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1st June, 1983

In this issue: The first article in this issue contains the trends and questions highlighted by the 'in-depth reflection group' at the recent Baltimore Mission Congress, 1983, organised by the United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA). Key elements of mission to-day are: building up of the human and Christian community into a world community: dialogue is a key attitude in this work and the use of power can either prevent or facilitate the process. The call to Jubilee (Lev. 25.8-12; Lk. 4: 16-20) provided a model for the mission of Jesus. It is appropriate that in this Jubilee year we consider the appropriateness of the model for mission to-day.

General Chapters and other Conferences of Religious Congregations and Societies continue to give special attention to issues of justice and peace. The Sacred Heart Missionaries statement in this issue is one more evidence of this trend. The forthcoming United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Belgrade is a significant event for those concerned with mission. There is a summary of the development of this Conference. Incarnation of the Gospel in the local cultures is the main concern of the Church in Nigeria. Luke Mbefo considers this in the context of South East Nigeria.

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### Coming Events

World Council of Churches:

Vith General Assembly.

Vancouver, July 24 - August 10, 1983.

News:

Sedos Bulletin:"Mission in Dialogue". A limited number of extra copies of the Special Issue of Sedos Bulletin No.8/83 of May 15 are available at the Sedos Secretariate. SMA Superior General. The General Chapter of the Society for African Mission has elected Fr. Patrick Harrington from Ireland as the new Superior General. Our good wishes for the future go to Father Harrington. We express our appreciation of Fr. Joseph Hardy the outgoing Superior General for his generous collaboration with SEDOS over the past ten years.

Religious Superiors Association of Sudan held its second meeting at Juba, February 8.11, 1983.

The Association is open to women and men Superiors having equal rights in all respects. The feasibility of membership for representatives of the Sudanese Diocesan clergy and Fidei Donum priests is being considered. The meeting was attended by representatives of eleven womens' and ten mens' Societies.

Africa Faith and Justice Network. The U.S.A. Provincial Administrations of a number of missionary Societies have decided to found a Faith and Justice Network. They aim to deal with injustices which have their effects in Africa but which have their origins in countries of the "First World". The organisers met during the course of the recent U.S. Mission Congress '83 at Baltimore. Eighteen groups are now interested in the Network which will gather and analyze information. This will be circulated to participating groups with recommendations for Advocacy or action. A Board of Governors chosen from the membership will govern the Network. For further information contact: Africa Faith and Justice Network, 1233 Lawsence Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017.

Marxism. In response to the requests of their General Chapters there was a meeting of ten Dominican experts on Marxism in Geneva, February 1983. They took as their point of departure the concrete situations specially in Eastern Europe, in Congo, Brazzaville and in Nicaragua. The themes analyzed were:

Identification of Marxism To-day (Elements for a diagnosis starting from concrete situations: Marxism as doctrine and as movement);

The Neurological Points of Confrontation with Marxism (atheism, totalitarianism, revolution, violence, critique of society, value of Marxist analysis, "scientific" character of this analysis, Marxism and sociology); The Vocation of the Order Facing the Network of Marxism and Post-Marxism (nature of the temporal commitment, Christian experience and Marxist Messianism as secular religion, integration of the "social doctrine of the Church", formation of responsible lay persons).

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## MISSION AND ITS FUTURE - A VISION

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### MISSION CONGRESS '83: US CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

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*(L'Association Missionnaire Catholique des Etats-Unis (USCMA) a nommé<sup>(1)</sup> un "groupe de réflexion approfondie" (In-Depth Reflection Group), chargé de synthétiser les questions principales soulevées au cours des conférences et des discussions, lors du Congrès Missionnaire de 1983, à Baltimore, du 17 au 21 mars. (Voir Bulletin du Sedos n. 7/83). Le groupe s'est réuni à plusieurs reprises au cours du Congrès, et présenta le texte ci-dessous à la séance finale du 21 mars. N.D.L.R.)*

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### MISSION TODAY IS THE BUILDING UP OF HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY INTO A WORLD COMMUNION

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Implementing the vision involves: Entering into the diversity of human cultures with an attitude of listening and being taught by the people, especially the poor; Allowing the Gospel to take root and shape along the contours of the culture, in response to concrete and specific needs of the present, and drawing upon the roots of the past; Appropriating not only our personal and recent collective stories, but also the greater sweep of Christian and human historical experience; Breaking through the barriers of classism, sexism and racism, and transforming the unjust structures which hinder the development of true community; Moving from the specific and structural challenges of the local community to the interrelatedness of world communion.

Continuing questions and issues on the way: Are we willing to build Christian community along the pathways of natural community in the specific cultural context, or do we bring in models from the outside? Can we find a middle path between, on the one hand, romantically affirming everything in a culture, and on the other hand, insensitively imposing alien and destructive patterns from elsewhere? To what extent are we willing to confront the destructive factors of classism, sexism and racism that impede the development of community, both in the United States and in other countries? In this building up of communities, how do we understand God's preferential option for the poor? What images of Christ and Church emerge from this process of community building? How do these relate to previous experience of our own and other Christian communities?

IN MISSION TODAY, DIALOGUE IS KEY AS AN ATTITUDE AND  
A PROCESS FOR BUILDING UP COMMUNITY

Implementing the vision involves: Dialogue begins in greeting and hospitality, recognizing the gifts of the other. It grows by learning how to listen. Its language is the language of symbols, wherein the partners can dwell. It witnesses with words, but more so with a way of life, embodied in mutual service. In so doing, dialogue becomes a kind of proclamation.

The openness to the other required in dialogue means that the eventual outcome of the dialogue cannot be predetermined. Dialogue brings understanding and knowledge to the partners, and leads to love, respect, and mutual enrichment. Paradoxically, true dialogue finally occurs as a result of this process.

Dialogue reaches beyond communities of living faiths to those who profess no faith or are antagonistic to it. Dialogue is increasingly lived at the grassroots level, where a way of life speaks more strongly than ideas about life.

Continuing questions and issues on the way: While dialogue can be a form of proclamation, can it also be a form of evangelization? What is the relation between dialogue and evangelization? Will genuine dialogue lead us to acknowledging new appreciations of the meaning of Christ, salvation and Church? What does the finality of the revelation of God in Christ mean in genuine dialogue? Will a genuine recognition of the gifts of other religious traditions be allowed to change or develop our own religious heritage? To what extent? Christians are now anxious for dialogue, but what of our dialogue partners? What would they hope to gain from us? How do they understand our purposes and motives?

THE EXERCISE OF POWER IS BOTH AN OPPORTUNITY  
FOR AND OBSTACLE TO MISSION TODAY

Implementing the vision involves: A social analysis of how the missionary presence creates new power relationships is necessary for dialogue, and for any kind of mission. Such analysis would address access to resources and influence, being expatriate and therefore distinctive, connections with North Atlantic cultures of (often oppressive) power.

The embeddedness of power within the human heart, and the defenses thrown up to maintain it, need to be set aside in order that the powerlessness of the cross might become the only true power of the Christian.

At the same time, the positive dimensions of power must be recognized. True authority is power given over freely for the sake of leadership and service. When faithfully exercised, authority helps bring about conversion and social change for the sake of the Reign of God. But such power must be a gift, not something wrested from an oppressed people, class or sex; The model for Christian power is the Christ who emptied himself (Phil. 2:6-11); Christians learn a Spirituality of power and powerlessness in a special way from the poor.

Continuing questions and issues on the way:

To what extent does North Atlantic cultural experience hinder our understanding of power as an obstacle, and also as an opportunity? These factors need to be identified; How does a Christian spirituality of power and powerlessness interact with the violence found in social structures and in political and economic action, both in the United States and other countries?

MISSION AND ITS FUTURE: THE CALL TO JUBILEE

Implementing the vision involves: The call to jubilee (Lev. 25:8-12; Luke 4:16-20) provided a model for the mission of Jesus, and continues to provide one for us as well. It announces a reversal of those things which impede the building up of human and Christian community: slavery, poverty, indebtedness, hunger captivity, oppression.

The jubilee proclaims the forgiveness of sins and the liberation of those sinned against. It evokes a vision of the Reign of God, now at hand, in which reconciliation takes place; The call to jubilee challenges Christians to respond to the mission of the poor who have heard the Gospel; The call to jubilee is not announced only for distant lands, but also in home communities as well. It is a call to renewal in the Church as well as conversion in the world.

The call to jubilee will heighten the conflicts which are symptomatic of the sin embedded in the social structures of communities and between communities. The conflicts will heighten the tension for exercising a Christian spirituality of power and dialogue.

Continuing issues and questions on the way: The call to jubilee requires a reversal of concrete inequities and injustices in concrete societies. What will these be for us, both in the United States and in other countries?

How does a Church respond concretely, both within itself and its surroundings, during a year which it has proclaimed as one of jubilee (the extraordinary Holy year, 1983)?

Respectfully submitted,  
The In-Depth Reflection Group

The members of the In-Depth Reflection Group were:

Joe Gremillion; Willie Jenkinson; Joe Lang; Peggy Loftus;  
Mary Jo Maher; John Mutiso-Mbinda; Bob Schreiter; Gene Stockwell;  
Keizo Yamada.

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FROM ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMEROS'S HOMILIES

"Our present society is a sort of anonymous society in which no one is to blame and all are responsible. . . and each one is guilty of his own shabby tricks" (homily of March 25, 1980). "It should be borne in mind by any group of liberators which emerges in our country that the primary liberation to be aimed at by a political group wanting to free the people is to free itself from its own sin. As long as one is the slave of sin, of egoism, of violence, of cruelty, of hate, one is not the right person to liberate the people" (March 2, 1980). "Without God there can be no true idea of liberation. Short-term liberation, yes; but definite, solid liberation can only be achieved by men of faith" (February 23, 1980). "Doubtless, many politicians are listening to me, many who, without faith in God are trying to bring greater justice in their fatherland, but I say to them: my dearly beloved atheistic brethren who do not believe in Christ or in the Church, your struggle is noble, but something is lacking" (March 9, 1980).

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PEACE AND JUSTICE STATEMENT

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GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART  
MARACAIBO, VENEZUELA, JAN.31st to FEB.18th 1983

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"The persons responsible for the sixteen Provinces of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, gathered in Maracaibo, Venezuela, together with the General Administration of the Congregation wish to express their concern about certain situations in Latin America and elsewhere in the world.

As a religious missionary Congregation, we have made a special option for the poor, to be open to their demands on us and on the world at large. We understand the poor to be primarily those who suffer from injustice and its various consequences which wound and degrade the human person: hunger, the lack of a proper wage, the denial of the right to determine their own destiny, religious and political persecution, the lack of education, of sanitary living conditions and of adequate medical care.

As Religious we do not have specific solutions to change the world economic system, but we must insist on these God-given rights of each and every human being, rights which no government should dare to violate. Yet we are well aware that these rights are often trampled upon to further various interests of different groups. We feel the need to speak as men of faith: faith in the creative power of God and faith in the basic goodness of all human beings, redeemed through Jesus Christ.

The consequences of injustice are often due to foreign and local greed, linked together by means of certain multinational corporations with little concern for effects on the internal social and economic systems of countries. We denounce such callous inhumanity.

We realize that this injustice and its consequences are perpetuated by the imposition of the struggle between the two superpowers in our world, the "two-block-mind-set" which often sweeps whole nations into its vortex. This mind-set leads to military, economic and propagandistic rivalries that foster all kinds of unjust interventions into other countries, causing human misery that history, and we ourselves, must condemn. We need cite only a few but excruciating examples: Nicaragua, Angola, Guatemala, Afganistan, El Salvador and Poland.

Born of this same two-block mentality and of the international arms production industry is the senseless and dangerous arms race, nuclear as well as conventional. Huge sums of the world's wealth

are plowed into instruments of mass murder instead of farm fields, education, health and other needs of the world's poor. Even a small percentage of this cost, if used judiciously to create a better economic condition for peoples, could alleviate the sufferings and hunger of whole populations. We denounce this insanity as anti-human anti-evangelical and unchristian.

We call upon all men of good-will, upon leaders of nations and especially upon the leaders of the superpowers to enter into an honest dialogue, to try every available avenue, to explore every possibility to rid the world of these injustices and their dehumanizing consequences.

As a world-wide missionary institution, we commit ourselves to do all in our power to bring about a change of heart and to foster a better understanding between peoples and between political systems, so that there might exist a true acceptance of the fact that different approaches are possible in the search for true and full human development".

*(La Congrégation internationale des Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur a célébré sa Conférence Générale à Maracaibo (Venezuela) du 31 janvier 1983 au 8 février. Elle réunissait, en plus de l'Administration Générale, les Directeurs régionaux et provinciaux des 16 pays où la Congrégation possède des Provinces.*

*La Conférence a approuvé une déclaration sur des questions concernant la justice et la paix dans le monde d'aujourd'hui: "Nous souhaitons joindre nos voix, représentant 2.500 prêtres et frères travaillant dans 35 pays, à celles d'autres groupes ou de personnes, en attirant l'attention du monde sur certains points qui dégradent un grand nombre de nos soeurs et de nos frères et qui constituent une menace pour la paix de notre planète". N.D.L.R.)*

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## CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN AFRICA

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*(Le Centre d'Etudes de l'Islam et des Relations islamo-chrétiennes, de Selly Oak College à Birmingham (Royaume-Uni) vient de lancer une nouvelle publication: (Bulletin de l'Islam et des relations islamo-chrétiennes en Afrique, BICURA). L'abonnement à ce bulletin trimestriel est de 7.50 Livres sterling. Ci-dessous une recension du premier numéro de ce Bulletin, (Janvier 1983) par le P.Fitzgerald P.B.)*

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The Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, of the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England, has launched a new publication BICMURA (Bulletin on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa). The editor, Sigvard von Sicard, explains that interest in Christian-Muslim relations tends to concentrate on the Middle East and Europe, where the encounter is seen to be of an essentially polemical character. Yet Africa, where the two religious traditions have existed side by side for some 1400 years (Muslim converts took refuge with the Coptic Christian emperor of Abyssinia before the establishment of the Muslim community in Medina), provides an alternative history of Christian-Muslim relations to that of the Mediterranean. The growing amount of published material in Africa indicates that Africans are themselves very conscious of this.

The Bulletin intends to publish articles and research papers. An important feature will be the Abstracts, summarizing material gleaned from over 100 publications on Christian-Muslim relations received by the Centre. The first issue (January 1983) contains an article by von Sicard on Christian-Muslim co-operation in Africa: towards a better understanding. He indicates the bases for co-operation (common humanity, common religious heritage, the call to serve humanity, commitment to economic, social and political justice) and outlines some areas where co-operation can or could take place (relief and rehabilitation, health, community development, education, theological issues). He then gives some guidelines for co-operation, demanding in particular "that neither Christianity nor Islam be treated as institutions, or doctrinal systems, but as expression of the living, activating faith of its adherents". Von Sicard's approach, programmatic rather than descriptive, may be thought too sanguine by some, but his reflections are worth considering. One will find, too, many worthwhile bits of information in the Abstracts section. The Bulletin is to be published quarterly, proposed subscription 7.50 pounds sterling. However, there will be no subscription charge for the first four issues for those who are concerned with Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.

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## CNUCED VI A BELGRADE (JUIN) 1983

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*(UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) will be holding its sixth meeting next June in Belgrade. Third World nations ("the group of 77") have been meeting in Buenos Aires to establish a common front. In its April issue the Flemish mission magazine Wereldwijd traced the history of UNCTAD and underlined the importance of the forthcoming UNCTAD VI, particularly for the countries of the Southern hemisphere. A summary of this article is given here).*

### Le Groupe des 77 à Buenos Aires

Les 125 pays du tiers monde regroupés au sein d'une organisation colatérale dite "groupe de 77" - auquel la Chine vient de demander son adhésion - sont, à partir du 5 avril, en train de mettre au point, à Buenos Aires, une position commune à présenter à Belgrade. Les pays en voie de développement se considèrent comme les vraies victimes de la crise mondiale: avec 70% de la population mondiale ils ont 20% du revenu brut mondial et une dette extérieure de 626 milliards de dollars.

Les délégués algérien et égyptien ont mis en cause "les conditions critiques" créées dans les pays en développement par les décisions des pays riches. Selon le représentant du Koweït, les pays pétroliers affrontent une situation critique en raison de la baisse du prix du pétrole brut et des "mesures égoïstes" de déflation adoptées par les pays développés. Si des mesures urgentes ne sont pas prises, a-t-il ajouté, l'explosion sociale sera inévitable.

Ouvrant la réunion des ministres, le général Bignone, chef d'Etat argentin, avait lancé un appel pour un nouvel ordre économique international, un rééchelonnement de la dette des pays pauvres, la nécessité d'une coopération entre le "Nord" et le "Sud" et d'une volonté commune de sortir ensemble de la crise. Un discours qui s'apparente à celui tenu devant les non-alignés, à New Delhi, par Indira Gandhi.

1. Au mois de juin aura lieu à Belgrade la 6me conférence mondiale du Cnuced/Unctad.
2. Les 5 conférences précédentes eurent lieu à Genève (1964), New Delhi (1968), Santiago (1972) Nairobi (1967), Manila (1979).
3. Les conférences précédentes eurent chacune un caractère spécial:

Genève: C'était la création du Cnuced.

New Delhi: la promesse des pays riches (les 24 de l'OCDE) de donner aux pays pauvres 0,7% de leur PNB en aide à la coopération.

Santiago: pour la première fois on parle d'un nouvel ordre économique international.

Nairobi:- programme sur les matières premières

- un plan pour la stabilisation des revenus provenant de la vente des matières premières.

Manila: réforme des structures internationales des finances et de la politique monétaire.

En somme, chaque fois, on fit surtout des promesses

- Des riches ne cèdent que quand ils sont mis sous pression.
- La seul moyen de pression de l'hémisphère Sud était le prix et l'approvisionnement du pétrole.
- Dans le cadre des réunions de l'Assemblée Générale de l'ONU, le Sud demandait régulièrement que l'on traite globalement de tous les dossiers: aide à la coopération, commerce des matières premières, industrialisation, pétrole, structures financières.
- Surtout les Etats Unis ont manœuvré pendant 3 ans pour que cette discussion globale ne se fît pas...jusqu'à ce que le front de l'OPEP s'écroula.
- Depuis, les pays riches sont de nouveau tranquilles et assurés: le tiers monde a perdu son moyen de pression et de nouvelles formations de cartel (pour d'autres matières) ont pu être évitées.
- En attendant, vu la crise récente, les politiciens du Nord peuvent tranquillement affirmer que dans les pays riches il n'y a pas de volonté politique pour accepter des réformes importantes. Et c'est vrai. On veut bien donner quelque chose aux pauvres, mais on ne veut pas que l'on touche aux structures qui ont créé le fossé profond entre le Nord et le Sud et qui élargissent encore ce fossé.

Pendant 15 ans toute négociation se butait à la puissance  
et la mauvaise volonté du Nord.

Pour le Nord: Depuis 2 ans, le Nord à son tour, connaît une grave crise économique:

- révolution industrielle (chips, computers, robots)
- crise de production (on produit trop)
- crise de consommation (on ne parvient plus à liquider les surplus de nourriture, ni de produits)

Pour le Sud: la crise du Nord devient une catastrophe:

- a. Les pays du pétrole (les 13 de l'OPEP et quelques autres): Ils ont réalisé beaucoup de travaux d'infrastructure, mais à cause du protectionnisme du Nord ils ne parviennent pas à liquider leurs produits: situation grave pour la Nigéria, le Mexique, le Vénézuéla...
- b. Les jeunes pays industriels (8 pays) Pour s'industrialiser ils ont fait de larges emprunts aux banques du Nord (qui disposaient de beaucoup d'argent grâce aux pétrodollars qui y étaient déposés). Mais, vu la baisse des ventes et le protectionnisme du Nord, ils sont devenus insolvable.

La dette totale du tiers monde s'élevait en 1981 à 530 milliards de \$ dollars En 1982: 626 milliards de dollars.

c. Les pays au revenu moyen (60 pays) Souvent ils ne disposent que des revenus provenant d'une seule culture ou d'une seule matière première. (monoculture, héritée du temps colonial) Ils dépendent complètement des fluctuations des prix sur le marché mondial.

Or, les prix des matières premières ont baissé en moyenne de 16% en 1981 et encore une fois de 17% en 1982.

Sur 2 ans, cela fait une perte de 21 milliards de dollars.

d. Les pays les plus pauvres (30 pays) Pour eux tous les éléments se conjugent et tous sont négatifs. Pour rester en vie, ils n'ont que l'aide de l'étranger et les emprunts bon marché.

Mais, en ce moment, le Nord coupe sérieusement dans ses budgets de la coopération...alors que ces pays pauvres doivent payer davantage pour leur pétrole, la nourriture importée, l'achat des machines, etc.

Résultat: une sous-alimentation encore plus grave.

Ces 300 millions d'habitants sont confrontés avec la famine.

C'est dans cette perspective que nous devons voir  
CNUCED/UNCTAD VI.

Cette fois-ci c'est vraiment un cri d'alarme qui nous provient des pays du Sud. Le Sud attend plus que de vaines promesses ou de belles déclarations sur les Droits de l'Homme.

Le Sud attend des propositions concrètes dans les domaines des matières premières (pour éviter l'écroulement des prix), du commerce international (contre le protectionnisme), des finances (emprunts bon marché), des pays les plus pauvres (un programme d'action avait été rédigé en leur faveur à Paris en 1981...mais il était pratiquement resté lettre morte).

Pour la 6me fois le CNUCED se réunit. La conjoncture internationale est mauvaise. Mais le gaspillage par la course aux armements se continue et les riches, aussi bien ceux du Nord qui commandent que ceux du Sud qui jouent le jeu du Nord, gardent les oreilles fermées. Faut-il vraiment qu'on accule le monde des pauvres, à bout de patience et poussé par la famine, à une révolution mondiale?

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## BACKGROUND TO INCULTURATION

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Luke Mbefo, C.S.Sp.

*(L'africanisation recouvre des domaines très larges et très profonds qui n'ont pas encore été suffisamment explorés. C'est à la fois une question: de langage adapté à la présentation du message chrétien; de catéchèse; de réflexion théologique; d'une expression plus adaptée de la liturgie ou de l'art sacré; de formes de vie communautaire. Dans cet article le P. Luke Mbefo discute ces problèmes, avec une référence spéciale au Nigeria. NDLR).*

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### JOHN PAUL II IN KINSHASA, 3 MAY 1980

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It is clear that the main thrust of future theological reflection on the African continent will concern itself with the concept of inculturation. This is a task which African theologians can no longer continue to shirk. Their Catholic faith should imbue them with the courage and the sense of responsibility for the rooting of the Church in our land. We can no longer expect outsiders to carry out our own task for us. They have done their own: the implantation of the faith. They did it with excellence.

Two theological principles lend impetus to this undertaking. They are the principle of the Incarnation and the principle of Restoration. The Incarnation signifies God's desire and readiness to be at home with every race and with every culture (Heb. 2.5ff.). Restoration is the complementary principle: God became one with us in order to restore all things in His Christ (Rm. 8.19ff; Eph. 1.10). The present essay is not an elaboration of the implications of this twofold principle on African soil. It is, in a sense, a prolegomenon: the articulation of the background against which such an elaboration can be constructed.

My approach is historical. The present situation of the Nigerian Church affords the material for this sort of theological reflection. It is my submission that the Nigerian Church has reached a stage in her development which is analogous to the period in the Church's history often referred to as "post-apostolic Christianity." A sense of the movement of history urges that the wider Church expect the Nigerian Church to exhibit the same signs of maturation usually associated with her own stages of growth. Just what these signs are, I shall attempt to show in what follows. A broad outline of this development will suffice for my present argument.

## POST-APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY

As the Church spread from Jerusalem into the Greco-Roman world, problems arose for both the preachers and the hearers of the Word. In the effort to assure the pagans that Jesus was God's good news for them, the messengers of the Word found it necessary to adapt, by expanding, the Jewish universe of discourse which was the original "life situation" of Jesus' proclamation. Paul was unconvincing in his first attempt to present his message to the men of Athens (Ac. 17.17ff.). His own failure turned Paul against the sophistications of rhetoric and philosophy (1 Cor. 1.18; Rom. 1.22). Yet, later generations of Christians will make use of the prevailing philosophies of their age to communicate the same Christian message.

Thus, we have Christian Platonists like St. Augustine and Christian Aristotelians like St. Thomas Aquinas. These later apologists for Christinity found, as Paul did not, that making sense of God's revelation called for starting with the people's own intellectual achievements. Many of the doctrinal and dogmatic statements of our Christian faith come to us in the language and concepts of Greek philosophy. Such notions as substance and transubstantiation, hypostatic union and 'communicatio idiomatum' do not derive from the world of the Bible. They were seen, however, to reflect for a different audience the ultimate meaning of the biblical text.

The hearers of the Word also felt the need to expand the inner boundaries of their world to allow the construction of the foundations demanded by the new doctrine which they believed was their salvation. They were open-eyed and critical. In this way they were able to distinguish between the message and the messenger; between the meaning and the vehicle that carried the meaning. This means that they could accept the message while rejecting the messenger. They could receive the meaning while dispensing with the vehicle carrying the meaning. Jesus had spoken of those who sit on the throne of Moses. They are to be listened to, but their life-style is not to be copied (Mt. 23. 1-4). Paul talked about those who preach Christ, but do so from the motive of material gain.

The whole range of biblical criticism and scholarship is ultimately designed to make meaningful for contemporary hearers a message spoken to another age, in another language and from another cultural perspective. Such transpositions must continue in each age, and among each new culture and people that have been exposed to God's Word in the words of men. No local Church may consider her work accomplished until such transformation—an ongoing process, has been set in motion and kept in motion. The early pagan converts found that becoming a Christian did not entail either their undergoing circumcision or their obedience to the Mosaic law. To be Christians they did not have to be Jews first.

Women and slaves even found liberation from social and cultural discrimination through the liberating grace of the Gospel. Such liberation must continue if we are to have more abundant life.

### RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the interplay between God's address and man's response, some facts have emerged. There have been transformations of God's message. There have also been aberrations on the part of man's response. The development of Christology can be taken as an example. As believers started to reflect seriously on the Christ-event, it became clear that there were various and often irreconcilable interpretations of the revealed data. Some thinkers saw Jesus as a good man who so pleased God that he was adopted as God's son. This adoption did not in any sense make him divine. Another group of thinkers maintained that Jesus was always God but appeared as if he were man. This group could point to the Homeric gods in Greek mythology to support their claim that God assumed the form of man but in reality he was no man at all.

Such teachings set the tone and temper of the great Christological controversies that raged between the 3rd and 5th centuries of Christianity. These false teachings were important, however, because they called for a conscious determination of correct doctrine. Thus, heresies play a role in the articulation of orthodoxy. It was on account of these early doctrinal disputes that councils were summoned to set officially recognized Catholic beliefs. Many of our credal formulas are the positive fruits of combating early heresies.

### THE RELIGIOUS SCENE IN NIGERIA

It is the submission of this paper that the events of Early Church history are paradigm for the present stage of the Church's evolution in Nigeria. Having passed through the stage of primary evangelization, it is now up to the Nigerian Church to take the next step in making itself a local Church. This can only be done through hard re-thinking of the foundations of the faith which has been preached and accepted. Up until now we have been, in the main, maintaining the faith as it was handed down. However, questions are starting to be posed which indicate that a new stage beckons. The period of gestations, that phase in which the faithful have been thinking and praying over the Gospel, seems to be over. Now is the stage for discussion: We want to know how revealed religion is related to our natural and traditional religion. We want to know if there are Nigerian alternatives to Western forms of Christianity. We want to know whether our Christianity implies Europeanism. We are asking whether we can be fully Nigerians and fully Christians, like the God-man.

It is clear from travels through Western Europe and the Americas that there are considerable variations in Christianity. Even right here in Africa, there are notable differences between the Churches in English-speaking as opposed to French-speaking nations. If such is the case, then it is conceivable that there is an African or Nigerian alternative to Western Christianity. And unity can still be maintained in diversity. There is no doubt that the form of Christianity we have bears the stamp of the home churches from which our missionaries came. When people accuse us of maintaining a foreign religion, they do not mean that we should not remain Christians. They mean that we should make Christianity more completely our own, giving a Nigerian expression to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The present Pope, John Paul II, says as much in his first African visit when he told Africans: "Be yourselves. I assure you:.... you are capable of solving your own problems yourselves..."(Abijan Airport, 12 May, 1980).

#### RE-THINKING THE FOUNDATIONS

If we are to reconstitute the Church in Nigeria so that it is a genuinely Nigerian Church, one that is an authentic expression of the Catholic piety of our people, then we have to begin our work at the very foundations of Catholic doctrine and practice. Inculturation cannot simply be a matter of a few Nigerian patches-drums instead of the organ, native cloth and designs in the vestments-sewn onto an otherwise Roman or Western tunic. A better model for the seamless cloak of Christ would be Joseph's many coloured cloak: a garment that is manifold in its essential structure.

If we are to carry through a genuine programme of inculturation, then we cannot be so afraid of heterodoxy that we are unwilling to engage in "foundation thinking" or to undertake real experiments. "Heresy hunters" we will always have with us, but we cannot allow their negative attitude to dominate the scene. The project of inculturation must be built on positive, perhaps, even bold-which does not mean rash-thinking and experimenting. Furthermore since this is to be a genuine cultural and therefore community project, it will be necessary to create an open and unfettered atmosphere which will encourage individuals to express themselves. It is in the debates that will be engendered by such toleration that the real issues will come to the fore and get a proper airing.

An illustration might help clarify my point. It has been normal to refer to the Igbo-speaking areas of Eastern Nigeria as very Catholic. Numerically, there is no way of denying this. Yet, it is in these very areas that issues which touch upon Church and State have been invariably decided on the side of the State. The moment these Catholics



saw an opportunity to declare independence of Church supervision, they took it without a second thought. Had they been encouraged to think over and speak out rather than merely to believe and attend the sacraments, perhaps our numbers would be less, but our public reaction would be more predictable. Thus, the new openness argued for will not only favour candour, it will also favour sincerity of heart and belief sustained through reflection on the truth. Then we shall be governed by realities rather than illusions.

The necessity to incarnate the Church in our culture is even more pressing as we find the so-called "Independent Churches" springing up around and even out of the Catholic Church. We may conveniently characterize them as "home-made" Churches. Since they reflected the local scene, people tend to find more fulfillment in them than in the "foreign" Churches. As an expression of Africa's celebrated "joie de vivre", these Churches present themselves as versions of corybantic Christianity. This stage, I submit, is a passing one. They will change from celebration in song and dance, in trances and healings to a conceptual articulation of their position on religious issues. The newly established Catholic Institute of West Africa has as part of its task the training of native theologians. Since these theologians share the same cultural background as the members of the Independent Churches, they will be better qualified to engage these same members in doctrinal discussions. These theologians will also evolve the guidelines for the transformation without violence of our culture into the fulfillment which Christianity offers.

#### CONCLUSION

The necessity for inculturation is beyond debate. Nor should we try to decide beforehand how far we should go. The enfleshment of the Eternal Word of God is the only principle that can guide the process. Therefore, it will be necessary to reflect more on the concept of the Incarnation in the economy of salvation. The Incarnation represents a decision on the part of God to take our humanity seriously (Col. 1.15-20). The conditions of human existence are the instruments adopted for our salvation. They are therefore truly salvific. In the same way God wants to enter our culture in order to reconcile all things in Christ. Such is part of the good news to Nigerians contained in the theological concept of the Incarnation.

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 BOOK NOTES
 

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LA MISSIONE NEGLI ANNI 2000: Seminario di Ricerca del Sedos sul futuro della Missione.

*Bologna, Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1983. pp 500. L20,000*

Il presente volume riporta i principali interventi del Convegno, nel 1981, di Sedos, il Centro di Studi e di Documentazione al servizio di 55 Istituti Missionari di ogni parte del Mondo. Essi, partendo dal vivo delle esperienze di fede di tutte le chiese affrontano quasi tutte le "questioni aperte" della Missione oggi, soprattutto di carattere metodologico.

Il titolo avrebbe potuto anche essere: missione sì, ma missione come? I temi del dialogo con le altre religioni, del legame tra missione e promozione umana, missione e diritti della persona, missione e liberazione dei popoli, della necessità di inculturazione del messaggio evangelico e dell'istituzione ecclesiale in ogni area culturale-uno dei temi più ripresi-costituiscono la trama di tutto il libro, fino a delle conclusioni aperte, che in qualche modo delineano il volto della missione del prossimo futuro.

Un libro importantissimo per tutti coloro che, a titolo diverso, sono allo stesso tempo soggetto e oggetto della missione: per tutti i cristiani, dunque; ma in particolare per i missionari, gli operatori pastorali, gli studiosi della realtà ecclesiale. Una panoramica così ampia sulla realtà missionaria del nostro tempo non era stata ancora fatta.

Moorsom, Richard.

TRANSFORMING A WASTED LAND.

*London, Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1982.*

*Pp. 114. L.2.95/\$5.*

This is the second book in the series, Namibia in the 1980's. The series addresses the fundamental problems of the Namibian economy, distorted by years of colonial rule: 90% of goods produced are for export; 60% of GDP is taken as company profits or South African taxes on profits; the average personal income for black Namibians is lower than that of Tanzania despite a per capita GDP six times higher.

The present volume deals with Agriculture. It is well Researched and has a good bibliography. Its two main objectives are: to present an up-to-date outline analysis of Namibia's agriculture and the forces that have shaped it during the colonial epoch; and to discuss alternative paths of rural development open to a newly independent Namibian government.