

26. George Santayana, *Reason in Religion* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 9.
27. Nathan M. Pusey, *The Age of the Scholar*, (Cambridge Harvard University press, 1963), p. 145. The emphasis in brackets is mine.
28. James Freeman Clarke (1810—1888), *Ten Great religions*, See Geddes MacGregor, *Philosophical issues in Religious Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), p. 1.

Mr Paul K. Oredipe B.A. (Hons) *Philosophy*, is a student of the Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul, Bodija, Ibadan, Nigeria.

JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION AS CULTURAL REVOLUTION: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES

A.S. Oyalana

Introduction

In Vancouver, in 1983, the delegates at the VI assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) issued a call to the member churches to engage themselves in "a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice peace and the integrity of all creation"¹ The task was considered urgent and given high priority. It stemmed from a twofold conviction, namely, that "demonic powers of death" abound in the world today and that it is a duty of those who confess "Christ as the life of the world" to resist such powers. The demonic forces of death are present in "racism, sexism, caste oppression, economic exploitation, militarism, violations of human rights, and the misuse of science and technology".² The reports of the Issue Groups 5 and 6 identified more precisely such forces.³ For example, group 6 denounced:

*the machine of the prevailing economic order which starves millions of people, and increases the number of unemployed every year. Science and technology are misused to oppress the people and to destroy the earth in an insane arms race. More and more people are detained and "disappear", are tortured, deprived of religious liberty, forcibly displaced or exiled.*⁴

There is no doubt that the Christian community must, in the name of Christ, oppose such demonic powers. The crucial question here is *quomodo*? or "in what way?" This is not, of course, an easy question and it admits of a variety of answers. the purpose of this paper is to bring up a few concerns of mine (taken up from my reading of Paulo Freire) which may help us in answering the question *quomodo* in our particular contexts. The proposals made in this paper may help us to enhance or in some cases even correct existing strategies. It is certainly neither possible nor desirable to provide the reader with a complete strategy for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Our sole goal is to discuss a few issues which in our view are important.

It is proper to discuss briefly at this point the main elements of the WCC's strategy. After the Vancouver assembly, justice peace and the integrity of creation became more than synonyms for life (as opposed to death) or goals to be achieved; they were organized together as a special priority programme, the so-called "JPIC programme".⁵ As a programme, it has a distinct strategy. Special offices were created to carry out and to promote the programme. A special effort is being made to engage churches and people in study and action. Some sort of convergence in thought and action is expected on the part of the member churches. Moreover, the programme is described as a "conciliar process".⁶ A world convocation was scheduled for 1990 in Seoul, South Korea, where the churches were expected to speak with a united voice and, therefore, to address forcefully those in power (governments).

In this paper, a few points in the strategy of the WCC will be examined critically in the light of our concerns which are finding ways by which the oppressed and poor peoples of the world can be delivered from their bondage to realise justice, freedom and life "abundant" which they long for. In the first section we will attempt to understand and name the superstructure which supports the unjust infrastructures of the metropolis-periphery relationship. We shall propose that "cultural action;" is a necessary ingredient in a project for justice. In the second section we will ask ourselves what the proper role of a revolution in the process for social change is. We will re-define the concept of "power", in the light of which we propose that a true revolution is, above all, a cultural revolution. In the last section we shall deal with the modern phenomenon (common to most Third World countries) of the emerging popular consciousness. the suggestion that the people's participation in their own struggle for liberation is a must will lead us to question whether the Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation programme is a programme of the people or for the people.

Breaking with the Culture of Silence

One of the aims of the Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation programme is that of encouraging study and action on the programme's theme. Those involved with the programme are, therefore, expected to base their action on knowledge of reality. How is it possible to denounce reality without knowing it? Or to proclaim a new reality without drafting a viable project? A serious social analysis is, therefore, essential to the programme. If our social analysis is to be serious, it must not be limited to the level of the infra-structure. Conversely, it must not lose contact with every-day reality

and limit itself to the super-structure, that is, to the world of the myths and ideologies which support the infra-structure. If we limit our analysis to any of these spheres, we will be guilty of either mechanism or solipsism. Social scientists will remind us that

Social structure is not an abstraction; it exists in the dialectic between super and infra-structures. Failing to understand this dialectic, we will not understand the dialect of change and permanence as the expression of the social structure.

According to Paulo Freire, there is a super-structural expression, or mode of culture, which conditions much of the Third World consciousness.⁸ This mode of culture was born out of the relationship between the First World and the Third World, between the dominators and the dominated. By introjecting its myths, this mode of culture became firmly established and turned upon the infrastructure from where it originated and "over-determined" it. Freire calls this mode of culture "culture of silence"

The relationship between the metropolis and the Third World developed into particular political, economic, historical, cultural and technological context. The metropolis had the guns, a highly developed technology and an aggressive religion which regarded other religions as evil. The relationship developed was, therefore, a paternalistic one, one of domination and dependence. The myths which were created preached the inferiority of the non-European races, their need to become "civilized", that is, to adopt the "superior" European culture. The values and culture of the Third World peoples were seen as bad. They had to be rejected. Their voice was *silence*, the reason why Freire calls theirs a "culture of silence". By denying the right to speak and thus to participate, the oppressor robs the dignity and the humanity of the dominated. "The masses are 'mute', that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society and, therefore, prohibited from being".⁹

The myths created become an integral part of the dependent society's consciousness. the oppressed introject the values and life-style of the oppressors. The dominated have a natural tendency to imitate the dominator's cultural models. Sometimes they are not even aware of it. They may even deny it. Their admiration of the dominators' life-style and desire to live like them stems from the myth of inferiority created by the culture of silence. Thus, for example, the worker in a factory dreams of owning his own factory. the poor consider themselves not blessed by God. They desire

for the good of God's creation. Christians are called to support the right use of power and consequently resist the misuse of power.

In order to struggle for justice and human dignity we must resist oppressive powers. We are called to be in solidarity with those who build up people's power designed to shape a more participatory society through the legitimate exercise of power.¹⁸

One might suggest that the Assembly, in recognizing people's power as power, did not equate power with the power of the state. There is a power which is real and which exists independently from the state. In this sense one might say that there are at least two powers; one which is located in the state and one which is situated among the people. These two powers oppose each other. The first is exercised by a few people called "powerful", who control the economy, the government and the technology. The Vancouver Assembly qualifies this as "oppressive" power, because it excludes and oppresses the majority. The second power is dormant, but nonetheless real. It belongs to the majority, often thought of as powerless". This power is the power God wills. It is just power, the correct use of power. Therefore, to resist the oppressive power is at the same time, as the Assembly rightly acknowledged, to support the awakening and rising of the people's giant but latent power. This seemingly trivial conclusion has tremendous consequences for the spelling out of our strategy for the struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creating consequences which are often bypassed. This needs to be worked out in some more detail now.

The classical conception of power, as power located in the state, is very well summarized and criticised by Anthonom Faundex, former consultant for the Programme for Adult Education of the WCC.

No doubt the intellectuals were mistaken when they maintained that power was located only in the state and that, therefore, to take the power was the same thing as to take the power of the state. By state, it is meant both the administration and its coercive force, as well as its ideological apparatus, as well as the place where power is distributed from. For that reason professors, pedagogues and politicians have a share of power, namely, because they received it from the state.

There is a hierarchy of power. The power flows from the state which gives a share of this power, that is the power to distribute

power, is maintained by the elites which form the State. Therefore, to identify power with the state and then, establish that the transformation of a society begins by taking power, in this identification "state-power"¹⁹ is an epistemological, political, and even emotional mistake.

The political strategy of those revolutionaries, intellectuals and/or political parties which still work under such classical conception of power will be the following: They will look for support from the people in order to take the state (power) and then transform the society. They will guide the people, work for the people and on the people. The political party will pretend to speak in the name of the people, in the name of those who have no voice. Many of those involved with the Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation programme will see a revolution in this classical sense of the term as the only means to justice. Therefore, it is important to become aware of the presupposition on which such approach is based in order to understand its limitations.

It is important, first of all, to understand that power is not only located in the state. Power is present in everyday life, in life at schools and colleges, in family life and so on. Every relationship from friendship to parenthood to institutional organizations to churches to extremely complex social structures are, in a sense, power relationships, that is, they contain power mechanisms or structures. In every relationship the people involved possess power in different degrees, some more, some less or even none. In many cases the power structure of the state is only a reflection of everyday and institutional smaller powers structures. These, in turn, are the result of certain cultural and religious ideologies. We have seen in the first section that any social analysis must take into account the dialect between the infra and the superstructure. We have referred to the culture of silence as a cultural expression grounded on the assumptions that the European race and culture are better than others and that men are superior to women. Thus, white males are considered better than white females who are better than non-white peoples: Christianity is said to be better than other religions. This power structure is reflected both in everyday family life and in the laws of the state. The evils of sexism and colonialism, for example, stem both from this culturally-based power structure.

Secondly, if the society is transformed from above, that is, starting from the state which is conceived as the place where power is located and from where power is distributed, then revolution becomes a *coup d'état*. There

will be a few that will impose their revolutionary model on the others. In so far as they will presume to speak for the people, the culture of silence will not be broken. The oppressed classes remain objects and not subjects of their history.

It seems evident, in the light of what we have been saying, and modern history seems to support it, that cultural domination can remain even after the infrastructure, but can not change the superstructure. Even after the external dominator is expelled, the dominated will continue to behave like the dominator. Therefore, it is not possible to expel the dominator by a revolutionary process only, if revolution is understood in its classical sense.

It becomes clear why "taking power" cannot be equal to "taking the state". In the light of our new, more comprehensive understanding of "power", it is no longer fundamental to take the state, because there is no identification between state and power. The fundamental thing is to take power in so far as it is manifested in everyday life at the factory, at school, and in all aspect of common life. According to Faundez,

Starting from this conception (of power), the fight changes completely. It is no longer a question of taking the state in order to transform society, but starting, from the very base of society, in order to build a new society, in which power and the struggle for power are manifested in a different way.

*Power will start in the everyday actions of men, women, children, professors, in each area of life the human relationships will change, become more democratic. All will participate. Power will belong to all, each will take for him/herself his/her own share of power as a human being. This very fact will allow the building of a society in which power will belong to all, and not only to a few.*²⁰

In order to achieve this, a cultural action is necessary. This requires, as we have seen, the conscientization of the masses. This does not mean that there is no more from a revolution that aims at taking the state. What it does mean is that even such a revolution is not complete. No such a revolution is final.²¹ After the revolution the process of conscientization continues and is indeed indispensable. According to Freire:

Only a mechanistic mentality holds that... revolution can be halted when it attains power. To be authentic, revolution must be

*a continuous event. otherwise it will cease to be revolution, and will become sclerotic bureaucracy.*²²

We must, therefore, enlarge our traditional concept of revolution. Revolution is, above all, cultural revolution.

Emerging Popular Movements

An important step in human kind's evolutionary process has been going on in our century. The masses are slowly becoming aware of their situation of oppression and have been increasingly demanding justice. This important social phenomenon cannot be overlooked by anyone interested in social justice, including the WCC's programme for Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation. This emerging popular movements have become "the great new fact of our era". The organization of small Christian communities in Eastern Africa, the base-communities in Latin America, the women's liberation movement, the black movement, the struggle of the ethnic minorities, including the struggle of the native peoples, the student movement, the struggles for national independence, etc... are all examples of this emerging popular conscientization.

That this conscientization of the masses has become possible testifies to the fact that the dominating culture was not able to completely destroy the dominated cultures. No matter how attractive the seemingly "superior" culture was, the natural element of resistance was always present. The present popular movements grew out of this element. Had the oppressed completely given in to the oppressor, no process of liberation would be possible. When the contradictions and 'cracks' of the present system became more visible, the masses began to understand the ambiguities inherent in their situation and began to organize themselves in order to defend themselves from the oppressors. Another level of consciousness replaced the old semi-intransitive stage.²³

In the light of what we have said in the first two sections, it should be clear why these modern manifestations of popular conscientization are very important. Firstly, this is an indispensable ingredient in a cultural action or cultural revolution. By definition, there cannot be a cultural action without conscientization. Secondly, these movements, as popular movements, allow the people to become real subjects in the process of transforming society. Recognizing the masses as subjects in history means that the churches should not intend to be the voice of the voiceless. Perhaps for a change the churches should recognize that the voiceless do have a voice!

The churches should, therefore, do more than merely support these movements; the churches should recognize the action of God in history, who is, through his providence, controlling the evolutionary process. The churches cannot overlook these movements. Nor should it step ahead of them. According to Freire.

The fundamental role of those committed to cultural action for conscientization is not properly speaking to fabricate the liberating idea, but to invite the people to grasp with their minds the truth of their reality.²⁴

Recognizing God in the poor means that the churches should definitely abandon their paternalistic attitudes. They should not fall into the temptation of thinking that they know better. They should not want to teach the people, or tell them what is right or wrong, or move faster than they do. Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation is not the private property of the Churches; the churches are not even experts on that! Rather than teach, this is an area in which the churches must learn.

The Vancouver Assembly was aware of that. It stressed that justice requires the participation of the people in all levels of society as subjects of their own history.

(Jesus) demands that we be born anew through the word of God to become new people who are truly human. To be truly human is to cease to be oppressors, or racists, or sexists. It is to live in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, even as Jesus did. Real participation means becoming truly human. It implies involvement and encounter with others, sharing with others, working together, making decisions and living together as people of God.²⁵

We are called to be in solidarity with those who build up people's power designed to shape a more participatory society through the legitimate exercise of power. Thus, international network of support, facilitated by the churches, should be strengthened and widened. Churches are called to support people who resist oppression, combat the roots of injustice and take risks in the search for a new society network which help accumbulate forces among the poor to resist oppressive power.²⁶

Conclusions

The initial question we posed was the question *quomodo*? What should be the strategy of the churches in promoting Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation? If the churches are really interested in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, then that should become apparent in the life of the churches themselves. The churches should not only practice what they preach but their strategy itself should reflect their goals.

It is indispensable for revolutionaries (that is, the churches) to witness more and more to the radical difference which separates them from the rightist elite. It is not enough to condemn the violence of the right, its aristocratic posture, its myths. Revolutionaries must prove their respect for the people, their belief and confidence in them, not as a mere strategy but as an implicit requirement to being a revolutionary.

The revolutionary project is engaged in a struggle against oppressive and dehumanizing structures. To the extent that it seeks the affirmation of concrete men as men freeing themselves, any thoughtless concession to the oppressor's method is always a danger and a direct threat to the revolutionary project itself.²⁷

The churches cannot be the main protagonist of the Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation programme. These words do not belong exclusively to the churches. The role of the churches can only be that of helping the people's own programme. The Church claims to have a traditional role of preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, setting a liberty those who are oppressed and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18—19). This traditional role, however, has not succeeded in its intentions, at least in its empirical sense, since our concerns, that is eliminating the forces that threaten life, are still very much with us.

The Church therefore, should no longer pretend to be the voice of the voiceless, but rather the Church should encourage the voiceless to recover their own voices to be able to combat the forces of death themselves. This can be done through mass education and public enlightenment programmes that help to unlock the hidden potentialities of the voiceless to elevate them from their dependable and defensive attitudes to life to that of self-reliant and offensive attacks on the forces of death that stare them in the face. The Church should not pretend to be fighting for the poor and the oppressed. It

should rather assist the poor to fight for themselves. That is the way to regain true freedom and self confidence.

One of the goals of the Seoul convocation, that of addressing the governments with a strong voice, becomes, in the light of what was said, not so important. We discovered in section two that a programme for the transformation of society should not start from above, nor give too much importance to what is going on "up there". Besides, the churches main dialogue-partner should be the poor. These are the ones with whom the churches should be speaking on an equal footing. The oppressed need no "elites" to tell them what to do.

Notes and References

1. D. Gill (ed.), *Gathered for Life*, "Official Report, VI Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24th July — 10th August, 1983", Geneva: WCC, 1983, p. 255.
2. *Ibidem*.
3. Issue Groups were groups specially commissioned to consider certain aspects of VI Assembly of the WCC theme: "Jesus Christ — the Life of the World" and to publish their findings under the general ties "Issues".
4. D. Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
5. In many ways this new programme is a radicalization of the former "JPSS" (Just Participatory and Sustainable Society) Programme.
6. There has been some confusion and complaints about the use of the term "conciliar". Some prefer "pre-colonial or even a more neuter term such as "convocation" cf. Lucas Vischer, "Conciliar Fellowship and Councils. Churches on their Way to a Universal Council — some observations" *Resource materials* 3.1, Geneva: WCC, 1988.
7. Paulo Freire, *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Harvard Education Review and Centre for the study of Development and Social Change, Massachusetts; Cambridge University press, p. 33.
8. Cf. *Ibidem* pp. 32ff.
9. *Ibidem*, p. 13.
10. This could have been the result of a Long process of internalization in the minds of the oppressed people.
11. In a contextualization process, musical expressions in African style are highly encouraged in ecclesiastical music.
12. Cf. D. Gill, *op. cit.*, pp. 52—60.
13. **Conscientization is not actually an English word.** It was coined by the circle of Paulo Freire's friends. It refers to the process in which human beings, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality. Cf. Paulo Freire, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
14. D. Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
15. *Ibidem*, pp. 85—6
16. *Ibidem*, p. 86.
17. Cf. Romans 13:1.
18. D. Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
19. Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundex, *Por Uma Pedagogia da Pergunta*, Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985, p. 76.
20. P. Freire and A. Faundex, *Ibidem*, p. 77.
21. Fidel Castro, in *Fidel y la Religion*, made this very point clear. He admits that the Cuban revolution is not yet complete and that Revolution is a continuous event.
22. P. Freire *op. cit.*, p. 51.
23. This is what Freire calls "the society in transition". Cf. P. Freire, *Ibidem*, pp. 40ff.
24. *Ibidem*, p. 47.
25. D. Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
26. *Ibidem*, p. 86.
27. P. Freire, *op. cit.*, pp. 44—5.

Rev. Dr. A.S. Oyalana is a Lecturer in the Dept. of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.