

News

Chad Up Date: Sister Giuseppina Tresoldi of the Comboni Sisters and a member of the Executive Committee of SEDOS returned from an extended visit to Chad in May 1984. She shared her assessment of the situation there with a group of SEDOS members at an informal meeting in the Secretariate on June, 14. The military presence impinges less on the lives of the people than three years ago when she was last there. The economic situation has worsened.

The work of mission faces less difficulty and there are many new members of the Church who profess their faith with a spirit of joy and fervour. Spontaneous groups of Christians arise, specially among women, who feel the urge to be themselves messengers of the Good News to people in remote villages. Bishops urgently ask for missionary personnel as the local clergy are few but the harvest is great. The Bishops of the dioceses of SARH and MOUNDOU specially, ask for help in order to meet their urgent needs particularly in the preparation of local personnel.

Society of African Missions: Members of the Society meeting at their Generalate in Rome last month visited SEDOS Secretariate. Two groups, one English speaking, the other French speaking, came on different afternoons to see the work of the Secretariate and to visit the Documentation Centre. We, in the Secretariate, appreciated their interest and extend a similar 'benvenuto' to other groups who may be meeting in Rome.

Sacred Heart Sisters: Sr. Christina Middelhoff of the Sisters of Our Lady of Africa and a member of the Executive Council of SEDOS gave a talk on the work of SEDOS to a French speaking group of Sacred Heart Sisters at their invitation when they were in Rome for a renewal meeting last May.

Claretians' Mission Meeting: About thirty members of the Claretians (CMF) from various missions will come together during September at their Generalate in Rome as part of the process of preparation for their forthcoming General Chapter in 1985. SEDOS has helped in the preparation of the meeting which hopes to underline the mission dimension of the Claretians at their Chapter.

General Chapters: *Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSPS)* are at present holding their General Chapter in Rome. *Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDN)* have just begun their General Chapter at Namur in Belgium. Both Congregations will be discussing their new Constitutions and electing General Superiors. *Medical Mission Sisters (SCMM)* have chosen as the theme for their 1985 General Chapter "Mission, its implications and its costs".

SEDOS Secretariate will close on Friday, July 27 and will re-open on Monday, September 3, 1984. The next issue of the Bulletin will be on September 15, 1984.

A NEW ERA OF EVANGELIZATION

(NATIONAL SEMINAR, IBADAN, 1-3 May, 1984)

James Chukwuma Okoye, CSSp.

(In questa prima parte del suo discorso al Seminario Nazionale ad Ibadan Padre Okoye inizia con un'analisi di alcune delle difficoltà incontrate nel processo di evangelizzazione oggi in Nigeria e con un'analisi delle frequenti dichiarazioni di Papa Giovanni Paolo II sulla evangelizzazione durante la sua visita in quel paese.)

1. The task: In anticipation of his pastoral visit to Nigeria, Pope John Paul II expressed the hope that it would initiate 'a new era of evangelization' (1). It will be a fresh impulse to transform individuals and society. And since 'the path of culture is the path of man' (2) the new era will see an effective evangelization of culture such that each person in Nigeria will hear again the marvelous deeds of God in his own language (cf Acts 2:11) and from within his own culture.

The speeches of the Pope form an inclusion. Arriving in Lagos he spoke about how foreign missionaries sowed the faith here (3). To the assembled bishops of the country later in Lagos, he charged that the gospel must now become at home (4) among the cultures of Nigeria - 'inculturation of the Gospel into the lives of your people'. The new era is one of 'effective encounter between the Gospel and culture' (To Bishops, 3).

2. Intimations: I give three intimations of the task ahead.

(a) Osu. In a certain town a good Catholic died. He was an Osu. The Christians refused to bury him. A certain priest (5) heard this. He brought a dance to the funeral. In front of all he embraced and ate from every member of the family. He followed his evangelizing action with a rousing proclamation.

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1. A wish voiced by Paul VI for the whole church while closing the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (26 October, 1974) and expressed again in his Evangelii Nuntiandi, 2.
 2. Lagos, To Bishops, 3.
 3. Lagos, Mass, 3.
 4. 'Right now you have many initiatives under way to make the Church more and more at home in your culture' (Enugu, To Priests and Seminarians, 2)
 5. Msgr. Maduka, one of those who aided this paper through discussion.

(b) It is not the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20)

In another town, christians were so at enmity that they neither met nor ate together, nor attended each other's funerals and marriages. They neither bought from, nor sold to, each other. However, each went to confession, and each received communion. They thus ate together the Lord's supper. They knew it was an abomination for them to eat kola together.

(c) Naming ceremony

Love for the child is part of our culture (6). The naming ceremony gathers together kith and kin, a cultural group. The child is acknowledged and received into the kinship with thanksgivings to God. Our baptism ceremony at the moment does not generate anything like the emotions of the naming ceremony (7). Besides, we lose a privileged moment for evangelizing.

The first example shows that the Gospel has yet to reach the core of our beings. For example, how many here will allow a relative to marry an Osu? The second portrays a serious misunderstanding of the eucharist, and of the church as People of God and Body of Christ. Inattention to cultural facts has trivialized and profaned the eucharist, and given a wrong view of the church. It is just like pontifical concelebrated masses with daggers drawn that go on in some presbyteriums. The third example portrays the dichotomy that is so much part of christian life in Nigeria.

Certain cultural needs find satisfaction in the church. For others, people go elsewhere. Yet, it is for the Church to 'foster and take to herself, insofar as they are good, the ability, resources and customs of each people' (LG, 13).

3. The Process of Evangelization: The Pope used 12 verbs to describe evangelization. The Christ - focus of evangelization is immediately clear (8). What evangelization brings is supremely Christ, then the Gospel/Good News, the Reign of God/Christ, faith operative in love, salvation. All are aspects of the same reality.

proclaim - Christ, Jesus Christ in your midst.
- that Jesus is Lord. (2 Cor 4:5) (Lagos, Mass,8)

6. Onitsha, Mass,3.

7. The National Conference of Major Superiors suggested last year that baptism within the naming ceremony should be considered. The possibility of integrating native marriage with church marriage must be looked into. For one thing this will cut down the forbidding expenditures in addition to affording a cultural opportunity for evangelizing.

8. To evangelize is first of all to bear witness, in a simple and direct way, to God revealed by Jesus Christ (Ev. Nunt,26).

- the Gospel to every creature (cf Mk. 16:16)
 - the Gospel of salvation (Enugu, Priests, 1)
 - that the Kingdom of God is near.
- announce - Christ
- bring - Christ = function of church (Lagos, Bishops,3)
- Good news of Salvation
 - the light of the Gospel and the power of the Word.
- promote - the Kingdom of God
- the Gospel
- preach - Christ
- the Gospel
- spread - the Faith
- the Kingdom of God
 - the Gospel
- advance - Christ's Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace (Onitsha, Youth,7)
- share - Christ with others
- our Faith with others
- live - the Gospel ever more deeply (Bishops,3)
- bear witness to - Christ
- extend - his Salvation
- communicate - Christ (9)
- Christ to others
 - Gospel by word and action (Bishops,3)

To summarize, the Pope's key phrase for evangelizing is 'to communicate Christ'. He told the bishops:

"we are sent to announce Christ, to proclaim Christ, to communicate Christ and his Gospel to the world".
(Bishops,3)

Christ is seen in his Gospel. This Gospel began when he demanded transformation and renewal of men because God's Reign was near. (cf Mk.1:15). He spent himself in bringing all under that Reign. He lived the very life of God's Reign. He summarized this in a series of 'Blessedness Pronouncements' in Mt 5: 1-12. He held these up to society as the answer to man's quest for happiness and peace. The Reign of God is man's happiness. Christ lost his life in this service, but God raised him up and gave him Lordship over all, that he may give real life to all (cf Jn 15:2) who come to God through him. That men may have life and have it more abundantly (Jn.10:10), he sent the apostles to lead men away from worthless things (Acts14:15) to the living God, and thus to restore fully the universe (Acts 3:21).

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9. 'The aim of all these activities (of the church) is to evangelize, to communicate Christ'. (Enugu, Priests,5).

This is man's ultimate salvation, the realization of the shalom (peace) that we continue to wish one another. It is a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17) which becomes possible when the Gospel has permeated into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transformed humanity from within and made it new (Ev.Nunt., 18).

In evangelization, therefore, the destiny and well-being of humanity is at stake. Humanity cannot achieve its goal until the Gospel has upset and converted mankind's criteria of judgement, sources of inspiration and models of life which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation (cf. Ev.Nunt.,19). That is why, overwhelmed by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14), Paul Cried, 'Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel' (1 Cor. 9:16).

The model of evangelization is the eucharist: 'In the eucharist ... the Gospel is fully proclaimed' (Bishops,3). 'Indeed, your evangelizing zeal comes above all from the Eucharist' (Kaduna, Catechists,4). The Eucharist, like the Gospel, portrays the primacy of God's love and appeal, and his invasion of our realm. It is a model descending from above to enfold man, his life and activity, and assimilate him to the pattern. God bends down to take us up in the fruit of our hands. Our stretching upwards and yearnings find their target. When we are taken up, we are transformed. We become, individually and as God's People, sons in the Son. The goal of evangelization is, therefore, to bring society and culture to become a real eucharist - 'transformation of the world - to permeate all creation with the spirit of Christ' (Kaduna, Catechists,9).

4. Polarities in Evangelization: To avoid confusion, it is necessary to dwell a little more on the term evangelization. In AG,6 it is used to contrast with the rooting of the Church. It corresponds to what is later in the same paragraph called the first stage, that of planting or sowing the faith. This is the stage of missionary activity. As the faith grows, missionary activity (among pagans) gives way to pastoral activity among the faithful.

In Evangelii Nuntiandi the word evangelization is used all inclusively for both the missionary and the pastoral stages of the Church. This is because whereas the perspective of Ad Gentes is stage-by-stage, that of Ev. Nunt. is as a process. In the latter, therefore, the whole of the church's activity and being is called evangelization, comprising of elements which are complementary and mutually enriching (Ev.Nunt. 24), The insistence on complementarity was necessary because in the period between 1965 and 1975 polarities were beginning to appear in the discussion of evangelization.

- word-centred proclamation. The street preachers who belong to no church, and want none; only the Word shall make you free. They claim to love Christ but without the Church (cf. Ev.Nunt.,16).
- sacramentalizing. The emphasis may be placed on baptisms and masses without adequate attention to real personal and social conversion.

- dialogue. In the East especially, some were advocating mere christian presence and witness of life with no attempts at conversions. They hope that christianity could in this way be a correcting influence on the great world religions. (10).
- ecclesial. Numerical and territorial expansion of the church through conversion and baptism. (11).
- development-social gospel. Schools, hospitals, agriculture, social welfare.
- liberation - political gospel. (12).
- directed only to sociological groupings.
Do not try to evangelize everyone or even the majority
(V. Donovan, Christianity Rediscovered, 38) (13).

5. Moments (Stages) of evangelization

The stage of the work is not the same all over the country. It varies even within parts of one diocese. The church cannot always and instantly bring all the means of salvation into action (AG 16) Circumstances of the peoples may demand different emphases or different approaches.

Until recently the perfect rooting of the Church used to be seen in a native clergy and hierarchy. It is now being realized that this is not necessarily so. Not only may 'native' clergy and hierarchy sometimes require aculturation (because of the nature of their studies and formation), but clergy and hierarchy quite simply do not make the church. Since the church exists for God's Kingdom, she can be considered rooted only when she has become an effective influence on society and culture, or at least when she has the internal resources for this.

(End of Part I)

10. Some understand dialogue differently. For them, it is a universal mode of evangelizing. It consists in a sharing of life and faith experiences on the personal level, and on a basis of equality. Each allows himself to be addressed (and questioned) by the depth of the other's religious experience. Conversions, if they follow, are more personally meaningful. cf. Sedos, Bulletin, (15 May, 1983) p.142:

A dialogical attitude is an absolute necessity for all engaged in mission today. There is a sense in which dialogue can be described as constitutive of mission, an integral, part of proclaiming the gospel.....'

A fine illustration of this dialogical attitude is Jesus and the Samaritan woman (Jn.4)

11. Implantation of the Church is the proper goal of evangelization provided that the church is seen in its internal transforming dynamism, not as external institution. In Ev.Nunt. 18 'conversion' is related to conscience (of individual and society) and the milieux in which men live their concrete lives.
12. Paul VI warns that the Church's contribution is incomplete if she neglects to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ' (Ev.Nunt., 34).

JOURNEYS INTO MISSION - MARRIAGE AND MISSION
GO HAND IN HAND

Anita Campese Oberright

(Anita is a member of International Liaison, the U.S. Catholic Co-ordinating Centre for Lay Missions, affiliated to the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. In the Twentieth Anniversary Edition of RESPONSE, a directory of lay volunteer ministry opportunities they list 70 full members of the Coalition which is described as "a community of Christian sending agencies and organisations dedicated to alleviating the great need evident in today's world through the use or support of lay volunteers in many and varied ministries." The following account of two volunteers is taken from their quarterly news letter LAY MISSION).

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"I'm tired of going to meetings. I just want to help people!" When Carol Ann Wilder walked out of yet another social justice meeting with these words, it triggered a series of events that were to carry her thousands of miles from her Central Pennsylvania home and into some of the most profound commitments of her entire life. And, although he did not yet know it Rob Weezorak, friend, and co-worker, who attended this same meeting, would soon be sharing Carol's entry into a new way of life.

Rob and Carol met at the Children's Care Center, a privately-funded facility for severely disabled children in Hummelstown, Pennsylvania. Rob, a special education teacher, planned the educational program for all the residents, ranging in age from birth to 18 years, as well as acting as liaison for the specialists who ministered to the many needs of the multi-handicapped children. Carol utilized her training as a physical therapist to attempt to arrest the physical problems which plague disabled children.

The Children's Care Center is a co-operative effort of the State of Pennsylvania and private facilities which brings together the resources necessary to deal with the complex problems of severely disabled children. The staff of the Centre is supplemented by outside specialists, such as Carol, who provide a variety of services on an individual basis for the residents. There are 140 staff members for the seventy children at Hummelstown and the attitude of the staff toward their charges is one of incredible loving attention. The walls literally ooze love.

Perhaps it has something to do with the type of people who choose to work with the profoundly disabled, but both Carol Wilder and Rob Weezorak developed early a desire to share with those less fortunate the many benefits and rewards of their comfortable middle class life. Devoted Catholics, both had toyed with the idea of service as a volunteer while in college although they arrived at their knowledge of volunteer opportunities available primarily through

Protestant programs and the Peace Corps.

Peace Corps. In fact, Rob had applied to the Peace Corps when he finished college but, by the time his assignment arrived, he had already embarked on a career and accepted a position in special education.

Carol had considered the Peace Corps after school but "wasn't ready yet." She spent a summer as a volunteer at a school for exceptional children in Arizona, a placement she solicited herself from an ad in a medical journal.

Rob and Carol dated; broke up to give each other more room to grow; then dated again. It was a long-term friendship. The topic of volunteer service was discussed and became more and more of a "shared" concern.

Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Rob applied to Maryknoll Lay Missioners Program and asked Carol to join him "as a friend." The inability of the program to guarantee assignments in the same locale caused them to drop the idea for the time being.

As time passed, and both Rob and Carol matured, they found that their commitment to one another and the desire to serve as lay volunteers continued to grow, with one slight variation. As he felt more comfortable with his own maturing spirituality, Rob began to feel that placement in a "mission" organization was important-mission being defined as an organization with religious orientation.

Rob and Carol began to feel a need to make some sort of statement together about their shared desire to serve and their personal relationship. They felt, as Carol put it, "God's hand guiding us along" in their decision to marry and spend the first year of their married life in service as missionaries. The two commitments paralleled one another and were a reflection of their beliefs as Christians. As Rob so aptly said: "We didn't choose to be born into the U.S. middle class. It was God's choice. We do not have the right to say 'That's not my problem!' to poverty and need. How can we ignore these things? The gospel speaks against that, especially now, with the majority of the world's population in pretty bad shape!"

Both had been active in social justice groups in their area and were frustrated by the slowness with which such organizations move. They sought a way to solidify their personal philosophies into action; to create some lasting value for others and themselves; and to help them prioritize and simplify their coming life together. The opportunity to serve together was the final factor in their decision to seek placement again-this time with a mission group.

Propagation of the Faith: Rob and Carol went to their pastor, Monsignor Leo Bierster of St. Joan of Arc Parish, Hershey for advice. He contacted the diocesan office of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and was referred to the International Liaison. In December 1982, Rob Weezorak and his fiancée, Carol Wilder, requested foreign mission placement through the International Liaison referral service. Intrigued with the maturity and commitment inherent in their personal statements, I.L. decided to follow this dedicated couple through their placement process.

Rob and Carol were married in April 1983 in Hershey. Of the nine referrals they received from International Liaison, they applied to seven organizations, of which only two were interested in placing them. Several groups felt that the problems of newlyweds might interfere in the mission process.

Mercy Corps offered Rob and Carol volunteer positions at St. Michael's Association for Special Education in Fort Defiance, Arizona. Rob would be a special education teacher and Carol would work with the handicapped as a physical therapist, possibly practicing her specialty, working with neurologically impaired children.

Rather than worrying about the strain the mission experience would place on their newly contracted marriage, Rob and Carol welcomed it as a shared experience and the "best possible start" to their married life. They felt the experience of "culture shock" among the Navajos would bring them closer together and would be something they could share throughout their lives. They were disappointed initially that their request for overseas placement came to naught; however, the opportunity to experience another culture, while not leaving the U.S. consoled them.

Rob and Carol have been at St. Michael's since summer 1983. As their year-long assignment nears its end, they are still enthusiastic and committed to lay mission. In an interview they shared their plans for the future and their feelings about their time of service in Arizona.

Adjustment: There was definitely a difficult period of adjustment, especially for Rob who had to cope with cultural differences in the teaching process, behaviour problems in the classroom, the language barrier he experienced with his fellow teachers and assistants all of whom spoke Navajo among themselves, the Navajo attitude toward the handicapped and "thousands and thousands of grasshoppers all over the place" those first few weeks. There was the additional shock of being, as a white, in the minority, and the difficulty of being accepted into the Navajo community. It was, in Rob's words "really rough" those first weeks.

Assessment: But Carol and Rob feel it has been an overwhelmingly positive experience, despite the initial low moments. The daily exposure to the less affluent side of life has had a positive effect on the Weezoraks, allowing them to simplify their own lives as they desired. The poverty of the Navajo reservation was described by Carol as "very poor, very, very run-down, with the associated social problems" poverty fosters.

On several occasions Rob and Carol have been called upon to help deal with alcoholism and domestic violence among their neighbours. As Carol has said: "It's been good to have our eyes opened to another side of life than that of the middle class. To see daily the less affluent." Rob and Carol want to remember these things when they return to their homes and families. "It would be very easy to slip back into middle class America and resume our positions. We want to try to keep an element of simplicity in our lives."

Although they worry that they may forget their experience of working among the poor and less fortunate, Rob and Carol Weezorak's willingness to live their Christianity has led them to undertake yet another commitment—one that involves much more than a year's service. For, when they return to Pennsylvania in June, they will take with them a Navajo child, six year old Wilbur, whom they hope to adopt as their own son. Wilbur has been at St. Michael's since the age of five months and has not had an easy time of life. His presence in the lives of his new parents is the result of their ability to share their love for each other, and humanity, in a very special way through service. He should be a constant reminder to them of their desire to commit their lives to one another and to Christ, and their time of mission service—a time they hope to repeat in years to come.

Ref. Lay Mission, Volume 1, Number 1, Spring 1984.

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HOPE WITHOUT RISK

*Hope without risk
is not hope,
Which is believing
in risky loving,
trusting others
in the dark,
the blind leap
letting God take over.*

Helder Camara

(The Desert is Fertile. Orbis Books. 1974.)

**LA MISSION DE L'EGLISE AUJOURD'HUI
UNE RENCONTRE AFRIQUE-EUROPE AU CAMEROUN**

In the last issue of SEDOS bulletin there were some reflections on the meeting between African and European theologians held at Yaounde in April 1984. Following is an overall view of the meeting, the main topics discussed, the principal speakers and some recommendation from the meeting to the Christian Churches.

Du 4 au 11 avril s'est déroulée à Yaoundé (Cameroun), une grande première de l'histoire de l'Eglise: un dialogue à égalité entre 20 théologiens européens, sous le titre général: "La mission de l'Eglise aujourd'hui".

Le thème et les sous-thèmes: La rencontre se proposait de poser les jalons théologiques de la solidarité entre les Eglises pauvres et les Eglises riches dans leur commune mission d'évangélisation, face aux défis que suscite le monde moderne à la mission de l'Eglise universelle.

Le sujet central fut divisé en 11 sous-thèmes, le plus souvent traités à la fois par plusieurs orateurs (catholique-protestant, francophone-anglophone, africain-européen).

Voici la liste de ces sous-thèmes:

1. L'avenir de la mission en Afrique (Prof. J.M. Ela et E. Uzukwu).
2. La mission de l'Eglise: point de vue des anciennes Eglises (Prof. M. Spindler).
3. La mission de l'Eglise: point de vue des jeunes Eglises (Mgr. T. Tshibangu, Prof. Kibisho et M. Hebga).
4. Mission et culture (Mgr. Tchouanga, Pasteur A. Blancy, Prof. Brookmann Amissah).
5. Mission et dialogue des religions (Prof. R. Tossou, Pasteur P. Brown).
6. La femme et la mission de l'Eglise (Mme Zoe et Mme Mayland).
7. Mariage et famille (Card. Malula, Prof. M. Legrain et Yemba Kekumba).
8. Option pour les pauvres et combat pour la justice (Prof. E. Mveng et J. Althausen).
9. Eglise et politique (Prof. L. Broz et L. Ngongo).
10. Théologie africaine, libération et mission universelle de l'Eglise (Prof. Ngindu, C. Duquoc et A. Gesché).
11. Jeunesse et mission en Afrique (A. Mbembo).

Participants: 80 participants de 24 pays d'Afrique, d'Europe et d'Amérique ont pris part aux travaux du colloque. Plusieurs universités étaient représentées: Abidjan, Bangui, Kinshasa, Leiden, Louvain-La-Neuve, Lyon, Paris, Port Harcourt, Rome, Yaoundé. A noter aussi la participation des membres du peuple de Dieu à différents niveaux de la vie ecclésiale:

un cardinal, 4 évêques, des prêtres, des pasteurs et un nombre important de laïcs, hommes et femmes.

Soucis majeurs: Parmi les préoccupations majeures qui ont surgi au cours des débats, on peut retenir:

1. Le recours à l'histoire comme principe herméneutique indispensable à la recherche théologique.
2. la nécessité de repérer l'impensé du discours théologique et de dévoiler les conditions concrètes de production de ce discours qui est toujours situé.
3. pour les Africains, la persistance du défi fondamental: comment penser, comprendre et confesser Jésus-Christ dans leurs cultures et leur histoire, traversée par des tensions et des conflits?
4. pour tous les participants, l'apport des théologiens africains est apparu comme l'un des événements spirituels et scientifiques du XXème siècle.
5. la fonction critique de l'Eglise est apparue également comme une tâche capitale dans un monde marqué par des processus multiformes de papérisation.

RECOMMANDATIONS

Coscient de travailler à la mission de l'Eglise universelle, les théologiens africains et européens réunis à Yaoundé ont soumis à l'attention des Eglises les recommandations ci-après:

1. Il est souhaitable, chaque culture ayant droit à son expression théologique propre, que la voix des théologiens africains soit davantage entendue, en vue d'un réel pluralisme et d'échanges bénéfiques au progrès de la réflexion chrétienne.
2. Il est souhaitable que les étudiants africains en théologie poursuivent le plus longtemps possible leurs études en Afrique; que pour des études spécialisées, ils puissent se rendre en Europe et que des étudiants européens puissent venir en Afrique; que des échanges s'établissent entre enseignants africains et européens.
3. Il est souhaitable que les autorités ecclésiastiques d'Afrique usent de leur pouvoir de décision, spécialement en matière matrimoniale où s'expriment intensément les particularités culturelles africaines. Dogmatiquement, aucune difficulté ne s'oppose à la diversification du droit matrimonial selon les Eglises.
4. Il est souhaitable que les autorités ecclésiastiques, depuis longtemps conscientes de l'inadéquation et de l'insuffisance des structures ministérielles actuelles, suscitent des ministères répondant aux besoins réels des communautés chrétiennes.

A l'issue de leurs travaux, les théologiens africains et européens ont décidé de poursuivre le dialogue sur des thèmes ayant un intérêt commun par des rencontres qui se tiendront tous les trois ans. L'Association oecuménique des théologiens africains (AOTA) fonctionnera comme

cadre pour les Africains; les participants européens ont créé un bureau oecuménique européen de coordination composé de cinq membres: B. Chenu, catholique (France), A. Blancy, protestant (France), N. Klaes, catholique (RFA), J. Matthey, protestant (Suisse) et Mme. M. Mayland, anglicane (Angleterre).

Conclusion: nous sommes tous missionnaires: Comme l'a déclaré l'un des participants du colloque de Yaoundé: "L'Eglise d'Afrique, en tant qu'africaine, a une mission pour l'Eglise universelle. Elle est le coeur transpercé du Christ dans ce corps déchiré de l'Eglise universelle. Elle ne doit pas seulement parler oecuménisme. Elle doit vivre l'unité du corps mystique, et rappeler à toutes les Eglises soeurs du monde entier que nous n'avons qu'un seul Dieu, un seul Christ, un seul baptême. Elle doit dans sa pauvreté et son humilité, rappeler à toutes ses soeurs l'essentiel des Béatitudes, et annoncer la bonne nouvelle de la libération à celles qui ont succombé à la tentation du pouvoir, de la richesse et de la domination" (E. Mveng).

Ref. Africa Bulletin Afrique. No. 38, 15 Mai 1984.
Via Aurelia, 269, 00165 Roma.

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BAKOLE WA ILUNGA, ARCHBISHOP OF KANANGA, ZAIRE

The secret of my optimism, then, is my faith in this Jesus who says to me: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6). He is the way we must follow in order to reach the Father, where life exists in its fullness. He is the Truth who sets us free from false gods and illusory values. He is the full Life for which our whole being yearns.

I have discovered, then, that the deep-rooted, immemorial longing of our people for a full and fruitful life, a life we want for ourselves in our daily greeting, 'Muoyo!' ('Life!') is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In him I have found the deepest and fullest meaning of life: the meaning life has when it is grounded in God and shared with others. His gospel contains the secret of this kind of life and shows the way leading to true happiness. I have therefore allowed this Jesus to take me captive, so that I might be the witness of his Good News of life to my brothers and sisters.

We must allow ourselves to be taken captive by Jesus Christ so that we may be freed from slavery and find a new lifestyle, a new type of citizen who is capable of creating a new Zaire, a free Zaire.

This book, then, derives its origin from the cry for liberation that arises spontaneously, even if in different ways, from our people. The aim of the book, however, is to move beyond the stage of cries and to show the paths effectively leading to liberation.

Ref. (From the Introduction to his *PATHS OF LIBERATION - A Third World Spirituality*, Orbis Books, 1984).

"WORLD CHRISTIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA"

A

DEMYTHOLOGISER

(Extracts from an article by Dr. Stephen Neill)

(Nous avons déjà parlé de la "World Christian Encyclopedia", éditée par David B. Barrett (ANB/BIA, N° 5, 1 décembre 1982) et nous disions que la parution de cette encyclopédie était un événement. Time magazine l'avait appelé (3 mai 1982) "un miracle venant de Nairobi".

La revue "Missiology" (published by American Society of Missiology, 616 Walnut Avenue, Scottsdale, P.A., USA) demanda à plusieurs personnalités ce que la WCE (World Christian Encyclopedia) leur avait appris, e.a. au Dr. Stephen Neill, qui est anglican, qui a été missionnaire en Afrique et aux Indes, qui est directeur des World Christian Books et Secrétaire-général adjoint du Conseil Océanien des Eglises.

Dans un long article de 19 pages il donne une réponse très intéressante. De cette réponse nous reprenons la partie "WCE as Demythologiser". Le Dr. Neill est d'avis que les faits et les chiffres, apportés par la WCE, détruisent 4 mythologies:

- 1. le mythe du déclin du christianisme*
- 2. le mythe de la croissance unique de l'Islam*
- 3. le mythe du christianisme resté occidental*
- 4. le mythe qui veut que l'hostilité et la persécution doivent à la longue avoir raison de la foi chrétienne.*

Il va sans dire qu'il s'agit là d'une opinion personnelle, mais venant d'une autorité comme celle du Dr. Stephen Neill, elle mérite d'être écoutée).

One of the values of history is the service it can render as a demythologiser. We all live surrounded by a number of mythologies -both Christian and anti-Christian. We have even had a missionary mythology, which has now been replaced by an active and at times vitriolic anti-missionary mythology. The only way to deal with a mythology is to confront it with certain and undeniable facts. To a considerable extent the Encyclopedia is rendering this service to truth.

CHRISTIAN DECLINE - THE MYTH

For a number of years Christian pessimists, for reasons known only to themselves, have been purveying the view that, though the number of Christians in the world is increasing, the Christian percentage of the world's population is steadily on the decline; so that, whereas forty years ago Christians made up one third of the population, by the end of the century they will amount to no more than one sixth. (I myself pointed out the purely mythological nature of this statement to Barrett a good many years ago.)

Apparently the error of the pessimists was based on the idea that the number of christians would remain static, whereas that of

the rest of the world would be governed by the population explosion; it seems not to have occurred to them that in many countries the Christian birth-rate is rather higher than that of the population as a whole, and that Christians also have their population explosion, to which conversion as well as the birth-rate makes a contribution.

The figures published in the Encyclopedia show that, though there may have been a slight decline in the Christian percentage since 1900, this is only very slight, and is far less than catastrophic. I am not myself, however, convinced that there has been any decline at all. The figure given for 1900 is 34 percent of the whole. But I am inclined to think that this was an over-estimate, based on the idea that the entire population of the countries of Europe and North America, except in so far as it was Jewish, was Christian. At that time, it was impossible in many countries for citizens to register themselves as "without religion", a category to which much place is accorded in the Encyclopedia. It is clear that the erosion of Christian faith had already made considerable progress by 1900, and that the figure 34 percent may be as much as 5 percent too high. In that case, the lapse from the faith of great numbers in Russia and in western countries has been more than made up by the astonishingly rapid increase in Christian numbers in many parts of Africa. If there is no occasion in 1983 for Christian triumphalism, equally there is no case for Christian pessimism.

GROWTH OF ISLAM - THE MYTH

Another cry which has been going up from Christians and has been reproduced in many periodicals is that five times as many people are becoming Muslims in Africa as are becoming Christians. I myself never gave a moment's credence to this myth and have never been able to track it to its source. I have a suspicion that it is based on a statement made by Professor Parrinder, in his excellent book, *Religion in an African City*, about the single city of Ibadan in Nigeria.

My own observation, in twenty-nine African countries, was that almost everywhere Islam is a respected minority, though almost unknown in Zaire and in countries to the south of it. Nowhere, however, is it making rapid progress, except in some former French colonies. Not even in Northern Nigeria where Muslim influence and propaganda are at their strongest, is any marked swing of the population in the Islamic direction to be observed. This personal observation is confirmed by the careful figures relating to the non-Christian religions in the various countries as set forth in the *Encyclopedia*.

Sixty years ago, Islamic progress in Africa was so rapid as to occasion much talk in Christian circles of "the Muslim menace". This impulse seems to a considerable extent to have died away; the African peoples appear to be less inclined than they were at the beginning of the century to think of Islam as the religion which will best meet their religious and cultural needs. The possibility always exists that the pendulum may swing again in the Islamic direction; for the moment, however, rapid progress is almost exclusively on the Christian side.

CHRISTIANITY STILL OF THE WEST - THE MYTH

The greater part of the *Encyclopedia* is taken up with the survey, country by country, of the specific religious situation. This is almost inevitable as a matter of convenience. But it has to be remembered that in a great many cases the divisions between countries are purely artificial, having been apparently settled by European autocrats with paper and pencil, seated round a table. The most irrational of these divisions is perhaps that between West Irian and Papua-New Guinea, where there is no division in geography, ethnology or anything else to cause one part of the great island of New Guinea to belong to Indonesia and the other part to be an independent Pacific country within the (British) Commonwealth. West Irian looks north to southeast Asia; Papua-New Guinea looks east to north-east over the vast spaces of the Pacific.

In Africa there are equally illogical divisions, where single tribes, with a common language, find themselves split up between three not always friendly countries. It used to be thought that, with the end of colonialism, these strange divisions would come to an end, but this has not occurred. Apparently the colonialists had done their work too well, and there had been hardly any rectification of frontiers. This means that, on the basis of the figures given in the *Encyclopedia* it is difficult to work out the situation in more or less identifiable regions, such as western tropical Africa or the Pacific, and this causes difficulty in tracing more or less identical spiritual processes. But, for all that, the general lines of Christian progress can be fairly well worked out.

Universal Character of Christian Faith: This survey, country by country, makes it plain that we have to do today with something for which there is no precedent in earlier history - a universal religion. This does not mean that everyone belongs to it or acknowledges its truth - far from it. But in 1983 the Christian church does exist in every country of the world with the possible exception of Tibet; in many areas extremely weak and accepted by only a very small minority; in other regions well rooted in the past and sturdy in the present; in some claiming at least the nominal allegiance of almost the entire population.

Islam has spread out in many directions, but is still essentially the religion of the middle east, drawing its main strength from the Arabic-speaking countries. Hinduism in recent years has begun to claim for itself universal validity as the most tolerant and all-embracing of all religious systems, but in practice it has been for centuries the main religion only of the Indian sub-continent. Buddhism has also had a long missionary history; but, in spite of success in various parts of the world, is still at home mainly in South-east Asia, with Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand as the principal representatives of its Theravada form. Christianity alone has managed to make itself at home in all the continents. From the figures given in the *Encyclopedia*, it appears that Christianity has as many adherents as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism taken together. How many of these adherents are deeply convinced and committed Christians is, of course, known to God only, the same being true also, of course, of all the other religions. But in a work such as the *Encyclopedia*, which deals in the main with observable phenomena and

measurable realities, we have to take the figures as they are and make such comparisons as can legitimately be drawn from them.

Hostility and Persecution will

Vanquish Christianity - the Myth: It is a historic fact that the great expansion of Christian faith and profession in the nineteenth century was almost contemporary with the expansion of western and especially European political and military power throughout the world, though the connection between these two phenomena is much less close than has often been affirmed. Equal notice has not been taken of the no less important fact that for more than a century the Christian faith has been more persistently and virulently attacked than any other religious body with the exception of the Jewish people and the members of the Bahai faith.

This hostility has taken many forms. It reached the level of vigorous persecution in Uganda and in China at the end of the nineteenth century. It has taken the form of near suppression in many Muslim countries, even where death as the penalty for apostasy is not imposed. In Malaysia, for example, any approach to Muslims with the offer of an alternative faith is most strictly prohibited. In communist-controlled countries Marxist-inspired governments have not veered one single point from their expressed determination to eliminate every form of religious belief - Christian, Jewish, Islamic or whatever it may be - though a number of governments have found it convenient, as in eastern Germany, to arrive at a situation of limited mutual toleration. Friedrich Nietzsche was only the first, though also the best known, of the critics who have poured out the vials of their wrath on Christian faith and cried out, "Down with it, down it, even to the ground".

Rationalist associations continue to proclaim the death of God to all who will hear, and set themselves to subvert Christian propaganda wherever the opportunity is given. In many western universities the schools of philosophy, history, psychology, anthropology and some forms of physical science are so deeply under the influence of materialistic and non-religious forces as to confront students with a number of gospels other than that which is presented in the New Testament.

In some areas the successes of the non-Christian forces have been considerable. It seems probable that in some countries of Central Asia, with the coming of the Bolsheviks, the small and struggling churches were simply blotted out. Marxist propaganda has in many places been more skilfully carried out than that put forward by Christians, with the result that Christians in the west find themselves burdened with a load of guilt, or at least with a guilty conscience inherited from the past.

Vitality Despite Hostility: And yet, through all the storms of a century, the Christian churches have continued to maintain themselves, to grow and to manifest a vitality which is sometimes disturbing to those who wish for nothing more earnestly than for their overthrow. What has happened in China may be taken as typical of what has taken place again and again. When in 1949 the communists took over power in the Celestial Empire and brought into effect many anti-religious rules and edicts, Christian pessimists in many media were heard to proclaim that "mission Christianity" had failed, and that for the fourth time in history China had rejected the

approach made to her by Christians. Not all observers were convinced that this was so, or that the survivors of the Christian churches in China would be limited to minute and scattered house churches, which by the intensity of their faith had managed to maintain themselves in near obscurity.

When a measure of religious freedom was restored, it was "mission Christianity", Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant, which emerged from the shadows, shaken by thirty years of suppression, yet having learned many things through affliction, having developed a new self-consciousness and selfreliance, and eager at the earliest possible moment to recover contact with western friends and western churches. The church has once again revealed itself, in highly unfavourable circumstances, as an anvil which has worn out many hammers.

This extension of its existence could not have taken place, if the churches had not been able to show a surprising measure of flexibility and adaptability to many and varied cultures. This is shown up interestingly at one point in the Encyclopedia -the attitude of the churches towards the Scriptures that have been committed to their care. The contrast with Islam is particularly striking. In Islam the revelation is so intimately linked to one language that throughout the Islamic world, prayers are said only in Arabic; though translations of the Qur'an have appeared in many languages, the majority of these have been made by non-Muslims, and no version has as yet received fully official recognition in any part of the Islamic world.

The Christian churches have undertaken a vast enterprise in the learning of languages, in the reduction of previously unwritten languages to writing, and in the translation of at least part of the Christian Scriptures into more than 1500 languages, so that something like 96 percent of the world's population, if literate, now has access to at least a part of the Christian Scriptures. Many of the translations have been shown in the light of fuller knowledge to be woefully inadequate; the work of revision and retranslation is going on in many languages, as it is in English. And yet evidence from many quarters shows that even through imperfect renderings something of the light of the Gospel has been able to shine through.

Ref. Africa Bulletin Afrique. No.37. 1 Mai, 1984.
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RECOMMENDED READING

FOR ALL THE PEOPLES OF ASIA: The Church in Asia: Asian Bishops' Statements on Mission, Community and Ministry 1970-1983 (The first volume of a two volume work; Pp.300: 1984).

Editors: Rev. C. G. Arévalo, S.J., theological adviser for the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (from the preliminary meetings in 1970 to the present); Sister Teresita Feliciano, RGS and Ms. Teresita Giron.

Foreword by Most Reverend Archbishop MARIANO G. Gaviola, D.D., Archbishop of Lipa City (Philippines), Secretary-General of the FABC since its first Plenary Assembly.

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The National Office/Philippines for the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies (POMAS).
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The volume brings together official -- and other -- Statements and Reflections, Recommendations and Directives, of thirteen major Meetings held under the auspices of the FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS' (FABC), the ASIAN BISHOPS' INSTITUTES FOR THE MISSIONARY APOSTOLATE (BIMA and INTER-RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS (BIRA) and the important INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON MISSION (IMC, 1979, MANILA).

Volume II, expected in November 1984.

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