
SEDOS SEMINAR
MINISTRIES IN A DYNAMIC LOCAL CHURCH
SOME FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A future issue of SEDOS Bulletin will contain the full Report of the Seminar together with the papers presented there. In the meantime we give here an outline of the Report, some first impressions of the Seminar and a preliminary assessment.

The final Report has four main parts bringing together the main ideas which emerged at the Seminar under the following headings:

- An Examination of the New Reality of Ministry To-day.
- Questions Being Raised.
- Unresolved Tensions in this New Reality.
- Tasks Ahead for Societies Engaged in Mission.

- 1) An Examination of the New Reality of Ministry draws attention to the extraordinary growth of and variety in ministries and the accompanying mood of anxiety centred around conflict with established ministries, clerical identity and some of the directions which ministries of the future appear to be taking. We are committed to encouraging their growth, listening to the local churches where many of us are engaged, discovering the close relationships between ministry and community and the implications of recognising the richness of the Church understood as the People of God.
- 2) Questions Being Raised. A major question highlighted at the Seminar concerned how our experiences were changing the definition of ministry. A second major question concerned how the new ministries will relate to other ministries already in the universal church. The report outlines eight questions which arose during the seminar.
- 3) Unresolved Tensions in this New Reality point to profound tensions not only between those who hold to differing models of the Church but also among all concerned for the well-being and authentic witness of the Church to her Lord. These tensions have not been resolved and at this present time show no ways of easy resolution. The report outlines some of these tensions in detail. It draws attention to the seeming impasse concerning the closing off of some ministries to women.
- 4) Tasks Ahead for Societies engaged in Mission. This final section of the report attempts to indicate lines of action which can be undertaken by Societies whose experience of living from their special charisms enables them to feel at home more quickly with new and prophetic models of Church. This prompts them to prophetic action which it is hoped are signs of new life

rather than sin and death. Tasks ahead for Societies engaged in mission are then indicated.

There is a final note recording that the dominant mood of the assembly about the new direction which ministries are taking was one of joy and even of excitement.

Some First Impressions. The variety of personal experiences shared by the participants was rich and reflected the varieties of cultural situations in the churches where many participants ministered. The exigencies of inculturation were constantly present.

The formal theological reflections were clear, very much appreciated, and helped to create a useful framework for the discussions.

The process, rather than drawing up of a final Report, was the key element of the Seminar. This was specially evident in the rapid conscientisation which took place around the place of women in the Churches. Horizons were widened. Participants gained an insight to the questions and tensions around this topic which was very revealing for some.

Discussions were marked by openness and an attitude of listening.

The paucity of participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the overwhelming representation from Europe and North America was reflected in the final report. A much greater emphasis on the serious dimensions of poverty, injustice and lack of dialogue with other faiths would have emerged from a seminar whose participants came from those continents.

The scripture reflection at the beginning and the Eucharistic celebrations at the close of each day created an atmosphere of prayer and incidentally pointed to some of the unresolved tensions in women's ministries.

Composition. There were ninety two participants at the Seminar, thirty four women and sixty eight men coming from forty six Societies engaged in mission and from twenty-five countries, fourteen being in the so called 'third world'.

The eleven Resource Persons, already included above, were made up of four women and seven men, four being lay people.

Forty five participants were Superiors General or Assistants.

Preliminary Assessments. Forty three assessments of the Seminar were submitted on the concluding day. These represent approximately 50% of the participants excluding the resource persons. The following table indicates the combined assessment.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Content	12 (28%)	27 (63%)	2 (5%)	-	-
Methodology	10 (23%)	20 (46%)	12 (28%)	1 (2%)	-
Resource Persons	11 (25%)	25 (58%)	7 (16%)	-	-

THE SCOPE OF MISSION

David Bosch

(Dans cette dernière section de sa communication sur la façon d'interpréter l'envoi en Mission de saint Mathieu, le Dr. Bosch étudie les relations entre l'annonce purement évangélique et la justice sociale. Une insistance exclusive sur la dimension "spirituelle" de la Bonne Nouvelle, présuppose une dichotomie entre le spirituel et le corporel, absolument inconnue dans la Bible. Nous ne devons pas restreindre le sens du Royaume de Dieu, dans nos efforts de convertir des individus en nouvelles créatures. Il est faux d'enseigner que si les gens pris individuellement ont une expérience personnelle du Christ, en termes de piétisme traditionnel, ils s'engageront automatiquement dans la réforme de la société. C'est évident si l'on considère les activités des églises fondamentalistes en Amérique Latine. N.D.L.R.).

This Justice-love is infinitely superior to that of the Pharisees.

Although they sit in the chair of Moses, they do not practise what they preach(23:2,3). They are more interested in observing the letter of the Law than its spirit, because they have forgotten that God desires mercy, not sacrifice(12:7).

In summary then: Jesus has commanded the fulfilling of the Law which is the practice of justice-love. To love the other person means to have compassion for him or her and to see that justice is done. Love of neighbour and enemy manifests itself in justice.

The Greek word for "justice" (*dikaiosyné*) is therefore to be regarded as one of the key concepts in Matthew's gospel. A German scholar, George Strecker, rightly entitles his book on the theology of Matthew *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (The Way of Justice). The phrase comes from *Matthew* 21, where Jesus relates to the chief priests and the elders the parable of the two sons, one of whom changed his mind and decided to do his father's will. In applying the parable to his listeners, Jesus then says, "I tell you this: the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For when John came to show you *the way of justice* you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and prostitutes did" (21:31-2).

Somehow, however, we have failed to recognize the centrality of justice in the first gospel. In particular the justice command as integral to the Great Commission has escaped our notice. It has been, with us, almost as with the two men who went up to Emmaus: something has held our eyes from seeing (cf. Luke 24:16). Why? Once again our use of language has played tricks on us. Sidney H. Rooy, a North American missionary to Argentina, relates his discovery of the fact that the two English words, "righteousness" and "justice", are both universally translated *justicia* in Spanish, as if the two meant the same thing! He then made another and more disconcerting discovery: the English word "justice" never occurs in the King James version of the New Testament! Instead, the word "righteousness" is used almost universally. And most other English translations of the New Testament follow suit.

Rooy states that there are three intimately related biblical terms that we have divorced from one another. In so doing we have made them say three very different and almost unrelated things.

Justification according to the view commonly held, is the forensic act of God that changes our status God declares us just and as such acceptable to him. *Righteousness* is that spiritual quality that we receive from God. It is also an attribute of God himself. It is, preeminently, a religious or spiritual concept. *Justice* is the form in which we conduct ourselves in relation to our fellow human beings and seek for them that to which they have a right.

Proclaiming a Gospel we have never heard: If Rooy's observations are correct - and I fear that they are-it is small wonder that many Christians believe that the New Testament, which, as they read it, knows only of "righteousness" and "justification", teaches an exclusively "spiritual" or "religious" message.

We have all been educated to a spiritual righteousness divorced from earthly justice. Look, for example, at what we have done to Matthew's gospel! Those who hunger and thirst to see that justice is done have become those who piously hunger and thirst after spiritual righteousness (5:6). Those who suffer persecution for the cause of right, now suffer on account of their righteousness; that is because of their faith, religiously defined (5:10). Only the righteousness, that is the spiritual quality, not the practice of justice, of Jesus' disciples, has to surpass that of the Pharisees (5:20). If we are tempted to devote too much attention to material things, we are reminded to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all the other things will be given to us as well (6:33). This means, in popular understanding, that the spiritual is more important than the material, that God's kingdom is a spiritual reality, and that if only we have our priorities right, putting the spiritual-God's kingdom and his righteousness-above the material, he will bless us with material things as well.

All this is far removed from the command that we should not, like the heathen, be preoccupied with our own selfish wishes, but rather with seeing that justice is done to our neighbour, for this is what the kingdom demands (cf. also Rom. 14:17).

These few examples should suffice to prove that the first gospel may in fact be proclaiming a message we have never heard. Of course, we should not go to the extreme and see only secular justice and no righteousness in these texts! Then we would be guilty of the same kind of divorce we have been criticizing. It would be wrong to regard righteousness as a religious and theological concept but justice as merely secular and anthropological. The two are intimately related, even co-terminous. Where the one surfaces, the other is close at hand.

JUSTICE-LOVE

In 1980, Waldron Scott, then General Secretary of the World Evangelical Fellowship, caused a stir in evangelical circles with the publication of his book, *Bring Forth Justice*. Scott's central thesis was that evangelicals should see the Great Commission in a wider context than had hitherto been customary. The Great Commission, he argued, views mission in larger dimensions than most evangelicals would allow. Disciple-making is more than was commonly assumed. He then went on: "I am proposing that we view the larger mission, the ultimate mission, as the establishment of justice." And again: "One

must understand discipleship in order to make disciples, and discipleship is not fully biblical apart from a commitment to social justice.... To be a disciple is to be committed to the King and his Kingdom of just relationships."

I endorse Waldron Scott's interpretation. The central thrust of the Great Commission is indeed aimed at disciple-making - and that includes not only persuading people to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and become members of the church (baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit), but also, and simultaneously, teaching them to observe what Jesus has commanded: to practice love and uphold justice.

Evangelism and the "Great Commission": It is not true that the "Great Commission" talks only about evangelism", about leading people to Christ, and the "Great Commandment" only about love and justice. It is still further from the truth that the only responsibility of the missionary church or the mission society is the former, namely evangelism. Harold Lindsell is in error when he says, "The mission of the church is preeminently spiritual - that is, its major concern revolves around the nonmaterial aspects of life". This entire tendency - to see mission, indeed, the gospel itself, in exclusively personal, inward, spiritual and vertical categories - is nothing but a travesty. It has become almost endemic in the west and, through our far-flung missionary efforts, has been exported to all corners of the globe.

Waldron Scott tells of twenty-four North American mission executives working in Latin America who were questioned about the relationship between evangelism and social justice. Only two of them recognized any relationship at all. The remaining twenty-two did not. Some of their responses have been summarized as follows: "The church exists for the purpose of worship, communion, spiritual growth, and evangelistic witness. The more the church agitates for land reform, liberation from imperialism, etc., the more it dissipates the purpose for which it was founded. The growing churches in Latin America are those which minister most to the soul and least to the body. When the decision is left to the national brethren they stress evangelism. Preach the gospel, win the lost, and social ills will gradually vanish as the number of believers in society increases.

No dichotomy: If we evaluate such responses from the perspectives established by the Great Commission, we at once observe that they are riddled with fallacies. They presuppose a dichotomy between the spiritual and the bodily of which the Bible knows nothing. They narrow the scope of God's kingdom activity to making individuals new creatures. They falsely teach that if individuals have a personal experience of Christ in traditional pietistic terms they will automatically become involved in the changing of society.

The Great Commission teaches otherwise. It talks about making disciples. And in Matthew's gospel discipleship means commitment to both the King and his kingdom, to both righteousness and justice, and like plaited strands woven into the very fabric of the first gospel. We cannot, on the basis of Mathew's gospel or of the Great Commission, declare the one element to be primary, the other secondary, the one to be the root, the other the fruit. John Stott is correct in declaring: "...not only the consequences of the (Great) commission but the actual

commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus."

CRISIS

What all this means, in practical terms, for a society such as the Church Missionary Society is not for me to say. For almost 200 years the CMS has been involved in a most remarkable enterprise across the globe. In the course of its history it has adapted to changing circumstances - from the colonial to the post-colonial era, from pioneer evangelism to the building up of indigenous churches, from the practice of one-way mission to partnership with the younger churches.

Today we stand on the threshold of yet another paradigm shift, which is, as yet, difficult to delineate. In the post-colonial era and in the practice of partnership there have still been the senior partners who - in one way or another - have called the tune. Today, it would appear, even that is on the way out. An era has passed, but the contours of the new are still faint and indistinct. Even those who have ears to hear and eyes to see do not know what we ought to do next. In the western church this uncertainty manifests itself in a serious crisis of identity, and in western missionary circles in what Max Warren - a fortnight before his death-referred to as a "terrible failure of nerve about the missionary enterprise."

Apocalyptic situation: The optimism - indeed euphoria - of the 1950s has gone beyond recall. The horizon has darkened progressively throughout the world in the past decade. The world has shrunk to a global village faced with a total system of death, in which twelve million refugees - one third of them in Africa, most of whom are women and children - live in the shadow of death, in which seventeen million children die of starvation each year (a figure which may reach thirty-five million a year by the end of the decade), in which racism and brutal repression-from the left and from the right-appear to be endemic, in which militarism is on the increase and more than half a million pounds are spent *each minute* on military budgets. The situation is truly apocalyptic and utterly terrifying.

What are we to do in the face of all this? The choices before us are essentially the same as Jesus faced.

The Choices: (1) We can, first be overcome by despair and despondency: There is nothing we can do, we might say, to change the course of history. So let us, like the Essenes of old, retreat into the desert, there to sit and wait for God to destroy the world and our enemies. "Survival preparation" is the name of the new game in some circles, particularly in North America. Mission becomes, at best, a holding operation; at worst, we begin to dismantle and retrench. New initiatives, from whichever quarter, are nipped in the bud.

(2) We can alternatively, like the Pharisees, advocate a purely religious ministry. We then concentrate on evangelism alone, steer clear of politics, and teach our converts to do the same. Our missionary enterprise may then become a very impressive edifice which appears to notch up many successes. Yet this may be achieved at a terrible price.

T.K. Thomas of India cries bitterly, "We have freedom in many Asian countries to preach the gospel, to speak in tongues, to conduct healing ministries...as long as the gospel does not disturb, the tongues do not make sense, the healing does not extend to the diseases of the body politic!"

(3) A third option follows the path of the Zealots of old. We react in political indignation, believing that we can divert the course of history. In the name of God we might put paid to unjust politics, exploitation and poverty. Our missionary involvement then consists of lending support to groups who are bent on overthrowing the status quo, by violent means if need be, in the vain hope of ushering in Utopia.

(4) Fourthly, we may, like the Sadducees and the Herodians, feather our own nests in the name of religion. Mission work, where it still takes place, is then essentially understood as a currency with which to buy favour for the west among the nations of the third world. The purpose of religion - in this case the Christian faith - is, after all, to solve our problems, be they psychological or marital, personal or global. Religion is supposed to satisfy us, not upset us; to lull us, not transform us. So we embody the image of a Jesus who has more in common "with the Chamber of Commerce and the entertainment world than with a simple cave in ancient Bethlehem or a rugged cross on a barren hill.

These are the "human" options before us. Jesus also faced them. He chose none of them. As a matter of fact, when the crisis broke, representatives from three of these parties forgot for a moment their differences and joined forces to get rid of Jesus. They instinctively sensed that he was a greater threat to each of them than they could possibly have been to each other.

The only group that was not involved were the Essenes, not because they approved of Jesus, but simply because they had, by then, already withdrawn into the desert. They would in any case not have soiled their hands by attacking Jesus; God himself would deal in his own way with this upstart from Galilee.

Jesus' Option: It was this man from Galilee who, on the slopes of a Galilean mountain, indicated the only option really open to the church, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them to observe justice-love." This was commanded to a ragged and rather bewildered group of simple men, of whom Matthew noted (v.17), "When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." The Greek can also bear the meaning that *all*, not just some, had doubted. The very one who worshipped him would then be the same ones who doubted (see also Matt. 14:31,33). It is, moreover, never reported that their doubt was removed. The Great Commission is not addressed only to those who have overcome their doubt, to heroes of the faith. It is no disgrace to experience crises in our faith, even in our missionary involvement. The word for "crisis" in Japanese characters consists of the combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity." Mission never takes place in self-confidence but in the knowledge of our own weakness, where danger and opportunity meet. Like the disciples in Galilee, like Matthew's community in Syria today's missionaries stand in the dialectical tension between worship and doubt, between faith and fear.

They know, by faith, that all authority has already been given to Jesus, all authority, that is, in heaven *and on earth*. They therefore confidently pray the Lord's Prayer, "Your will be done, *on earth* as it is in heaven" (Matt.6:10). Moreover they have the assurance of Christ's abiding presence, for these are the words with which Matthew concludes his gospel, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (28:20). As Matthew writes these final words - "I am with you always" - he reaches back to the very beginning of his gospel, to the story of the birth of Jesus, where he reminded his readers of the prophet's words, "The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he shall be called Immanuel, which means 'God is with us' " (1:23). Here, at the end of the gospel, he is truly and permanently declared Immanuel. This, then, is the more-than-cosmic framework in which the Great Commission is placed-then as now: it is embraced by Jesus' universal authority. ("heaven and earth"), and by his permanent presence ("always, to the very end of the age").

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THE WORD REMAINS: A LIFE OF OSCAR ROMERO. JAMES R. BROCKMAN

(New York: Orbis Books, 1983.

Paperback, \$ 12.95).

James Brockman's book traces the development of Romero's thought during his last tumultuous years. It also sheds light on the struggle for liberation in Salvador. The dilemma facing those responsible for decision making in the Church of Salvador was reduced more and more often to a stark simplicity: "Whose side are you on?" Brockman shows how Archbishop Romero chose to defend kingdom values and in doing so worked painfully towards making moral choices which inevitably led to his death in a monstrously repressive society. This is the most complete and authoritative biography of Archbishop Romero yet published.

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L'ÉGLISE DE CUBA, AUJOURD'HUI

(This is a message of hope from the Church in Cuba where stars continue to shine in a dark night. There is a saying there that whenever there is a difficult and thankless work to be done look for a pure Communist or a real Christian to do it. The faith is certainly not dead and there are many signs of new life in the Church. "I have seen the Church reborn" writes a young man. The constancy of the grandmothers who nourished the faith of the people in the difficult days immediately after the revolution is bearing fruit.)

"LE BON DIEU ÉTAIT FATIGUÉ DE NOUS"

Quelques années après le triomphe de la Révolution de Fidel Castro à Cuba (1959), au moment où l'Eglise était ébranlée par les secousses violentes de cette révolution,

Jo Fouchaud préparait l'arrivée d'une équipe (Fils de la Charité) dans l'île. Il aimait plus tard à répéter cette confiance du vieil évêque espagnol de Santiago de Cuba, Mgr Pérez Serantez: "Le Bon Dieu était fatigué de nous, nous croyions plus à nos institutions qu'à Jésus-Christ."

Peu de temps après l'arrivée de la première équipe dans l'île (1968), le nouvel archevêque de Santiago, le Père Meurice, au cours d'une réunion de prêtres, méditait avec nous la visite de Dieu à Abraham et Sara (Gen. 18, 10). Dieu visite deux vieillards à qui il promet une postérité: Dieu promet à Sara, stérile, un fils, et elle d'en rire: "Ce n'est plus possible, c'est bien fini pour moi, il n'y a plus d'espoir." Il y a quinze ans, notre Eglise était seule, vieille et stérile. La pratique des chrétiens, catholiques et protestants, fondait comme neige au soleil, beaucoup avaient pris le chemin de l'exil. De neuf cents prêtres avant la Révolution, il n'en restait que deux cents, dont beaucoup d'étrangers âgés: de deux mille qu'elles étaient, il ne restait que deux cents religieuses. Les organisations d'Eglise avaient disparu, les pratiquants étaient âgés. Beaucoup songeaient encore à quitter leur pays. Au total une Eglise vieille, pauvre, recroquevillée sur elle-même, nostalgique. Et notre évêque d'ajouter: "La promesse de Dieu à Abraham est toujours vraie et aussi sûre pour nous que pour Sara, car rien n'est impossible à Dieu."

DES ÉTOILES ERILLENENT DANS LA NUIT

Nous avons appris à avancer dans la nuit, comme une Eglise enfouie dans le silence, mais qui recueillait dans la foi et la prière ce qu'elle vivait. Dans cette nuit, quinze ans après, quelle bonne nouvelle nous

a annoncée Jésus-Christ? Quelles surprises Dieu nous a-t-il faites? Quelles merveilles avons-nous découvertes?

La foi des personnes âgées. D'abord la fidélité rayonnante et contagieuse de nos grand-mères. C'étaient elles qui pratiquaient, elles qui souffraient plus que d'autres dans leurs coeurs les divisions politiques de leurs enfants et de leurs petits-enfants, l'incroyance des uns et la foi chancelante des autres; elles cherchaient à les comprendre tous, elles priaient et elles tenaient bon. Elles qui là où il n'y avait plus de prêtres ouvraient les chapelles, sonnaient les cloches, récitaient le rosaire, entouraient les malades, accompagnaient les familles des défunts. Des gens pouvaient rire d'elles, elles croyaient que Dieu dit vrai et tient ses promesses.

Des vocations sacerdotales et religieuses. Ajoutons que de 1970 à 1980, en dix ans, cent jeunes ont été ordonnés prêtres pour une communauté catholique d'à peu près cent mille pratiquants. Cent jeunes Cubains qui souvent, à 25-30 ans, ont abandonné un métier ou l'Université pour s'embaucher dans une entreprise en faillite, pour s'embarquer dans un bateau qui prenait l'eau de toutes parts. Comment expliquer cela? Plus tard, le même élan a saisi les jeunes filles qui sont entrées aussi nombreuses dans les congrégations religieuses. Ainsi se rassemblent autour de nos sept évêques, ces prêtres, ces religieuses, ces jeunes, tous Cubains. Il s'agit d'un véritable renouveau de l'Eglise.

Un défi relevé. Autre surprise: d'où vient ce dicton qui commence à s'entendre dans l'île, lorsqu'un travail difficile, une tâche ingrate demande de nombreux sacrifices, des responsabilités, le sens de l'effort? Pourquoi dit-on: "Trouve un communiste pur ou cherche un vrai chrétien?" Pourquoi ce dicton? Parce que pendant plus de dix ans, une poignée de laïcs, jeunes et adultes, a marché dans, la nuit; parce que bâtisseurs de leur pays dans la Révolution - ce qui était au début mal vu dans l'Eglise - mais en même temps fidèles coûte que coûte à leur Eglise, ils n'étaient pas acceptés par la Révolution qui n'avait pas confiance en eux: c'étaient des chrétiens.

Cette poignée de laïcs qui a marché sur la corde raide pendant des années, aidée par quelques prêtres, quelques religieuses, comprise par ses évêques et soutenue par leur confiance, a ouvert un chemin nouveau dans l'Eglise. Grâce aussi à l'évolution positive des rapports entre l'Eglise et l'Etat, les catholiques de Cuba, pour la plupart, savent que leur sort est lié au sort de leur pays, qu'ils doivent vivre, travailler et témoigner là où Dieu les a semés. Peu à peu les chrétiens sont en train de regagner le droit de cité dans leur pays.

La sève chrétienne toujours perceptible. Pendant des années, nombreux sont ceux qui ont déclaré, pour s'en réjouir ou le déplorer, que Cuba est devenu une terre sans Dieu. Actuellement, au bout de vingt ans, tout le monde est obligé de reconnaître que le peuple cubain reste religieux, même s'il ne va pas à l'église. Cette reli-

giosité populaire des gens simples que nous, gens d'Eglise et chrétiens instruits, avons trop souvent méprisée comme une forme de superstition, a été aussi un chemin d'évangélisation et de rencontre de Jésus-Christ. Lorsque, dans une société où officiellement, il n'y a plus aucune manifestation religieuse, où le calendrier est entièrement civil, des personnes glissent dans la conversation, volontairement: "Oui, nous ferons cela, si Dieu le veut: nous ferons cela quand Dieu voudra: Dieu d'abord: grâce à Dieu et à la Vierge. Dieu met à l'épreuve mais n'écrase jamais: la foi c'est ce qu'il y a de plus grand pour moi dans la vie." Ce sont plus que des formules de routine, c'est une expression de foi certaine. De même, la plupart des gens de ce pays, au-delà de toute idéologie, vivent l'accueil quotidien aux autres, à la famille au sens le plus large, aux amis, aux étrangers. Lorsqu'un peuple partage sans compter le peu qu'il a avec ses voisins, avec ses amis, lorsqu'il pense que le respect de l'autre est un droit sacré, qu'il est très grave d'offenser le prochain, ce peuple n'est-il pas proche de l'esprit de l'Evangile? Est-ce vraiment une terre sans Dieu, n'est-ce pas plutôt une terre sainte?

Témoins de l'espérance. A pâques, l'année dernière, après avoir assisté au baptême de jeunes gens de 15 à 20 ans, après avoir vu l'accueil de la communauté de Manzanillo à ces nouveaux baptisés, un jeune ingénieur écrivait à ses amis: "J'ai vu renaître l'Eglise." Je crois qu'il disait vrai. Au cours des dernières années, le baptême de jeunes de 15 à 25 ans est devenu assez courant. Même si très peu d'enfants fréquentent le catéchisme à cause des difficultés qu'ils rencontrent, les groupes de jeunes chrétiens sont mieux formés, mieux organisés, plus dynamiques aujourd'hui qu'il y a dix ans.

L'an dernier, pour la première fois en vingt ans, nous avons pu faire une rencontre nationale de jeunes chrétiens autour du thème: "Nous vivons et annonçons Jésus-Christ aujourd'hui". Ces jeunes chrétiens sont tous passés par les écoles de l'Etat ou les fréquentent encore et sont marqués par la doctrine marxiste. Tous vivent dans les cadres de la nouvelle société et participent dans la Révolution, mais ils ont été frappés par des jeunes témoins de Jésus-Christ, attirés par des communautés où l'on respire la joie, la liberté, la charité, et ils ont envie de connaître ce Jésus-Christ et de vivre dans cette Eglise. Ces jeunes rencontrent les anciens à l'intérieur des communautés et voient en eux des témoins de la foi. Et les anciens de les écouter comme des témoins de l'espérance. Dieu n'est pas le Dieu des morts, il est le Dieu des vivants.

Nous Avons Evinçé La Peur: Un touriste superficiel, un sociologue un peu pressé pourront passer à Cuba et dire avec raison: "Ici l'Eglise n'a pas de problème, la Constitution garantit la liberté de culte, mais elle est sans importance, sans influence, elle n'a pas d'avenir." Humainement parlant, c'est vrai. Petite est l'Eglise et grandes sont les difficultés. Mais, pour un chrétien de la communauté cubaine, pour notre équilibre Fils de la Charité qui vivons avec ce peuple comme curé

de campagne ou de paroisse citadine, comme prêtre ouvrier, comme aumônier ou encore comme animateur de jeunes, cette nuit est parsemée d'étoiles. Comme la nuit d'Abraham, après la visite de Dieu. Le choc de la Révolution, qui a terriblement marqué l'Eglise, une fois assimilé dans la foi et la prière, a été un chemin de conversion et d'espérance.

Avant tout, nous avons évincé la peur: peur d'avancer, peur des situations difficiles, peur des contraintes. Nous avons compris que Dieu nous aime, en dépit de la pauvreté de notre Eglise. Il compte sur nous, malgré tout, pour réaliser de grandes choses. Cette Eglise est devenue une Eglise confiante, une Eglise priante, une Eglise missionnaire. Au milieu du peuple, en Eglise, nous aussi avons appris à être chrétiens dans la Révolution. Comme dans beaucoup d'autres pays - un homme sur trois dans le monde vit en régime communiste - nous apprenons patiemment à vivre et à dire Jésus-Christ dans ces nouvelles sociétés. Ensemble nous cherchons à répondre à quelques questions fondamentales au coeur de notre espérance:

- Comment être solidaires de la Révolution, collaborateurs actifs du développement de notre pays tout en sachant interpeller la marche de la Révolution au nom de l'Evangile?
- Comment vivre la fraternité vraie, sachant trouver dans l'Esprit de réconciliation de Jésus la lumière et la force de construire la fraternité universelle?
- Comment faire naître ensemble l'homme nouveau cubain sachant que l'homme est totalement nouveau le jour où il connaît le Dieu de Jésus-Christ et aime comme lui?

Voilà ce que cherche à vivre, après quinze ans, l'équipe Fils de la Charité à Cuba.

Ref: Chantiers des Fils de la Charité, No. 54.

- fin -

"WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU DOING THERE"
AN ATTEMPT AT MISSION IN THE 'INNER-CITY'

(A Dublin des étudiants en théologie qui se preparent pour la mission vivent dans une paroisse ou habitent les plus marginalisés de la ville. Ils s'efforcent de partager leurs conditions de vie. Cette expérience provoque bien des questions. "Qu'est-ce que vous faites là-bas?" on leur demande souvent. Et on laisse supposer que la vie d'étudiant doit nécessairement être artificielle. Voici un extrait de leur réponse à cette question. N.D.L.R.)

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Sean McDermott St., is only a stone's throw from O'Connell Street. It is in the heart of 'C' district of the Garda Siochana where 1/6th of all crime committed in the Irish Republic last year was reported. Unemployment, bad housing, overcrowding, illiteracy and low self-esteem are the norm. They are some of the ingredients which contribute to that grim statistic.

Sometimes people ask, "What exactly are you doing down there?" And sometimes we ask ourselves.

We don't see the mechanics of what we're actually doing as important. Managing a youth employment project: developing a community craft centre: helping to staff an old folks day-care centre: running a youth centre: a folk group: preparing a meal: studying or whatever. They are just the media of being with a small group of like-minded Spiritans and with the wider community of the Parish in a very meaningful way. The important thing is not the medium but the people. The medium should serve as a means of communicating concern, love, respect and freedom. If we were to regard the medium as being priority we would be often frustrated and disappointed to see it being sometimes destroyed, pillaged and set afire by the very people for whom it is intended.

The project began to take shape in the spring of 1978. A small group of theology students were considering the feasibility of living in an inner-city working-class area and invited me to join them. At our first meeting we shared scripture, prayer, and sought guidance. We were of one mind and heart as to what we wanted to try to be and do, even though we had not a clear formulation of what it was at that time.

We wanted to live a radical christian life in a poor working-class area. To make a meaningful genuine contact with our neighbours. To relate to them as friends and neighbours and not from a professional point of view as cases to be worked on. To know the young people in

the area so that they would be at ease visiting us in our home, having a meal with us, singing with us, working with us and some of them praying with us. We wanted to share the risks, hazards and insecurity of living in such an area: the petty annoyance and frustrations. And somehow we would hope to be a sign of concern, love and hope to those around us - pointing to another way, yet respecting their freedom to follow or not to follow. Each of us in his own way would make his particular contribution depending on his particular charism.

Living in an area such as this, one cannot help being very much aware of the reality of evil. There is an element of it in all aspects of life: personal, social and institutional. It's subtle and elusive: it is rarely recognised though its effects are all around us. In another situation its mechanics and manifestations might be termed respectable. In our situation it is often crude, blatant, violent, powerful and dominating. You cannot fail to be aware of it: to feel its influence. It is no respecter of persons. It feeds on itself and if left unchallenged, it knows no limits. You don't have to seek evil out in order to confront it. If you try to live as a christian you set yourself on a collision course and sooner or later you will inevitably confront it. Just by "being" you are a walking contradiction. You will be hurt - often in spirit and maybe sometimes in body, hurt by institutions, by groups, by individuals and sometimes by friends. It has all happened before: it all happened to Christ, and it will all happen again wherever people seriously try to live the Gospel.

At times the sense of apathy, hopelessness and despair is contagious and almost overpowering. And then out of the deep gloom a ray of sunshine pierces through: from the barren, harsh desert a solitary flower appears. It may be sometimes in the smile of a child, the shine in his or her eyes as you are recognised and called by name. Or in the casual remark of a teenager which says, "I know you care." The history of his or her short life to date has been one continuous road of insecurity, violence, crime and exploitation. Bewildering, puzzling experiences with police, probation officers, social workers, courts and institutions. Now at seventeen unable to read and in many other ways inadequate, he faces a hostile world. It has occurred to him not to face it: just take an over-dose and opt out. You learn to listen sensitively, to pick up signals in casual remarks and gestures: also to transmit signals of concern, respect and love, without being patronising, sanctimonious or sentimental. You try to create an environment in which you help people to help themselves. To care, trust, respect and love them so that they may begin to care, trust, respect and love themselves.

It's important to live life in perspective. You can't help being aware of all around you that is not right. with institutions, groups and individuals. It would be foolish and naive to take it all on, to think you can change it. Sometimes people don't believe things can be different. Sometimes they don't want things to be different - yet. To live in a situation such as this you have to be patient and tolerant

accepting the situation as it is, yet working all the time to change it. Observing and listening all the time. Speaking out, sometimes with words and at all times by the way you live, by the value you set on people and things. Challenging institutions, groups, individuals, without condemning them. Endeavouring all the time to be sacrament of Christ's teaching presence, healing presence, loving presence, here and now in this situation in this community.

Endeavouring to keep alive in oneself the flame of Faith and Hope and Love; not to become angry, or frustrated or disillusioned even though you may at times have cause; this is what's asked. Last Tuesday as I listened to the morning news I heard that a boy I worked with was charged with attempted murder in the course of an armed robbery. You hear the news differently when you knew the boy as a confused youth of fifteen at the crossroads of life, liable to go in any direction. He spent his 16th birthday in jail. He was a father at 17. He was released from jail a month ago, and now at 18 he's charged with attempted murder. What future has he got. I believe his situation should not be so, I believe his situation need not have been so.

Our experience here has not been one-way traffic. We have received more than we have given. We feel we have been accepted and trusted by the local community and we regard that as a compliment and an honour. I think all of us have been enriched and encouraged by our experience in our immediate community.

Now after nearly three years, we are of the opinion that this has been the work of God. This opinion is strengthened by the good fruit it bore to those immediately concerned and the wider community, by the sense of peace, harmony and good will it has created.

So we have shared with you some of our experiences, our hopes and our dreams. We are aware we have not grasped them fully and we're still working on them even though it takes a lifetime. We tenaciously hold on to them despite the temptation at times to be cynical and despairing- and they sustain us on the way.

Ref: FORUM- Spiritan Newsletter No.46.

- end -

BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AFRICAN STYLE
A NON RESIDENTIAL SUMMER SCHOOL

JULY 9 - JULY 20, 1984

(MONDAY TO FRIDAY)

at

White Fathers, Cypress Grove Road,
Templeogue, Dublin 6, IRELAND.

Basic Christian Communities have their origin in South America and in recent years they have been introduced into Africa, but in a new and African style. BCC have, in the last decade or so, been proposed as a major pastoral priority in many parts of Africa; e.g. The AMECEA bishops of East Africa.

This short course given by experts in this field is aimed at helping missionaries on holidays from Africa and those who intend to go there in the near future to reflect on the many different aspects of BCC, so as to be in a position to understand it, and where possible to implement it.

The topics covered will include:

1. The present situation with regard to BCC; successes and failures; the future of BCC; a case study: the diocese of Lilongwe (Malawi)
2. Rural and urban forms of BCC.
3. the Ecclesiology behind BCC.
4. the Difference between BCC and the more traditional "outstation" model of the parish.
5. The role of lay leaders and of the missionaries in a BCC pastoral project.

RESOURCE PERSONS:

Bishop P. Kalilombe W.F. from Malawi. As bishop of Lilongwe strove to make his diocese into a mature local church and as a consequence created a pastoral project basing the Church on small christian communities rather than on big structures. Now having finished his doctorate in USA he is lecturing in "third world theologies" at Selly Oak College. (U.K.)

A. Shorter, W.F. presently based in Nairobi. He has lectured and written extensively on African cultures and religions and on the theology of Mission.

FEE: Ir£100 which includes a non refundable deposit of Ir£10 to be paid before 31st May 1984.

Note: Because of limited facilities the number of participants will not exceed 25. Priority will be given to those with African experience.

 JEEVAN DHARA - LIVING STREAMS

 SUMMER - 1984

- A SUMMER SPACE**
- for silence and Simplicity of living
 - for Sadhana and Spiritual Guidance
 - a meeting place for the Spiritual Traditions of East and West
- FOR THOSE WHO**
- want to learn about Eastern Spirituality or Meditation
 - have already had contact with Eastern Spiritual practice either in Asia or Europe and who want an atmosphere conducive to Sadhana
 - want the opportunity to make a Retreat with some personal guidance
 - want time and space to be silent, to pray, to reflect alone or with others
- THE DAILY PROGRAMME**
- practical sessions based on Ashtanga Yoga-Meditation
 - input - a talk on some aspect of Eastern Spirituality
 - Satsanga - a time for sharing and questions
 - Eucharistic celebration
- the orientation is Christian
 - the life-style simple
 - the cost as minimal as possible
 - input in English and French (German and Spanish according to availability of speaker).
 - participants may stay for a week, 10 days, varying lengths of time according to the needs and availability of accomodation.

ISHPRIYA will be at "SOPHIENHOF": Gut Hausern 1 D - 8062
 Markt Indersdorf : W. Germany
 (40 kms from Munich) Tel.(08139) 926
 from AUGUST 15 - SEPTEMBER 8

If you are interested in participating in this experience

Apply to: "Jeevan Dhara", 50, Santos Rd., West Hill, London SW18 1NS, England.

Stating: Name and Address.

Dates you wish to come. (Alternative dates would be appreciated)
 Language preference - i.e. French or English.

Enclosing: A deposit of D.M. 54 (Cheques, Bank drafts etc. should be made payable to: "SOPHIENHOF")

Cost: Will be D.M. 26 per day.

NB: Accomodation is very limited and applications should be made as soon as possible.

Note: ISHPRIYA was one of the Resource Persons at the SEDOS Seminar on Dialogue, March 1983.)

WHAT HAPPENS TO DIALOGUE - IN DIALOGUE
A CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP: JUNE 22-JULY 6, 1984

IN COMMON with many other places in Britain, the composition of the population of Birmingham has greatly altered during the last 10 years. Many different nationalities are now represented among the citizens of Birmingham.

An important factor of these different nationalities is their characteristic religious belief and practice, because it introduces new dimensions into the social and religious differences which already existed among the population of Birmingham.

There is a need to examine what effect these new dimensions are having or could have on what happens in the Birmingham area. One effect is that it is compelling inhabitants to re-assess the way they relate to people originating from other countries and backgrounds.

Recognizing that the situation is a dynamic one in which all religions are involved, and based on the actual experience of individuals and groups during the multi-faith research project, Birmingham 1978-1981; The conference/workshop will attempt to provide:

1. A SPACE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS AND CULTURES TO WORK AT UNDERSTANDING WHAT THEY STAND FOR IN RELATION TO WHAT THEY SHARE TOGETHER.
2. A METHODOLOGY WHICH CAN ENABLE CONSTRUCTIVE INTERACTION TO OCCUR, i.e. AN INTERACTION MINIMIZING PREJUDICE, SUSPICION OR APATHY.
3. A METHODOLOGY BASED ON FAITH, SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND LEARNING, WITH RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF DIFFERING BELIEFS AND VALUES.

Full residential cost is £250 for two weeks; non-residential cost is £140 for two weeks.

The 1984 Conference/Workshop Programme will include:

MEDITATIONS; LECTURES; SEMINARS; GROUP WORK;
 A DAILY THEOLOGICAL FORUM; A DAILY ART FORM PRESENTATION;
 A DAILY EVENING MULTI-FAITH PANEL;
 OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET MEMBERS OF VARIOUS RELIGIONS;
 A SHARING OF FESTIVALS;
 VISITS TO CHURCHES, SYNAGOGUES, TEMPLES, MOSQUES AND CENTRES.

Applications to: Dr. Mary Hall, Executive Director.
 Birmingham Multi-Faith Resource Unit,
 1, College Walk, Selly Oak,
 Birmingham, B29 6LE ENGLAND.

RESOURCE PERSONS INCLUDE:

Swami Nirliptananda, Director, London Sevashram Sangha; Rabbi Norman Solomon, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham; Professor John Hick, Claremont Graduate School, California, USA; Heidi Singh Inter Religious Council of Southern California, and National Conference of Christians & Jews, USA; P.S.Dosangh, Joseph Chamberlain School, Birmingham; Dr. Gopal Singh Puri, Fellow, Royal Academy of Arts & Science, Liverpool; Professor Donald Nicoll, Rector, Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies, Jerusalem, Israel.