Workshop IX

RAPE OF THE LAND, RAPE OF PEOPLES

The workshop is designed as an exercise in contextual theology. We will look into different country and community contexts (Hawaii itself offering a very instructive case study). Although we will go into historical and structural analysis, the emphasis of the workshop is on the theology and spirituality that operates in these different contexts. Hence, in doing the analysis, we will give greater attention to cultural analysis.

While the moderators assume responsibility for presenting the first case studies (from our respective countries/communities), we ask as many participants as possible to present case studies that provide a variety of contexts for doing theology.

Whatever the country and community, we will examine the theology and spirituality operating in at least two poles of the context - the pole of power and domination, and the pole of survival and resistance. We try to approximate a balance between spending time on a critique of the theology and spirituality associated with domination, and a critique of the theology and spirituality associated with survival and resistance. We are particularly interested in the interplay between theology/spirituality and the socio-political standpoint and thinking of the two opposing poles. To what extent does their theology/spirituality define their socio-political stance, and to what extent is their theology/spirituality defined by their socio-political commitment?

Ideally, the workshop should be able to combine stories (narratives of people in pain and struggle) and analysis and strategy. It will try to avoid the temptation of a Manichean framework that approaches the conflict as simply that of total evil versus total good. In addition to contextualizing the conflict historically and structurally, we will take a look at the biblical concept of "blindness" when it comes to the colonizers and inquire into the capacity of theology to "open the eyes." A sensitivity to cultural analysis will allow us to critically examine the thinking and values, the mind-set and paradigms (including theological texts and images) that encouraged and justified "colonization" - with its ambivalent meanings: on the one hand, settling and cultivating what is presumed unpopulated and uncultivated areas; on the other, displacing and subjugating people on the colonized land, and treating the land as merely a factor of production for maximum profit.

Although we welcome participants with different points of view, the workshop itself (or at least the moderators), following the tradition of contextual theology, approaches the topic ultimately from a point of view that has taken sides, "a preferential option" for the poor. This does not mean simply an emotional and intellectual identification that selects texts and does violence to
them. We will also look self-critically at the strategies and visions of different peoples in struggle. Obviously, we need to devote attention to the spirituality and theology that undergird the struggle of the indigenous peoples and communities that have survived, that continue to resist and that seek transformation. We also want to analyze how and why some Christian theology has "passed over" to the side of the people in struggle, and the implications of this for our understanding of "mission."

We will address the different visions about people's relationship to the land - as tillers (gardeners), stewards, owners etc. with special discussion on "ancestral land rights." Can the biblical concept of "jubilee" be the foundation for a mechanism of redressing injustice, while accepting that there is no perfect/permanent alternative arrangement?

The choice of workshop theme (by the IAMS Executive) is evocative of male domination. While male rape happens (especially in prisons), rape is dominantly associated with male assault. How can the feminist critique of power feed a spirituality and strategy, not only of resistance but also of transformation? The same question may be asked about the spirituality and thinking that seek their basis in nature. Within the limits of the workshop time and topics, what can we learn from these approaches? What would be the prospects of an integral spirituality and theology that relates such approaches to the "traditional" approaches to justice?

Co-Moderators: Ed de la Torre
Ho'oipo De Cambra

IAMS Project "BIBLICAL STUDIES AND MISSION"

A workshop of the BISAM (= "Biblical Studies and Missiology") Project is being planned for the forthcoming Hawaii Conference of IAMS. The Project has been part of the IAMS agenda for the past fifteen years or so and was launched because of the conviction that any serious missiological reflection simply has to engage in dialogue with biblical scholars.

Because of this, BISAM workshops have usually been held during the most recent IAMS conferences. In consultation with IAMS President, Dr John Pobee, it was decided that David J. Bosch, missiologist at the University of South Africa in Pretoria, and Donald Senior, CP, New Testament scholar at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, would take responsibility for the next workshop.

At this point, it is not yet possible to give an exact timetable for the workshop, other than stating that it will follow immediately upon the general conference and will not last more than one day. Three sessions are planned.

Instead of discussing the general theme of "Bible and mission," it is suggested