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In this issue: The emphasis in this issue is on the spiritual experience of an encounter between the Lord and the poor. We give the full text of Mother Theresa's address in Oslo on the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. She spoke from the background of her experience in Asia.

Leonardo Boff writes from the background of his Latin American experience.

The synthesis which it is important to bring about, he writes, and which is developing in Latin America, is that of prayer in action, within the action and with the action. This synthesis does not treat of prayer on one side and action on the other, nor of prayer outside a concrete commitment to the liberation of the oppressed but rather of a prayer in the very process of liberation, living out this meeting with God in the meeting with our brothers and sisters.

His analysis of "*contemplativus in liberatione*" can be helpful to all those missionary institutes examining the relationship between apostolate and prayer in their new constitutions.

Donald Macdonald reflects on the unchanging Johannine root of mission which is union with Christ. There are some thoughts on peace and on the scandalous relationship between world trade in armaments and world poverty.

News: Mission in Dialogue: The Sedos Research Seminar on Mission. Orbis books, 2 vols., will be available next month. Copies may be ordered, wholesales, through the Sedos office. A list of Orbis Books wholesalers in various countries is given on page 193 of this issue.

EMI (Editrice Missionaria Italiana) are publishing an Italian translation of selections from the Seminar. Details will be announced shortly.

The Seminar on Missionary Situations in Marxist Regimes in Africa has been postponed as the alternative date, 18th June - was not suitable.

| <u>Contents</u>   | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Mysticism and Political Action. ( <i>Contemplativus in Liberatione</i> )<br>Fr. Leonardo Boff. | 185         |
| 2. Where Are You Staying? Fr. Donald Macdonald, SMM.  | 194         |
| 3. Missionary Spirituality ("I Choose the Poverty of Poor People")<br>Mother Theresa of Calcutta. | 197         |
| 4. Thoughts on Peace.   | 201         |

Coming Events:

Executive Committee Meeting - Monday, 21st June at 4.00 p.m.

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## MYSTICISM AND POLITICAL ACTION

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(CONTEMPLATIVUS IN LIBERATIONE)

Fr. Leonardo Boff  
Sr. Helen Phillips MM  
(translator)

*(Au point de départ de la théologie de la libération, il y a une expérience spirituelle d'une rencontre entre le Seigneur et les pauvres. Etre avec eux, lutter avec eux pour leur libération devient une nouvelle voie de sainteté et d'union mystique avec Dieu. Cela fait naître un nouveau genre de spiritualité, spécifiquement latino-américaine, qui réunit la mystique et l'action politique de la libération. L'auteur de l'article est professeur de théologie systématique à Petropolis, Rio de Janeiro.)*

### A NEW EXPERIENCE

What has characterized the ecclesial life of Latin America during these last few years has been a growing consciousness of the responsibility of faith in the social changes that bring about a greater justice and the participation of the large majority of the poor in our countries. In the light of faith and in evangelical solidarity with those most in need, each time more significant groups in Church, including whole Bishops' Conferences have tried to live and to teach the Christian faith in such a way that it might effectively be a means of the integral liberation of man. Therefore, within the Christian communities, there is a movement towards a vast and well articulated process of liberation born of the unity of faith-life. Together with this they have developed a corresponding critical reflection that comes under the name of theology of liberation or of a theology developed out of an interest in an integral liberation especially for the most oppressed members of our society. But that which sustains the practice and the theory (theology) of liberation is a spiritual experience of a meeting of the Lord with the poor (1). Behind every new movement in the Church, at the root of any real theology, there lies latent a typical religious experience. This constitutes the source of the word; all the rest comes from this total experience, it is the strength of the translation within the parameters of a specific historic reality. Only with this presupposition can we understand the great synthesis of the theologians of the past - such as - St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Suarez, Rahner and other teachers of the Spirit.

Every spiritual experience signifies a meeting with a new and challenging face of God that emerges from the great challenges of the historic reality. Great socio-historic changes carry within themselves profound meanings, a supreme demand that religious spirits understand as the unfolding of the mystery of God. God has meaning only when He is seen as the flowering of that radically important reality seen both in the light and darkness. In this way, God is not seen merely within a religious framework, but as that which has a meaning, of hope, of an absolute future for man and for his history. This situation implies an experience that is proper to and typical of the mystery of God.

That which we have noted expresses the subjective moment of the experience. But we can also enunciate the same thing in strictly theological terms. Therefore, we say that God in his desire to communicate himself reveals himself concretely in history. Man comes to know a new vision of God because this is how God is revealing himself. He places his sacramental signs, chooses his messengers, causes that adequate reflection be entered into or leads to actions of great consequence. And there will always be those who know how to identify this new voice of God and how to be faithful to its demands.

Volcanic eruption of God: We believe that in the last few years there has been a veritable volcanic eruption of God in our latin-american continent. He has raised up the poor as his sacrament, his sign of self-communication. In the poor He has made heard his demands of solidarity, of identification, of justice and of dignity. And the Churches have known how to be obedient (ob-audire-to be listeners) to the call of God. Faced with the scandal of poverty, he prods them to act for the poor against poverty so that there can be justice for all. This action carries within it a clear dimension of liberation that comes forth as the contextualization of faith, that unites itself to the Lord present among the poor. To struggle with the poor, to appreciate their desires is to unite with the poor Christ and to live as his disciple. This perspective implies being a contemplative in the liberation process - contemplativus in liberatione - and presupposes a new way of seeking after sanctity and mystical union with God. The spiritual transformation brought about by this new manifestation of God produces characteristics of a spirituality that is lived and practiced by so many Christians who are committed to the integral liberation of their brothers and sisters. It is this spiritual transformation that one finds as the basis of the theology of liberation.

#### THE SPIRITUAL DIFFERENCE

The most classic formula of the sought after unity of faith-life was without doubt the monastic tradition, under the motto - ora et labora: prayer and also work. This is not the place to trace the historical development of this inspiration. It is enough that we might grasp its dominant thrust which consists in the overwhelming predominance of prayer over work. This spirituality takes as the crux of the organization of the spiritual life the moment of prayer and contemplation, alternating with that of work. Prayer is that which encloses all the values and it expresses itself in religious life in: the liturgy, choral recitation of the Office, devotional exercises and the whole gamut of religious expressions.

Work in itself is not a direct way to God: it is such only to the extent that it is coated, so to speak, by the influence of prayer and of contemplation: it is an expression of the profane and the purely natural: it constitutes a field of ethical expression and the place of testimony, the meaning of which becomes clear within the limits of prayer. This carries over into work making it also something sacred. The basic conception implies a sort of "spiritual Monophysitism"; the nature of prayer rejects the created and natural earthliness of work. For this reason there still exists a parallel situation here that has never been completely overcome: on one hand, prayer - on the other, work. The conjunction "and" (et) is an indication of this bilingual spirituality. By all means this spirituality is filled with prayer and has elevated the work of christians and filled with religious significance all the areas that we consider profane.

The socio-historical development has advanced toward the relative autonomy of the profane and of a work ethic: (2) work and effectiveness have come to be the axis of modern culture, the finished product of which we see in our days in the dominance of the scientific-technological companies. The motto has been reversed: - labora et ora - work and pray. One discovers the divine and critical elements of creation and of work as a form of human collaboration with divine action. God has not given us a world that has been completely finished but rather wants to include us in his work of its transformation. Work possesses its own dignity and sacredness, not for being baptized by prayer or by good intentions that supernaturalize but rather by its own created nature inserted in the whole Christological design. That which is of importance is work carried out in the proper manner, ordered to the construction of an earthly city loved by God and which is but a foretaste of the heavenly city. More especially work for justice and a commitment to the poor bring about the true end of all prayer: contact with God. The prophetic tradition is explicit in this (cf. Is. 1:10-20); Jer. 22:16) and Jesus Himself directly refers to this (Mk. 7:6-8), they are not only the teachings but the practice which will bring about salvation (Mt. 25:31-46). Prayer continues to have its place and its value, but its truth is measured by the quality of its expression, of its real and ethically correct practice. In its most radical form, this spirituality of the divine character of the material and of work above all leads to a pouring forth of prayer, of a liturgical and devotional expression.

This perspective gives value to the objective character of the grace which impregnates all of these spheres and which is not confined to the realm of conscience and of explication. In other words: God's presence is not realized automatically nor exclusively there where God is spoken of and where his memory is cultivated, but rather it is always and objectively realized in history wherever there is a real living out of truth and justice, even though there is no conscious realization nor explicit mention of God. But the predominance of work, lived religiously, maintains over prayer a new parallelism that can again become a "spiritual monophysitism", now under the predominance of the work ethic. Prayer is a form of work, or of practice, which is losing its specificity as prayer. As long as we speak of work and prayer, labora et ora, we will never arrive at the union faith-life, action-prayer.

The synthesis that it is important to bring about, and which is developing in Latin America, is that of prayer in action, within the action and with the action. It does not treat of prayer on one side and action on the other, nor of prayer outside a concrete commitment to the liberation of the oppressed, but rather of a prayer in the very process of liberation, living out this meeting with God in the meeting with our brothers and sisters. We could say that every great saint has attained this vital and concrete synthesis, and that it has always constituted the secret of every authentically Christian life,

But in Latin America we are called upon to live in a situation in a certain new way, or at least with very definite nuances. The problem is not simply the relation prayer-action, but prayer-liberation, that is to say, prayer-political, social, historical, transforming action. In its correct formulation the question is posed in terms of Mysticism and Politics. How to be radically committed to the liberation of the oppressed and at the same time committed to the source of all liberation who is God? How to

reconcile a passion for God which is characteristic of every truly religious person, with a passion for people and for justice, the distinctive mark of every truly militant politician? In order for this synthesis to be complete and consistent, one must take advantage of all the richness of *ora et labora* of prayer as a privileged meeting with the Lord; it ought also to take advantage of the truth present in *labora et ora*, the religious value of work and of a commitment that brings about justice and fraternity.

We are not trying to make a verbal synthesis or a correct correlation of terms. This treats of the living out of a Christian life imbued with prayer and commitment; that this commitment be born of prayer, and that the prayer would flow from the heart of the commitment. How can one attain this?

#### PASSION FOR GOD IN PASSION FOR THE POOR

The experience of a living and true faith builds up the unity of prayer-liberation. But the experience of faith must be correctly understood. Faith is, primarily, a way of living all things in light of God. Faith defines the where-from and where-to of our existence, that is God and His designs of love communicated and realized in all things. For the man of faith reality is not originally profane and sacred, but simply sacramental: it makes God known, it calls Him forth, it comes immersed in the divine reality. For this reason, the experience of faith unifies life because it contemplates the reality unified by God as the origin and destiny of all.

As a way of life, faith implies a contemplative posture vis-à-vis the world: to see and meet God everywhere, in everything. But it is not enough that the faith be alive; it is important that it be real. Faith is real only when it brings about love, truth and justice. The living God of the Scriptures is a God who hates iniquity and loves justice. Only this committed faith is a salvific faith and therefore true. "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:21); the demons also have a faith that is pure but without works. (James 2:20).

The Christian faith knows that Christ has a special sacramental dimension in the poor. They not only have needs that must be met, they possess a richness that is unique and proper to them: they are privileged bearers of the Lord, first ones destined for the Kingdom, with the capacity of evangelizing all men and the Church. (Puebla 1147) The believer does not only have a socio-analytical image of the poor, identifying his passion and the causes that give rise to the mechanisms of his impoverishment. Supposing all of this (3) he looks at the class of the poor with eyes of faith and discovers in them the suffering face of the Servant of Yahweh.

This image does not remain in the contemplative realm, such as "using" the poor in order to unite himself with the Lord. Christ becomes identified with them and it is there where He desires to be served and welcomed. This situation of misery moves the heart: - "I was hungry..." (Mt. 23:35) One is truly united with the Lord in the poor if he/she commits her/himself to fight against the poverty that humiliates humankind and which God does not want, because it is the fruit of the relation of sin and exploitation. The same true faith implies and demands a commitment

to liberation "---and they gave me to eat": (Mt. 25:36) If one is not moved to liberating action, he not only does not love his brother but does not love God either (1 John 3:17): love cannot be "of words and of the mouth but rather with works and in truth." (1 John 3:18)

This spiritual experience brings unity to the relation faith-life, mysticism-politics. The problem which it poses is: how does one maintain this unity? How does one nourish it before all the forces of disintegration? This vision which at the same time contemplative as well as liberating does not spring forth spontaneously; it is the most significant expression of a living and true faith. But how does one give stability to this faith?

Prayer and Praxis. It is here that the two poles emerge: prayer and praxis. However, the question is not that they remain polarized or in juxtaposition: we would only then fall again into the two monophytisms that we criticized before. We must dialectically articulate the two poles: they must be considered as two spaces, open to one another, affecting each other. But one must favor one of the poles of this relationship; that of prayer.

Through prayer man expresses that which is the greatest and the most profound of his own being; he can overcome himself, transcend all the greatness of creation and of history, assume a position of "ecstasy" enter into a dialogue with the Supreme Mystery and shout "Father!" With this, he does not leave the universe behind but rather takes it to himself and makes of it an offering to God: but he frees himself from all bonds, he denounces all historic absolutes, they become relative and he confronts himself alone and divested of all before the Absolute One in order to, with Him, create history.

It is here that God is discovered as the Holy One: with Him we are before the most Solemn and Absolute: with Him one does not play games. However, at the same time, this God who is so holy and absolutely serious, reveals Himself as a God committed to and sensitive to the crisis of the oppressed. He can say: "I have seen the oppression of my people... I have heard their complaints against the oppressors; I have seen their sufferings and I have come to earth to set them free--" (Ex. 3:7-8). Therefore the God who through prayer says to man; "Come!" in the same prayer says: "Go." The God who calls is the same one who impels us to a commitment to liberation. He asks that we unite a passion for Christ with a passion for the oppressed. Better yet, it demands that the passion of God in Jesus Christ might be lived out in the passion of our suffering and needy brothers and sisters.

The action of service of our brothers and sisters and our solidarity with their struggles for liberation flowers in the very heart of prayer that touches the heart of God. Prayer nourishes the sight by which the believer sees in the poor and in every class of the exploited the sacramental presence of the Lord. Without prayer, born of faith, our vision is opaque and only sees the surface of things, it cannot reach the mystical depth in which we can enter into communion with the Lord present in those condemned, humiliated and offended by history.

On the other hand, the pole of praxis of liberation returns once again to the pole of prayer as a fountain that nourishes and sustains the strength

in the struggle and guarantees the Christian identity in the liberation process. It is of interest to the Christian that liberation really be true liberation and thus an anticipation of the Kingdom and the concretization of the redemption of Jesus within history. It is faith and prayer that permits him to see his effort, oftentimes seemingly irrelevant, as the historic construction of the Kingdom.

Social action has its concrete and intra-world depth, but its significance does not end here; faith reveals its transcendent meaning and its salvific significance. Therefore, for one who has understood this perspective, the liberating service of our neighbor constitutes a real (diaconia) service to the Lord, an associating of oneself to his redemptive and liberating work and to a real "liturgy" in the Spirit. This is what it means to be a 'contemplativus in liberation' a contemplative in the liberation process. Contemplation takes place not only during the sacred time of prayer, nor in the sanctuary of a church or a monastery; it is found also in political and social action, immersed in, supported and fed by a living and true faith.

It is very important in our Latin American Church that the bishops, priests, religious and the laity most committed to the cause of the poor (their justice, their rights, their dignity) also be people of deep prayer; that they unite in the same movement a love and dedication to God and to their most needy neighbor.

#### PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF THIS SPIRITUALITY

In this section we will attempt to identify some of the most significant characteristics of this contemplation lived in the context of liberation: (4)

- 1) Prayer that flows from action: 'Liberation prayer' gathers all its material from a dedicated life: the struggles, the collective strength, the errors made and the successes achieved; they give thanks for the steps taken they ask not in an individualistic way but rather for the good of all, for those who suffer and for those who cause the suffering; the conflict of the liberation process resounds especially during prayer; the confession of sins is spontaneously communitarian; no one hides behind great discourses but rather lays open his/her heart even to the most intimate details; it is a prayer that reflects the liberation of the heart; they accuse themselves especially of a lack of congruence between what they profess and what they live, the lack of solidarity and of commitment.
- 2) Prayer, expression of a liberating community: Private prayer has a permanent and definite value but in committed groups prayer is essentially a sharing of practical experiences enlightened and criticized in the light of faith and of the Gospel. The experience does not remain in the splendid privacy of the soul with its God, but rather open to the other, both in listening and communicating. They mutually comfort each other, they discuss the problems of each and try to arrive at solutions for them; there is no "holy shame" or reticence that inhibits one from speaking of the lights and graces received from God. The souls of most of them are like open books. This shows forth in the liberation process taking place in the very heart of the community.

- 3) Liturgy as celebration of life: The canonical liturgy preserves its character and is the expression of the universality of our faith but in the measure in which communities bring together life and faith, mysticism with politics, they more and more insert into the liturgy the celebration of a life shared by all. In this setting, a rich creativity flowers that has both its dignity and its holiness assured by the deep sense that the people have of the sacred and of dignity; they take advantage of symbols significant of the group, they devise dances and many times 'mystery plays' with bodily expressions proper to the group.
- 4) Hetero critical prayer: Liberation prayer often serves as a critical examination of the practices and attitudes of the members of the community. They learn to mutually criticize themselves without becoming saccherine or engendering personal hard feelings. What is important are objective criteria - the Kingdom, liberation, respect for the way of a people. It is in light of these realities that the methods and practices of pastoral agents can be judged. There are real conversions and helps that stem from this sincerity and loyalty.
- 5) A political holiness: The Christian tradition speaks of a holy asceticism, of a mastery of the passions and a faithful observance of the laws of God and of the Church. Practically speaking, holy politicians and holy militants are all but unknown. In the process of liberation conditions for another type of holiness have come into being: beyond the struggle against one's own passions (which in itself constitutes a permanent task) one struggles against the causes of the exploitation and destruction of the community. From this struggle emerges difficult but real virtues: solidarity with those of one's own class, participation in community decisions, fidelity to the solutions arrived at, overcoming of all hatred against those persons who are responsible for the poverty of the people, capacity to see beyond the present distress and work for a future society that as yet does not exist and one which most likely they themselves will never enjoy. This new type of asceticism implies great demands and renunciation in order to maintain a heart that is pure and governed by the spirit of the beatitudes.
- 6) Prophetic courage and historic patience: Many committed Christians have the courage drawn from faith and prayer, to confront the powers of this world for the good of the people and of a dignity that has been trodden upon. In this is demonstrated the apostolic freedom to risk one's self even to the point of suffering persecution, imprisonment, loss of work, tortures and even loss of life. In spite of this evangelical courage, they have a historic patience with the slow pace of the people, sensitivity to its rhythms, accustomed as they are to suffering repression. They have confidence in the people, in their courage, in their capacity to struggle, in spite of their limitations, mistakes and lack of intellectual acumen. They believe deeply in the power of the Holy Spirit that acts in the humble and in those who suffer and in the victory of its causes and in the legality of its struggles. This attitude is born of a contemplative vision of a history of which only God is Lord.
- 7) Paschal attitude: All liberation demands a price; there is a death and a resurrection that must be accepted with evangelical joy and serenity. They have no fear of sacrifices or threats or even of real situations of martyrdom. All this is accepted as part of following



Jesus. There is a strong sense of the cross as a necessary component of victory. The resurrection is lived as the moment in which justice triumphs a justice in which the people are victorious in their struggles and thus can live a life of dignity. It is the resurrection of Jesus in actuality as a great step forward in the liberation process taking shape in history. This is celebrated and lived as a form of the presence of the Spirit in the midst of history.

We could list other characteristics of this type of prayer that are becoming more and more a reality in those communities committed to the liberation of the needy. You can always see the unity of prayer-action, faith-liberation, passion for God expressed in passion for the people. More and more this brings about the objective possibility for the emergence of a new type of Christian who is profoundly committed to this earthly city, and at the same time, to the heavenly city, convinced that all of this depends on the way in which we have been involved in the creation of it. Heaven is not an enemy of the earth; it has its beginning here on earth. Both live under the rainbow of grace and of the liberating action of God in Jesus Christ.

This is not merely theology. It is the life and mysticism of many Christians.

#### Footnotes:

(1) Refer to the following most important titles:

Frei, Betti Oracao na acao (Prayer in Action) (Civilizacao Brasileira) Rio de Janeiro 1977.

Galilea, S. Espiritualidade de Libertacao (Spirituality of Liberation) (Voces Contributions of two theologians in Puebla) Petropoles 1976;

Espiritualidade e evangelizacao; para una espiritualidade de libertacao, em SEDOC Julho/Agosto 72-79; (Spirituality and Evangelization towards a Spirituality of Liberation in SEDOC July/August 72-79); Boff.L.

Testigos de Dios en el corazon del Mundo; Institute Teologico de Vida Religiosa; (Witness of God in the midst of the World; Theological Institute of Religious Life), Madrid, 1977.

(2) With a work ethic something without precedent in the history of humanity has been created; there was a noticeable activity of the means (forces) of productivity, changing man and his world; now we no longer speak only of work, but of producing the maximum with the minimum of input. Today, this has a planetary dimension. The Church has not yet adequately assimilated this revolution; ethics, spirituality and theology are still too marked by a world of rhythms of nature and of harmony of the ancient world. It was the unquestioned merit of the capitalistic system to have introduced this qualitative change into history; and it is also its great contribution.

(3) The militant Christian, accustomed to the complexity of the social reality, which today is extremely sophisticated and accessible only through scientific means, has to greatly fortify his faith vision in order to be able to discern in the socio-historic mechanisms the presence or the absence of God and of his grace. As never before in history, it is necessary to unite prayer with political astuteness; articulated mysticism with a critical analysis of the reality.

- (4) The great difficulty with this spirituality of liberation resides in the fact that the history of the Church presents few or almost no people who might have made this synthesis between mysticism and political action as we conceive it today. St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bernadine of Siena, St. Vincent and others had an attitude according to our criteria, more existential than liberating. It did not move them, nor did they have conditions neither theoretical nor practical which enabled them to do so, within the framework of politics as a field of struggle of powers, where they could impose options, at times quite radical, in the name of faith and justice. The great challenge of our times is to create militants with a sanctity that is truly political; it is important that one be at the same time both holy and political in the full sense of the word.

Reference: MENSAJE, No. 288 - May 1980.

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*(Readers may be interested to know that Orbis Books can be obtained through wholesale agents in a number of countries. Here is the current list.)*

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## WHERE ARE YOU STAYING? ?

Fr. Donald Macdonald SMM

One could be forgiven for thinking that when the Last Trumpet sounds for the end of the world quite a number of religious will be found attending seminars, courses or retreats. Not that this is altogether bad. For many of us, perhaps, there is no longer the understanding of our way of life once taken for granted in society. We need additional support. It is good to see religious now encouraged to attend renewal and refreshment courses of various kinds, in contrast to an earlier arguably more work-centred approach to religious life. But as the photocopied lecturer's notes increase, and tapes of the spoken word pile up, and recommended books fill our library shelves, it might be worthwhile looking at what is happening. It could be that we cannot see the wood for the trees.

Basically, the religious is asking Christ, "Where do you stay" (Jn. 1:38) This is why we attend most seminars and retreats. Of course, Christ is in fact staying with us (14:3, 16-20, 23; 15: 4). It is here we will find him. This can seem a depressing answer. Surely we go to seminars as we believe the local community does not have the resources to help us. To be told to go home and look again seems hardly fair. Do you know *my* community? Yet if God can only be found at a seminar or occasional retreat or in circumstances other than those in which I find myself now, then we are in deep trouble. If God cannot be found in *my* everyday world where on earth can I find him? Leaving aside the possibilities of sacramental and community life in the local Christian community, why not look again at the paper-back Bible found in every community? The answer given there to the question to Christ, "Where are you staying?" may help us.

As we pick up the Bible again it might be worth asking how do we approach this book? St. Anselm caught the mood well in a prayer to St. John the Evangelist asking for the love of God. He pictures John gazing steadily at him.

"If then, Sir, your gaze has more good in it than  
my prayer has devotion let your gaze become my prayer." 2)

Anselm speaks. John looks. Anselm wants. John has. Anselm seeks to be genuinely *possessed* of the love of God. In so approaching scripture, hungry and eager, he wants to assimilate what John can give so that his memory, imagination, intelligence, feelings, his entire personality reflects what he finds there. "Let your gaze become my prayer." The love of God as mediated through the Evangelist will transform his whole being.

### Footnotes:

- 1) Unless otherwise noted, all references in this article are to the Gospel according to St. John.
- 2) Prayer to John the Evangelist (2) in *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm* (Penguin Books 1973.).

His search is absorbed in what he finds. The religious, approaching his paper-back Bible like this within his seemingly impoverished local community, can find himself in the company of the Christ of the Fourth Gospel. He can ask him "where do you stay?", as the disciples did in that Gospel, and he may find a lifetime not enough to absorb the wonderful reality of the answer.

#### REMAIN IN MY LOVE

What some call, "The Farewell Discourse" (ch. 13-17) finds Christ speaking before his death in the context of failure, fear, disappointment and betrayal. Human nature is at its most vulnerable and not unattractive. "Lay down your life for me?... I tell you most solemnly before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times" (13: 38). Religious can have a very poor image of themselves and their communities under the rubric of being "realistic". The pity is that many view God in the same way. Rather "let your gaze become my prayer". Try and let God change the perspective as we open ourselves to the Christ of the fourth gospel. Let us briefly consider a few lines from the prayer of Christ in chapter seventeen.

"Father, the hour has come: Glorify your son  
so that your son may glorify you" (14: 1).

If we think of our Lord and think of prayer, we think of "abba, Father". The word unites both the unselfconscious intimacy of the child and the mature love of the adult. The word is invigorating and reassuring, conveying as it does the belief that love is creative and that it lasts. God loving us, therefore, is where Christ and we begin. "Glorify your son". In scripture, "glory", generally means "What God is like" in so far as a creature can be aware of it. So, facing imminent death, Christ asks his Father to show us what he is really like, so that he in turn can show us what the Father is really like. This was done: "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (15: 13). The crucifixion in the fourth gospel is supremely glorious as it reflects the love of God for us. This is not ambiguous. God is like this and this is reality. Christ so wants us to see; "When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself" (12: 32).

If we then allow our prayer to centre on the gaze of Christ in the fourth Gospel, we simply let ourselves be loved by God. But there is more. All through Christ's prayer in this chapter we see him describe his disciples and those who would believe in him through their word as, "those you have given me" (17: 2, 6, 11-12, 24). Our Lord sees us as a gift given him by his Father. We are treasured by God. We would scarcely consider ourselves as God's gift to anyone. Christ sees us a gift from his Father to himself. Consider what this would mean to the self-image of the religious. The poor self-image of many of us never came from Christ. We are loved, valued, treasured by God himself.

"I have made your name known and will continue to make  
it known so that the love with which you loved me may  
be in them. So that I may be in them" (17: 26)

"Name" means personality. Christ has tried to show us the Father and continues to do so (even as we read). The reason for it all would be unbelievable in any book but the New Testament. God wants to be with us. The love the Father has for the Son (which we later learn is the Holy Spirit)

is to be in us, just as in Christ. What if this is true? And we are unaware of it? To realise that we are loved by someone can add a new dimension to life. To be aware that we are loved by God... It must mean that God is present to us through knowledge and love or how else reach the centre of our being? Aware of God being so present to us can so change our grasp of reality that we can have an intuitive realisation of this beyond words and images. Allow God to give himself to us like this and our personalities can centre on this gift as we respond in wonder and adoration. It can become as natural as breathing. It is all God's doing (14: 26; 15: 4-6). And it is happening now.

So we find that Christ stays with us. Perhaps we have more going for us than we ever dare hope. Our God is too small. The horizons opened up for us by seminars and retreats, need not fade into a mirage when we leave that special environment. Open ourselves to the Christ of the New Testament. Just take a word, a phrase, a sentence from the Gospel and we may find that we have not yet read it for the first time. That with the help of the Spirit given us,

" on that day  
you will understand that I am  
in my Father  
and you in me and I in you"

(14: 20)

Reference: IN CHRISTO, A Quarterly for Religious, July 1981 - Vol.19, No.3.

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THE WORLD'S LARGEST DESERT IS GROWING: During the past half century, the southern Sahara appears to have claimed as much as a quarter of a million square miles of land along its borders. The Sahara Desert accounts for almost half of the African continent and is shared by the nations of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan. While desert margins have always fluctuated somewhat, there is accumulating evidence that population growth is causing desert areas to expand at an accelerating rate. Increased population has resulted in overgrazing, the extension of land-exhausting farming practices, and excessive firewood gathering--placing great pressures on the environment. According to the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), more than 250,000 acres of farm land in North Africa are lost to the desert each year. In many areas, vigorous savannah has been giving way to steppe, and steppe has been giving way to desert. In the past 35 years human and livestock population along the sub-Saharan fringe have multiplied rapidly, nearly doubling in some areas. Populations in Mali, Niger and Sudan are increasing by nearly 3% per year. As populations have become larger and less mobile, traditional practices that often prevented overgrazing have broken down. Overgrazing of land removes soil nutrients, which prevents new plant life from germinating, and the cutting of trees for fuel and farmland also strips the soil and leaves the land susceptible to wind erosion. The Worldwatch Institute warns: "If the process of desertification is not reversed, Africa, which has the highest birth rate of all the continents, may lose a sizable share of its food-producing capacity."

Reference: INTERNATIONAL DATELINE, News of World Population and Development - A Service for Mass Media, December 1981.

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## MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY

"I CHOOSE THE POVERTY OF POOR PEOPLE"

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Mother Theresa of Calcutta

*(Since Mother Theresa received the Nobel Peace Prize the scandal of commerce in modern arms has grown even more appalling. So also has the scandal of resort to armed conflict as a means of solving conflicts while the scandal of continuing world poverty takes on an even greater dimension of evil. This is Mother Theresa's address on the occasion of receiving the Peace Prize at Oslo on 10th December 1979. The ending of world poverty may well be an idea whose time has come. In the meantime, Mother Theresa's address is a salutary reminder of the personal challenge of poverty to each one.)*

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Let us thank God for this marvellous circumstance thanks to which we can proclaim, all together, the joy of spreading peace, the joy of loving one another and the joy of knowing that the poorest of the poor are all our brothers and sisters.

As we are gathered here to thank God for this gift of Peace, I have had distributed to you the "Prayer of peace" which St. Francis of Assisi composed many years ago. I wonder if he did not feel, then, exactly what we feel today, have the same reason for which we pray.

I think you all have the text. We will say it together: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, so that where there is hatred, I may bring love; where evil reigns, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness; where there is discord, I may bring harmony; where there is error, I may bring truth; where there is despair, I may bring hope; where there is darkness; I may bring light; where sadness reigns, I may bring joy. Lord, make me seek rather to comfort than to be comforted; to understand than to be understood; to love than to be loved; for it is by forgetting oneself that one finds; by forgiving that one is forgiven; by dying that one awakens to eternal life.

Amen!"

Love of others will make us holy: God so loved the world that He gave his Son. And He gave him to a Virgin, the Blessed Virgin Mary. And from the moment He came into the world, she hastened to give him to others. And what did she do then? She worked for the unfortunate; she simply spread this joy of loving by bestowing services lavishly.

And Jesus Christ loved you and loved me and He gave his life for us. And as if that were not yet enough, He has not ceased saying: "Love as I loved you, as I love you now". And He told us how we must love by giving.

For He gave his life for us and He continues to give it. And He continues to give it even here and everywhere, in our own lives and in the lives of others.

It was not enough, for him, to die for us. He wanted us to love one another, to recognize him in all our fellow-men. That is the reason why He said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". And to be sure that we should understand his thought, He said that at the hour of our death we will be judged by what we have been for the poor, the hungry, the naked, the homeless. And He becomes himself this hungry man, this naked man, this homeless man. Not only hungry for bread, but hungry for love; not only devoid of a piece of cloth, but devoid of human dignity; not only homeless for lack of a place in which to live, but homeless because forgotten, unloved, uncared for, for not having been anyone to anyone, for having forgotten what human love, human contact is, what it is to be loved by someone.

And He said further: "What you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me".

It is so wonderful, for us, to become holy through this love! For holiness is not a luxury reserved for a small number, it is merely a duty for each of us and, through this love, we can become holy - through this love for one another.

I am happy to receive the Nobel prize on behalf of the poor: And, today, I have received this prize, of which, personally, I am unworthy. Having approached near enough to poverty to be able to understand the poor, I choose the poverty of our poor people. And I am grateful, I am very happy, to receive it on behalf of the starving, the naked, the homeless, the sick, the blind, the lepers, all these people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for, rejected by society, these people who have become a burden for society and who are humiliated by everyone.

I accept this prize on their behalf. And I am sure that this prize will bring forth understanding love between the rich and the poor. Jesus stressed this point so much. That is the reason why Jesus came to earth to proclaim the Good News to the poor. And through this prize, and through our presence here, we all want to proclaim the Good News to the poor: that God loves them, that we love them, that they are someone for us, that they, too, were created by the same loving hand of God to love and to be loved.

Our poor people, our splendid people, are people perfectly worthy of love. They do not need our pity or our sympathy. They need our understanding love, they need our respect, they need us to treat them with dignity. And I think that here they have the experience of the greatest poverty; we sense it before them, who run the risk of dying for a bit of bread. Yet they die with such dignity!

I will never forget the man I took in one day from the street. He was covered with vermin, his face was the only clear thing. And yet this man, when we brought him to our home for the dying, uttered this sentence: "I have lived like an animal in the street, but I am going to die like an angel, loved and looked after". And he died a marvellous death. He went

away to his home, to God, for death is nothing but the return to one's home, to God's house. It was because he had felt this love, because he had had the feeling of being wanted, of being loved, of being someone for someone that, in his last moments, he felt this joy in his life.

Abortion, the greatest destroyer of peace: And I feel something that I would like to share with you.

Today, the greatest destroyer of peace is the crime committed against the innocent unborn child. If a mother can kill her own child, in her own womb, what prevents you and me from killing one another? Holy Scripture itself declares: "Even if a mother can forget her child, I will not forget you. I have kept you in the palm of my hand". *Even if* a mother could forget, says the text, doubting the possibility. But today millions of unborn children are killed. And we do not say anything. We pay attention in the newspapers to the number of people killed here or there, to everything that is destroyed, but no one speaks of the murder of millions of little beings conceived with the same life as you and I, with the life of God: we do not say anything! We accept it in order to be at peace with the views of the countries that have legalized abortion. These nations are the poorest. They are afraid of children, they are afraid of the unborn child and this child must die; because they do not want to feed another child, bring up another child, the child must die!

And here, I ask you, on behalf of these little ones...for it was an unborn child who recognized the presence of Jesus when Mary went to visit Elizabeth, her cousin. We can read in the Gospel that, at the moment when Mary went into the house, the babe in his mother's womb leapt for joy, recognizing the Prince of Peace.

On behalf of these little ones, today, I call upon you to take this strong resolution here: "Let us save all the babies, all the unborn babies, and give them a chance to be born. And what will we do for this purpose? We will fight against abortion by adoption, God has already blessed so marvellously the work we have done: we have been able to save thousands of children. Thousands of children have found a home where they are loved. And we have brought so much joy to homes where there was no child!

That is why, today, in the presence of His Majesty and before all of you who come from different countries, I ask you: let us all pray to have the courage to defend the unborn child and to give him the possibility of loving and being loved. And I think that in this way - with the grace of God - we could bring peace into the world. We have the power to do so. Here, in Norway, you are, through God's blessing, quite prosperous. Yet I am sure that in families, in many of your houses, you are not, perhaps, hungry for a piece of bread, but hungry for love. Perhaps there is someone in the family who needs to love and who is not loved, not cared for, who is forgotten. With a sacrifice, with a child, love can begin at this home.

Love others to the point that it hurts: Love, to be true, must hurt. I will never forget the little child who gave me a marvellous lesson. The children had heard, in Calcutta, that Mother Teresa had no sugar for the children. Now, a little Hindu boy, 4 years old, went home and said to his parents: "I will not eat sugar for



three days. I want to give my sugar to Mother Teresa". How much can a little child eat? Three days afterwards, his parents brought him to me and I saw this boy. He could hardly pronounce my name. He loved with a great love; he loved so much that it hurt.

And this is what I propose to you: to love one another to the point that it hurts. But do not forget that there are many children, many men and women, who do not have what you have. Remember to love them to the point that it hurts.

Some time ago--this may seem very strange to you--I took in a little girl from the street. I could see from her face that the child was hungry. Goodness knows for how many days she had not eaten? I gave her a piece of bread. And the little girl began to eat this bread crumb by crumb. And when I said to her: "Eat this bread" she looked at me and replied: "I'm afraid to eat it because I am afraid to be hungry again when it is finished". Such is the reality!

A lesson in sharing from the poor: And then, there is also this greatness of the poor. One evening a gentleman came to tell us: "There is a Hindu family with eight children who have had nothing to eat for a long time. Do something for them". I took some rice and went there at once. And I found there this mother and these faces of little children, their eyes shining with real hunger. She took the rice from my hands, divided it into two parts and went out. When she returned, I asked her: "Where did you go? What did you do?" And the answer she gave me was: "They are hungry too". Her neighbours, a Moslem family, were also starving. What surprised me most, what astonished me was that, in her suffering, in her own hunger, she had the love and courage to share. She shared till it hurts!

And that is what I wish for you: to love the poor and never to turn your back on them. For turning your back on the poor, you turn away from Christ. Because He himself becomes the hungry man, the wretched man, the homeless man, so that you, like me, may have the opportunity to love him.

For where is God? How can we love him? It is not enough to say: "I love you, God". We must say: "I love you, God, *here*. I could enjoy this thing but I renounce it. I could eat this sugar but I will give it away".

If I stayed here all day and all night, you would be astonished by the marvels I could relate what people do to share the joy of giving. That is why I pray to God for you, that you too may have this joy, that in you may grow the conviction that Christ is to be found in the poor. And, then, you will really believe and really begin to love; then you will love quite naturally and you will try to do something. At first in your own home, then in your neighbour's home, then in the country in which you live and then in the whole world. And now, let us all join in this prayer: "Lord, give us the courage to protect the unborn child!" A child is God's most beautiful gift to a family, to a country and to the whole world. God bless you!

Reference: CHRIST TO THE WORLD, International Review of Apostolic Experiences, N. 2 - March-April 1982, Vol. XXVII.

THOUGHTS ON PEACE

*From prophet to priest every one deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.*  
 - Jeremiah 8:10-22

*(The armaments race) is a form of theft. The massive budgets allocated to the manufacture and stockpiling of weapons is tantamount to misappropriation of funds by the "managers" of the large nations or favored blocs. The obvious contradiction between the waste involved in the overproduction of military devices and the extent of unsatisfied vital needs is in itself an act of aggression that amounts to a crime. Even when they are not used, by their cost alone armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve... - Statement to the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament by the Vatican.*

*We are convinced that the arms race cannot be won; it can only be lost.....The existence of forces having the capacity to devastate our planet not once or twice, but many times is absurd and cannot be tolerated. It must be confronted and overcome in the name of the Christ who lives and reigns forever. - Representations of USSR and USA Churches.*

*The arms race is a scandal; the prospect of disarmament is a great hope. The scandal relates to the crying disproportion between the resources in money and intelligence devoted to the service of death and the resources devoted to the service of life. The hope is that, by cutting down military expenditures, a substantial part of the immense resources that it now absorbs can be employed in a vast worldwide development project. We feel the scandal, but we make the hope our own.*

- Pope Paul VI

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Reference: MISSION INTERCOM, No.115, May 1982.

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DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGION IN TANZANIASociological Soundings On Christian  
Participation In Rural Transformation

By Jan P. van Bergen

A book published jointly by CLS, Madras and Department of Missiology IIMO, Leiden, 1981. 337 pp. with 5 maps. Price: f27,50 or \$11.00.

From the Editorial Foreword by M. R. Spindler: The revolutionary changes in Tanzania have been associated with the policy of President Nyerere and the watch word Ujamaa. What is Ujamaa in actual fact at the grass roots level? Has Christianity, as organized religion, a role in the shaping of developmental attitudes, behaviour and policies in Tanzania?

Reference: INTERUNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR MISSIOLOGICAL AND ECUMENICAL RESEARCH, Department of Missiology - Boerhaavelaan 43 - 2334 ED Leiden, the Netherlands.

SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

This is a 62 page article by Drs. J. Heijke in issue no. 30 of EXCHANGE, December 1981, the Bulletin of Third World Christian Literature, a publication of the Department of Missiology of the Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (IIMO) in the Netherlands. It focusses attention on the state-church relation in African socialist countries, and more particularly in Tanzania, Mozambique and Algeria.

Some notes on Guatemala and South Africa together with some letters from readers of Exchange conclude this issue which is particularly interesting to Sedos members in view of the recent Sedos Seminar which treated among other topics, of the missionary situation today in Ethiopia.