



**11 Prof. Gianni Colzani**, professor of systematic theology, theological anthropology, eschatology, mariology and mission theology in Milan, Florence, Rome and visiting professor. Author of 23 theological works and several hundred articles on theology. Main works: *Theological anthropology. The man of paradox and mystery* (Bologna 1988; 1997; Salamanca 2001); *Maria mystery of grace and faith* (Cinisello Balsamo - Milan 1996; 2000; 2006; 2011; 2014); *Contemporary missiology. The evangelical journey of Churches: 1945-2007* (Cinisello Balsamo - Milan 2010), *Thinking the mission: published and unpublished studies* (Rome 2012). As Vatican delegate attended the meeting of the CWME in Athens in 2005 and in Edinburgh in 2010 and, as an expert, at the Extraordinary Synod on Africa in 2009.



### **Identity, Crossculturalness and Evangelization**

Crossculturalness – the coexistence of cultures into one another – has produced an expansion of individual liberties and a crisis in the predominant monocultures; the proposing of cultural diversity in not conflicting ways has tray again the issue of social and cultural differences. Though every civilization is a mediation of different historical elements, layered over time, in a situation of crossculturalness, people are confronted with multiple possibilities of interpretation of his own humanity; this fact enhances freedom at the same time that increases the discomfort and difficulties of those who must build a clear identity and a consequent social belonging.

In this context, the two dynamics of humanity – identity and belongings – are in difficulties. It is hard for the personal and social identity; the identity is now in trouble to give life a cultural, ethical and spiritual orientations, to develop the unifying meaning of his life need; hence, sometimes, escape to closed forms of identity, impervious to discussion and dialogue. Also the belonging became a problem; the communities did not a single address, common and shared, and individual freedom claim an increasingly larger space. Understood as a value in itself, the personal and social identity appears a task to implement and realizing in a multifaced, dynamic and changing context.

It is now necessary to questioning if it is an act of wisdom or fear to bring back the social belonging to a single cultural form or, on the contrary, let it destroy our traditions for an uncertain future. The identity and belonging rethink – now under way – brings into play the concreteness of each person and the assets of that tradition to which people refer. The contemporary challenge is that identity can not be imposed on singles by the social behavior and the social life is made up of people who look at life in the same manner only in an ideological perspective. The multiculturalism put today in front individualizing cultures that have settled on the subject and cultures that have focused on the community.

This planetary level makes more radical choices that are today called upon to perform. Togetherness of subjects so different necessarily involves several disquiets. The claiming to achieve today a social balance without tensions and difficulties is now anachronistic. Multiculturalism is a fact before being a problem; our task is how to live it, without pretending it does not exist. Multiculturalism carries with it the need to reinterpreting and rethinking of personal identity and cultural belonging.

Today, this multiculturalism has taken three different forms:

- The “integration”, that is the assimilation, to be part of an already existing reality by adapting to it. In such a policy, the knowledge of the other is not relevant: the goal is to assimilate the newcomers and make them socially active citizens in a predetermined society.
- The “transcultural”, that is to emphasize the anthropological constants that run through all cultures and, somehow, approaching to each other. This common foundation makes it possible to recognize each other; this “recognition” – not assimilation – creates the possibility and space of an enriching communication.
- The “crosscultural” will harness the complexity of a multicultural society in which different personal and social identities come together and mingle: the fear, anxiety, discomfort that crosscultural

introduce should be temporary basis for a future synthesis. This strategy – rather than the “integration” or the “recognition” – cultivates the dream of a “new humanity” and suggests a situation where diversity, interacting with each other, achieve higher synthesis of culture and humanity.

Interculturalism moves along a dynamic balance which aims to transform the inevitable tensions in signs of a different and better future. It can say that multiculturalism has imposed an inter-relational concept and existence: the opening to the other is no longer a choice but a structural and inevitable historical necessity. There is then both the need to know, or rather, to arrive at the understanding of themselves through relationships with others. This mutual recognition should recognize each other but also demands to be recognized by him: in this dialectical relationship, mutual recognition is always under the threat of misunderstanding, that is, always runs the risk of being misunderstood or rejected.

A proposal that is collecting the agreement of states and peoples is to think again and to strengthen the borders. This concept is based on the diversity of the other: his presence is seen as a threat to socio-cultural identity – religious and spiritual – a people. The ultimate meaning of this choice seems to be the belief that the identity of a people, in its specificity, includes its difference from other peoples; therefore, the identity must be kept in its difference. It is common ground that the difference, as such, does not establish a relationship but an opposition; the unit and the equality of the human family, however, suppose that, above the differences, are of common or complementary properties, able to allow a common meanings horizon.

Here is the problem. When the efforts to share this worldwide horizons compares with the cultural heritage of different peoples – expression of their diversity – universal ethical values of the human family appear a bone of contention and division among peoples without a prior knowledge. The affirmation of human dignity clashes with the theme of socio-cultural citizenship that complements and overlaps the common human dignity. At the end the human dignity became a vague and imprecise reality. Consequently, the positive reading of globalization has given way to the protest of S. Huntington about the clash of civilizations. Globalization has taken over the glocalization which recognized a space to local entities. Today people moving to a rejection of globalization itself. All agree on the truth of the common human dignity but it is not clear how to achieve it.

- F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press – Maxwell Macmillan, New York 1992 (tr. itaòliana: *La fine della storia e l'ultimo uomo*, BUR, Milano 1996).
- S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York 1997 (tr. italiana: *Lo scontro delle civiltà e il nuovo ordine mondiale*, Garzanti, Milano 1997. 2000).
- Ph. Jenkins, *The next Christendom: the coming of global Christianity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002 (tr. italiana: *La terza Chiesa. Il cristianesimo nel XXI secolo*, Fazi editore, Roma 2005).
- Ch. Taylor, *A secular age*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) – London (UK) 2007 (tr. italiana: *L'età secolare*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2009).
- A. Renaut, *L'ère de l'individu*, Grasset, Paris 1989.

In this issue, it is now necessary to bring the religious dimension and, in particular, the Christian dimension. The starting point of the Christian faith is the interest that Christ showed for the human history and the value that awarded him by his incarnation and his paschal mystery. There is not only the incarnation: this Jesus, who was made Jew, dies why that people rejects him; will his gospel and his Spirit to take again his design and make it operational in history. This design meets today with the problems of wide human mobility; the migration will give new urgency to this issue: “living together” needs to formulate clear reasons of this, clarify the forms of its realization and to show the meanings or a liberating and meaningful coexistence.

These issues call into question the religions: the religious world bear a historical responsibility for ethical and transcendent dimension of life: testifies for the contents of human dignity and supports his realization. Of course, there is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations in December 1948 but the issue today is not its foundation or its affirmation: it is its realization. Although they are not political entities, religions can not be indifferent to this witness. Christian churches know that the relationship with our neighbour – poor and needy, stranger and enemy – belongs to the person and to the mission of Christ. Since the Church is convinced that the relationship

“with” and “for” the others belongs to the person and mission of Christ, this commitment also belongs to his mission: «he is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of unity of the whole human race».

The lives of disciples must be positively modeled on Christ’s mission: our relationship with others and their lives should be a liberating and joyful service. Jesus never generalizes its commitment: his attention is for the concrete persons that he meets. The structure of his divine-human person recalls that God takes care of every person in its entirety and in its historical concreteness; revealed in the historical life of Jesus, this love is given to us in the Eucharist, in the Spirit of holiness and in the Word of truth. Before being proclamation of the gospel to non-believers or propagation of the Church where there is not or is not yet stable, the mission is testimony to this new way of living, of this new humanity. Linked to the divine persons, the mission is not available for something else but itself its value. It is not the Church to do the mission but the Church and the mission are available to the Spirit to serve the birth of the new humanity that brings with it the love of God.

### Crosscultural – Church – Mission

In the history of humanity, a life that does not become a linguistic event is doomed to insignificance; if the message is the content, the lack of communication correspond to uselessness. Since birth, the life is always searching and self-discovery in the movement toward a "you" with whom you enter in relationship. The realization of the own "self" includes both the gathering in themselves and the go out of ourselves to meet and walk with others. Otherwise the life expires or in the isolation of one who closes in himself or in the gross pleasure to tell and to show their lives. Here the key issue is not what to say or how to say but, as recall E. Levinas, is the ethical relationship that you establish with each other in a reciprocal commitment to help. The other is not exploitable objet but subject to which reserve respect, acceptance, dialogue, friendship and peace. Just because the other's face is both the promise and limits, communication has its risks that become neighbor to the other does not cancel but accepts.

This communication is the form of meeting between the human search for meaning and the gift of goodness and love with which God accompanies the journey of humanity. In Jesus, who reveals the Father, this communication is his message, his life and his human person itself; in the Church is her mission in the world. So, the mission of the Church is not impersonal: it can not be only conceptual or institutional but will always bind to mediation of the Christian witness.

The force that supports the mission of the Church is the Spirit and not the coherence of Christian life but their testimony is the human reason of the credibility of Christianity and of the personal and social practicality of the Christian life. The universal horizon of the Gospel lived in the defined substance of Christian and ecclesial life.

This goes beyond a one-way communication, from the West to the countries of the South, and calls to discovering again both the leadership of local Churches, an exchange of material and spiritual gifts between sister churches and a new thinking about the universal task of the bishop of Rom. Such a commitment can not be left only to the hierarchy but must see the commitment of all members of the Christian community with their charism: theologians and religious, priests and *christifideles*. It is to recovering not only the value of communion but also that of mission. The challenge today is not the orthodoxy but orthopraxis, that is the recovery of the vital and fruitful sense of faith. As Karl Barth observed in the last years of his life, what we have learned about Christ and his Church, we need to rethink it now lies in the action of catholic Spirit that «fills the world, is all-embracing, and knows what man says» (Wis 1,7). The abiding in Christ is united to bear fruit (Jn 15,4-8), the plenty of service and the beauty of love.

The relationship between ecclesial catholicity an personal testimony repeats, in a certain sense, the relationship between universal citizenship and local membership. It is not possible to live what is universal and transcendent without trying to embody it in their own lives; by doing so, it may perhaps impoverishes it but also realized it. The transcendent becomes human; the identity becomes mission; the disciple-missionary becomes living part of the Body of Christ, the Church.