

Coming Events:

- 4th December - 4.00 p.m. Sedos office: Executive Committee
Seminar Steering Committee meetings.
- 9th December - 8.00 a.m. - Prayer of Intercession for Sedos Mission Research
11.30 a.m. Seminar: Programme:
- 8.00 - 9.00 a.m. Concelebrated Mass in Crypt of
St. Peter's.
- 9.30 - 11.30 a.m. Meeting continues in Borgo S.
Spirito 3A.

MISSION RESEARCH SEMINAR

9th - 19th March, 1981

The opening of the Sedos Mission Research Seminar which will be held at Villa Cavaletti in March '81 is little more than three months away and preparations are now in their final stages.

Forty-nine preparatory papers have been written for the Seminar by resource persons in mission around the world, thirty-two of whom have accepted, to date, our invitation to attend.

There will be about one hundred participants made up of the authors of the preparatory papers, the Superior Generals or their representatives, of Sedos Member Societies, the representatives of sponsoring agencies and of some new missionary Institutes in "Third World" countries.

Over half the resource persons are from Asia, Africa, Oceania or the Americas.

All members and friends of Sedos are invited to a half day prayer of intercession on December 9, for the success of the Seminar. This prayer partly replaces the normal Seminar organized by Sedos each December. It will be fully replaced by the Research Seminar of March '81. You will find details of the Prayer of Intercession in "Coming Events."

With this Bulletin there is also an insert for our Roman readers asking for their help in providing accomodation for a small number of the resource persons having no contacts in Rome. We hope you will be generous in offering hospitality.

In the four hands of the Seminar Sign on our title page we are reminded of the spirit of collaboration in equality which inspires mission today. All are invited to collaborate in making the Seminar a fruitful event. Those of us living in Rome could start by joining in the morning of prayer on December 9th. We look forward to meeting you there.

- end -

News Items: See page 323.

**CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN THE THIRD WORLD:
IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION**

- Walter J. Hollenweger

Songs and stories, prayer for the sick, pilgrimages, exorcism and glossolalia, in short all the expressions of oral theology, function as a system for passing on theological and social values and information in oral societies in a way that can be likened to a modern computer, because the individual memories can be linked together in such a way that, although no one person actively communicates the whole tradition, in principle everybody has access to the total information.

This communication system is vital for pre- and post-literary cultures. As these cultures are becoming more and more important, it becomes imperative for Western theologians and missiologists to be able to read these "oral books," to tune into these sociopsychological information systems and to communicate with the theologians of these cultures. If mission is not only the geographical growth of Western culturally determined forms of the church but also the cultural and theological growth, then we have to explore the intercultural theological exchange between the different forms of the church in such a way that the cultural diversities of the church become an expression of its theological unity.

There is no reliable overview of the charismatic renewal in the Third World. Generally speaking we know that it is strong in Brazil, Mexico, Trinidad, Argentina, Indonesia, Korea, and South Africa. As to its strength in other countries, opinions vary. Problems of establishing the extent and character of the charismatic renewal are almost insurmountable, first, because the scene is changing all the time; second, because there is no accepted definition of the charismatic renewal; and third, because it is almost impossible to get accurate statistics and descriptions.

The question of definition is not only a semantic, but also a theological one. I mention only a few of the problems: Should the Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad, who are in no way more enthusiastic than the Catholic Pentecostals on the same island, be included in the charismatic renewal? Should the Kimbanguists in Zaire, who by now are a well-established, hierarchical African church, be included in an overview of the charismatic renewal? (This question becomes all the more poignant as only ten or twenty years ago they were not even counted among the Christian churches.) Similar questions have to be asked about the indigenous Indian Pentecostal churches in Mexico, the revivals in Indonesia, the Christian gurus in India, the black churches in England, the Jamaa Movement in East Africa, and the many and powerful African churches in West Africa. Finally, it is becoming more and more evident that there is a growing and important charismatic renewal under way in Eastern Europe (with similar features to the Third World charismatic groups and churches), which, for obvious political reasons, is so far contained firmly within the traditional churches.

I. THE ROOTS

Two roots can be identified: first, American Neo-Pentecostalism and, second, something that I would like to call "oral theology" and which owes its existence to the encounter between the gospel as preached by Western missionaries and various Third World cultural and political situations.

American Neo-Pentecostalism: is present in all mainline American denominations.

It owes its existence to American Pentecostal spirituality and doctrine, which has infiltrated all the American churches via the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, the ministry of David Du Plessis, and the Oral Roberts University. (One should never forget that Oral Roberts has been accepted as a Methodist minister without having been asked to change either his theology or his practice; if a Pentecostal is rich and influential, American church authorities no longer insist on doctrinal investigations.) It is understandable that not only had the Vatican to make a thorough study of its relationship to Pentecostalism, but the World Council of Churches had also to set up--albeit belatedly--a program to study questions of the charismatic renewal.

This is not the place to reiterate the story of American Pentecostalism. Only one point is important, namely, that it emerged in the encounter of the Holiness Movement with black spirituality in Los Angeles in 1906. As important features of Roman Catholic spirituality have been integrated into the Holiness Movement, one could--in a somewhat simplified way say that Pentecostalism is in part 'the result of an encounter of Catholic spirituality and black spirituality on American soil.' Hence the fierce resistance of all strictly evangelical Christians both to Pentecostalism and to the charismatic renewal. In spite of some common ground, they rightly sense the difference between Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality and their own. Only to the extent that Pentecostalism loosens its roots in Catholic and black spirituality does it become acceptable to Evangelicalism.

But it is the very same ingredients, namely, the Catholic and black spirituality, that account for the success of American Neo-Pentecostalism in the Third World. The oral liturgies of the charismatic renewal, its potential for overcoming a century-old antagonism to the Roman Catholic Church, the fact that, for the first time since the Reformation, Protestants enjoy ecumenical Eucharists together with the Catholics (which are by no means initiated by the World Council of Churches) make it a very likely candidate for success in Latin America. The emphasis on healing by prayer, the importance of song and speaking in tongues, the ministry of exorcism ring true to many African Christians who hitherto had been told by their sterner Protestant teachers that all this was sub-Christian baggage of the past. A charismatic leader as the focus of the church makes it possible to link Christianity with the tradition of the guru in India. That all is a highly risky business and contains promises both for disaster and for healthy mission will be discussed later.

Oral Theology: Western Christianity and Judaism are religions of the book. We are introduced to our tradition by reading the records of the past. It is strange for us to learn that there are other ways of recording and passing on the values of the past.

Yet there are such other ways. They can be found among many Third World churches, and--perhaps surprising to some, in the Bible. As form criticism taught before structuralism became a fashion, the hymns and stories of the Old and New Testaments were passed on for a considerable time through oral tradition.

The theologies of the Bible shaped the values of old Israel and articulated the hope of the emerging church long before they were written down, just as the hymns, prayers, dances, and liturgies of the independent churches in Africa, of the black churches in the United States, and of the Pentecostal churches in Latin America conditioned their theological communication. In these preliterate, semi-literate, or postliterate cultures the medium of communication is--just as in biblical times--not the definition but the description, not the statement but the story, not the doctrine but the testimony, not the book but the parable, not a systematic theology but a song, not the treatise but the TV program, not the articulation of concepts but the celebration of banquets.

Desmond Tutu comments, "Why should we feel embarrassed if our theology is not systematic? Why should we feel that something is amiss if our theology is too dramatic for verbalisation but can be expressed only adequately in the joyous song and the scintillating movement of Africa's dance in the liturgy?"

Why should Africans feel embarrassed? The answer is simple. Because we theologians of the West, and in particular we evangelical theologians, do not consider such communication to be of the same academic standard as that which is expressed through our own cultural media. How superficially have we read the Bible! How little have we, who are committed to biblical truth, taken seriously not only the content, but also the form, of biblical communication! Not to speak, of course, of the modern, so-called progressive, theologians who do not bother to look at the visions of hope and freedom that are expressed in a moving way in the songs and stories of these Third World churches. It is as if they do not exist.

"Such silence is inexcusable," says James H. Cone, a black theologian from the United States, in an analysis of the Spirituals. "It is hard," he continues, "not to conclude that they (namely, the mentioned theologians) are enamored by their own identity with the culture and history of white slave-masters." Even if one deducts a fair amount from such a sweeping statement, the fact is obvious that our debates on development policy, political witness of the churches, "Church and Society," "Theology of Revolution," or whatever the slogans may be, ignore some of the most adequate methods of communicating and celebrating the gospel such as are practiced among the Kimbanguists in Zaire and other African churches, and Latin American indigenous Pentecostal churches.

In order to clarify the function of oral culture I now retell the story of 'Antônio José dos Santos' in his own words:

"I was born in the state of Alagoas in the city of Uniao dos Palmares. The names of my parents were José Filipe dos Santos and Joana Maria da Conceicao. At the age of six months I was taken to the state of Pernambuco where I was reared. At the age of twenty-one I was married. I married abiding by the laws of the Catholic church and only now have married legally. At the age of thirty-six I accepted the Word of Christ's Gospel. It happened in the municipio of Pôrto do Calvo at the Engenho Sao Joao. There already existed an assembleia in that place and that is where the Lord used me. And I went into the desert to pray for a period of ten months, then I started preaching the Gospel to the people."

Antônio José dos Santos then describes in detail how he received the baptism in the Spirit and how he was called by visions to the ministry. He earned his livelihood as a farmworker and preached when he had earned enough in order to support himself and his family. But he had a troubled life, never being permitted to stay more than a few months in any one place.

"Once more I had to move on, so I returned to Sergipe and Campo Nôvo where my wife and children were, and preached the Gospel there. The owner of the farm and his entire family were converted and I started a small congregation. After eight days the people from Santa Brigida who had been converted began moving in over the thirty kilometers of trail between the two places.

These people fled from Santa Brigida by night because of fear of the Captain of Police, José Rufino, and other people in the town. They came in groups of twenty-five at a time and within a few days there were about thirty families at Campo Nôvo, which amounted to about one

hundred and fifty persons. We stayed there together for four years and eight months...

"Now the owner of Campo Nôvo farm who had been converted had a son who had been absent for some years in the city of Sao Paulo. One day he came home and found all of those crentes (believers) farming on his father's property and he began immediately to agitate to have his father send us away upon the pretext we would eventually take the land entirely away from his father and the heirs.

Really, though, what he wanted was the improvements we had put on the land in those years of hard work: thirteen good houses, five acudas (reservoirs for water) and a large number of tarefas (unit of land measure, equal to three-fourths of an acre) in Sergipe, of rice, beans, and cotton. His father finally agreed to his demands and I went to the authorities of the municipio asking them to try and intercede for us for at least some sort of partial payment for all we had to leave behind.

On 27 May 1958 sixty crentes followed me leaving behind everything and we all travelled forty-five kilometers to another fazenda named Belo Horizonte. The wife of the farmer of Campo Nôvo turned against him when he treated the crentes in this manner, and came with us. Today she lives with us here on the Fazenda Belo Horizonte and has brought suit against her husband for her share of the property of Campo Nôvo.

"The fazeindeiro of Belo Horizonte was named Agostinho Barbaso dos Anjos and he took all of us in, offering us land. He told us he would sell the land to us so we would never be chased again. But we did not have any money with which to pay. He said that it did not matter. I was to stay and work with the people and pay him as we could. After nine months at Belo Horizonte he gave us a written title by means of which I and all the people became registered owners of 2,300 tarefas. We had to work three years more in order to pay for it in full but after this we were free to move onto the property and build our homes on it.

This is the settlement we have built, and are still building, and we call it Fazenda Nova Vida (New Life Farm). To the thirty families who moved here with me I appointed a piece of ground, all that they were able to work, and gave them a property document for it. Each family received land according to its size and number of hands it was able to put to work. The church we have built we call the Evangelho da Paz.

The public authorities of the municipio of Poco Redondo, in which Belo Horizonte was located at the time we came, refused to have anything to do with us up to and including this very day. On 24 September 1963, our church joined the Assembly of God irgeja-mãe of Aracajú."

Donald Edward Curry, to whose anthropological research I owe this story, describes Antônio in the categories of a Brazilian messiah. This is "taken to mean a person believing himself to be divinely called, as a result of a dream or a series of visions, to lead a group of people from some catastrophic set of conditions into a more perfect state of affairs." I would have preferred the term "shaman" for the same phenomenon. However, it seems to me that his conclusions--quoting Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz--are significant for our study.

"The...primary function (of the Brazilian messianic movements) is to transform the profane society....The second function is that of renewing the local political frameworks, by substituting for the traditional chiefs--who no longer merit confidence--someone who is their superior --the messiah....The Brazilian messiahs thus owe the greatest part of their prestige to their skills in resolving the practical problems of daily life. Salvation in the hereafter is completely secondary in comparison to the importance of profane goals."

This is of course contrary to all that is usually said about Pentecostals and it might well be that Curry goes to the other extreme. But the structure of this oral culture, of this oral theology, is clear. It is carried out in descriptive categories, in the story, the witness, the vision.

This mode of theologizing makes it independent of Western experts, skills, and capital. The tradition of their stories functions like an oral book. Very few people can learn a whole book by heart, but it is easy to repeat accurately a song, one of Christ's parables, an Old Testament story, the story of Antônio. Each of these single pieces of information can be linked together like the isolated datum of information in a computer. Thus the whole body of wisdom, of theology, is available to the whole community, as long as the community stays together. Not everybody knows everything, but in principle everybody has access to the whole tradition, which is exactly the function of a modern communications system, only in the case of an oral culture it functions without electronic gadgets.

That is why charismatic movements in the Third World not only have access to the literary tradition of the United States, but also the collective wisdom of their own cultural situation, both Christian and pre-Christian. Obviously one would expect new forms of Christianity to emerge--just as the encounter of the Hebrew-Christian form of Christianity with the Hellenistic culture produced a different form of Christianity. The moral standards, the Christological categories, the liturgical formulas, and the eschatological expectations of the Hebrew Christians differed widely from those of the Hellenistic Christians. The inculturation of the charismatic movement into the different oral cultures of Third World countries produces different types of charismatic movements. This is the reason for both its missionary efficiency and its possible theological deviations.

If, however, controls from outside, from Europe and America, are enforced on Third World charismatic movements in order to ensure that they remain charismatic in the sense of the European/American pattern, then its missionary outreach will be seriously hindered.

The fact that Antônio joined the Assemblies of God in Brazil was not a conscious decision for a certain type of theology, namely the Pentecostal. It was much more a decision for a type of Christianity within which he could operate without having to give up his own oral tradition.

II. THE FRUITS

Insofar as charismatic movements in the Third World become part of the culture of the Third World, the following features will be recognized: (1) a nonconceptual medium for theologizing: song and story; (2) an alternative or a complement to Western medicine: prayer for the sick; (3) an exploration into the dark side of the soul: exorcism; (4) a cathedral of sounds; glossolalia. As I have dealt already with the first category, namely, the category of orality, I shall immediately pass on to the second.

Prayer for the sick: is of particular importance in the African and Latin-American churches. The treatment of illness as practiced by Europeans is scarcely acceptable to many of them, even if they cannot explain in our terms what prevents them from accepting it. European medicine seems to them to be a new and worse magic which claims to be able to overcome the tragedy of sickness but which in fact isolates the body from the soul with the tools of modern science. In these circumstances a responsible integration of academic medicine (including psychiatry) and the African practice of hypnotherapy (healing by hypnosis) with healing through prayer is an urgent necessity.

An example of such an integration is the Etodome Nyanyuie-Presbiteria Hame Gbedoda Kple Doyo-Habobo (The Prayer and Healing Group of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church at Etodome in Ghana). This prayer group was founded by the bricklayer Frank Kwadzo Do, a faithful member of the Presbyterian Church in Etodome. With the permission of the church authorities he began to hold Presbyterian services because the nearest Presbyterian church was too far away. Since those who came to these services did not know any Protestant hymns he held special hymn practices for them. A dying child was brought to one of these practices and was healed by the prayers of the assembled congregation. At the same time Do received visions and the gift of speaking in tongues.

This prayer and healing group in Etodome that grew up round Do worked within the Presbyterian Church, with the permission of the church authorities, although the speaking in tongues and other peculiarities caused a great deal of tension with neighboring congregations. Its healing services are quite different from American healing services. They consist of friendly pastoral care for individual patients, with confession of sins, and advice for combating disease, the difficulties of pregnancy, miscarriages and still-birth, together with help in preparing expectant mothers for the task of bringing up their children. In addition, all the greater and lesser difficulties of marriage and the upbringing of children that occur in daily life are dealt with in a sympathetic, goodhumored, but never frivolous way, in what amounts to an unselfconscious form of group therapy.

Another example is from Latin America: Dr. Binder, who is a disciple of Albert Schweitzer, provides a model for the integration of South American Indian medicine with scientific European medical treatment. He does not fight the Indian medicine men but accepts them as equals, colleagues. While he learns from them, at the same time he passes on to them important elements of European medicine and hygiene. Binder's dealings with the medicine men seem to me to be truly dialogical. The distinction between pupil and teacher is overcome. Both the European doctor and the Indian medicine man are pupil and teacher simultaneously.

All this suggests to me that in twenty or fifty years' time our children and grandchildren may perhaps ask questions similar to those that we ask when we look at the aqueducts of the old Romans: Why is it that those clever Roman engineers built costly, complicated three-storied structures to carry water over the valleys? They could have done it much more simply. And our grandchildren may ask us: Why these complicated X-ray machines? There are more simple ways of examining the inside of a person. Why these complicated operations? There are more human and less costly methods of adjusting bones and of removing foreign bodies and growths than cutting open the human body. Why these complicated anesthetics? There are simpler and less harmful methods of making the human body insensible to pain.

These are by no means the crazy questions of an uninformed outsider. The World Health Organization and the Christian Medical Commission (an agency sponsored by the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches) are conscious that a health service does not consist mainly in the

maintenance or even in the erection of traditional hospitals. Hospitals, especially in the Third World, are becoming increasingly expensive and increasingly ineffective in raising the general level of health of the population, because they are "bed-centered" and "care-centered" instead of being "person-centered" and "health-centered." What is the use of treating infectious diseases when the water we drink and the air we breathe become more and more polluted? What is the use of treating heart ailments when our modern way of life (even in the churches) imposes an excessive burden on the heart?

The most important question an African patient asks must not be constantly avoided. This question is not: What is my disease (appendicitis or a broken arm)? but: What is wrong with me, why am I ill (evil spirits or offenses against the community)? The African wants to see treatment for what he regards as the root of the disease and not merely treatment of its symptoms. Thus a decisive factor in the work of healing in Africa is the cooperation with Africans who have not had medical training but who are skilled in an African approach to health.

European medical researchers: Over the last ten years this insight has also spread among European medical researchers. In a provocative sermon on Mark 5:1-43, Walter Vogt, a Swiss general practitioner, said: "Medicine has developed an unsuspected skill in restoring health without healing....The encounter with mental illness for example is avoided. Society avoids confrontations with what cannot be healed, because it has itself become unhealthy." In other words: healing cannot really take place because the human machine must be repaired at all costs, even at the cost of hindering true healing. A person is seen as a combination of bio- and electro-chemical systems to be replaced and repaired. If people are "healed" like this, they fall to pieces.

In a very valuable book Hans Schaefer, a German professor of medicine, investigates the underlying principles and effects of present-day medicine. He does not believe that an increase in technological medicine will bring us that health for which we are longing. Similar questions are raised in the English-speaking world. The English doctor Michael Wilson describes present-day medical practice as "violence."

I do not advocate that we should replace European medicine with the practice of the African independent churches or the prayer for the sick of the Latin American Pentecostals, but surely their experiences point to realities and potentials that we have neglected. Such neglect could be to our cost. And who other than the charismatic movement, both in its Third World form and in its European/American form, would be better placed to take up this challenge?

Exorcism: There was a time when any mention of possession by ancestral spirits or demons would have been considered the product of a sick imagination. Consequently all phenomena of possession in Third World churches were considered part of the superstition of the uneducated. Today the pendulum is gradually swinging to the other extreme and we are faced in Europe with a growing wave of occultism, Satan worship, and demon possession. In spite of this the scene seems to be much less clear than is the case in respect of prayer for the sick. To my way of thinking the criteria for diagnosing demon possession are not clear (which is not the same as saying that demon possessions do not exist).

The question of the presence of ancestral spirits is of central importance to African Christians, both in the mainline churches and in the newly independent churches. Gabriel Setiloane complains bitterly how disappointed he was when the section on the presence of the ancestors was deleted from a material he wrote for the World Council of Churches. Ancestors are present everywhere in Africa, and not only for the poorly educated but even for "a Christian minister, born and raised in a manse," and trained in European theology. Simon Barrington-Ward, the

well-known general secretary of the evangelical Church Missionary Society in Great Britain, and Michael Singleton see the belief in ancestral spirits not just as a remnant of the African past, but as a way of dealing with a complex technological and pluralistic situation, a way of putting a shattered world together and a bridge between Europe and Africa--an idea already put forward by the great French sociologist Roger Bastide in his studies on the Afro-Brazilian religions.

The question of a critical reception of ancestral worship into the body of African theology would deserve a paper of its own. All that I can say here is that the issue is not closed and needs further intercultural theological reflection.

However, my topic here is not specifically ancestral worship but exorcism. Since writing 'The Pentecostals' I have not come across a better-documented and analyzed case than that of the exorcism of Gottlieb Dittus by Christoph Blumhardt. I therefore use the material again. It is identical to experiences in Third World churches, which unfortunately are not so well documented and examined as this story from southern Germany. Among other things it shows that the cultural barriers between Europe and Africa are not insurmountable if we Europeans take seriously those parts of our history that do not fit so easily into the historiography of a completely rational and enlightened Europe.

This is the story as reported by Blumhardt, a well-known Pietist. According to him the devil had magically introduced nails, frogs, and other substances into Gottlieb Dittus, who was finally set free in front of witnesses as the result of months of prayer. I am not able to judge whether there were parapsychological phenomena at work, or whether it was a case of therapeutic practice, which could be interpreted in terms of modern psychiatry. A Swiss psychiatrist, G. Benedetti, says:

A modern psychiatrist who, in treating a psychosis, allowed himself to become as infected as Blumhardt did, would be bound to cause us serious concern for his mental health. For the "reality" in which we live today has much less room for the possibility of such experiences than did the world view that existed a hundred years ago. Nowadays the occurrence of such experiences implies a far greater departure from the outlook and mode of experience of the healthy social environment in which they take place. In Blumhardt's time the world was much more open to many of the experiences of psychotic people.

I wonder whether this may not be the reason why patterns of symptoms like those of Gottlieb Dittus hardly ever occur in the present day. In our age suffering of this kind is a rarity. Extreme mental distress is expressed in different forms today. We observe it more in the autistic loneliness of schizophrenia or depression than in the colourful images of a spreading and contagious hysteria, occasional occurrences of which were still being studied at the beginning of this century by the early psychoanalysts. Consequently I think that to diagnose hysteria in the modern sense in the case of Gottlieb Dittus would be to fail to give a full account of the nature of her affliction. Hysteria in the present day is something different from what Blumhardt describes.

Benedetti continues:

In bringing the demons "face to face" with himself, Blumhardt became in part subject to them. This is the meaning which we can perceive in Blumhardt's "mythological" narrative. Hallucinatory experiences which

he shared with his patient show us how far he himself was affected by the stimulus of the psychotic situation. But the effect was unlike that upon people who completely shut themselves off from the affliction of the mentally ill person as a defence against it and yet who themselves fall victim to it in the very act of rejection.

The cruelty of the persecution of witches was an expression of the fact that the persecutors had 'succumbed' in this way. 'By entering into the situation of the psychosis, Blumhardt finally overcame it.'

I think a "critical reception" (see above, "Prayer for the Sick"). . . . of African healing practices and of African ancestral beliefs would have to proceed along these lines.

A theologian, Joachim Scharfenberg, has also studied the case of Gottlieb Dittus in detail. He agrees with Benedetti in regarding Blumhardt's relationship with the sick girl as a realization of and a pointer toward "the classical pattern of psycho-therapeutic dialogue." According to Scharfenberg the healing took place because, in his pastoral care, Blumhardt abandoned the attitude of instruction and consolation and entered into an open dialogue with the girl, "setting the faculties of experience" free to receive a new experience.

"It is the area of consciousness which is enlarged in this way which is able to exercise a healing effect, both on the mental situations and on the situations of social conflict in which his son, the younger Blumhardt, tried to carry forward the line of development begun by his father."

It is therefore not surprising that in the revival movement sparked off by Blumhardt, the sermon was replaced by an activity in which "as far as possible all members were involved in dialogue with each other" - a description of the very essence of a charismatic renewal patterned according to Paul's understanding of the relationship of the different organs within the body of Christ. In these meetings "the fateful division between the profane and the sacred is really broken down, here... a style of life is realised in which dialogue can develop, in which all who take part both give and receive."

"Here Blumhardt also learned to leave behind his former 'sharp' style of preaching and there was even a visible replacement of pastoral concern for the individual by this group dialogue. The effect of these impulses and promptings will spread far and wide, without setting up a situation of sectarian dependency upon them. Here people find liberation and--as Blumhardt set out as his aim--consciousness and 'knowledge of themselves.'" All this is another important bridging function of the charismatic renewal between the cultures of the Third World and the North Atlantic.

Over twenty years ago W. Schulte, a doctor, gave a similar reply to the question: What can a doctor say to Johann Christoph Blumhardt about illness and possession? According to Schulte "it is not possible to give a diagnosis which distinguishes between sickness and possession.... They represent two possible aspects of the same event." From this Schulte concludes: "No discerning doctor will deny that the healing of a disease can only come about with the help of God. But this should not mean abandoning all medical activity in the sphere of psychological and mental illness and looking for the help from a miracle of prayer."

All that seems to emerge from this medical evidence is this: perhaps most phenomena of possession can be explained (although not understood) within the framework of modern psychiatric knowledge, even if the possessed cannot be healed within that same framework. Even granted this, there is an "inexplicable remnant"

which points to the fact that our methods of perceiving and describing the realities of health or sickness are relatively accurate only in the spheres for which the method used is particularly appropriate. This is also the conclusion of a very revealing book on witchcraft in the west of France written by a French psychoanalyst. She rejects the simplistic "explanations" of traditional psychology and sociology and leaves the enigma open for the time being--probably the only honest conclusion for a purely empirical research.

Furthermore, we observe--in the Third World and in Europe--that in certain cases exorcism brings about healing where psychiatric treatment does not. It may be that this healing has to do with the willingness of the pastor or doctor "to enter into the situation of the psychosis" (Benedetti). But if that is a condition for healing, the experience of those Third World prophets, pastors, and healers and of those "exorcists" in the charismatic renewal who are not afraid to enter into that psychotic situation is all the more important for us. How do they manage to enter into that psychotic situation without becoming psychotic themselves? Here again an important intercultural learning process should and could emerge.

Glossolalia: In most Latin American Pentecostal churches, in many African independent churches, and in all charismatic prayer groups glossolalia is common praxis. It is, however, not more common among Mexican Pentecostals, for example, than among Catholic charismatic groups in the United States.

The literature on glossolalia is, of course, legion. I shall confine myself here to the analysis by a linguist, William J. Samarin, himself not a glossolalic. On the basis of tape recordings, visits to charismatic meetings, questionnaires, and a good knowledge of the international literature, Samarin comes to the conclusion that glossolalia is a normal phenomenon; not aberrant, only anomalous in certain cultural contexts; not pathological and having nothing to do with trance or schizophrenia. It can be seen as another way of communication, one that was commonly known "before the Aristotelianisation of the West", as Aristotle is not (or not yet) part of the New Testament canon, it is astonishing that not only liberal but also many evangelical theologians have capitulated before him.

Glossolalia is not fraud or pious deceit, but also not xenoglossia (as some charismatics believe), nor does it necessarily happen in a loud or particularly emotional voice. It is also not supernatural; in fact it is not a language in the sense that the sounds have a systematic relation to meaning. To state that it is either "the voice of God or schizophrenic babbling" is setting up wrong alternatives. It is a "facade of language." It is impossible to translate into a series of consonants and vowels the totality of events that gives glossolalia its significance." There is more than phonetics and linguistics to it.

What is its significance? Here Samarin knows Paul better than many scholarly New Testament commentators and antagonists of Pentecostalism. "The individual and social benefits of this existential, 'be yourself' religion have not been fully appreciated by observers in spite of the value that it places on just this kind of self-assertiveness." "Glossolalia is therefore not aberrant behavior, only anomalous. It is anomalous, because it departs from run-of-the-mill speech, not because tongue speakers are in any way abnormal."

But society has "judged glossolalic behavior abnormal because of the belief by certain Christians that this comes from God. Society has therefore judged a 'belief', not behavior or people. Yet both the speakers and the speech are condemned." Both those who believe that glossolalia is from God and those who believe that it is pathological, are in error, and according to Samarin the latter

error is the greater. Samaritan then tries his hand at an original and interesting sacramental interpretation of glossolalia. Bread in the Eucharist, he says, is bread, but in the Eucharist it becomes something that transcends ordinary bread, it has a function which is different from everyday bread. When a person speaks in tongues there is nothing supernatural about this. But "he is saying that he is involved in something--at a given moment in time or as part of a pattern of life--that transcends the ordinary.

"In short, glossolalia is a linguistic symbol of the sacred...Glossolalia says, 'God is here,' just as a Gothic cathedral says, 'Behold, God is majestic' ...Viewed in this way glossolalia is symbolic in the very way that the eucharist is symbolic."

The cathedral is built of ordinary stones. But the whole of the cathedral functions as a pointer to and a vessel of the extraordinary. It is built of normal stones but the whole building is the expression of the transcendental. The sounds of a sermon are ordinary sounds, expressed according to grammatical rules. But the whole of the sermon--if it is a truly evangelical sermon--points to something that goes beyond ordinary grammar.

At the very least, what this linguistic evidence shows us is: here are people without a Gothic cathedral (or, in the case of the American charismatic renewal, who have left their Gothic cathedral). Their symbol of the sacred, their liturgical space, their scenario is not set in stones and architectural design but in a design of another kind of language. It is a socioacoustic sanctuary.

I am not advocating that we should imitate the songs, the stories, the treatment of the sick, exorcism, and glossolalia of Third World charismatics. I simply would like to free these phenomena from their aura of exoticism and extravagance and show their potential for sound liturgical and missionary communication. I am convinced that some--surely not all--point to realities and to methods of dealing with realities that our forefathers knew, but which we have been made to forget. And that could become fatal for the future of Western theology because it hinders a truly intercultural approach to theology.

Furthermore, that process of repression and "forgetting" could become extremely harmful when the "demons of the past" break into our cultures (as can be seen already in the emergence of uncontrolled and sensational occultism) and find us completely unable to deal with them in a responsible way. For this coming confrontation, the charismata of the poor of the Third World will prove to be very much more than poor charismata.

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION

If mission is more than the export of our own culturally determined understanding of the gospel (necessarily culturally determined) into other cultures, if mission is that process by which the gospel passes from Jerusalem to Caesarea, then mission is not only concerned with the geographical growth of the church but also with its cultural and theological growth. The gospel which was finally received in Caesarea was different from that which was dispatched from Jerusalem. The Hellenistic church was different (and necessarily so) from the Hebrew Christian church. The same is true of the transition of the gospel from the Hellenistic culture to the Roman, and later to the Germanic and to the Anglo-Saxon cultures. And it is to the credit of the modern missionary movement that this same process is becoming visible in the transition of the gospel from the North Atlantic culture to the different Third World cultures.

This raises, of course, the question of the plurality of Christian worship, liturgy, and ethics within the unity of the Christian community, a question that evangelical missionary strategists can no longer simply pass over to the World Council of Churches and other "liberal" organizations. At least since Lausanne it is clear that there is an equally plural approach emerging in the evangelical community.

This makes an intercultural theological approach imperative, for which I submit in closing a number of theses. The church is theologically a transcultural and sociologically an intercultural body. But as soon as the church speaks it uses cultural language because all human language is embedded in a cultural tradition. How does theology, which wants to mirror this intercultural entity and point to its transcultural reality, operate if theological language is by definition culturally biased language and if this is unavoidable?

Theses: 1) The first step for such intercultural theology would be to acknowledge its limits. Intercultural theology is that academic discipline which operates in a given culture without absolutizing this culture. In that sense it only does what theology would do anyhow; in other words, it reflects or mirrors theologically the body of Christ. If theology is not just a rationalization of our own cultural biases (i.e., a sectarian theology, or worse a theologically defended cultural imperialism), then it must attempt to be open to this universal and sacramental dimension of the Christian faith.

2) The methods by which this is achieved have to be chosen on the basis of their suitability. The North Atlantic tradition cannot a priori be ruled out as one of the possibilities, but it should not be taken for granted that it is the only, or even the most important, one unless one has arguments that disqualify the great stories of the Bible, including the parables of Christ, as theology. In this "body of Christ" approach, theology has to hold its ground against all pagan and sectarian schools in the world of learning (and in the churches). It cannot conform to the 'stoicheia tou kosmou.'

3) Intercultural theology is not a form of "pop theology"; it does not make our task easier, but makes it more difficult. It does not mean that we give up our critical scholarship, but that we apply it not only to the content of our discipline but to the whole process of communication.

4) Intercultural theology is not only concerned with the dominant cultures but also--following the example of the early theologians of our tradition--with "oral cultures" and "oral theology", which is not necessarily "unwritten theology" but which follows other patterns of thinking and communication than the "literary cultures." This is all the more important if we take seriously modern exegetical insights and the findings of Vatican Council II, which concur in placing theological reflection not entirely in the hands of professional theologians but expect theology to happen within the people of God.

5) If, however, theology is that process which reflects critically on its own tradition within the cultural contexts of the people of God, then we need 'pontifices', bridge-building theologians, theologians who make the critical dialogue possible between "oral" and "literary", "female" and "male", "black" and "white". The differences between these cultures should not only be seen in strictly Marxist terminology (which in itself is a Western thought pattern; after all Marx was not a thinker from the Third World but a German Hegelian), but also in the categories of different cultures, which cannot be explained away within the Marxist understanding of history.

6) If the church succeeds in organizing an intercultural dialogue, then, for the first time in world history, a global communication would emerge without giving a privileged position to any one culture of our globe. This would be the translation of the theological concept of conciliarity into cultural categories, and it could defreeze potentials and insights both in the "old" and in the "new" cultures.

Reference: OCCASIONAL BULLETIN OF MISSIONARY RESEARCH, Vol. 4. No.2, April 1980.

- end -

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN WEST AFRICA

- Fr. Guy Verhaegen, sj.

(Introduction: Charismatic renewal is spreading like wildfire in Africa, especially in Kinshasa and Zaire. Everywhere groups are springing up. There is no carefully organized structure with officials, rules and so on, but a freely-moving, spontaneous happening in the Spirit. A few very light structures have developed it is true, and some traditions growing from the urging of the Spirit. They are the ways we have from the Lord. Father Guy Verhaegen here explains the essential characteristics of the renewal to new-comers not familiar with this way of the Lord, as well as those who are simply looking for information. Fr. G. Verhaegen, sj, is a specialized economist and professor at various centres in Zaire, and an active member of the Centre d'Etudes pour l'Action Social.)

I. Historical Survey

People sometimes forget that the gift of tongues, prophecy, healing and so on, are as old as the Church. Mark 16 mentions them and they are fully described and analysed in the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters.

There are those who think of charismatic activity as belonging only to the apostolic period. Indeed, Cardinal Ruffini pressed for a text in this sense to be voted at Vatican II, but the Council gave charismata their rightful place according to Scripture and tradition thanks to Cardinal Suenens. (e.g. Decree on the Lay-apostolate, no.3).

All through Church history these charisms are to be found. At the end of the 2nd century Ireneus wrote: "Many brothers in the Church possess prophetic charisms, speak all kinds of languages, through the Spirit, manifesting men's secrets for their good and exposing the mystery of God."

Later on, the use of these charismatic gifts seems to have been confined to a minority of fervent Christians, monks and hermits, founders of orders and their immediate disciples, the saints, and some renewal movements. Hence, more often than not these last were in trouble with the hierarchy. It is a fact that these gifts have lain dormant from the second century till today.

Manifestations of the Spirit in the Church today that most resemble the 20th century charismatic renewal are what are known as "Revivals" and they are worth looking into. All through Church history there have been times when these

currents burst out against a gradual fading and cooling of the faith among christians and the juridical formalism of ecclesiastical hierarchies. "Enthusiasm, revivals, spiritual movements, "or simply "reforms", have been the names used at one time or another.

Some grew up inside the Church they belonged to, for example, the hermit movement, monasticism, the Franciscan revival of the Middle Ages, and all the religious orders or congregations in the Catholic Church, besides innumerable revivals in both Catholic and Protestant Churches during the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in the USA and Britain. And since 1900 up to now, there is the Pentecostal movement.

Many of these revivals had problems with their church but most of them finally won the day and were accepted. However, there were some that ended up in schism and produced new churches whether due to certain excesses, illuminism without discernment, or to the established church backing away from recognition of wrongs and refusing to accept reforms. There was always a kind of nostalgia for the primitive church and the breath of the Spirit of liberty, stress of personal relationship with Christ and above all life in the Spirit.

Charismatic renewal today: Charismatic renewal as we know it today in Zaire and in about 70 other countries all over the world, originated in certain facets of 16th century protestant reformation, those very particularly that stressed the subjective aspect of faith leading the christian to personal relationship with Christ. Twentieth-century Pentecostalism and Charismatic renewal came in the wake of 17th to 19th century movements. Some of the Pentecostalists organized themselves in separate churches under 35 different names and in 1972 these counted some 13 million members. Others refused to become separate churches and preferred to remain informally structured. They shared their experience by word of mouth, often among the very poor and illiterate. In this way the latter could "feel themselves on an equal footing with evangelists, cantors and prophets. The natural leaders of poor communities were discovered and given responsibilities. It was a model of an authentic proletarian church enabling the marginal man to express his sufferings in biblical language providing not only hope, but a theology of its own, made for them and by them, with a post-literary liturgy, non-bourgeois ethics and a political programme."

Towards 1956 Pentecostalism began to spread within the larger non-Catholic denominations as well, such as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, etc. and all these experienced a renewal in faith and practice. It was not until 1967 that the movement penetrated the Catholic church through a small group of students and professors in Dusquesne University, Pittsburgh. They felt something was missing in their christian life: the power of the Spirit that the apostles and early christians were filled with. When they became convinced that they could ask for the effusion of the Spirit they turned incidentally to a group of protestant pentecostalists, who laid hands on two of them and soon afterwards on all the others.....

Conclusions to be drawn from this short outline seem to be: that stress on life and baptism in the Spirit is not a 20th century novelty, but a current running through all Church history, periodical reactions against the tepidity and formalism of Christians; that these currents have all met with more or less opposition from the established churches; that there is real danger of excesses, illuminism and schism, and hence the need for vigilance and discernment so as not to stifle the Spirit.

II, Effusion of the Spirit and its Immediate Effects

1. Transformation of heart: Superficial reading of the Acts of the Apostles may lead us to be struck above all by the charismata, gift of tongues, tears, prophecy and healing. Yet these outward manifestations of the presence of the Spirit are secondary to the essential fruit of the presence of the Spirit, transformation of heart. Spectacular gifts do not always accompany the effusion. Some charismatics never receive them and others, without any fault of their own, find they have been taken away by the Lord, while there are people who receive charismata without even knowing it. Other people perceive in them their gifts of service, teaching, knowledge and wisdom.

2. Imposition of hands: Biblically this gesture has a variety of meanings: blessing, transmission of power, or simply intercessory prayer. In this last sense, it is practised in the renewal when asking humbly for the effusion of the Spirit. This implies no sacramental character or transmission of powers. Anyone may lay hands on another in a gesture of prayer, but those who do so should preferably have already received the effusion of the Spirit and should understand clearly the significance of this gesture.

3. Immediate effects of baptism in the Spirit: Effusion: Specific to baptism in the Spirit is its character of plenitude, an experience of the presence of the Spirit within that is a totally new power for good. This may be accompanied by a vivid impression of the Lord's presence and the Spirit that can at times be highly emotional. Lack of experience, weakness, shock and even fatigue, may bring slight trembling that should not be taken as a sign of the effusion since it can arise from a variety of reasons. Neither should this be confused with trances in which there is loss of self-control when a person may fall down and be a prey to real convulsions, pronounce incoherent words and so on. These are a cultural and very widespread phenomenon in Africa, and have nothing to do with the effusion of the Spirit. Generally they are taken to come from man's spirit, the result of inner tensions that have reached breaking point. But the Holy Spirit always acts in peace, joy and self-mastery (cf. Mk. 5:1-20).

4. Effects of inward transformation: (a) Baptismal grace. However strong the effects of charismatic renewal, we should not suppose this is the first effusion of the Spirit. The crucial coming of the Spirit that makes us Christians takes place in the sacrament of initiation, baptism, and Confirmation and the Eucharist, which are of themselves efficacious signs.
 - (b) Beginning of a new life: Few Christians live continually in the presence of the Spirit; they may have started fervently and then become tepid, or else total commitment to real life in the Spirit has been missing from the start. So effusion of the Spirit becomes the starting point of fresh Christian commitment and new life in the Spirit. A powerful and peaceful force lying dormant, is released. As this fresh dedication becomes more absolute there follows the breaking of old chains, healing of moral and psychological wounds, release of fresh energies and overcoming of apparently insurmountable obstacles. All this supposes fidelity to the long process of effusion and its call.
 - (c) Fruits of the Spirit: This inward transformation can be traced from experience. First fruits of the Spirit described by Paul are love, personal encounter with Jesus and the urge to love of our neighbor, above all the insignificant, the poor... (Gal 5.22,23-25). Then there is delight in the Word, love of holy Scripture to which we bring a fresh gaze, much deeper understanding and absorbing interest. Thence, we have an intense desire for

prayer, especially the discovery of the prayer of praise that is a feature of the renewal groups.

§. Charismata: A definition could run thus: a charism is a call made to an individual in view of a specific service in the community, and at the same time it makes him able for this service. Charism, is continually given yet never possessed, leaving one free to accept it or not. (1 Cor. 14:31-33). It is given in view of the community, it is not a personal gift but for the building up of the body of Christ... (1 Cor 12:17). The New Testament has eight lists totaling some 24 charisms in all. Changing and dynamic, the Spirit adapts his gifts to changing situations and persons. Charisms while diverse, are yet unified, many gifts but the same Spirit. And finally they empower to service which will only come about if the charismatic person bears witness to the message he or she transmits.

The danger of the charismatic person thinking he owns the gifts is very real. Therefore, in the charismatic group there is need for a discernment team to watch carefully over the manifestations of the Spirit.

(a) A few charisms: the gift of tongues: First of all, what it is not: it is not the gift of speaking foreign languages. Enquiries, tape-recordings, analyses by psychologists and linguists have shown up to now no sign of an existing language. Those who thought they had understood their own language had more likely received a gift of listening, an inward illumination allowing them to recognize a message spoken by another person in tongues. Neither is speaking in tongues to be identified with merely uttering incomprehensible sounds.

It is a gift of the Spirit, of a prayer so intense and deep that the one who receives it begins to emit sounds belonging to no known tongue. It is more like a new tongue of love, overflowing from subconsciousness, always bringing calm, joy and peace and the certitude of the Lord's presence and surrender to his will. In a prayer meeting it is usually followed by an interpretation given by another member of the group and a discernment team generally intervenes.

(b) Gift of prophecy: This is not, as some think, foretelling of the future. The prophet in the Bible is someone called by God to speak in his name; he lends his tongue to God, so to speak. He experiences an intimacy with God, that enables him to discern the true meaning of events and in the name of this love he denounces sin, proclaims the word, exhorts and encourages. Prophecy is always a word of power that actualizes what it says, for God's Word is always fulfilled. The prophet is called to a life of more intense prayer, total surrender and ever-increasing active charity.

(c) Gift of healing: This gift is, and remains, God's exclusive property given when and where he wills, according to the needs of the community or individual. The charismatic commands the illness with authority or declares the sick man healed. At times he may feel sudden suffering in some specific point of the body and he knows the Lord is about to heal someone there. It is distinct from the gift of faith when the Spirit inspires prayer for healing in the certainty that it will be heard. This is not a permanent gift but God gives it when and where he wills. The certain criterion for the gifts of healing and faith is in their community or individual sign value. Although charismatics do not worry about having these healings recognized and registered, it is certainly true they are quite widespread. Most frequent are the inward healings of stubborn psychological or moral wounds arising from one's past life or sins. When the psyche is restored and personality unified, some physical ills originating in anxiety, trouble or anguish, are eliminated...

6. The 7-week seminars: The laying on of hands for the effusion of the Spirit is only done after serious preparation, so that the candidate may hear the personal call of God and make ready to receive it sincerely and completely. This preparation is usually a retreat or a 7-week seminar.

This seminar is meant for those who have been members of the renewal for a certain time and who desire to deepen their life in the Spirit. It consists of a weekly meeting of two to three hours, and the participants are expected to spend at least a quarter of an hour daily in prayer and Bible reading (which is set out in a daily programme) with a few chapters of Scripture reading each week also.

The seminar brings not only solid teaching but also leads to inward conversion and a deeper understanding of our Lord Jesus and life in the Spirit. Prayer for the effusion of the Spirit takes place in the fifth week, the sixth and seventh being consecrated to realization of the requirements and conditions for growth of the life of the Spirit within, personal prayer, community witnessing, progressive transformation of the whole being in the Spirit.

III Daily Life of Charismatic Christians

Besides the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, there are also certain exterior manifestations: stages in prayer meetings and social and professional commitment.

A renewal meeting: Every meeting is, before anything else, contact with the living Christ among men, and it includes prayer for a fresh effusion of the Spirit of whose light and love we can never have enough.

The starting point is normally the prayer of praise directed to God himself. The high-point comes in listening to the Word: a text chosen by the discernment team is explained shortly and spontaneous and free prayer (songs, texts) follow. Often there is the Spirit speaking to the community through prophecy or the gift of tongues and their interpretation; witnessing of any special experience of God's goodness and power; intercessory prayer for each other's needs and all in a spirit of fraternal communion.

Social and professional commitment: a) Social responsibility: Charismatics are often reproached with a certain neglect of earthly things, an escape from social responsibility to the psychological comfort of prayer groups. They are also accused of seeking only for emotions, miracles and extraordinary gifts to make them forget their daily problems. Only too often these are true criticisms. Too many charismatics tend to forget that a weekly 2 to 3 hour meeting together with their daily prayer, should be enough to feed the main fruit of the Spirit which is love of neighbour. Has then, the effusion of the Spirit in them been an illusion? This has to be enquired into.

b) The words of Jesus: the Spirit we receive is sent by the Father in the name of Jesus to remind us of his words and bring us to total truth. Could he teach us anything but love, who is himself reciprocal love of Father and son? And Jesus' new commandment consists wholly in the service of others as he has loved us...

c) Commitment to social relationships: This attitude should show up not only in the prayer group but towards all those who cross our path, those closest to us and those further away as sent by the Lord.

d) Social commitment on a collective level: There exists among Christians "a cleavage between those who stress prayer and life with God and have a purely personalist and individualistic idea of human relations and social life, and those who envisage the two commandments of love of God and neighbour in an optic or global analysis of contemporary, particularly Marxist, philosophies." In the life of Jesus these two poles were perfectly unified and his Spirit urges us towards this synthesis in our own lives. The Spirit of Jesus we call upon in our prayer is bound to inspire us with the same mind as Jesus, making us conscious and sensitive to the cries of suffering of those around us - unemployment, poverty, oppression, torture, injustice, war and anxiety for the future, and like Jesus, wanting to transform the structures that cause them.

At Lumbumbashi and Kinshasa, the Spirit has already been at work in the renewal arousing a movement to fight corruption through prayer, penance and a personal honest life known as: "the Chain of Honesty."

Very specially lately the Spirit seems to remind us insistently that "evil is not merely a physical, personal dimension, but also a collective, social one. Our idea of God is still too narrow, confined in a static, individualistic image. "We have to learn in the charismatic renewal to recognize and exorcize not only the demons of drug addiction, sickness and occultism, but also the demons whose names are: collective egoism, money, power, refusal to share, profit-seeking."

"It is not for nothing" says J. Gabus, "that Jesus placed the two commandments of love on the same level. When we are truly renewed in the Spirit, we shall see no more opposition between the two, or between the pole, prayer and the pole, action for justice."

Reference: TELEMA, (LEVE-TOI ET MARCHE), --No.23, juillet-septembre 3/80.

- end -

Fr. Mel Brady, ofm, was elected to the post of General Secretary of Missions of the Order of Friars Minor at their General Council Meeting on 5th November, 1980.

Fr. Brady replaces Fr. Erminio Roncari, ofm, who died on 1st November, 1980 at age 55 for whose eternal repose we pray.

Sr. Danita McGonagle, ssnd - former Sedos Treasurer, has just taken up posting in Liberia, West Africa. Her address is:

Catholic Mission,
Zwedru,
Grand Gedeh County,
Liberia, West Africa.

**QUELQUES POINTS FONDAMENTAUX QUI EMERGENT DES RAPPORTS DES
CONFERENCES EPISCOPALES AFRICAINES (SECAM) AU COURS DU SYNODE,
OCTOBRE, 1980**

1. Le rôle de l'Eglise locale et l'application du principe de subsidiarité.
La nature de l'Eglise elle-même, et les valeurs culturelles qui varient d'une région à l'autre, demanderaient que les conférences épiscopales nationales et régionales puissent prendre des décisions appropriées en tout ce qui concerne la vie de la famille dans leurs nations/régions respectives, car c'est seulement à ce niveau local qu'on peut avoir une compréhension juste de la situation concrète des gens.
2. On devrait clarifier la relation entre mariage selon les coutumes et mariage chrétien. C'est précisément le mariage en tant que vécu dans une culture donnée qui est purifié et perfectionné par le Christ quand il en fait un sacrement pour ceux qui croient en lui. Les aspects inter-personnels du mariage assument toujours des aspects communautaires, et on ne peut jamais isoler le mariage de la communauté vue comme un tout.
3. Dans la tradition africaine, le mariage est un processus, et non pas un acte isolé ou une cérémonie momentanée. Le processus est un tout dynamique; il ne peut donc pas être fragmenté en moments séparés (par exemple, parler d'une "phase pré-nuptiale" implique toujours une fragmentation d'une réalité qui forme un tout). Ceci est en rapport aussi avec la dimension eschatologique du mariage considéré comme un mouvement vers la plénitude et la perfection, avec les implications pastorales "d'accompagnement" des familles dans leurs cheminement.
4. Tout optique pastorale valide sur le mariage doit tenir compte, très sérieusement, de l'expérience des personnes mariées dans leurs situations réelles. Les laïques doivent pouvoir exprimer leurs points de vue personnels et leurs expériences dans le mariage si on veut que l'enseignement de l'Eglise soit plus concret et pratique et basé sur la vie réelle.
5. La "famille prolongée" est la cellule vitale dans la société africaine: la famille est ouverte à la communauté plus grande, et chacun participe aux responsabilités pour le bien de la famille. C'est sur cette base que les petites communautés doivent se construire.
6. Le milieu socio-économique doit être transformé: beaucoup de problèmes des familles, spécialement en Afrique et dans le 'Tiers-monde', proviennent de l'injustice dans le monde et dans la région. L'appel à la rénovation de la vie de la famille est aussi un appel pour un ordre social nouveau et pour une société plus juste.

- fin -

Et les autres?

Je ne suis pas seul dans le monde!

Je peux même dire que je ne me connais vraiment que grâce à ma relation aux autres. En quelque sorte, ce sont eux qui donnent consistance à ma vie et forgent ma propre personnalité.

Cardinal Roger Etchegaray

Reference: MESSAGES DU SECOURS CATHOLIQUE - No.321 - Novembre 1980.
