developments in the Theology of Revelation	20
3.1 <i>Revelation and History</i>	20
3.2 <i>Revelation in Jesus Christ</i>	24
3.3 <i>Revelation as Dialogue</i>	26
3.4 <i>Revelation as Deposit of Faith</i>	27
3.5 <i>Revelation and the Human Response</i>	31
3.6 <i>The Transmission of Revelation</i>	34
3.7 <i>Revelation and Scripture</i>	38
3.8 <i>Ongoing Revelation</i>	41
3.9 <i>Revelation and the «Signs of the Times»</i>	44
3.10 <i>Revelation and the Kingdom</i>	47
3.11 <i>Revelation beyond the Judeo-Christian Tradition</i>	49
4. Some Developments since the Council	51
5. Conclusion	53

CHAPTER II: Revelation and the Third World Experience	57
1. Introduction	57
2. Revelation and Human Experience	59
3. The Magisterium of the Third World Episcopates	63
3.1 <i>Latin America (CELAM)</i>	64
3.2 <i>Africa (SECAM)</i>	67
3.3 <i>Asia (FABC)</i>	70
3.4 <i>Oceania (FCBCO)</i>	73
3.5 <i>The Experience from the Local Churches</i>	75
4. The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians	76
4.1 <i>Tanzania (1976)</i>	76
4.2 <i>Ghana (1977), Sri Lanka (1979), and Brazil (1980)</i>	79
4.3 <i>India (1981)</i>	81
4.4 <i>Second General Assembly of EATWOT: Mexico (1986)</i>	83
4.5 <i>Third General Assembly of EATWOT: Kenya (1992)</i>	85
5. Issues Raised by the EATWOT Challenge	86
5.1 <i>An Epistemological Break</i>	86
5.2 <i>The Experience of Christopraxis</i>	89
5.3 <i>Scripture and Other Sources of Our Knowledge of Revelation</i>	91
5.4 <i>The Role of the Holy Spirit</i>	92
5.5 <i>The God of Life</i>	93
6. Conclusion	94
CHAPTER III: Jean-Marc Éla's Understanding of Divine Revelation	97
1. Introduction	97
1.1 <i>Antecedents</i>	100
1.2 <i>Éla's Basic Argument</i>	102
1.3 <i>Locus for Theology: Culture, Economics, Politics</i>	105
1.4 <i>Theology and African History</i>	107
1.5 <i>Theology: How Can We Speak about God?</i>	108

2. Revelation: God's Word	110
2.1 <i>Images of God</i>	110
2.2 <i>Locus of Revelation</i>	112
2.3 <i>Terms Used for Revelation</i>	113
2.3.1 <i>Revelation</i>	113
2.3.2 <i>Word</i>	115
2.3.3 <i>Gospel</i>	116
2.4 <i>Synthesis</i>	118
2.5 <i>Revelation: The God of Life</i>	120
2.6 <i>God's Word and Human Language</i>	123
2.7 <i>Gospel: God Frees People for a New Life in Christ</i>	126
2.8 <i>The Revelation of God's Will</i>	130
3. An African Interpretation of Revelation	131
3.1 <i>Rereading</i>	131
3.2 <i>An Example of Rereading</i>	132
3.3 <i>Éla's Hermeneutic</i>	134
4. The Human Pole of Revelation	138
4.1 <i>Faith and Human Experience</i>	138
4.2 <i>Culture</i>	141
4.3 <i>The Silent God Speaks</i>	144
5. Evaluation and Critique	149
5.1 <i>Relationship to Other Theologies</i>	152
6. Summary and Final Comments	154
 CHAPTER IV: Aloysius Pieris' Understanding of Divine Revelation . . .	159
 1. Introduction	159
1.1 <i>Socioecclesial Context</i>	162
1.2 <i>Theravāda Buddhism</i>	164
1.3 <i>Developments in Pieris' Writing</i>	166
1.4 <i>Basic Premises</i>	168
1.5 <i>Pieris' Theological Vision</i>	170

2. The Locus of Revelation	175
2.1 <i>Revelation and the Three Levels of Religion</i>	178
2.2 <i>The Experiential Level</i>	178
2.3 <i>The Religious Level</i>	180
2.4 <i>The Interpretative/Theological Level</i>	182
3. Developments in Pieris' Christology	184
3.1 <i>Christ as Sacrament</i>	184
3.2 <i>Human Dimension of Christ</i>	185
3.3 <i>Cosmic Dimension of Christ</i>	186
3.4 <i>Asian Christ</i>	187
3.5 <i>Christ and the Word</i>	188
4. Jesus Christ and Revelation	189
4.1 <i>The Illuminating Word of Revelation</i>	191
4.2 <i>Logos and Dharma</i>	195
4.3 <i>Revelation as Language of the Universal Spirit</i>	197
5. Evaluation: One's Standpoint Influences One's Viewpoint	201
5.1 <i>Pieris' Hermeneutic</i>	203
5.2 <i>Comparison with Dei Verbum 2-5</i>	208
5.3 <i>Jesus Christ and the Incarnation</i>	216
5.4 <i>Uniqueness of Christ</i>	221
5.5 <i>What's in a Name?</i>	223
5.6 <i>Jesus Christ and Salvation</i>	225
6. Conclusion	229
CHAPTER V: Gustavo Gutiérrez's Understanding of Divine Revelation .	237
1. Introduction	237
1.1 <i>Socioecclesial Context</i>	240
1.2 <i>Some Basic Premises</i>	243
2. Principal Ideas on Revelation	246
2.1 <i>Use of the Term «Revelation»</i>	247
2.2 <i>The Development in Gutiérrez's Understanding</i>	248

2.3	<i>Human Emancipation in the Light of God's Word</i>	248
2.4	<i>God Revealed in the Liberation of the Poor</i>	251
2.5	<i>The Gratuitous Love of the God of life</i>	252
2.6	<i>Revealed Truth and the Deposit of Faith</i>	253
2.7	<i>The «Neuralgic Point» of Christian Revelation</i>	255
2.8	<i>The Locus of Divine Revelation</i>	257
2.9	<i>The Content of Revelation: The Mystery of God's Love</i>	258
3.	God's Word and Historical Processes	260
3.1	<i>Revelation and History</i>	261
3.2	<i>Faith in Christ and the Life of a People</i>	265
3.3	<i>Eschatology and Praxis</i>	268
4.	Contribution to Our Understanding of Revelation	272
4.1	<i>Revelation from the Underside of History</i>	272
4.2	<i>The Life of the Faith Community</i>	273
4.3	<i>God's Word in History</i>	275
5.	Evaluation	278
5.1	<i>The Roman «Observations» and «Instructions»</i>	280
5.2	<i>Gutiérrez's Hermeneutical Approach</i>	282
5.3	<i>Theory and Praxis</i>	284
5.4	<i>Praxis and Truth</i>	288
5.5	<i>Transcendence and History</i>	289
5.6	<i>A Question of Language</i>	291
	Summary and Conclusion	295
CHAPTER VI: The Contribution to the Understanding of Divine Revelation		
of the Theology of Éla, Pieris, and Gutiérrez:		
	A Critical Evaluation	301
1.	Introduction	301
2.	A Comparison of Éla, Pieris, and Gutiérrez	302
2.1	<i>Common Points</i>	302
2.2	<i>Contrasting Points</i>	303

3. The Third World Approach: Contribution and Lacunae	305
3.1 <i>First Element in the Hermeneutical Circle: Context</i>	306
3.1.1 Historicity and Truth	309
3.1.2 How to Express the Nature of Humanity before God? . .	314
3.2 <i>Second Element in the Hermeneutical Circle: Gospel</i>	315
3.2.1 The Credibility of the Gospel	318
3.2.2 Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis	321
3.2.3 Links with the Universality of Christian Faith?	323
3.3 <i>The Third Element in the Hermeneutical Circle: Interpreter</i> . . .	324
3.3.1 Faith Experience of the Local Community	326
3.3.2 Revelation as the Work of the Spirit?	328
4. Continuity and Discontinuity with Vatican II	328
4.1 <i>Themes Developed from the Council</i>	329
4.1.1 In Harmony with Vatican II	331
4.2 <i>Beyond Vatican II</i>	331
4.3 <i>Ressourcement or Aggiornamento?</i>	334
4.4 <i>Different Paradigms</i>	335
5. Summary and Conclusion	338
 GENERAL CONCLUSION	 341
 APPENDIX I: Interview with Jean-Marc Éla	 345
APPENDIX II: Interview with Aloysius Pieris	356
APPENDIX III: Interview with Gustavo Gutiérrez	365
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	371
GLOSSARY	377
BIBLIOGRAPHY	379
1. Jean-Marc Éla	379
2. Aloysius Pieris	382
3. Gustavo Gutiérrez	387

TABLE OF CONTENTS

447

4. Other Works Cited	393
INDEX OF PERSONAL NAMES	417
SCRIPTURE INDEX	423
SUBJECT INDEX	425
TABLE OF CONTENTS	441

FIGURES AND TABLES

Fig. 1: Revelation, Word, Gospel in the Theology of Jean-Marc Éla . .	120
Fig. 2: Revelation from a Pneumatological Viewpoint	230
Fig. 3: Revelatory Dynamic in Kingdom-Liberation Model	278
Table 1: Éla, Pieris, Gutiérrez: Contrasting Points	304

PHILIP GIBBS

ISBN 88-7652-697-8

THE WORD IN THE THIRD WORLD

Divine Revelation in the Theology of
Jean-Marc Éla, Aloysius Pieris
and Gustavo Gutiérrez

«Revelation» is one of the fundamental concepts in the Christian understanding of contact between God and the human believer. However today some ask whether God is absent or silent in the face of violence and suffering. Theologians from the Third World point out that if God's Word is to have any relevance it must speak to humanity, not in terms of faith and reason, but in terms of faith and life, particularly the life of the poor.

How can one speak of God's love when so many innocent people suffer in Latin America, or in societies torn apart by forms of neo-colonial violence in Africa? Where can we find a credible symbol of God's saving presence in Asia? These are questions faced by the three theologians in this study: Jean-Marc Éla from Cameroon, Aloysius Pieris from Sri Lanka and Gustavo Gutiérrez from Peru.

These theologians maintain that God's revelation is known not only through the Word in Scripture, but also through human effort which puts God's love revealed in Christ into practice. Their stress on «living the incarnation» allows them to see the liberative activity of God and the struggle of the poor as united in one saving reality. Following Jesus, in striving for life and liberation in the face of death discloses new ways to understand the Word as a Word of life in Africa, the harmony between the Word and silence in Asia and the Word addressed to those reduced to silence in Latin America.

PHILIP GIBBS, born in Lower Hutt, New Zealand in 1947, joined the Divine Word Missionaries in 1971, and was ordained priest in 1978. He studied social sciences and history at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand; anthropology at the University of Sydney, Australia; theology at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago; and has gained a licentiate and a doctorate in theology from the Gregorian University, Rome. He is currently continuing in the missionary apostolate in Papua New Guinea, Oceania.

