



**EFFECTS OF LIVING IN MARGINAL AREAS UPON  
RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN CHILE AND UPON THEIR  
RELATIONS WITH THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH**

A study by Katherine Anne Gilfeather, M.M.  
Centro Belarmino  
Santiago, Chile.

Introduction by Sr. Maria José Tresch, ssnd.

This paper by Sister Katherine Gilfeather was prepared for a presentation at the Workshop on Religion and Politics in Latin America which was held at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. on May 22-23, 1978.

The paper is a lengthy one, therefore, an attempt will be made to sketch out briefly Sister Katherine's study of the problem and then to conclude with the last two sections of the paper reprinted in their entirety. These two were chosen because it was felt that they would be of special interest to SEDOS members.

Sister Katherine begins her paper with a study of the problem in its historical dimensions going back to the New Testament Church in order to trace the involvement and the role of Christian women at that time. She then considers the subject from the point of view of its development within the present reality of the Chilean Church. Next she looks at the problem from the sociological point of view, that of social change. Here, she emphasizes four dimensions of change within the present Church structures: 1) the emergence of the individual, 2) innovation, also described as serendipidity or the action of the Spirit - the discovery of valid results not deliberately sought, a happy surprise, 3) the "extension of power" 4) secularization as rationalization with an emphasis on the influence of rationality over the merely traditional. She then, analyzes the problem in its Historical-Ecclesiastical Dimension beginning with the efforts of the Chilean Church to draw up a Pastoral Plan for the country in 1961.

The next section of the paper describes the Religious women who are involved in marginal living who were the subjects of her study - the kinds of communities - the instruments used for the study - the environment in which these Religious women lived - their tensions and frustrations - their responses to the institutional Church - and the problem of adequate financial support for them (92% claim that their financial situation is acceptable). Also included in this section is a description of the image of Church held by these women, as well as their opinions regarding the relative importance of pastoral problems. They were asked to rank them as they saw them in order of urgency for the Church.

Their choices were as follows: 1) the need to build strong, effective primary communities (Comunidades de Base) and 2) the protection of human rights in society. Another area that was studied was the doctrinal positions held by these Religious.

Three possible positions were presented for their responses: a literal interpretation, an anti-literal interpretation and a mythological interpretation. In the latter, the individual reinterpretes the religious affirmation in order to find the profound symbolic meaning which exists beyond a literal interpretation. More than 66% of the Religious took a mythological stance with regard to doctrinal commitment, less than 33% adhered to a literal interpretation, and barely 10% could be classed as anti-literal in their interpretations of doctrine.

The last topic touched in the paper analyzes the spirituality of these Religious women and how it has changed as a result of their marginal experience. This is presented here along with the CONCLUSIONS.

### Changes in Spirituality Patterns

The response of these women to the frustrations of life is rather unique, in its blend of rebellion with innovation within, and a continuing commitment to institutional structures. They look for new ways to achieve their goals; they question those goals institutionalized by society and even by the Church. Their very style of life is counter to the material goals of success and comfort of their own society. The values they stress - compassion, mutual affirmation, respect for life, creativity, dialogue and the like - are in fact those most needed in our alienated society which speaks incessantly of "community" without knowing how to achieve it. It is our belief that women possess the most adequate response to the present societal frustration. The very apostolic experience which they have chosen demonstrates an openness to the search for more functional means and methods; for this reason we hoped to find the same search in the realm of spirituality, the same "rebellion" and "innovation" we have come to expect in their day to day living. We expressed this in the following hypothesis: "The experience of these women has the potential to enrich and deepen their spirituality." Due to the limitations of space, we will consider only a few of the traditional components of spirituality.

A. Prayer. One factor which must be considered in any discussion of prayer is the context in which it takes place. The presence or absence of a small chapel or oratory can enrich or impoverish that context and is an indication of the importance given to prayer in the community. The fact that 90% of the sample live in small communities that possess a small chapel or oratory where space is extremely limited speaks eloquently enough of the priority given to prayer by these religious. Looking at the content of their prayer, we find three principal orientations: 53% pray the Divine Office in common (psalms and readings from Old and New Testament and the Fathers of the Church); 49% participate in free, shared prayer with others; while over 17% prepare para-liturgical ceremonies in the absence of a priest. These orientations are not exclusive, but overlap in various combinations of activities. The importance of the Divine Office, which is the official prayer of the Church, reveals the spirituality of these women. They seek bonds of union with the universal prayer of the Church. Their shared prayer in dialogue form provides a firm

basis for mutual support and understanding. The frequency of para-liturgical ceremonies, directed by the sisters themselves, clearly shows that they are learning to detach themselves from a total dependence upon the clergy for spiritual development and opening themselves to receive what is necessary from their sisters.

To what can we ascribe these orientations in their prayer life? Were they always present? Over 90% declared that their prayer life had experienced great changes since their coming to live in a marginal area. This dimension of their spirituality has thus been clearly affected by their marginal experience. A closer look at their responses indicated clearly the extent and content of this change. The terms they use reveal that from a rational, theoretic, structured, private prayer, it has come to be: "affective, evangelical, down to earth, communal, intimate, interiorized and based on life." In this way the religious themselves evaluate the effect of the environment upon their prayer and the development of new modes of prayer and of being present to the Lord as well as to one's brother and sister.

B. Meditation. One of the classic activities of the spirituality of religious life is meditation and despite what we would expect from a group that is often plagued with constant calls for service, with little free time, over 90% dedicated time each day to this exercise. The terms used to describe changes in their meditation are very similar to those used for prayer: "done with more regularity, less theoretic, less structured, more profound, more affective, based more on daily life, done with greater pleasure and for longer periods."

C. Devotion to the Virgin Mary. Considered one of the oldest and dearest devotions in the Church and deeply related to the life of the religious, devotion to Mary has become a rather ambiguous aspect of the spirituality of many of these religious. A quarter of these women stated that their devotion to the Virgin Mary had either diminished or no longer existed. The majority, almost 60%, expressed their veneration on one or another level but of that group, over 38% stated that their devotion had been enriched profoundly by their marginal experience. They spoke of the Virgin Mary as having become a "real person" to them, nearer and more of a woman like themselves. She was no longer the powerful Mother of God but rather the "poor virgin", the "woman of faith" who accompanied them in their labors for a suffering people. It is possible that those who felt that their devotion had diminished or disappeared were rejecting an image of Mary that no longer holds meaning in the face of their experience or the context of their lives.

D. Revision of Life. This refers to an evaluation of the life of an individual, in the light of the Gospel and in common with the members of his or her community. The purpose is to grow in Gospel values with the support of the entire primary group. Fully 68% of our sample take part weekly in this type of evaluation, and from their responses it is clear that their marginal experience has enriched and deepened this activity. The terms they use recall those mentioned for meditation and prayer. Thus, their revision of life has become "more demanding, it exacts more effort and commitment, it opens new

horizons and areas before untouched, it is more down to earth, more evangelical, more sincere, more supportive, based on real life, I get much more out of it."

E. Spiritual Direction. Traditionally considered essential in the religious life, spiritual direction on the part of a priest has become a luxury for most religious in areas with few priests. Only 28.7% of our sample enjoys some form of spiritual direction, "although unsatisfactory", while 50% feel the deprivation of direction keenly and hope to find help "some day". The most realistic attitude was expressed by over 23% of the sample who find a substitute among friends or the members of their own primary community. This new form of spiritual orientation deserves our attention not only because it satisfies a need and offers a substitute for priestly direction, but also because it constitutes an integral form of human and spiritual growth that is at least as sound if not sounder than traditional forms of direction. A well established group where sincerity, openness, and a desire to mature in the Lord are dominant provides the best context for personal growth. It is interesting to note that the great majority of those who had chosen this type of orientation in their lives live in urban marginal areas. Throughout our observation of these women it became obvious that those living in urban areas were more creative in their search for solutions. This creativity may be the fruit of a more deeply felt need than that experienced by their rural sisters.

F. Sharing the Faith Experience. From earliest times, the Christian community has been based on a sharing of the faith experience. Although such sharing is essential to the Christian commitment, Christians have for too long been formed in a contrary type of spirituality stressing independence and detachment from others. This has been particularly true in the religious life. It was all the more surprising then to find that over 95% of the sample expressed a strong desire to be able to share their faith experience with their sisters and others. Almost 67% find it easy to do so while a third complain of obstacles which are, in great part, difficulties in interpersonal relationships. The resulting lack of communication and the climate of conflict created make sharing impossible. What interests us here is the perception of need for mutual sharing of one's faith experience in Christ. If this conviction is strong enough solutions will be sought to problems, be they lack of time, exhaustion or personal conflicts. Clear goals and strong motivation can help to cut through the thick curtain of obstacles that can smother life in common, leaving only an attitude of tolerance in a boarding house atmosphere.

G. The Vows. As these are so essential to the life of a religious, we wished to evaluate their relevance in the lives of our group. Over 85% of those living in urban marginal areas declared their vows to be more relevant today than ever; 72% of their rural sisters agreed. The reasons recall those given for changes in prayer, meditation and revision of life. Those who feel most "questioned" by their environment (the urban sisters) are those whose vows are more relevant than ever. Their vows have opened up a new liberating dimension which supports rather than limits their commitment.

The vow receiving the greatest coverage in writings on the religious life today is poverty; it was likewise, of most interest to our group. In speaking of changes in their living out of the vow, the Sisters used terms which express the values they prize most highly: "the vow (poverty) gives me greater liberty, it permits real solidarity with my people, it frees me for service, I feel it is a source of liberation for me, it helps me to be more open to others, I am drawn to share more of what I am, I feel that it leads me to question myself and my motives, through it I am learning to accept myself as I am." If, as we suggested previously, one's participation in human affairs depends upon one's experience, then the contribution of these women to the future Latin American society should be a most positive and humanizing one. For their vision of the vow of poverty emphasizes a liberating dimension which enriches rather than impoverishes the human spirit.

Their style of life gives concrete evidence of the importance given not only to the vow, but also to the consequences of their identification with the poor. For this reason we asked them if the vow could be lived with sincerity in a different type of social context, in a less demanding style of life. Their responses reveal considerable ambiguity. Almost 40% denied the possibility of living the vow with sincerity in a more comfortable style of life. Those who showed more tolerance were from rural areas. It would appear that the tensions of a life of extreme simplicity amidst the general misery of urban marginal sectors, influence the relative strength of opinions originating there. There is a danger inherent in this intransigent attitude with respect to the vow of poverty. The great majority of religious women in Chile do not live in urban or rural marginal sectors, for this reason a judgement with respect to the "sincerity" of their mode of life, and particularly their living out of the vow of poverty is questionable and, moreover, is symptomatic of an attitude of "exclusiveness" with respect to a particular style of life. These are the false dichotomies which cause divisions among personnel and damage pastoral efforts.

### Conclusions

The analysed data may or may not point to a "new spirituality" but the foregoing facts are indicative of the multiple changes experienced by these women since coming to live in marginal areas.

The responses of religious women living in marginal areas reveal attitudes and values which have only a secondary place in our society. They have developed a way of life (or spirituality) based on values, qualities and attitudes that have been repeated over and over again in the analysis: "authenticity, liberation, solidarity, compassion, sensitivity, openness, sharing, confrontation, self-acceptance, respect for life." These are human as well as Christian values, humanizing factors which at least partially define Christian existence and should inform the action of the Church. Their "spirituality" reflects definite interests, motives and options - it takes sides with the oppressed, the marginal, the poor in general and for that very reason is based on praxis, solidarity, and shared experience.

These women do not express themselves in terms of abstract analysis or in intellectual discussion but in the use of a wide gamut of human expression - art, music, dialogue, solidarity, compassion and openness. They do not separate the sacred from the profane, the religious dimension from daily living. On the contrary the content of their liturgy, prayer and meditation is a reflection of the experience of the reality of their life-situation. Through these same activities they give expression to their fears, frustrations, the experience of oppression but, above all, to their hope for a new society where justice and humanity will prevail.

Just as experience has shaped their spirituality, so too it has altered their values and attitudes as witnessed in responses to structures at all levels and in all areas of their lives: relations with the institutional Church, vocational commitment, work, recreation, planning, prayer, even their doctrinal stance have all been deeply affected by the marginal experiment. The four dimensions of social change have thus come full circle in the fertile ground of the poblacion environment. To the extent that the emergence of the individual, innovation, the power controversy and secularization become prevalent in an environment, whether singly or in conjunction, tensions inevitably result. We have seen evidence that the situation of these women points to a high degree of tension and that the data suggest the urgency of dealing with the problem and seeking creative solutions if the Church continues to avail itself of their dedication. The institutional Church appears, in many instances, to be cautious of these women, of their growing self-awareness and the resulting conflictual relationship between institution and personnel. It is an uneasy courtship and we might ask ourselves what, in fact, sustains them. To a great extent, it appears to be their spirituality that overrides their frustrations and tensions. It likewise offers a surety that despite a possible (or probable) continued environment of frustration and tension, these women will, unlike so many disillusioned political ideologists, remain with the marginated.

This identification with the "broken ones" of society which has engendered such unexpected purpose, strength and creativity in these women, has, we feel, the potential to enrich the religious life of the entire Chilean Church.

"Being rich He became poor that He might enrich us."  
(2 Cor. 8,9.)

.....

(For the complete report cf. Sedos Documentation No. 4/3376).

:::::

HUMAN RIGHTS DIRECTORY indexes and describes more than 200 U.S. -based organizations involved in some aspect of the human rights struggle. 150pp. Order from Human Rights Internet, 1502 Ogden St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010. Cost \$5.00 prepaid.

Reference: MISSION INTERCOM, No. 85, May 1979.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS TODAY  
 .....  
 IN A SOCIALIST SOCIETY  
 .....

By  
 Metropolitan Anthony of Leningrad and Novgorod//

The Need for Evangelism in the World

Our Saviour said to his disciples before the Ascension: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt. 28: 19-20). This divine commandment contains all the basic aspects of evangelism. That is why the apostles considered it their principal responsibility "to give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). St. Paul perceived his apostolic calling as a calling to unremitting preaching of the word of God: "...for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16).

The duty of the successors of the apostles - ministers of the Church of Christ - is to continue in this calling, so that "the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified" (II Thess. 3:1). Therefore the responsibility rests with the Church to propagate the faith of Christ by virtue of the commandment given by our Saviour to apostles and through them to their successors.

The Saviour set no restrictions on the power of evangelistic grace, saying that he had "other sheep, which are not of this fold; them I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). If by the fold we mean the Old Testament Church, then "other sheep" means Gentiles.<sup>(1)</sup> But if by the fold we mean the Church of God as a whole then a distinction is drawn here between an organized fold of speaking sheep, that is the Church, and a broader area which includes "other sheep" who have the same invisible shepherd but have not yet joined the one fold with the Church. Because of the existence of this broader area known to the One God, the scope of the activity of shepherds on earth is extended to include the function of evangelism.

Evangelism and Problems of Secularization

When socialist social relations were established, the Church had to carry out her activity in an unprecedented political and socio-cultural situation. In contrast to spontaneous secularization in many capitalist countries, secularization in socialist countries is a foundation on which social life is organized. Therefore the Church, in seeking to evangelize society, has to counter secularization as a force which creates a secular pattern of social life on principle.

It would be wrong to suggest that the Church in socialist countries should give up evangelism altogether because problems of social order in society remain outside the sphere of the Church's concern. The point is that the ideological confrontation between Christianity and atheistic ideology presents

---

(1) ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Works, The Interpretation of the Gospel according to St. John (Sergiyev Posad, 1906), p. 497.



essentially theological problems, rather than political or social concerns.

In Eastern European countries, religion "which once monopolized spiritual life is not accustomed to discuss matters with atheism; for the support from the state which religion enjoyed in the past excluded practically any atheistic education and propaganda. Rapid achievements of atheism were thus made possible at the initial stage through the development of education and 'educational' propaganda, hence an absolute quality has been frequently ascribed to this educational method up to now." (2) This statement by a Marxist scholar is similar to the opinion of a prominent Italian leader of the communist labour movements. "In regard to the development of religious consciousness we no longer accept the naive and wrong conception according to which to increase knowledge and to change social structure is sufficient to bring about radical transformations. This conception created by the educational activity carried out in the 18th century has failed to stand the test of history. Roots are to be sought at a deeper level. Transformations are brought about differently; reality is more complicated." (3)

Thus, "it does not mean that education and faith exclude each other under socialism, though this idea was formulated early under socialism because the liquidation of religion was paralleling the rise of the educational and cultural levels of the masses". (4)

Reality makes amendments to academic research and this testifies to the fact that social determinism is not the principal factor in the continuously changing world - a fact which was stated in early Christian times: "Be more attached to God... You can dispute every word using another one, but what can you use to dispute life?". (5) Sociologists can study only the outward manifestations of religion, its social forms; but as far as the essence of religion is concerned it is beyond comprehension through sociological analysis. Religion is "metasocial" by its very nature, assuming in its interaction with society certain social forms rather than deriving from a particular social system.

Christianity is not bound to a particular social political structure: "By virtue of its mission and its very nature the Church is not bound by any form of human culture nor by any political, economic, social structure." (6)

---

(2) AG. ATILLA: "The Social Function and the Future of Religion", Questions of Philosophy, No. 2, 1969, p. 104.

(3) PALMIRO TOGLIATTI: Selected Articles and Speeches, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1965), p. 839.

(4) AG. ATILLA: "Social Function and the Future of Religion", Questions of Philosophy, No. 2, 1969, p. 105.

(5) ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN: Works, Vol. IV (Moscow, 1889), p. 170.

(6) Gaudium et Spes, 42, 76.

Since an overwhelming majority of Christians in socialist countries take an active part in the building of a new society and constitute a whole with the people, a question has arisen as to what influence this section of the society may exert on shaping the society. "Our approach to socialism cannot be abstract nor our conception of the processes taking place in it." "We cannot treat it as if it were some 'homogeneous field' which operates simply and solely to overcome religion with the result that the question of the future of religion reduces merely to the transformation and overcoming of the religious form of consciousness." (7)

In socialist countries a selfless work for the welfare of society is equally welcome whoever does it - the believer or non-believer.

It is important to note that the term "socialism" covers very different experiences and realities depending on the country and culture. Therefore, practical realization of the principle of freedom of conscience and evangelism in various socialist countries have their features conditioned by specific historical development, by internal socio-economical conditions, by traditions, customs and surroundings. Each of these factors has its own influence but taken together they enable the distinctive and specific realization of the principle of freedom of conscience in this or that country. With an increasing number of countries entering the path of socialism, it is essential that they should follow in their development the principle elaborated in the period when the first socialist state emerged: "The state is not to deal with religion; religious societies are not to be connected with state power." (8)

#### Moral and Ethical Aspects of Evangelism

Believers in socialist countries are members of the socialist society so its social achievements are dear to them. It is important that theologians should combine socio-ethical directives of the Church with the interests of believers to enable them to fulfil their Christian duty in a secularized society. "Christians in a socialist society are confronted with a task which is not 'to be or not to be' but which is to find a proper solution to the question of how to remain true Christians in this period of history." (9)

Some philosophers have often conveyed the idea that Christianity, at least as a dogma and a Church, belongs to the past, that it does not correspond to the present world in which secular ideology has prevailed. They allege that the Christian faith makes us less capable of fulfilling our human duty by offering us invariable ethics revealed by God. Hence a question arises: is it true that belief in a supernatural Revelation weakens our aspiration to work for the common good and the good of our country? For a true Christian in a socialist society religious beliefs are not an obstacle but an incentive for his or her involvement in the struggle for peace and social progress.

---

(7) AG. ATILLA: "Social Function and the Future of Religion", Questions of Philosophy, No. 2, 1969, p. 98.

(8) V.I. LENIN: Complete Works, Vol. XII, p. 143.

(9) The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, No. I, p. 6.

"The Christian considers the question of whether he must or must not participate in a just social revolution as decided; the more important question for him is what he can and must do, participating in it as a Christian, what can and must be his truly Christian contribution to the cause of the revolutionary transformation of society." (10) It is necessary to continue elaborating theological argumentation of the need for Churches and Christians to participate in socio-ethical and scientific and technological progress, to increase their responsibility and social action in the dynamically developing world. "We believe that man is to become the master of nature; that is a command to man by God in the Book of Genesis", said an Italian Marxist (11) and another Italian, Pope Paul VI, did justice to "technological progress which is the pride of modern man, the pride of his efforts to explore outer space, to make good use of the latent power of the atom and to change social structures". (12) It is appropriate to note the positive influence of evangelization on modern industrially developed society. One cannot believe that when class inequality and exploitation are liquidated all personal problems will be solved too. There will always be such problems that cannot be solved at the level of social control; in the life of every man there occurs disappointment, failure; there may be a threat of illness, loneliness, discord in the family, approaching old age, a loss of the nearest and dearest, fear of death. "All that we heal and care for belongs to the secret of human heart." (13) We see in these days the emergence of a new pattern of utilitarian and technological thinking as well as essential changes many people have made in their system of values as a result of the disproportion between material civilization and spiritual culture.

Urbanization causes man to maintain impersonal relations with a great number of people; his mobility deprives him of the former communal structure. Here, too the contribution of evangelization to the moral and ethical state of society may be of special importance.

We comprehend the sense of being human through religious faith; the Church can effectively contribute to counterbalancing the negative impact of the scientific and technological revolution upon society and man. Thus, Christianity as a source of evangelization is not a mere instrument of Divine Providence leading the world to salvation in eschatological perspective; more than ever our world, being at the mercy of technology and called to carry out a mighty work of the emancipation of the masses, needs "the spiritual supplement" of which Bergson wrote. (14)

---

(10) The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, No. 8, 1969, p.42.

(11) PALMIRO TOGLIATTI: Selected Articles and Speeches, Vol.2 (Moscow, 1965), p.838.

(12) Herder-Korrespondenz, 1967.2., p.60.

(13) ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN: Works, Vol.I (Moscow, 1889), p.23.

(14) H. BERGSON: Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion (Paris, 1932), p.335.

## Evangelism and Dialogue with non-Christians

General human values often require Christians to cooperate with those who do not confess Christianity but accept the same human values. By this cooperation Christians bear witness to the Saviour of the world and to the unity of the human community: "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (I Cor. 9:22-23). An example of the constructive relations that are being built in the Soviet Union between Christians and non-Christians in discussing and solving problems of the struggle for peace and social progress is the World Conference of Religious Workers for Lasting Peace, Disarmament and Just Relations among Nations, which was held in June 1977 in Moscow.

Of course the cooperation between Christians and non-religious circles is not based on a community of philosophical and world-view positions. But it does not exclude similarity of socio-political aspirations and humanistic values, through differently motivated, as well as similar attitudes towards negative phenomena in modern life. It is also important that such a dialogue should be implemented through the joint participation of Christians and non-Christians in the improvement of all aspects of life. Christians seek to cooperate with representatives of different ideologies in strengthening international peace and in creating a life style worthy of man, acting on the basis of the faith in the Prince of life (cf. Acts 3:15). We are convinced, however, that there cannot be any ideological rapprochement of Christianity with secular ideologies, let alone convergence.

## Particular forms of Evangelism in Socialist Countries

Evangelization cannot remain without shape; that is, it acquires specific organizational forms.

Evangelization in our socialist society is carried out first of all through worship and preaching in the Church. According to the law of our Soviet state, preaching belongs now in the Church, but the Russian Orthodox Church has made it an integral part of divine service. We minister to God and he himself ministers to us without demanding the service of human hands, "even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). He himself performs the ministry of his word, and of the word written in the Gospel, and of the word spoken through his servants and co-workers. What a great responsibility rests upon the preacher! He has to take into consideration the composition of the audience - its educational level and spiritual requirements. But the sermon is neither a report nor a speech. It is the sowing of grace, and we are to sow the seed as God himself disposes it and provide the conditions for its germination. The word can be either oral or printed. To evangelize then is first of all to bring a person into knowledge of the word of God according to the Bible. The thirst people feel for the word of life gives testimony to the heaven-born soul of a human being, to his God-seeking, his search for the source of living water running into eternal life.

Gospel truths, as explained by the apostles, interpreted by the Church Fathers wise in the Lord, have served as a source of spiritual reflection for devoted people of all times.

In our periodicals we publish articles reflecting on the Gospel. The history of the Gospel and of Gospel characters are dealt with in many papers of our periodical Theological Works. Our Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, which has a wide circulation, publishes many articles on the interpretation of the Gospel as well as sermons. If all the sermons from all issues of the Journal were collected they would comprise a great collection of many volumes!

Evangelism brings people of different convictions nearer to religion. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (Jn. 14:27). Christ has never been a leader of violence; on the contrary, by his humbleness and love he conquers, which suggests that love of peace is essential for the success of evangelization.

Evangelism in our society has sometimes determined its own ways. The word of the Gospel is like a fire which one cannot hold in one's hands; it burns and shines and feeds upon itself and finds its own way into the human heart. Evangelism is an appeal to every heart whether man's or woman's.

#### Evangelism in the Church

What an inexhaustible source for evangelization are the liturgical texts of the Orthodox divine service. All the best that could be given to mankind by human genius is imprinted in the liturgical texts of the early Church. Poetry and philosophy revealed in theological discoveries, the art of the word combined with divinely inspired musical compositions - these are the embodiment of evangelization within the Church designed to edify and renew humanity. Christians have created this not for their earthly glory but for the richness of the Church of Christ.

Iconography represents another important aspect of Orthodox evangelism. Iconography is one of the mysteries of the Church influence upon the human heart. The icon is a window into another world; it is a silent preaching of the Gospel. The icon is a spark of the divine truth. It is evangelization through the aesthetic conception of the Kingdom of God; it is the spirit of the transformed world of God.

Evangelism in our country is carried out through a harmonious utilization of all kinds of knowledge with the purpose of revealing the will of God through every word, every action and every step in life as a responsible procession towards the throne of the Kingdom of God. Nobody can possibly give any prescription of how to evangelize today.

Evangelism is now different from what it was before. Society has changed and the conditions for evangelism have changed, too. In the pre-revolution Russia evangelism was closely bound up with the ideology of empire. The Church was not separated from the State and the interests of state policy and those of the Church were mixed. Involvement of the Church in politics overshadowed the authentic evangelism of the Church. But even at that time, the Holy Spirit guided evangelism towards His goal and in accordance with His will.

Evangelism, now deprived of the old pre-revolution positions, finds itself under much more favourable conditions for influencing the hearts and minds of the emancipated listeners. Some are trying to find new ways to evangelize. Life is in constant movement with changing forms. What is important is to fill both old and new vessels with evangelical wine, strong, mature, carrying the currents of life and eternal joy.

Evangelism has always provided a stimulus to life in Christ and its success does not come from human deeds but from God through the service of men. Light and warmth have always drawn people by their vitality. Hostility causes fear; wars kill; but the Word of God brings people to life and reconciles them.

Reference: INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSION, Vol. LXVIII No.271, July 1979.

//METROPOLITAN ANTHONY is a former member of the CWME Commission. This paper, which appears here in edited form, was presented at the CWME Consultation on Christian Witness in Socialist Countries in Europe, Prague 26-30, March 1979.

:::::~

The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa's new address is: Villa Vecchia - Via Frascati, 45, 00040 MONTEPORZIO CATONE. Tel. 942.05.68.

:::::~

The new members of the General Council of the Good Shepherd Sisters are:

Sr. Marie Bernadette Fox - Superior-General (re-elected)  
 Sr. Mary Paul Waddell - English-speaking Region (Provincial St. Louis, Mo.)  
 Sr. Mary Peter Jacinto - Asian Region (Juniorate Directress, Philippines Province)  
 Sr. M. Roswitha Wanke - German-Dutch language Region - re-elected;  
 Sr. M. Rosario Di Silvestri - Spanish language Region - re-elected;  
 Sr. M. Neusa Ramos Nery - Portuguese language Region (Provincial, Recife, Brazil)  
 Sr. M. Simone Derriau - French language Region (former Provincial, Middle-East).

The Good Shepherd Sisters have a new address without having moved! It is: Suore del Buon Pastore  
 Via Raffaello Sardiello, 20  
 00165 Roma, Italia

:::::~

.....  
 : PARTNER IN NATION BUILDING: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH :  
 : IN INDONESIA, by Fr. M.P.M. Muskens. :  
 : Sedos Members who ordered this book can collect :  
 : their copy at the Secretariat. The cost is :  
 : 10,500 lire. :  
 :.....

## MISSION IN THE 1980s

By

Fr. Thomas F. Stransky

The assigned title is convenient for a mission prophet's platform. But if we compare each decade's anticipated agenda as offered in the January issue of mission journals, *révues*, and *zeitschriften* for 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960 and 1970, then reread them ten years later, they appear as either pride-tempters or, more often, embarrassments to the authors and editors.

Amid these 2000 words, I could put a question mark after most sentences. I blue-penciled them out, and let the reader presume the question marks.

1. At a more quickening pace will be the emergence of the "Third Church" - as both a geographical and a historical repositioning, away from the Northern Atlantic/Eastern European/Mediterranean areas, to Latin America/Africa/Asia - in having influence over theological articulations, ethical stances, spiritualities, church disciplines, artistic expressions, interchurch cooperation, and structural forms of "home" and "foreign" missions.

How much this Third Church will become the church of the future, as well as the future of the church, will depend largely on those decisions of the 1980s taken in all six continents. Any theology of history (in that context, a theology of mission) which predicts irrevocable "Christian progress" would be naive.

2. These objective realignments are already causing a mutation in the psychological climate in which mission has been carried out. During the last two decades, the euphoric self-confidence of the western churches and mission groups has rapidly been replaced by a general missionary discouragement and doubt, erratic and easily rationalized fumbings, masochistic guilt, and self-centered neo-isolationism - and thus, overall fatigue. Whereas in the nonwestern world, the churches have witnessed a new dynamism, self-confidence, and a will to find their own way into tomorrow's world.

The 1980s will see in the western churches and mission groups a less uptight and humbler self-assurance about their role and responsibility in world mission. Six-continent partnership in mission will move beyond the slogan to at least modest taken-for-granted practices.

3. But in the Third Church, self-confidence, still often adolescent, will become chastened, more mature. The 1960s and 1970s were marked by the new mystique of "nation-building," especially in Africa; and mission was being integrated into that general process. Now, new nations are no longer so innocent, nor are the churches therein. The immediate post-independence honeymoon is over.

Authoritarian regimes will continue to put pressure on the churches ("The Church is a state within the State, and so endangers national unity"), as Christian consciousness and conscience become more sensitive and sophisticated in social, political, and economic issues. The 1980s will see new threats to whatever religious freedom is now enjoyed.

In fact, the growing secularization of value systems, especially through urbanization, and the increase of governmental pressure on those who are not "100 percent with us," will, in many newer nations, demand a quality of Christian commitment not experienced before.

4. The moratorium debate will no longer be an either/or issue, which in its harsh, oversimplified demands has at least made its point. It will quicken co-responsibility in the allotment of money and the placement of personnel. The dominating power and lobby struggles will be within the churches more than between them and mission agencies/societies. If there be a strict moratorium somewhere, it will be imposed by a few visa-granting governments, no matter what missionaries debate.

5. The holy dissatisfaction with the more obvious dysfunctional patterns of mission ministry appears already in the 1970s: especially, the stress on ordination over service; a false professionalism with emphasis, in practice, on prestige positions rather than complementary functions; the concentration of leadership among those "highly educated" according to western standards of theological education. Through the less dependent and more secure generations of leadership, these dysfunctional patterns will fade more quickly. Ministry in mission will become less elitist; more emphasis on laity formation as distinct from the training of lay church workers. Grassroots training of more diversified church workers, paid or voluntary, will be judged equal in importance to higher forms of seminary training (although a disproportionate amount of monies will continue to be budgeted for the latter).

6. The "church growth movement," i.e., the quantitative expansion in a mission context, will be taken more seriously by all the churches, as a conscious policy matter dealt with in theory, strategy, and administration. Church growth will no longer be overly identified with restricted presumptions or theories (e.g., "free church" or "faith group" evangelism); or with North American/European missionary agencies; or with specific institutions and personalities (e.g., Fuller School of World Mission; Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner). Calmer and less belligerent pros and cons will mark the examination of specific theories and methodologies.

7. Mission theology in the 1970s mirrored the emphasis of that decade's theology in general - method more than content. One no longer assumes there is only one right way to reflect on what mission is and should be in practice. The 1980s will see more doing of mission theologies through various methods; more content-theologies and less monotonous we-need-to-dewesternize-the-enterprise.



And this development will be enhanced by a new generation of theologians, most of them yet unknown: the successors to John Mbiti, E.W. Fasholé-Luke and Peter Sarpong, Choan-Seng Song and Kosuke Koyama, José Miguez-Bonino, Juan Segundo and Gustavo Gutiérrez, James Cone and Deotis Roberts, Rosemary Ruether, Raimundo Panikkar, etc.

The main themes of these fresh theological developments will remain classical and central: the God who saves through Christ in the Spirit; the world that groans and grows; and in and of that world, the human person, alone and in community, who searches, finds, and searches (faith and unbeliefs) in cultural contexts (theologies of experience); the church, and the images which reflect its mystery and its tasks; its relations with "The Others" (those of other religions, secular ideologies); evangelization, common witness, and proselytism; the local congregations in mission.

What remains to be seen: the extent to which theological plurality can be stretched in order to remain a faithful herald of Good News, and not of "another gospel" (I will not be surprised by less dissimilarity than others have already predicted); the extent to which Third Church theologies will indeed be cross-disciplinary, more synthetical than analytical (I predict, in general, an initial backward step); the extent to which western theologies will absorb and shift because of others (I predict very little in the 1980s, but more in the 1990s); the degree of patience of one "school" to indeed listen to others as they understand themselves to be (in the 1970s, too many violations of this simple dialogical discipline were witnessed in discussions of "liberation Theologies").

The best shared sources for this entire theological enterprise will not be found in hard-covered, footnoted books but in catechetical and adult education materials (this has always been true, but seldom taken advantage of).

8. During the 1960s and 1970s, the paradigm of Christian mission cleavage has been shifting. No longer side-by-side existence of Protestant denominations/mission groups; no longer a simple, competitive Roman Catholic versus Protestant/Orthodox. The main gap now appears between the mainstream Protestant/Roman Catholic/Orthodox and the Evangelical. In the 1960s and early 1970s, both clusters were judging each other by those who were dominating the image-making and smothering the silent majorities: among the Evangelicals, those who downplay, in theory if not in practice, the mission struggle for just, sustainable, and participatory societies in one world; and among the others, those who downplay, at least in practice, explicit convert work among those not graced by explicit Christian faith and church discipleship.

What is often overlooked is that Roman Catholic missionary communities and most local churches are far more evangelical than the Evangelicals realize, and at the same time, less uptight with, and more open to, cooperation and common witness with "conciliar, ecumenical" Christians.

In the 1970s, the Evangelicals emerged out of their low, defensive profile. With more energy and assurance than have other groups floundering and littered with burnt-outs, the

Evangelicals are now looking afresh at the shared total mission agenda. In many areas they could very well give mission leadership to those Roman Catholics and other Protestants who are beginning to see that indeed they can learn and benefit from a positive encounter with the Evangelical mission movement.

Under the widely accepted umbrella of "holistic mission," evangelism - the Great Commission understood also holistically - could be restored to its rightful, central place in missionary activities across all borders, in and to all continents.

But the Evangelicals in the 1980s could blow this potential leadership role, if they would learn nothing from Roman Catholic and other Protestant good and bad experiences of the 1960s; if they would keep themselves aloof from the wider ecumenical movement; and worst of all, if the fragile unity among themselves would break apart because of a sadly titled "Battle for the Bible/Battle for World Evangelism."

In fact, as a Roman Catholic who prays he is committed to the biblical paradigm of unity-in-mission/mission-in-unity, I see the most ominous and depressing negative sign on the mission horizon of the next decade in the fact that the seventieth anniversary of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference will be celebrated in 1980 by two expensive, international meetings within five weeks of each other, the World Council of Churches' conference on world mission and evangelism: "Your Kingdom Come" (May, Australia), and the Lausanne follow-up Consultation on World Evangelization (June, Thailand).

Both meetings intend to reflect on a common commitment to the whole gospel of the whole church to the whole world. True, there may be somewhat different emphases and constituencies, and one should rejoice in a maximum of flexibility in mission approaches and organizations. Nevertheless, I do worry about an impending structuring of world mission that will force too many churches, mission agencies and groups to take sides in their stewardship of personnel, funds, and energy. So I end this article with the question: Will the 1980's see the children of Edinburgh and their prolific six-continent offspring now grown up only to be, once more, estranged members within the Christian mission family, divided witnesses to the Father who sent the Son that the world may believe?

Reference: OCCASIONAL BULLETIN OF MISSIONARY RESEARCH, Vol.3, No. 2, April, 1979.

: : : : : : : : :

INDIA'S MISSIOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, "Ishvani Kendra" is a center for missiological studies and for the formation of experts in missiology. Its founder, Rev. Engelbert Zeitler, a Divine Word Father, has set the goals: to study the socio-cultural-religious factors which would allow a more modern and acceptable methodology for evangelization and to raise the level of mission awareness in the country. The institute is open to ministers of all denominations.

Fr. Zeitler is co-editor with Lucy Misquita, rscj, and Jessie Tellis Nayak of a book, Women in India and in the Church, published for Ishvani Kendra. Pune. 411 014.

Reference: MISSION INTERCOM, No. 85, May 1979.

Report of the Ecumenical China Study Liaison Group Meeting -  
Brugge, 3rd-6th September, 1979

After the Louvain Conference in 1974, a group entitled "The Ecumenical China Study Liaison Group" arranged to come together every two years to exchange news and to discuss trends in China. The meeting in 1976 was held in London and this year the group met in Brugge in Belgium. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation and Pro Mundi Vita and brought together 28 Catholic and Protestant delegates. The 15 Protestant representatives and the 13 Catholics were not only people with a knowledge of China, but "multipliers", that is people who affect others from their positions as administrators. A few of the groups represented were: The Lutheran World Federation, Pro Mundi Vita, The Institute of Missiology and Ecumenical Theology of Aarhus University, The China Study Centre (Tao Fong Shan of Hong Kong), The National Council of Churches (U.S.A.), The China Study Group (U.K.), The Institute of Theology and Culture, The Centre for Chinese Studies (Rome), The Secretariat for Non-Believers, the CWME and the World Council of Churches, The Canada China Programme, Sedos etc.

Since the last meeting of the group three important events had occurred in relation to religion and the Chinese situation. First was the Chinese Theologians' Colloquium in Hong Kong which for the first time brought together Protestant and Catholic Chinese theologians to discuss the future development of Chinese theology.

The second significant event was the visit of a group of Chinese Christian pastors from Hong Kong to China. This was the first time that a group had been admitted as religious representatives. (For an account of this visit cf. Peter Lee's article in Ching Feng No. XXII, No. 2, 1979).

The most recent development was the presence of ten delegates representing various religious backgrounds at the Conference on Religion and Peace held in August at Princeton. Four of the delegates were from the Three Self Movement and included Bishop Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting). The representative from the National Council of Churches related that these four representatives had been invited to visit various Christian communities in the United States after their Princeton meeting.

Throughout the two and a half days, there were presentations and discussions on the major trends in China in the Age of Deng and on the Christian Response to the new situation. Various national groups gave reports and the results of the Chinese Theologians' Meeting were discussed. In the presentation on the major trends the following were mentioned: restoration of property, the downplaying of the class struggle, the reform of the legal system, the changes in the educational policy, economic readjustments including more incentives in agriculture and the rise of single individual service-type enterprises, attempts to control population by incentives in housing and medical services for limiting one's family and attempts to allow more freedom in literature and art. Naturally

there are some who feel this has gone too far and there is a rise of opposition to the new policies. The strength of the opposition is impossible to discern at this point.

In the discussions on religion in China the "official religion" was distinguished from, for want of a better name, was called "grassroots" Christian groups. With reference to these latter groups it is difficult to locate and to find out how widespread they are. Most of the religious representatives met in China were either from the Three Self Movement or from the Catholic Patriotic Association.

In the presentation and discussion on the Christian response to the new situation it was pointed out that religious institutions are now looking at how they should respond on an institutional level. What appears to be needed is information, analysis and theological reflection. Do the institutions also need to provide educational programmes to renew the interests of their members? Some are already doing this (e.g. National Council of Churches). Many religious missionary organizations were of the grassroots type and therefore they tend to think of any involvement in China as direct personal contact. Yet at this point very few opportunities exist for this type of involvement. Some suggestions were made as to what religious groups might provide:

- Contact with the Church in China through letters and other types of contacts particularly missionaries with their former mission areas. This often provides a knowledge of the "grassroots" Christian situation.
- Evaluation of the records of the past...writing the history of mission activity in various parts of China.
- Contacts with lay persons engaged in research on China and with people from China who are in their own countries.

In discussing the problems which the new response to China may occasion in religious groups it was pointed out that the remnant Church in China may find it difficult to understand the new type missionary who comes to China in some type of secular position. It also means we must rethink the concept of mission more in terms of witness than service. The new situation will also require greater coordination of religious congregations and institutions. It is understood that this coordination also includes the ecumenical dimension.

Much of the discussion was reflected in the recommendations of the groups. The first concerned a greater sharing, along with a better indexing, of primary level information. The need for trust rather than secrecy was mentioned. The second set of recommendations referred to religious institutions (this would include Catholic religious congregations). It noted the need for information, analysis and reflection on material about religion in China before any precipitous action. The importance of sensitivity to the Chinese religious development was stressed in order that the mistakes of the past would not be repeated. Chinese religious expression in liturgy and theology should be nurtured to avoid a Western expression of Christianity. The importance of Chinese Christians in the diaspora was also mentioned several times. These groups should be helped to related their faith to the Chinese experience. The third set of recommendations centre around the wish to examine whether or not the time had come for a second Louvain type

conference on China. A Committee was set up to look in this matter and to report to the wider group at their meeting next September.

::::::::::

### OUR CHINESE MISSION

In a recent letter to the editor of the Tablet, Fr. Naylor, sj, of Hong Kong makes the following comment:

There have been many developments in China recently. In some ways they are unbelievable in taking place so fast and so contrary to what has been since 1949 that one wonders how lasting they will be, and how far they reflect the reality of life in China. Almost every week some person returns with personal accounts of what has been seen and met with in China. This sometimes gives hope and creates great expectations.

Whatever further changes might occur, much painstaking work still needs to be done which requires the help of untold numbers in Christendom. I list ten requirements: (1) a modern documentation of the life of the Church in China; though there are standard works on the subject, a single well-written volume needs to be written for the 1980s; (2) a volume on the Church in China during the past 100 years or so, either from 1911, with the founding of the Chinese Republic, or earlier, and this to be accompanied by serious theological reflection on the future; (3) books for non-Christian Chinese, in the new Chinese type and the modern Chinese idiom, which have a thorough grasp of Marxist, Leninist and Maoist thought, as well as being familiar with traditional Chinese culture; (4) contact between Christians and Chinese living outside China, and especially with newly-arrived students from China; (5) cooperation between the Christian churches in order to make full use of Christian broadcasting to China as an avenue for contacting people in China - there is evidence that existing programmes are listened to; (6) ever-growing numbers of businessmen and tourists will go to China - among them many Christians and these should be encouraged to meet Chinese Christians; (7) Christian influence on their own governments to press for religious freedom in China, in accordance with the UN Charter on Human Rights and practice in the free world; (8) the contribution of the non-Chinese studying or teaching in China - at present very few but whose numbers will grow - to the building up of the Church there; (9) experience in attracting to the Church the non-Christian Chinese living outside China, welcoming them as cultural and racial minorities who have a place in the Christian community; (10) the promotion by centres of Chinese studies in various universities of a deep knowledge and appreciation of modern and ancient China and of the great contributions it can make to the world community.

China is important to the Church and needs the attention of at least some in all parts of China.

Reference: THE TABLET, 16 June, 1979.

::::::::::