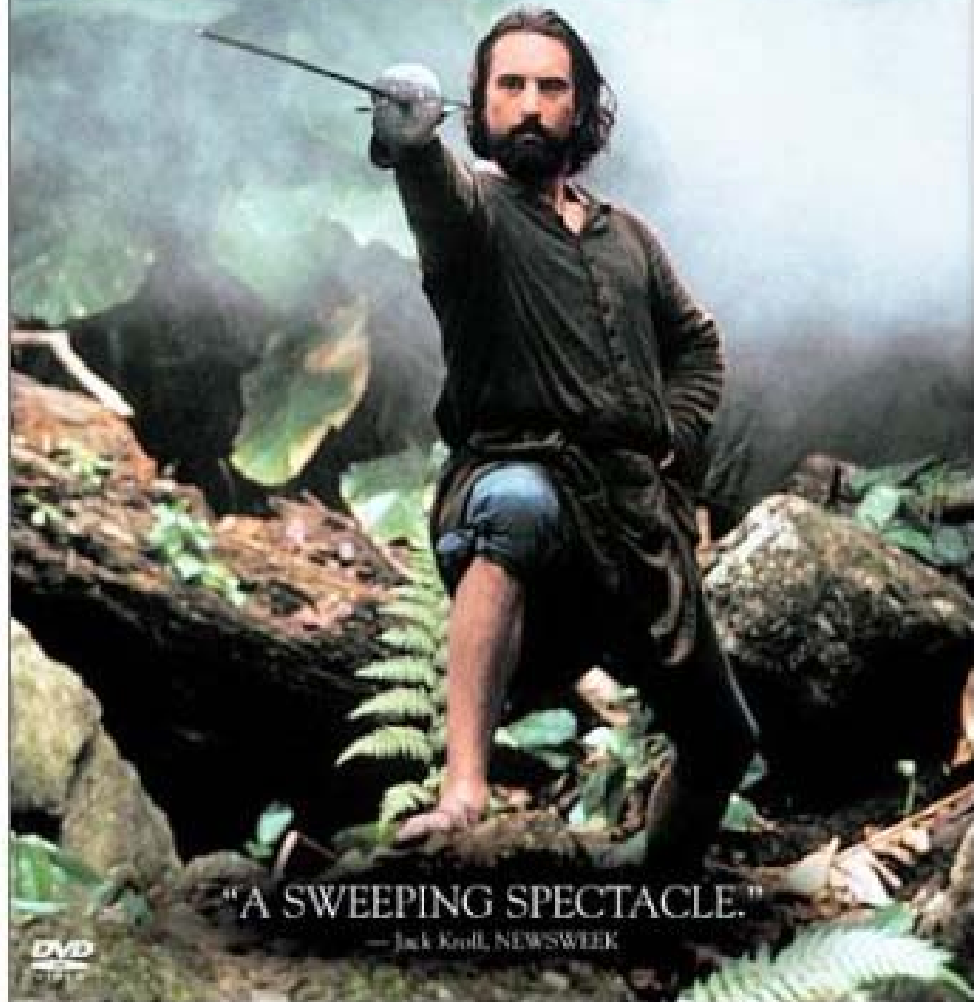


TWO-DISC SPECIAL EDITION

ROBERT  
DE NIRO

JEREMY  
IRONS

THE  
MISSION



**The Mission**

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Spring, 2007

## DESCRIPTION OF THE MOVIE- *THE MISSION*

The challenge facing the Roman Catholic Church in South America during the Spanish and Portuguese colonization showed in the movie *The Mission* was not an easy one: the priests had to have strong faith and dedicate time, work, knowledge and their own lives so that the indigenous *pagans* could reach God. These ministers were sent to the South American colonies in midst of the chaos that was happening in Europe in consequence of the Protestant Reformation of Calvin, Henry VIII, and Luther. The Roman Catholic Church reacted against the Protestant Reformation with the work of leaders like Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the order of Jesuits. Many of these Jesuits were sent to the New World to convert American gentiles (the Indians of South America) to the doctrines and traditions of the Catholic Church. (Klaiber, 2004)

*The Mission* is set in the eighteenth century, in South America. The film has as one of its main characters a violent native-slave merchant named Rodrigo Mendoza (played by Robert DeNiro), who regrets the murder of his brother. After that, this mercenary carries out a self-penitence and ends up converting himself as a missionary Jesuit in *Sete Povos das Missões* (a region of South America claimed by both Portuguese and Spanish nations). This was the stage of the *Guerras Guaraníticas*, which was the war between indigenous people supported by the Jesuits against Empire Colonizers and slave mercenaries. *The Mission* won the Golden palm award in Cannes and the Oscar for cinematography. The movie shows the hunter of Indians of that region, Captain Mendoza, in his search for Indians who already had been catechized and educated by the Catholic Church. Those natives presented great advantages compared to the non-converted Indians because the converted Indians adapted more easily to the work, the language, and the ways and habits of the Europeans who lived in America. Mendoza hunted these Indians and sold them as slaves to the Spanish colonizers. The other main character is Father Gabriel (played by Jeremy Irons), who is a gentle Jesuit missionary. He is shown in the beginning of the movie attracting the Indians through the melody of his flute, and converts them to Christianity. He organized the missions as small republics of a social economy (a Christian Communism) of free workers whose progress allowed them to negotiate with other communities, even white communities. This alternative model contrasts with the authoritarian rules of the colonizers.

Mendoza killed his younger brother because he was having an affair with Mendoza's wife. Devastated by feelings of failure and guilt, Mendoza found support from the Jesuit Gabriel, who helped Mendoza find the path toward redemption. Converted, the warrior Rodrigo Mendoza was ordained priest and dedicated himself to the Indians whom he previously hunted and sold. Analogous to Mendoza's story line was the arduous work of the Jesuits. Everything had been initiated with the opening of a wild and strange region where the dense forests and the wild animals constituted obstacles that were difficult overcome. Not less hostile and unreceptive (at least in the beginning), the Indians created obstacles to some missionaries who were sent to the area presented in the movie. For Indians to be converted, the arrival of a capable and experienced priest (Gabriel), eager to confront any difficulty, was necessary. Despite the fact that the

Jesuits positioned themselves on behalf of the Indians, defending them from slave merchants and from those who desired the native lands, there is a question concerning the action of the religious order of Ignatius of Loyola: what did they do to native cultures?



(Mendoza in the moment of his conversion with Father Gabriel)

After overcoming the natural adversities and initial rejection of the natives, the Jesuit's next step was to stop the action of the main hunter of Indians in that region, Captain Mendoza. However, that action was facilitated by the martyrdom faced by Mendoza, who as mentioned earlier, was involved in a love triangle of tragic outcome. This caused him to want to redeem his sin through an exemplary penalty: to work on behalf of those who were once his prey, the natives.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF *THE MISSION***

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several catholic missions were created by the Jesuits in South America. Having arisen in the thirteenth century with the order of mendicants, work in evangelism and catechesis was greatly expanded in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the context of the maritime European expansion. Although they had an objective to diffuse the faith and convert natives, the missions ended up more as an instrument of colonialism. In exchange for political support from the Church, the State was responsible for sending and maintaining the missionaries and for protecting the Christians. In the analysis of Darcy Ribeiro in "As Américas e a Civilização", the missions characterized themselves as a highly successful attempt of

the Catholic Church (1) to Christianize native people, (2) to assure a refuge to native populations threatened by absorption or being enslaved by the diverse nuclei of descendants of Europeans, and (3) to organize native people in new forms that were capable of guaranteeing their survival and progress.

During the eighteenth century, the missionary movement faced problems in South America in areas of litigation between Spanish and Portuguese colonialism. In the south of Brazil, the native population of the *Sete Povos das Missões* was submitted to the Madrid Treaty (1750), one of the main treaties signed by Portugal and Spain to define the colonized areas. (Blank, 2003) According to the Treaty of Madrid, it was established that transference of natives to the western margin of the Uruguay River, would mean for the *Guaranis* the destruction of the work of many generations and the deportation of more than thirty thousand people. The decision was made in agreement between Portugal, Spain, and even the Catholic Church, which sent emissaries to impose obedience over the natives. This placed the Jesuit missionaries in a delicate situation. If they supported the natives, then the church would consider them rebellious. But if they did not support the natives, the Indians would not trust the Jesuits anymore. Some Jesuits remained in support of the crown, but others, such as the priest Lourenço Balda from the mission of São Miguel, supported the natives, and organized the resistance of those Indians to the occupation of their lands and slavery. The slaughter of the natives and Jesuits by soldiers of Portugal and Spain is named “*Guerras Guaraníticas*” (wars of Guaraní). Despite the absurd military inferiority, the native resistance remained until 1767, thanks to the tactics and the leaderships of Sépé Tirayu and Nicolau Languiru. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Indians had been scattered, enslaved, or were refugees attempting to re-establish the tribal life that they treasured before the missions. (Blank, 2003)

## **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS**

### ***Violence and the Mission***

*The Mission* makes us rethink and appreciate the magnificent work between the people from the Company of Jesus with the Indians. It also shows the aching opposition that they suffered from Portuguese and Spanish ecclesiastical and civil authorities, which resulted in the destruction of everything that had been done up to that time in terms of inculturation, evangelism, solidarity, and construction of a community in that area. There are several elements to highlight in the movie. In the first place, the main personages: the head of the mission, Father Gabriel, played by Jeremy Irons, who portrays with truthfulness the embodiment of asceticism and mysticism from the Company of Jesus. Gabriel is a spiritual and apostolic figure, unattached to material things (like a good Buddhist) and committed in a holistic manner to the mission. He is a man of prayer and discernment, who takes seriously his task of Father Superior, second in the discipline of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, where the superior has all authority over the religious that are under his responsibility. Irons' expressiveness is visible in Father Gabriel's passion for the people, the place, and their work.



A typical artistic portrayal of a Jesuit in sixteenth-century Latin America

The other main character is played by Robert De Niro, who captures well the case of many Spanish and Portuguese colonizers who first settled in the colonies and then, after uncontrolled and unbalanced lives, entered in the Company of Jesus and committed themselves fully to the missions. Captain Mendoza magisterially embodies the ideal of the Company, but in a different way than Father Gabriel. Rodrigo Mendoza fell in love with the people who rescued him from the life of perdition that he led, and decides to defend the mission using weapons. Mendoza ends up killed by the empire soldiers. In any case, Mendoza's character reminds us of so many other Jesuits and religious leaders who more recently in Latin America gave their lives allying themselves in the fight next to the poor, against the oppression in several places of the continent.

A lot more praise can be given to aspects of this movie, like the dazzling settings chosen by the director (the waterfalls of the Iguazu-Brazil, which are similar to the Niagara Falls) to show a realistic portrait of the saga of the Jesuits and the Indians. However, I would like to call attention to a theme that constantly affects Christians: the question of violence. In other words, the question of whether it is lawful and Christian to bear weapons and use violence when we work for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This question is a thorny one. We could say that Father Gabriel agreed with Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), for whom all wars were unjust, and who defended total pacifism, even if unilateral. In the other way we could say that Father Mendoza agreed with Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), who was realistic and moderate and based in the

teachings of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Aquinas recognized that peace is the desired state; however, there are just wars in which the moral conscience asks us to take one side. It was Augustine (354-430) who first developed a list of criteria for a just war. Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* enumerated three criteria: 1) the war must be declared by a legitimated authority, 2) a cause must exist that involves the violation of something just, and 3) the war must be for restraining the evil and cooperating with the good. Later on, Luther and Calvin agreed that a war is justified when it stops evil, promotes justice, and contributes to well being.

It seems so paradoxical that theologians presented argumentation to justify war. It is as paradoxical as the love and vengeance of God or as the contrasting titles of Prince of Peace and Lord of Armies. The goal of the just war theory is to STOP evil. As a matter of fact, everyone who seeks to impose an unjust and oppressive domain will find women and men determined to resist and to defend freedom and justice with their own lives. The war of the allies against Nazism was a just war and Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer help us to understand why. Both theologians directly suffered the consequences of the tyrannical-oppressive-evil Nazi regime. (Windass, 1964)

The movie expertly brings the figures of the two Jesuits face to face with the drama of the missions being invaded by the colonial forces and presents two distinct responses. The key dialogue between Father Mendoza and Father Gabriel is perhaps one of the most beautiful scenes in contemporary cinema. Father Mendoza prayed, discerned, and decided to fight with the Indians, with weapons. Mendoza had with himself two other Jesuits who would do the same. Mendoza then went to ask the blessings of his superior. Father Gabriel refuses to bless Mendoza and says harshly, "What do you want, captain, an honorable death? If you die with blood on your hands, you betray everything we've done." And then he ends, "If you're right, you'll have God's blessing. If you're wrong, my blessing won't mean anything." The question of legitimacy of violence, the use of the violent means to defend the poor, tortures many religious and missionaries. It is beautifully expressed in the attitude of Father Mendoza and in the words of Father Gabriel. The Church cannot be faithful to Jesus Christ and His Gospel, answering violence with violence and tarnishing hands with blood, even blood of the guilty. However, faced with practical circumstances, the problem has no easy solution.

Father Mendoza was killed by enemy forces. Upon trying to explode a bridge, Mendoza saw a native boy on it. He then tried to save the boy and was shot by soldiers guarding the bridge. Father Gabriel joined the women and children and went to meet the soldiers carrying the Holy Sacrament. Upon seeing the scene, the soldiers hesitated; soon afterwards they fired, carrying out one of the largest slaughters in the history of the continent.

### **Salvation, Liberation Theology, and *The Mission***

Although fictitious, the characters present richly symbolize the options of thought and political action that arise in the face of conflicts between groups or between powerful

nations and the poor. That is in broad terms. On another plane, the movie evokes the problem of liberation theology, of the discussions between the former monk Leonardo Boff and the Vatican, of the clergy engaged in the agrarian questions encompassing the demarcation of lands to indigenous rights. (Sander, 1986) Mendoza, a repented ex-mercenary, meets the aggression of the powerful against the *Guaranis* with violence, organizing a defense of the territory. The Jesuit Gabriel opts for “civil disobedience” and non-violence.

The film, though dense, grave, and competent, explicates the difficult missionary project of the Jesuits better than it examines the critical aspects of the native encounter with modernity. These latter aspects include the ethnocentric ideology and colonizer evangelism that is credited to Christianity, and the imposition of a cultural superiority over other peoples despite numerous and visible disasters.

The central point of the story appears to be Christian values in their purest crystalline conception: catechization as way to salvation and submission to the divine will as the only path for the good soul (often represented by Church and tradition). However, the movie makes clear how the creation of the institution Church ended up perverting the holy values of Jesus Christ in relation to questions of power. Naturally, it was the Roman Catholic Church that, in that epoch, commanded the matters of the Iberian States and, consequently, their colonies. What we have, although already very debated, is a criticism of the participation of the Church in secular matters—in other words, the concrete as in perpetual partial disagreement with the divine. Besides these discussions of macrostructure issues, there is still space to show the root of the fights outside the palaces. In the scene depicting the invasion of the Seven Peoples of the Missions, the Indian appear like an individual grossly subjugated, when in fact a bloody war between *Guarani* Indians and Portuguese soldiers occurred. The Portuguese and Spanish cruelty causes commotion through the moving contrast between the shots of the conquistadores and the Gregorian singing of the dominated Indians - reiterating the vision of inherent kindness of the Indians.

This Manicheist, or morally dualistic, view of reality extends itself to the setting of the story: the impression of beauty and harmony of the natural world contrasts with the pride and greed of the conquering, essentially mercenary, Europeans. The same idea occurs in the scene in which the representative of the Church speaks to the Jesuit priests telling them that they should leave the mission in formation and not fight, and that if they acted to the contrary, they would be “banished and excommunicated.” The camera then traverses the group and ends up focused on Mendoza. This cinematic choice is a clear indication that Mendoza would be excommunicated as the defender of nobility and courage as highest values to which warriors can aspire. Die, yes, but bravely and intrepidly. Perhaps it is possible to conclude that in the end of the movie the vision of Mendoza watching Gabriel being shot while carrying a sacred symbol reinforces a Christian sense in life: the world is evil, salvation is in heaven.

The combined interests of the Vatican, Portugal, and Spain did not allow the development of the Jesuitism and the *Guarani* republics in South America. The Pope

sent the Cardinal to investigate the Jesuit's administration, their system of life, the agricultural output of the missions, and their commercial activities. The emissary recognized the progress and the harmony in all of the sectors, but he recommended the disarticulation of the republic. He also recommended the priests return to the brutal system that had been officially instituted, in aid of the motifs of the "civilized" State. Three terrible options are presented to the Jesuits: obey the Church and abandon the *Guaranis* to the ambitious mercenaries of Portugal and Spain; disobey the Church and organize an armed defense facing imminent war; or give up without any resistance. All alternatives lead to tragedy, in face of the technological, military superiority of the "civilized", which destroyed and killed thousands to impose their domain and their political economy in the region.

The colonial forces overcame the obstacle of the immense waterfall that gives access to the missionary territory. The Jesuits then defined their options. Mendoza organized the group that would resist and fight. Gabriel prepared a spiritual, non-violent stand on behalf of the community. As usually happens in war, the strongest defeated the weakest; extermination was blatant. However, the example of the missions remained. The title of the movie points to two meanings of the word mission. In the first sense, this concept is related to the Jesuit missionary institution, whose objective was to spread the Christian religion. In a second sense, it expresses a functional idea whereby the missionary priests can carry out a mission to invest themselves personally in the welfare and defense of the Indians.

As a matter of fact, many times so-called historical movies simultaneously treat two distinct times—the time portrayed in the movie and the time when the movie was produced. The movie is the fruit of a twentieth-century view of the sixteenth century. It is a subjective analysis of a specific moment in time. The great question concerns what is being emphasized by the director, the scriptwriter, and the producers in relation to the underlying "historical fact". To analyze *The Mission*, we must understand the success of the movie related to the context in which it was produced. The movie speaks of an "apparently" very distant past where the conflicts with the "other"—the "strange" and the "peculiar"—were intense. However, similar situations occurred in United States and Europe in the eighties when ethnic and racial conflicts occurred. In the USA, some blacks and whites lived out an intensely explosive relationship. In Europe, the immigration of great contingents of people from countries that were old colonies caused harsh disputes and divergences. The difficulty of peaceful relations among ethnic groups, religions, and cultures was not confined in the sixteenth century.

In Brazil, a characteristic of the social and political context of the eighties was the polemical action of some members of the Brazilian Roman Catholic clergy, epitomized by the monk (later excommunicated) Leonardo Boff, who is one of the fathers of liberation theology. (Sander, 1986) This theology, in general terms, neither affirms the supremacy or superiority of the Christian faith nor requires a blind submission of the faithful to the orders from the Church. Rather, it emphasizes that the Kingdom of God begins here in earth, as the consequences of our actions and attitudes on behalf of social transformation. In other words, liberation theology seeks to extend the role of the



Church and its doctrine beyond the limited task of comforting and preaching sanctification, where it can often avoid dealing with the social problems experienced by the majority of the populations from Latin America, the region where the movie was made and locale of the missions of the Jesuits. According to Gustavo Gutierrez who explains the text of Luke:

“Blessed are you poor for yours is the Kingdom of God” does not mean, it seem to us: “Accept your poverty because later this injustice will be compensated for in the Kingdom of God.” If we believe that the Kingdom of God is a gift which is received in history, and if we believe, as the eschatological promises- so charged with human and historical content- indicate to us, that the Kingdom of God necessarily implies the reestablishment of justice in this world, then we must believe that Christ says that the poor are blessed because the Kingdom of God has begun: “The time has come; the Kingdom of God is upon you” (Mark 1:15). In other words, the elimination of the exploitation and poverty that prevent the poor from being fully human has begun; a Kingdom of justice which goes even beyond what they could have hoped for has begun. (Gutierrez, 1998)



Las Casas

There is a real historical character named Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566) who is similar to Father Mendoza. Las Casas came to Latin America to explore the continent and gain riches. He converted to Christianity and later supported the Indians. He became one of the main defenders of the Indians in the sixteenth century against the

abuses and violence from the colonizers and slave traders. Las Casas said that because of the impious and infamous actions perpetrated in a barbaric and tyrannical way by Spain, God will destroy Spain for enriching itself at the cost of killing and exterminating the Indians.

The theologian Gustavo Gutierrez reflects the theology of Las Casas. Gutierrez says that the heart of the spirituality of Las Casas' theology is in two things that are intimately linked: the preferential option for the poor and the option for the indigenous cause. Las Casas said that God had a special memory for the poor. He reminds us to act preferentially toward the poor. The second spiritual intuition of Las Casas was from Matthew Chapter 25, namely, to see Christ IN the Indian. Therefore, the poor and the Indian are the starting point for the theological and spiritual guidance of Las Casas.

According to Gutierrez, the Dominican missionaries of the sixteenth century, Montesinos, Pedro de Cordoba, and Las Casas, said that the Indians died too early. Unfortunately, this affirmation can be used today; however, the Indians of today are also poor... and the poor die too early. This is the pastoral question nowadays: How to announce resurrection in a continent marked by death? This is the root of Liberation Theology. Montesinos spoke of a "lethargic dream of the colonizers". It was lethargic because it did not see the real impact of their actions. Even though some of the colonizers and priests had good intentions, it was not sufficient to safeguard Indian interests (spiritual, cultural etc.) <http://www.dominicanos.org.br/textos/jp/gutierrez.htm>

## ***Music and The Mission***



Father Gabriel playing his flute to the Indians

The music in *The Mission* has a dimension that highlights the understanding of the movie and the history of missions in South America. The music serves not only as a backstage tool but often becomes the center of the scene. The music is intimately involved with the narrative. From one side, the film explains how the music helped to establish contact between the Jesuits and the indigenous population; from another side, the music helps to explain the conflict between the Caucasians and the Indians.

Music is fundamental for the Jesuits as well as for the Indians. Thus, its role in the movie is as an element that is not the fruit solely of a single culture. It gives the contrary impression of being part of *nature* shared by both cultures. It seems exterior to people and at the same time within the power of their creation. It is almost an element of “universality” among all peoples that would enable a union and a meeting beyond and above all differences and impossibilities of communication as a sort of language of human groups, understood universally by everybody.

The theologian Paul Tillich appreciates music not only because of its aesthetic or pleasing sound but also for the intensity of its spiritual substance. Tillich points out that no artistic expression is possible without the creative rational form. But the form will be empty if it does not contain spiritual substance. Even the most refined and profound artistic creation can be destructive for spiritual life if received as only formalism or aestheticism. What Tillich calls spiritual substance is something beyond musical composition or a piece of art in general terms. Spiritual substance is an idea and tends to be ideologically conceived. (Tillich, 1989) Music does not contain spiritual substance; its existence is its essence, as Sartre would say.

The scene of the meeting of the priest Gabriel with the Indians is marked by a song. Gabriel plays flute in the environment of the natives, who find the Jesuit strange and cannot understand his language. The Jesuit also does not know the language of the Indians; thus, there is mutual estrangement. But the music breaks through that and enables a meeting, a dialogue to occur. The music does not just link the parties to this dialogue; in fact, it integrates them into all humanity. We are faced with the same logic regarding music as an instrument of approach among cultures and even the most diverse beings (as exemplified in the encounter between Indians and missionaries). Even if each culture can produce its own instruments and melody, music expresses the “essence” of human being.

The musical creation, the making of the instruments, and the teaching of music appears throughout history. In the movie, the Jesuits are the ones who teach the natives to play their European instruments and to play their Roman Catholic songs. Music is not only the point of approach; it is also the means by which the missionaries first train the natives in the ways of European culture. Thus the Indians learned the artistic and cultural values of the Caucasian, European, and Roman Catholic Jesuit. The priests do not appear to play or learn melodies from the Indians. What subsequently happens in the movie is exactly the inverse. In one of the final scenes of *The Mission* we see a violin and a candlestick under water, after the massacre of the Mission of Saint Miguel by the Portuguese colonizers who faced the resistance from the Jesuits. These are the two most emblematic objects of the Jesuit mission: the sacrament (represented by the candle) is to catechize the Indians and expand the Catholic faith, while music (represented by the violin) transmits to the Indians the values of European culture.

In her article about the movie the anthropologist Maria Claudia Coelho (1998) affirms that the missionaries are the heroes of the movie while the bandits are the hunters of

Indians. Coelho discusses the concepts of genocide and ethnocide in the light of the work of Pierre Clastres. The two concepts oppose body and soul. Genocide is the physical destruction of different people, while ethnocide can be understood as the destruction of a different culture. In sum, genocide murders the people in their body and ethnocide kills their spirit. (Coelho, 1999) According to Clastres, postmodern industrial society has an “ethnocide vocation”. Clastres detaches mainly the aspect of the economic output of the modern societies in opposition to the “non productivity” of the tribal societies. The movie *The Mission* does more than explicitly present an account of the missions and their relationship to strange cultures; it also indirectly raises these questions about the power of cultures that still remain unresolved. (Clastres, 1994)

The challenge to the Cultural Industry is to face its problems and bring to the screens the wealth of that diversity. According to Lévi-Strauss, the need to preserve the diversity of the cultures in a world threatened by cultural monotony certainly did not escape the notice of international institutions. Yet these organizations need to understand that it is not sufficient for reaching that end merely to encourage local traditions and to establish a truce regarding the past. It is the dynamic distinctiveness of each culture itself that should be saved. It is necessary, therefore, to encourage hidden potentialities, to awaken all the vocations for life in common, with historical memory as inspiration and guide. It is also necessary to be ready to face without surprise, without repugnance and without revolt, what new forms social expression are offered, even if apparently unusable. Tolerance is not merely a contemplative attitude indulging what was and what is. It is a dynamic attitude that consists of foreseeing, understanding, and promoting what is wanted to be. The diversity of the human cultures is behind us, around us, and also ahead of us. (Levi-Strauss, 2001)

### ***Dialogue and Mission***

The movie shows us that there was no real dialogue between the Church and the Indians. No Indigenous church was born. The first step of a true dialogue is to listen. To listen means to pay attention to the voices of all indigenous people, to understand their worldview, their relationship with the spirits, their societies, and demonstrate solidarity with their fight for human dignity, for their autonomy, and their space of life. It means to leave aside our projections and stereotypes about the Indians, both idealistic and negative. We should relativize our culture and theology. (Philippians 2:5-11) The Apostle Paul says that we see in “glass, darkly”. The true dialogue is “face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12); it is a gift from God.

Jesus detached himself from wrong projections and was in open dialogue with everyone. Thus, a second step of an inter-religious dialogue is to recognize the ambivalence of all religions (even Christianity). On one side all religions articulate questions and answers of humanity regarding the meaning of life, of where we came from, and of where we will go. The desire for plenitude of life, which is articulated in many ways and forms, transcends the real, transitory, fragile and unfulfilling world. On the other side, all religions show the absence of GOD, the injustice, the sufferings of

people, the anguish of death, and lack of external and internal harmony. It is necessary to listen to the modern criticism of religions (Christianity included) that interpret religion as mere illusions due to powerful human projections. It is true that with our reason we cannot prove that God exists; however we cannot prove that God does not exist. Even the Bible criticizes the concept of religion. Cain killed Abel while practicing religion. (Genesis 4:1-8) Religion can become fanatic, violent and even deadly. The Indians faced this side of religion in the image of the colonizer, the soldier, and even the Christian missionary. All religions contain the ambivalence of Cain and Abel.

This movie reminds me of the Catholic Theologian Karl Rahner. The movie shows some sort of Manichaeism (antagonism between two poles), with the Christian religion representing the light and the Indigenous sects representing the darkness. According to the movie, and the Jesuits, the Indians had to be saved and only through Christianity. Karl Rahner helps us to believe that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life and at the same time sees a perspective of salvation outside Christianity. According to Rahner, the salvation dynamic not only involves the one who explicitly professes the Christian faith, but also can happen in a mysterious form among the adepts of other religious traditions or among those who define themselves as atheists. According to Rahner, the decisive factor for salvation is not its conscience, for the reason that in the end the practice of the love to the other is what decides. Solitariness and love open in human beings the possibility to depart from himself/herself and reach the true love from and toward God. (Thousands of Indians shared love and solidarity before the colonizers arrived.) The Christocentric identity of Rahner is revealed in his hermeneutic of salvation, in the sense that his interpretation registers salvation that happens in the world throughout human history. Yet, for Rahner, salvation cannot be dissociated from Jesus Christ. Thus Rahner presents the perspective of the anonymous Christians or of anonymous Christianity. According to Rahner it is an intra-Catholic theological controversy. Thus anonymous Christianity exercises a very important task, blocking the course of the classical *exclusivism* present in the Roman catholic theology, which kept a stricter interpretation of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation) presented by Cyprian (c. 200-258). (Rahner, 1982)

According to Roger Haight, when world religions open themselves to transcendence, they stimulate human beings to open themselves to self-transcendence, which makes them reflect and experience the immanent God as the Spirit that Christians know through Jesus Christ. God is transcendent as well. The knowledge of the transcendent God happens through an encounter with mystery. Neither Jesus nor Christianity expresses the fullness of God. Without a sense of the transcendent mystery of God, without the agnostic sense of the things that we DO NOT know about God, we cannot expect to know more about God from what is transmitted to us from other revelations and other religions. Indian forms of spirituality, as well as those of other religions, present the mysterious ways of God's transcendence that so many missionaries failed to perceive as authentically spiritual. We now have the opportunity to try harder to perceive their authenticity without an arrogant approach in the sense of feigning ownership and knowledge of the mysterious ways by which God works. (Haight, 2000)



Agência Folhas

"Os poucos guarani foram no passado e são atualmente submetidos ao trabalho tutelar e conservacionista de missões cristãs"



Agência Folhas

"Embora pareça cientificamente estranho, não é fácil dizer-se quantos são os guarani de agora ..."

The Guaranis today

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