

"THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE EIGHTIES"

"CHRISTIANS AND THE THIRD DEVELOPMENT DECADE"

The year 1960 marked the beginning of the first United Nations Development Decade. It also brought the publication of a little book by a colleague of mine from Cambridge, Professor Herbert Butterfield, called "International Conflict in the 20th Century - A Christian Perspective". Two of his thoughts expressed in that book then may help us now, as Christians address themselves to the challenge of development in the third United Nations Development Decade. First he observes:

"there is no realm in life which calls for profounder rethinking than that of international affairs; - no realm where it is more necessary to do hard things with our personalities, unloading ourselves of former prejudices, and piercing through successive layers of insincerity."

If the world economic recession at the beginning of the 1980s is bringing hard times to small industrial countries, to unemployed individuals, and to the least developed countries above all, then Christians should not be surprised if "hard things" seem to be asked of our personalities also, as we confront, and are confronted by, the international dimensions of the development problem. But secondly, Professor Butterfield goes on to express this hope:

"It maybe a prejudice of mine, but I wonder whether Christians, if they could disentangle their minds from the conventional mundane systems that constrict them, might not, within a decade, contribute something creative to this deeper cause of human understanding."

We do not know precisely what he had in mind. But how free are we, and should we be, with all the modern aids to living, to disentangle our minds from what he calls "the conventional mundane systems"? It is here we confront the challenge. If Christians can accept "hard things" seeming to be done to them, then something creative for the world may emerge from them. If this were so, perhaps we should not be surprised to find that it has taken more than just the one decade he spoke of to bring it about.

Profound re-thinking, and a willingness to listen to people from other parts of the world, has brought the subject of development into the centre of Christian concern. We must respect this movement. It is a challenge for our time. Not, until 1920, and the 1st Lambeth Conference under Archbishop Davidson, do we find predominantly Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking bishops making mention of it. (Resolution 8 of that Conference speaks of their "grave concern at the evidence of disease and distress..... in large tracts of Europe and Asia."). No mention was made of Africa, but then there were no active African bishops yet present at these conferences. But as communications during this century have improved, so the rapid growth of Third World churches have made their voices heard more sharply and clearly at Lambeth. Perhaps this process has reached a point of culmination when, on July 28th 1978, the 400 bishops then present at the latest Lambeth Conference expressed their solidarity with the suffering dwellers in the threatened shanty-town

and 4 800 million human beings in them who live in absolute poverty

lack indigenous? native is the unfortunate word -

at Crossroads in South Africa by sending them a letter, signed by all without dissent. Similarly, in the ecumenical movement of this century, so well described by Bishop Leslie Newbiggin in his preparatory document for the 1980 World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, called "Your Kingdom Come", Christian concern has moved from preoccupation with personal salvation and morality, to a sense of corporate salvation for humanity within the Body of Christ, and to a new awareness of the importance of world development in this global, truly ecumenical, process. Speaking of the 4th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1968, he writes.

"The churches, which often seemed to belong rather to the court of Pharaoh, than to the camp of Moses, were summoned to identify themselves unequivocally with the aspirations of the oppressed"

(Page 9).

Profound rethinking on international affairs among Christians, then, there has been. Faced now with the world economic recession, and with the national interest of governments, leading them to respond with inward-looking attitudes of self-protection and defence, the strength of this movement both within and between the churches will be thoroughly tried and tested in the coming decade.

For this movement, however, to lead now to a new Exodus for the churches, in partnership with the exploding population of our planet, a number of other factors will need to be present. In the word of Yahweh addressed to Moses, recorded in our Jewish and Christian Scriptures in the book of Exodus, 5 verbs are to be found. I liken the effect of these verbs upon the mind of Moses to the interaction of electrons encircling the nucleus in an atom, at a given moment to explode with liberating energy. "I have seen the affliction" is the first of these, in the written records we have (Exodus chapter 3, verse 7). To have seen the affliction of the estimated 800 million people on our planet who are destitute, of whom the Report of the Brandt Commission speaks, rightly generates an irresistible power. I understand that it was at their meeting in Mali, one of the least developed countries in a belt around the continent of Africa, with the opportunity which that meeting brought for members of that Commission to look for themselves into the human eyes of poverty, that more than any other single factor welded the consensus between members from the North and South, which gave particular authority to their report. Those Christians who have not yet seen for themselves the face of this degree of deprivation of the basic prerequisites of life, should nevertheless respect the "hard things" that it does to human personality, and respect at least the urgency expressed by the Brandt Commission in their emergency programme designed to do something about it.

"I have heard their cry" is the second verb in the word of God addressed to Moses. We have considered how hard a thing it has been for white and western Christians to hear this cry of the oppressed from Third World countries. Though not necessarily agreeing with the opinion expressed to the Brandt Commission by the governments of Eastern Europe that "development" is the responsibility of the former colonial powers, there has been a process of "unloading ourselves of prejudice" and of being "pierced" through successive layers of insincerity. Too much of the wealth created out of colonial soil with the help of native labour has found its way back to build the infra-structure of our cities, and to

develop our economies in the capitalist nations of the west. Now the cry of their impoverished people is not for charity but for justice. Having heard their cry, now must be the time not only for Christians, but for capitalism, to act massively to regenerate the purchasing power within their markets, as part of a programme of new investment and development.

"I have come down to deliver them" is the third such verb in the word addressed by God to Moses. It is the power locked up in the interaction of this electron with its nucleus, that lies behind the humble human form of Jesus whom successive generations of Christians have bowed the knee to worship in the House of Bread, in Bethlehem. It is this verb particularly that has discharged its meaning in the liberation theology of Latin America. What "hard things" must Christians in the west now accept in terms of simplifying their life-styles, if we are to help to transform the society in which we live, and not simply conform to it? It is this verb, and our obedience to its call, that above all contains the challenge of a new Exodus in the coming decade. For example, it is said that what oil has been to the 1970s, grain will be to the 1980s. By which I understand that grain as a commodity that is traded in the international market place, is becoming increasingly an instrument of political policy, as oil has been to Arabs in their struggle with Israel. Already in 1980 we have seen the pressure on demand for grain that comes from poor harvests in Russia and China. We know of the additional pressure upon demand for grain that comes from the practice in Europe and North America of feeding it to animals for conversion into meat. We know that more and more countries like Lesotho, which used to be exporters of food, are now faced with the need to import, thus placing further pressures on the price of world supplies. The challenge of development to Christians in the 1980s will require us then to renegotiate the terms under which we participate in the life-styles of society around us, so that something of this pressure upon the ecology of our planet to produce enough food can be reduced. This renegotiation can go on in a private and a personal way, as individuals bear their witness, while at the same time, at government level, the terms of trade, and the supplies of grain, are renegotiated in the Development Strategy of the United Nations.

The fourth verb, in the word of God addressed to Moses at the Exodus, was expressed in terms that are fundamental to the missionary tasks of the churches in the 1980s: "I will send you unto Pharaoh." It does "hard things" to personality to have to grapple with the forces of international politics, and with the specialist terms of the economic shorthand that are required, if we are to present our message aright, and express that political will which is necessary for democratically elected governments to act. Terms and acronyms like SDRs and U.N.C.T.A.D. do not come easily to the lips of the average parish representative on a diocesan or deanery synod. But then we do not know what demands upon his mastery of foreign languages were made upon the Samaritan, first in speaking to his neighbour who was the victim at the roadside, and secondly in speaking to the inn-keeper in the hostel down the road. Yet, if Professor Butterfield is right, it is only after accepting these "hard things", and acquiring these new aptitudes and skills in international affairs, that Christians may then contribute something creative to the process of understanding the deeper human dimensions of development in the 1980s. Especially if we hear, and believe, the fifth verb spoken to Moses at the Exodus by God that "I will be with you" in the tasks ahead.

But Pharaoh in the 3rd Development Decade will be as much a director of a multinational corporation, as he is a leader of a government. It is to these companies that Mr. Robert MacNamara and his successors at the World Bank must be heard to speak in their Development Reports. If economic studies serve us right, it is as much the tendency of multinational corporations to thrive on new technologies, and their dependency on innovation, as it is the structures of world trade, that has led to hundreds of millions of people finding themselves without a job on the margins of the world economy.

The lessons learnt from Dr. Schumacher about the importance of appropriate technology will need to be applied more widely in the 1980s. Another economist, this time at Capetown University, has shown, in a study he prepared for a Partners-in-Mission Consultation, how a further tendency of multinational corporations has been for them to create wealth in what he calls an urban core economy. People's work and skills are then sucked in to the city centres of this urban core, where new investment is taking place, with a resulting break-up and impoverishment of the rural homelands outside that core. The obvious focus of this process at work is in the economy of South Africa. But the model may well serve as a microcosm of the world. How much of a North-South divide in Western Europe depends upon investment in the core economy of a Brussels-Paris-Ruhr triangle, with an accompanying tendency to import migrant labour from the south, only to re-export that labour to its impoverished homelands at times of economic recession? Christians cannot equate the creation of wealth in a country with the development of that country, if a whole economic system is built up on new capital-intensive technology, leaving the labour and the skills of a rising proportion of the work force discarded and useless. The publication of this symposium of essays provides an opportunity for this to be said, at the outset of a decade, during which time we shall see the fuller implications for employment of the coming of the micro-chip.

The Report of the Brandt Commission does not seem to tackle this problem seriously enough. It does, however, place the transfer of massive resources to the Third World countries as the foremost point in its emergency programme. Such a partnership between North and South would seem to be a precondition if any economic Exodus is to take place from world recession. I believe, at least, that this is part of the message with which Christian economists are charged in their mission to Pharaoh. Writing out of the economic depression between the wars, Reinhold Niebuhr reminded the churches of their need, not only of a plan and blueprint of the promised land at the end of their Exodus, but of an appropriate partnership with those who possess the power to bring this blueprint into reality. It is with the terms of this new partnership, both with governments and with multinational corporations, that Christians must be engaged in renegotiation in the coming decade.

From these "hard things", let us now turn to consider the hope that Herbert Butterfield expressed: that out of a profound rethinking on international affairs, Christians might contribute something creative at the end of the decade. I have seen and heard something of this hope being realised in our country, during the two decades that have now passed since he wrote that little book. The December Declaration of the Churches in 1969, when one million signatures were attached to a petition, urging the government to allocate 0.7% of the Gross National Product of the United Kingdom, in

official government aid to developing nations, demonstrated that the educational work about development issues, on which Christians had already embarked, was beginning to bite. That declaration was I think significant far more as a measure of educational effort and of its effects, than as a petition carrying political weight. Ten years later, at the end of the third One World Week, instigated in over 700 towns and villages across the country, by the Churches' Committee of the World Development Movement, I heard some members of a branch of the Mothers' Union being interviewed on B.B.C. radio. They had been playing the Grain Drain, an educational game produced in the 1970s by Christian Aid. Simply, clearly, and with profound effect, they articulated the lessons they had learnt about the ~~(about the)~~ tendencies of free market forces within an economic system to support the rich and to deprive the poor. There is surely a creative contribution which Christians can make to our understanding of the issues, and to our participation in transforming the political will by which solutions may be found for their alleviation, in the 1980s, simply because a significant educational task has already been embarked upon. It was the vision of the Brandt Commission that not only governments, but schools, trade unions, rotary and round table associations, churches, and women's movements like the Mothers' Union, should receive and act upon their report. I find already that the hopes of my colleague Herbert Butterfield for a creative contribution from Christians to be excitingly capable of fulfilment. In Britain, in the autumn of 1981, a new 4th channel television company will begin broadcasting. To participate in these new opportunities, the 4th Channel Development Education Group has set in motion the production of films suitable for transmission on this channel. To snatch at the issues raised by starving children in Uganda, or the destruction of shanty towns in Crossroads, with sensational news coverage, can really be no substitute for well-thought-out analysis of both the short-term and the long-term implications for development. I believe in their engagement with these tasks, Christians are finding themselves in the company of new fellow travellers, both of other religious faiths, and of none. Something again of the hopes for a creative contribution from the churches are susceptible of realisation.

In these educational tasks, Christians find themselves turning towards the face of Christ who confronts us with hope and with challenge at the start of a new decade. It is into ~~our own~~ ^{our own} stature that as individuals we are called to grow, and to participate in development process. ~~With~~ ^{With} his peace his word of shalom, that gives blessing to those who undertake hard things to bring it about. In his book "The Concept of Peace" Professor John Macquarrie helps us to see how this peace is only possible when all the constituent members of a society, and of a family of nations, are striving to fulfil the potential that remains to be developed, and realised, within them. This is both the peace we seek, and the peace that is Christ's gift to those engaged in Exodus with him. A new generation of Christians, schooled in the spirituality of the Taizé Community in France, offer hope that the world community can still experience this peace. Struggle is to be coupled with contemplation of the one who is our peace. The Eucharist becomes the simple pilgrim feast in companionship with Christ. The symbols of the bread and wine, become symbols speaking to us of the centrality of trade in the world economy. Christians seek and work for justice in that trade in grain which is the raw material of our daily bread. We seek the participation of everyone in the labour and skills by which these raw materials of bread and wine are processed, to become fitting symbols of

our offering of our work to God.

We seek a successful outcome to the United Nations Drinking Water Decade referred to on page 56 of the Brandt Report, so that water too may be a fitting symbol of the life God gives to all his creatures. We seek finally a fulfilment of that development process, whereby all men and women and children shall participate with the offerings of their own hands in that Celebration which accompanies Christ's presence amongst us.

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