

*In ascolto dell'America. Popoli, culture, religioni, strade per il futuro. Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Pontificia Università Urbaniana, 7-9 aprile 2014), a cura di A. Trevisiol, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2014, pp. 477.*

“L'America, nelle sue grandi e medie città così come nelle più disperse realtà rurali, è stata ed è tutt'ora un laboratorio incredibile di incontri, convivenze, fusioni, mediazioni sociali, culturali e religiose” (*Introduzione*, 7). Many forms of inculturation, fusion and cultural transformations allow us to confirm this statement. The International Symposium, entitled: *In ascolto dell'America. Popoli, culture, religioni, strade per il futuro*, was dedicated to the New World. The recent publication of the Acts of this Symposium, which was held in Rome at the Pontifical Urbanian University (April 7-9, 2014), is directed to all those readers who wish to develop their knowledge of the American context.

In this collection, Alberto Trevisiol, the Rector of the Urbaniana University, introduces the *Acts* in a few pages, in which he stresses – as the title of his contribution suggests: *Le “Americhe”, processo secolare di incontri, fusioni e costruzioni di identità* – perspectives and issues developed by the authors in their essays. The reflections of Cardinal Filoni, who is the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, marks the end of a rich and varied itinerary through the complexity of “un continente plurale, ricco di speranza ed anche di contraddizioni” (p. 451). Between these two texts, the essays are divided into seven sections. Each casts light on specific aspects of the socio-cultural as well as religious context of North and South America. Considered individually, each section deals with specific questions which the authors illustrate from different points of view in accordance with their own culture, confessional stance, and academic training. As a whole, the sections of the volume are related to one another. The resulting overall view presents both positive elements and points of debate, which are two sides of the same coin. At the same time, they are also the proper starting point for further development and change.

The three essays in the first section – *L'America tra culture indigene, meticce e migranti. Contaminazioni, interculturali, culture globali* – highlight certain fact, which can be chosen as a main criterion for understanding the following sections. It can be expressed thus: the process of integration of divergent elements, which is part of American history, has, on the one hand, not yet been accomplished; on the other hand, it is hampered by today's migratory flows, which introduce new social and cultural

challenges. The second section – *Culture americane ed esperienza cristiana* – has four essays. Here, the problem is investigated from the point of view of the relationship between Christianity and American cultures. Various forms of their encounters in the past have had many consequences. Such viewpoint helps to underline the dynamic and changing character of relationship between Christianity and American cultures. The analysis is partly theoretical and historical, but it aims also at realization of the new or renewed relationship between Christianity and American cultures, embodied in today's reality.

The third and fourth sections – *Società urbane e megalopoli* (four essays); *Mass Media e New Social Media. Nuove strategie e frontiere della comunicazione* (three essays) – focus on specific areas. They are not only physical or geographical areas, but also – perhaps, primarily – anthropological and cultural ones, already listed by Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* 37, dedicated to the *missio ad gentes*. Exploring the issues from many perspectives, the authors underline the profile of societies on the move. Both massive urbanization and the use of new communications technology call into question the common social and cultural *status quo*, as well as outline new opportunities. From many points of view, the authors stress the emergence of new cultural forms, which originate in and are shaped both by the character of urban societies themselves and by new communicative strategies and frontiers. There is no doubt that they have some significant implications, perhaps as yet not entirely explored, on the above-mentioned relationships between Christianity and cultures, which need to be rethought from these twin points of view.

The four essays in the fifth section – *Beni comuni e progresso sostenibile. L'ambiente come valore, risorsa e merce* – highlight aspects of a question which is very relevant today: the environment. There are many approaches to this issue. Indeed, ecological themes not only affect economic, social and cultural matters but also theological research. The three short contributions in the sixth section touch on another key question, which is indicated by the section's title: *La convivenza delle religioni. I nuovi paradigmi dell'incontro nel dialogo interreligioso*. The seventh section – *La fede oggi fra domande nuove e antica sapienza. Le teologie, la comunità e la sfida dell'evangelizzazione* – focuses on theological reflection, the life and the mission of the Church, the strict correlation between them and their cultural contexts.

As with other collections, this one presents some heterogeneous elements, which depend on choices of method and content, variety of expertise, and diversity of academic and ecclesial commitments. Nonetheless, there are common elements. They do not refer so much to individual themes, as much as to fundamental questions in the current American context, characterized by phenomena, ranging “dal cosiddetto ‘pensiero meticcio’ frutto dell’incontro tra cosmovisioni indigene, europee e afrodiscedenti al *melting pot* delle grandi città nord-americane; dalla ricca tradizione della religiosità latinoamericana alle sperimentazioni politiche e sociali di tipo comunitario; dai movimenti innovativi circa i diritti e l'emancipazione delle persone alle forme più partecipative di educazione e comunicazione popolare” (*Introduzione*, p. 7). Both the multiplicity of the themes, and the individuation of fundamental points, steps already

taken, and new perspectives are other cohesive elements in this collection. It is also enriched by the plurality of the authors' voices (see their short bio-bibliographies, pp. 470-474) and their various languages. This collection stands out as a useful reference tool, aimed not only at scholars and experts on the matter, but also at students interested in issues of the Church and her mission.

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