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I *Quaderni del CSA* ospitano articoli e studi che riflettano su alcuni fenomeni religiosi, socio-economici, politici, culturali e missionari delle Regioni Saveriane presenti in Asia. Essi si propongono anche di far conoscere eventi o esperienze che possano arricchire ed essere di aiuto ad altri missionari coinvolti nelle stesse attività.

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I fiori del cielo

TIZIANO TOSOLINI

Una delle intuizioni più profonde e care al Buddhismo è certamente quella dell'impermanenza di tutte le cose (*anicca*), del cambiamento che è intrinseco e connaturale ad ogni esistenza fenomenica, del ciclo infinito delle metamorfosi in cui tutto si trasforma e cambia senza mai stancarsi e senza mai avere una meta ultima a cui tendere e così cessare. Ogni cosa della vita è immersa nell'ininterrotto flusso del tempo, si forma e si frantuma di continuo lasciando dietro sé solo ombre che scompaiono di fronte ad un giorno che come sempre sarà. Riconoscere la profonda insostanzialità della realtà, essere consci dell'incredibile rapidità dell'impermanenza, lasciar andare il proprio io rinunciando ad ogni sorta di attaccamento... sono le esortazioni che più di altre risuonano e si ritrovano espresse negli insegnamenti che accompagnano i detti del Buddha storico. Come si legge ad esempio nel *Dhammapada*, un testo che secondo la tradizione riporta gli *ipsissima verba* del Buddha: «Ogni cosa esistente è impermanente. Quando si comincia a osservare ciò, con comprensione profonda e diretta esperienza, allora ci si mantiene distaccati dalla sofferenza: questo è il cammino della purificazione» (xx, 277).

Il pensiero dell'impermanenza, seppur nella sua indubitabile evidenza, nasconde però in sé un problema squisitamente epistemologico: quello del rapporto tra la realtà e la sua percezione. Se tutto è impermanente, se non esiste un alcunché di stabile a fondamento della comprensione della realtà, come è possibile affermare che tutto è in flusso e in divenire? Se si è consapevoli dell'apparire e scomparire delle cose proprio perché le si raffronta con ciò che è permanente o duraturo (o viceversa), eliminando uno di questi due poli del rapporto come si potrà mai distinguere il movimento dalla quiete?

Questa domanda sembra trovare una qualche risposta nello scritto *Kūge* (空華 *Fiori del cielo* o *Fiori del vuoto*) del maestro zen Dōgen (1200-1253), un breve ma denso saggio filosofico incluso nella sua opera *Shōbōgenzō* (*Il tesoro dell'occhio della Vera Legge*). Ecco come ci introduce a questo scritto uno stimato traduttore di testi buddhisti: «I "fiori del cielo" sono una metafora per i fenomeni della realtà. Questi fiori sono il prodotto della malattia degli occhi e fa sì che i fiori del cielo siano visibili... La visione dei fiori del cielo sono una forma di malattia, ovvero di distorsione della percezione umana, la quale, basandosi sul proprio io, condiziona ogni visione esterna (e interna) falsandola, e soprattutto ritenendo come salda e permanente la realtà vuota e impermanente. Tuttavia,

questa concezione non basta a Dōgen, il quale si spinge molto oltre. La realtà, pur vuota, insostanziale, impermanente e illusoria come di fatto è, è pur tuttavia la realtà dell'illuminazione, proprio così com'è, ovvero proprio con le caratteristiche citate prima. Pensare che la dimensione dell'illuminazione sia reale, vera, sostanziale e permanente significa travisare il Buddhismo. La realtà così com'è, quale la conosciamo con la nostra limitata capacità di comprensione, è la buddhità tutta intera. Nel testo si dice: "Il nirvāna e nascita-e-morte sono i fiori del cielo". D'altra parte, pensare che i fenomeni illusori non siano veri, e che solo i fenomeni visti con l'occhio dell'illuminazione siano veri, è un grande errore... Anche gli esseri senzienti ordinari, pur con la malattia degli occhi, che vedono l'illusione, sono persone dell'illuminazione... Tuttavia è diffusa la falsa visione secondo cui i fiori del cielo esistono a causa della malattia degli occhi e se tale malattia non esistesse, anche i fiori del cielo non esisterebbero. Però Dōgen, ribaltando il ragionamento sostiene che le malattie degli occhi esistono a causa dei fiori... Cioè la falsa visione della realtà e dei fenomeni dipendono anche dalla presenza dei fenomeni illusori sempre sotto i nostri occhi, quotidianamente. I fiori del cielo anche con la visione dell'occhio dell'illuminato non scompaiono: i fenomeni impermanenti sono la realtà in cui ognuno vive, e la vera illusione è pensare di poterla modificare».¹

Per il pensiero non discriminatorio di Dōgen, ogni cosa non è che un'espressione del vuoto, e anche l'illusione (i fiori del cielo prodotti dalla malattia degli occhi) non deve essere eliminata ma piuttosto preservata e accudita proprio perché essa è identica all'illuminazione. La vita deve essere accettata e riconosciuta per quella che è, la suprema realtà del nirvāna non deve essere cercata e raggiunta al di fuori della nascita-e-morte. Per Dōgen, allora, il quesito postogli sulla possibilità o meno della consapevolezza dell'impermanenza non possiede alcun senso. L'incedere e il passare, infatti, non si discostano dalla quiete e dalla calma: essi non fanno altro che segnalare e scandire la venuta del tempo della fioritura, quel tempo che porta con sé anche il tempo senza tempo dell'illuminazione. Alla caduta del proprio io non si potrà dunque che assistere alla corrispondente la scomparsa di ogni differenziazione.

Eppure, chissà se in questa ininterrotta impermanenza, se in questo oggi eterno, scompariranno anche quei «fiori» che i nostri occhi sempre più consumati dalla malattia continuano a vedere: il tempo dell'indifferenza che ha il sopravvento su quello dell'amore, il tempo del disinteresse che rende irrilevante sapere che Dio ci concede sempre l'attimo per sbocciare all'interno della Sua dolce ed intramontabile memoria...

1. *Antologia del buddhismo giapponese*. Testi tradotti ed annotati a cura di Aldo Tollini. Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi. Classici. Filosofia, 2009, 225-6.

Religioni e missione



Interreligious Dialogue in Japan

FRANCO SOTTOCORNOLA

How to Announce and Inculturate the Gospel

The Case of *First Corinthians*

FABRIZIO TOSOLINI

Interreligious Dialogue in Japan

FRANCO SOTTOCORNOLA

Japan has a long history of accommodating different religions within its social life and culture. During the sixth century Buddhism began to be known and practiced in Japan, albeit within the restricted circle of a political and cultural elite. The meeting of Buddhism with the local ancient religion (Shintō) was not easy and not always peaceful, but, somehow, the two spiritual traditions managed to coexist and even, at times, to mingle and interact.¹ Buddhism and Shintō, however, have remained deeply different traditions, even in their vocabulary and the issues they raise or deal with.

This very difference between the two spiritual worlds of Shintō and Buddhism has helped them find a settlement. In modern Japan, events linked with life (birth, marriage, feasts) and the Country as such are usually connected with Shintō, while funerals and the care of the deceased members of the family are entrusted to Buddhism. It is quite common for a Japanese family to have both the *kamidana* (a little Shintō «altar») and the *butsudan* (or «altar» for the deceased members of the family with, at the centre, a statue of the Buddha). Japanese history, however, has known conflicts and wars waged by armed Buddhist temples, and violent State reaction to their political power, as well as oppression of non conforming Shintō sects (like Ōmoto!) by the State during the nationalistic period that started with the Meiji era (1867) and ended with the Japanese defeat in the Second World War (1945).

Even among the different Buddhist schools (the existence of which is a typical aspect of Japanese Buddhism) the mutual relation was not always peaceful and harmonious. Rivalries and contrasts have been quite common already among the ancient Buddhist Schools established in Japan in the ninth century. Recently, Japanese newspapers carried the big «news» that, on 15 June, 2009, the leaders of the Shingon and the Tendai Buddhist Schools had met for the first time in 1200 years! Contrasts among the various Buddhist traditions and related institutions were strongest in the Kamakura age (twelfth-fourteenth centuries) when new forms of a more popular and «local» Buddhism arose in Japan.

1. In Japanese, this phenomenon is known as the *shinbutsu-konko* or the «the mixture of Buddhism and Shintoism in the daily life of the Japanese». Momoo Yamaduchi and Setsuko Kojima eds., *A Cultural Dictionary of Japan*. (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 1979), 322.

The encounter of Christianity (brought to Japan by Saint Francis Xavier in 1549) with the local Shintō religion and with Buddhism, notwithstanding some examples of «dialogue» or mutual interest, was also a difficult one, which, moreover, was too soon hampered with and tragically suppressed by the State persecution which finally banned Christianity in 1614 and obliged it to an underground existence for over two hundred and fifty years.

To complete an introduction to our subject, we have to mention the phenomenon of the «new religions of Japan,» which can be said to begin with the foundation of the *Tenrikyō* (1838). After the war, these «new religions» became so numerous and so active as to become one of the major factors on the present religious scene of Japan. A more recent wave of them, with peculiar elements linked to the changing needs and moods of the age, are known as the «new-new religions of Japan». Their impact on the religious scene and also on the kind of inter-religious «dialogue» going on in Japan is considerable.

After the War. The Beginning of a New Era

It was only after the Second World War that «freedom of religion» was granted and protected by the new Japanese Constitution (1947). The tragedy of the war and the need to rebuild the Country, not only financially and politically, but also giving it new ideals and new values to live by, helped to bring the various spiritual traditions closer to one another or at least to introduce a new kind of attitude in their relationship. Thus it was that in 1946 the «Japanese Association of Religious Organizations» (*Nihon shūkyō renmei*) was established. In 1947 «The International Religious Fellowship» (*Kokusai shūkyō dōshi kai*) was born. One of its co-founders was the Catholic Bishop of Kyoto, Furuya Yoshiyushi.

In 1951 «The Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan» (*Shin Nihon shūkyō dantai rengōkai*) was set up. The establishment of these organizations, where for the first time different religions in Japan grouped together for a common goal, was the signal of a new attitude in their mutual relationship. A vigorous contribution to what we can now begin to call «interreligious dialogue» (i.e. mutual interest in view of cooperation and interaction among the religions) came with the II Vatican Council of the Catholic Church. In 1965 Niwano Nikkyo, the founder of *Risshō kōsei kai*, a powerful and dynamic Buddhist lay organization, who in the same year had become President of the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan, was offered the chance to attend the last session of the Council. This event added to his already lively involvement in interreligious contacts.

The cooperation of Niwano Nikkyō with Miyake Toshio, also the leader of a new religion (the «*Dōshi* Church of Izuo») and a pioneer of interreligious dialogue in Japan, brought to the foundation, in 1970, of the «World Conference of Religions for Peace» (WCRP) which has since developed into the most important organization of its kind in the world. Its first general assembly took place that same year in Kyoto with the participation of hundreds of religious representatives of all major religious traditions from 39 Countries. Card. Shirayanagi Seiichi, former Archbishop of Tokyo, has been the chairman of the Japan chapter of WCRP for many years.

We can note here that a special common ground of interreligious cooperation in Japan has been, right since the war, its commitment to world peace, and particularly to nuclear disarmament. This important element of interreligious cooperation in Japan becomes evident every year on the occasion of the anniversary, on August 6 and 9, of the dropping of the atom bomb at the end of the war on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Every year the tragic event is recalled by a common civil celebration in which religions join together and play a significant role. This field of interreligious dialogue, i.e. cooperation for a common social goal, seems to be one of the most promising, and also of the most practicable in Japan. Yet, a lot more of it could be done!

Christian Pioneers of Interreligious Dialogue in Japan

As already pointed out, the II Vatican Council, by common admission, has played an important role also in Japan in fostering a positive attitude of mutual respect and cooperation among the different religions. But even before this event, Christian missionaries had begun a serious study of the religions in Japan often involving friendly relations with their representatives.

Among them we must recall Fr. Joseph Spae, CICM (1913–1989), connected with the foundation of the «Oriens Institute for Religious Research» in Tokyo (1959), the «Christian Center for the study of Japanese Religions», sponsored by the (Protestant) National Christian Council of Japan, active in Kyoto since 1959,² but also individuals like the Jesuits Heinrich Dumoulin (1905–1995), William Johnson (1925–), Kadowaki Kakichi (1926–), the Carmelite Okumura Ichiro (1923–) and Fr. Allegrino Allegrini, PIME (1926–2006) who was the first Catholic priest to receive a degree from the Shintō National University (*kokugakuin*) back in 1973 and who was constantly involved in interreligious dialogue on

2. The NCC publishes two reviews: *Japanese Religions* (in English) and *Deai* (in Japanese).

many fronts, making friends everywhere among people of other religions. An example of his life of dialogue are the articles he published for several years on the daily newspaper of the city of Saga as part of a friendly correspondence with Ven Ide Satoshi, head of the Pure Land Buddhist temple Sainen (Imari, Saga Pref.) later collected and edited in two volumes.³

Since 1976 the Nanzan «Institute for Religion and Culture» was established by the Nanzan University (svd) of Nagoya.⁴ Its first director was Fr. J. Van Bragt, CICM (1928–2007), another pioneer in the field of interreligious dialogue in Japan.

Each one of the above mentioned names of persons and institutions would deserve a separate study and provide material for abundant research on the interreligious dialogue going on in Japan at the level of scholarly exchange. The study of other religions is an important and necessary foundation for any interreligious encounter. In itself it is not yet true «dialogue». In all the above mentioned cases, however, it was accompanied by a friendly encounter with persons of other religions, giving rise to mutual exchanges and reactions, so as to constitute at least the beginning of a true interreligious dialogue.

Only a beginning, however; because it seems that so far in Japan, as elsewhere, interreligious dialogue at the level of scientific research has not gone beyond the study of one another's religious tradition, a better and deeper knowledge of the other, without, however, giving occasion yet to a true mutual questioning, for a common deeper search about the specific elements that differentiate and, therefore, relate the purposes and roles of the different religious movements, as well as to mutually challenge their claims and test their foundations.

Dialogue of Religious Experience

Another kind or field of interreligious dialogue is that of mutual witness and, to the extent possible, also sharing, of personal religious experience. Fr. Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle, SJ (1898–1990) for example, with his research and his personal experience has been a pioneer in the Zen-Christian dialogue. He not only studied in depth the practice of Zen silent meditation (*zazen*) comparing it with Christian spirituality, but also assiduously practised it and founded Shinmeikutsu, the first Christian *Zendō* (or Zen meditation hall) in Japan for the practice of *zazen* near Tokyo (1961). The Dominican Fr. Oshida

3. *Kokoro no siruku rodo* (Silk road of the heart). (Tokyo: Saga Shinbunsha, vol. 1: 1995, vol. 2: 1998).

4. The Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture edits the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* and publishes a yearly Bulletin in English and in Japanese where account is given of its various activities

Shigeto (1922–2003) was also a man who, with his whole way of being, lived interreligious dialogue. He founded Takamori Soan, something between a Christian hermitage and a Zen temple on the mountains of Nagano Prefecture, and inspired a lot of people with his peculiar life style, which, however, more than to other religions sought inspiration in Japanese tradition itself.

The most significant event, or series of events, in this field of spiritual interreligious dialogue taking place in Japan is what is known by the name of «East-West Spiritual Exchanges» (*Tōzai reisei kōryū*). This particular form of interreligious encounter taking place between Catholics and Buddhists is of special significance for the fact that monastic tradition is well rooted in both traditions.

These «exchanges», born out of the encounter and cooperation of several persons and institutions, are supported, on the Buddhist side, especially by the Hanazono Institute for Zen Studies of Hanazono University (Kyoto), and, on the Catholic side, by the Benedictine organization «Monastic Interreligious Dialogue» (MID). They consist of a period of three or four weeks in which monastics from Europe (mostly belonging to the Benedictine and Trappist Orders) go to Japan and stay in Zen monasteries sharing as far as possible in the life of Zen monks.

In return, groups of Buddhist monks (mainly from the Zen tradition) go to Europe for an equal period of time during which they stay in Christian monasteries sharing as far as possible the life of local monks. The first such «spiritual exchange» took place in 1979 with a group of about 50 Buddhist monks, divided into two groups, going to Europe.⁵ Later exchanges had less participants. So far, ten such exchanges have taken place. The last one was in 2005 with a group of 9 Western monastics visiting and staying in Zen temples in Japan (among them 8 from Europe and 1 from the USA; 3 Nuns, 3 Brothers, 3 Priests). This encounter is certainly an important part of interreligious dialogue, but its limit comes from its being restricted to a few participants.

Another limitation is its international aspect, with the danger of considering Buddhism a Japanese religion and Christianity a European religion. For this reason Fr. Pierre de Béthune, at the time Secretary General of MID, has voiced the desire that in the future this exchange should take place in Japan between Japanese Christian monastics and Japanese Zen or other Schools' Buddhists.

5. Cf. B. Billot, *Voyage dans les Monastères Zen*. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1987), relates the story of the second «spiritual exchange» which took place in 1983 with 15 Europeans (13 monks belonging to the Benedictine and the Trappist Orders, 1 Dominican and 1 Marist) visiting Japan and staying about a month in Zen monasteries.

The Spirit of Assisi

A most significant event in the history of interreligious dialogue was the prayer meeting of Assisi, called by Pope John Paul II in October 1986 to involve all religions in a world wide effort to bring about peace on earth. To this unprecedented interreligious event, leaders and representatives of all the main religions of the world were invited and participated. Also from Japan there were numerous participants, from all major religious traditions.

The impact of this meeting was enormous. More than any speech or discourse, it made people realize that religions do not necessarily divide, but, on the contrary they can unite people. Consequently, religions can, and must, play an important role in uniting people and overcoming hatred, divisions, wars. Since that first meeting, the Assisi event was re-enacted every year on the initiative of the Rome based Catholic association known as the «Community of Saint Egidio». Every year in a different city of Europe (so far, out of Europe it was convened only once in the USA) the interreligious event of Assisi is re-lived as a world wide encounter of people of all religions who join in prayer and commitment to peace.

This year (2009) it will be its twenty-third edition, and it will be held in Krakow (Poland). Many Japanese religious representatives take part in it every year. There, they come to know each other, and absorb a style, a spirit, which they take back with them upon their return to Japan. Moreover, the great Buddhist leader of the Tendai School Yamada Mumon, who attended the Assisi meeting, upon his return, in 1987 called a similar meeting at the headquarters of the Tendai School on Mount Hiei (Kyoto), which has since become a tradition. Every year now, at the beginning of August, on the eve of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemorations of the atom bomb, an interreligious meeting, similar to that which has taken place in Assisi, is held on Mount Hiei, and is attended by representatives of all the major religions of Japan.

At the Official Level

Within the frame of the Episcopal Committee for Social Questions of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, a Committee for interreligious dialogue existed since 1966. Actually that committee did not have a definite program or an ordinary activity of its own, but served especially to meet requests or to provide assistance on special occasions. The Bishop in charge has been, for many years, Bp. Tanaka Ken-ichi of Kyoto. Because of this position and of his personal involvement, Bishop Tanaka, together with Card. Shiray-

anagi, then Archbishop of Tokyo, has been for a long time a point of reference for inter-religious dialogue on the part of the Catholic Church in Japan both at the national and at the international level. To the credit of the Bishops' Conference during that period of time one has to ascribe the publication (1985) of some very useful and practical «guidelines» regarding the way to deal with the deceased and the ancestors, where various issues related to interreligious dialogue are dealt with.

At the General Assembly of the Bishops' Conference held in February 1998, however, the above mentioned Committee was dissolved and it was decided that interreligious dialogue would be dealt with by the Bishops' Conference itself, acting through its Standing Committee, with two Bishops in charge, one for national affairs, the other for international issues, especially for relations with the Holy See. The situation changed again in 2004, when a Subcommittee (depending from the Standing Committee of the Bishops' Conference) was re-established to deal with interreligious dialogue on behalf of the Bishops' Conference. At the moment (2009) the President is Bishop Otsuka Yoshinao, of Kyoto. Other members include two Bishops, three Priests and two Sisters. Secretary is Fr. Hisashi Ritsuo, of the General Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference.

Since its establishment this Subcommittee has worked mainly on two projects: the first was the collection and publication of the most significant documents and texts of the Catholic Church on interreligious dialogue, both at the universal and at the local level. This volume was published in 2006. After that, the committee started working on a set of guidelines to be offered to Catholics in Japan for interreligious dialogue in its various aspects. These guidelines have already been approved by the Bishops' Conference in the General Assembly of June 2009 and will be published within this year (2009).

Besides such initiatives, the Committee is in charge of official contacts with the Holy See (PCID), representation in national or international events as it was the case of the international «summit» of religious leaders on the occasion of the G8 summit held in Hokkaido in 2008, or the participation in meetings and activities promoted by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, the yearly interreligious meeting held at the beginning of August on Mount Hiei, etc. An official annual initiative is the conveying of the good wishes on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to Buddhists on the occasion of the *Hanamatsuri* feast (Vesak), which in Japan occurs on April 8, and to Muslims for the end of *Ramadan*.

At the diocesan level, not every diocese has an official desk or committee in charge of this activity. But almost every diocese is involved in a way or another in interreligious dialogue. For example, the diocese of Takamatsu (Island of Shikoku) has joined a local

interreligious committee, formed by 13 representatives of various religions who meet once every three months. Its president, at the moment, is the Catholic Bishop of Takamatsu, Mgr. Mizobe Osamu. A general assembly held in 2006 gathered 130 participants. In 2009 the Bishop, as President of the committee, led a pilgrimage to Rome in which 43 Buddhist monks participated. They were received by the PCID and had a chance also to meet the Holy Father Benedict XVI. The diocese of Oita also participates in an interreligious group with rotating presidency and yearly meetings.

A «semi-official» rank belongs to the organization «*Kakehashi*: Association to Promote Interreligious Dialogue», which gathers the Major Superiors of Religious Orders (or their delegates) joining forces and information to work together for interreligious dialogue in Japan. At the moment, 11 different Religious Orders belong to *Kakehashi*. Members meet twice a year. This association was founded in 2002 as a development of a previous group, started in 1982, uniting PIME and Xaverian Missionaries interested in contacts and dialogue with Japanese religions.⁶

Organizations and Groups

There are many organizations, groups and individuals working for interreligious dialogue or actually living out interreligious contacts and cooperation at various levels in Japan. These are so numerous that it is impossible to even attempt to list them here. Some examples will give an idea of the sort of «grass roots» interreligious dialogue going on in Japan. The Zen-Christian colloquia (*Zenkikondankai*). This association is perhaps the oldest of its kind in Japan. It was started in 1967 by an American Quaker, Douglas Steere, to promote friendship across religious barriers. From the very beginning also Catholic scholars were members of this group, the purpose of which is to offer a chance to persons of different religions to come together and share, in a friendly atmosphere, their religious experience and inner spiritual life. At present, besides Zen Buddhism and Christianity, also other branches of Buddhism, as well as Shintō and the Sikh religion, are represented. The group has about 50 members. A special feature of the annual three days' meeting is the practice of *zazen* in the morning and the attendance at the Holy Eucharist, celebrated by a Catholic Priest member of the group, in the evening.⁷

6. See <<http://www.pimejapan.com/kekehashi/>>.

7. A publication on the tenth anniversary of the group's foundation collected the thoughts and feelings of its members: *A Zen-Christian Pilgrimage*, The fruits of Ten Annual Colloquia in Japan. 1967–1976. The Zen-Christian Colloquium 1981.

CORMOS («Conference on Religion and Modern Society», *Gendai ni okeru shūkyō no yakuwari kenkyūkai*) was founded in 1970 in Kyoto by a joint effort of the NCC Center for the study of Japanese Religions and the Tokyo based Oriens Institute for Religious Research. This organization brings together leaders and scholars of various Japanese religions for a two days' session once or twice a year.

The Japanese branch of the American «Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies» born out of an initiative of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture of Nagoya. The Research Center for Interreligious Dialogue (*Shūkyōkan taiwa kenkyūjō*) founded by Ven. Minegishi Shoten, a Zen Buddhist Monk, in Tokyo. It holds monthly meetings on topics related to religion, passing in review different religious traditions and promoting an interreligious exchange. The Association of members of different religions committed to disarmament and peace (*Hisen Heiwa wo negau shūkyōsha no kai*) is an organization headed by a Buddhist temple (Kotokuji) in Kumamoto holding frequent meetings and even demonstrations on the occasion of national or international events or issues dealing with social justice and world peace.

Fr. Ogasawara Masaru, former secretary of the Committee for Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, since 1998 started holding meetings once every two months in the city of Yokohama, in which he and the popular Buddhist scholar Hiro Sachiya take up together various religious topics, dealing with them from the Buddhist and from the Christian point of view.

Prof. Honda Masaaki, a Catholic scholar (former President of Notre dame University of Kyoto) deeply interested in interreligious dialogue especially in the field of philosophical thought, in 1996 established a Study Center (*Sogo ningengaku kenkyūjō*) near the city of Kitakyushu to foster such research.

Shinmeizan

Shinmeizan was established in 1987 by a Xaverian Missionary in cooperation with Ven. Furukawa Tairyū, head of the Buddhist Seimeizan-Schweitzer Temple of Tamana (Kumamoto Pref.) as a «House of Prayer» open to people of all religions, which is, at the same time, a place of interreligious encounter.⁸ It practices «dialogue of life» or «life of dia-

8. Cf. F. Sottocornola, «A House of Prayer and Interreligious Encounter in Kumamoto» in *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, Winter 1987: 203–7; Id. «Seimeizan 1987–1992: Five years of Interreligious Experience» in *The Japan Mission Journal*, Summer 1993: 119–29; Maria De Giorgi, *Frammento di un dialogo tra cristiani e buddhisti*. (Bologna: EMI, 1989).

logue» first of all in its daily contacts with the people of the village it belongs to, sharing in its events and life. Besides welcoming guests who come, also from abroad, to spend some time at the Center, contacts are made and kept with various religious groups or organizations of the surrounding area especially Buddhist temples of Tendai, Shingon, Zen, Pure Land, the *Risshō kōsei kai*, etc. But also with Shintō, Ōmoto, and Tenrikyō. Once every two years the representatives of these religious organizations are invited to a «prayer meeting», each group following its own tradition, at Shinmeizan, ending in a common pledge to work for peaceful cooperation among the religions and commitment to world peace. Representatives of about ten different religious traditions meet on such occasion.

To spread the ideal and practice of interreligious dialogue Shinmeizan, in 1992, has founded the *Kumamoto chiiki shoshūkyōtaiwa grupu* (Interreligious dialogue group of Kumamoto). After a four years training period to study the reasons and true nature of interreligious dialogue and to learn about the various religions present in the area from their own representatives, the group started its own activity visiting four times a year different religious institutions to foster mutual knowledge and friendship among them.

To help clarify and deepen the theological foundations of interreligious dialogue, Shinmeizan has organized several international consultations on interreligious dialogue and the theology of the religions supporting it. The first such international consultation took place in 2003 in Izumi Sano (Osaka), the second (2004) in Padang (Indonesia), the third (2005) in Bangalore (India), the fourth (2007) in Tagaytay (Philippines).⁹

To help train persons who are motivated and competent in the practice of interreligious dialogue, Shinmeizan, in cooperation with the association *Kakehashi*, has organized also week long specific training courses. The first such course was held in Uji (Kyoto) in March 2007. The second at Shinmeizan, in March 2008.¹⁰

Conclusion

Interreligious dialogue in its various forms serves two great aims in human society. The first one is to lead religiously motivated persons and organizations to find in their own religious experience and in their own faith a source of cooperation and friendship so as to contribute positively and efficiently to build a world of peace, of justice and of mutual

9. See an account of this program in *Quaderni del Centro Studi Asiatico*. 2007, vol. 2/4: 153–66.

10. In default of a bibliography on the issue of interreligious dialogue in Japan, cf. F. Sottocornola, «The present situation regarding inter religious dialogue and communication in Japan» In *Journal of Dharma*, 2000, 1: 32–48.

friendly support. To this purpose it is necessary, first of all, that people belonging to different religious traditions come to know one another, become friends (because of their common religious commitment) and meet to think together on how to accomplish, together, such great task.

But this first aim, noble and great as it is, while it certainly contributes positively to the well being of human society, does not answer the deep needs of religious movements as such. Human religious aspirations have a wider and higher aim. They look for the last, final, meaning and purpose of human existence and of all things. In the words of the Declaration of the II Vatican Council on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) the religions are called to answer the «great questions» that press the human heart: «Men look to the various religions for answers to those profound mysteries of the human condition which, today even as in olden times, deeply stir the human heart: What is a man? What is the meaning and the purpose of our life? What is goodness and what is sin? What gives rise to our sorrows and to what intent? Where lies the path to true happiness? What is the truth about death, judgement, and retribution beyond the grave? What, finally, is that ultimate and unutterable mystery which engulfs our being, and whence we take our rise, and whither our journey leads us?» Only a satisfying answer to these questions can quench the human thirst for truth and joy.

It seems that interreligious dialogue, a rather new adventure in human history, also in Japan (and perhaps especially in Japan because of some particular values of its culture), pursues with good results the first of these two aims. However, the limitations inherent in these particular values of Japanese culture cause a certain hesitation, an objective difficulty, in pursuing the second goal of interreligious dialogue. It will take a long time to go further on the path of interreligious dialogue.

The attainment of the first aim will certainly be necessary to prepare a gradual attempt to pursue the second. But such step forward is inevitable and it responds to the inner religious thirst of all genuine religious search. The search for good answers to the «great questions» that hunt the human heart.

How to Announce and Inculturate the Gospel

The Case of *First Corinthians* (2 part)

FABRIZIO TOSOLINI

11:2–16. *The Veil of Women*

The unit inaugurates a section of the letter that according to commentators deals with communal meetings of the Church. Apparently the issue (the veil women should wear when praying or prophesying, 11:5)¹ is a minor one. However, Paul seems to consider it an important matter.²

The unit opens with Paul's praise to the Corinthians because they remember him and keep the traditions he transmitted to them (11:2).³

Then a teaching follows about the relational «body⁴—head» pattern which links together woman, man, Christ, God (11:4). In view of signifying this relationship, while praying or prophesying, males should not cover their heads, women instead should, lest they make ashamed their own «head» (the males, with a domino effect, 11:4–6).

The following verses offer a reason for males not to cover their heads, through a further teaching on another aspect of the «body—head» pattern: the «body» is the «glory» of the head. A male is the image and glory of God,⁵ a female is the glory of the male. This

1. Strictly speaking, the text does not make it necessary to think that in 11:2–16 Paul has in mind formal meetings of the community. If Paul were referring here to informal moments, either personal or in groups, this would provide a way to harmonize this text, where women can pray and prophecy, and 14:33–38, where *in the assemblies*, women are not allowed to speak.

2. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 405–07, tries to identify the real issues at stake in the unit against possible misinterpretations.

3. This double topic is important in the development of the argument: 11:16 Paul recalls the point; 11:22 there is no praise for other wrong behaviors; 11:23 Paul refreshes the memory of the Corinthians about the tradition he received and gave them.

4. Paul however does not use this word. Perhaps in order to avoid any allegorical equation, much of the kind Philo uses: the man represents mind, the woman represents sensation, the snake represents pleasure (*Legum Allegoriae* II, 44, 71).

5. Cf. *Gen* 1:26–27, with the insertion of the term «glory» which does not appear in the text of Genesis. In order to follow the argument, Paul should have given reasons for calling the male «glory of Christ,» not immediately «glory of God.» To show that a male is glory of Christ would have implied a reference to salvation history, possibly to the Resurrection of Jesus. Perhaps Paul had reasons for trying to avoid that.

teaching (11:7–9) refers to the story of creation (which is anterior to the differentiation of peoples and cultures). In 11:10 there is a reason for women to cover their heads: they should do this in view of the angels. The statement is not clear. Some commentators think that it refers to the order in creation which is safeguarded by angels, or to the angels who take part in worship.⁶ Then verses 11:11–12 seem to state the basic equality between male and female: the tradition makes use of the gender difference only to express, in a specific context, some aspects of the relationship of the believers to God. The following verses (11:13–15) again offer some reasons for recognizing the convenience of the tradition: on the teaching of nature itself⁷ the long hair of a woman is a glory for her. Should it not be covered during her prayer? The final verse (11:16) closes the discussion on the basis of the fact that neither «we» nor the Churches of God have such custom; the one who supports such a change is called «fond of strife».

Remarks

In this unit we find a confirmation of what we have seen before about Paul's effort of bringing the Corinthian community into the mainstream of the Church's tradition. Although, at least for us now, his argumentation does not seem convincing enough (perhaps he himself was not entirely satisfied with it), he closes the discussion by an appeal to the already traditional custom of the Churches. In this way he shows that the visibility of the unity of the Church is a reason strong enough to command some choices, even if in other cultural environments they could be interpreted in different ways.⁸

In turn, this speaks of the relevance of the tradition of the Church in view of salvation. Christ's incarnation would not be real enough if it were not historically experienced in the new world of the Church's life.⁹ At the same time, the custom concerns a specific moment of the community life, with a specific range of significance. Its intended meaning seems to focus on theological (salvation–history) rather than on anthropological issues.

6. Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 546–47; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 418–19.

7. Paul appears to be close to Epictetus, who speaks of the external signs nature itself has given in order to distinguish males and females. Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 552.

8. The materials collected in Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 526–29, 536, show that both in Jewish as well as in Greek–Roman environment, women (among the Romans even males during rites) used to veil their heads when in public. Paul would interpret praying and prophesying, even in an informal environment, as an act involving the Church.

9. Paul does not say why, contrary to Jewish tradition (cf. Ez 44:20 LXX), in the first Churches the males did not cover their head while praying (Collins, *First Corinthians*, 401). Was this a sign that the glory of Jesus had already been revealed in his Resurrection? At this point, the fact that women (being glory of man) cover their heads would signify the awaiting of the final Resurrection, where the glory of the whole mystical body of Christ would be fully revealed.

11:17–34. *Abuses at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

The next unit focuses on some abuses during the community gatherings. After an introductory verse («I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse,» 11:17), Paul lists two negative facts: divisions among the believers (11:18–19), and second, the practice of having separated meals which contradicts the Lord's intention about his supper (11:20–33). Paul expands on this second issue. First, he describes the practice (11:20–22) with a strong comment: «What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not» (11:22). Then he recalls in a solemn way what he received and transmitted to the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper, followed by his interpretation: «For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes,» a death which Jesus himself has said to be «for you,» a memorial which belongs to him («do this *eis tēn emēn anamnēsin*, in view of the memorial which is mine,» 11:25).

Then, in 11:27–28, Paul shows a consequence of this reality: if someone eats and drinks in an unworthy manner (he does not recognize the body) he is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, he eats and drinks his own judgment.¹⁰ Therefore everybody should examine himself. In the following three verses Paul first shows a sign of the Lord's judgment (11:30) and then talks of the positive effects of self examination and judgment (11:31–32). At the end (11:33–34) he issues his command: «So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another; if any one is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together to be condemned.»

Remarks

The connection between the conclusion of the unit (11:34b) and the previous warnings is not immediately clear.¹¹ What is clear however is the fact that for Paul the gathering of the community, and the quality of the relationships taking place there are of the utmost importance. They announce the fact and significance of Jesus' death by making the Body visible, the Body that is saved because the Lord is living in it. The absolute use of the term «body» in 11:29 reinforces Paul's attempt at linking the words of Christ, the celebration

10. Plutarch speaks of the presence of the god at sacrificial meals, with his help, accepting what is taking place (Klauck, *Religious Context*, 39).

11. What Paul says in 11:34b («About the other things I will give directions when I come») lets us understand that there may have been other disorders taking place during the gatherings of the community. This may explain the fact that the invitation to self examination has a scope that is wider than the issue of separated meals.

and the community, so that in this unit the idea of the fellowship with Christ (1:9) surfaces. In this unit it is also possible to see the big difference existing—at least in Paul’s mind—between the patterns of communal life of the widespread private associations of the Greek cities and those of the *ekklēsiai tou Theou*. The private associations had rules for their celebrations and meals.¹² Under this aspect, the community of Corinth could resemble any of them. What is different is the orientation of the communal life. Those private associations responded to the needs of socialization and mutual assistance. Although under the protection of some god, they were centered on the welfare of the members. Instead, according to Paul, the Christian community is oriented towards Christ. From him—from the tradition that starts from him—it learns the patterns of its life. The community lives the new life that comes from the Lord, not as the sum of the individual believers, each one considered as an independent entity, but as the unity of all of them, a unity that is created by the Living Lord.

Paul is not afraid of making this explicit. He shows the permanence of the Lord’s intention throughout the life of the community. Even the interpretation of the sickness and death of some as a punishment coming from him shows his active presence.

12:1–14:40. *Charisms and Community Growth*

It is not immediately clear which is the problem prompting Paul to write the long section on the «spiritual gifts.» In any case, the introduction (12:1; cf. 1 Thess 4:13) presents the topic as a matter of teaching, rather than of reproach. Paul sees that the Corinthians need instruction and therefore provides them with it. It is one of the few positive sections in the letter.

The first, most important point is that in their relationship with Christ the Christians are led by the Spirit of God (12:2–3). Paul then proceeds in showing that, although there are differences in the spiritual gifts, they all proceed from the same God and show his presence and action in the community (12:4–6). The gifts, although different, are the way the Spirit manifests itself¹³ to each one of the believers, for the communal good. The same Spirit operates in the different gifts, and distributes them as he likes (12:7–11).

12. Klauck, *Religious Context*, 42–54. During private meals offered by some patron, social differences were visible in the places assigned to the guests, and in the quantity and quality of food. This could happen also in the meals of the private associations. (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 567–69).

13. *Hekastō(i) de didotai hē phanerōsis tou pneumatos pros to sumpheron*. Not «a» manifestation, but «the» manifestation of the Spirit is given to the believer. It seems that, according to Paul, the Spirit manifests itself entirely under the form of a particular gift. For the believer, what he receives is all the Spirit; what others see in him, is just a gift among others.

The reason for this is given in 12:12–13: in the same way as the body has many members but they are one body, so is with the Christ. The unique Spirit makes all one body: «For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.»

The two verses introduce the content of the following units.

First, Paul develops the analogy (12:14–26), in order to make explicit some consequences drawn from the unity of the members in the physical body. Nobody can say: because I am only a part, I do not belong to the body. Neither can he say: because I am an important member, I do not need the others. On the contrary, among the members of the body there is mutual care, help and respect, according to the needs of each of them. Paul sees all this as established by God, in order to grant unity and life to the body.

Second, he presents the reference of the analogy, the community as the body of Christ, in view of helping the Corinthians to acknowledge and accept their place in it (12:27–30). It is at this point that Paul names the gift about which he wants to give instruction: the «various kinds of tongues» (12:28), which he lists last, and to which he adds the gift of interpreting tongues (12:30). But before discussing such gift, Paul first exhorts the Corinthians to seek the best charisms, then announces that he is going to show them not a gift, but «a way by excellence» (12:31).

This announcement introduces what seems to be a digression from the main theme, the unit devoted to the praise of charity (13:1–13).¹⁴ It unfolds in three parts. In 13:1–3 Paul shows that those who have all the other gifts (this time the gift of tongues is listed first), prophecy and martyrdom included, if they have not charity, are a useless nothing. In 13:4–7 he portrays the features of charity, in a special way the fact that charity is the source of faith and hope. Finally in 13:8–13 he presents the eternity of charity, because it is the right answer (cf. 8:3) to God's love (13:12).¹⁵

After the digression, which is aimed at showing how the believers should receive and use the charisms they have received, Paul returns to the main topic. His main advice is to pursue charity, and in this attitude to strive for the spiritual gifts, the best of which is prophecy (14:1).¹⁶ Following this thematic announcement, Paul shows why prophecy is

14. The arrangement of this section is similar to that of 8:1–11:1, with a sort of digression (9:1–10:13; 13:1–13) at the centre.

15. In this chapter Paul does not name God, perhaps this is in view of showing that love is his presence, even his nature.

16. In the Biblical tradition a prophet is not principally someone who foretells the future: in principle he is the messenger who delivers God's words, and lets the people know God's mind and will. This is the true «future,» because it is what remains forever.

preferable to speaking in tongues: because it edifies the Church through his encouragement and consolation. He expands at length on the topic, by showing that the Church receives improvement through understandable communications rather than through mysterious ones (14:2–12).

Paul then considers the case of somebody who has the gift of tongues. He should pray for someone who interprets his words. The reason is that by praying in tongues the spirit prays, but the mind remains without fruit, and further, there is no sharing in the prayer, no «Amen» from the fellow believers. Going a step further, Paul speaks of his choice: he prefers to say five words using his mind than ten thousand in tongues, to suggest the Corinthians to refrain from showing off their gift of tongues (14:13–19). In order to help them to be mature («perfect») with respect to their way of thinking, he adds a conclusive case: if common people or not yet believers see the community speaking in tongues, they will think that they all are mad; if on the other side all say the words of God, these people will acknowledge his presence in the midst of them (14:20–25).¹⁷

Next Paul issues his dispositions for the orderly performance of the meetings, in view of the upbuilding of the community. Speeches in tongues need interpretation; however they should be not many; the inspirations of the prophets are subject to prophets, those who speak should do it one at a time (14:26–33). In this context, before the conclusion (14:39–40), and as the last provision in view of the order in the assemblies, Paul, on the command of the Lord,¹⁸ forbids women to speak during such meetings (14:33b–38).¹⁹

Remarks

From the point of view of style and arrangement of the topics, the section is similar to the preceding ones: the general orientation is a teaching in view of which Paul makes use of the rhetorical and literary devices he thinks functional to his purpose.

17. The connection between the quotation from *Is* 28:11–12 with its explanation (14:21–22) and the following case is not immediately clear. In order to understand this connection, one should interpret Paul's words in 14:22 in this way: on the basis of the Biblical quotation, «tongues are a sign» that leads not to faith («not to the believers»), but to incredulity («but to the unbelievers»).

18. The completive clause at the end of verse 14:37 («If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge *that* what I am writing to you *is a command of the Lord*») can also be translated as a causal clause («*because it is a command of the Lord*»). In this way the command would not be a Church tradition interpreted as normative on the basis of the Lord's authority; it would be issued straightforwardly by Jesus himself. The tradition of commentators favors the first interpretation (Collins, *First Corinthians*), 522.

19. In order to solve the problems posed by the unit, Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 764–68, considers 14:33b–36 as a later interpolation; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 515–17 and Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 528–31 consider the unit a discussion Paul makes against some who want women not to speak in the cultic assemblies, refuting their position.

Notably, in Ch. 13 he presents the importance of love by means of the well-known Greek literary genre of the praise of virtues.²⁰

In Ch. 12 he uses the image of the body in order to highlight the organic unity of the Church in Christ. The image has a Greek as well as a biblical background.²¹ It could well be, however, that Paul just elaborates on Jesus' words: «This is my body» (11:24).²²

At the level of content—the theme of the section is subsumed in 1:7 under the heading: «you are not lacking in any spiritual gift»—the most important topic surfacing in it is the view Paul has about spiritual accomplishment (cf. 14:20), a vision that is in contrast with the one of the Greeks, and notably of Philo of Alexandria.

For the Greeks the experience of unity with the world of the gods takes place in a psychical region which is above reason and its normal exercise. Those who are able to show through special signs²³ that they have entered in such states are considered to be the perfect ones, whose words come from above.²⁴

Philo has a similar conception, although he speaks of «*nephalios methe*,» «sober drunkenness,» and the experiences of supreme knowledge he describes are the work of the Spirit, although in a very special or mysterious way.²⁵

20. Scholars have pointed to the similarities with this literary genre, which belongs both to the Greek as well as to the biblical tradition (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 692–96; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 488).

21. The Greeks used the metaphor of the body with two functions: in order to highlight the unity of the citizens of the city or of the state, and the unity of the human kind and of the universe. Paul's use of the metaphor is related to this background, not to any Gnostic speculation on the heavenly man, nor to the Jewish–biblical notion of corporative personality, the unity of the descendants with their ancestor (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 661–65).

22. In 12:27, by calling the community «body of Christ,» Paul goes beyond any cultural meaning of the image and proposes its new meaning, which derives from Christ (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 676–77).

23. To speak in tongues (that is: to utter words incomprehensible to the audience, sometimes in a state of physical excitement) is counted among these signs.

24. Greek religion is well acquainted with ecstasy and inspired speech. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates states that divine madness is the source of great blessings for humans. He distinguishes four kinds of divine madness: prophetic madness, ritual madness, poetic madness, erotic madness. The gods are thought to take possession of the vocal organs of the prophets and speak through them, often with strange, fanatical and unintelligible words. Dionysiac ritual madness is manifest in wild dance, at the sound of music, introducing into a state of frenzy, thought to be the sign of possession by the god (J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians As Reflected in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 304–05). On the cult and mysteries of Dionysus, the scandals involved, and the attempts of the Roman Senate to control it, cf. Klauck, *Religious Context*, 106–17.

25. «The prophet (being a spokesman) has no utterance of his own, but all his utterance came from elsewhere, the echoes of another's voice... He is the vocal instrument of God, smitten and played by his invisible hand... This is what regularly befalls the fellowship of the prophets. The mind is evicted at the arrival of the divine Spirit, but when that departs the mind returns to its tenancy. Mortal and immortal may not share the same home. And therefore the setting of reason and the darkness which surround it produce ecstasy and inspired frenzy... The prophet, even when he seems to be speaking, really holds his peace, and his or-

Paul's idea of spiritual accomplishment is different. When he speaks of love he does not mention any ecstatic phenomenon connected with it. The exercise of love is the expression of the full use of human reason, memory and will, in order to discern, decide and do. Such accomplishment does not take place outside history, in some ethereal solitude; on the contrary it is shared in a community and lives with it. The reason why Paul's mysticism coincides with the full use of the human mind is the fact that he tries to have the mind of Christ (2:16): not his own knowledge (objects and attitude) but the one Christ has.

This point is of great importance and there are no negotiations on it, although Paul does not oppose in principle any manifestation of the Spirit and adopts a positive stance towards the speaking in tongues, in view of instructing the Corinthians. But the parameters he sets in order to evaluate the spiritual gifts are related to the historical life of the community, so that the journey to Christian accomplishment does not borrow anything from the Greek environment, not even from the existing attempts towards cultural mediation; on the contrary it reflects the traditional biblical vision, where the great figures of legislators and prophets may have special experiences of God (in perfect lucidity of mind), but these are in view of their mission to the Chosen People.²⁶

The disposition about women finds parallels both in Greek customs and in Jewish tradition;²⁷ it is useful, however, in view of clearly perceiving the importance Paul attributes to the existing traditions in the early Church, based on the Lord's command and

gans of speech, mouth and tongue, are wholly in the employ of Another, to show forth what he wills» (*Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit* 259–66). In *De Ebrietate* 147, he portrays the «God–possessed» in this way: «In the case of those who are under divine inspiration, not only is the soul accustomed to be excited, and as it were to become frenzied, but also the body is accustomed to become reddish and of a fiery complexion, the joy which is internally diffused and which is exulting, secretly spreading its affections even to the exterior parts, by which many foolish people are deceived, and have fancied that sober persons were intoxicated.» Speaking of the *Therapeutai*, Philo describes a celebration in which men and women sing songs and hymns, first in separate choruses, then joining together on the pattern of the Israelites at the Red Sea. He portrays them «like persons in the bacchanalian revels, drinking the pure wine of the love of God» (*De Vita Contemplativa* 85). On the background of such experiences and language, which could be easily misunderstood, the prohibition for women «to speak in the assemblies» becomes more intelligible.

26. During his ministry, Paul would face a double polemic, against the Judaizers and against apocalyptic enthusiasts. Against the Judaizers, Paul shows that Christ's lordship, working through the power of the Spirit, is superior and eliminates any attempt to reach salvation through observance of the Jewish Law. In front of the enthusiasts of Corinth Paul does not deny the fundamental importance of the Spirit in Christian life; he recalls them that the Spirit leads them to walk in the steps of Christ, who offered himself on the cross for the salvation of all. The community is the measure of the authenticity of the Spirit of the individual (G. Colzani, *Antropologia Teologica: L'uomo Paradossale e Mistero* (Bologna: EDB, 1988), 69–71).

27. Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 767–70. He quotes Plutarch, for married women: «It is not of the wise woman to speak in public; and she should be ashamed, and abstain from speaking in front of outsiders... Indeed, she should speak only to her husband, or through his husband» (*Praecepta Coniugum* 31–2).

concerned about avoiding any shameful behavior (*aischron*, 14:35; cf. 11:6). Even if they seem to belong to one specific culture, in order to be recognized as part of the Church of the Saints (14:33,38), Paul thinks that it is necessary to accept them.²⁸

15:1–58. *The Lord's and Our Resurrection*

In 1:17 Paul says that he has been sent not to baptize but to evangelize. In 15:1, in an emphatic way, he «ets the Corinthians know» again about the gospel. There is some irony in this exordium: Paul intends to say that they did not keep the gospel as they should have done. The topic of the long chapter is the doctrine about the final resurrection, as it becomes clearer in 15:12. In 15:1–11 Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel he has received and passed down to them. He quotes an old *kerygmatic* formula to show the continuity between the event of the Resurrection of Jesus, the experience of it made by the Apostles, the first community and himself, and the gospel announced to all peoples, in which the Corinthians too have believed.

Such continuity—in itself a proof of the truth of the gospel—is now broken by some who say that there is no resurrection of the dead (15:12).²⁹ If this is true, he argues, not even Christ rose from the dead. In turn, this makes both *kerygma* and faith useless, empty, meaningless. The announcers become liars, sins are not forgiven, the dead are lost forever, those who believe in him are the most pitiable of all men (15:13–19).

To this Paul opposes that Christ is really risen,³⁰ and he is the first-fruits of those who have died, the source of the resurrection of all. In the same way as through one man death spread all over mankind,³¹ so through Christ is the resurrection from the dead

28. We might ask why Paul on the one side is not afraid of refusing circumcision for the Gentiles who convert, and on the other side is so tied to observances that at least appear marginal. A possible answer could be that in matters of faith Paul is and cannot not be very clear and unswerving from the truth of the gospel. The matters with which he deals in 11:1–16 and 14:33–38 pertain to another domain, which we could term as discipline, or pastoral, or ethical. On this, other parameters are applied, such as the sense of propriety and modesty proper of a culture. Given that the gospel issues from the Jews, on whose culture God has worked for centuries in order to make it fit to receive Christ, and the Lord's specific command, already received by the other Churches and become tradition, Paul finds it necessary to ask the Corinthians to accept a set of rules that they may see as having limitations.

29. J.-N. Aletti, «L'Argumentation de Paul et la Position des Corinthiens: 1Co 15,12–34,» L. De Lorenzi Ed., *Résurrection du Christ et des Chrétiens (1Co 15)* (Rome: Abbaye de S. Paul, 1985), 63–81, 79–81, shows that Paul does not quote the reasons for the Corinthians to deny the resurrection. He only highlights the disastrous consequences of their denial.

30. In 15:20 Paul uses *egēgertai*, in the Greek perfect tense, to show the permanence in the present of something that happened in the past. The fact that Jesus has been «awakened» from the dead points to God's action on him, and on the purpose of such an action, which is to make of Christ the first fruit of the resurrection of all.

31. According to Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 569–70 the Adam–Christ typology in 15:21–22 is based only on the biblical account of Gen 3:17–19; there is no need to refer to the myth of the «primal man,» because

spreading to all. This takes place according to a clear sequence: Christ is the first, then come those who belong to him, then there will be the end. During the present time Christ is exercising his royal power, till the time in which he will submit all his enemies under his own feet (*Psalms* 109/110:1). When the last enemy, death, will be destroyed, Jesus will submit everything to God, so that God be everything in all (15:20–28).

Then Paul returns to the wrong statement, that there is no resurrection from the dead, and contradicts it on the basis of the present experience of the Church: those who let themselves be baptized for the dead,³² the missionaries who are in peril at all time, he himself who faced death, are living proofs that the dead do rise again (15:29–32). His conclusion is that the Corinthians are under the influx of bad companions, who show that they do not know and deserve to be sternly reproached (15:33–34).³³

Next, Paul faces a question that may have been the reason for the inference that the dead ones do not rise again: the difficulty to imagine which body will the dead have in the resurrection (15:35). Not without calling his discussion partner «you foolish man!» Paul answers by stating some points. First, by using the image of sowing, he shows that before resurrection there is death, and that there is a difference between what is sown and what buds forth from the earth.³⁴ The bodies these plants receive are given by God according to his will (15:36–38).

Next, he observes that there is difference among the various existing kinds of beings and among their bodies. By making a reference to the common view of the time about

there is no evidence that Paul ever thinks in the terms of such a myth. On the intertestamental development of the vision of Adam's responsibility for the sin of all, cf. R. Penna, *Lettera ai Romani I. Rm 1–5: Introduzione, Versione, Commento* (Bologna: EDB, 2004), 448–51.

32. Aletti, *L'Argumentation*, 77, cites Foschini 1950, who listed more than 40 kinds of interpretations of what «to be baptized for the dead» means. The Third Council of Chartago (397), 6, prohibits such a praxis. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 578–80, after a survey of 6 main explanations, notices that in 15:29 Paul is not describing, nor discussing the custom, but only using it as a proof for his argument. R. E. DeMaris, «Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology,» *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 114 (Winter 1995), 661–82, suggests that there is a connection between the cults of Palaimon and Demeter at Isthmia, and the custom of some in the Church of Corinth.

33. In 15:33 Paul indirectly quotes a passage from a Greek poet, Menander, *Thais*, fr. 218; the saying is present also in Euripides, Philo, Epictetus, Diodorus Siculus (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 837; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 583).

34. Paul's use of the imagery of the sowing may refer to a rabbinical background. In *bSanh 90b* the «nakedness» of the seed is used in order to infer that human beings, who are buried with their garments, will rise again very well clothed and not naked (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 841). This may explain why Paul in 15:42–44 uses the metaphor of sowing, and in 15:53–54 that of «putting on» incorruptibility and immortality. The image of putting on garments is well attested in the OT, and has an interesting use in apocalyptic literature, with reference to the resurrection: cf. 1 *Enoch* 62,15–16: «And the righteous and elect shall rise from the earth, and shall cease to be of downcast face. And they shall wear the garments of glory. These garments of yours shall become the garments of life from the Lord of the Spirits. Neither shall your garments wear out, nor your glory come to an end before the Lord of the Spirits.»

heavenly bodies, he then shows that also they differ in «glory» (15:39–41).³⁵ Then he applies what he has stated before to the status of the risen bodies. After death the dead will receive a spiritual body,³⁶ sharing the glory of the Risen Christ in the same way as we shared in the earthly condition of Adam (15:42–49).³⁷

Then Paul makes a precision on the way «it is sown in corruptibility, it is risen in incorruptibility:» although on the last day not all of us will be dead, we all will be transformed, so that what is corruptible will put on incorruptibility and immortality. In this way, through Jesus, God will give to us the victory over death, the last enemy (15:50–57). In this way Paul can conclude (15:58), by exhorting the Corinthians not to change their minds (cf. 15:1–2) and grow in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labor is not in vain in the Lord. This last sentence may refer back to the introduction (1:4–9): the Corinthians are rich in every kind of grace, perhaps they should increase in the labor of doing good. It may introduce the following Chapter and the proposals of good works Paul is about to mention there.

Remarks

As is widely acknowledged, in this section Paul faces a major cultural difference between biblical and Greek anthropology, in turn based on the different visions of the world and of the relationship between world and God.

For the Greek there are two worlds: the visible, limited and corruptible world of daily existence on earth, and the invisible, unlimited and incorruptible world of eternal life in heaven. Man too reproduces such a dichotomy: in his mortal body the invisible soul is closed as in a sepulcher. Death frees it and allows it to enjoy the unlimited life of the invisible world. In such a vision there is no space for the notion of «spiritual body.»³⁸ On the contrary, on the basis of historical experience, Israel knows that Someone chooses

35. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 589–90 gives references for the Greek as well as the Jewish background of Paul's discussion of the different kinds of bodies.

36. Ibid., 594, after referring different explanations of the term, thinks, together with others, that the best thing is to consider it «an oxymoron,» a paradoxical language.

37. «Hultgren has shown that Paul is not reversing Philo or combating Hellenistic Jewish anthropology, but is deriving his two Adams simply from his interpretation of Gen 2:7» Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 592. Nor is he deriving his vision of the last Adam from intertestament literature (*The life of Adam and Eve*), or from Palestinian or Rabbinic Judaism (*ibidem*). Cf. also Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 852–53.

38. From the seventh century BC onwards, the traditional conception of a region where the dead lived like shadows is substituted by the belief in the survival of the soul which is immortal by nature. Mystery religions tried to reach immortality through initiation and mystical union with the gods. In some Gnostic currents there is also the vision of eschatological salvation which will take place in the future, even with a new body (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 800–01).

it, frees it, creates it as a people. This God is the most powerful of all other gods, because he created all things. There is no limit to his power. In this conception the resurrection is possible, the spiritualization of the body—the liberation from corruptibility and the attraction into the sphere of divine splendor and glory—is not difficult to achieve.³⁹

The originality of Paul's vision lays in the fact that his doctrine on resurrection is founded on the Resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, he sees Christ as the first fruit, the active principle of the resurrection of all; he is life-giving spirit, all will receive new life according to his new situation; the Risen one is the final conqueror of death, the one who gives the kingdom in the hands of the Father, so that God finally be all in all.⁴⁰ Paul tries to let his listeners understand, through the use of many examples, that this vision is possible. In any case, he does not seek a mediation between the two visions. He asks the Corinthians to accept the corollaries of what they believed when they received the gospel: not to reduce Christ inside their traditional categories, but to let their faith teach them a new vision, in which all things tell the glory of God, according to the ways he has already revealed – through the Jewish biblical tradition.

16:1–24. *Epistolary Conclusive Section*

In the last section of the letter Paul deals with some practical issues, mixed with his conclusive exhortations, greetings and blessing. In 16:1–4 he gives instruction on how to collect the contribution for the «saints,»⁴¹ a project that Paul must have discussed with them previously. Other Churches are also cooperating to it.

Next, he informs the Corinthians about his plans for his next visit to them. He hopes that the Corinthians will be the community that sends him to the next missionary journey, thus taking the enterprise on themselves (16:5–7). Then, he talks about his present situation and plans, about himself and others: his stay in Ephesus till Pentecost; the recommendation of Timothy⁴² when he will visit Corinth; Apollo's intentions⁴³ (16:8–12). In

39. Starting from the second century BC, in the Bible there are two main perspectives on life after death: the resurrection to a new life with a new body (*Dan* 12:2; *2 Mac* 7:9); eternal life for the souls of the righteous ones (*Wis* 3:1, 4). The picture becomes more variegated in intertestamental Judaism, with the idea of resurrection gaining more and more ground (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 798–800)

40. Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 801.

41. The Bible knows of contributions made for sacrificial purposes (*2Macc* 12:43). The fact that Paul speaks of the *first day* of the week may indicate that the tradition of gathering together on that day was already established (cf. *Acts* 20:7), Barbaglio, *Lettera ai Corinzi*, 874–75.

42. Paul hopes the Corinthians will be willing to provide a warm environment for his stay there, and also help him in the travel expenses when he will go back to Paul (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 879–80).

43. Perhaps the Corinthians requested his presence. What Paul says about Timothy and Apollo gives information about the customs of the first Churches regarding the itinerant preachers.

16:13–14, in few words, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to stand firm in faith, to be watchful, courageous and strong, to live in reciprocal love. To this, in 16:15–18, he adds a recommendation of the family of Stephanas, in the hope, as it seems, that the whole community obey them «and all who work together and labor» (16:16).⁴⁴ Their presence has given him joy and represented the love of whole community. Last, Paul conveys the greetings of the Churches of Asia, of Aquila and Priscilla and their Church, of all the brothers (16:17–20a);⁴⁵ he invites the Corinthians to greet each other in the holy kiss (16:20b; cf. *Rom* 16:16; *2Cor* 13:12 *1Thess* 5:26); in his handwriting he issues a last warning, to love the Lord and await His coming (16:21–22; cf. 1:9); he wishes them the grace of the Lord Jesus and assures them of his love to them, in the Christ Jesus (16:23–24).

Remarks

The last Chapter of *First Corinthians* offers a view of the life of the first Churches in a Greek environment: small communities which are linked together by the common faith, by frequent exchanges of letters and by visits of itinerant missionaries and their friends.

Paul tries to expand and to protect such environment, so that it may keep the unity established through the shared faith and live in reciprocal love, open to the unity of all the Churches. The holy kiss seems to originate within the liturgical celebrations of the first communities, and is shared in order to express a heartfelt greeting.⁴⁶ Also the Aramaic formula *Maranatha* belongs to the Palestinian Churches and is inherited in the other Churches, as well as the Hebrew *Amen* (14:16).⁴⁷

2. First Corinthians and Its Relevance in View of Announcing the Gospel

The summary analysis conducted so far evidences a special problem surfacing in Corinth. The Christians there have accepted the Gospel, they believe in the Lord Jesus but, perhaps unconsciously, transfer into their new faith all the cultural categories which they

44. The reasons of Paul's exhortation to respect and obedience are based on factual experience: their conversion, their commitment to the service of the community and of the Apostle. Some scholars see in this the presence of a pattern of the community organization different from that of the Palestinian Churches. Paul would also criticize the introduction in the community of secular ways of leadership; he would propose a new pattern of leadership, based not on personal prestige but on self-commitment for the good of the community (Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 28–9, citing A. D. Clarke 1993.)

45. According to Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 885, greetings were not a regular feature in Hellenistic private letters.

46. R. Penna, *Lettera ai Romani III. Rm 12–16: Introduzione, Versione, Commento* (Bologna: EDB, 2008), 301–03.

47. Barbaglio, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 888–89.

are familiar with. As a result, the specific content of the Gospel vanishes, Jesus becomes one of the gods of the Greek Pantheon, or one of the masters of the philosophical schools flourishing in their cities. Paul faces the problem of showing again, in a way that cannot be misunderstood, the novelty of the Gospel.

His strategy seems clear enough: he presents the distinctiveness of the Christian faith by a consistent recourse to tradition. As a first step in view of evidencing Paul's aim, we can subsume his attempt under some headings

Paul's Aims

a) The *koinōnia* with Christ, the confirmation of the Corinthians. At the end of the thanksgiving report, in 1:10, Paul writes what can be interpreted as God's plan on the Corinthians, in function of which the Apostle works: «God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.»

Besides, among the headings of the unit, the one that is not clearly developed in the following sections is the «*confirmation* of the witness of Christ» (cf. 1:6). Paul repeats the topic in 1:8: «He (our Lord Jesus Christ) will confirm you (*bebaiōsei humas*) to the end, guiltless.» This fact shows Paul's intention: in view of having the Corinthians attain a deep fellowship with Christ, he tries to confirm them in their Christian life.⁴⁸

We can identify some of the ways Paul proposes to his Christians in order to attain this goal. As in other letters, Paul does not report many historical details but underscores doctrine and attitudes. This fact gives an orientation to the following interpretive attempt.

b) Building up the Church (14:5). The vocabulary of *oikodomē* («building up») offers an important clue in view of determining with more detail under which aspect Paul tries to confirm the Corinthian believers.

To be steadfast in Christ implies and is verified in the attitude towards the community. Only a behavior that «builds up» the brothers and sisters in the Lord shows that a believer really loves Christ, lives for him, is under the guidance of his Spirit. The theme of *oikodomē* is relevant in view of assessing Paul's stance in front of the problems related to the different cultural environments in which the Churches may live.

48. For every section of the letter there is a specific purpose; some of the issues need immediate response, some others show the need for formation. Other immediate purposes are listed in ch. 16: to inform about his present plans and the decisions of Apollo, to give information about his next visit, to organize the money contribution for the Churches in Judea, to recommend Timothy and the house of Stephanas. Not one of these purposes needs the long thematic developments of the previous chapters.

In the idea of «building up» there is a necessary reference to the foundation of the building, as Paul himself states: «For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ» (3:11). To build the Church implies to be strongly founded («confirmed») on Jesus, who is the foundation of the entire construction.

Which Christ? The one who exists as the fruit of anyone's interpretation? Christ as understood by the minds of the believers? Which kind of interpretation? Which kind of understanding?

This is the point where Paul fights his battle for the confirmation of the Corinthians. He tries to let them perceive that the relationship they have with Jesus is in the power of his Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ It is not under a control that is merely human. Rather, what of Christ appears in the human minds of the believers is what the Spirit reveals to them, «for the advantage» (12:7) of the whole Church. Those who receive these holy gifts must keep them in a holy way (*Wis* 6:10), in a life informed by the self-forgetfulness of love so as to share in their benefits. On this point what Paul shares about himself is illuminating: «I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings together with them» (9:23). He is afraid of being excluded, if he does not live in a way worthy of the gospel.

In this way Jesus is not the content, but the owner of the minds of the believers: «We have the mind of Christ» (2:16), which is the same as to say: «Christ's love impels us» (2*Cor* 5:14).⁵⁰

It is through the life of Jesus' mind, which is shared, explored, guessed together through reciprocal love («We have») that the Church is built up as the temple of the Spirit, both in the single believers (6:17,19 and in their community (14:25), which becomes the prophetic word of God, the «witness of the Risen Christ,» for the world. This experience offers also the key to understand what Paul is trying to accomplish among the Corinthians.

c) «I delivered to you what I also received» (15:3). He tries to lead them into the mainstream of the life of the Holy Church, the Church existing as the communion of all the single Churches scattered in the many cities of the Roman Empire and elsewhere with the Heavenly Jerusalem (*Gal* 4:26), the Mother of them all. He tries to build them up on that

49. On this, cf. M. O'Connor, *Paul*, 284: «The church is not a set of ideas which informs the mind but a context of divine power which transforms the personality.»

50. *Ibid.*, 287: «By calling the community the Body of Christ, therefore, Paul identifies it as the physical presence of Christ in the world. The mission of the church is a prolongation in time and space of the ministry of Christ by manifesting, as he did, the power and wisdom of God (1*Cor*. 1:24).»

foundation, which has already created a tradition. This tradition is the fruit of the continuous work of the Holy Spirit on the historical chain of human relationships through which Christ creates a new history, a new world (15:25) of which he is the King.

This operation consists in two steps. First, the Corinthians should acknowledge that the experience of faith they have entered into already has a historical side, that is given and should be accepted, in the same way a son accepts the physical and cultural features he inherits from his parents. He cannot separate himself from them. As in any historical experience, a form is also a limit. Paul invites the Corinthians to see through the limits the presence of the power of God by which they are saved. He invites them to see the living process of the building of the Church, and to participate in it. The way they enter the already laid foundation is that of accepting the doctrine and traditions of the existing Churches. In *First Corinthians* Paul mentions many times the «other Churches,» the «Churches of God» as the reference point for their faith.

The second step is to actively cooperate with the building of the Church, through a life of love and the sharing of the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, by which God's words are uttered in the midst of the assembly.

When Paul says: «Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God» (10:32) he has in mind *a third pole* which is different and beyond the two poles of Jewish and Greek culture. This verse taken alone would only signify the presence of the Church in the midst of the other two cultures and religions. However, what Paul tries to show throughout the Letter, is that the Church is *the pole of attraction* of the other cultural experiences, because it is the place where they find salvation, together with their bearers. Throughout the Letter Paul is not so much trying to make the gospel comprehensible to the Corinthians as to have them enter the gospel, a gospel that does not change in front of them, rather it lets them change from inside.

This interpretation of the main trend of the letter is balanced by what Paul says of his choices: «I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more» (9:19). He speaks of the ways he adapts his attitude—not his gospel—so as to create the atmosphere of mutual acceptance and confidence that can let his partners experience the life and love of Christ for them.⁵¹

However, in *First Corinthians* he just recalls his attitude, in view of a specific purpose. He does not say in detail what he did, which means he used to «become all things to all» (9:22). In general, Paul's letters do not speak of this. The reason is that the listeners are

51. The verb «to win» (*kerdainein*) appears also in *Phil* 3:8, where its object is Christ. For Paul, to win Christ passes through winning the brother to Christ.

already believers. Now what they need is not somebody who adapts himself to them, like a mother (*1Thess* 2:7), but somebody who, like a father, admonishes and encourages them to live in a way worthy of the God who calls them to his glory (*1Thess* 2:12).

d) «We all were made to drink of one Spirit» (12:13). What balances Paul's instruction to the Corinthians is his experience and doctrine about the Spirit of the Lord. He has the clear perception that the relationship with Jesus is in the space of the Spirit, it is ruled by him. The Spirit teaches everyone (*1Thess* 4:9)⁵² and leads everyone to faith (2:4–5; 12:3) and salvation. He bestows on the believers his gifts, which are his manifestation, the way they know the Lord (in the same way as for Paul his experience of the Lord is qualified by the missionary call, he knows the Lord through mission).

Therefore Paul is respectful of the charisms of the believers. His letter is mainly functional at opening the eyes of the Corinthians, at helping them know their experience in the right way, recognize the voice of the Spirit talking to them, share their inspirations, grow on the existing tradition, enrich it and show its vitality.

Paul does not only answer to existing problems, he offers a method by which the Corinthians can grow (cf. 3:1–3; 14:20) and be able to actively participate in shaping their own Christian lives, and by this their tradition. In view of this purpose, he treasures the gatherings of the community and the sharing of spiritual gifts that takes place in them: «When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification» (14:26).

There is a balance between the inspiration of the Spirit and the life of the Church: «Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good» (*1Thess* 5:19–21; cf. *1Cor* 14:32). In principle, both confirm each other, because both are under the guidance of the Spirit, the one as the new sprouts that are budding, the other as the already grown tree. The space between them is the space of the relevance of history and human freedom inside God's plan.

e) «On the ground of conscience» (10:27,28). Paul identifies the space where discernment of God's will takes place as the conscience. It is a common feature of every human being, a sacred space, where nobody is allowed to interfere. It is the space where Christ meets the uniqueness of a person, and talks with him/her.

Paul shows the process that takes place in the conscience when he says: «I do not

52. The idea of divine teaching is present in *Is* 54:13 LXX (*didaktous theou*) (Cf. *John* 6:45). It indicates one of the features of the New Covenant (Cf. *Jer* 31:34).

even judge myself. I am not aware (*ouden gar emautō[i] sunoida*) of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me» (4:3b–4).

The inner dialogue between a man and himself progressively becomes the dialogue with the Lord, where the Lord shows his will, the right behavior. Task of the community is to be at the service of such a dialogue, in view of giving strength to the voice of the Lord, in view of showing which are the right choices that the Lord then would recommend.

f) «In order to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord» (7:35). The immediate context of 7:35 speaks of possible choices about marriage. But what Paul says in this verse seems to go beyond a particular issue and to point to a general rule: the reciprocal exhortations should allow the receivers to find, in the service of the Lord, the ways that unite them to him «without tension.»

The «absence of division,» of distraction, of solicitude, anxiety, care, seems to be a quality of the union with the Lord, even a criterion to discern whether a behavior is what the Lord wants. If a behavior creates divisions, anxieties, distractions, that behavior is not the one the Lord wants. The union with the Lord is registered by the conscience as an immediacy that is received as a gift, that stands in face of possible other choices, that confirms and is confirmed by the community. It is an immediacy that grows together with the commitment towards a better discernment.

Such a process is very delicate, like the growth of a very rare plant. It needs the right environment, the sharing of prophetic words, words that come from God and are uttered with his love.

g) «Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom» (2:6). Therefore Paul hopes that the Corinthians may create an environment, opportunities for an exchange of spiritual gifts that may console, edify, sustain, all the members of the community. Such an environment bears some similitude both with the Jewish communal inquiry about the Law in the rabbinic schools and with the Greek philosophical schools, where dialectics lets the partners of the discussion to get closer to the truth. In such environment God makes himself present among the brothers and sisters united in his name (14:25).

h) «I have become all things to all men» (9:22). It is in the frame of these attitudes that the effort of nearing all men and their cultural world finds significance. Although Paul has a great capacity of presenting the gospel with the use of categories and examples close to the world of the listeners, in *First Corinthians* this operation seems rather natural, nor does Paul evidence it. This fact signals that attitudes are of greater importance than

the material outcome of their exercise, although the analysis of the images Paul uses is of great importance under many respects.

Paul's Language

Which kind of language does Paul use in *First Corinthians* in function of his purposes? In the peculiar stage of the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians represented by the Letter, two remarks about the language used are possible.

First, in the course of the argument, Paul employs all the means he deems useful in view of his purpose. This is visible at the level of images and of the references to the contexts the Corinthians know, or are supposed to know. With great freedom Paul uses images referring to the Greek, as well as to the biblical environment. This may also be a sign that such a language was already known and accepted in the community. Paul uses it not only because of its content (especially what refers to the biblical background), but also in view of its persuasive helpfulness (e.g. the vividness of the image in 4:9).

Second, Paul, following the tradition preceding him⁵³ is very careful in the choice of Greek terms to express his doctrine. Terms such as *ekklēsia*, or *agapē*, or *suneidēsis*⁵⁴ show that by the selective use of Greek words, NT authors—and Paul as the first of them—on the one hand propose a precise doctrine, without fear of not profiting of some shared values present in the Greek environment.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Paul is not afraid of adopting terms that may create misunderstandings about the new doctrine, e.g. *Kyrios*, or «Kingdom.»⁵⁶ In doing this, he is faithful to the tradition he inherits. His aim is to put his listeners in contact with the tradition of which he is part, in the most faithful way possible.

Such a mix of openness and selectiveness, even refusal, points to the experience that allows the different attitudes find a coherence even in presence of apparent disharmonies. This experience is the life of the community, which, on the basis of its own tradition, fills with the unique meaning it inherits the words it uses.

53. A great role in this process is played by the LXX and its translation choices, which already set some clear parameters for the use of NT authors.

54. The case of *suneidēsis* is somehow special: Paul borrows the word from the Greek popular philosophy; by this he integrates biblical language on a point where he thought that to refer to a Greek term was more useful in view of his purposes. However, he uses the term in a way that is new.

55. *Aretē* («virtue»), a positive term, is seldom used (4 times in the whole NT, in Paul only in *Phil* 4:8 in a list); *pronoia* («providence,» a word typical of Stoicism) is used only twice: in *Acts* 24:2 on the lips of the lawyer Tertullus; in *Rom* 13:14 in a negative sense: «Do not do the “providence” of the flesh in view of the passions.»

56. According to the report in *Acts* 17:7, the Jews in Thessalonica take Paul to the magistrates on the ground that they oppose the Emperor by preaching another King, Jesus. On the social and ethnic problems of Thessalonica, cf. M. O'Connor, *Paul*, 114–19.

The coming together of the believers, their faithfulness to the tradition they continually receive and in which they continually enter, the sharing of the special gifts every one has received, creates a typical environment in which the words used find a new referent, Christ's mind, his intention.

This process corresponds to the way all cultures develop and shows that the Church too creates its own culture; this culture on the one hand appears as one among the human traditions present on the earth; on the other hand it becomes a centre of attraction for all traditions and cultures, because in it they are all sanctified by their contact, through their bearers, the believers, with the Risen Christ.

First Corinthians and the Work of Mission

It is clear that Paul's aims in writing *First Corinthians* are not straightforwardly missionary, at least not in the sense of training missionary envoys. He hopes to confirm the Corinthians in their faith. At the same time, what Paul tries to achieve has a precise collocation and function in the sequence of stages according to which the work of mission develops. Such a pattern surfaces in Paul's letters, as well as in *Acts*:

- a) Somebody coming from afar sows the seed of the Word.
- b) The Word works in the believers and creates a community, a Church.
- c) The life of the community becomes a continuous spreading of the Word in the surrounding environment.
- d) The community entrusts somebody with the task of sowing the Word in other environments.

To confirm the community is therefore functional to a missionary work towards those who are close, a work that develops in time and depth in a steadfast way. Because the Gospel becomes visible in the life of the community, it attracts more and more believers, and the group grows together with the spiritual richness of its life. A living community can also entrust some of their members with special missionary tasks, and support them. *First Corinthians* shows the importance of this stage, and the ways that lead to a community that gives witness to the new life the Risen Lord offers to all.

3. Paul's Strategies in Announcing the Gospel

The Letter offers also an indirect perspective about the way Paul announces the Gospel to Greeks and Jews in order to convince them to believe in the Lord Jesus. Since before conversion the extension of a common language shared by the announcer and the listen-

ers, at least at a surface level, is very small, Paul's ability consists in finding some shared ground that may lead to an ever deeper encounter, paving the way to faith.

In view of this, from what Paul says, we can evidence some important points.

First, the reference to the message. Paul is not afraid of delivering a message on Christ that may be not appealing. He trusts the independent force of the message itself.

Second, the coherence between messenger and message. Paul shows with his own life what is the meaning of the words he proclaims. He offers his partners the opportunity of entering into a new relational pattern, modeled after Christ's message.

Third, in view of this, Paul tries to become as close as possible to those to whom he announces the Gospel,

Under this third heading comes the problem of finding a suitable relational framework, a framework that the addressees easily understand and accept, because homogenous to their culture and personal expectations. At the same time, such a framework should by itself pave the way to the possibility of the irruption of the new and unexpected, so that it is also functional to evangelization.

Paul has two answers, which are two patterns, two roles or functions that allow him to introduce himself into the world of those to whom he announces the gospel: in the context of the Jewish synagogues he introduces himself as a *rabbi*, learned in the Law, who can preach and teach; among the Greeks he introduces himself as a teacher, a philosopher; he offers doctrines that can lead to personal accomplishment those who accept them.

Lietaert Peerbolte gives the following synthetic description of the series of aspects under which Paul was similar to a philosophy teacher:

«Paul organized a missionary enterprise that aimed to carry out the proclamation of the gospel in a way that is comparable with the instruction given in philosophical schools of antiquity. He, as they, focused on the interpretation of sacred texts containing a revealed truth. As happened in philosophical schools, these texts were read from a hermeneutical position that defined the focus of their reading. He, as they, laid emphasis on his followers' ethical behavior. The *paideia* model of instruction was present everywhere in Paul's context; he had been instructed in similar fashion as a Pharisee. Next to this, he was familiar with the strategies and styles of Greek philosophers, and he formulated the core of the gospel, the unity of all believers in Christ, in a manner that was influenced by a basic notion from Cynic–Stoic philosophy. By acting as he did and modeling his gospel and its proclamation after the example of the practice of *paideia*, Paul paved the way for

an understanding of the Christian gospel as a “true philosophy”.»⁵⁷

The information retrieved in *First Corinthians* presents Paul’s attitude (2:1–5; 9:19–23) rather than his technique, or the details of his persuasive skills. Nevertheless, what the Letter lets us know is useful because it shows that behind Paul’s ministry there is the power of the Spirit. His words become meaningful not because they are skillfully chosen, but because of the Spirit’s action in and through them, because the Spirit acts in his attitude and words.

4. The Relevance of Paul’s Attitudes and Choices for Our Present Situation

It is almost impossible to show in an exhaustive way how important *First Corinthians* is in view of announcing the gospel and adapting it to the different environments of the believers. The following hints seem to be of importance.

First, the Letter reminds us of the importance of getting a possibly clear understanding of the way mission develops, according to the stages of the growth of the Word. It also helps us to assess in which moment of the work of mission our communities are.

With a view of the first stages of evangelization, we can learn from *First Corinthians* the importance of finding the most suitable relational structures⁵⁸ we as Church are employing in the cultural environment in which we live, in view of having many experience the life of Jesus. It is also important to continually assess their functionality. We should do this not only on the basis of our inherited tradition, but also paying attention to how the relational structures we create are seen in the culture where we live, on the basis of the already present traditions.⁵⁹

We learn also the importance of finding the most suitable language in order, on the one side to transmit the novelty of the message of Christ and his uniqueness; on the other side, to let the receivers of the message understand it.

57. L. Peerbolte, «Paul and Paideia», 279. In the same sense also Penna, *Romani III*, 292. M. O’Connor, *Paul*, 120, finds it difficult to concede that Paul deliberately adopted the techniques of philosophical teachers. He suggests that Paul drew on his own experience, as a convert and as a member of Christian communities.

58. Paul’s choice to present himself as a teacher and an educator seems to be not only occasional, but one of the best choices available, a choice Jesus himself made use of. This can be seen in many different historical epochs and environments. It is the way the Oriental Religions are spreading in the West. In general, a socio-cultural analysis of the patterns of mission in history (and in the history of the West) is very useful; on the subject, cf., as an example, the works of Christopher Dawson.

59. As an example: here it is easy to interpret the parish life, and a parish church, on the basis of the life of the temples of the folk religion. It is necessary to be aware of the positive elements and the limits of such a comprehension, that may be present also in the minds of Christians. In the same way, much can be learnt from the ways Buddhism has adopted along history in different cultures and in our present environment.

Then, since the Letter is written to a community in view of confirming their Christian life, the main teaching we can learn from it is how to reach the stage of maturity Paul hopes for the Corinthians and for us.

«No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit» (12:3). A first fact we should recognize is that the Letter is written to already converted and baptized believers. Paul acknowledges the great miracle of conversion as the work of the Spirit. He sees in the Corinthians the presence of the same life he enjoys. All what he writes is based on this acknowledgment.

We too should acknowledge the importance of the experience of conversion as God’s action and give it the place it deserves in the life of the Church.

Conversion is the God-made perfect inculturation, because the one who believes in Jesus finds in him the fulfillment of all the aspects of his/her life, which are characterized by culture in a pervasive way. What remains to do is to make explicit what is already given in the experience of conversion, in the same way as Paul’s theology makes explicit what he has experienced in the process of his of conversion. The Churches all over the world should find the appropriate ways to enhance the tradition of treasuring what the Lord continually creates in the lives of many, in order to enjoy of the spiritual delight their sharing causes (*Acts* 11:23; *1Thess* 1:4–10), learn the ways of the Lord, follow his steps (*Acts* 2:48).

In order to achieve this, a simple way is to share what each of the believers has understood and continually learns about Jesus. To reenact the sharing about which Paul speaks in 2:6–16 and 14:26, to create the spiritual atmosphere that makes this possible is of the greatest importance.

This is also the way by which one can recognize what keeps him/her united to the Lord without distractions, and therefore distinguish which of the elements of his/her culture, as he/she experiences them,⁶⁰ are functional to this union, which of them become a distraction from it.

This is also the way by which each one of the believers can build up his/her conscience, because in an atmosphere of reciprocal acceptance and love the voice of the Risen Lord is more easily heard. He himself teaches and forms the conscience of the believers.

In this way our communities may hope that the Lord add to our number day by day those who are being saved (cf. *Acts* 2:47).

60. The experience of conversion teaches that *the person* is what matters. This becomes a fundamental criterion of analysis of any situation and of action. Christians do not see structures, or whatever generalization, they see persons.

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Cultura
e società



The Oil & Gas Industry
in Indonesia
ANON.

The Oil & Gas Industry in Indonesia

With an estimated population of almost 240 million, largely concentrated on the islands of Java and Madura, Indonesia is the fourth most populated country in the world behind China, India and the USA. The country itself is an archipelago of about 18,000 islands, only one third of which is occupied. Most recent data indicate a GDP per capita of 1,800 US\$ with an estimated 18% of the population living below the poverty line. The industry sector in general contributes 85% of the total GDP. Main industries are petroleum, mining, cement, rubber and fertilizers. At the end of 2007 the real growth rate was 6.6% with an inflation rate of 6.3%. The most recent economic data seems to indicate a growth rate of 2 to 4% for 2009 in spite of the deep global economic crisis.

From a political point of view Indonesia is a democratic Republic based on a constitutional system. Three centuries of Dutch colonial rule were ended by the Japanese occupation during World War II driven also, among other reasons, by the desire to take control over the oil producing fields of Tarakan (Kalimantan) and Sumatra. After the end of World War II independence was declared on 17 August 1945, with President Sukarno bringing freedom and political unity.

In 1965 President Soeharto succeeds President Sukarno and brings economic development to the country. Development is very rapid but mostly confined to a small elite power base concentrated in Jakarta. The deep Asian economic crisis of 1997 leads to the end of Soeharto's rule and Indonesia enters a period of political transition lasting until the election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in 2004.

Indonesia is now enjoying a period of significant stability. The election process of SBY was very transparent and conducted peacefully. His first term, now coming to an end, has been characterized by achieving consensus from a very slim political base due to alignment with Golkar and Vice President Jusuf Kalla. Despite several natural emergencies such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, earthquakes, periodic floods, the avian flu and some security incidents, President Yudhoyono has succeeded in launching major infrastructure projects and has seriously started fighting against widespread corruption.

After the 2004 attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia has not experienced any serious security threat or terrorist attack. An ongoing effort at decentralization and regional autonomy is calming separatist sentiments and regional conflicts. As a result, there has been a marked reduction in tensions in Central Sulawesi, Maluku, Papua and, above all, the North Sumatran Aceh province which is now completely peaceful.

The Oil and Gas Industry

History

The oil and gas industry in Indonesia is among the first in the world and dates back to the very dawn of the oil industry itself. Oil in commercial quantities was discovered in northern Sumatra in 1883, leading to the establishment of the Koninklijke Nederlandsche Maatschappij tot Exploitatie van Petroleum-bronnen in Nederlandsch-Indië (Royal Dutch Company for Exploration of Petroleum sources in the Netherlands Indies) in 1890, which was merged in 1907 with the Shell Transport and Trading Company, a British concern that had been drilling in Kalimantan since 1891, to form Royal Dutch Shell.

Royal Dutch Shell dominated colonial oil exploration for more than thirty years. By 1911 Royal Dutch Shell operated concessions in Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan (then called Borneo), and Indonesian oil was almost 4 percent of total world production. Indonesia's most important oil fields, the Duri and Minas fields in the central Sumatran basin, were discovered just prior to World War II by Caltex, a joint venture between the American companies Chevron and Texaco, although production did not begin until the 1950s.

By 1963 the Duri and Minas oil fields, located in Riau Province near the town of Dumai, accounted for 50 percent of the country's oil production.

Resources and Production

Indonesia is a very large country covering an area of 1,920,000 square kilometers. About 60 sedimentary basins have been recognized onshore and offshore Indonesia; only 16 of which are currently producing. Of the remaining 44, eight have proven hydrocarbons but are not currently producing, 14 have been drilled but no discoveries were made and 22 are still completely unexplored.

The vast majority of the unexplored basins lie in deep or extremely deep water (> 1500 m), or in very remote and difficult areas. With recent technological advances, the deep water basins are becoming more and more the focus of current exploration activity notwithstanding the high risk and huge investments needed. Current estimates from various sources including the United States Geological Service indicate that 75% of the undiscovered hydrocarbon resources in SE Asia will be discovered in Indonesia. Expectations are as high as 118 billion barrel of oil equivalent. As of 2005, Indonesia had proven and probable reserves of 28 billion barrels of oil and 159 trillion cubic feet of gas. Most oil and gas production comes from Tertiary basins onshore northern Sumatra, onshore and offshore Java, the Natuna Sea, onshore and offshore east Kalimantan and onshore Papua

(formerly Irian Jaya). Cumulative oil production until end 2007 was about 23 billion barrels.

Production peaked in 1977 with over 600 million barrels produced during the year. Since the mid '90s, production has steadily decreased at a rate of about 1.2% per year. Oil production in 2007 averaged about 955,000 barrels per day with Chevron being the biggest oil producer in the country. Cumulative gas production at the end of 2007 was 70.4 trillion cubic feet with the French company Total the biggest gas producer. While oil reserves have decreased by over 1 billion barrels over the period 1999-2007, gas reserves have increased from 159 to 165 trillion cubic feet over the same period of time indicating that vast reserves of gas are still to be found in Indonesia. For the first time in 2005 domestic oil consumption surpassed production thus turning Indonesia, formerly the only Asian member of the production body OPEC, a net oil importer. In 2008, Indonesia officially quit OPEC.

Until 2005 Indonesia was also the world's largest LNG (liquefied natural gas) producer and exporter providing over 17% of total world LNG production. However, Qatar overtook in 2006 and Malaysia in 2007 making now Indonesia the third largest LNG producer. Two liquefaction plants are currently operating in Indonesia: Arun in North Sumatra and Bontang in Kalimantan.

A significant increase in LNG production is expected before year's end once a third LNG facility in Papua (Tangguh) comes on stream. With a production capacity of 7.6 million tons per year the coming on stream of Tangguh may restore Indonesia to its former glory, although this production increase may be offset by a rapid decline at the Arun plant unless new discoveries are made.

Contribution to Indonesian Economy

The oil and gas industry is a major contributor to the Indonesian economy. In 2007 it provided seven percent of the total gross domestic product and 25% of total budget revenues. During the same year oil companies invested over US\$10 billion for exploration, development and production activities. This level of investment creates of course countless job opportunities. Over 300,000 people are directly employed by the oil and gas industry with indirect employment to millions of others.

Exploring for Oil and Gas

It is commonly believed by the vast majority of the public that international oil and gas companies are spoiling developing countries of their natural resources, reaping huge

profits and leaving nothing behind. This alleged attitude is also often labeled as «Neo-colonialism».

Exploring for and developing oil and gas resources is a capital intensive, high risk venture requiring state of the art technology and highly qualified personnel. A large number of new exploration licenses recently awarded in Indonesia is located offshore in remote deep water areas. Investments in the order of over US\$100 million are normally required in the first 3 years exploration period with a probability of success usually in the range of 15% to 20%.

This means that an oil and gas company operating such a project has an 80% to 85% chance of finding nothing and therefore losing all the invested capital in the process. If a discovery is made, several billions of dollars will be spent in developing the field creating income and huge employment opportunities.

However, the whole cycle from initial exploration to discovery, sanctioning, development and eventually production can take up to ten years. During this entire period the Government of Indonesia does not assume any risk nor provide any capital but will share a large portion of revenues once the field goes on stream.

Licensing and Fiscal Terms

The award of exploration and production licenses in Indonesia as well as the revenue split and taxation regime during the production phase are strictly regulated by the Governmental Authorities. After the end of World War II, the post-independence government increased its control over the oil sector during the 1950s and 1960s by increasing operations of several government-owned oil companies and by stiffening the terms of contracts with foreign oil firms.

In 1968 the government companies Indonesian Oil Mining company (Pertamin), National Oil Mining Company (Permina), and the National Oil and Gas Company (Permigan) were consolidated into a single operation, the National Oil and Natural Gas Mining Company (Pertamina). At this time, a new form of contract was introduced called «production sharing contract,» or PSC.

A production-sharing contract split total oil production between the contractor and the government, represented by Pertamina, and allowed the government to assume ownership of structures and equipment used for exploration and production within Indonesia. Indonesia's contract terms were considered among the toughest in the world, with the government in most cases receiving 85 percent of oil produced once the foreign company recovered costs.

In 1989 and 1990, the government loosened some provisions for new contracts to stimulate exploration, particularly in frontier areas. Improved oil market conditions in the late 1980s also contributed to a surge in production-sharing contracts. Fifty-seven of the 100 contracts active in 1992 were signed from 1987 to 1991. A similar trend has also been observed in the last four years with 75 new contracts awarded between 2005 and 2008 involving a total exploration investment commitment of more than US\$ 1.5 billion and the payment of US\$ 226 millions in cash bonuses to the Government of Indonesia.

Until 2001 the award of new licenses and contracts and their administration was responsibility of the State Oil Company Pertamina. In 2001 law 22/2001 was approved regulating oil and natural gas activities. The key regulatory institutions under Law 22/2001 are the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources that has overall responsibility for the implementation of Government policy in the energy sector, MIGAS that formulates policy in the oil and gas sector and grants licenses, BPMIGAS that supervises upstream business activities (exploration) and finally BPHMIGAS that supervises downstream activities.

Licenses are normally awarded through a combination of so called regular and direct award tender rounds. Regular tender rounds are periodically announced by MIGAS that nominates specific areas for tender. Interested companies have four months to evaluate the areas and submit their bids.

To apply for a license, companies must commit to a minimum three year work programme that must include at least the drilling of one exploration well and pay a cash bonus with a minimum amount set by MIGAS. The cash bonus is paid only once the license is awarded and only by the receiver of the award. The minimum bonus is usually US\$ one million with no maximum amount. During the last regular tender round a bonus of US\$ 40 million was paid for a single license setting a record for Indonesia.

Direct tenders were introduced few years ago to revive a stagnating licensing process. Through this mechanism companies can nominate areas of their interest and conduct a geological study in conjunction with a local university. At the end of the study they have the right to apply for the area through a public direct tender round where potential competitors have only 45 days to evaluate the areas on offer (not the usual 4 months). Furthermore, if a competing bid is received, the original proposer has a right of first refusal, i.e. has the right to match any competing bid. Exploration licenses are awarded for a minimum duration of three years. Carried out the initial committed work programme, licensors can extend the license for another three years provided they relinquish 25% of the original area and commit to a further work programme. At the end of the sixth year if a discovery is made, the licensor can apply for a further final extension of four years by

relinquishing another 25% of the original area and committing to more work. After ten years, the contract is either relinquished in total or transformed into a development and production license.

At that stage all provisions of the PSC contract come fully in place. Broadly speaking, a PSC is a type of contract where all risk and investment during the initial stage is on the contractor but once production starts the vast majority of costs incurred during the previous phase from day one can be recovered from production (this share of production is also called «cost oil») and what is left after paying income taxes is shared between the contractor and the government in different proportion («profit oil»).

In current Indonesian contracts the after tax contractor's share varies from a minimum of 15% to a maximum of 35%. The Government therefore receives revenues from both income taxes paid by the contractors on their share of production as well as its own government share of production. There are also other provisions including the obligation for the contractors to sell 20% of total production in the local market at a fixed price, lower than market price. A simple example may explain better how a PSC works. We can think of a landowner who does not have the knowledge and capital to grow rice on his land. He gives therefore the land to a contractor in exchange for a cash payment and the agreement that the contractor pays for land working cost, fertilizer, maintenance, harvesting, etc. When the harvesting season comes, the contractor recovers all his cost and the remaining rice is split with the landowner.

In a typical oil contract with a 65%-35% after tax revenue share, out of 10,000 barrels of oil produced 3,694 would go to the Government and only 56 to the contractor after recovering total costs equivalent to 6,250 barrels. It should also be noted that cost recovery does not include any provision for capital interests.

Impact on Local Communities

Every oil and gas company operating in Indonesia has a duty to invest heavily in community development projects particularly during the initial, highest risk exploration phase. In 2007 oil and gas operators invested more than US\$ 30 million in community and social responsibility projects. Examples vary widely from health support (inoculation programmes, construction and running of new clinics), to education (teachers' training, provision of educational material, «mobile» libraries for children, etc.) and business support helping local fishermen, farmers and their wives improving their activity or setting up completely new ones. These programmes have a high impact on local communities

particularly when one thinks that more and more oil and gas projects are being carried out in remote areas where no other forms of investment are present. As a consequence of ongoing oil and gas investments, local communities in South Sulawesi are receiving extensive TBC inoculation and wives are being helped setting up small businesses to sell better and more efficiently the fish caught and dried by their husbands.

This significantly improves the family income. Teachers' training is also being implemented. Due to a severe shortage of qualified personnel, teachers in remote rural areas are often not properly trained and qualified. Unqualified teachers command a salary that is about half the salary of qualified ones. Oil companies currently investing in projects offshore Sulawesi have therefore decided to provide the necessary training turning them into properly qualified teachers with the consequence of both providing better education for the children and doubling the salary of their educators. It should also be added that local authorities have the right to gain up to 10% participation in any oil and gas development and production project implemented in their jurisdiction. Revenues from this participation are therefore another indirect form of support to local communities.

What Lies Ahead

Although current production is declining and internal consumption steadily growing, Indonesia remains the most prospective SE Asian Country in terms of expected undiscovered oil and gas resources. This is reflected in the very high level of interest and investments that all major and independent oil and gas companies are currently committing to in Indonesia.

A solid and well established regulatory framework manages to minimize risk and maximize revenues for the Government but at the same time ensures recovery of costs and a fixed share of production for the contractor. Albeit less profitable than contracts offered by other countries, the PSC system is more predictable and greatly reduces the exposure to and impact of commodity price fluctuations as well as increasing exploration and development costs.

With a vast part of the population still living in extremely difficult conditions, the high need for infrastructures and investments and the large expected resource potential, Indonesia has a lot to gain from continued interest and investments from foreign oil firms. Given the right business environment, foreign companies will certainly continue creating wealth and job opportunities not only for themselves but for the Government and people of Indonesia as well.

In
margine



Filosofia giapponese oggi

TIZIANO TOSOLINI

Filosofia giapponese oggi

TIZIANO TOSOLINI

La filosofia, fin dal suo nascere e susseguente sviluppo, è interrogazione sul reale e sulle sue condizioni di possibilità. La sua storia evidenzia come risposte infallibili alle domande che essa stessa si pone non solo non esistano, ma non possano neppure essere confinate e ristrette ad un «pensiero locale», regionale o continentale che sia. Il mondo — come profetizzava tanto tempo fa McLuhan — è diventato villaggio, e lancia alla filosofia la sfida di intrattenere un dialogo non più limitato a quegli omogenei bacini culturali che si sono formati da una stessa tradizione di pensiero, ma di ammettere alla discussione anche tutte quelle voci e contributi che a quella tradizione e pensiero sono stati finora estranei.

È a partire da queste riflessioni che l'università Pompeu Fabra di Barcellona, nei giorni 3-5 giugno 2009, si è fatta promotrice di un incontro internazionale di filosofia giapponese dal titolo di *Japanese Philosophy: Confluences and Cross-Currents*. È stato questo il sesto di una serie di raduni che in questi anni hanno visto incontrarsi e confrontarsi esperti, studiosi, accademici, cultori, appassionati e simpatizzanti di filosofia giapponese provenienti da varie università del mondo (come quella di Montréal, Trent, Lovanio, Lubiana, Hawai'i, Ohio, Iwoa, North Florida, Berlino, Estonia, Ginevra, Cork, Salamanca, China, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Kobe, Kyoto, Nanzan, Torino, Venezia...).¹ Ciò che ha attratto e continua ad affascinare questi studiosi, è senz'altro il fatto che la filosofia giapponese non è più semplicemente uno dei tanti ambiti di specializzazione riservato ad esperti, quanto piuttosto il fatto che essa si pone come *partner* privilegiato per instaurare un dialogo tra diverse tradizioni di pensiero.

Tutti coloro che hanno preso parte al convegno, e i molti che per varie ragioni non vi hanno potuto partecipare, sono infatti convinti che occorra superare il banale pregiu-

1. Gli atti dei convegni precedenti sono stati raccolti in una serie di volumi pubblicati dal Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture di Nagoya: J. W. Heisig ed., *Japanese Philosophy Abroad*, 2004 (atti del primo convegno svoltosi a Nagoya, Giappone); J. W. Heisig ed., *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy*, 2006 (atti del convegno svoltosi a Berlino); V. S. Hori, M. A-M. Curley eds., *Neglected Themes and Hidden Variations*, 2008 (atti del convegno tenutosi a Montréal); J. W. Heisig, U. Mayuko eds., *Origins and Possibilities*, 2008 (atti del convegno ospitato a Nagoya); L. Wing-keung, C. Ching-yuen eds., *Facing the Twenty-First Century*, 2009 (atti del convegno tenutosi a Hong Kong).

dizio che l'Oriente (in questo caso il Giappone) sia un luogo misterioso, mistico, sensuale, spirituale e quasi irrazionale, mentre un mai ben specificato Occidente (con la sua filosofia) sia invece razionale, logico, creativo, concreto e pragmatico. Al di là di tutte queste fragili distinzioni, sintomi di un fin troppo antiquato «orientalismo», esiste la consapevolezza che la filosofia ha ormai assunto una caratteristica universale, che le sue ragioni possono essere ascoltate, accolte o criticate da chiunque, che le sue interpretazioni e le sue domande possano raggiungere ed essere significative per tutti coloro che si soffermano a riflettere sugli aspetti sempre misteriosi della propria identità, del proprio mondo, della propria spiritualità e finitudine.

Questa consapevolezza ha certamente colorato tutti i numerosi interventi che si sono susseguiti durante i tre giorni della conferenza. La mattinata della prima giornata del convegno è stata dedicata al padre indiscusso della filosofia moderna giapponese, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), cercando innanzitutto di evidenziare la struttura e il linguaggio usato dal filosofo per descrivere il concetto di *basho*, cioè di quel «luogo» inteso come quell'universale che avvolge e fa emergere tutte le operazioni della coscienza, quell'aspetto predicativo che soggiace a ogni conoscenza oggettiva, quello sfondo su cui si riflettono e sono collocati sia la realtà dei fenomeni che l'autoconsapevolezza del soggetto. Questo *luogo* è l'ineffabile matrice in cui ogni cosa esistente possiede un suo significato essendo collocata al suo interno, ed esso rappresenta l'idea di un universale concreto, cioè di un universale che non solo accoglie e ospita in sé ogni figura o forma, ma anche un universale attivo, che si autodetermina nelle singole istanze particolari e presiede alla loro determinazione ed interconnessione. Il *luogo* corrisponde così a quell'orizzonte incondizionato ed infinito che contiene e costituisce ogni forma o figura e, nel contempo, questa stessa forma non è altro che una determinazione e concretizzazione del *luogo* stesso. Il discorso ha poi cercato di chiarire le varie interpretazioni socio-antropologiche implicite in questo concetto nishidiano e ha cercato di descrivere la rilevanza che la filosofia della storia di Nishida — assieme a quella di Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945), un altro filosofo della Scuola di Kyoto — possiede in quest'epoca segnata dallo scoppio della bomba atomica su Hiroshima e Nagasaki.

Nel pomeriggio si sono svolte altre due conferenze incentrate sul confronto tra la nozione di vita-morte (*shōji*), così come si trova espressa nel Taoismo e nella tradizione Zen, e la nozione di *ars moriendi* di stampo europeo, sottolineando come quest'ultima, con la sua ansia nei confronti della morte, con i suoi sempre instabili equilibri tra *eros* e *thanatos*, sembra priva di quella velata consapevolezza dell'impermanenza di tutte le cose, di quella interpretazione del corpo che anche se paragonato alla polvere partecipa

però dell'essere di tutte le cose, di quella suprema possibilità di sospendere l'eterna ciclicità di vita-morte entrando nella silenziosa e rassicurante atmosfera del Nirvana. Lo stesso contrasto, seppur con esiti diversi, è stato fatto notare anche nel rapporto tra «nichilismo» e «vacuità» (*sunyata*), tema del successivo intervento. Il nichilismo occidentale, con la dissoluzione di tutti i valori metafisici e l'avvio della saga delle interpretazioni di certo non può essere paragonato alla vacuità, alla consapevolezza del vuoto di ogni cosa. Sebbene il «vuoto» sia di solito raffigurato dall'arte buddhista con un cerchio vuoto, non lo si deve percepire come un semplice «niente», come un «ni-ente» (o negazione di qualsiasi cosa). Già l'Hinayana aveva paragonato il mondo che ci circonda a della schiuma, a una bolla d'aria, un miraggio, un sogno, una magica rappresentazione. L'uso di simili immagini si proponeva di render familiare l'idea che il mondo è relativamente senza importanza, senza valore, senza sostanza e ingannevole. Nel Mahayana uno dei sinonimi più frequenti per il «vuoto» diventa quello di «non-dualità»: nella conoscenza perfetta, infatti, tutte le dualità sono abolite, l'oggetto non differisce dal soggetto, il Nirvana non si distingue dal mondo, l'esistenza non è più separata dalla non-esistenza. Ed è proprio qui che l'autore sembra notare una certa somiglianza tra nichilismo e vacuità o, come egli afferma, tra *Entwertung* e *prasanga*, cioè tra la svalutazione di tutti i valori occidentali e la costante *reductio ad absurdum* adottata dalla scuola Madhyamika che decostruisce ogni concettualizzazione e idea per lasciar spazio ad una nuova dimensione in cui ci si libera da tutte quelle visioni e illusioni con cui leggiamo e distorciamo la realtà non lasciandola emergere invece così come essa è.

Il giorno seguente si è riflettuto in un primo momento sul modo con cui uno dei rappresentanti della Scuola di Kyoto — Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960) — avesse riletto, incorporato e sviluppato all'interno della sua filosofia alcune delle tematiche e intuizioni sapienziali del famoso monaco e maestro zen giapponese Dōgen (1200–1253). Questa analisi è poi proseguita cercando di giustificare una diversa interpretazione del concetto di «*uji*» — di solito tradotto con «essere-tempo» — che rappresenta una delle nozioni più difficili presenti nel *corpus* letterario del *Shōbōgenzō* di Dōgen. Quello che si faceva notare, infatti, è che la ormai comune e accolta dizione «essere-tempo» (anche se i caratteri giapponesi giustificano letteralmente questa traduzione) risente troppo del richiamo al famoso testo di Heidegger *Essere e tempo* che, data la lontananza temporale e semantica con il testo di Dōgen, non può che rendere ambiguo il suo significato. Pare infatti che della nozione di «tempo» Dōgen volesse evidenziare non tanto il concetto di «durata», quanto piuttosto quello di «momento», di quell'«attimo» che il tempo scandisce e rinvoca rendendolo unico e assoluto e in cui noi ci troviamo ad esistere come per la prima

volta. Tentando quindi di sostituire «essere-tempo» con «momento» la lettura del testo di Dōgen assume una connotazione filosofica diversa, più intensa, e forse anche più vicina allo spirito profondo e complesso dell'autore.

I partecipanti al convegno sono stati poi invitati ad analizzare alcuni temi di estetica e di arte giapponese, soffermandosi soprattutto sugli influssi filosofici che queste discipline hanno ricevuto nell'incontro con studiosi occidentali venuti ad insegnare nelle università giapponesi. I nomi maggiormente ricordati sono stati quelli di Ernest Francis Fenollosa (1853–1908), storico dell'arte e orientalista che insegnò filosofia (soprattutto hegeliana) all'Università Imperiale di Tokyo ed è considerato il fondatore della moderna storia dell'arte giapponese secondo canoni occidentali; e Raphael von Koeber (1848–1923) che ha insegnato nella stessa università di Fenollosa, facendosi però promotore della filosofia di Schopenhauer, e che ha avuto come suoi studenti persone poi divenute celebri in abiti filosofici (come i già ricordati Nishida Kitarō e Watsuji Tetsurō) letterari (Natsume Sōseki, 1867–1916) e, appunto, di estetica (Onishi Yoshinori, 1888–1959 e Kuki Shūzō, 1888–1941). Ed è proprio su Kuki Shūzō, (il filosofo menzionato da Heidegger nel suo famoso *In cammino verso il linguaggio* e amico di Henri Bergson, Paul Claudel e Jean-Paul Sartre) e sulle sue nozioni di «*iki*» e di «contingenza» che i partecipanti sono stati introdotti a riflettere sull'«ideale» (non sul «gusto») estetico giapponese e sul suo innato rapporto con il «vuoto».

Nel pomeriggio si è passati ad analizzare il tema della donna e l'influsso filosofico, letterario e morale che esse hanno esercitato in Giappone. L'attenzione è qui stata posta su figure importanti della storia giapponese, come Yosano Akiko (1878–1942) poeta e femminista divenuta celebre per la sua poesia «il giorno in cui le montagne si muovono» in cui profetizzava l'imminente emancipazione di tutte le donne; Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971) giornalista ed attivista politica, una delle prime a battersi per la riforma della posizione sociale e legale della donna giapponese e famosa per la sua frase: «All'inizio la donna era il sole. Era una persona autentica. Ma oggi la donna è la luna»; Yamakawa Kikue (1890–1980) socialista e femminista che scrisse e pubblicò molto in questi ambiti di pensiero. Il *leit-motiv* che accomuna tutte queste (e altre) figure femminili, sembra senz'altro essere rintracciabile in quel desiderio di liberazione integrale che evidenzia non solo il senso della loro particolare spiritualità (il desiderio cioè di essere salvate *come* donne, non *dal fatto di essere* donne), ma anche il significato profondo della loro corporeità ed umanità. Non sembra un caso, allora, che uno degli scritti presentato in questo contesto abbia avuto il titolo di: «Vivere come donna e pensare come madre: il percorso femminile all'interno della filosofia moderna giapponese e il concetto di una morale al femminile».

L'ultima giornata del convegno ha poi visto instaurare un confronto tra alcune teorie filosofiche giapponesi e l'influsso che esse potrebbero esercitare sulla costituzione di un nuovo ordine sociale e politico. Una delle nozioni analizzate è stata quella di «repubblica mondiale» auspicata dal filosofo e critico letterario Karatani Kōjin (1941–) e ispirata al Movimento di un Nuovo Associazionismo (che egli stesso ha fondato in Giappone nel 2000). È questo un movimento che cerca di promuovere un nazionalismo senza stato, un ordine senza potere, uno scambio senza denaro (utilizzando ad esempio i cosiddetti «*credit paper*», cioè un tipo di denaro «parallelo» a quello normalmente in circolazione, ma proprio perché non emesso da banche o istituzioni finanziarie non è né tassato, né entra nel circolo vizioso del cosiddetto «signoraggio») e un sistema di commercio non più globalizzato ma attento agli scambi locali. Un movimento e una teoria questa che trova eco e riscontro anche in sociologi ed economisti di fama, come ad esempio Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein (1930–).

Questa tematica ha poi interessato anche l'intervento seguente incentrato sul concetto di globalizzazione e cosmopolitismo così come essi emergono dal rapporto dialettico e filosofico tra «l'uno e i molti» analizzato da Mutai Risaku (1890–1974), uno dei discepoli di Nishida e promotore del cosiddetto «umanismo globale» mediante il quale si riconoscono e promuovono i valori della libertà e della pace superando così le ristrettezze imposte da ogni nazionalismo.

La seconda sessione della mattinata ha visto i partecipanti continuare a riflettere sulle implicazioni pratiche della filosofia della Scuola di Kyoto, questa volta analizzate nel loro versante economico. Il titolo del primo intervento, era infatti «Di fronte alla crisi economica odierna, cosa si può imparare dai filosofi della Scuola di Kyoto?». La lezione che se ne può certamente trarre, è stato detto, riguarda soprattutto l'approccio e lo studio delle leggi e norme che regolano l'economia odierna e che stanno portando il mondo ad una *empasse* economico-sociale.

Queste regole possono essere trasformate solo se si ritorna a riflettere sugli assunti impliciti che le reggono (riflessione questa che di solito non viene mai sviluppata dagli esperti di economia) e sul fatto che l'economia, come «legge della casa», debba essere intesa come una materia che studia i comportamenti umani all'interno delle organizzazioni sociali, e non come scienza esatta che detta leggi alle istituzioni sociali e politiche. Ciò che è necessario, allora, è un ritorno a quel «grande dubbio» buddhista, a quell'«approfondire la natura della propria autoconsapevolezza» che sole possono aiutare a comprendere l'economia non tanto come un qualcosa da studiare, ma come un qualcosa in cui siamo immersi e che condiziona il nostro essere, oltre che i nostri bisogni.

Le riflessioni finali del convegno si sono poi spostate su altre tematiche filosofiche di altrettanto interesse, come ad esempio «Un concetto alternativo di normatività nello Zen», «Nulla e da nessuna parte ad est ed ovest: Nishida e l'intuizione di un fondamento comune», e infine «Rendere la filosofia giapponese comprensibile agli studiosi occidentali», *papers* questi scritti rispettivamente da J. Maraldo, J.W. Heisig e T. Kasulis, cioè da coloro che da oltre un ventennio si sono fatti promotori e diffusori della filosofia giapponese nell'ambito accademico internazionale e che stanno curando la monumentale opera *Sourcebook of Japanese Philosophy* di prossima pubblicazione che diventerà senza dubbio un testo imprescindibile per tutti coloro che vorranno accostarsi allo studio della filosofia giapponese.

Il convegno di Barcellona ha dunque rappresentato un'ulteriore tappa nell'ormai costante ed inarrestabile flusso e riflusso di quel pensiero che cerca di riflettere sugli originali contributi della filosofia giapponese connettendoli con quelli elaborati dagli studi e ricerche occidentali. La consapevolezza che oggi la filosofia giapponese non possa più essere relegata ad una specie di filosofia «minore» o «marginale» ma debba partecipare di diritto al *forum* mondiale del dibattito filosofico, teologico, politico-sociale e religioso sembra quanto mai scontata ed evidente.

Considerando le numerose traduzioni in lingue occidentali di testi filosofici (soprattutto di pensatori appartenenti alla Scuola di Kyoto)² e osservando il rigenerato entusiasmo che questo tipo di studi sta suscitando nello stesso Giappone,³ dobbiamo am-

2. Numerose sono ormai anche le traduzioni disponibili in italiano. Per chi volesse consultare testi di filosofia giapponese contemporanea, riportiamo qui l'elenco dei libri disponibili, senza dimenticare che — forse per la prima volta in Europa — un'editrice italiana (L'Epos di Palermo) ha deciso di dedicare una collana specifica a questo settore di studio. Nishitani Keiji, *La religione e il nulla*. (Trad. C. Saviani). Roma: Città Nuova, 2004; Nishitani Keiji, *La relazione io-tu nel Buddhismo Zen e altri saggi*. (Trad. C. Saviani). Palermo: L'Epos, 2005; Nishitani Keiji, *Dialettica del nichilismo*. (Trad. C. Saviani). Palermo: L'Epos, 2008; Nishida Kitarō, *L'io e il tu*. (Trad. R. Andolfato). Padova: Unipress, 1996; Nishida Kitarō, *Il corpo e la conoscenza. L'intuizione attiva e l'eredità di Cartesio*. (Trad. M. Cestari). Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2001; Nishida Kitarō, *La logica del luogo e la visione religiosa del mondo*. (Trad. T. Tosolini). Palermo: L'Epos, 2005; Nishida Kitarō, *Uno studio sul bene*. (Trad. E. Fongaro). Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2007; Kuki Shūzō, *La struttura dell'iki*. (Trad. G. Baccini). Milano: Adelphi, 1992; Ueda Shizuteru, *Zen e filosofia*. (Trad. C. Saviani, C. Querci). Palermo: L'Epos, 2006; Takeuchi Yoshinori, *Il cuore del Buddhismo*. (Trad. M. De Giorgi). Bologna: Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1999; Watsuji Tetsurō, *Pellegrinaggio alle antiche chiese d'Italia*. (Trad. O. Frattolillo). Palermo: L'Epos, 2005. Per chi si accostasse per la prima volta a questa area di studio, può invece consultare i seguenti testi introduttivi: G. Forzani Jisō, *I fiori del vuoto. Introduzione alla filosofia giapponese*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2006; W. J. Heisig, *Filosofi del Nulla. Un saggio sulla scuola di Kyoto*. (Trad. E. Fongaro, C. Saviani, T. Tosolini). Palermo: L'Epos, 2007; G. Piovesana *Filosofia giapponese contemporanea*. Bologna: Pàtron, 1968; G. Vianello, *Messaggeri del nulla. La Scuola di Kyoto in Europa*. Messina: Rubettino, 2006; G. Vianello, M. Cestari e K. Yoshida, *La Scuola di Kyoto. Kyoto-ha*. Messina: Rubettino, 1996. Altri testi sono in corso di pubblicazione.

3. Nell'ultimo decennio, dopo un periodo di relativa stasi, si sta assistendo ad un rinnovato interesse per la filosofia giapponese all'interno dello stesso Giappone. Basti qui ricordare che nel 1999 la casa editrice

mettere che il convegno di Barcellona ha rappresentato un'ulteriore concretizzazione di un sogno che Nishida aveva a lungo coltivato, quello cioè che ogni filosofo si lasciasse affascinare ed abbagliare dall'inconfondibile meraviglia del pensiero ponendo come unico e vero confine delle sue riflessioni non tanto una cultura o una tradizione filosofica, quanto piuttosto quella ragione e quella fede che per loro natura sono, e non possono che essere, universali.

Tōeisha di Kyoto ha iniziato la pubblicazione di una serie di 31 volumi dal titolo di *Raccolta della Scuola di Kyoto* in cui ogni opera indaga su un filosofo appartenente a quella Scuola; nel 2000 si è inaugurata la rivista *Filosofia giapponese*, mentre nel 2003 nasce la rivista *Studi di storia di filosofia giapponese*. Nello stesso periodo viene inoltre fondata l'Associazione filosofica Nishida Kitarō, che dal 2004 pubblica anche gli atti del loro convegno annuale.

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