
LIBERATION UNTO FREEDOM

REFLECTION CONCERNING THE MANDATE OF THE CHURCH

- Giancarlo Collet

("Christian faith remains related to Jesus, because in him, the intent and purpose of freedom is made explicit as being unconditional love"...Giancarlo Collet's article, translated from the original German by Mrs. Antonia Fonseca, examines the mandate of the Church to mediate God's unconditional acceptance of man. She can only do this if she is herself a community of liberated individuals. The copious references have been confined to actual quotations due to limitations of space.Ed)

Introduction

Theological reflection concerning freedom, if it is not to miss its point, must start with an analysis of real freedom, i.e. it must be placed in a context of social and political and - last but not least - ecclesiastical freedom or liberation. Even if in this article this analysis itself is not made but rather presupposed, at least its implications will be mentioned. The social conditions where the Church must accomplish her mission in the world can be defined as follows:

CONTEXT OF FREEDOM

- (1) World unity: From the beginning of modern times, the world is on the way to unity. The growing interdependences in the social, political and economic spheres as well as in the field of communication technology have brought about an increase in collateral interdependence. Structures and institutions have increased their power to a certain extent while, at the same time, the immediate dependence of human beings slides more and more into anonymity.
- (2) European and American influence: The process of world-unification we are now witnessing occurs under the pressure of circumstances, because the influence of the pattern of European and American ways of life and interests on the non-western world is a threat to other peoples' chances of developing freely and creatively, if they still desire to do so and are not already fascinated with or blinded by western modes of living.
- (3) "Companionship of misfortune": The world-wide threat posed by poverty, hunger, disease, unemployment and war, by a nature both exploited and destroyed on the one hand and by growing resignation, apathy and cynicism that find expression in the way one comes to terms with a given situation on the other - all this creates a kind of "companionship in misfortune", an "ecumenism of suffering", where freedom is threatened everywhere and in many ways, but is also laboured for.

When freedom is spoken of and acted upon within the framework of the Church, such talk and such action necessarily stand in a similar context. Over and above this context, there are certain considerations concerning the Church that must be borne in mind.

Considerations Concerning the Church

(1) A world Church: After the age of discovery and colonialization the Church, by means of her missionary activity, has now entered into the modern ecumenical era. The presence of the occidental Church is world-embracing; this is not merely the result of imperialism. Even if it has often proved impossible to implant the Church effectively, the western Church, by its missionary activities, has become a world body, and Christianity unmistakably has become a factor to be reckoned with in world history.

(2) Local Church: The one Church, now a world Church, performs her task in various socio-cultural and socio-political circumstances. This task must be taken care of by the individual local churches; they succeed to the extent that they discover their own identity. In order to achieve this, they must overcome the alienation caused by an ecclesiological monoculture; they must also become aware of diversity within the Church. The "glory" of the western Church is her universality in world history; her "misery", however, lies in misunderstanding particularity.

(3) Church identity: Historical mortgage and social expectations compel the Church to prove her identity. This compulsion is the reverse of the Church's "identity problem", i.e.: "The more theology and Church try to become relevant in the context of modern problems, the deeper they are drawn into their own Christian identity crisis. The more they try to assert their identity in traditional dogmas, rites and moral notions, the more they become irrelevant and unreliable". (1)

Church mission: The mission of the Church (or her right to speak of the God of Jesus Christ) also depends on the establishment of her own identity through identification with the "least of (her) brothers" (Mt 25,40;45) and with those who "have no one" (Jo 5,7), on whether she contributes her share towards a humanization of the world. This means, however, that the Church can contribute to the history of human freedom only if her "gesture of freedom" is an inviting one and if she herself becomes the "scene of freedom".

"Suffering man": If we are "to build a world where every human being, no matter what his race, religion or ancestry, can lead a full and human life, neither enslaved by men nor oppressed by untamed natural forces; a world where freedom is no empty word..."(2), then the solidarity of the Church with the history of human freedom must not be made to depend on the "opportunities for evangelization" of Christianity; for "suffering man" is himself the reason for the commitment to liberate him unto humanity. Conversely, however, the Church will not do justice to her mandate where the testimony of the kingdom of God begun in Jesus Christ and of its freedom is waived. (3)

THE GESTURE OF FREEDOM

God's unconditional love: Christian faith wants to procure man the experience which, through the agency of others, avails him of a knowledge of himself as being unconditionally accepted by God; on the basis of this knowledge, he can also accept others.

(1) J. Moltmann, *Der gekreuzigte Gott. Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie*, München 1972, 12.

(2) *Populorum progressio* Art. 47.

(3) Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Art. 14, 32ff.

What is outstanding in this truth, i.e. in the acceptance of man by God as unconditional love, is that it wants to communicate in freedom and to be accepted in freedom. Love reveals itself only in its realization. Therefore, God's acceptance of men is realized where men trust the promise of such a love and share it with one another.

What God in his acceptance of man intended with the freedom revealed in Jesus Christ is essential. Only the experience of being unconditionally acknowledged liberates freedom from the constraint of having to guarantee its significance by means of self-assertion and achievement. Freedom, itself substantiated by love, is able to define its action through love. "Christian freedom, by claiming to make man's true freedom accessible to him, is the epitome of a self-substantiation that is given to man, not achieved by him; created man, by virtue of his createdness, would be unable to achieve such freedom." (4)

Communicative freedom: Freedom must be understood as being communicative; we are not here concerned with a human potential in the sense of self-realization, where the "other" comes into the picture merely as a limitation of one's own freedom. Communicative freedom, on the contrary, means realization of freedom together, a freedom where individual freedom owes its existence to the freedom of others, is aware of it and itself renders possible the freedom of others. "Communicative freedom implies that another person is not experienced as limitation but as a condition for the possibility of one's own self-realization". (5) Where such freedom is to become a reality and where it is to be successful, its absolute postulate is that its intent and purpose must be anticipated if freedom is to be established. Love is successful only where its absoluteness is believed in and its realization hoped for.

Human freedom imparted to man: Human freedom cannot confer on itself the absolute significance man has no command over. Therefore, this intent and purpose of freedom must be imparted to man. The experience of absolute import is given to human freedom only by means of historic reality. Christian faith, therefore, remains related to Jesus: because, in him, the intent and purpose of freedom is made explicit as being unconditional love; because, in him, the absolute postulate of a new history of human freedom is set up, "Christ set us free to be free men" (Gal 5,1), which once again teaches Christians how to give; they become, for one another, the unconditional grounds and the goal of human freedom.

Through Jesus, God's acceptance is promised every man and he who trusts this promise maintains communion with God, on condition that he shares in his acceptance of all (1 John 4,7-14). "God's love aims...at a universal communion of all men, in agreement with himself. This eschatological communion is now represented and symbolized by the communion of the faithful". (6)

(4) J. Baur, Freiheit und Emanzipation. Ein philosophisch-theologischer Traktat, Stuttgart 1974, 40.

(5) M. Theunissen, Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik, Frankfurt a.M. 1980, 46;

(6) W. Pannenberg, Die Bestimmung des Menschen. Menschsein, Erwählung und Geschichte, Göttingen 1978, 26.

Christian freedom a gift: Christian freedom, therefore, does not procure its own significance, but receives it as a gift. This opens up an area of reality for human freedom where it can endure, is acknowledged and learns that it may and must exist. God's acceptance of man is enjoined on men themselves, as a task, so that they may give one another meaning and joy. Therefore, the circumstances wherein men mutually acknowledge and accept one another must be made humane. Inhuman structures must be changed and behaviour altered. For the unconditional acceptance of man concerns, on the one hand, the social conditions he has to live in; but, on the other hand, liberal conditions are no guarantee for liberal attitudes. An "Ethos of Freedom" is called for, with everyone's freedom at heart.

Analysis of situations: In order to learn how circumstances are to be shaped concretely as condition for and in recognition of human freedom, an analysis of the respective situation, of its ideas concerning freedom and its concepts of alienation is indispensable. A truly analytical reason will necessarily also permutate into political postulates for the realization of freedom and justice. Neither the misunderstanding of reason as being instrumental nor its inhuman misuse are in opposition to this.

"There is no other way towards the discovery of a more just and a more humane society than the use of reason. In this context, we must speak comparatively of a more just and a more humane society. It has not been defined once and for all what justice and humanity are in concrete circumstances, bearing in mind what can indeed be done. In a society whose members are threatened with famine, nutrition is more important than education. In a society where the majority have become objects of manipulation by a few who lord it over them, it is not enough to refer to the fact that these puppets are economically quite well off. In this case, reason ought not to be content with demanding material security; it ought to insist on mental emancipation over and above material security."

"Reason, therefore, can only become active within a process of discovering truth and justice. Truth and justice are not definite and fixed values that have been determined once and for all. They are goals social behaviour tries to align with; society can only draw near them in a process of communication and interaction. Since society itself is not a complete structure but an uninterrupted process, the society that is both just and worthy of human beings is not a condition achieved once and for all, but a proposition that must be constantly realized". (7) Love of one's fellowman does not allow the heart to stand by as a neutral onlooker; it opens the eyes of reason, even where there is some ignorance as to how reason ought to be made use of (cf. Lk 10,25-37).

The call to protest against...Challenged by the "pain of negation", Christians will protest against such circumstances as are the cause of suffering: injustice, subjugation, exploitation, poverty, hunger..., because this is asking too much of men. They will dare to change inhuman conditions; they will not withhold their appreciation from all who suffer for the sake of their commitment to freedom: and to suffer with...

Christians will also be prepared to suffer the same privations, for they know that there is a kind of distress that cannot be removed by changing structures but must be accepted and suffered, in order to alter circumstances; e.g. the constant inability of living up to the Christian challenge, suffering in solitude one's own identity, the pain of unrealizable love, the sting of finiteness and death...

(7) M. Honecker, Konzept einer sozialetischen Theorie. Grundfragen evangelischer Sozialetik, Tübingen 1971, 50.

THE SCENE OF FREEDOM

Church - beginning of a "new creation": In actual life, the Church is the established scene where the unconditional definition of human freedom is anticipated and realized. The Church is a community of human beings who trust in the promise of God in Jesus, who allow him to give his love to them and, by passing this love on to others, mediate it in history. The gesture of freedom must therefore define both the Church's existence and her activity. As a "creature of the spirit" (Eph 2,17ff) she anticipates the future kingdom of God that is the destiny of all men. Where the spirit of freedom is alive, Jesus takes shape in the kingdom that has already begun. This makes the Church the beginning of a "new creation" as she heralds men's goal in their history.

The meaning of her mission: The Church, in anticipation of communion with God under his rule thus represents the destiny of human society. "In the Church we are concerned with the anticipatory presence of human destiny within society". It is symbolic of the promised universality of the kingdom of God that men from all countries and all nations belong to it - "Jews and Gentiles". The only advantage the Church has over the rest of humanity is that it has been granted her to receive and recognize God's acceptance in Jesus and thus to live freedom in unfree conditions. Her unique and specific assignment, the meaning of her mission, is that all men may arrive at the knowledge of this trust, and trust her in turn.

She represents God's kingdom: The Church must, already now, represent God's kingdom in her life, the kingdom which is the future of all men of the whole world. The kingdom of God is the condition that makes freedom and justice possible among men. Freedom and justice appear among men by liberating them from the necessity of asserting and vindicating themselves, thus placing them into a new interrelation of mutual acceptance.

The irrevocable difference between Church and kingdom: The Church, therefore, is to be understood as the scene of eschatological freedom; she is not subject to the "powers of the world" nor to their law, but committed solely to the "Law of Christ" (1 Cor 9.21) and the "Law of Freedom" (James 1,25). Between the concrete Church and her destiny, the kingdom of God, there is an irrevocable difference. Hence the Church, "if rightly understood, always lives by the proclamation of her own transience and her historically progressive neutralization in the future kingdom of God, which is the goal of her pilgrimage". (8) The more the promised kingdom of God is realized within the life of the Church, the more it becomes evident as being the destiny of man as well. For that reason all evangelization and every action of the Church must be in accordance with her symbolical presence. The witness for the kingdom of God begun in Jesus must be at the core.

(8) K. Rahner, Kirche und Parusie Christi, in: the same, Schriften zur Theologie, Vol. VI, Einsiedeln-Zürich-Köln 21968, 348-367, 351.

A sign of freedom, justice, love, peace: Where this attempt is successful, the Church bears witness to "the acceptance by God in respect of guilty human involvement and in respect of the temptation of using political and social power to dispose of men's humanity. The Church thus represents the cause of justification and consequently of freedom. She bears witness to God's partiality for the weak to the detriment of all aspects of oppression; she represents the cause of justice. She gives evidence of the presence of Jesus for others till death on the cross; she therefore represents the cause of selfless love. The Church manifests the power of the Risen Christ - a power that exceeds bounds, that encompasses heaven and earth - as against worldly powers that set limits and are always entangled in internecine quarrels. The Church, therefore, represents the cause of peace". (9)

The effects of division: The fact that the Church is divided into several communities distorts and obscures her charge of representing the kingdom of God among men. As long as Christ's Church is divided, she will be able to realize the promise given man by God and the unconditional definition of the meaning of freedom as love only imperfectly and not without guilt.

The Church maintains her sanctity, her bond with the one God and Lord of all men only if she is united. Indeed, she can find the way back to unity only by reflecting on her sanctity. Only if one has become aware of the provisional character of the Church's organization and teaching regulations as compared to the future of the kingdom of God and of the one Lord Jesus Christ, and as compared to the bond in the spirit of divine love, with all this implies for the self-assessment of the churches - only then will the disintegrating significance of the differences between Christian communities wear away". (10)

Unity and internal communicative freedom: Real unity is therefore a basic condition for enabling the Church to pay attention to her mission in the world. An ecclesiological mono-culture's dogmatic intolerance as well as fanatic sectarianism must be overcome by Church unity, if a multiform liturgical life of ecclesiastical order and theological reflection is to be made viable.

This would imply the realization of communicative freedom among the churches themselves and within the Church; it would make identity possible for others and concede it to them; it would also make it possible to find one's own identity in promoting and recognizing the identity of others. As long as the Church is unable to realize freedom within her own confines, she will find it next to impossible to legitimate her mandate for the liberation of men.

A community of liberated individuals: It remains the specific task of the Church to mediate God's unconditional acceptance of man. However, the Church can represent the claim of Christian freedom only as a community of liberated individuals. For that reason, she herself must become the "scene of freedom"; this calls for internal reforms.

(9) W. Huber, Kirche, Stuttgart-Berlin 1979, 144; cf. *ibid*, 177f.

(10) W. Pannenberg, Das Glaubensbekenntnis ausgelegt und verantwortet vor den Fragen der Gegenwart, Gütersloh ³1979, 165.

Christian freedom, to be sure, first proves itself within the community of the faithful: "According to NT understanding, this community is marked by freedom of speech, by means of free renunciation, by generosity and consideration; by promoting lively spontaneity and by banishing legalistic ways that have a paralyzing effect; by a release from selfishness, from enslaving "vital interests", even from fear; by granting peace and joy (Rom 14,7); by breaking through constricting conventions, by a stimulus towards an ever new unanimity". (11)

THE POLITICS OF FREEDOM

To be sure, the kingdom of God that is promised to man does not consist of a programme for fashioning social reality. Like eschatological reality, it cannot be identified either with an ecclesiastical regulation or with a certain political way of life.

Communion with God - freedom of action: Yet men who trust the word testified by the Church and the promise of that word anticipate their destination - communion with God - and find therein the freedom of action which influences the organization of human association and of the relationship with nature.

"The Church..., founded in love, contributes to the development of justice and love within the confines of a nation and in the relationship between peoples. By proclaiming the truth of the Gospel (the Church) also respects and promotes political freedom". (12)

Because God himself is mindful of the humanity of man, Christians seek to promote this by resisting inhumanity and by seeking better forms of realizing freedom.

The eschatological reservation: The "productive and critical impulse of Christian belief in God, for the purpose of restorative action benefiting man, and a purposeful political application for a better future of mankind does not neutralize the eschatological reservation. Even so, this reservation remains critical and productive, because humanity is not the subject of a 'universal providence'...God's reservation is shown in that humanity itself is not the universal subject of history and that its temporal providence is surpassed by the Lord of History". (13)

Politics and law - political freedom: Political freedom is a necessary actualization of the freedom the Christians declare. Where the concretion of God's acceptance of man is relinquished, it cannot become historically concrete. But where Christian freedom is consciously realized, this realization occurs in the historical space of politics and legal order also; these have been instituted by men themselves; for they require politics and legal organisation in order to associate.

(11) R. Pesch, Die erinnerte Freiheit Jesu, in Freiheit in Gesellschaft, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1971, 21-38, 27.

(12) Vat. II, Gaudium et spes Art. 76c.

(13) E. Schillebeeckx, Christus und die Christen, 761.

Politics and law, however, are not given once and for all; they are quantities conditioned by history and can therefore be moulded. An attitude that is open to new and better possibilities of human association, and averse to being satisfied with the status quo, is required if law and politics are to be human and not arbitrary.

"Freedoms" rather than "freedom": It is an opportunity for Christian freedom to indicate at first the limits of realizing individual freedom, to expose by drawing attention to the inhibition and suppression of human freedom and to outline new possibilities of communicative freedom.

We cannot be concerned with safeguarding individual freedom alone. Such freedom is always due to some other freedom; realization of freedom therefore implies a reference to society as a whole, without however "functionalizing" the individual. Perhaps the issue here is to keep awake an interest in the freedom of all and to realize it. For only the mutual recognition and legal safe-guard of every individual realization of freedom makes a free and just society feasible.

Demands of the "other": This touches upon another opportunity for Christian freedom: the possibility of overcoming sectarian interests that more or less define politics, and of being aware of its responsibility for all. It is a criterion of faith that the believer takes on responsibility for others and does not let responsibility end where he suffers contradiction and where he is opposed. In order to realize their mission for the liberation of men, and on the basis of God's unconditional acceptance of men, Christians will stand up for the realization of freedom and justice politically as well, even if it means they have to give up traditional privileges or may not claim them.

Church "models": The "distance" between Church and state could avail the Church of an opportunity to create "models" of liberal attitudes and to experiment which of them would be conducive to a more humane life for the entire society. "The application of human communication and interaction paradigmatic for society as a whole, or, in the word of the NT: the action, the doing of truth, of justice, of God's redemptive will", (14) would be typical of a Christian approach. Only where political freedom is realized (and this goes for the Church as well) does it not remain an "empty word" and is the "pathos of talk about freedom" not in danger of merely compensating the absence of practical realization.

(14) M. Honecker, Konzept einer sozialetischen Theorie, 65; cf. the same, Sozialetik zwischen Tradition und Vernunft, Tübingen 1977, 9ff.

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RACISM

The new economic crisis reveals an unresolved racism that permeates our society's structures and resides in the hearts of many among the majority. Because it is less blatant, this subtle form of racism is in some respects even more dangerous--harder to combat and easier to ignore. Major segments of the population are being pushed to the margins of society in our nation. As economic pressures tighten, those people who are often black, Hispanic, native American and Asian - and always poor - slip further into the unending cycle of poverty, deprivation, ignorance, disease and crime. Racial identity is for them an iron curtain barring the way to a decent life and livelihood.

Reference: "Brothers and Sisters to Us": U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism.

CONVERSION: AN ASIAN WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE

From Tribal Priestess to Social Critic

- Marianne Katoppo

The Tribal Priestess

One of my great-great-grandmothers was a tribal priestess. Actually, that is somewhat of an understatement. In my native region of the Minahassa (North Sulawesi, Indonesia) the four major tribes were very closely related to each other ethnically, linguistically and culturally. They were all descendants of 'Luminuŭt,' the great mother who divided the land at Watu Pinawetengan (The Stone of Division), giving each tribe a fair share.

Each tribe has a great many priests, ranging from hunters to those who communicated directly with the 'opo', i.e. the ancestors (who were the tribal gods). Only one tribe--the Tontemboan--believed in the ordination of women and reserved the office of priesthood exclusively for women.

Among those priestesses, there was one who was the 'Walian Wangko', the 'Priestess Supreme'. She was a figure of great authority and power. Priests of other tribes submitted to her, and chieftains dared not take any steps without consulting her.

Such a one, then, was my maternal grandmother's grandmother.

We do not even know her real name, the name given to her by her own people. We only know the name given to her by Schwarz, that indefatigable East German Pietist, when he finally succeeded in baptizing her. He called her Lydia.

She had resisted conversion until late in life for she belonged to the fiercely proud mountain people, who tolerate no intrusion.

Her world was that of ancestor worship to ensure cosmic balance.

Head-hunting and human sacrifice were part of this, not primarily because of a lust for blood, but because this was what the ancestors demanded. Human sacrifice - usually captives from other tribes - was a salvific ritual in which the whole community participated. The beautiful 'kulintang' (bamboo xylophone) music was originally intended to accompany the stabs of the priest's knife.

Marriage, with persons moving from one clan to another, could seriously upset the cosmic balance. Therefore, one had to try to make amends and restore the balance through gifts of a high mystical content, such as human heads.

Cannibalism was also practised in order to absorb the qualities and virtues of the victim, usually an enemy.

There was not a single act in Lydia's world which was not directly rooted in or related to her religious beliefs. There was no compartmentalization of "religious" from "secular" life; nor was one subordinated to the other.

The Evangelization of the Minahassa

In the coastal regions of the Minahassa, such as the cities of Manado and Amurang, Christianity was introduced by the Portuguese in the 16th century, surviving after a fashion until Riedel and Schwarz, "the Apostles of the Minahassa", arrived in 1831.

They were working class Pietists from Eastern Germany, sent by the Dutch Missionary Society (Nederlandsche Zendeling Genootschap). There was a great deal of work for them to do: Riedel in Tondano in the North, Schwarz operating from Langowan on the southwestern side of the lake. Schwarz used to ride his horse far into the deep south, to places where no white person had ever ventured before.

This took great personal courage. Although the Minahassa chieftains had signed a treaty with the Dutch some fifty years before, giving their solemn word that they would "henceforward desist from the abominable practices of cannibalism and headhunting", this treaty - as indeed so many others - was by no means a guarantee for one's personal safety. It was as late as the 1850's that Linemann remarked in the Dutch mission journal, 'Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsche Zendeling Genootschap' (MNZG), that the Minahassa had become a safe place to travel.

I think it was Schwarz's courage that impressed Lydia as well as his sincerity. He inculturated himself with the people by marrying a "native" woman, a fact referred to with some horror by Ida Pfeiffer in her travelogue. Actually, Mrs. Schwarz was Eurasian.

Many Minahassan women, besides Lydia, resisted Christianization. Often, they were the tribal priestesses, who stood to lose everything by adopting the "Western" faith. It was not an appealing prospect to give up one's position of authority and power, in order to be relegated to the position of 'hausfrau'. The MNZG records cases of women throwing their husbands out of the house for having converted to Christianity.

On the other hand, once they had become Christian, women were the most ardent supporters of the Church. The MNZG also records that women personally lugged timber to the church-site in Tomohon, putting to shame the men who were afraid to act against the local authority's orders.

Lydia saw the inconceivable happen: her world was changing, yet it did not fall apart. Her values were being proved false; she had to relinquish the power which at any rate was already slipping from her.

Did she, in her turn, experience the liberation of so many others of her people; the joy, in being set free from the inexorable claims of the ancestors, in being persons in the sight of God instead of units in the cosmic make-up of the universe?

I think she did; otherwise she would never have let herself be baptized. She saw the words of Schwartz come true. She knew him to be a person of great courage and sincerity: a 'do-er', not just a 'preach-er'. They had great respect for one another, which is evident in the name he gave her: Lydia (Acts 16).

Since Lydia's day, the Minahassa has become one of the acceptedly Christian regions of Indonesia. The population is 99% Christian, the remaining 1% are migrants or settlers from other regions. Education has been one of its most important assets. Illiteracy is virtually unknown. The first school for girls, 'de Christelijke Meisjesschool', was opened in 1881, when Kartini who is often mistakenly called "the pioneer of women's education in Indonesia" was barely two years old in far-away 'Java'!

A Social Critique of the Minahassa Today.

In the past it was copra. Today it is cloves. The Minahassa has always been one of the most wealthy regions in Indonesia. Last year its GNP was estimated to be US \$600, almost three times that of the rest of Indonesia (US \$250).

Next year Tomohon will be the venue of the Seventh National Assembly of the Council of Churches in Indonesia (DGI). The theme of the Assembly is "The Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God".

The date will be but one year short of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Riedel and Schwarz in the Minahassa.

Last year I went to see Schwarz's grave in Langowan. Barring church historians, very few people in the Minahassa today are aware of the contributions of either Riedel or Schwarz to their present affluence.

The road from Sam Ratulangi Airport in the north into the capital city of Manado displays a fair share of statues erected to commemorate cultural or political heroes and heroines. As one then follows the road up into the mountains, one realizes that the Minahassans like this kind of monument. There are even statues to legendary 'opo' (the tribal gods).

In Langowan, I found Schwarz's grave in a corner of a plot now used as a football-field, right in the centre of the city. The cross was partly broken, the stone slab invisible because the whole was overgrown by weeds. People had also taken advantage of the comparative seclusion afforded by the tall weeds to defecate there.

I turned away, unable to control the tears of anger that sprang into my eyes. The religion of my people attached great importance to the veneration of ancestors. In a way, Schwarz was a spiritual ancestor, yet how shamefully he was treated!

I know that it would not have been important to him, for he worked for the kingdom of God, not for his own personal glory. But would he have recognized the kingdom of God in the high literacy rate and the material prosperity of the Minahassa today?

My mother recalls that the house of her grandfather (Lydia's son) was adorned with human heads, which were only taken down after he died. The mere sight of them made her shudder, as they would many of us.

Yet the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Hong Kong, for example, a fashionable restaurant, which erudite and civilized people frequent, boasts of a wall of photographs at its entrance which are only slightly less unsettling than human heads. They are award-winning photographs, almost life-size. Nearly every single one of them portrays a violent death: a murder, a suicide. The best-known is probably that of the Buddhist monk burning himself to death. The photos are not known to affect the appetite of the correspondents or their guests.

Lydia believed human sacrifices were necessary in order to maintain cosmic balance. The 'opo', as guardians of the tribe's welfare, had to be placated.

Returning from Langowan to the Minahassan Church Synod's Office in Tomohon, we drove past mountain-slopes verdant with cloves. Tomohon's main road was jammed with cars, buses, horse-carriages and other means of transportation, linking Tomohon with the other cities of the Minahassa. Within Tomohon itself, of course, one could walk. Yet many preferred to take the car.

I could not help thinking that we had somehow substituted technology and GNP for the tribal gods. Coconut plantations have to make way for industrial plants. Fishing-villages disappear in the face of luxury hotels. The sensual fertility feasts of old have given way to the prostitution racket. Pollution and consumerism are the order of the day.

The small farmers or fishing villagers, the prostitute and the cheap labourer, are they not human sacrifices we offer to the anti-god of an ever-increasing GNP?

Conversion in my case is not marching down the streets shouting "Halleluia!" at the top of my voice. Rather, it is consistently saying "No!" to the anti-god who demands these human sacrifices, who ruthlessly reduces living human beings to so many factors making up a higher GNP.

Conversion means, for example, drinking home-grown tea, instead of trans-nationally produced soft drinks. Wearing native 'batiks', instead of imported fabrics. Using locally-made sandals, instead of Kickers or Bally shoes purchased in Hongkong or Rome.

Conversion means being constantly aware that we are because of what we 'are', not what we 'have'; that, in relinquishing power, we demonstrate our authority, i.e. our competence to communicate freedom. (1)

This freedom we communicate is not freedom from the tribal gods, trees, stones, mountains, cosmic forces of the past, but freedom from the modern gods, money, hedonism, systems, and structures that enslave people today.

It is a sin to sacrifice even a few in order to serve the mode of existence of the majority. To turn from this, and to turn to the Living God, in whose sight every person is precious, that is conversion.

(1) Aloysius Pieris, S.J., "Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation: Some Religio-Cultural Guidelines", Paper presented at Asian Theological Conference, Holy Family Convent, Wennapuwa, Sri Lanka, 7-20 January 1979.

Reference: INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSION, Vol. LXVIII No. 270, April 1979.

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RACISM

We wish to call attention to the persistent presence of racism and in particular to the relationship between racial and economic justice. Racism and economic oppression are distinct but interrelated forces which dehumanize our society. Movement toward authentic justice demands a simultaneous attack on both evils. Our economic structures are undergoing fundamental changes which threaten to intensify social inequalities in our nation. We are entering an era characterized by limited resources, restricted job markets and dwindling revenues. In this atmosphere, the poor and racial minorities are being asked to bear the heaviest burden of the new economic pressures.

Reference: Racism. "Brothers and Sisters to Us". Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism. (U.S.A)

EXPERIENCES WITH THE BASE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES IN BRAZIL

- J. B. Libânio, S.J.

(The visits of John Paul II to Mexico and Brazil and the events in Nicaragua, Salvador, Bolivia and elsewhere draw increasing attention to the Church in Latin America. The phenomenal growth of Basic Church Groups remains one of the significant "signs of the times" both for the Churches of Latin America and for the Universal Church. J. B. Libanio's experiences with these communities enables him to give an historical overview of how they emerged in Brazil and also an analysis in depth of how they function. J. B. Libanio is a professor at the Catholic Pontifical University in Rio de Janeiro. The second part of the article will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin, 1st February, 1981. Ed).

The fast-growing grass roots movement in Brazil called the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs) or 'comunidades' needs to be surveyed vis-à-vis the broader as well as the Brazilian social and ecclesial context in which they were spawned. This overview of the birth of the 'comunidades' will underline the more original aspects of the BECs, especially within the complexity of the time in which we live.

This historical study is based on personal experience and direct contact with the BECs 'comunidade' representatives in numerous local, regional and national meetings; on facts gathered from the reports the BECs prepared for the three Interecclesial Encounters which have been held in Brazil and from the monographs which have been prepared by churchpersons.

SOCIAL AND ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

These grass roots communities are an example of the liberty and creativity of groups which are responsive to the unexpected breath of the Holy Spirit. They do not appear in history, like Melchizedec, without human parentage, but have their socioecclesial context where they are germinated. They absorb their strength from the soil in which they are born.

Global context: Important elements in the complex worldwide sociocultural and ecclesial circumstances explain the sudden appearance of the 'comunidades'.

Modern society, with its progress and its development of the productive forces, has produced a culture which profoundly affects us - positively and negatively. In spite of extraordinary benefits, this modern culture introduced inhumane conditions: painful anonymity, scandalous massing and marginalizing of human beings. From this double-edged phenomenon came a fervent search for community, a concern for authenticity and a thirst for experiences. These three characteristics created a propitious climate for the birth of groups of Christians who are seeking to live out the communitarian, authentic and novel dimensions of the experience of the church.

The impetus given the entire church by the Vatican Council also contributed to the transformations which the church experienced in Latin America. Vatican II, more than just an assembly of bishops, condensed, catalyzed and legitimized a series of movements which had been active since the beginning of the 20th century. Many of these movements directly influenced the birth of the BECs:

- the lay movements, particularly those related to Catholic action such as the Catholic Student Youth (JEC), Catholic Young Workers (JOC), and Catholic University Youth (JUC).
- the liturgical movement
- the biblical movement
- the "mystique of the poor" movement
- the theological renewal of ecclesiology.

Each of these movements contributed to the climate of renewal and freedom in the post-Vatican II era which permitted the birth of the 'comunidades'. In Brazil, these action movements combined with the renewal movements, and added to an ecclesiological openness a heightened interest and commitment to the poor. They were the decisive factors in the birth of the BECs. In the words of John XXIII, they became a manifestation of a new Pentecost for the church.

Brazilian context: Church historians and sociologists have recently referred to the romanization of Brazilian Catholicism which started in the second half of the last century. Before this century-long process, the church in Brazil knew a distinctly lay organization. This was manifested particularly through flowering ecclesiastical institutions such as the religious orders where the layperson was the central figure. These autonomous movements were directed entirely by the laity and were responsible for the glitter of the popular religious ceremonies and the many processions. From these arose outstanding lay leaders - the charismatic, fanatical types who were looked upon almost as local saints. Other hermits or church wardens (whose importance bears little resemblance to that of our present-day wardens) were important to popular piety. Even today whoever reads the sermons of Antônio Conselheiro is pleasantly surprised at the spiritual sublimity of his words.

Influence of individual movements: The Barra do Piraí experience, though a rough model, provided a beginning from which would come the true spirit of the BECs. It was strictly a clerical movement imbued with the zealous spirit of missionary conquest and anti-Protestant apologetic. Elitist, attempting to make up for the lack of an ordained priesthood, it was nonetheless the germ of an experience where the church began to trust the laity to perform certain pastoral tasks on behalf of their community, albeit in a controlled and limited way.

Most programs grow beyond the limits imposed due to the fears of the authorities. So, the popular catechists of Barra do Piraí in northern Brazil grew. No longer mere ignorant objects in need of instruction, they became subjects of evangelization.

Inspired by the experience of radio Sutatenza in Colombia, the so-called 'Movimento Natal' was launched in the 50s in the northern city of Natal, Rio Grande do Norte - one of the most underprivileged regions in the country. The stated goal was to "educate for change," giving these needy people a minimum of knowledge, of decision-making capability, of practical techniques and of basic health standards to help make them more capable of moving toward development.

It was an extensive literacy program combined with health education, basic training in trade and agricultural skills, community development and personal improvement. Done through "radio schools," it was coordinated by the Rural Assistance Service (SAR) and its three principle objectives were:

- Grass roots education
- Awareness of the need for in-depth changes in the political, social and economic structures; awakening a critical consciousness which would set in motion a process of consciousness-raising in order to achieve a new social order
- A vigorous effort to take God to these abandoned populations.

Grass roots education movement: In the beginning the Grass Roots Education Movement (MEB) was similar to the Natal Movement. Eventually it achieved a wider outreach, while adopting a more critical approach which became committed to changing the foundation of the society. Officially it was born in 1961 out of an agreement between the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) and the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture, by a presidential decree. MEB proposed to offer basic education to the populations in underdeveloped areas of the north, northeast and central-west Brazil by means of special radio programs.

In spite of the fact that the MEB was developed as a clear anti-Communist alternative to the peasant leagues, it contributed to consciousness-raising and grass roots training without apologetic overtones. Particularly during the early years, the majority of its cadres were young people from the Catholic action and other radical youth movements. Furthermore, the MEB found in Paulo Freire its methodological mentor. So alongside the literacy programs, the movement carried on programs of conscientization and politicization. A training manual entitled "To Live is to Struggle" was prepared to facilitate this process. Later the police under Governor Carlos Lacerda confiscated this manual in the state of Guanabara (Rio) shortly before the military coup of 1964. After the imposition of the military regime, MEB was slowly dismantled and transformed into what it is today - a pale shadow of the movement of the 60s.

Role of women religious: An important role in the process of church renewal - which provided the necessary climate for the birth of these 'comunidades' - was played by the women religious. They were able to approach the people in a freer and more original pastoral manner so that many of the BECs began when nuns started to assume the responsibility of encouraging communities of prayer, worship and life among the poor. Nizia Floresta, a small rural northeastern town some 40 km. from Natal, has become symbolic of this new apostolic activity of the sisters.

Although this initiative was characterized by certain clerical overtones (as was shown by the way in which the sisters were addressed as "vicars"), nevertheless the internal dynamics of this experiment superseded any early intentions. Elsewhere it evolved into a new kind of presence on the part of the religious orders within the community which eventually gave rise to new impulses and stimuli that, in many places, produced profound changes in the life-style of priests and nuns.

Repressive regimes: The final and decisive factor that facilitated the ecclesiological explosion of the 'comunidades' was a balance of a church in the midst of an accelerated process of renewal with a moment of political effervescence, produced by popular movements, followed by a night of repression at the hands of the post-1964 military regime.

After centuries of sterile juridical conservatism, the church began to experience the tremors of change throughout its being. At 'the level of the episcopacy' a sense of co-responsibility for the new problems emerged. After 1952 collegiality was facilitated by the organization of the National Conference of

Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) in which Dom Helder Câmara played a key role. In 1962 the bishops launched an Emergency Plan and in 1965 they approved the first Joint Pastoral Plan as guidelines for church program and action. The CNBB put its weight behind the new social consciousness and involvement of the laity in the life of the church. Many bishops went much further and adopted concrete actions on behalf of human promotion and grass roots socio-economic reforms.

At 'the level of the people of God', the Catholic action groups, particularly the JEC, JUC and JOC movements, as "Movements for a Better World" bravely undertook the task of updating bishops and clergy with innumerable workshops - 1,800 in five years. These contributed to a greater involvement of members of religious orders with the poor and oppressed as was illustrated in the Nízia Floresta experiment. Liturgy also became a prime object of church renewal. The laity became more involved and a more personal communal life-style developed.

All of this would probably have produced only a more modern church, as has happened in other parts of the world. However, the addition of a political ingredient produced the BECs phenomenon. At the close of the 50s and into the next decade, Brazil saw a growth of popular movements and social forces with a goal to affect a profound change in society. The critical voices of both middle and upper class were involved.

The church contained the auspicious combination of two factors: on one side a group of progressive bishops led by Dom Helder, on the other, sectors of the church which related to the Catholic action groups and were increasingly critical of a church allied with the dominant classes. This was the beginning of the realignment of those identified with the bourgeois hegemony and those identified with the emerging classes and social forces. Stated simply, significant parts of the church turned towards the poor and these popular classes began to be significant for the church. The more official repression restricted these social segments, the more the church cemented its alliance with the poor.

This, then, was the social context in which the 'comunidades de base' were born. The church became involved with the projects of the popular classes and was present in their midst. During the dark years of repression, the church was virtually the only possible space in which anyone could work on behalf of the poor. There the popular classes found a place in which to exist, to think, to pray, to discover themselves, to plan and to dream. These classes gradually began to occupy the church and today we see 80,000 BECs spread throughout Brazil.

Without the vigor of the popular classes, without this new openness to the poor on the part of certain segments of the episcopacy, and without the vitality of some of the middle class laity (especially those in the Catholic action groups), the explosion of the BECs would be difficult to imagine or explain.

DESCRIPTION

The research on the BECs shows that they are mainly located in socially deprived rural and urban areas. Few 'comunidades' exist among the urban middle and upper classes. BEC participants in general are peasant farmers, sharecroppers, small rural landowners, small business people and public servants, truck drivers, nurses aids, washerwomen, dressmakers, cleaning women, construction workers, mechanics, electricians. Many are illiterate and lack professional qualifications.

Definition of BEC: Community: A dynamic unit of persons that through spontaneous social interaction becomes integrated by bonds of friendship, emotional ties, common history and culture. It is an entity where the subjective and interrelational common interests give meaning to human groupings. These are

restrictive groupings of primary relationships. They are affective, nominal and interpersonal.

- Ecclesial: The community is defined by a faith that is made explicit in Jesus with reference to religious elements and bonds to ecclesiastical structures.

- Base: Psychosocially the community possesses a cellular nuclear and fundamental aspect; theologically it possesses an elemental lay Christian network of relationships; sociologically, it refers to the working classes.

- Poor: Those who are either at the margin of the system or out of favor with it.

Formation of BECs: The 'comunidades' normally begin through the pastoral action of evangelizing teams made up of either clergy, religious or lay persons who are the catalyzers of the communal energies and faith already present in the people. After several visits and informal get-togethers with this team, the people begin to gather in small groups which gradually become 'comunidades'eclesiais de base'. This means that first the evangelizing team must develop faith and confidence in the intrinsic worth, courage and ability of the popular classes. This team must also be willing to go to these people and share in their life, helping them organize communities of faith.

An important role in the development of the BECs came from the liberating pedagogy of Paulo Freire. On the other hand, observes Carlos Mesters, the majority of the BECs were born out of "Bible circles," or groups who began to regularly encounter the Word of God as it was read, lived and interpreted within the context of their own social reality.

End of Part I

Reference: Missiology. An International Review, Volume VII Number 3 - July 1980.

INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL SIN

(There are 7 million Catholics in Cardinal Jaime Sin's archdiocese, making it one of the largest dioceses in the world. Other indicators of its size are the need for seven auxiliary bishops, and the fact that since becoming archbishop in March 1974 he has established 63 new parishes, almost one new parish a month. The following exclusive interview was held on June 25 at the Cardinal's residence.)

PAPAL VISIT

'Some people feel the Pope should not come here in November. What good do you see resulting from his visit?'

His visit is a pastoral one to strengthen our faith, which is the task given to Peter. People are suffering here, there is fear, tension. We hold to our faith, but we expect the Pope to strengthen us.

When he beatifies our Filipino martyr, Lorenzo Ruiz, he'll explain, I'm sure, how to remain strong in the faith despite terrible suffering.

Observing good manners, he'll visit President Marcos. But it's a pastoral visit. I know some people feel he'll be used by the government to build its own image. I don't worry about that. The Pope has been to Mexico and he's going to Brazil. He knows how to handle a situation like ours.

If the Pope doesn't come we'll be deprived of something meaningful, especially the poor. I know the poor will be happy to see the Pope.

'What would you like the Pope to say?'

I suggested to him that he talk of human rights and repeat the message he gave in Puebla.

PRIESTS IN POLITICS

'Pope John Paul has spoken often recently about priests staying out of politics. Is he saying something new or is he in the line of Pope Paul?'

He is saying the same thing as Pope Paul. He doesn't want priests to run for public office or to tell the people to vote for this man or that one in an election, nor does he want us to choose one type of political system over another. Don't get involved in divisive politics, he is saying.

But we must talk about politics as a human activity with a moral dimension. If there's cheating in an election, I talk about it as I did after the January (1980) elections. We have to speak out. But I don't think priests should opt publicly for a system, for example, democracy or monarchy or something else.

A priest in a poor rural area gets the problems of the people night and day. He tries to help but nothing happens. He gets bitter, becomes an activist and finally a guerilla.

I certainly wouldn't condemn such a priest, but I would say to him, let me help you. If you go on like that things will be even worse. The people in charge will be angry and adamant.

I get results by calling the different ministers. I made the appointment for Bishop Brasseur to see the government about the problems of the Kalinga mountain people. I told the officials that there was the beginning of a revolution up there. If instead of doing it that way, the people demonstrate and demand that the government do this or do that, the officials will not listen. You have to do things in a nice way. Else there will be violence. We must be diplomatic and keep talking with one another.

Violence is certainly against Christianity. I think it was Robespierre, the man who was so active in the French Revolution, who later in his life said it was all a mistake. Revolutions eat their own children. The Cultural Revolution in China was very brutal.

I want to help the people. If I incline to one side or another, I won't be able to work effectively for the poor. It's okay for me, but what about the poor?

MARTIAL LAW

'Do you think President Marcos wants to end Martial Law?'

I think he does but the people around him who have benefited financially will not allow it.

He had the opportunity in the last local elections to restore his credibility, if he had worked for clean elections and promised to punish those who cheated and promised to work with the people who were elected whoever they were. But he forgot all this. Personally I think he will continue for life.

Our president knows history. He must know how it will end for him if there is no normalization. So many ambitious people scheming for power around the president. If he dies or is killed, what? Those people will fight among themselves and then what? I only know of one dictator, Charles De Gaulle, who ever stepped down.

Maybe, maybe there was some need of Martial Law for a short while back there in 1972, even though democracy could have been able to solve the problems. I never thought it would last this long.

CHURCH-STATE

The president sat right there where you're sitting and asked me if there should be a union of Church and State. I said, no. Church-State separation is the best thing the Americans brought here. If the Church marries a political system in this generation, she's a widow in the next when people put off that system. If the Church is a political agency now, she's unnecessary in the next generation. Let the laity take the leadership. We can supply the moral principles.

The late Jesuit historian Father (Holacio) de la Costa said it best: our attitude to the government must be one of critical collaboration. If the government is wrong, speak out against it. If it is right, congratulate them. I'm not interested in systems of government but in human rights, the Christian vision of man, the welfare of man.

The Church must not be controlled. The president offered to give me back the Philippine Trust Company. I refused. I told him I don't want to be indebted to you. If I take the bank back, you'll shut my mouth. I only ask justice, nothing more. That's why I can hit them properly. Properly, because the president is my parishioner and I have to try and save him too. I don't know how I'm going to do that.

ABOUT HIMSELF

'Pope John Paul II said that if he had known he would be Pope someday, he would have studied a lot harder in the seminary. If you knew long ago you would be Cardinal of Manila, what would you have done?'

I would have left the priesthood.

I have my limitations and I know them. Jesus rode an ass into Jerusalem. He's riding another one now, I think.

These are problems here. These are tense days. I think many changes are necessary and they are offensive to some. We must implement all the resolutions of Vatican II and fast, or the Church will be left far behind.

But this is the era of dialogue and true dialogue with all our people takes time. So you have two characteristics - the need for rapid change and the slow process of dialogue.

When I was a boy I wanted to be a missionary so I could share the Gospel with others. I applied with the Jesuits and was accepted, but my bishop wouldn't let me go. The same thing with the Vincentians.

After ordination, the bishop wanted to send me to Rome for studies. I didn't want to go. Others want to go, I said, send them. Just put me in a small rural parish. I went to work in those places where the parish priests couldn't go. I did that for three years and was very happy.

Then I was named rector of the seminary. I studied on my own to prepare for this. I never had special studies.

I try to read an hour at night. Cardinal Newman is my favorite and John XXIII. I also read about dictators like Hitler, in order to know how to put a stop to them.

When I came to Manila there were serious divisions among church people. I think I've healed most of them. My goal is to unite people. As you know I shared ₱25,000,000 of Manila's money with the rest of the bishops.

I want to see our recent Synod implemented. This calls for continuous dialogue with all. I don't want more buildings. I want to build the Church in men's hearts.

Reference: INFO ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, Volume 7, Number 7 - July 1980.

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Christology and Inculturation: (the earthly Jesus and the risen Lord): The Person of Jesus is at the centre, and at the periphery, of Christian faith. Apart from him there is nothing. It is, of course, the risen Christ we are speaking of, the one who has been lifted up from the earth and drawn all people to himself, the one who has poured the Holy Spirit on all humanity because he has been glorified.

In recent years, happily, the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus has come back to the forefront of liturgy, spirituality and theology: we have often been reminded that Easter is the Christian feast, and that every Sunday is a 'mini-Easter', the day of the Risen Lord.

But the liberation theologians, among others, have also reminded us that the resurrection cannot be understood apart from the crucifixion, that the risen Jesus is the same person who "because like us in all things but sin", assumed all our human burdens and joys.

There cannot be a "theologia gloriae" without a "theologia crucis". In the resurrection, everything in the earthly life of Jesus has been glorified and transformed. His values, his life-style, his vision, have shone forth as the triumphant forces in human life, as the very meaning that God sees at the heart of all human existence.

Christology in terms of "passing-over" involves two main 'steps', therefore. The first is a study of Jesus in his mortal life, the man whom we remember; the second is a study of the Church's proclamation of the risen One, the one who is Lord, the universal person.

Reference: AFER (African Ecclesial Review), Volume 22, No. 6, AFER Number 100 - December 1980.

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