

## **Development**

*By Dr. Eugene Carson Blake\**

I consider it a great honour to be invited to participate in this significant conference on Religion and Peace and to deliver one of the main addresses. I come to this conference representing a religious organization--the World Council of Churches--which has within its fellowship most of the major Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican churches of the world. This world body is committed to the cause of world peace. A main purpose of the World Council is to bring about unity among Christians and thereby manifest the unity of the Christian Church; but we are called to pursue this task not in exclusive terms but in the context of human solidarity and for the sake of the unity of the whole human family. In addition, our faith in Christ compels us to be actively engaged in the quest for peace, for the primary mission to which Christ committed his followers is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5: 19)--reconciliation of man with God and of

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man with his fellow man.

I am extremely glad that this conference will give detailed attention to three major aspects of peace in our contemporary situation: disarmament, development and human rights. I, personally, am interested in all three issues. I am happy that the organizers of this conference asked me to speak on the second topic--development --which is of particular interest to me and to which the churches around the world and the World Council of Churches have given special attention in recent years.

I would like to divide my address into four subsections: the objectives and process of development; the relationship between development and peace; the relationship between development and religion; and finally the potential contribution of religious communities to the quest for development.

### **Objectives and Process of Development**

The term 'development' is so much in current use that it evokes different meaning to different people. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of development as it is used in the Christian discussions. A recent Asian Ecumenical Conference on Development, held in Tokyo in July of this year, spoke of development as "a liberating process enabling persons and communities to realize their full human potential as purposed by God" (*Liberation, Justice, Development*, page 1). I find this an interesting statement. The definition of development as a liberating process emphasizes a structural approach--the need for radical changes in social, economic and political structures which oppress, enslave, or dehumanize man. Development is also seen as a means of improving the quality of human life--

including its moral and spiritual aspects. Whenever development is spoken of in exclusively quantitative terms, such as per capita income, gross national product, industrialization, caloric consumption, etc., it is necessary to be reminded of qualitative dimensions and criteria of the human.

From this perspective, no nation can claim to be a 'developed' nation. All nations suffer from underdevelopment, though its specific nature may vary from country to country.

Involuntary poverty is one of the most blatant manifestations of underdevelopment. Therefore, one of the major objectives of development is to attack the root causes of poverty. But attempts for economic growth should be made alongside the pursuit of other social and human goals. As the Tokyo Conference stated, "people are crying not for food alone, they need and demand freedom, dignity, justice and participation as well" (*Liberation, Justice, Development*, page 1). A world consultation organized by the World Council of Churches in Montreux, Switzerland, last January, spoke of the central goal of development as consisting of three inter-related objectives: social justice, self-reliance and economic growth, of which social justice should be accorded primacy (*Fetters of Injustice*, page 133).

I share the conviction with many others that justice should be the focus of the development process. I have come to this conviction not simply on ethical grounds but also to ensure a high rate of economic growth over time and steady progress towards self-reliance. From a Christian point of view it is clear that there is a compelling ethical reason for providing every man with the necessities of life and opportunities for creative work and recreative leisure. What is not clear is how far the raising of

the standard of living should go. No such ambiguity exists, however, regarding injustice which is involved in any situation where one group of people exploits other groups. This I realize is not a perspective of Christianity alone but is a view shared by many religions. I am also persuaded in advocating justice as a primary goal from my observation of what is actually happening in many of the poor countries. During the first development decade, the poor countries increased their gross national product by an average of five per cent per annum (*Partners in Development*, Report of the Commission on International Development, page 12). But this does not mean that the poor people, who form the large majority of these populations, received proportionate benefits from such increases. On the contrary, the rich minority in these countries seem to have become richer and the poor majority to have become relatively if not actually poorer. Therefore, a programme of distributive justice is essential in order to ensure the maximum sharing by the poorest majority of the resources of their countries, including the possible increases in the coming years.

One of the goals and effective means of development is self-reliance. It implies the ability of a nation to maintain a desired rate of growth through its own resources. The most abundant and potential resources which the poor countries have are human resources. The mobilization of these vast resources requires popular participation which can be ensured only if the poor majority are sufficiently aroused by the prospect of benefits which can be secured by their participation. Efforts for distributive justice and programmes for increased welfare play a vital role in giving incentive and purpose to the people to involve

themselves in the development process.

I am impressed by the growing awareness on the part of economists of the value of distributive justice and egalitarian reforms even in the process of sustained economic growth. For example, Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist who has made an extensive study of the economic problems of the poor countries, especially those in Asia, argues in his latest book, "The Challenge of World Poverty," that "greater equality in underdeveloped countries is almost a condition for rapid growth" (*The Challenge of World Poverty*, Pantheon Books, 1970, page 54). Professor Parmar, an economist from India, made a similar case at the Montreux consultation. Certain documents from the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East stated the same conclusion (*Recent Trends and Developments in Asia, Economic Bulletin for Asia and the Far East*, vol. XIX, No. 1, June 1968, page 58).

Identification of justice as the primary goal of development has also the possibility of generating the right motives in the people of the affluent societies for their role in world cooperation for development. Fear of communism or revolution, enlightened self-interest, or even appeals to a sense of compassion or charity do not evoke the right and sustaining motives for development concern. An awareness of human solidarity and community with a sense of international justice can be considered as the only right and lasting basis. Why should the rich countries seek to help the poor nations? "The simplest answer to this question is the moral one; that it is only right for those who have to share it with those who have not." (*Partners in Development*, page 8). I quoted this answer not from a religious book but

from a secular document, namely the Report of the Pearson Commission.

Emphasis on justice on our concern for development will enable us to recognize the importance of structural changes on national and international levels. In the poor countries, it would mean efforts to change existing property relations, position of social classes, land tenure systems, etc. On the international level, it would mean radical changes in international economic structures and relationships, such as trade and tariffs, the monetary system, the flow of development capital, the transfer of technology, etc.

### **Relationship between Development and Peace**

If development is understood as the quest for the quality of life and a just society, its close relationship to peace can easily be seen if peace is understood as a dynamic concept. Peace is not merely absence of war or armed conflicts among nations and peoples; it is essentially that social condition which not only prevents armed conflict but fosters social harmony within nations and cooperation among the nations.

An unjust social system, on national or international levels, however peaceful and orderly it might appear on the surface, is potentially and actually a "war situation." Wherever and whenever a group or a nation dominates and exploits other groups or nations, a neatly camouflaged state of war actually exists which may erupt into open war at any time. The exploiting groups or nations maintain the status quo, using either brute force or some subtle means of psychological violence. In the name of law and order they often try by force to prevent the

oppressed groups from challenging their position of privilege. Those who are committed to a dynamic concept of peace recognize the hypocrisy of such a stance. In such situations certain disruptions of superficial calm and peace are inevitable and even necessary in order to establish true and lasting peace. Stable and lasting peace can only be built on social justice.

As Christians we understand the meaning of the term 'peace' as it is used in the Bible. The original Biblical term for peace is the Hebrew word 'shalmon.' A recent conference on Peace, organized by SODEPAX (The Joint Committee on Society, Development and Peace of the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace and the World Council of Churches) held in Austria, clarified the meaning of this Biblical term in the following way. "The word, shalom, as it is used in the Bible expresses the wholeness of full human life in a community of mutual sharing and affirmation. It includes prosperity, happiness, respect among friends and all that belongs to personal fulfilment. For a community it means the flowering of its common life in all respects. It is the fulfilment of the promises of God. As such it is a dynamic concept which demands ever new realization in new personal and social situations." "Therefore," the conference went on to say, "peace is inseparable from the achievement of justice in human life" and the quest for peace demands "constant reexamination and, if necessary, radical refashioning of the social, economic and political structures of society."

From what I have stated so far, it must be clear that there is a convergence of the goals of peace and of development; both these concerns are aimed at creating conditions for the wholeness of life, human dignity and social justice.

The process of development requires radical changes in the social, economic and political structures to foster economic growth, self-reliance and social justice. Development in this sense should be considered as a process of liberation and could be called 'revolution.' Such a process may appear to militate against the concern for peace, if peace is equated with static stability of undisturbed continuance of existing political, social and economic structures. But a profound understanding of peace as that condition which establishes justice and fosters lasting stability, opens up a common path for those who seek for peace and those who seek for development.

### **Relationship between Development and Religion**

There are many people today who consider religion as an obstacle to development. For various reasons they seem to share Marx's dictum that religion is the opiate of the people. As leaders of religious organizations and movements, we must not ignore this criticism without examining some of the underlying factors.

Is there not some truth in the criticism that popular religion, be it Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam or any other religion, often contributes to social inertia and supports the perpetuation of many customs, taboos and even traditional social and economic stratifications and power structures? Is it not true that in many traditional societies, customs which inhibit the underprivileged and exploited from questioning or protesting against their plight often receive religious support and sanction as being ordained by God or gods? Is it also not true that the other worldly emphasis of some of our religions has tended to

drain off man's concern for an abundant life in his present earthly existence? Is there not a certain measure of validity in the argument for a secularized view of nature and human history rather than a religious view in order to pave the way for the introduction of science and technology for the betterment of human life?

The questions which I have raised here do not lead me conclude that religion is necessarily an obstacle to development. On the contrary, I firmly believe that religion may have a positive contribution to make to authentic development. For one thing, development is for man and not man for development. The spiritual and religious aspirations of man cannot be separated or neglected in the quest for the wholeness of life, personally or corporately. The human and social criteria which determine the goals of development and judge its process are criteria derived from concepts and values of man and society, which are religious and philosophical concerns. To say that religion has no relation to development is to deny the actual base from which its value premises are derived.

Empirically, no one dare ignore the place of religion in the lives of peoples and societies. This is true in the secularized societies of the rich nations, including the Marxist societies; it is more true of the societies of Asia, Africa and Latin America. A process of dereligionization as advocated by certain proponents of secularism as a necessary condition for development is neither right nor feasible. Even if secularism succeeds in replacing all transcendental references in human values and goals, it will soon end up as a pseudo-religion, supplying its own world view and value premises in rigid and absolute terms. In other

words, it will mean not derligionization, but a replacement of traditional religions with a new religion such as secularism, scientism, nationalism, humanism or Marxism.

The validity of a religion in the life of man or society cannot be judged purely in terms of its contribution to the goals of development; that would be tantamount to deifying development. However, as development aims at human goals, religion dare not stand in the way of the authentic development process. On the other hand, development requires the values of some religion to shape the quality of life without which it would lose its purpose, depth and beauty. Both must support and enrich each other. This leads me to the last section of my address.

### **The Contribution of Religious Communities to the Development Process**

First of all, I believe that the adherents of religions have a contribution to make in the current debate on the meaning and goals of development. We need to be constantly on the alert to call attention to the need for understanding development as a liberating process whereby persons and communities realize their full human potential--which includes not only their capacity for production and consumption, but also their aspiration for freedom, dignity, justice and spiritual growth. At the same time we need to affirm in words and action that we really take seriously the quest for a better life, here and now. That "man does not live by bread alone" must never be used as an excuse for not meeting man's bodily needs.

As a representative of Christianity which may fairly be characterized as one of the more materialistic of the living faiths of men,

I believe it is important for me to say a word here about the traditional religious values of asceticism and specifically of poverty. When religious men look at the wide-spread grossness and debasement of human life and values in the affluent and technically developed nations, they cannot be blamed for wondering whether economic development may not be a disaster to man rather than the basis of his fulfilment. So far in human history the actual result of the availability of wealth to men appears to be, to say the least, morally and spiritually ambiguous. Whereas economic growth produces leisure for art and beauty, it also produces pollution and ugliness. Any support of development by the forces of religion must therefore be qualified by their critique of the actual materialism of the technically advanced societies. I suspect that all religious men are agreed that voluntary poverty and asceticism, defined as the free and voluntary refusal of overconsumption and lavish waste, are positive virtues. On the other hand, I hope you will all agree that starvation, involuntary poverty, and inadequate opportunity for fruitful employment are equally debasing to men. It is because of the increasing incidence of such dehumanizing conditions in large areas of our world and in pockets of poverty even in affluent nations that religion must identify itself with the real needs of the poor everywhere. One could put it even that the traditional values of voluntary asceticism can only be realized by men rich enough at least to be able to choose simplicity of life as over against ostentation and greed.

So then, secondly, as religious communities we have a contribution to make in the search of different societies for new cultural foundations and ethos. If science and technology, which have

already shaken the foundations of traditional cultures and even modern societies, are to be tamed and fostered to serve men, then these need to function in a cultural context based on human and spiritual values. With this need in view, we must examine our religious precepts and practices in the light of the present quest for development. I am *not* suggesting here that the fundamental beliefs of the various religions should be changed. I *am* suggesting that many of our religious precepts and practices which are not necessarily so fundamental need to be and should be changed and interpreted in order to serve the goals of development and shape the quality of life. I know that there are movements of renaissance in all religions that are attempting to do precisely this important and difficult task. As I commented in an article published in this country, it is appropriate that this Conference is held here in Japan "where religions and technology, the values of the past and the techniques of the present, the transistor and the chrysanthemum, meet in hope and expectation."

Thirdly, as religious communities we need to educate our people to bring about a change in their conceptions and attitudes. Among the poor and the oppressed of our constituencies, a process of conscientization must be initiated to help them realize their plight, to make them conscious of the possibility of effecting changes by their organized power, to mobilize their scarce resources and to promote justice and self-reliance. Among the rich and the powerful of our constituencies, a process of education must be initiated to make them aware of the injustice in society and the need for changes in the social, economic and political structures, and to mobilize their participation in the redi-

tribution of resources and power. In this connection, I, as a representative of one-half of the world Christian community, the majority of whose members reside in the rich and powerful northern hemisphere, realize the immense responsibility that we have in changing our attitudes and relationships.

Fourthly, as representatives of religions which claim universal dimensions, we need to keep before us and others the global understanding of, and involvement in, the process of development. Development is not the exclusive concern of certain nations; its need exists in every nation. Wherever man is deprived of dignity, equality of opportunity and participation in social decision-making, and wherever man is dehumanized and oppressed there is underdevelopment. Furthermore, the destiny of each nation is bound to the destiny of all others. As Adlai Stevenson once said, "we travel together, passengers on a little space ship." The safety and security of each is tied to the safety and security of all.

The plight of the millions of people in Asia, Africa and Latin America is as much the result of the built-in injustice in the international framework of our present-day world as of the built-in injustice in their own societies. We need to affirm to ourselves and to others that the poverty of two thirds of the human family in a world of plenty is a moral outrage. It is intolerable, especially at this stage in history when nations together possess adequate resources and skill to provide for the basic needs of all mankind. The everwidening gap between the rich and poor nations calls into question the unity of mankind, threatens world peace, mocks at justice and flouts God's will.

Fifthly, as adherents of religious communities we need to act

together and in solidarity with all men of good will in the quest for development. Development is a human concern common to all. In each nation or region it requires participation of the entire community, irrespective of their religious affiliations or lack of them. Such common involvement should enable us to move out of our religious ghettos and narrow communal interests to wider concepts and experiences of community on local, national and world levels. We need to act together on behalf of the poor, the powerless and the oppressed in our specific situations.

Finally, I believe that we have a contribution to make in direct assistance to development programmes and projects. All religious communities have certain financial resources. We need to allocate part of such resources for development purposes. The World Council of Churches has asked all its member churches to set apart two per cent of their resources for development programmes and projects. Such an attempt on the part of religious communities contributes to the process of promoting commitment on the part of individuals, communities and nations to the cause of development. Besides, the resources which could be mobilized in this and other ways could be put to significant use in certain strategic programmes for development, especially suited to voluntary efforts, such as promotion of social justice, organization of the powerless, community development efforts, programmes of 'conscientization,' service to neglected minorities, etc.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the interrelation between the three topics of our discussion here, namely disarmament, development and human rights, in our concern for peace. I believe

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that it is part of the fundamental right of every human being to have the adequate necessities of life and opportunities for work and growth. In this sense, concern for development is the concern to ensure the fundamental rights of mankind everywhere. I also believe that one of the major stumbling blocks in mobilizing adequate resources for development arises from spiralling expenditure for military purposes. The world is not lacking in resources to provide a decent living for every man, woman and child. What is lacking is the political will to divert the world's resources from destructive purposes to creative goals. As religious communities we have the responsibility of awakening the conscience of our societies and of calling a halt to the armament race. The next decade will be a decisive decade for the inauguration of a new era of international cooperation of all the peoples of the world.

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