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In this issue: The Sedos Research Seminar of March 1981 reiterated the importance of proclamation in mission. This issue of the Bulletin gives two examples taken from the work of catechists, one from Chile, the other from Kenya with a particular ecumenical dimension. Both are concerned with the direct proclamation of the Good News in face of problems and difficulties which are being turned into opportunities.

Consideration of the mission of the local Church in relation to the great non-Semitic religions of Asia leads Aloysius Pieris to the view that the local Churches in Asia have not fulfilled their mission and have failed to produce local Churches of Asia. He has interesting views on the "inculturation vogue" and on the significance of politics, poverty and religiosity in the Asian context.

Yves Morel outlines some of the criticisms of the Church made by today's youth in Tchad, Ivory Coast and Cameroun. The next issue of the Bulletin will continue this contribution, giving some of the positive aspects of Morel's analysis.

Your attention is drawn to two summer courses, and to 'Catoruzi' an appeal from Zimbabwe for teachers.

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COMING EVENTS

Meeting on the Appeal from Zimbabwe	Tuesday, 23rd March - 4.00 - 6.00 p.m. at Sedos
Meeting: African Members of Inter- national Congregations/Institutes.	Thursday, 1st April - 4.00 - 6.00 p.m. at Borgo S. Spirito

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MODERN CATECHETICS
-NEW LIFE TO CHILEAN CHURCH

John O'Hehir

(Ce compte rendu d'une nouvelle méthode catéchétique expérimentée au Chili est inspirée par celle de Gerald Griffin: "Comment mettre en valeur la Bonne Nouvelle au Japon" (Sedos Bulletin No. 14, 1981). Les deux rapports soulignent l'engagement de la communauté dans les situations vécues. La Bonne Nouvelle y est présentée et appliquée, et la foi qu'elle engendre n'est plus une liste abstraite et à moitié retenue de "questions" et de "réponses" du catéchisme, mais une communion vivante avec un Sauveur personnel et avec les autres, dans l'Esprit. N.d.l.R).

Amelia is 27 years old an unmarried mother and she was weeping. Her tears at that final group meeting were tears of joy at having discovered a whole new circle of true friends; she had found a closer union with her God through her studies of the Bible and of the life of Christ; and she had personally prepared her eight-year-old daughter for First Communion.

Juan Carlos, a 40-year-old father of three children, was initially resentful at being obliged to attend a course for two years, but at its conclusion he wanted everyone to know how he and his wife and family had found a new closeness and understanding that he did not believe possible. As well he was deeply moved because he himself had prepared his son for his First Communion.

Amelia and Juan Carlos are well known to me as they are members of the Christian community of Santa Catalina in the Archdiocese of Santiago in Chile. These are only two of the thousands of Chilean Catholics who have been enriched by their experience of the new catechesis of the Chilean church. The catechetical program has received international recognition; with its emphasis on adult evangelization, it has been seen as the principal cause of the dramatic renewal and aliveness that is evident in the Chilean church of today.

Called "Family Catechesis" it is a method designed and perfected by the catechetical department of the Archdiocese of Santiago. Its aim is twofold. Firstly, the evangelization of the parents of those children who are preparing for their First Communion, and of the same children through the direct collaboration of these parents. Secondly, the integration of the parents and their children into permanent Christian communities. One of the reasons which has prompted the Church to engage in this methodology is a number of characteristics proper to Chilean Catholicism.

Eleven million people live in Chile. About 88 percent of the population are Catholic, with another 8 percent belonging to various other Christian Churches. The majority of Chileans are Catholic more by tradition or social pressure than by conviction. They receive in their youth a minimal instruction in the faith and the level of religious practice is very low - about 8 percent. Manifestations of so-called "popular religion" are relatively scarce and temperate in comparison with other Latin American countries.

About 70 percent of parents in Chile want their children to receive First Communion. The Church has always responded by arranging school or parish programs to secure a pre-First Communion preparation. However, the effects of a rapid secularization, a persistent non-Catholic proselytizing, growing urbanization (Santiago now has a population of 4.5 million), together with a grave shortage of priests and religious, required that the bishops re-examine their catechetical program.

ONCE A UPON A TIME

Once upon a time the parish priest was able to personally supervise catechesis for First Communion applicants. But with growing numbers in city parishes - some have 80 or 100 thousand people - there might be more than 600 children entered in one parish program alone. This was a well nigh impossible task for the priest and a few catechists to handle adequately.

This situation demanded a decentralization of the parish catechetical program, creating centers of Christian formation for children in different sectors of the parish. Lay people were called upon to assume important roles. Into the church community scene came the so-called "Catechist Mothers", i.e. women who would bring neighbourhood children into their own homes to prepare them for First Communion. Catechetics acquired a marked family characteristic, and the message of Christ came to the children in simple language, within surroundings natural to them. Doctrinal precision was sometimes sacrificed but a more real life-situation was achieved. This development of Family Catechesis took place between 1965 and 1969.

The second stage - until 1971 - began with a long hard look at the Chilean reality. "Catechist Mothers" observed that much of their work was useless as very few children persevered in sacramental practice after having "made" their First Communion. The reason was obvious - they did not get the example and moral support of their parents. For the majority of Chileans First Communion was purely a social event without any commitment or further impact on the life of the child. The reality of the situation called for the commitment of the parents themselves to the preparation of their children for First Communion. The requirements imposed upon the parents were not the same in all parishes. In some cases the only requirement was that they attend four or five "formation" meetings during their children's period of preparation. Other parishes, however, placed an obligation on the parents (or at least the mother) to assist weekly at formation meetings so that they themselves would be the teachers of their children.

It was at this time that Cardinal Raúl Silva, the Archbishop of Santiago, restructured the department of catechesis in his diocese. A newer and more professional approach appeared which gave immediate priority to the preparation of "themes" to assist the "catechist guides" in their formation meetings. The first work was a booklet with 25 themes which were to be used for 25 sessions with groups of parents, as well as a work-book for the children. Soon after, the Chilean Bishops Conference fixed a mandatory period of two years preparation before First Communion --both for the parents and the children. Other booklets were produced to cover the "second year catechetics", but up to this time the aim of the program was still directed to the instruction and formation of the child. Other dioceses began using the booklets for First Communion preparation, and a new priority and direction reorientated the whole program.

As past experience had indicated, parents did become interested and dedicated to the religious formation of their children. However, it was becoming clear that the father of the family was unable to fulfill his role unless he had consciously committed himself to Christ. And if the parents were limited to be only teachers, then it would be reducing the richness of Christian living to the assimilation of religious concepts. So the direct evangelization of the parents became the focal point of the whole catechetical program.

The "guides" sessions with the parents developed different objectives for each of the two years.

The First Year: To announce the Good News to the parents inviting them to a true conversion of heart and commitment to Christ.

The Second Year: To help them to discover the community emphasis of Christian living, inviting them to join a small Christian "basic community" in which they would encounter the full meaning of the Eucharist Celebration. With these aims clarified, formation themes were introduced into the First Communion catechetical program and the following *schema* became the norm of catechetical formation in the Pastoral Plan of the archdiocese.

FIRST YEAR

There are 27 official instruction meetings besides occasions of group celebration which include prayers, readings, a Mass (if possible) and a social. There are two preparatory sessions to enable groups of parents to begin to know one another and to establish good relations between the married couples. Then follow 6 sessions of "deepening" as the members of the group become accustomed to sharing their attitudes about, e.g. the meaning of life, relations between parents and children, between spouses, the mystery of suffering, etc. Then begin 13 sessions on evangelization: an introduction to the New Testament - the Person of Jesus Christ - and other themes basic to an understanding of the gospels. Then a final six sessions about "commitment", explaining the need to make a personal option for Jesus Christ which involves one's whole life: conversion, baptism, the requirements of Christian life, true clarity, etc.

SECOND YEAR

For this year there are 24 sessions: 10 sessions which reflect on the experiences of the Chosen People in the Old Testament - Yahweh leading Israel away from idolatry and into the preparation for the encounter with His Son, the Messiah; 4 sessions devoted to the Pascal Mystery - the Last Supper, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; finally 10 sessions about the life of the Christian community and its summit experience in the Eucharist.

There is a methodology in this program. To assist parents who desire their child to receive First Holy Communion, they are invited to form part of a group of parents with the same aim of preparing their own children. The majority of parish priests insist on this two-year program of preparation as one of obligation upon the parents. The groups that are formed should have no more than a dozen persons and the religious formation of the group is the responsibility of the catechist guide. The guide is accredited by the Church as a trained catechetical teacher after successfully completing courses of the Catechetical Institute in Santiago and is accepted as such by the christian community.

The guide usually works with the same group for the entire two-year period. The meetings are normally on a weekly basis. The guide follows a special handbook designed to aid the correct handling of the meetings. The learning parents will depend on *their* booklet which includes in some detail all the themes which they will deal with during this year. Every meeting assumes that the participants have prepared the theme together at home before the meeting.

The children use their own work-book from which they will write, draw and memorize the various themes. Every Sunday morning they are invited to a "children's celebration" which is the responsibility of an *auxiliary* or catechetical helper who is usually a younger person. The children play, dance and sing together and listen to specially prepared readings of God's Word. In this way it is hoped that a children's Christian Community will develop.

THE ACTUAL MEETING

The method employed at the weekly meetings is a very simple one. It lasts for one hour exactly and the lesson is developed in stages.

10 minutes: A conversation about an actual life situation, e.g. the story of Manuel who pilfers from the timber yard where he is employed and explains his justification.

30 minutes: A passage from the Bible illuminating the reflection upon the problem, accompanied by the guide.

10 minutes: A final reflection in which all take part and which leads the group to concrete conclusions and resolutions.

10 minutes: A final conversation in which is discussed the best way of explaining the subject to their children.

A FINAL COMMENT

Puebla's call for an "integrated catechesis" contains the key and in my opinion the "why" of this very real renewal of the Chilean church.

In any integral catechesis we should always find the following things brought together in an inseparable way:

- the knowledge of the Word of God;
- the celebration of faith, in the Sacraments;
- the profession of faith in day-to-day life.

In my own experience, I believe that the Word of God, the Bible, has been "discovered" by the Chilean people. It is a really new experience for most of them to meet the Redeemer in His personal life and teaching and to reflect upon this in relation to their own selves and life situations. A whole new dimension has been added to their lives spilling over into the way they celebrate their sacramental life and into the attitudes that bring them into a Christian community life-style.

They have made the Bible *their* book finding that the poor that Jesus had compassion upon are themselves; that the sick and the old and the children all live in His love; that the crucifying situations of life are never without his presence. Their faith for them is no longer a dry, abstract, half-remembered list of 'question-and-answer' catechism faith, but an alive and vibrant communion with a personal Saviour and with one another in the Spirit.

Reference: COLUMBAN INTERCOM, December 1981 - Vol. 3, No. 10.

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NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS: I have nothing else to say to the world. At other times one could talk about family life and divorce and birth control and abortion and many other questions. But this nuclear rocket is here. And it renders all other questions null and void. Nothing, nothing can be settled until this is settled. Or this will settle us, once and for all.

It's terrible for me to live in a time where I have nothing to say to human beings except, "Stop killing," There are other beautiful things that I would love to be saying to people. There are other projects I could be very helpful at. And I can't do them. I cannot.

Because everything is endangered. Everything is up for grabs. Ours is a kind of primitive situation, even though we would call ourselves sophisticated. Our plight is very primitive from a Christian point of view. We are back where we started. Thou shall not kill; we are not allowed to kill. Everything today comes down to that--everything.

Father Daniel Berrigan

- addressing the Court after being sentenced to prison for offences connected with an anti-nuclear arms protest.

A CATECHETICAL OPPORTUNITY IN KENYA
ECUMENISM IN ACTION

Marguerite Gemme, sa

(Ce bref article décrit un projet catéchétique oecuménique dans le diocèse de Mombasa, situé sur la côte du Kenya. Dans cette région, il y avait une vieille tradition de suspicion, voire même d'animosité, entre les Eglises chrétiennes. Des progrès dans l'oecuménisme se sont réalisés, en bonne partie grâce aux initiatives des évêques anglican et catholique. On y rencontre maintenant une équipe de conseillers en éducation religieuse, composée de catholiques, d'anglicans, de methodistes, de luthériens et de membres de l'Armée du Salut. Cette équipe travaille à l'établissement d'un cours de religion destiné aux enseignants des écoles gouvernementales, où un fonds commun d'enseignement religieux est approuvé par le Ministère de l'Education et fait partie du programme scolaire. N.d.l.R.)

To leave or not to leave:...that was the question debated in the Mombasa community a short time ago. This community which was started at the beginning of the century, concentrated on the Christian education of generations of children in the city. But...the situation had changed. The Star of the Sea School had been africanized and a discernment was under way to reflect on the situation in the light of our missionary vocation and the needs of the local Church.

The Bishop still wanted missionary sisters. If he continued to claim sisters for the school, he was also asking that we "push out into the deep". Religious Education Advisors (REA's) were required to help teachers of religion throughout the coast province to be better prepared to transmit the Message of Christ to the thousands of children registered in schools for Christian Religious Education.

Whatever the determining factor for remaining in Mombasa, we are still there, and Honor McGrath and Marguerite Gemme are busy R.E.A.'s, involved in an ecumenical team, commissioned to reach out to as many as possible of the 550 Government schools in other towns and villages along the coast.

Religion in the curriculum: The Government of Kenya requires that religion be taught in all primary schools as an academic subject along educational lines. Christian Churches work in partnership with the Ministry of Education to prepare syllabuses and materials. The schools have a dual programme: The Joint Syllabus which is common to all Christians, has been carefully worked out by the experts from the different Churches. It is based on the Scriptures and remains faithful to the teaching that there is "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism".

The Pastoral Programmes prepared by the respective Churches, ensure that the child in the classroom learn the way of life and teaching of his/her particular Christian community.

The teaching of religion to Catholic children has always been very dependent on the school system in Kenya. And this is still very true in Mombasa diocese where there are still very few adult Christians in rural areas, few parishes, few priests, but many schools begun by missionaries. When the Churches handed over their schools to Government, they remained sponsors, having their say in maintaining the religious tradition of the school. That is why the Christian Churches, and very particularly our Bishop in Mombasa, are very keen to appoint R.E.A.s to ensure that the aims of religious education are understood and that syllabuses are followed.

To other towns I must proclaim the Good News (Lk. 4.43): With such a situation, it followed naturally that the R.E.A.s of the different denominations should seek one another out to see how they might work together. Our ecumenical endeavour began in 1980 when two Methodists, an Anglican and four Catholic Religious Education Advisors came together to pray and reflect, to share their experiences in schools and to study the possibilities for working as a team. At first there were reluctances...a little suspicion of one another, a lot of caution, but as we planned a programme, visited schools together (94 in the first term), shared in the work, barriers began to fall.

In the meantime, our original group expanded with R.E.A.'s of the Salvation Army, the Pentecostal and Lutheran Churches joining us; and the team came to include pastors and priests of the different parishes in remote areas, all very eager to be involved in the effort to help teachers to become more aware of their responsibilities as Christians in areas where Islam claims 1/3 of the population and where whole communities are still adhering to African Traditional Religions.

With our expanded group, we soon saw the need to meet monthly, to plan out our programmes and to give a half day to prayer together and to a sharing of our deep convictions on various subjects such as baptism, the Eucharist, traditions of prayer, priesthood and ministries in our Churches. These exchanges proved very enlightening to all of us and created an openness and respect with regard to the work of the Spirit in and through each one.

After we started our visits to schools, in twos or threes, sometimes at considerable distances in rural areas, it soon became clear that the teachers expected more. Everywhere, Christian Religious Education (C.R.E) was on the timetable, but it was not always taught. Many of the teachers, first generation Christians themselves, had too little knowledge about Christianity, did not feel confident enough to teach it, lacked syllabuses and books, and in some cases, avowed that they were not really living out their Christian commitment. "What are you going to do to help us?"... several asked.

As we continued our work, we adjusted our approach and with the help of the education officers and Church leaders, we were able to organize day workshops in parishes and in regional areas. The misunderstandings that had marked our team relations in our first visits to schools were disappearing and our message, without in any way departing from the essence of the Gospel, had become more sensitive, more open... and more respectful of the different Christian traditions within our team and among the teachers. By the end of the year, teachers of religion of 250 schools had been touched, either by a visit to their schools, or by a day or weekend workshop...and they were calling for follow-up courses.

This led to further planning: What could we do to provide the teachers with a good basis for their Christian faith...to help them to become aware of their responsibilities as teachers and as members of a Christian community?

Religious Education Awareness Programme: Our search led to a programme already in use in the Kisii diocese, called Religious Education Awareness Programme...REAP for short, designed by an R.E.A. team in that diocese, not only to strengthen the faith of the teachers of religion, but also to help them to understand the programmes and to motivate them for their teaching and for living out their Christian life in a meaningful way. It consists of ten long weekend workshops and can be given in a programme that extends throughout a school year. After all the necessary approvals for starting the programme were obtained, a tentative schedule was made out for the whole of 1981-82. A Government-subsidized centre was chosen as the most appropriate venue because of the low cost of accommodation, and it was decided that the teachers wanting to join the programme should contribute towards their own board and room.

The response of the teachers for the first workshop was so great that we had to repeat it almost immediately to take care of the many registrations we received. All the teachers who started the programme signed up to continue it to the end, even though at their own expense and time. "I wish to complete all ten workshops", wrote one teacher in his evaluation, "to help me to be an active member in my Church and a devoted teacher". And another: "The power of God moving within us during the course promotes a lot of interior change".

Inservice renewal courses: So that the team of R.E.A. and the priests and pastors may be prepared to run these workshops together, an inservicing will be given them by the originators of REAP who have accepted to go down to Mombasa for that purpose. This will enable the team to share the tasks in a balanced way, as it is necessary that each workshop be assured by at least 5 facilitators of different religions and capacities, to maintain the ecumenical aspect before teachers of different religions and to assure the necessary services. Prayer is usually given pride of place during the sessions, to help the teachers to appreciate this spiritual dimension of their Christian vocation and to teach the children in their classes how to pray. Singing also, is found to be important as a medium, not only for celebrating liturgies but also as a means for reinforcing the Scripture teachings given during classes. The teachers are further introduced into various forms of group work, designed to help them to relate to one another, to know themselves better and to learn, in a practical way, to use the "life approach" method with their children in the classroom.

And so, with a full programme scheduled for the months ahead, we continue to prepare and to work together as a team, conscious of our limitations but confident in the One who has sent us "that they may have life to the full". This work is not without its hurdles. The Kenya Government is presently studying how it can make changes in its Education Act to lighten its burden and to give back to the Churches the responsibility of the teaching of religion. The Bishops of Kenya are concerned about this.

We know that we must work together to create an awareness of the need for religion throughout the school system if the children are to grow up as good citizens, aware of the place of God in their lives and concerned with the values that count for real development in their country.

So, Mombasa community lives on with a new work that has opened up avenues of dialogue and of communion with brothers of other Christian denominations and of other faiths. And the apostolate stretches forth to other towns, to other villages, that the Good News of Christ may be shared.

Reference: HELLO? FRASCATI. November-December 1981.

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CATORUZI

(CATHOLIC ANCILLARY TEACHERS OF RURAL ZIMBABWE)

AN APPEAL FROM ZIMBABWE

The major religious superiors of Zimbabwe with the support of the bishops and in conjunction with the Minister of Education and Culture are launching a project CATORUZI - Catholic Ancillary Teachers of Rural Zimbabwe - a worldwide appeal for teachers to help in the massive expansion of rural secondary education in the recently independent nation.

Some who are eager to respond have expressed a desire for some sharing and reflection around the questions raised:

How does the project fit into government policy generally, and to the needs and wants of the local people?

How does it fit into the church's pastoral priorities? Is it a backward step to be emphasizing institutions rather than basic communities? What form will the support of the bishops take? What kind of orientation should be offered to those teachers, religious and lay, who respond to this appeal?

Those interested in the Project are invited to a meeting at Sedos office on Tuesday, 23rd March, 4-6 p.m. (Enclosed are three items of information on the project).

MISSION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN RELATION
TO OTHER MAJOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Aloysius Pieris

(Voici une partie d'une étude préparée pour le "Séminaire de Recherche sur la Mission" de SEDOS à Rome, en mars 1981. Le texte complet paraîtra prochainement aux Editions "Orbis Books". L'étude se limite aux religions non-sémitiques d'Asie, et à leurs relations avec les Missions, des Eglises locales d'Asie. N.d.l.R.).

PART I. PERSPECTIVES AND CLARIFICATIONS

Today's Mission Crisis is basically an Authority Crisis. It is well known that in the heart of the traditional Churches which founded the missions, the once all-pervasive authority of the Institutional leadership has been increasingly questioned or simply ignored. Those who wield authority saw it as a crisis of obedience. To the rest it was simply a crisis of credibility. When this crisis matured in the Colonial frontiers of the same Churches, i.e. in the so-called mission lands, it travelled back to the Centre in the guise of a Mission crisis. As we see it, therefore, the mission crisis is no more, no less than an authority crisis.

Here, in Asia, this crisis lay dormant for centuries like embers until Vatican II fanned it into a conflagration of self-criticism leaving the Church's "missionary claims" in cinders. From these cremated remains we Asians are called upon to resurrect a new credible symbol of God's saving presence amidst our people, an Authoritative Word from a Source of Revelation universally recognized as such in Asia. In short, we are summoned to discover the contours of a new missionary community which is truly qualified to announce God's kingdom, and mediate the liberative revolution inaugurated by Jesus through His life and death, i.e. a community that seeks no other sign of credibility or authority than that which such mediation would bestow upon it. What is asked of us, then, is nothing short of an ecclesiological revolution. Thus the frontier situation in which we live has opened up a new horizon for us. Though our praxis is punctuated by debates and deliberations we have no hesitation about the direction of our quest. The perspectives are clear and self-evident.

It is these perspectives that I wish to set forth here. They consist of assumptions that require no substantiation but need only to be explicitated. Since, however, the title of this essay has been given to me already phrased as the Mission of the Local Church and the Major Religious Traditions, I am compelled to set up here the framework of our discussion by spelling out our missiological assumptions around the concepts already given to me: "Mission", "Local Church" and "Religions".

The assumptions are as follows:-

1. "Local Church": The term 'local Church' is a tautology. For there is no church that is not local. And we hasten to add that the Christian Communities in Asia are all truly Churches, and therefore, authentically local.

2. In Asia - of Asia: This, however, does not imply that all local churches in Asia are necessarily local Churches of Asia! Most of them, regrettably, are local Churches of another continent struggling for centuries to get acclimatized to the Asian ethos. Obviously, our reference is to the so-called "Western Missions" which are Asian branches of the local churches such as those of Rome, England and so on. This applies in a limited way also to the Oriental Rite Churches which can legitimately claim to be local churches of Asia - though, perhaps, not always of today's Asia! I confine my observations here to the former category, i.e. to the Western Missions.

3. Inculturation vogue: Nonetheless these observations do not warrant the conclusion that the immediate task of local churches in Asia is to become local churches of Asia, and that this is an indispensable condition for the evangelization of Asian nations. That is a species of missiology lying beneath the theories of 'inculturation' now in vogue. We do not uphold this view. We see the process of "becoming the local church of Asia" only as an accompaniment or a corollary to the process of "fulfilling the mission of evangelizing the (Asian) nations." Put conversely, it means that the local churches in Asia have not fulfilled their mission and therefore have failed to produce local churches of Asia.

4. Mission to the poor: Now the Mission to the Nations is primarily (cf. Medellin 1968) even if not exclusively (Puebla 1980), a mission to the poor. He who entrusted this mission to us has defined it so. Since good news to the poor is always bad news to the rich, the liberation of the rich is mediated by the liberation of the poor, not vice-versa. Our mission, in other words, is prophetic and has been coloured from its inception with a class option. Hence the observation: a local church in Asia is usually a rich church working for the poor while the local church of Asia could only be a poor church working with the poor, a church that has been evangelized, a church that has become Good News to Asians.

5. Great(monastic) religions: This Church however, is a little flock, a tiny minority in Asia and has no monopoly of this mission. The great (monastic) religions which antedate Christianity also claim to possess a message of liberation for the poor of Asia. That is why the local churches in Asia look upon these religions as rival claimants; but in a local church of Asia, they will have already become collaborators in a common Mission.

6. Politics: The moment we associate the Asian Poor and the Asian Religions with our prophetic mission, we are right in the middle of politics. Moreover, poverty and religiosity are two areas in which confrontation with two political ideologies, Capitalism and Marxism, cannot be avoided. These two ideologies are directly involved with the "liberation" of the Asian poor and have definite theories about and

attitudes towards the Asian Religions. The local Church in Asia whether prophetic or not, rich or poor, is a political church: a neutral church is a contradiction in terms, for it would not be local.

7. Authority: Since all these religions and ideologies claim to be liberative movements, saviours of the masses, it is only the poor who will decide as to who is competent to liberate them. Neither textual proofs (our authority is mentioned in our holy books) nor the appeal to tradition (we always claimed this authority and people used to accept it) are adequate today. Authority is the spontaneous manifestation of a Church's competence to mediate total liberation for the people of Asia. The ultimate Source of this Authority is He who entrusted the Mission to us. But He has identified Himself with the poor as the 'Victim-Judge' (Mt. 25) and it is in and through the poor that the Church or any other religion or ideology will receive His authority here in this Continent. The authority crisis therefore remains a permanent possibility in the mission of a local church in Asia.

The political implications of this prophetic mission constitute only one source of conflicts which the local Churches experience today. Another major divisive factor which can be more easily eliminated is found purely in the area of semantics. The key words Religion and Poverty which together describe the Asian Ethos, are themselves polysemous words, signifying contradictory realities. Those engaged in missiological debates - specially the 'Liberationists' and 'Inculturationists' - are both guilty of over-simplifying this complex question.

Poverty? It is curious that even the Medellin papers, when speaking of the phenomenon of 'poverty' take a zig-zag path, now deploring it, now counting its blessings. The ambiguity can be traced back to the Gospels. When Jesus invited the young man to sell all things and give (-not, of course, to the temple, but) to the poor, He required the Rich Man not to be rich and the Poor not to be poor! The Marian Manifesto in Luke announces the Messianic Intervention whereby the positions of the Rich and the Poor would be reversed, implying that both Riches and Poverty be eliminated. The attempt to distinguish "economic" from "evangelical" poverty does not help clear this ambiguity. The only way out would be to admit a distinction between "forced poverty", inflicted on some by the hedonism or the indifference of others (Dives and Lazarus) and "voluntary poverty" embraced as a protest and a precaution against "forced poverty". The one is enslaving; the other is liberating. In eastern religions, voluntary poverty is a spiritual antidote against Mammon working in man psychologically. In liberation theology, it is also a sociological weapon, i.e. a political strategy, necessary in the battle against organized selfishness or Mammon's principalities and powers. Mahatma Gandhi is the most outstanding Asian example of voluntary poverty with both its psychological and sociological implications.

Religion? A similar clarification is desirable in the understanding of 'religion'! Under the influence of a Marxist critique of religion, and the biblical hermeneutics of Latin-American Theologians, some of our Asian Liberationists define Religion and Poverty as negative forces forming an unholy alliance from which the Asian masses have to be liberated. Poverty for them is an evil in itself. Religion is said to perpetuate it first by restricting the area of spiritual liberation to the non-social, non-political, non-economic plane (-does such a plane

exist?) and secondly by legitimizing as well as allowing itself to be legitimized by oppressive systems that create and maintain the evils of poverty. The Inculturationists, on the other hand, ignore or gloss over this negative aspect of religion and sometimes of poverty, except perhaps when they acknowledge the failure of other religions to inspire a Mother Teresa who would alleviate the sufferings of the poor! The demand for radical transformation of society as an indispensable condition for the elimination of sufferings is neutralized by 'apostolic works' which turn victims of poverty into perpetual objects of compassion. They would also appreciate the monastic thrust of major Asian religions in that these religions value poverty as something to be voluntarily embraced in order to combat selfishness and acquisitiveness. They would want the Church to absorb these traits of various religions in becoming more 'at home' in Asia. But this approach of the Inculturationists sounds too accommodative in the minds of Liberationists.

The Reality is more complex than that. Religion too has an enslaving and a liberating dimension as much as poverty does. After all has not the same Christian religion produced a theology of domination and a theology of liberation?

We give here, in a tabulated form, the contradictory realities that the words 'Religiosity' and 'Poverty' designate. They show that these words are bipolar, each containing a negative and a positive pole. Besides, each pole has two complementary dimensions: sociological and psychological - or more precisely, socio-political and individual. I hope the ensuing discussion of concrete issues (Part II) will become clearer in the light of this fourfold distinction.

RELIGIOSITY AND POVERTY: SCHEMATICALLY

<u>Poles</u>	<u>Psychological</u>	<u>Sociological</u>
The enslaving face of Religiosity -	Superstition, ritualism dogmatism, etc; trans- ^{ism} cendentalism (=manichae- [↑] docetism, etc.).	Religion's tendency to legitimize an oppressive status quo= religion's tendency to serve Mammon or Anti- God; commercialism.
The liberating face of Religiösisity +	The interior liberation from Sin (=Mammon, Anti- God, Tanha etc.or exploit- ative instincts).	Religion's organi- zational & motivational potential for radical social change. (eg. independence movements in Asia).

continued over

<u>Poles</u>	<u>Psychological</u>	<u>Sociological</u>
The Enslaving face of Poverty -	Imposed poverty violating the dignity of the human person (alienation).	Poverty as the subjugation of peoples by the slaves of Mammon (=disinheritance, dispossession, etc. colonization, multinationals.
The Liberating face of Poverty. +	Voluntary poverty as one's interior liberation from Mammon i.e., a <u>spiritual antidote</u> (emphasized by Eastern Religions.)	Voluntary poverty as a <u>political strategy</u> in the liberation of human society from Mammon or organized Sin (the stand of liberation theo- logians).

- to be continued -

"The central value upon which other values in love depend, is the value of the human person". Karol Wojtyla, *Fruitful and Responsible Love*.

"The missionary attitude begins with a feeling of deep esteem for "what is in man".... John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*.

L'ÉGLISE EN PROCÈS CHEZ LES JEUNES AFRICAINS

Yves Morel

(Black Africa received the message of Christianity favourably with the exception of some localized areas of resistance. But today the educated African has entered a period of criticism of the Church. Based on an experience of twelve years animating groups of senior students in a mixed Catholic College in Douala (Cameroun) an establishment which is open also to Protestants and Muslims - the author attempts to present some of the questions being asked of the Church by these students covering an age group of 16 to 22 years. He also makes use of research carried out in the Colleges of Tchad (Dieu des autres) and among the youth in Ivory Coast, Mali and Upper Volta (Voix des jeunes dans la ville africaine).

L'ÉGLISE EN PROCÈS

Seuls les établissements confessionnels ont encore des horaires précis pour la formation chrétienne (mais très peu de messes pour le second cycle.) Dans certains de ces établissements, les cours magistraux d'autrefois ont été remplacés par des "groupes de réflexion chrétienne" qui ont l'avantage de mieux respecter la liberté des participants et surtout de les amener à s'exprimer, ce qui a d'ailleurs fait craindre à certains responsables que les sujets abordés (sexualité...) ne fassent perdre toute moralité et toute foi aux élèves! Si l'animateur du groupe n'est pas trop autoritaire ou susceptible - ses convictions profondes sont souvent remises en question - il peut recueillir une grande variété d'opinions critiques, en particulier sur l'Eglise catholique.

L'Eglise fait l'objet d'une quadruple remise en question: historique, philosophique, scientifique et même religieuse.

Critique historique: Le jeune Africain reproche à l'Eglise d'avoir pactisé avec la colonisation et d'avoir combattu les valeurs africaines. En effet, selon les jeunes, les missionnaires n'ont pu vraiment pénétrer en Afrique qu'à la faveur de la colonisation. Ils ont reçu des avantages des colonisateurs sous forme de terrains, de protection; de leur côté, ils ont amené les populations à "avaler la pilule de la domination coloniale" et à se soumettre au travail forcé, etc.

En même temps, la Mission a contribué à déconsidérer les traditions, en particulier les croyances religieuses anciennes, ce qui revenait à nier toute valeur aux actes les plus sacrés des Africains dans le passé. Un Tchadien dit: *Un Père m'a fait savoir que le sacrifice que font mes parents n'a pas de valeur.* Voilà ce qu'il a compris et que des missionnaires ont dit en divers endroits, sans mesurer la gravité d'une telle

négarion. Un autre Tchadien: *Les Blancs sont en train de blasphémer notre religion...ils ne nous respectent pas.* On comprend que de tels constats aient préparé au Tchad un terrain favorable à la "révolution culturelle" de Tombalbaye et même à ses excès, et qu'ailleurs ils préparent des réactions de rejet.

Mais aujourd'hui, les Africains savent qu'on s'intéresse à leur religion et à leurs coutumes. Eux-mêmes vivent encore un pied dans ces coutumes sans en surmonter pleinement les contradictions avec le monde moderne. Une certaine logique plus ou moins consciente les amène donc à penser que si l'Eglise a injustement évalué un phénomène observable comme leur religion, d'une part, elle ne s'est pas montrée vraiment chrétienne, d'autre part, elle ne peut prétendre à la vérité et à l'infailibilité sur des questions fondamentales.

Critique philosophique: Influencés par les lectures de leur programme de français - notamment Voltaire et Sartre - les élèves reprennent et assimilent les grandes critiques de la pensée occidentale moderne à l'égard de la religion. Deux questions émergent.

La première s'appuie davantage sur le XVIII^e siècle voltairien: le christianisme est une religion parmi d'autres; toutes ces religions prétendent parler du même Dieu, et pourtant, elles aboutissent à des dogmes contradictoires et à des coutumes opposées. Par exemple, un élève baptisé fit référence à un texte du Coran sur Jésus:

*Mais ils ne l'ont pas tué.
ils ne l'ont pas crucifié;
cela leur est seulement apparu ainsi.*

Ainsi, d'une part, la véracité des religions est remise en question et, d'autre part, elles aboutissent à la division des peuples entre eux et à l'intolérance. Un élève affirmait: *La diversité des religions remet le sacré en question.* Or, pensent les Africains, il n'est pas nécessaire d'ajouter à nos divisions.

La deuxième problématique est plus récente: elle s'appuie moins sur les "maîtres du soupçon" - Marx, Freud et Nietzsche - peu connus des élèves, que sur J.P. Sartre, étudié à partir de la pièce. *Les mains sales.* A la suite de cet auteur, certains élèves soutiennent que la liberté de l'homme ne peut pas coexister avec celle de Dieu. En fait, ils n'en déduisent pas l'inexistence de Dieu, mais plutôt l'absence de liberté chez l'homme (absence parfois compensée par la licence), car ils croient plus volontiers en la prédestination qu'ils admettent comme normale et évidente. A cet égard, le cas de Judas Iscariote intrigue les jeunes, car disent-ils, puisque sa trahison a été annoncée par les Ecritures, d'une part, il n'était pas libre, d'autre part, il a même coopéré à la rédemption; il n'est donc pas coupable. Au total, pour beaucoup, la religion apporte l'aliénation: l'Eglise est pour eux celle qui donne les commandements, proclame les interdits. Ils reprochent à l'Eglise de brimer les "aspirations à la liberté" en condamnant la polygamie, l'avortement; elle interdirait l'expérience des bébé-éprouvettes, etc. Les jeunes se détournent en particulier de l'Eglise au sujet de la liberté sexuelle, et ils déplorent sa "répression" en ce domaine. En effet, très dépendants financièrement et scolairement, ils aspirent à affirmer leur autonomie par rapport aux adultes dans la relation garçon-fille. Comme on le voit, cette revendication ne se fait pas seulement par rapport à l'Eglise, mais par

rapport au monde des adultes, et elle est d'autant plus forte qu'elle correspond à des frustrations: elle ne reflète pas une émancipation réelle.

Critique scientifique: Au vrai, cette critique liée à la précédente ne joue pas pleinement. Par exemple, l'attitude des jeunes à l'égard du miracle est complexe: ou bien pour eux, les miracles sont tellement courants qu'ils n'ont aucune portée réelle, ou bien il faut constater que les miracles dont parle l'Eglise ont surtout lieu chez les Juifs et les Blancs et qu'ils ne concernent pas les Africains. En effet, quand on parle de résurrection, les élèves ne sont pas étonnés, car, dans leur entourage, disent-ils, des personnes ont été ressuscitées (ceci, bien qu'on n'ait pas revu ces personnes depuis). Alors, quoi d'extraordinaire à la résurrection de Lazare et quel effet peut bien produire la résurrection de Jésus (qu'on n'a pas revu lui non plus)? Autrement dit, les phénomènes de revenants ne sont pas nettement distingués de la maîtrise totale de Dieu sur la mort.

En deuxième lieu, les miracles et les apparitions suscitent le doute moins parce qu'ils semblent défier les principes de la causalité scientifique que pour la raison suivante: ils ont eu lieu en Palestine, en Europe aussi (d'ailleurs on prend souvent Jésus pour un "Blanc" et le christianisme pour une religion européenne), mais pas en Afrique. Pourquoi? Un élève déclarait: *Les Blancs nient les résurrections dans notre tradition, mais ils soutiennent des invraisemblances comme les apparitions de Lourdes.* Les Africains sont d'ailleurs parfois étonnés qu'en Europe coexistent des croyants fervents et des rationalistes athées. Les premiers n'ont-ils pas pour but de les tromper, tandis que les seconds représentent l'émancipation de l'esprit?

Mais, au nom d'une certaine logique plus ou moins consciente, l'élève craint d'être radical dans sa critique scientifique de la religion. En effet, il sent que cette critique l'amènerait à rompre les amarres avec ses propres traditions, et au nom de son identité, il hésite à le faire. Il ne suit pas sur ce terrain certains penseurs comme le Camerounais Marcien Towa qui préconise le rejet de la négritude. Mais rares sont ceux qui croient que la religion et la science soient compatibles.

En se plaçant plus nettement sur le terrain de la raison, le jeune (ce sont surtout les garçons qui s'expriment) constate que si les affirmations scientifiques se prouvent expérimentalement, il n'en va pas de même des enseignements religieux et notamment de l'existence de Dieu. Ou du moins, la preuve se fait à un autre niveau d'expérience que bien des gens ont du mal à atteindre dans le monde moderne; il est donc normal que les élèves de la fin du secondaire rencontrent cette difficulté. Il est même assez remarquable que cette question se pose à eux, et certains sont sur la voie de la solution de deux manières: d'abord en remarquant que sans Dieu il est difficile de comprendre la complexité du cosmos et l'existence. Ensuite, en reconnaissant que le péché, la faute vont contre notre nature et contre le plan de Dieu. Un jeune Voltaïque déclare: *Quand je veux faire quelque chose de mal, ma conscience se met à battre.*

Cependant rares sont ceux qui admettent que Dieu puisse avoir une influence par l'intermédiaire des hommes. Un jour que je parlais de cette influence chez Martin L. King, Dom Helder Camara, Mère Teresa, un élève souffla: *Ce sont des histoires.*

Critique religieuse: Si la religion soutient des affirmations qui semblent incompatibles avec la raison, elle a sa sphère d'existence dans laquelle sa véracité est remise en question par ses propres contradictions, son inefficacité. C'est ce qu'on pourrait appeler la critique interne de l'Eglise. En ce domaine, les réserves des jeunes Africains sont abondantes et il faut essayer de les classer.

D'abord, l'Eglise est *divisée*: les élèves posent assez régulièrement des questions sur Mgr Lefebvre et aussi sur les différences entre catholiques et protestants, puisqu'eux-mêmes sont baptisés dans diverses églises chrétiennes. Qui suivre, alors que Jésus a demandé que ses disciples soient unis? Nous rencontrons là une difficulté de l'enseignement religieux en des pays où l'oecuménisme est peu développé et où il ne représente pas encore un pôle d'espérance et d'action pour les chrétiens. L'Afrique ignore ce qu'est la chrétienté, sauf autrefois au niveau des missions isolées. Le cas de Mgr Lefebvre fait problème, car les Africains sont attachés à la continuité, surtout dans l'Eglise; pour eux le sacré réside dans la permanence et dans une certaine obscurité. Cependant, les jeunes n'ont plus la même nostalgie que leurs parents pour le grégorien et la soutane.

Ensuite, l'Eglise semble *inefficace* et d'autres religions ou sectes sont plus puissantes qu'elle. Le gros reproche que l'on fait à la foi et à la fidélité religieuse, c'est qu'elles ne font pas barrage au mal. Ici les interventions sont nombreuses: "La religion ne supprime pas la misère" - "ni l'inégalité"; "les gens qui aiment Dieu ne le sentent pas; ils sont victimes de malheurs"; et parmi ces victimes, on compte des saints comme Job et Jésus; "la religion ne peut nous dire que Dieu nous aime". L'Eglise échoue dans son message d'espérance, et elle se contente d'enseigner aux gens à supporter le malheur, comme elle l'a fait pendant la période coloniale: "on apprend la résignation aux villageois".

D'ailleurs les gens qui représentent l'Eglise et devraient être les premiers à observer son message, en particulier les prêtres, *ne lui sont pas fidèles*, notamment dans les domaines de la pauvreté et de la chasteté: ils recherchent l'argent et le confort. Pour l'accès aux sacrements, disent les élèves, on prête plus d'attention à l'attitude des gens à payer qu'à leurs dispositions intérieures. En outre des prêtres prennent femme(s) et ont des enfants. Les grands collégiens et leurs aînés sont d'autant plus sensibles à ce dernier point, que pour eux, le prêtre est un personnage mystérieux aux pouvoirs occultes, dont ils aimeraient percer le secret. Ils sont tentés de dire que si le prêtre d'aujourd'hui n'est plus aussi efficace, c'est qu'il ne respecte pas ses engagements. Et pourtant, en même temps, les élèves trouvent anormal qu'on impose le célibat au prêtre: d'une part, l'homme est fait pour avoir des enfants; d'autre part, "il faut que le prêtre soit *dans le bain* pour comprendre le mariage", c'est-à-dire, il faut qu'il soit marié lui-même. Ajoutons que les élèves reprochent aussi aux chrétiens pratiquants d'être des hypocrites, de se croire meilleurs que les autres hommes, etc.

Enfin, estiment certains, si l'Eglise et ses représentants perdent leur efficacité, certains *mouvements et sectes* semblent devoir les supplanter. Contrairement à certains pays comme la Côte-d'Ivoire (harisme) et le Zaïre (kibanguisme), et surtout la plus grande partie de l'Afrique anglophone, en particulier l'Afrique australe, le Cameroun n'a pratiquement pas été touché par le phénomène des Eglises indépendantes

africaines avec leur millénarisme et leur prophétisme. Ceci tient, dit-on, à la discipline apportée par les Allemands qui, lors de leur colonisation, ont nettement partagé le Kamerun méridional entre protestants et catholiques.

Aujourd'hui, il n'en va pas de même pour les sectes et surtout les mouvements initiatiques comme la Rose-Croix qui se développent dans ce pays. A la recherche d'un système de croyance, d'une interprétation globale assez simple, des étudiants, des cadres, prêtent peu d'attention aux fondements de l'AMORC (Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae-Crucis) qui nient l'existence de Dieu et de l'âme individuelle (et bien sûr la divinité de Jésus et le salut qu'il apporte), mais au contraire beaucoup d'intérêt à la puissance supposée des membres de l'Ordre: pouvoir de fascination sur les autres, pouvoir magique même, pense-t-on, réussite assurée dans la vie. Tout se passe comme si une "élite" africaine, désespérant de rendre vie aux traditions d'autrefois qui conféraient pouvoir et autorité aux anciens et aux chefs, cherchent maintenant à leur trouver un *substitut moderne* dans ce mouvements venus d'Occident, en particulier des Etats-Unis.

Conséquences: 1. Si les grands élèves faisaient toutes ces objections telles quelles et d'une manière construite, ils devraient inéluctablement se détourner de la foi chrétienne. En fait, ils demeurent plutôt dans une sorte de vide. Un jeune avoue: *A travers tous ces faits, je suis resté un enfant orphelin de croyance.* Ces critiques sont successives, parfois inchoatives, elles ne forment donc pas un système, car les élèves ne maîtrisent pas complètement ces questions, ni le langage nécessaire pour les aborder; ensuite, nous l'avons vu, une critique de la religion qui se veut radicale, atteint aussi la religion traditionnelle et remet en question l'identité de l'Africain.

2. Or, malgré tout, l'Africain reste religieux, et il serait injuste de conclure de ces interrogations et de ces critiques qu'il n'a pas la foi. Même si sa sensibilité est mal à l'aise dans la liturgie d'origine occidentale, elle s'exprime dans la solidarité, notamment dans la fête et dans le deuil. L'Africain demeure foncièrement déiste. Il faut bien admettre que des jeunes portent en eux l'ensemble de ces questions.

3. Le sens de la vie n'est pas livré tout donné dans une tradition claire et facilement accessible: il est à découvrir. Les questions qui agitent l'esprit des jeunes sont comme un kaléidoscope, dans lequel une structure pourra progressivement émerger. L'éducateur qui a compris que ce questionnement correspond à une intense et douloureuse recherche de la vérité et non à une attitude systématiquement hostile, sait qu'il ne perd pas son temps en permettant aux membres de son groupe de s'exprimer, et en leur répondant de façon même partielle, la seule réponse définitive venant du Christ lui-même. Le danger d'objections successives est que le jeune s'abrite indéfiniment derrière de nouvelles questions, en oubliant les réponses antérieures et en adoptant une attitude durablement attentiste, sans engagement personnel. Il est bon que l'animateur attire l'attention du groupe sur ce chassé-croisé perpétuel, et sur la nécessité de ne pas toujours attendre des réponses de l'extérieur, mais de les trouver en soi. Il est bon aussi que les jeunes apprennent à avoir un préjugé favorable à l'égard de ce qu'ils connaissent mal, car condamner systématiquement les autres, c'est se poser en arbitre suprême.

Reference: SPIRITUS, Expérience et Recherche Missionnaires, décembre 1981, No. 85. L'article continue avec: Section 2: Les Visages de l'Eglise. Section 3: Se Convertir à l'apostolat des Jeunes.

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