

North and South Survival.

The Common Goal and the different strategies

Intervention

Peace Forum

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro
de l'Association oecuménique des
centres de recherche et de rencontre
en Europe (Pays-Bas) Sept. 1987

Driebergen (NL) 5 Sept. 1987

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



North and South Survival
The Common Goal and the Different Strategies

Driebergen (The Netherlands), 5 September 1987

Introduction

Let me start by telling how I come to be here and being here, peacefully with you, has something to do with the way I solve for myself the tension between assimilation and isolation.

(LG, in paras 31-33 speaks about that tension as part and parcel of the situation of lay people.)

On the 9 and 10 March, as part of the InterAction Council of Former Heads of Governments, I participated with six of my colleagues in the first meeting between political leaders and religious leaders of five major world religions.

We said at the end of our meeting:

On 12 March I flew to San Francisco where I had to speak at the First International Cance... of Women Political Leaders, chaired by Geraldine Ferraro.

In the last two days I was present at the International Symposium on "Global Structural Change", held on the occasion of the Bicentennial Celebration of the University of Pittsburg.

How can the University and the political leaders have a more meaningful cooperation to solve the problems of mankind?

No need to elaborate on the meaning of such events.

- A world in which global issues can only be dealt with at global level and in the most diversified platforms :
 - . religious leaders
 - . women
 - . scientific community



What did it mean for me as a Christian?

The most obvious pitfall is just to look at those events with the eyes of 10/20 years ago: being in international meetings was a luxury, and there was some exhilaration in travelling around, seeing places and people, pretending that you can be like God, creating always something ...

On the other hand, would it not be much quieter to set at home, to watch indignantly the TV news and the tragedies in the world and to relativize almost cynically what is happening? Finally "life is so futile" ...

To find a garden of my own, to do my own thing, to have my time and space, to find even my place for prayer ...

I am here and was in the last days involved in other events, because I assume that they are inter-connected, that through me, as a Christian, the events are part of the Kingdom in our midst, that the crux of my being Christian is God's will and that will is:
peace to all
bread for everyone
forgiveness
cutting the roots of evil

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

1. Main assumption

In today's life there are two opposite trends:

- on one hand, life appears fragmented, escaping from the core of things, scattered in events and informal;
- on the other hand, this provokes among Christians the desire to come to the center of being, to unite in themselves what is divided. Most often this is done through movements which claim emptiness, concentrating elsewhere than in reality.

It is my conviction that Christianity today is the overcoming of this dual attitude.

If we submit ourselves to the logic of the world as it is without any other term of reference, the alternative assimilation/isolation is the very plausible one.

My assumption is that to be a Christian implies another logic. Christianity, because of its eschatological dimension, meets God en avant.

Hence, assimilation or isolation are overcome by an anticipation to life, to its sociological conditions.

Another logic is at stake which at once encompasses and goes beyond the logic of the world.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

2. Complexity

A lot of criticism goes on in the United States of America against Ronald Reagan, but it is not over-simplified in moral terms. Instead, one article in the otherwise pro-reagan Time Magazine denounces "his inability to focus on complexity".

True of politicians.

True of the electorate.

True of the Christians.

We want to be reassured that every effect speaks of just one cause, that the issues can be mastered.

Complexity is not the property of being complicated.

It is rather the statement that everything has to do with everything else.

(In the limit, there are no problems, but one problem.)

However, complexity does not equate with a mere logic relation.

Rather, one thing interferes with, provokes the other. This is true of any two, three, four factors in a series. Many variables are creating in a dynamic way many diversified situations.

- To deal with complexity we need the
system-science.

A system being a set of events, things, phenomena, which are autonomous and yet interdependent.

- Thus complexity includes the capacity of self-organization - it is a real source of innovation.
- Fascination of living in such a world:
complexity outside
 inside ourselves.

Can we solve the problems?

Not only what or how but why.



- The pre-complexity attitude leads to assimilation by the world:

- only simple elements of it are seen,
- the limited pattern perceived is followed.

- Complexity has a perverse effect:

the variety of elements and the rapidity of change may lead to fundamentalism, based on ethnics, religion, language;

it is an extreme position
reducing issues,
limiting the problems.

- Next generation of problems

Because of complexity, new problems are mainly in the interfaces:

environment/development/population/hunger/natural resources/climate/action of men on environment/technology/culture
interdependence/autonomy

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

- Needed:

vision to conceptualize and to dream
process to get to the goal, not to lose sight of it at different stages
strategy to make sure the vision is implemented and the process not changed by perverse effect
articulation of short-term
of long-term
organization
structure

1. The situation Christian are in
- a) acceleration of transformations going beyond man's capacity to absorb them;
 e.g. (peace negotiations) zero solution
 in INF
 Pershing
 SS20
- informatics and robotics
 genetics
- b) the big questions of the world management as linked with day-to-day conditions and man's sense of powerlessness in relation to them:
- arm's race
 nuclear
 ecology
 economy
- c) mass-media pouring out information which cannot find an active receptor:
 no personal answer
 no critical attitude
over-populated universe of impressions.
- d) overwhelming complexity of every issue and of inter-relatedness of different issues
 leading to the awareness of new zones of "illiteracy"
 (man cannot decodify the interpenetration of events)
- e) incapacity to govern
 (governance in the world)

2. The specific Christian questions

- a) history is not linear/there is no plan of God
- how is God reigning over the world?
- b) power is needed to prevent the world from collapsing
- what is the translation today of: "seek first the Kingdom of God"?
- c) where do we meet God?
- d) Christ came to change the world
not as a man of the establishment
as a revolutionary

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



3. The assimilation by the world as it is
- a) dichotomy spiritual/temporal;
 - b) living with the rythm of ages past;
 - c) accepting pleasure, discontinuity between events and feelings, accumulation and greed ... as substitutes for real happiness;
 - d) wanting to change the world within its logic and being sucked up by it;
 - e) going with the waves of intellectual, political fashions

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

4. The isolation from the world

- a) the "walkman" as expression of wanting "to cut from the environing world;
- b) radio, TV, photo - seeing in a mirror, not the real things but their images;
- c) the simple truth, going back to basics - fundamentalism of all kinds, which accepts the world as it is;
- d) refuge in the church - the new liturgies and celebrations, even theology of liberation (as it works with the masses, the simple people who accept cause/effect relationships)

One fact that puzzles me is that the appeal of the contextual theology has so far only provoked the universalisation of the "liberation theology"! which is situated. Is it isolation from our world?

One explanation could be found in the fact that the international system, taken as a whole, can be seen as broadly expressing the juxtaposition of oppresser and oppressed. Hence, the liberation theology as a possible frame for work and inspiration at the international level.

However, our lives are not only determined by that division in the world. Our faith - as part of our life - is interwoven with many different elements related to each other.

It is my deep conviction that unless we work out the components of our culture in the highly industrialized world, it would be impossible to say anything about the Christian Faith and the Christians.

- e) the isolation of those who do not expose themselves, living with defenses, protected by the status quo, by the security, by the Temple and the Law;
- f) those who live outside the mainstream of ideas and events because they do not want to be shaken nor disturbed;
- g) becoming "ermite" ...
taking time out ...

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



Why?

Our linear thinking has led us to put everything in terms of dichotomy.

Even the coming Synod expresses that when it speaks about "the vocation and mission of the lay people in the Church and in the world".

As it was already commented, in the light of Vatican II, LG and GS, the question is not the Christian facing two different realities, "alien to each other", obliging the Christian to an option for one or for the other.

What we have before us is the vocation and mission of the Christian-in-the-Church-for-the-world. This is not only the teaching of Vatican II but an old perspective on which many of us have built their life.

As early as 1952 as Dr. Merckx said, Congar stressed that the Kingdom of God is the reconciliation "from within" of things of this world. If Paul affirms that the creation is expecting in labour for the salvation of men (Rom. 8, 19-22), this does point out towards our fundamental condition:

"between the Kingdom of God and the world there is a unity of purpose" through men's existence and work for the world.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

Main context for Christians: information society

1. a new form of relating persons, materials, data through
electronics,
robotics,
micro-processors.

Not an abstraction but as an economic reality.

Greater rythm of change because of innovation in communication and computers.

Application to traditional industries and later to new ones,
generating new fields,
new products

Civilization of the immaterial.

Together with this change, another one which is happening and of which we do not know yet all the results:

the development as in biology and molecular biology.

Life-sciences, for the first time, give the same foundation to the study of all reality - from physics and chemistry to biology.

Life-sciences have impact not only on the microbiological fermentation industry, agriculture, fisheries, medical care, but also on engineering and industry.

Rather than constituents of a new branch of natural science, life-sciences can be seen as something that can change the very structure and character of modern sciences and technology.

Thus, we are facing a civilizational mutation from the material civilization to the life-centered civilization.

Immaterial

Life-centered civilization leads to the awareness that the Spirit is at work everywhere, indeed the Spirit fills the earth, the Spirit of the Lord as the ultimate form of live: the Spirit of Christ risen from the dead, alive in our history.

New thinking

How?

There is no ready-made solution.

The Gospel tells us that God is everywhere and can rebuild the Temple in three days.

Today, there is in some sophisticated circles the discovery of beauty, as a substitute to God. The expression "it is beautiful", uttered in all types of tones, is the awe before God, said in another way. For many, this has become an intoxication. And again, we have to ask ourselves how this path can be pursued ...

Looking at places, listening to music, seeing the great arts of mankind, is to grasp a line of continuity in human history - a way to overcome, within oneself, in a synthesis, what is discontinuity, fragmentation.

"For the past four months, Ronald Reagan has not had
 the physical stamina,
 the emotional intensity
 or the mental acuity
 to be President of the United States.

"The three qualities are inseparable in leadership.

"His ignorance about the issues, his inability to focus on complexity, to sort out chronology, and his shock at the sudden loss of popular affection produced a kind of stupor."

Time, 9 March 1987

"The circuits are overloaded."
 Nancy Reagan

