

**DIAKONIA
2000**

**CALLED TO BE
NEIGHBOURS**

Official Report

**WCC WORLD CONSULTATION
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A.K.P. - dokimi

We Christians can never experience such a kenosis as long as we are in privileged positions in our society. We have, by choosing neighbours, learnt to survive and not to sacrifice. We have loved neighbours who do not upset our *modus operandi* of hierarchical servitude to the system.

It would be very difficult to respond to the call to be a neighbour as long as the church remains under the influence of the powerful in our countries. Jesus' message is very clear — it was within the Samaritan experience that "he was moved with pity". The priests and Levites cannot be moved by pity as they are busy with other things. Those who had power could not be moved to an involvement, to a complete identification with the man by the wayside. This is the challenge before us. To be powerless is not to be weak. The Samaritan was not a weak person; he risked being attacked by the robbers. In today's terminology, this would demand that the church identify completely with the powerless of our society, the proletariat in our midst. We must not forget that the issue of the neighbour was closely related to the question of eternal life — the first question was: "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

The churches, the Christian community, will first have to experience powerlessness, it will have to choose God and not mammon. The call to become neighbours involves that choice and that transformation.

2. *Alexandros Papaderos*

This region lies, in a way, between the two worlds that you have described as one-third and two-thirds world. You have viewed the world situation from your standpoint. I can tell you that I share your judgment almost without reservation. But you may be interested in taking into account certain experiences and aspects from our region.

Examples: In Crete you would no longer be able to pray in the Cathedral of the Apostle Titus. Twelve centuries ago it was laid waste by robbers. And in any case your prayers would be disturbed by foreign training rockets, and the noise makes the protest of our people barely audible. An excursion to Palestine and Lebanon will convince you that victims and robbers do not only exist elsewhere. But you would also meet a Samaritan or two here. However, if we took a route through Asia Minor our ears would hardly be able to hear the lamentations of the Christians who lie under the ruins because the "neighbour" was absent in their time of affliction. If we venture to Troy we would certainly hear

the voice of Europe, which again calls for help (Acts 16). For as you may know, Europe is again in a crisis: a crisis of faith and of ethos. It has again become a region for mission and re-evangelization. Even seen from the Aeropagus you will soon understand why precisely here tragedies and comedies came to blossom; because the same Athenians who endeavoured to shape for themselves and humanity the democratic model and a sense of justice killed Socrates whose criticism had become too painful for their welfare-fattened consciousness.

From this vantage point we should therefore listen and affirm that:

- God is the Lord over heaven and earth and we will not let ourselves be intimidated by those who “reign” on earth and threaten the stars!
- God gives human beings *life*. Therefore we oppose everything which you rightly term *anti-life* and death!
- God has created all of humankind out of one person; therefore we regard as God's opponent everyone who threatens this unity of humanity through discrimination and marginalization!
- God calls us all to atonement because the day of judgment will come, to be carried out by the One whom God raised from the dead. If we listen carefully to this message we will better understand why he has called us together here!

The church belongs to hell

In view of the apocalyptic situation we are in, *following Christ* can hardly mean anything other than going with him into hell — into the dark *centre of death*. Which other space of existence would there be for the church in the interim period between the resurrection and the parousia than that where the death of people and creation happens passively or with power?

Such a descent into hell assumes a willingness and ability from the church to carry out a *kenotic diakonia* which pursues a Samaritan diakonia right to its final consequence. This entails risk and hazard. We have in our region a tradition of giving lives for the oppressed and enslaved; the theology of liberation has continuously been a reality for us in our faith and action. Though I cannot confirm that we have identified all forms and structures of modern enslavement or that we have had the courage to take the consequences thereof as our tradition bids. Therefore we look to this meeting with hope: it must bring about a change, a radical atonement and renewal. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to follow us onwards on the way of truth and life (John 14:6).

Appendix: Some questions for discussion

1. From your region of Latin America, you have expressed the desire to be liberated from the Cartesian logic of Europeans in order to harmonize the “logically” contradictory and to secure the new future. This would be in line with Orthodox theology which has always warned Western Christianity against a paramorphosis which leads to a self-glorifying rationalism in faith and ethos.

2. A consequence of this logic is the many dualisms and polarizations: North and South, East and West, God and gods of the system. We must denounce all tyrants. How can we overcome the different dualisms and polarizations of today in the light of the *metamorphosis* in order to serve the One, Trinitarian God?

3. You have identified the many robbers of today in the parable of the Good Samaritan. But you haven't indicated clearly what we should do with them. Do you think Christ's relationship to the robbers on Golgotha (Luke 23:32ff.) has something to say to us for our relationship with the evil-doers in the world today?

4. Is there not a danger that the victims are too oriented to the robbers that come in from outside and don't sufficiently discover the robbers within their midst?

5. Your contribution confronts me with the question as to whether the two-thirds world is not rapidly imitating the one-third world in oppression, not only of the poor by the rich but of the poor by the poor.

6. The churches ought, without giving up their micro-diakonia, to give priority to macro-diakonia. The experience of my own people shows that freedom, justice, human dignity, combating of poverty cannot be imported goods, but must always be fought for and won by ourselves.

7. The Orthodox teaching of *synergia* (cooperation) between God and humans on the work and mystery of redemption manifests itself historically in the decisive *autenergia* (self-determination) of the people. How do you see this?

8. Would you agree that we need a new definition of poverty? Take for example the growing spiritual poverty of the rich which is just as obvious and dramatic as the mutual fear of the antagonist powers that call themselves “super”. Can we in our martyria and diakonia neglect this fact, given that the poorer in self-security, trust, love and meaning of life the rich or powerful become, the deeper will they let the powerless sink into misery?

9. Do we not need to reinterpret the word of the apostle that “we should help carry one another's burdens” (Gal. 6:2). We have different burdens

to carry. Are we not called to take upon ourselves the part of the burden which the other cannot carry alone? This should also be true of the two-thirds world helping the brothers and sisters and the institutionalized churches in the one-third world which cannot face the challenges alone. Would you not agree that, because the one-way street no longer is or should be valid for diakonia, in future only a with-and-for-one-another in solidarity is meaningful and effective?

10. If this is so, then the with-and-for-one-another can only be eucharistic by nature, in the sense of a eucharistic fellowship with God, with one another, with the whole of humanity and the cosmos. For this we do not need an independent official diaconal bureaucracy, but a truly liturgical diakonia, which has its source of power in the holy eucharist as all-encompassing love, as dispenser of life and hope!

Bible studies were led by Albert van den Heuvel whose relaxed style challenged participants to look deeper into the biblical foundations of diakonia. Adebayo Adedeji presented a sombre analysis of the current world situation which was followed by reactions from Hilikka Pietilä and Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios. The "Samaritan's diakonia" was the theme of the major theological address by Victor Araya Guillén. Nirmalka Fernando and Alexandros Papaderos presented reactions to this address from their own regional contexts.



Albert van den Heuvel



Adebayo Adedeji



Hilikka Pietilä



Metropolitan Geevarghese
Mar Osthathios



Victor Araya Guillén



Nirmalka Fernando



Alexandros Papaderos