

(During the past year, we have published several articles on the future of mission and religious life. In his recent Message to the Dominican Order on the Eve of 1980, Fr. de Couesnongle, the Master-General, raises three very thought-provoking points).

THREE NEW CONCERNS

...Four years ago, I shared certain of my concerns with you. Over the years the face of the Order changes and, as we come to the threshold of the eighties, I want to tell you what has especially struck me during this time. As ever, there are fears mixed in with my hopes.

Certain of the provinces have seen an increase in the number of their novices. These latter have come to us with a real love of the Order and a strong desire to live to the full its charism today. But this re-nascent hope does not come to me without some worry--namely, the fear that at the end of 5, 10 or 20 years, these young people of today might be deeply disappointed by what we have offered them by way of conventual life and apostolic perspectives. Shall we know how to respond to their wish to confront the needs and the call of their world? Will they find in the house of Saint Dominic an intense common fraternal life in prayer, study, and sharing?

The crisis that followed in the wake of the Council has called into question a certain type of religious life and, in fact, the religious life itself for a good number of our brothers. Thus, I have cause to fear that a "second crisis" might appear in a few years. Perhaps this "second crisis" could be even more serious than the first, to the extent that the younger generations come to question the very possibility of Dominican religious life's being a light and a force in the Church and the world of tomorrow.

I am also struck by the fact that more and more of our brothers - and our sisters - are wanting to be present to the apostolic problems of a world which takes on a new look everyday. If the eldest of our brothers often find difficulties in getting into the rhythm of the day, over the years they understand the desires of the younger generations better and they more easily accept the sacrifices that are demanded of them. But that often demands - ever more and more often--choices that are sometimes heroic: shutting down a house, leaving a ministry that you like for one that is more demanding but also more urgent, etc. My concern here is to say that all too often we shut our eyes to reality, we refuse to change, we lack any sense of the future of the province, with the conviction that "that can continue going on as it has" for some years--those that are left for me to live, anyway.

Then, too, the bishops do not always understand our desires, the proper character of the Order, the possibilities of our brothers. And we sometimes stand by and watch our Dominican identity lose its flavor and become insipid. Some of us become sort of "second-time-around illiterates". I mean by that, brothers who were formerly capable of doing great things but who, little by little, have lost the capability and the appetite for

this. Because of their work, they have continually reduced the field of their apostolic life, in order to do what other institutes of priests do - and perhaps better than they can.

What I see here and there also gives me cause to fear that with time, the apostolic work of religious might come to depend more and more exclusively on the organization and administration of dioceses at the heart of which they will have had to integrate themselves, under pain of not having very much of anything to do, or even nothing.

Behind all this, you can see, is the specific character of our life, of our vocation, of our mission in the Church which is at issue. The inventive and creative aspect of the Order can become annihilated.

There is one more thing to say: a certain renewal of the sense of the supernatural and of common and private prayer in the life of religious. Even if that is different according to our provinces, there is a tendency which is beginning to make itself felt. The youngest are certainly here for some reason, as are also the Sisters and the nuns to the extent that the Dominican family becomes a more effective reality.

On top of all this there comes what is for me a new concern, sometimes even touching upon anguish. Yesterday it was anguish at the diminution of vocations. Now that they are picking up, it is anguish at the formation of young people: what religious are we preparing for tomorrow? What formation are we giving them to make them real sons and daughters of St. Dominic, men and women of prayer, of thought, living witnesses to the Word of God, true religious and true apostles for a world that one must expect to be even more obdurate than the present one?

This anguish grips me when I see the difficulty we have in finding a formation team worthy of that name, in creating a welcoming community, when everything that makes up the armor of a Dominican seems to be being progressively battered to pieces under the blows of the hammer of life, of a mentality, of convictions that are more secular than evangelical.

These, then, are the thoughts that come to my spirit, dear brothers and sisters, whilst I think about this year and about the decade we have just lived through. 1980 will mark the celebration of the centenaries of St. Albert the Great and St. Catherine of Siena. This will also be the year of the General Chapter of Walberberg. God grant that this may be the year for a decisive step ahead for all of the Order and for each of its members towards a life that recalls ever more clearly the presence of Saint Dominic to the men and women of our day.

In my prayer "pro coetu pauperum", I assure you of my deep affection.

Fr. Vincent de Couesnongle, O.P.
Master of the Order

Saturday, 1 December 1979

Reference: INFORMAZIONI DOMENICANE INTERNAZIONALI, 11th Year, No.10 - 11/XII/79.

Fr. de Couesnongle has also written "What must the Order be in the Next Ten Years to Assure its Future", Sedos Documentation No. 4/3680.

Part II of "Church and Mission in Relationship to the Kingdom of God Especially in a Third World Context", by the Most Reverend Patrick d'Souza, Bishop of Varanasi, India.

III. THIRD WORLD AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

What then is the mission of the church in the concrete situation obtained in the Third World today?

A. Mission and Kingdom in Evangelii Nuntiandi

The Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi has placed the mission of the Church into perspectives which are appropriate to our times and regions. It recognizes 'evangelization' understood in terms of 'proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him, of preaching, of catechesis, of conferring baptism and the other sacraments' (EN 17). But it does not regard these activities which are part of the universal sacramentality of the church, as the only legitimate 'mission work'. In the same paragraph (EN 17), Evangelii Nuntiandi states that 'any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism, does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of destroying it'. Then Evangelii Nuntiandi positively defines what it means by evangelization: 'For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the good news into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new'. This statement immensely widens the very concept of evangelization, and yet it in no way waters it down. On the contrary, it brings it out more forcefully by continuing: 'But there is no new humanity, if there are not first of all new persons renewed by baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change and if it had to be expressed in one sentence, the best way of stating it would be to say that the church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims both the personal and collective consciousness of people, the activities in which they are engaged and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs. (EN 18)

The next paragraph, No.19 of Evangelii Nuntiandi, contains one of the weightiest statements concerning our whole mission in Asia. 'For the Church, it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation'.

All this could be expressed in the following words: 'What matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures' (taking account of their immense pluriformity in the Third World)' in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in Gaudium et Spes, always taking the person as one's starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God...The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama

of our times. Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly, of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. But this encounter will not take place, if the Gospel is not proclaimed'. (EN20)

B. Sociological Implications of Baptism

It is important to pay attention to the great difference of the meaning of Baptism in theological tradition of the Church, and its sociological implications.

There are many in the Asian continent, certainly in India, who know and love Christ, but will not be of the Church. They explicitly exclude Baptism as an unbecoming change of one's society; the Church, as unnecessary in going to Christ whom they venerate. Due to various sociological factors, sometimes Baptism appears to them as a sign, not of a new life, but of a new society with its roots abroad; as a giving up of a society of their birth, as the beginning of an ostracism in their family. One cannot say with certitude exactly how many such persons there are, but they would seem to surpass the pitiful number of christians. They know and love Christ but they do not wish to be part of the Church. Mahatma Gandhi is a good illustration of this group. While they yearn for the saving activity of God, they are afraid of what is presented as his kingdom.

What is the responsibility of the Church towards the growing number of these people, who are interiorly very much committed to Christ though sacramentally, i.e., by Baptism they do not desire to be of Christ's Church. (13)

How is the 'kingdom' to be presented to this growing group? Does the kingdom begin with baptism? With the desire to be of Christ fully? What is the mission of the Church towards this group? To urge them to Baptism? To wait for the growth of their numbers, till perhaps in a generation or two, they understand and desire Baptism, and the fulness of communion in Christ? How far is it advisable to keep silent about the necessity of Baptism?

The problem is not completely new. The working paper of 1974 synod of Bishops spoke of 'those many who though they have been baptized, do not share the life of the Church', do not live as Christ's. They have the fulness of sacramental commitment but very little, if any at all, of personal commitment. (14) Can we think of another group that has almost the fulness of personal commitment, but no sacramental incorporation because sociological factors hinder them? Is the kingdom, i.e., God's saving activity Baptism, or in a personal commitment? If both cannot be hoped simultaneously now, what is the mission of the church now to those millions of Third World?

(13) Patrick D'Souza, Non-institutional Christian, His Gospel to Our Peoples... pp. 129-131.

(14) Working paper for the Synod of Bishops 1974, I, 10 of "His Gospel to Our Peoples..." p. 132 (Nota)

One can discuss the question further. With the old 'mission' concept, the passport for the citizens of God's kingdom, was Baptism. Very few of the heroic missionaries and fewer of the theological theoreticians of the past realized that 'baptism' means something very different in many of the Third World countries, from what it means in Scripture. We must accept that the sacrificial element of the commitment to Christ is an essential dimension of our Faith. This consists in the death to self, a complete conversion to God. But many other implications of Baptism are due to historical accretions. When the Apostles baptized the first Jews, little changed externally. Christ entered fully into their personal lives and created at the same time a new christian community that adored the Father in spirit and in truth. All the rest remained the same. Even when the first 'pagans' were baptized in the Greek-Roman world, things remained more or less the same. When Roman citizens were baptized, they remained Romans as before. It is not so with the people of the Third World who were baptized. In many of these countries, especially in the Asian continent, baptism often meant and still means a radical social change. In India, for example, the one who is baptized also automatically passes over into an entirely new system of law that henceforth governs his marriage, his property rights and his entire social life, and in most cases cuts him off socially from his former background, the very root from which he draws his life.

These vital implications, which an essentially religious act, baptism, has for the life of baptized Asians, have often been overlooked by theologians, missionaries and church planners. This question of baptism in its socio-legal implications for most Asians should be taken up for serious scrutiny by a congress like ours, that wants to convey the good news of Jesus Christ to the Asian people and others of the Third World in similar situations. This vital topic I find missing on the agenda of this congress and I believe we will miss a good deal if we by-pass this key issue: mission and conversion, baptism and its social consequences for the people of the Third World, especially the Asian continent. We must see this problem in its particular context, in the context of 'anti-conversion bills', which is very different from the context in which it appears, for instance, in the west,

Certainly, the final goal can be formulated in traditional terms as the incorporation of the peoples of the Third World into the people of God in Jesus Christ through baptism, reaching its fullest union in the Eucharist and then spreading out to establish new communities of life centred around the altar and the bishop. Was it a realistic goal or an illusion and a pious wish of some of the best missionaries? Could baptism be separated from the entire cultural, social and religious life of those who had accepted Christ as their new Lord and Master?

Vatican II in its Mission Decree has spoken a language very different from the one used by the previous evangelizers: it had recognized the inner values of non-christian religions, thus giving a new emphasis to the saving activity of God in regions whose living religions exercise great influence.

C. Tasks and Challenges of the Church

The primary task of the Church is to represent effectively through personal witness, life style, concern for others, commitment, joyful hope, the meaning of human existence as revealed in Jesus Christ. (EN 41, 76). The Church must become the sign of joy and hope to the peoples. To be this sign, she must first divest herself of whatever is coming in her way of being this effective sign. (EN 15)

The Church will be a sign of hope in the Third World if through the power of the Gospel, she influences and transforms society, changing mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interests, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life. (EN 19)

Much has been said and written about the mission of the Church in various spheres in today's world. Dialogue with non-Christian religions, conscientization and liberation of the poor and the oppressed, apostolate among the youth, are some of the topics that are widely discussed today. Hence I shall not deal with them here.

I shall touch on some points which I consider are particularly relevant in the context of the Third World today.

The challenge which the situation poses to the christian churches in the Third World could be summed up in the following principles stated by the FABC meeting in Hong Kong in 1977. They constitute a concrete plan of action for our evangelization.

- a. 'In religious matters the question is: how to preach the good news of Jesus to our brethren so that the Church may be, and appear to be, the sacrament of salvation and a community of love.
- b. In relation to the world religions: how to enrich its own christian identity and life by opening itself to the great religious traditions of Asia in inter-religion dialogue, and together with these, how to practise religion, and promote moral and religious values, in a way that all contribute to the total human development of our peoples.
- c. In economics: how to contribute to the eradication of stark poverty by an authentic dialogue of life with the poor of Asia without fostering materialism.
- d. In social life: how to preserve the authentic values of personalism and family life in the face of urbanization and technological progress.
- e. In political matters: how to help our people find an Asian style of authentic participative leadership in government at all levels.
- f. In cultural matters: how to find their own national and Asian identity, by blending ancient and modern values in face of the future ahead'. (15)

In these short six paragraphs we have heard the Magna Carta for mission work in the Third World for the decade to come. We shall illustrate these tasks of the Church, reflecting on one of them, i.e., studying how the living Faiths of Asia must experience the saving activity of God. This is the Kingdom,

From this centre of a living encounter with God, we are now approaching the most acute problem of the mission in Asia, namely, the new relationship of our christian message with the existing living faiths of the Third World. We are at the same time approaching one of the most difficult questions of present day theology, made all the more difficult since the problems concerned cannot be adequately solved except by those personally acquainted from inside with these religions. So the answers cannot but be long in coming.

1. Discovering the Kingdom

What is required today is nothing more and nothing less than a new theological understanding of the role that 'non-christian religions' or better still 'the living faiths of mankind'--today play in the work of salvation. They and we must understand the saving activity of God in them. The deep and radical question, that are to be investigated, and lived, solved in this context, constitute a long-term programme for mission work in the Third World. Research and experimentation must go hand in hand with a deeply prayerful and contemplative 'living in' with these religions, before we can come to any definite pronouncement on this matter, which will be vital for the entire future of 'mission work', of evangelization. Above all, the 'non-christian religions' will stand up as formidable challenges to any missionary who dares to proclaim 'the infinite riches of Christ' to people, who may be much more deeply steeped in the experience of God. All our christian communities in the Third World will have to face the same challenge if they evangelize, and still more if they do not evangelize!

The Church has rediscovered the deep conviction, (in fact she had never lost it, though some of her theologians, perhaps many of them, did) that 'the light that was shining into this world' illumines every man, every human being in the Third World, with its divine splendour. Today with an openness of mind we can see the tremendous treasures God created in the countries of the Third World, the living religions which reflect this divine light and are an everlasting glory to its Creator.

We may discover to our astonishment that Christ was (and still is) present in an eminent way in the Third World much before any christian messenger reached there. What is more: Christ may have revealed himself in new dimensions, which may not be contained in this particular way, as we have understood Him up to now in our so-called christian 'theology', which is always a fragmentary representation of the infinite riches of Christ and of kingdom. It is one of the most thrilling thoughts that mission of the Church in Asia tomorrow will be, not only to bring Christ and his Church to this immense continent, the cradle of mankind's history, but also to discover with astonishment and amazement and immense joy, the presence of this hidden Christ in his own home continent. We will realize that these Living Faiths are not so much fortresses to be conquered, and perhaps razed to the ground, but rather tabernacles to be lovingly opened with the

love of the Lord, to be beatified and perfected by His saving presence. We will also realize that for all men, and for all religions Jesus is the Liberator from all that enslaved them. 'The words of Christ are at once words of judgment and grace, of life and death, for it is only through putting to death that which is old, that we can come to the newness of life'. (AG 8)

If this should be true, it will have some far-reaching consequences for all our mission work. We will have to go about with much less self-assurance, and will have to listen much more to the promptings of the Spirit, which may show us wonders we have been overlooking up to now. It is in this case very probably that the missions will have to pass through a kenosis similar to the one which was manifested in the baptism of the Lord, when the Redeemer of the world, ready to dispense his immense riches of truth and love, went to his precursor, John the Baptist, to empty himself completely, in order to be filled with the plenitude of the Spirit. It is almost impossible to imagine what richness may be awaiting a new type of christianity that is no longer European and western, but genuinely Asian, once this process is initiated and finally brought to completion.

2. The Necessary Kenosis

a. The Unique Mediator

This will be a kenosis, a metanoia for both the Church--that it may become the Kingdom, and for other Living Faiths that they may be perfected and beautified into the New Jerusalem. For other religions, the first, and the essential change will be the acceptance of Christ. 'In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things' (Heb 1, 1-2). This will be kenosis asked of all living religions so that they may be offered to the Father, that they keep themselves open and allow themselves to be inspired by the message of Jesus; he belongs not only to christians but to all men. His total dependence on God his absolute trust in him; his unconditional commitment to the struggle of the people; his faith in human dignity, in equality, brotherhood; his conviction that God will prevail over all powers of evil; that love is stronger than hatred, are inspirations to all.

b. Personal Redeemer

Another element will be the acceptance of a personal saviour. This implies a concept of personal sin. No one can become of the Kingdom unless he 'loses his life'. Christ the Redeemer came to give his life as a ransom for many. It is from our sinfulness that He freed us. It is this liberation from all what is worldly, this conversion from selfish values to the beatitudes, which Christ the Liberator of sinful man offers to the Third World, which has yearned for the 'real', for the Nirvana, a freedom from sin, not only social, but first of all from personal sin. So metanoia which is the beginning of the Kingdom, is not, first of all, a new outlook, like Gandhian Philosophy or Marxist brotherhood. It is a liberation from sin. Without this liberation, the Kingdom will be closed. So the mission of the Church is to give this awareness of our littleness, our wickedness before God, and the assurance that Jesus through his sacrifice sanctified for ever all his elect, individually and in his Church.

c. Lord of History

A third element in the metanoia of Living Faiths--we saw above how much they will contribute to the richness of the Kingdom--is the acceptance of worldly realities of time, of matter. There is a tendency among many of them to forget the meaning of history, of the values of temporal realities.

The African peoples know only two dimensions of time: a long past and a dynamic present. The future as such, had no value in their thought. For them, history did not move towards a point in the future but strove to re-establish the origins, to adapt the present to the past. (16) Asiatic religions remain trapped in the cycle of birth and rebirth. The neighbours of the people of Israel, the Babylonians and Canaanites believed in gods that had fixed the world at the beginning for all time. They had no new horizon--towards which a people could journey. In contrast to all these, the God of Israel was a God of nomads who must ever continue their journey. Christ has once for all broken the barrier of death (Rom 6, 9) and through the breach has opened up for us an everlasting future. (17)

Hence as a part of their kenosis, in their becoming the Kingdom, Living Faiths must accept Christ the Liberator as the Lord of History, as the Liberator of entire man, of society. Religions must, through this metanoia, provide both an intense union with God and the renewal of unjust human structures. Hence God-experience in Jesus will have social implications. The Kingdom established by the preaching of the Word will have both the vertical dimension of sacramentality and the horizontal one of liberation theology. The new Jerusalem, will include a new social order grounded in a God experience in Jesus.

This will also bring in the dimension of urgency. For Jesus, everything was the last hour. Hence the importance of the decision, now. John the Baptist, the Pauline epistles stress the same idea.

How well this urgency suits the situation of the Church in the Third World! For the individual, it was always true. For society, it is evident today. Kingdom of God must come now. It must be proclaimed, by word and deed now. Every means of present technology, of social communication, of behavioural sciences must be pressed into service that in everyway Christ and the Crucified Lord, Christ the Liberator may be proclaimed. The situation of the Third World brooks no delay. Only the coming of the Kingdom can save it.

IV

A. The Servant Church 1. Like Her Lord

One more thing is certain: only a servant Church will be able to follow in the footsteps of her Servant Messiah. It has to be a fast and a radical kenosis, evidently a painful one. The great temptation of the Churches in the Third World will be the same as the temptation that accompanied the Lord's mission, namely, not to be a Servant Messiah but to achieve his mission in his own strength and power, the false notions of the Kingdom which the Lord condemned.

(16) J.S. Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background Oxford, 1971 pp. 23f.

(17) J. Danielou, Vom Heil der Volker, Frankfurt, 1952 pp.82-103.

2. The Church of the Poor

Another consequence is not less evident: if the Church is ever to fulfill this role of the Servant Messiah, it must be the Church of the Poor. Time and again this topic has come up in big congresses in various parts of the Third World, and yet the situation has not changed substantially even now. The Churches in the Third World continue to give the appearance of association with the higher classes of society, of relying on the power of money and prestige--in spite of all the detachment from earthly things, real and imaginary, which we claim to practise.

An immense new orientation will mark the new course of the Third World missions: the firm commitment to poverty as an essential ingredient for a credible proclamation of the Gospel, receiving everything from the Father.

Though we mention it only now, the first priority in our work of evangelization must be given, from the very first stages of our missionary witness and proclamation, to the presentation of the good news seen as 'total liberation' of the socially and economically oppressed. This is the top most priority that has to be proclaimed in the Third World under the given circumstances, before time runs out for the missions and other forces take over. China's example, whatever one may say against it, will last as a powerful model for rebuilding the Third World in the same fashion. We should have no illusions: religion will be severely tested in the Third World, and the test will be precisely the social question. No religion, be it Christianity, Islam or Hinduism, that is unable to create a world in which justice dwells, has a chance of seeing much of the third millenium. (18)

3. Ongoing Renewal

Just as the public mission work of the Lord started with a clarion call for conversion, so also the new phase of the world mission starts with a similar call which is expressed repeatedly, for instance, in Evangelii Nuntiandi No. 15: 'The Church is the people of God immersed in the world and often tempted by idols and therefore always needs to hear the proclamation of the mighty works of God'...in brief, this means that she has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wishes...to proclaim the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council recalled and the 1974 Synod vigorously took up again, this theme of the Church which is evangelized by constant conversion and renewal, in order to evangelize the world with credibility'.

Some of the salient features which would act as the criteria of genuine conversion of the converted ones would be the realization that mission work is the over-flow of the Christ-experience, and therefore can never exist without a deep concomitant contemplation and life of prayer. Mission work is not in the first place, as is mistakingly thought by many, a question of finances and personnel, but the over-flow of the Christ-experience into others. This presupposes in the missionary a deep, genuine life of prayer.

(18) E. Zeitler SVD, The Signs of the Times for the Religious in Asia, Keynote Address for the Asian Conference of Major Superiors, Pune, 1978, p. 26.

B. The Church of Hope

The Church in the Third World has to be the Church of hope. In the midst of the complete absurdity that life can produce; the poverty, misery, oppression, injustice that exists in the world, the Christian believes that life has a meaning. He knows that salvation history is realized not only in the mighty works of God for his chosen people and in the recorded actions of Jesus so long ago. To believe in salvation history we have also to involve ourselves in the activity and movement God inspires today. There is a feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness among many peoples in the Third World. To these people, the Church has to be a sign of hope. We must believe, that beyond all our horizons, God awaits us with his promise of his kingdom. For God is always the God of the Exodus and of the resurrection; He is always ahead of us on our way, leading us out of the captivity, of the unfree conditions we have come to terms with, into the land of freedom.

The Church has to be a sign of this hope to the Third World. The Lord who rose from the dead, lives. He will surely come as Redeemer, as Liberator. "Write these things. They are trustworthy and true" (Rev 21,5).

CONCLUSION

We have reached a decisive turning point in the mission history of the Third World: there is no return to the past, neither to the past mission theories, nor to the past mission methods, nor to the past mission goals. (19)

A new era has started, that of the Third World Mission, which grows harmoniously out of the past into a new future.

The tiny Third World Churches are no longer only 'missions', the recipients of material help and of 'mission personnel'. They have now been entrusted by Divine Providence with a tremendous task to be and to proclaim the Kingdom of God in the Third World with great faith, and a still greater hope, even though their success in terms of the Church structures they will be able to put up, may be minimal. Even so, the Third World Churches are called upon to proclaim God's Kingdom not only to the Third World but far beyond to the whole world.

Our attitude should not be one of fear and despair, but of immense expectation. The Lord of history will manifest His mighty deeds in this world of ours.

(19) E. Zeitler SVD, The Future of Missions, Pune, 1978 p. 22.

Abbreviations

AG - Ad Gentes, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church
 LG - Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
 EN - Evangelii Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI

SOUTH AFRICA
REVIEWS OF TWO RECENT BOOKS

By Father Francis George, omi.

Richard Turner, the author of The Eye of the Needle: Toward Participatory Democracy in South Africa (Orbis, 1978), was a lecturer in political science at the University of Natal in Durban. He was banned in 1973. In 1978, almost at the expiration of the five year banning order, he was shot and killed in his home by an anonymous assassin. His book expounds an economic and political critique of South African society and proposes an alternative to the present scheme of things. The critique is based largely on Marxist economic insights and the suggested alternative is "utopian" Christian socialism. The entire book is an argument for "the necessity of utopian thinking," the need for a relentlessly theoretical approach to free us from existing social institutions and enable us to work toward an alternative future.

Some of the theoretical models Mr. Turner sketches have historical names: Christianity, capitalism, socialism. In rather general terms he explores the values to be found in these models and then shows their concrete realization in South African history. Turner's conclusion is "that the capitalist human model is (1) incompatible with Christian ethics, and (2) the root cause of conflict in South Africa" (p.36). Turner wants South Africans to work toward a model he calls "participatory democracy"; and its historical instances are more difficult to find. He mentions some worker run firms in Western Europe and the United States, Israeli kibbutzim, Tanzanian Ujamaa villages, parts of Czechoslovakian industry before 1968, some Chinese communes and, most important of all for Turner, Yugoslavian factories. The heart of Turner's thesis is given in Chapter 5 (pp. 52 to 71), in which he works through a series of problems to show that his notion of a planned economy is compatible with personal freedom. Joining long range planning with decentralization of control and decision making is what religious government has been about for the last fifteen years, so this chapter can be of concrete interest to members of General Administrations.

Turner adds chapters on how to educate for freedom and on what democracy in South Africa would look like, were it genuinely participatory. The postscript to the book is another chapter, going into some detail on means to change the present situation: expanding one's network of friends among people of all races, analyzing the values made concrete in personal behavior, changing the pattern of relationships between men and women, using actual workers' organizations and the homeland structures (Turner will be criticized by many for accepting these as a useful intermediate tool for black expression), and finding a clearer role for the churches as agents of social change. He covers a lot of ground in a relatively short book of 173 pages, and many of the suggestions made in the postscript could be of help to those looking for constructive ways in which to work for change in South Africa.

It seems ungracious, at least, to criticize the ideas of a man who died for them; but it would be unfair to deny Turner in death the dialogue he was unjustly deprived of in life. Three general criticisms can be made.

1) Since Turner calls his book theoretical, the bases of his theories, if weak, can undermine his whole line of argument. A major theoretical weakness is his locating the root of racial discrimination in class differences and economic interests. There have been published too many studies on the psychology of racial prejudice to permit the reduction of racial differences to class differences. Personal attitudes on the one hand and social and economic structures on the other certainly influence each other reciprocally; but even Turner admits that self interest cannot be identified with material or economic interest. Furthermore, a capitalist economic system does not, of itself, demand the complicated system of pass laws, immorality acts, racially restricted suffrage, government censorship, anti-subversion measures, restrictions on freedom of association and on trade unions that are law in South Africa. These laws could go, as many South African businessmen plead, even without radical change in the basic economic system; if they are maintained and strengthened, it is for multiple reasons, including racial and cultural sensitivities which predate the development of industrial capitalism. In fact, a peculiarly repulsive feature of South African society is that, in the name of racial differentiation and the defense of "Christian civilization", the government has imposed on its people many of the instruments of oppression found in Marxist socialist states. The experience of oppression is similar everywhere, no matter the ideology legitimating it.

A second theoretical weakness stems from Turner's reliance on Marx's notion of the surplus value of labor, which enables one to label individual profit as theft. Basing one's theory of economic justice on Marx's notion of surplus value is a little like basing one's belief in the resurrection on the Shroud of Turin: there may be something to it, but the theory entails so much that is extrinsic to the issue at hand and is, furthermore, still so little intellectually compelling, that the conclusions appeal only to the already converted. Only those already converted to a Marxist worldview can read without blinking: "... there is no reason why Christian business people should not practice Christianity by handing their own enterprises over to the workers" (p. 103, emphasis added).

2) Although primarily a theoretical work, Turner's book mentions a number of practical examples to illustrate his ideas. Here too there are problems. As we learn more of contemporary China, the claim of the Maoist revolutionary communes to have met the challenge of feeding the Chinese people rings more and more hollow (cf. Miriam London and Ivan London, "Hunger in China: the Failure of a System?" Worldview, October, 1979, pp. 44-49). Also, Turner's favorite example of participatory democracy, the Yugoslav workers' republic, had in 1979, according to Yugoslav dissidents comparable in their society to Turner in his, the highest rate of inflation in Europe (27%), a chronic deficit in its balance of payments (6.2 billion dollars last year, which aggravates its 20 billion dollar indebtedness to foreign leaders) and an unemployment rate of 12%, not counting the million

Yugoslav citizens who must find work abroad. If phenomena such as unemployment or underemployment, inflation, high foreign debt and the orientation of production for export so that people cannot enjoy the fruits of their own labor are as true of Poland as they are of Brazil, then perhaps these phenomena occur at a certain moment of economic development, no matter if the economic organization of a society is called "capitalist" or "socialist". Upon examination, Turner's historical examples often turn out to be as "theoretical" as the model they are meant to make concrete.

3) Lastly, there are difficulties with the relationship between Turner's theory of participatory democracy and the Christianity he wants to say inspires and legitimates it. Turner proposes a rationalist economic model which, if it worked, would protect certain values, some of which are dear to believers in Christ's salvific death and resurrection. Does this make his model "Christian"? The Gospels tell the believer that God's kingdom is a reign of justice and peace, of truth and freedom, of generosity and love. What these words mean is very much mediated by the culture in which they are spoken. What they should mean must be mediated by an eschatology which is not open to every form of utopian thinking. Ignoring these caveats, well-intentioned people who happen to be Christian can proclaim universal rationalist panaceas and call this an act of Christian prophetism. Turner's theory has features which some Christians, and others, might find attractive; but it's only one of many social orders more or less compatible with Christian belief.

A second book, The Church Struggle in South Africa (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979), is by John W. de Gruchy, a lecturer in the department of religious studies at the University of Capetown and a minister in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. This book is, except for the last chapter, less theoretical and more historical than Turner's in its approach and analysis.

To begin, de Gruchy traces the historical origins of the Christian church in Southern Africa from the coming of the Dutch (1652) and the French Huguenots (1668) to the beginnings of the independent black churches of this century. De Gruchy writes mostly of Protestant churches, treating the Catholic Church tangentially. The Dutch Reformed Church, Calvinist in its theology but influenced in its South African development by both liberalism and evangelicalism, was and remains, in its three major denominational expressions, the church of the Afrikaner. English-speaking churches are the Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Congregationalist. The churches were a means of nationalist expression for their white adherents. To reach black Africans, the Dutch Reformed denominations created black daughter churches. The English-speaking churches established missions, which eventually changed these churches into multiracial denominations with white leadership. In this century, the rise of the independent churches was associated with the awakening of black nationalism.

Next, de Gruchy tells in more detail the story of the various churches' struggles around the issue of apartheid, especially since the Nationalist party's electoral victory in 1948 made this theory the guiding policy of the government of South Africa. The author carefully analyzes major Conference, Synod and General Assembly declarations. Two impressions emerge from his presentation: 1) the constant and strongly expressed moral opposition of the

English-speaking churches to apartheid and its attendant legislation: the Group Areas act, immorality act, education act, job reservation, security act, pass laws, the farm prison system; 2) the extent to which the Nationalist government is itself vocally involved in Church politics and in denominational debates. Beyond the declarations and the papers, there is also the story of events--the reaction to Sharpeville (March, 1960) and the Cottesloe Consultation (December, 1960); the pressure from the World Council of Churches, especially through the 1970 Program to Combat Racism and the tensions in the South African Council of Churches; the ministry of Beyers Naude and the Confessing Church movement centered in the Christian Institute; the public dialogue published in the Spro-Cas reports; and the conscientious objection debate of recent years.

The black Christian response expressed itself in the University Christian Movement and, more speculatively, in a black South African theology of liberation. The government's reaction to black initiatives was, as usual, more brutally direct and repressive. De Gruchy shows how the story of institutional conflict between government and black Christians is also the story of the gradual superseding of tribal identities by black consciousness.

The final chapter of the book is theologically the most important. It explores the theology of the Kingdom of God, considering in different contexts three constant themes: 1) the sovereignty of God over history, 2) the redemptive grace of God in Jesus Christ for the person and the community, and 3) the socio-political implications for the present of God's ultimate purpose for the future of the world. The contexts in which these themes are examined are North America, South Africa and South America. De Gruchy gives a clear and comprehensive analysis of the relations between faith and ideologies and makes an arguable statement about violence: "Those who argue that in some cases, as in the liberation movements, violence may be necessary, have to contend with (John) Yoder's comment: 'If violence is not always wrong, then structural violence is not necessarily wrong either'. You cannot have it both ways" (p. 232). He finishes the book with a plea for church unity so that the church will be a more effective witness to that peace and justice which are the signs of God's kingdom.

Both books are graced with a foreward by Alan Paton. Mr. Paton, from the depths of his own Christian faith, writes of signs of hope and of possibilities for change. He writes also of the inevitable tension between white security and black liberation in the church and, consequently, of the contrast between the Church of the Nation and the Church of Christ.

What both books make clear is that strategic possibilities for change in South Africa, and elsewhere, are linked to a theology of history, sometimes explicit and sometimes not. When salvation history is too closely wedded to the history of any people, then Sacred Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, can be too easily searched as a casebook of national liberation. The exodus story, for example, has been used as a sacred precedent by Afrikaners to justify their trek, by Zionists to justify the occupation of the West Bank and by liberation theologians to justify social revolution in South America. When, on the other hand,

there is no sense of the connection between the Spirit of God moving in the world and the aspirations of every people for freedom and justice, then church people are unable to speak to their own society except in moralistic or sentimental terms.

Among religiously oriented people interested in the future of South Africa, there are those who see very clearly, in line with Vatican II, that the church must remain free to evangelize and be independent of whatever political and economic order obtains in the country. Some of these, however, are not especially exercised about the liberation of entire peoples and are perhaps a bit suspicious of many freedoms claimed as rights by individuals in liberal cultures. Other religious people, including apparently many of the staff of the World Council of Churches, are very insistent on the liberation of peoples, seemingly less concerned about the independence of the Church and sometimes scornful of individual freedoms, which are said to be tied to a particular class and a certain type of economic structure. But from history, both ancient and recent, it is not difficult to argue that any profound social change which doesn't guarantee basic freedoms for individuals, including the freedom to dissent publicly, has soon ended with a less than liberated people and a church highly dependent on the state and hampered in exercising its right to preach the Gospel. In building the Kingdom of God, in South Africa and elsewhere, can missionaries and other religious people put together individual freedoms, the liberation of peoples and the independence of the church?

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SOUTH AFRICA
CRISIS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

Pretoria, 1st February 1980 -(DIA)-

An important conflict seems to be taking form between the Anglican Church and the South African Government, after the decision of the leaders of the Church to ignore the laws requiring an official authorisation for multi-racial meetings.

The leader of the Federal Progressive Party, Dr. Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, recently declared that if South Africa would not abandon its line of political conduct which is opposed to the religious convictions of the established Churches, there would be a great danger for conflict between the State and the Churches. Nevertheless, Dr. Slabbert declared that his party does not favour violence as a solution to abolish the law on the separation of racial groups (Group Areas Act), but that it is firmly opposed to this act.

Moreover, Archbishop Bill Burnett, in the course of a synod at Grahamstown recently, alluded to the impossibility for the Church to continue to function legally in South Africa. The delegates to the synod also supported a resolution recommending to the World Council of Churches (WCC) to combat racism, whilst some of them even went so far as comparing their situation to that of the Church in Nazi Germany. "What has happened in the course of the Synod of the Anglican Church in Grahamstown constitutes a provocation", declared the national South African Radio.

The conflict has grown worse with the announcement of complaints lodged by the South African security forces against Rev. David Russel who transgressed an interdiction against him since December 1977, by taking part in the Synod.

Reference: DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION FOR AND ABOUT AFRICA, 30th January, 1980, 16th Year, No.43.

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 :DOCUMENTATION:

FAMILY

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Title of Document</u>
5.ADS (177/79)	<u>Kenya Bishops' Issue Pastoral Letter on Family and Responsible Parenthood</u> , In AMECEA DOCUMENTATION SERVICE, No. 177, 1979. pp. 2-9.
5.F (2935/79)	<u>Pastoral Letter Concerning Family Life</u> , In FIDES, No. 2935, 1979. pp. 164-169.
5.CEM (M) (8/9/79)	<u>Il Fanciullo nella Comunità Umana--La Famiglia</u> , In CEM MONDIALITA, Anno 8, Settembre 1979. pp. 1-39.
4/3534	<u>The Family Today, Faithfulness</u> , In THE TABLET, 1979. 2 pages.
4/3513	<u>The Family Today: Marriage and Children</u> , In THE TABLET, 1979. 2 pages.
4/3640	<u>The Family Today</u> , In THE TABLET, 7th July, 1979. 2 pages.
5.R (197/79)	<u>The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World</u> , In REPRINTS No. 197, 1979. pp. 627-643.
4/3628	<u>The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World</u> , In THE TABLET, 30 June, 1979. Synod working paper.
4/3581	<u>The National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds</u> , in THE LINACRE QUARTERLY, Vol. 45, No. 4, 1978. 432 pages.
4/3591	<u>Natural Sex</u> , Rawson, WADE Publishers, Inc. New York, 1979. 273 pages.
4/3579	<u>Educational Handbook: A Guide to the Family Fertility Education Learning Package, 1979</u> . 75 pages.
4/3584	<u>Advance Mailing Summaries or Abstract of NFP Workshop Presentations, June 27-29, 1979</u> . 31 pages.
4/3583	<u>IFFLP African NFP Instructor Project 1978-1980, Progress Report: No. 1, 1979</u> . 25 pages.
2.MM (M73/12/79)	<u>Salvation History Begins With the Family</u> , In MARY-KNOLL, Vol. 73, No. 12, 1979. pp. 2-64.
2. CSSP (S77/79)	<u>La Famille Chinoise</u> , In SPIRITUS No. 77, 1979. pp. 356-372.
2.CSSP (S77/79)	<u>Quelle Parole Pour Quelle Famille?</u> In SPIRITUS, No. 77, 1979. pp. 386-400.
2. FSCJ (MN 205/78)	<u>La Famiglia Cristiana</u> , In MUNDO NEGRO, No. 205, 1978. pp. 26-30.
4/2961	<u>The Changing Family Pattern in India</u> , by Father Anthony D'Souza, SJ., 16 pages.
4/2962	<u>The Family in East and Southeast Asia: Persistence and Change</u> , by Mercedes B. Concecion. 13 pages
1/846	<u>SECAM. Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, 1978</u> . pp. 12.
5.C(USG) (4/80)	<u>"Defis et Aspects Positifs dans la Crise de la Famille D'Aujourd'hui"</u> In USG CONVENTUS MENSILIS; Circ.N.4/80, 16 Janvier, 1980. pp.2-7.

COMING EVENTS

SEDOS SEMINAR/GENERAL ASSEMBLY will be held on Thursday, 12th June, 1980 from 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. at the Generalate of the Christian Brothers, Via Aurelia 476.

The theme will be:

A Different Tomorrow

(a report on the Melbourne Conference)

The Conference booklet speaks of the Lord's Prayer as "the prayer that makes it possible to believe in a different tomorrow".

The Sedos Seminar will consist of a report on the highlights of the Conference, along with reflection groups to ascertain the ramifications of the conference for the future of mission. Copies of the Conference booklet in French and English will be distributed before the Seminar as preparatory material.

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Course on THE INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH: this is the title of a course to be conducted in English at Villa Cavalletti (Grottaferrata, Rome) from June 8th to 16th, 1980, by Fr. Anthony de Mello, well-known author of 'Sadhana--a way to God'. Preference in participation will be given to members of General Councils, up to March 31st; others may apply later. Information and registration at: Centrum Ignatianum, Borgo S. Spirito 3A - Tel. 656.98.41 (any weekday, 9-12 a.m.).

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ON-GOING FORMATION COURSE FOR MISSIONARIES--The men's and women's missionary institutes of Italian origin will sponsor a formation course from 19th May to 12th June on the theme:

The Role of the Missionary in the Formation of Christian Communities

The course is orientated towards biblical, theological and ecclesial reflection on the fundamental elements of the Christian community in relation to the evangelization of peoples.

The language of the course is Italian. The venue is Centro Internazionale di Animazione Missionaria, Viale delle Mura Aurelia 4, 00152 Roma.

For further information, contact: P. Filippo Commissari, pime
Via F. D. Guerrazzi 11
00152 Roma
Tel. 06/589.79.41

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