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**REPORT ON
WORLD COUNCIL OF
CHURCHES ASSEMBLY
1975**

"God, who has made of one Blood all nations."

Robert L. DeWitt

By the phrase "the social mission of the church" we mean that aspect of the work of the church which pertains to the world society of which the church is a part, and to which it has been sent. When that world is gathered representatively, as at the WCC Assembly, the social mission of the church takes on a new reality, a new urgency.

The WCC is not a venerable institution. Nor, indeed, are other efforts to unite a tragically torn world. The WCC had its official origin only in 1948. The largest single segment of organized Christendom, the Roman Catholic Church, though a very interested observer, is still not a member. Nevertheless, as former Presiding Bishop John E. Hines has observed, "The WCC represents the only approximation of a world-wide Christian council that we have today."

Thus, the Assembly serves as a thermometer of the life of the universal church today. Because of that, and because the excellence of much that was said at the Assembly enjoyed only fragmentary reporting in the American press, The Witness is pleased in this special issue to bring together excerpts from some of the major addresses given at the recent Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya.

We hope hereby to make a contribution toward the diminishing of the localism and parochialism of so much of American Christianity by giving it a proper setting in its world-wide context.

For information concerning the obtaining of the full text of the addresses and the reports issuing from the WCC Assembly in Nairobi, contact: W.C.C., 475 Riverside Drive, Room 439, New York, New York 10027 (Phone: 212-870-2533).

Between the Prophets

WCC Begins Era of Plain, Hard Work

Roy Larson

This appraisal of the WCC Assembly by Roy Larson is reprinted here by permission of the Chicago Sun-Times, where Mr. Larson is religion editor.

Before the end of the 18-day fifth assembly of the World Council of Churches, it was apparent the 27-year-old ecumenical agency has entered a period of consolidation.

Archbishop Olof Sundby, primate of the Church of Sweden and one of the WCC's six newly elected presidents, summed it up as well as anyone when he said:

Perhaps this is a time that is lacking in prophets and prophecies. But prophets must be given to us by God. We can't just create them. No, we're in for a period of

hard work while we wait for the new prophets."

The last assembly seven years ago in Uppsala, Sweden, reflected the spirit of the 1960s. It was a nontheological period when the slogan of the day—"The world must set the agenda for the church"—was taken with some seriousness.

The Nairobi assembly was much more theologically self-conscious—and conservative.

In his opening remarks, Dr. M. M. Thomas of India, the outgoing chairman of the central committee, recalled with appreciation the remark of a churchman who said after Uppsala: "For the sake of the world, the next assembly should be more theological."

THE WITNESS

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It was that. The program committee, for example, which was charged with helping set the course for the next seven years, stated: "Constant attention must be given to the integration of theological reflection and action into all agendas."

Interest in theology and spirituality showed up even before the assembly began. In their preregistration forms, delegates were asked to indicate which of six legislative sections they wanted to participate in. By far, the most popular section was the one titled "Confessing Christ Today." Asked to analyze this concentration of interest, the theologian Jurgen Moltmann said: "It simply means people want to know what it means to be a Christian today. It does not mean they want to retreat from social and political issues."

Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, honorary WCC president and one of its chief architects, was delighted by this development. "After Uppsala," he said in interview, "there was danger we would lose our theological perspective. Now we're getting back on course again."

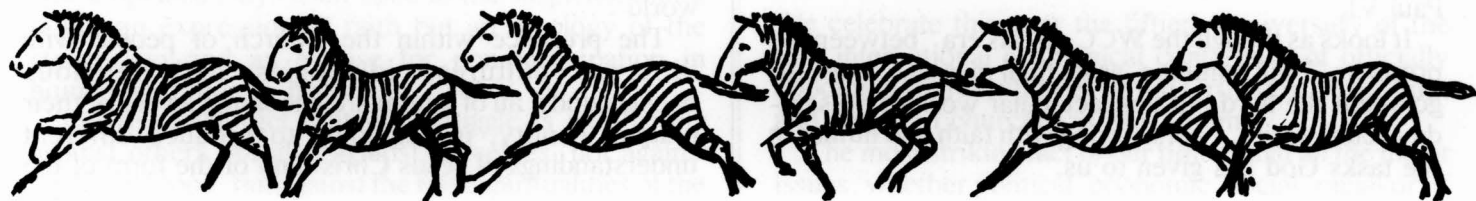
Many delegates from Orthodox churches who long have claimed the WCC has sacrificed its Christian identity for the sake of "relevance," left Nairobi convinced their theological concerns were listened to more attentively. Dr. Nikos Nissiotis, a prominent Greek Orthodox theologian from Athens, said the WCC was "coming back to its theological roots. We have more careful theological interpretations now," he said, "more of a realization that there is a point of departure in the Christian faith for all that we do."

To make sure this trend didn't go too far, Dr. Thomas and Dr. Philip Potter, WCC general secretary, took pains in their opening speeches to press for a "spirituality for combat" and for "spirituality for engagement instead of escape."

A few cynical observers familiar with the workings of bureaucracies, took different readings of the theological obsession. One said the WCC's serious money problems helped produce the intensified traditionalism. Another observed: "If you want to engage in radical social action, the most strategic way to do it is to wrap yourself in the garb of orthodoxy."

The traditionalism created as well as solved some problems. The most confused and confusing report came out of the section examining the relationship between Christianity and other faiths. In an age when people of different faiths and cultures increasingly are coming into contact with each other on a regular basis, words like "dialog" and "pluralism" have become popular. The delegates were awkward as they attempted to reconcile their cosmopolitan impulses with their commitment to evangelism and mission. Some delegates, notably those from India and the more secularized countries of the Western world, thought the committee went overboard in obeying its compulsion to stress the uniqueness of Christianity and lambast the dangers of syncretism (unification).

In its attitude toward Jews, the assembly was split between those who tend to lump Judaism with Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam and those who contend, in the words of one document, "There is a very special relationship between Christianity and Judaism." This ambivalence never was completely resolved. In its political pronouncements the delegates did not repudiate Dr. Potter's statement condemning the United Nations action equating Zionism with racism. At the same time, they took some stands on Middle Eastern issues that reflected the point of view of member churches with sizable Middle Eastern constituencies.



For all its talk of evangelism and spirituality, the assembly did not ignore its traditional concern for social justice. There was very little disposition to abandon its controversial program to combat racism, which during the last five years has distributed \$1.5 million in grants to a variety of action and education agencies, including Frelimo (the "liberation movement" that now rules Mozambique) and the three factions currently contending for the rule of Angola. (No grants were given to these groups during 1975).

Similarly, condemnations of multinational corporations and international economic systems "that militate against predominantly nonwhite people" in the Third World became almost ritualistic.

Although some Americans became defensive when capitalism was attacked or questioned, there was no way the WCC could claim to be a democratic organization and attempt to mute the voices of its many members who do not regard Christianity and socialism as being incompatible. In Africa, where there exists a phenomenal continental self-consciousness today, all informed Africans are watching with intense interest the socialist experiments taking place in such countries as Tanzania and Mozambique.

Human rights issues were tougher for the assembly to handle. Generalized statements were criticized for blandness. Specific statements that focused attention on violations of human rights in certain countries were, in some cases, side-tracked when the word was passed that the resolution might jeopardize the lives or at least the well-being of delegates from the spotlighted nations.

In contrast to Uppsala, where there was some hope that the Roman Catholic Church was not far from applying for WCC membership, it was obvious from the outset here there would be no major new breakthroughs in ecumenical relations on the "Rome-Geneva axis." Meanwhile, however, in less dramatic ways, the relationships among Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians have been intensified. According to most Catholic and Protestant observers, no decisive, new steps are likely during the reign of Pope Paul VI.

It looks as though the WCC, in this era "between the prophets," will continue, as its final message states, to go about the hard but unspectacular work of present-day ecumenicity, "persevering with faith and humor in the tasks God has given to us."

Sinners and the Kingdom

Report of the Moderator of the Central Committee

Dr. M. M. Thomas

Dr. M. M. Thomas is one of Asia's pioneer ecumenists and for the past seven years has chaired the policy-making Central Committee of the WCC. For the past 13 years he has directed the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society at Bangalore, India. Widely known for his consuming interest in social problems Dr. Thomas presided over the landmark World Conference on Church and Society (1966). Like other ecumenical leaders he was active in Christian youth and student movements and during the 1950's organized a series of study conferences on social questions in Asia which gave impetus to the East Asian Christian Conference.

I recall what David L. Edwards, then Dean of King's College, Cambridge, said, commenting on Uppsala—that "for the sake of the world the next Assembly should be more theological."¹ It is indeed for the sake of the world that God became man in Jesus Christ. The heart of the Gospel is that God loved the *world* so much that He gave His only begotten Son to be its salvation (Jn. 3:16), that God was in Christ, reconciling the *world* unto Himself (II Cor. 5:19). Therefore, if at any time we have done theology for any purpose other than the world, we were not being Christian. Looking at the main themes of the Assemblies of the WCC—*Man's Disorder and God's Design*,² *Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World*,³ *Jesus Christ, the Light of the World*,⁴ and *Behold, I Make All Things New*⁵—we can affirm with justice that "God's Purpose for the World in Jesus Christ has indeed been our basic theme throughout. The Christ-centredness of the Council makes the world central to its theological orientation. Theology is alive only at the cutting edge between the Word and the world . . .

The presence within the Church of people with different cultures, ideologies and religious backgrounds, all of whom are becoming aware of their unique identity, is beginning to produce different understandings of Jesus Christ and of the form of the

¹The Uppsala Report 1968, WCC, Geneva, 1968, p. 85.

²Amsterdam 1948 ³Evanston 1954 ⁴New Delhi 1961 ⁵Uppsala 1968

Church. James Cone's Black theology and Gustavo Gutierrez's Latin American theology oriented to social liberation, Seth Nomenyo's African theology and Kosuke Koyama's Asian theology oriented to renaissance indigenous cultures, the new expressions of Christ in traditional and modern artistic forms being produced in all cultures and reflecting new experiences of Him—these to take a few examples, are all attempts on the part of Christians to emancipate themselves from the Latin or Hellenistic captivity of the Church . . .

The question is often raised as to whether in this emphasis on social and political justice there is not present a social utopianism which denies the fact of sin and affirms a self-redemptive humanism. Yes, the danger is always present. So is the opposite danger that we may not take seriously enough the fact of divine grace and the power of righteousness it releases to a daring faith in the realm of social and political action. It is the task of ecumenical theology to warn us against both these dangers. For instance, in the Accra 1974 discussions on "Giving Account of the Hope that is Within Us", it is clearly affirmed that "the future of perfected humanity lies in the fulness of the Godhead" beyond this side of history where sin and death prevail. But our hope in the coming Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ "takes on the character of a concrete utopia, that is, an idea of our aim and a critical point of reference for our action in society. This provides us with an incentive to participate in efforts to build a more human social order in the perspective of the Kingdom of God." The statement then goes on to point out how every social order is limited by "the continuing sinfulness of man" which corrupts the very institutions which are meant to protect human beings in society. Given this limitation, "concrete social utopias can correspond to the eschatological reality of the Kingdom of God."⁶ Here, then, is no utopianism of the kind which we must reject on theological grounds; we have rather the picture of a penultimate hope for the effective realization of the ultimate hope within the limits of a sinful history. In this sense, as Paulo Freire says, the Church "can never cease being utopian".⁷ And often anti-utopianism lays itself open to the suspicion that it is not an expression of faith but an ideology of the *status quo* and an excuse for non-participation in human liberation in history . . .

Let us not forget that our struggle is not merely against others but also against ourselves, not against flesh and blood, but against the false spiritualities of the

idolatry of race, nation and class, and of the self-righteousness of ideals which reinforce collective structures of inhumanity and oppression. Any spirituality of righteousness must start with a turning in repentance from idols to the living God and justification by faith . . .

Let me conclude with some words of adoration and expectation from the Theological Reflections adopted by the CCPD/CICARWS Consultation: "God be praised, not all is darkness. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall never be able to quench it. There are witnesses to the light. The power of Jesus Christ is at work and the Holy Spirit will bring to perfection that which God has begun. The new age is not a myth or a symbol, but a powerful reality which overthrows the mighty from their thrones and fills the hungry with good things . . . The Church called to be Herald, Sign, Sacrament and Agent of the Kingdom waits for her own liberation by the power of the New Age."⁸

The State of the Church Report of the General Secretary

Dr. Philip A. Potter

Dr. Philip A. Potter is general secretary of the WCC. He was born on the Caribbean island of Dominica, studied in Kingston, Jamaica and Richmond College and London University's Faculty of Theology. He has served the WCC in three capacities: director of its Youth Department, director of its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and the general secretariat. He has also been a pastor of a Methodist church in Haiti, a secretary of the British Student Christian Movement and of the Methodist Missionary Society in London.

We celebrate this year the fiftieth anniversary of the first international ecumenical conference of officially appointed representatives of the Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican churches at Stockholm . . .

The most striking fact of our time is that all the major issues, whether political, economic, social, racial or of

⁶John Deschner, *Uniting in Hope*, Accra 1974, Faith and Order Paper 72, WCC, Geneva, 1975, p. 31.

⁷"Witness of Liberation", in *Seeing Education Whole*, WCC Office of Education, Geneva, 1971, p. 70.

⁸"Structures of Captivity and Lines of Liberation", *The Ecumenical Review*, January 1975, pp. 45 and 46.

sex, are global and interrelated in character. What happens in one place affects all places. What appears to be a political issue tends, on closer examination, to have many other dimensions . . .

And they are exacerbated by the arms race. More and more deadly weapons are being produced. We now live under the permanent threat of the ultimate annihilation of the human species. The economy of many industrialized countries is now heavily geared to or dependent on the production and sale of arms. There is no world authority to limit this indiscriminate traffic in arms . . .

There is a third major trend which has become increasingly evident during these years.

All over the world people are becoming more determined than ever to participate in decision-making, in efforts towards self-reliance, in movements of various kinds which give them scope to be themselves and to be authentically with others. They no longer accept passive roles, or being treated as objects rather than as subjects. Even the pundits of science and technology now realize that such matters as nuclear energy, genetics, and planning can no more be left to governments and other power elites. The people themselves should be allowed to see the issues and express themselves on options.

In a real sense, this has been a major emphasis of the World Council's activities during these past seven years . . .

I have the impression, moreover, that these activities have provoked very strong reactions in many of our member churches. Why is this so? It may well be that despite their profession that the Church means the whole people of God, most churches have not yet learned what this may mean in their life and witness. The same hierarchical and nonparticipatory structures which exist in society are reflected in our church structures and styles of living—preaching, teaching, decision-making, authority. There is, therefore, bound to be resistance to the growing demand for participation and a tendency to accuse those, who promote this participation, of “left-wing” ideological motivation. It is interesting to note that in countries officially “left-wing” the cry for participation is suppressed for fear of “right-wing” tendencies . . .

It must, however, be admitted that the cry for participation all over the world is matched by an increasing trend towards the violent suppression of those who demand a bigger share in the life of their

countries. This in turn provokes counter-violence which is called terrorism. During these years under review there has been an increase of military coups and guerilla movements and the steady erosion of private and public liberties in East and West, in North and South. The whole world is caught in a profound conflict between those who yearn and struggle to participate in change for a more humane existence and those who seek to maintain the *status quo* of power relations whether their ideology is capitalist or socialist—between people wanting to share power to shape the future and people holding on to power that shaped the past . . .

Underlying all these trends and threats to human survival is a growing malaise of the human person, the spiritual crisis which is everywhere evident. This takes different forms. People are gripped with fear—fear of losing privileges; fear of accepting responsibility for one another because of the perplexity of problems and the consequences of engagement; fear of difference and of conflict; fear of violence; fear of change, fear of expressions of faith and of church life different from their own. People feel so alienated from themselves and from one another that they are unable to trust each other. They create or hide themselves behind walls of non-communication with other persons and peoples . . .

In all this we are brought face to face with that revelation of the free, authentic Man, Jesus, who calls us all to repentance, *metanoia*, the radical change of our thinking, and attitudes, indeed, of our whole beings, towards God in Christ and our fellow human beings in faith. It is an act of sharing in the death of Christ, the crucifixion of our selfish existence, and in the resurrection of Christ, the affirmation of the impossible becoming real, of life being wrested from death.

Coming Events Cast Their Shadows Before Them?

A Russian Orthodox representative, in the discussion of the hotly-debated resolution which proposed the naming of Russia as a violator of the Helsinki Declaration: ‘We have been bearing our witness in an atheistic society. Our problems in witnessing are different from yours. Some day you may have to draw on our experience . . .’

Beyond Division, Unity

Who is this Jesus Christ who Frees and Unites?

Robert McAfee Brown

Dr. Robert McAfee Brown has done seminary teaching (Union Theological Seminary, New York City, 1953-62) and college teaching (Macalaster College, 1951-53). Currently he does both, commuting between Stanford University where he is professor of religious studies and Pacific School of Religion where he is teaching a course on "Ecumenical Roots of Liberation Theology" as well as a Christian ethics course.

ONE QUESTION, MANY ANSWERS

Each day at Nairobi we will be confronting Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" and each day we will be listening to answers other than our own. Out of such exchanges, our own understandings will change. Answers we do not take at all seriously today may have to be taken very seriously next week, as we are forced to share more fully our backgrounds, questions, anxieties and answers. It is both threatening and liberating to realize that our understanding of Jesus, as well as our understanding of ourselves will be changed in the process. It may be even more threatening and liberating to realize that the process will not stop when Nairobi ends; we must take our new perceptions, commitments and challenges back to Tokyo, Constantinople, Jakarta, Kiev or Waukesha, and keep the process going . . .

So as we deal with the question, "Who is this Jesus Christ who frees and unites?" let us listen particularly to *those answers that initially threaten us the most*, rather than reassuring ourselves with the answers with which we are already comfortable. If your present answer focusses on Jesus the personal savior, then be willing to confront Jesus the liberator whose social message threatens all the human securities you take for granted. If Jesus the revolutionary is the one who now gives you hope, then hear also the Jesus who reminds you that evil is embodied not only in oppressive social structures but also in every human heart—not only in the heart of the evil oppressor but in your own heart as well . . .

THREE CLAIMS

Nairobi describes Jesus as the one who Frees and Unites—Jesus the Liberator, Jesus the Unifier. As I shall suggest later, I believe that we cannot truly put those claims together unless we insert between them a claim that Jesus is also the Divider. As Jesus *liberates* us, we are required to face the potential *divisions* that liberation brings, so that we can move toward a truer *unity* than would otherwise be possible. Let us explore those three claims . . .

JESUS THE LIBERATOR

From what does Jesus free us, and for what does he free us? . . .

Negatively, *he frees us from the false securities by which we try to make our lives secure*. He makes an uncomfortably exclusive claim upon us. We are to give primary allegiance to him, and that means that we can only give secondary allegiance to anyone or anything else. Those other loyalties that have heretofore claimed us turn out to be inadequate and therefore false. They do not free, they destroy, particularly when we build them into the structures of our society.

Take the forms of oppression in our society mentioned a moment ago—racism, sexism, classism, imperialism. Those do not free, they enslave. They not only enslave those on whom they are imposed, they enslave those who do the imposing . . .

Positively, *he frees us for the possibility of seeing the world through eyes other than our own*. I offer that phrase as a "non-theological" equivalent for the theological word "conversion." He leads us to a fundamental change of direction, so that the concern of the "other" can become our *own* concern.

In the midst of much that remains unclear to me, one thing at least becomes increasingly clear: there is a *convergence* today between the Biblical view of Jesus as Liberator, and the cry of oppressed peoples for liberation. For our own day, to "see the world through eyes other than our own" has simply got to mean seeing it through the eyes of the poor and dispossessed. When the story of Jesus and the story of human oppression are put side by side, they *fit*. They are simply different versions of the same story. The cry of the hungry is overwhelming. The cry of the politically and economically exploited is overwhelming. The cry of those in prison and under torture is overwhelming. The cry of parents who know that their children are

doomed to stunted and warped lives is overwhelming. We cannot meet in Africa, indeed we cannot meet anywhere, and shut our ears to that human cry. There may have been other emphases needed at other points in Christian history when talking about Jesus as Liberator, but I am persuaded (and I hope this assembly is persuaded) that for *this* time and *this* place, the claim of Jesus to bring freedom, and the cry of oppressed peoples for freedom, converge and cannot be separated . . .

Gustavo Gutierrez has underlined this point unforgettably. He acknowledges that there is an important form of Christian witness that reaches out to the *non-believer*, the one for whom belief in God has become difficult if not impossible in "a world come of age." But he insists that the problem for Christians in the Third World is not how to reach out to the non-believer, but how to reach out to the *non-person*—to the one whom the *world* ignores, or uses and crushes and then discards, the one who is "marginalized," whose cry not only for food but for meaning is simply not heard, whose personhood the rest of us simply deny. We cannot talk about the lordship of Jesus Christ, or the reconciling love of God, or the meaning of the cross, or Jesus as Liberator, unless the cry of those we treat as non-persons is the central thing we hear, unless the vision of the world so structured as to take them into account is the central thing we see, unless we can come to see the world through their eyes.

Where is the gospel imperative for that? Take only one part of the cry, the cry for food, acknowledging that that cry must be heard in relation to agriculture, economics, population control, the use of energy resources and all the rest. Remember, in the midst of all that complexity, that while Jesus said that we do "not live by bread alone," he never pretended that we can live without it . . .

But it is not enough to "see" something; we must also act upon what we see. And so that means a third thing: Jesus not only frees us from false allegiances, so that we can begin to see the world through eyes other than our own, *he also frees us for struggle with and on behalf of those "others,"* who are the poor and dispossessed . . .

It is far easier to speak such words on a podium in Nairobi, Kenya, than to act upon them in California, U.S.A. But part of the liberation they struggle to describe is the liberation that comes from being part of the supportive community that is the church, and the

exhilarating discovery that we are not alone in such efforts. We must support and challenge and prod each other in our common allegiance to the smiting and healing Word of God, embodied in Jesus, who promises to free us not only from inner attitudes but from oppressive outer structures as well.

JESUS THE DIVIDER

And that of course means that Jesus Christ not only liberates. He also divides. That is initially surprising. "Surely", we respond, "it is Satan who divides, not Jesus." Division for the sake of division must indeed be the devil's work. But let us not evade too quickly the reality that in different ways Jesus also is the divider. Consider: . . .

The good news he brings to one group is (initially at least) bad news to another group. If Jesus' liberating message is good news to the poor, it means that the rich stand to lose something. If slaves are freed, slave owners are threatened. If those in captivity are liberated, those who have kept them in captivity had better beware.

Let us press the point: Christians in Latin America often proclaim the message of liberation in the framework of the Exodus story: if the good news is that God freed the oppressed Israelites from the power of the ancient Pharaohs, then God must be able to free the oppressed today from the power of the modern Pharaohs. And that can hardly be good news to the modern Pharaohs!

Who are these modern Pharaohs? They are the local oligarchies, the tiny minorities who have betrayed their people. But they are also those who have supported the local oligarchies with money, guns, intellectual rationalizations of injustice, and sophisticated torture techniques. Much of that kind of support comes, of course, from the United States and other wealthy nations. So if it is good news to South Americans that God promises to free them from the modern Pharaohs, it can only be bad news to North Americans to discover that according to the Exodus scenario a lot of us are serving in Pharaoh's court and that Pharaoh is doomed.

Position yourself where you will in such a scenario. I know that it divides me from many of my South American sisters and brothers, who see me as the oppressor who must be conquered. It divides me from most of my North American sisters and brothers, who reject such an analysis emphatically and are outraged that it should be offered as an exposition of the gospel.

And it divides me from God and from Jesus Christ—for if the analysis is correct, I am, whether I like it or not, on the wrong side in a struggle in which God has clearly taken sides with the oppressed, the poor, the down-trodden. Jesus is the Divider.

JESUS THE UNIFIER

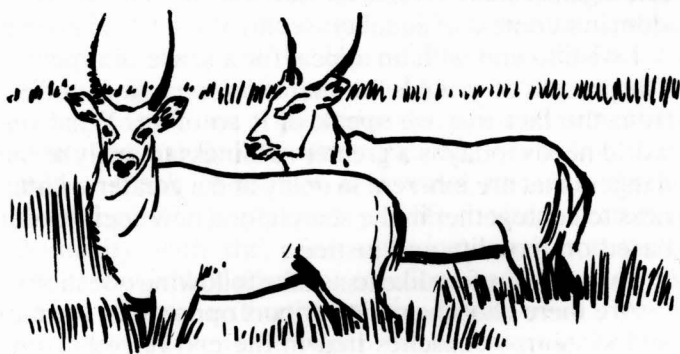
Finally, however, he is the Unifier. Jesus did not come “that all may be divided,” he came “that all may be one.” (John 17:21) But this must be said last (as it is now being said), rather than first. For if it is said too quickly, it will underestimate the reality of division, and the unity it proclaims will be superficial . . .

So the final note of the gospel is not division or ambiguity or tension or condemnation. It is joy. It is not a joy procured by ignoring what we clearly see going on in this bent and bleeding world, but a joy received by recognizing that in addition to what we clearly see going on, some other things are going on as well. As we look at the world, it *seems* to be only the shattered world of the cross—love defeated . . .

But for Christians, to see Good Friday at its worst is to begin also to see it at its best. For it is our faith that the seeming defeat is turned into a victory, that out of the very worst God can bring the very best, that God is working in our midst—patiently and impatiently, painfully and powerfully, judgmentally and healingly—to fulfill the divine purpose for us.

Babel, Interpreted

In the midst of the discussion concerning the Helsinki Declaration, a Bulgarian bishop speaking in his native tongue had to use the same microphone as his interpreter, a woman speaking in German, whose translation was rendered into French and English and Russian, which translations were piped through the ear-phone sets to people who came from the ends of the world.



The Shackles of Domination & Oppression

The Hon. Michael Manley,
Prime Minister of Jamaica*

Prime Minister Michael N. Manley of Jamaica was trained as an economist at the London School of Economics. He was a journalist and editor then became involved in improving the lot of workers in the bauxite and sugar industries. He was first vice-president of the National Workers' Union and his skill in union negotiations led to election as president of the Caribbean Bauxite and Mineworkers Union. Appointed a member of Jamaica's Senate in 1962 he entered elective politics in 1967 and won a seat in Parliament. Two years later he headed the People's National Party and when it was victorious in 1972 he became Prime Minister. He is a member of the Methodist Church.

DEMOCRACY, AN UNFULFILLED PROMISE

It is the irony of political democracy in a capitalist system that it has often failed totally to provide for the people that continuing access to power and decision-making that is the inner heart and purpose of the democratic process. Hence, within capitalist systems, the process of the domination continues despite the appearance of political freedom which incomplete democratic processes provide.

If capitalism was the engine that lifted man to new levels of economic and technological progress, it was equally the burial ground of his moral integrity. And as if the moral consequences of capitalism were not sufficiently disastrous both for its supposed beneficiaries and all others who were caught in the system, it also proceeded historically in harness with that twin steed of ill fortune and oppression, imperialism. For imperialism was the means by which capitalism reproduced internationally all that it had done to human experience within national boundaries . . .

I would like to pause briefly to mention the largest category of victims in all human experience: women . . . Let me record my bewilderment at the continuing exclusion of women from God's Ministry in so many Churches of the Christian world. So subtle and familiar are the ways of domination and insidious the paths of oppression . . .

Many parliamentary democracies are in fact nothing more than means of legitimizing a tyranny of the majority for predetermined periods of time. Worse, many parliamentary democracies tend to disguise and entrench what is in reality a system of irresponsible bureaucratic control. Therefore, liberation, properly understood, cannot end with traditional forms of parliamentary democracy. Rather, this is where liberation begins. Obviously, the complexity of modern society makes true people's democracy, the reality of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, and all of the time, extremely difficult to institutionalize. Nonetheless, the supremacy of this objective must be clear and must be pursued relentlessly in order to liberate mankind . . .

Liberation can only be secured in political terms where the people have access to decision-making at the community as well as the regional and national levels. Equally, it will only be secured where administrative control at the centre is neither exclusive nor irresponsible and bureaucratic, but is accessible locally where the effect of these administrative decisions is felt.

Equally, one must approach the economy in similar ways. A just society is one in which the economy is, first and foremost, directly and freely responsive to the overall needs of the community at large.

Under capitalism, it was long assumed that the "hidden hand" of market forces would produce this result by means of some mysterious inner chemistry. However sincere the intention, this hope foundered upon the rocks of self-interest, expressed as the profit motive, which are essential to that economic system. In extreme reaction to the familiar capitalist model, some societies have developed other economic orders under total state ownership and control which presuppose and promote bureaucratic centralism. While undoubtedly satisfying certain egalitarian tests which have failed in capitalist systems, these new models often involve a new form of oppression to maintain what is in reality, state capitalism.

The actual and potential victims of such systems are, as under bourgeois capitalism, the workers who now become unfree servants of a more powerful master, the bureaucratic state. The fact that such a state is supposed to act in the name of the people, is simply a fiction in terms of actual human experience . . .

Equally, I suggest that our social forms must leave intact those avenues of self-expression through which man pursues the path of his own infinite complexity

and individuality.

The freedom to explore one's relationship to the universe, to walk the rocky road of personal salvation, to soar through the great spaces of the psyche in search of a mystic communion with the Maker: all these must remain intact. Even the right not to soar is important; and the agnostic must be left secure in his right to doubt.

THE CHURCH CALLED TO STRUGGLE

I do not believe that Western Christendom can cease from struggle until these outrages that violate our religious faith and mock its moral teaching, have been totally overthrown and abolished. Every politician and every churchman, indeed, everyone who neither raises his hand nor his voice against such systems of oppression, thereby betrays the very cause of justice. Whether they form a majority or a minority on matters like these, the silent are willing accomplices and copartners in the crime against religion and humanity .

The Churches have a clear duty to make common cause with the Third World in its search for a new order.

However . . . there is a small minority among the men of God who repudiate absolutely the notion of temporal concern or involvement. These clearly must be left to their own devices, silences and idiosyncratic mysteries.

The Churches should, therefore, speak out against injustice wherever it is to be found. Indeed, it was the Bishops at Medellin who recently reminded us that "when justice does not exist among men, God is ignored." The Churches must be prepared to take their stand against fascism, against racism, against oppression, against undue materialism in human affairs, against elitism, against imperialism, and neo-colonialism, indeed against all those forces national and international, historical and contemporary, which militate against man's need for self-expression and freedom in a context of equality, security and social justice.

I wish to end with an appeal for a sense of urgency. The process of struggle for liberation sometimes suffers from the fact that we speak of it so often. What the world needs today is a greater readiness to analyze the dangers that are inherent in delay and a greater willingness to act together in the search for a new social order based on morality and justice . . .

I would therefore like to ask the following questions:

Are there churches that support oppressive regimes and systems—churches that in the end have become

apologists and spokesmen for regimes of domination and oppression?

Are there churches that maintain massive investments within oppressive political and economic regimes, thereby contributing to their viability?

Are there churchmen who act as Chaplains directly or indirectly to oppressive systems and who fail to relate the Christian spirit and message to the system that they serve?

Are there churches in Metropolitan countries which give aid to churches in developing countries, but do so with strings attached? And is this not also economic imperialism?

Are there Missionary groups who come to developing countries and wittingly or unwittingly retard the process by which people search for their own cultural identity? . . .

Creation, Technology and Human Survival

Charles Birch

Professor of biology at the University of Sydney, Australia, Charles Birch combines the pure scientist's knowledge with a lifelong concern for the social implications of modern science and technology. An early advocate of dialogue between science and religion, he now works to preserve the environment; since 1970 he has been vice-chairman of the WCC's Church and Society Committee. He combines research on mutations in genes with teaching and writing. Birch is an active Methodist layman influenced by the thinking of Paul Tillich, Alfred North Whitehead and the biologist Dobzhansky.

THREATS TO SURVIVAL

Let me be clear at the outset what I mean by threats to survival . . . Brontosaurus did not become extinct overnight, far from it. He doubtless experienced a gradual decline in his quality of life over thousands of years, one by one populations disappeared until eventually the last Brontosaurus expired. It is in this sense that I speak of threats to human survival; threats resulting in declining quality of life for large sectors of humanity with the poor suffering most, threats to sheer survival of whole populations and ultimately the threat of total extinction of the human race. This is precisely the sense in which the problem is discussed

in the circles of the World Council of Churches today.¹

I shall argue that the earth can no longer accommodate the sort of society we are building on its surface with the aid of science and technology. It has inbuilt into it self-destructive features. "Our present method of underwriting technology" says Kenneth Galbraith "is exceedingly dangerous. It could cost us our existence . . ."²

If the world is to sustain the lives of its four billion inhabitants and more to come, the world itself must be saved. But are we willing to pay the price of the redemption of the earth in terms of a revolution in values, in life styles, in economic and political goals and even in the nature of the science and technology we practice? Or shall we continue with the Faustian deal of travel now, pay later? The journey unfortunately is short. The time for payment has arrived. The world is a Titanic on a collision course. The iceberg ahead has its visible parts above water . . .

Only a change in course can avert disaster. Political leaders and economists still dance on the deck but the course remains unchanged. Technological optimists insist that a breakthrough a day keeps the crisis at bay. But there are some problems science and technology cannot solve . . .

I and many of my fellow scientists are encouraged that the World Council of Churches has begun to be concerned with the total problem, scientific as well as economic and political. We hope it will not give up after a few years of preliminary effort. There is much to do before the churches show that they are taking seriously the problems that we face . . .

The total effort of the technological society is widening the gap between rich and poor countries. We know how to use science and technology to produce a rich society but not how to produce a just one . . .

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Each person on earth has a negative impact on the environment. An Australian or an American has a much larger impact than a Kenyan or an Indonesian, perhaps twenty times as much . . .

There is no chance of the poor countries developing adequately unless the rich countries reduce the huge proportion they contribute to the total impact. This involves a programme of development of the rich world. The rich must live more simply than the poor may simply live. The world is not just. According to the

¹Threats to Survival. Report presented by the Commission on Churches' Participation in Development to the Central Committee of the WCC, August 1974 Study Encounter 10 (4) pp. 1-11, 1974.

²J. Kenneth Galbraith. *The New Industrial State*. (Hamilton) p.8, 1967.

criterion of justice any country would be over developed whose standard of living was beyond the capacity of the world to generate for all its peoples. This is a revolutionary ethical concept. It is illusory to suppose that the world as it is now structured would ever share resources that way. Countries with a huge resource base (U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Iran, Brazil and China) will have the power in the future. They will use it to gain further power. A just world involves not only a change in national goals, but, as well, a total restructuring of the international economic order. While the world, at the instigation of the developing countries, begins to work out ways in which that might be done, we must develop strategies that put pressure on those with resource power, obliging them to use it in the interests of a larger human purpose. I do not know what these strategies will be. I only know that unless we invent them the future of the poor world is bleak.

Secondly, the impact equation emphasizes that a better model of development, one that is more just and less wasteful than exists in the rich world, is desperately needed by developing countries. The enormous problems now facing Japan are a consequence of its blindly following the western pattern . . .

THE AMBIGUITY OF TECHNOLOGY

The world, rich and poor, cannot live without technology. Yet we have found no way of living with it. The poor countries are mesmerised by the power of technology. Politically they see that the present power of the rich world rests on its technological achievements. Naturally they ask how can they share in this power. They need more technology. But we have no clear idea of the sort of science and technology and human management that can bring well being to the poor. The attempts that were made in the decade of development of the 60s turned it into a decade of disaster . . .

Science and technology in the service of unlimited growth may, for a time, stave off disaster, but only by delivering us into a fool's paradise from which there may be no escape. The technological fix becomes the technological trap. To act as if the cure for all the ills of technology is more of the same technology is to follow the pied pipers of technology to destruction.

It is important to be clear as to who controls technology, for who controls technology controls development. One sixth of the Gross World Product is controlled by the multinational corporations. 18 Na-

tion States are not the only principalities and powers in the modern world. The annual sales of the five largest multinational oil companies combined exceed the Gross National Product of all but four countries in the world. 19 Multinational corporations have increased production in the developed and developing worlds but their products are usually designed for the rich who can afford to buy their products and not for the poor. It pays to tickle the palates of the rich rather than to fill the bellies of the poor. It is easy to criticize the multinational corporations. It is not so easy to invent and institute productive alternatives to these powerful corporations.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES

What is the role of the churches in this ambiguous technological future? It is now totally unintelligible for the churches to operate as though there is one plane called the spiritual which is their area and another called the temporal which they can leave to others. This leads to the false belief that all they have to do is to change people and that changed people will change the world. It has not worked out that way. If life in a vast factory is dehumanizing it is the factory that has to be changed. The redemption of people involves the redemption of the world they live in. The bonds that confine people all over the world are economic, political and technical as well as spiritual. The struggle for liberation is a struggle for economic, political, ecological and spiritual liberation. It is vital for the churches to be involved, boots and all, in all these tasks and to question seriously their commitment to the technically dominated society. It is a cop-out for them to draw a distinction between the things that belong to Caesar and those that belong to God. Nothing belongs to Caesar, except Caesar's evil machinations . . .

ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

For millions of years the thin envelope of life around the earth which we call the biosphere has sustained the resources necessary for its life in a most wonderful and complex way. Every molecule of oxygen in the atmosphere comes from plants. Every time you take a breath you can say thank you to a plant. All the oxygen is completely recycled by living organisms every 2000 years. Every molecule of carbondioxide in the air, soil and water comes from living organisms. All the carbondioxide is renewed every 300 years. Every molecule of water on this planet goes in and out of living organisms. All the water is completely re-

newed every 22 million years. Nature's global society is a sustainable society. It keeps the molecules moving. We had better keep it that way if we want to stay around. Whether we do or not may depend upon whether the nations can agree on a common plan of management of the two remaining world commons—the atmosphere and the oceans. The crass political negotiating that is going on at present is not the way we shall make these commons secure. A major objective of such management is to sustain the biosphere. I happen to think that is important. The real world consists of sustainable societies within the great sustainable biosphere, be they the Amazon rain forest or the Great Barrier Reef. For millions of years these have been self-renewing and self-sustaining natural societies. I learn from them too. And I learn how easy it is for man to make them *unsustainable* . . .

If we could only see ourselves in a global perspective then I believe we would come to see that ultimately the sustainable global society has the following requirements. Population growth would cease at or below the carrying capacity of the earth: zero population growth. Consumption of resources will stabilize at a sustainable level of supply—zero growth in consumable goods. Resources will be distributed to where they are most needed. They will be “farmed” by recycling as much as possible, involving a new sort of technology. The emission of *pollutants* will be kept below the capacity of the earth to absorb them—zero growth in pollution. In the sustainable society the emphasis will be on people, not on goods, on growth in quality not on growth in quantity.³

There is a huge gap between biological models and political realities. What matters now is that the steps we take are in the right direction. I shall mention three.

Appropriate technology: There are many desperately important tasks for science and technology to undertake to help promote a sustainable society for all people on the earth . . .

In a million situations the scientific community must devise techniques that extract more good for mankind from natural systems at less cost in human terms and less cost in energy, materials and ecological destruction such, for example, as small scale solar energy units. Such enterprises are not as glamorous as the nuclear power parade and heart transplants but they do carry the potential not just for survival but eventually for providing a decent life for all . . .

Self-Reliance: Self-reliance is not isolationism or self-sufficiency. It is the development of the capacity for autonomous goal seeking and decision making especially in those countries which, with appropriate internal effort, have the potential of conquering poverty and other miseries. The road is not an easy one. Self-reliance has to operate in the face of an international power structure that, to quote the *UNEP Cocoyoc Declaration*, “will resist moves in this direction”⁴ if they interfere with growth and profit.

Interdependence: The nations of the world have not yet decided they want interdependence. The myth is still widely accepted that each nation is a separate life boat. There is only one life boat with all humanity on board, albeit with first class passengers at one end and third class passengers at the other. If one end goes down the whole boat sinks. Survival and distributive justice require a reallocation of resources on the life boat by some means that is more equitable than the international marketing system allows. The ultimate challenge of resource reallocation is to the concept of ownership of resources by the nations that by accident happen to have them. We abuse resources because we regard them as commodities belonging to us. When we come to see land and minerals and oil and coal as part of a community to which we belong, we may begin to use them with a little more respect and a lot more justice.

NATURE, MAN AND GOD

Two connections need to be made more clearly.

Firstly: there is a connection between human justice and the renewal of the earth and between human injustice and environmental deterioration. When people no longer care about people they no longer care about the world. The industrialist who pollutes the air and the kid who slashes the seats of the railway carriage both represent the same attitude. They are ignorant. They do not care about each other. They do not care about the world . . .

It is time to recognize that the liberation movement is finally one movement. It includes women's liberation, men's liberation, the liberation of science and technology, animal liberation, plant liberation and the liberation of the air and the oceans, the forests, deserts, mountains and valleys . . .

Secondly: There is a connection between our image of nature and the way we manipulate nature. The ideology of nature dominant in western Christianity is the same one that is dominant in the secular world. It

³See the report of the 1974 WCC conference in Bucharest “Science and Technology for Human Development”. Anticipation 19, 1974, p. 12.

⁴Charles Birch. Science looks within itself and turns outward. Anticipation 10, February 1972, pp. 1-11.

is a technocratic view of nature . . .

Theology could have an important role in the future if more theologians were prepared to think critically about nature once again without fear of the consequences. The task, as I see it, includes the rediscovery of the fundamental unity of the human and non-human worlds without surrendering any truths about man. Indeed I would say it is to rediscover the unity of the whole creation in the light of the Christian understanding of man. That involves a radical reinterpretation of the nature-man relationship.

The world is not as tame as our sluggish convention-ridden minds tend to suppose. There is another view—which for want of a better term I shall call a sacramental view, which emphasizes the tender elements of the world. We catch glimpses of it in the book of Job, for example, in the questions in the 38th chapter: Why have flowers in the desert after rain where no man is? Have they no value when there is no one to use or admire them? Or in Psalm 104, where God made things for their own sake. Man is only one of a number of pebbles on the cosmic beach.⁵

Two aspects of nature are saved in the sacramental view. One is the intrinsic value of creatures in themselves. The other is the dependent relationship of all entities. Neither of these concepts is consistent with a view of nature as contrivance, period!

Why assert that only people have intrinsic value? But what could give intrinsic value to the flower that blooms alone in the desert, or the elephant or the blue whale? I reply with John Cobb⁶ that only responsiveness (or in anthropomorphic terms “feeling”) gives intrinsic value; responsiveness to the total environment which includes God. Who are we to deny this subjectivity to any creature? All we see with our eyes and the eyes of science is the outer aspect of things. The within of ourselves and our dependence we each know in our subjective life. Can we deny the within of other entities? Behold the lilies of the field! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father knowing. I do not interpret this to mean that God is a counter of dead sparrows but that even the life of a sparrow has significance for Him . . .

The creation stories are not about events in the past. They are about relationships of dependence, alienation and renewal in the present. The image of God as the artist who painted the flower and left it is inadequate. In some way God is involved in the being of the flower and in all that exists here and now. We

need a valuation of the creation that has within it a hierarchy of intrinsic value (of man and of sparrows) and which includes the concept of the rights of non-human nature. If existence on this earth is to be sustained it may be by a perilously slight margin of sensitiveness of those who value nature for more than its use to us . . .

I cannot think on this personalistic and unitary image of the creation without a humbling sense that all creatures are fellow creatures and that human responsibility extends infinitely to the whole of creation.

Can the Churches remain silent on these issues any longer? Or may they be awakened by the confusion in their own ranks and in the secular world? What is needed is a fearless pursuit of the meaning of the unity of nature, man and God in the light of both science and a wider ecumenism that includes African and Asian cultural ideas. They would then, I believe, see more clearly than they do at present their total responsibility to replenish the earth for the sake of all humanity and all creatures, while there may yet be time.

If we are to break the poverty barrier for almost two-thirds of the earth's people, if we are to continue to inhabit the earth, there has to be a revolution in the relationship of human beings to the earth and of human beings to each other. The churches of the world have now to choose whether or not they become part of that revolution.

“ALL IN THE FAMILY”

The WCC press officer, early in the Assembly session, made the following comments at a press briefing:

The attitude of western people toward churches in totalitarian countries falls into two stereotypes:

1. Christians in totalitarian countries are oppressed people; therefore, we cannot speak frankly with them, lest reprisals be made against them. Only behind closed doors can we be candid. Or,

2. They work hand-in-glove with their totalitarian government, completely co-opted, and there is no point in communicating with them.

Urging the rejection of these stereotypes, the WCC official pointed out that these churches have an identity centuries old. If they have an identity, he went on, we must assume they have integrity, and we must speak with them accordingly. The WCC cannot deal with them on the basis of stereotypes. These churches have memberships in the WCC, he insisted, and we must respect that fact.

⁵Further examples are given in John Passmore: “Man's Responsibility to Nature.” (Duckworth) 1974, Chapter 1.

⁶John B. Cobb. Ecology, Ethics and Theology. In: Herman E. Daly (Ed.) “Toward a Steady State Economy.” (Freeman) 1972, pp. 307-20.

Women Are Different

The inter-penetration of the issues of racism, sexism, classism and imperialism was implicit but vivid in the presentation at the special session on "Women in a Changing World." The theme of women's rights was played in different keys, depending upon the place and circumstance of the origin of the speaker. For example, the spokeswoman from Lebanon was tough, hard, speaking from the battle (literally), and her primary focus was the task, the struggle, the project at hand. And it was essentially political. On the other hand, the spokeswoman from Australia was concerned with the (also very real) question: Who am I? She was sensitive, affective, introspective, psychological, in her approach and concern.

Rock the Cradle, Rock the World

Tony Simonian

Tony Simonian is inter-church development secretary for the Middle East Council of Churches, having previously been regional youth secretary. A member of the Armenian Orthodox Church, she was born in Jerusalem but moved to Lebanon at age 11. She received a bachelor of arts degree in political studies from American University in Beirut and has pursued advanced study in rural sociology. She was youth advisor to the WCC Central Committee in Addis Ababa and Utrecht, has been on the Ad Hoc Youth Committee of the Council and is a consultant to the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development.

Protesting about women's rights alone is less valid for developing than for stable industrialized societies. It is the concern of a society with leisure; one performed in peaceful times. Societies with well established bureaucracies and administrative patterns evoke details about male-female relationships. Here, the boundary between domestic and public life is distinct. I make such a statement in the light of my own experience in general and the specific circumstances under which I prepared this exposé. I was writing these notes under machine-gun fire and mortar bombs. I

was forcing myself to think of this talk while organizing neighborhood committees for emergency relief work. When a country is going through a violent crisis, the problems and issues are challenging both men and women equally.

The mere fact that people are concerned with the status of women in society implies that they have started to question the nature and limits of the power women hold and the modes of its expression. As we all know, the question was asked for the first time by women and men in the Western industrialized world.

The issue of women's participation or non-participation in society, along with its accompanying strains or pleasures, is the product of social change and its impact on our institutions. It is the product of the evolution of our societies from agrarian to industrial societies. It is the conflict between the role of women within the family institution as opposed to their new roles transposed in other institutions (economic, academic, etc.). Besides actively participating within the family institution, women have also been powerful. Unlike the apparent impression of women's passivity, several sociological studies have demonstrated that women use their power at home by taking the total responsibility in child-raising, managing the economic life either by working in the field or in the kitchen, and finally manipulating the decision-making process. Based on the patterns of relationships outside the family, women are described as the submissive and obedient creatures in traditional agrarian societies. The appropriate social norms and legal codes set the rules of social control. With industrialization, institutions multiplied and the need for a new type of manpower arose. Women penetrated institutions other than the family where old ways of self-realization were no longer applicable. Consequently, old value systems were shaken and the type of interpersonal relationships between males and females was challenged. All these were accompanied with a change in the concept of family. The relationship between partners in marriage was given a new expression. What did not naturally evolve was the mechanisms of social control. This is how the trend in the West could be caricatured. In my opinion, what women need is to establish the appropriate avenues within the new institutions through which they can realize their potentialities as well as recuperate the power they had within the family institution and society in a new form.

Protest of women's movements in the West is in my opinion the result of such a conflict: searching for new techniques to express their creativity on the one hand, and conditioning the male attitude to accept explicitly women's complementarity in the modern industrialized societies on the other. As we read studies on women, we find that biological differences are not a basic handicap to condemn women and make them accept inequality at the cost of hindering their creativity. We do not read about *a priori* discrimination between sexes by God. Re-reading the Gospel objectively shows this clearly. Roles in general and those of women in particular, along with the value systems guiding them, are defined by societies . . .

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that women have participated in the life and evolution of societies with a powerful position; sometimes explicitly, at other times implicitly. Although motherhood has been the central role attributed to them, yet they have also participated in the process of economic growth. Therefore, I am not here as part of a demand for equal rights. I am here to make whatever contributions I can to this Assembly in the hope that it will ultimately contribute to the good of my people and my community. This is why I hold a position of responsibility in our organization (The Middle East Council of Churches). In my active involvement, as for all women in all places both in times of peace and crisis, we will continue to achieve self-realization in terms of re-discovering our power within the institutions of our societies. The issue, I repeat, is born of a combination of challenged male ego and societal affluence. Therefore, I reject the issue as arbitrary and look to the future with calm determination.

To be a Woman, to be Free

Dorothy McMahon

Dorothy McMahon of Australia is particularly active in educating for peace. She heads a non-sectarian Australian organization called "Another Mother for Peace" and edits its bi-monthly journal. She has done research for the Methodist Information Service of NSW and worked with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the International League for Peace and Freedom.

My work in the home, in the office, in the church, the women's movement, the political party and the peace movement certainly says something about who I am. What interests me is that my work in the home is so often used to define me, when the fact that I can clean a bath and cook meals says less about me than anything else that I do. One of my hardest struggles is to free myself to believe that I have worth apart from what I do, that if I stopped doing, people would still love me for who I am. The struggle is especially difficult because I live in a culture which values achievement above all else; which still largely says that a good wife and mother does everything for her husband and children; and I belong to a church which preaches justification by faith yet praises people, especially women, who are always doing. When I can free myself from justification by doing, then I can offer my service with joy and commitment. I am also freed to see that there are some jobs that almost nobody likes and the answer is for all of us to share them, not ask one group to try and sanctify them. Homemaking and church housekeeping belong to us all, not just to women.

There are those who try to define me according to their own picture of what a woman is like.

To be defined by the expectations of others is a mark of oppression. It can be a very comfortable oppression because, when you accept it, you gain the approval of both those who oppress and your sisters who accept oppression.

You know how you are expected to look, speak, behave and even think. I am experiencing the pain that comes from knowing that to be true to myself I must break free of this, that my survival as a person depends upon it. I find that when I share the reality of my experience of life, I am told it is not happening to me or that the problem lies within me.

It is implied that I am not really a true woman—that I am not defying tradition but the very order of Creation.

But I have come now to the point where it would be even more costly to go back. So I go on, not just for myself but for my sisters to come and, I believe, for my brothers too.

Some of you may believe you can define me as white, middle-class Australian.

My emerging personhood confronts me with the realities of this my birth and my inheritance. I can only say with sadness that I know very well who I am in

this respect—as I discover within myself dimensions of racism, the bonds of materialism, the clinging to economic privilege—the part of me which is oppressor. I know that my liberation must involve liberation from all these things—I can only ask that you meet me on the level of my frequent powerlessness, my humanness and my need of hope and grace.

So, who am I?

To ask this question is, for me, to make a move from non-being toward being. It involves the anger and pain which come with awareness of non-being, the urgent reaching out for affirmations of existence in relationships, in language and in a place in history.

I do know I am myself, a person with all the potential for whole humanness, with the worth that belongs to a daughter of God. In my growing freedom to be open to others, I experience both the vulnerability that comes with openness and the enfolding support of the sisters and brothers. I feel a strong sense of unity with all those who have committed themselves to the path of liberation. Our struggles are very different, our unity lies in the fact that we struggle. I have not been able to find in the church enough ways to share the pain and confusion of that struggle, nor enough celebration to express the hope I feel as I go through the resurrection process of finding myself.

I am.

I am woman.

I am freed by Christ and I am claiming that freedom, that space to live, now.

I stretch out my hands to you, my sisters and my brothers.

You may dance with me in celebration

You may walk beside me in unity.

I will no longer walk behind you.

Male and Female, Slave and Free

The African Moratorium

Rahantavololona Andriamanjato

Mrs. Rahantavololona Andriamanjato is one of the leading Christian women of Africa. Professionally she serves as Chief Water Engineer for Madagascar and simultaneously teaches applied hydraulics at the Uni-

versity of Tananarive. A lay preacher of the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, she is deeply interested in grass-roots evangelism. In addition to professional and religious activities, Mrs. Andriamanjato is president of the local branch of the Malagasy Independence Congress Party.

The liberation of women calls first of all for profound changes in the structure of society itself, and then for the development of the material and social conditions which will enable women properly to fulfill their varied role as full members of society. However, in addition to the material obstacles which can be removed through such measures, there are other obstacles of a more subjective nature. And, let us be honest, the religions, including the Christian religion, bear by no means the smallest share of responsibility for creating the inferiority complex and sense of inadequacy interiorized by the majority of women over the centuries . . . The all Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) at its meeting in Lusaka called for a moratorium, for the suspension for a few years of the sending of material aid and personnel from the western churches in order to allow the African churches to develop the sense of responsibility for themselves and for their witness in their own world and to enable them to discover the spiritual and (why not?) the material riches God has given them.

I know that some western churches, members of the WCC, are offended by this call and on more than one occasion when I have been travelling in Europe people have said to me, 'What use is there in our holding mission sales and exhibitions if the mission countries no longer need our missionaries nor our financial help?'

Yet there are so many things to be done in Europe and North America, not least, indeed one might say especially, the need to bring the Gospel to the people of those areas. However, if there are some people who feel called to work for Africa they can do so just as well by staying in Europe and North America.

They could, for example, convert the largely 'Christian' directors of the multi-national companies which continue to despoil independent Africa. They could convert them and make them understand and admit that the sovereign right of a people includes its sovereign right to manage its own natural resources and hence its right, among other things, to nationalize them.

They could convert them and make them understand that western Christians cannot go on defending the drive to draw maximum profit from the peoples of Africa, and that, on the contrary, it is incumbent on them to work for the rapid development of a new international economic order based on justice and peace.

They can also work for Africa, though staying in Europe and North America, by conducting intensive campaigns in the churches and among Christians and non-Christians in their own countries *against* investment in South Africa, against white migration to that country, *against* the governments that do not apply the embargo on the sale of arms to the government of South Africa which was passed by the United Nations twelve years ago . . .

So many things can be done outside the missionary countries in general and Africa in particular, to bear witness to Christ the Liberator. Consequently, we would like the sister churches, which used to be called the 'donor churches', not to regard the moratorium as a hostile gesture on the part of the African churches, but as a call to each of our churches:

- to break with tradition,
- to create new foundations for witness to Christ in each country,
- to consent to be the instruments by which Christ makes all things new.

Education For . . . ?

One of the unquestioned assumptions of Westerners concerning the Third World is the desirability of educational opportunities for Third World people. One of the hard lessons being learned by Westerners is that this unquestioned assumption is also, in many instances, unwarranted.

Dr. Samuel Parmar of India, speaking at a press conference at the Assembly, said that in India advanced education, although not intended to, often results in tending to strengthen the structures of domination. He cited the fact of 9,000 medical doctors in India seeking transfer to England to practice their profession. "And so", he said, "education can become the sustainer of negative values."

Third World, Last Place

Sergio Torres

Sergio Torres, a Roman Catholic priest, is the Executive Secretary of the Association of Latin American Theologians. He has spent many years in Chile, and last summer was responsible for organizing the Detroit Conference on "Theology in the Americas." Presently he is administering the continuation of that conference. He made the following remarks in an interview at Nairobi.

I am a little disappointed because this big conference, despite all its bureaucratic organization, is not really helping liberation, which is the theme of the conference itself.

There are significant differences between this assembly and the conference in Detroit last summer. One is that even though the General Secretary and the Central Committee of the WCC have in the past year held a very strong position about liberation in the world, I think that this assembly doesn't have a really common understanding of the presence of the church in the world. And I think that we had that in Detroit. That means two things. First, a common social analysis of the realities of our world; and secondly, a common theological understanding. These two factors were more clear in Detroit than here. I have to confess that the contribution of the Latin American delegation here is poor. I think there are two reasons. First, the protestant churches in Latin America are not united among themselves. Many of them don't belong to the WCC. Others are still far from a commitment to liberation. Second, in recent years there has been a strong movement of political repression in the different countries of Latin America. And I have to say that many of the protestant churches have agreed with this political repression by the governments. So I think it is a bad moment for some protestant brothers in Latin America. They are not really committed to the liberation of the oppressed. What we are seeing here at this assembly is the result of this situation in Latin America.

And not just the situation in Latin America. It is true also for other people of the Third World. I don't see clearly the input or impact of the Third World people in this assembly. Even though they are numerically in the majority in the assembly, they have not had a strong voice. They are related to other churches of their denominations in other countries. They receive money from the denominations to attend this conference. And I have the impression that they don't feel free to talk and to say what they should say.

Sadness

Robert L. DeWitt

It seemed never to have been mentioned explicitly at the Assembly sessions. It was more of an undertone. Perhaps an undertone not only in the speaking, but in the thinking as well. Half-unconscious as the thought probably was, it is not surprising that it failed to be articulated in words.

But it seems unlikely that persons attending this Assembly could have escaped completely an awareness of a cloud hanging over the churches. Better, a cloud formation, for there were various forms in which it cast shadows on the churches of the world.

Partly, it was the recognition of the failure of the churches to come together. Signs of this were the presence, only as observers, of the Roman Catholic communion, and the tenuous membership of the Orthodox, a membership threatened by any direct criticism of their country of origin. And this was sobering for an organization calling itself the World Council of Churches.

Partly, it was the awareness of the general failure of the churches to take seriously their mission, and the failure of the valid evangelization which would accompany a serious dedication to mission.

Partly, it was an awareness of the superficiality of so much of the theological discussions, the "vertical-horizontal" disputes, the problems of polity and politics which so occupied and preoccupied this Assembly.

Most deeply, perhaps, it was the awareness of the emptiness and fruitlessness of so much of church life on the local level, so immersed in triviality, bound and fettered by finances and the other vexing problems of survival.

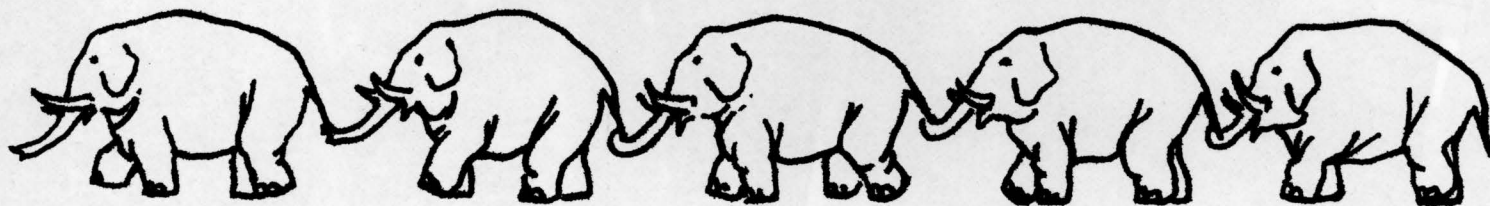
Survival. Was that perhaps the root of the sadness that permeated the Assembly like the coming of a humid spell, enervating people, making their spirits limp and listless? There were many signs that survival was indeed the question before the churches, yet one to which it gave no conscious consideration. As with the

dwindling garrison of a doomed fortress, the colors were still flying, the bugle still sounding, salutes still being exchanged. But there seemed to be manifested a quiet emptiness which none acknowledged.

Or perhaps not. It may be that the churches are only in a time of retrenchment. They may be exhausted by, but indeed recovering from a Pelagian fling, an era of trying vainly to bring in the Kingdom by force. The activist slogans and catchwords of the sixties may now be in the process of being quietly folded and laid away, even as the evangelical slogan—"The evangelization of the world in our generation"—of two generations ago was quietly forgotten when its subtle pride over-reached itself and was quenched by World War I. The end of an era. For those who have been in positions of influence, of authority, of privilege, the end of their era has inevitably a quality of sadness.

But what, really, is the meaning of "the end of an era" for Christians? Nothing but the passing of a watch in the night! God's eternal purposes in Creation and Redemption are not dependent upon the balance in our budgets. Nor upon the worldly success, even, of the churches. True, He has an eternal investment of concern in His Church. But our chronic error is too easily to equate His Church which He founded, with our churches which we manage. He is able, after all, "of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"—and that may be precisely what He has in mind! If the tree does not bring forth good fruit, there is only one fate in store for it.

But sadness will not suffice. It is not worthy of who and what we are. We have been baptized into a kingdom not of this world. All that is required of us is to live as becomes those who know that they are free to live in this life in the power of the life to come. That is what it means to be a part of Christ's Church. And the churches? Yes, it is a thing of sadness if they do not, in life and work, proclaim *this* Good News. And perhaps that sadness is what one sensed at Nairobi.



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