
SEDOS - SEMINARS

1985 - 86

Please note the following dates

BIBLE AND MISSION - October 29, 1985 (Last Tuesday)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & SEMINAR .

EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD OF BISHOPS - December 10, 1985 (Second Tuesday)

"THIRD WORLD" THEOLOGIES

VILLA CAVALLETTI RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR - May 6 - 10, 1986
(Note - This is a departure
from the usual date for this
SEDOS Seminar).

THE TASK OF MISSION
IN RELATION TO VARIOUS CULTURES, TRADITIONS
AND OTHER PEOPLES OF FAITH

Michael Amaladoss, SJ.

(Le Père Amaladoss discute la tâche de la mission dans le contexte de cultures, de traditions ou de peuples d'une autre foi, à la lumière de la situation complexe qui règne en Inde. Le Congrès International sur la Mission qui s'est tenu à Manille en décembre 1979 a soulevé un important problème. En Asie, il y a des pays, où le baptême ne signifie pas seulement mort au péché et vie pour Dieu dans le Christ, mais aussi des implications sociologiques nuisant gravement à la vie économique et sociale des candidats au Christianisme, ce qui les met dans des situations presque impossibles. Dans ce cas, suffirait-il de mener les gens à un point où ils puissent se contenter du baptême de désir?)

La deuxième partie de cette conférence, donnée lors du récent Chapitre général de Maryknoll suggère des motivations de la mission dans de telles situations. Elle paraîtra dans le prochain numéro de SEDOS N.D.L.R.)

The traditional idea of mission evokes the image of someone who is sent from among the "Haves" into the midst of the "Have-Nots" to share what they have. The gift offered was membership in the church through Baptism and consequent salvation. The concept of salvation was later widened to include development and liberation. Today one speaks of the dialogue between Gospel and Culture, with an implied contrast between them as divine revelation and human effort. The other religions are no longer understood according to a grid of absence-presence (of truth and salvation), but in terms of partial-full and/or implicit-explicit. The positive, even if limited, appreciation of other Living Faiths has given birth to an attitude of dialogue, even though some may still see it only as a preparation for proclamation.

Reflection on mission has been hampered from two directions. Experience brings up new questions. But in meeting them one is unwilling to abandon an a-priori point of view. Even though theology, as a reflection on faith-experience cannot avoid a certain a-priori perspective, the starting point must be faith-experience and not simply the data of faith. Secondly, reflection tends to remain abstract. One talks about the Gospel, Religions and Cultures. One often forgets the people who live them in freedom and commitment.

For my present purpose here I think it is important to start from experience and let it challenge and interpret the tradition of faith. It is only in the light of this reflection that we can spell out the tasks of mission. India provides an adequate example of various cultures, traditions and other peoples of faith to serve as my starting point.

I shall start with a brief analysis of the situation in India. This will be followed by a rapid look at the perspective of faith that serves as a horizon of understanding and interpreting which both

challenges and is challenged by the situation. It will lead to reflection. We could then spell out the tasks of mission in this situation.

ANALYSIS OF THE INDIAN SITUATION

India is a land of religions. The dominant Hinduism is a complex of a Multiplicity of traditions ranging from the cosmic to the meta-cosmic. There are 75 million Muslims and 20 million Christians. Buddhism, though present, has largely been absorbed by Hinduism. Sikhism is an attempt to reconcile Hinduism and Islam. Jains represent an important sub-group, not to speak of Zoroastrians and other smaller religious groups. Apart from these we have various tribal religious traditions.

Indian Society is not really secularized, there having been no dichotomy between sacred and secular powers. From a cultural point of view one could speak of a unity-in-plurality. There is certainly a common cultural heritage, an Indian ethos, notwithstanding a multiplicity of historic, regional and linguistic-cultural traditions. There has been a lot of inter-action. A great variety of folk-cultures, at a very popular level, constantly feed into and feed from a strong highly developed culture with a tradition of socio-political structures, philosophico-theological reflection and the creative arts. Rather outside this scheme are the various tribal cultures.

This religio-cultural complex is today undergoing a double impact: namely, modernity and westernisation. Science and technology has not only introduced a spirit of practical rationality but has also brought in its wake industrialization, urbanization and attendant problems. The colonial past has contributed a political system, a legal and administrative structure, a language and elements of popular culture that is almost becoming international. An on-going acculturation on the one hand and defensive revival, even fundamental, movements co-exist.

Socially, India remains highly stratified, because of the caste system, and still largely feudal. Economically it is a developing country-with a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The worst affected are the poor landless agricultural labourers of the country side. There is wide-spread corruption. But the youth are a sign of hope.

The relation between religion and society has been, through the history of India, a dialectical one. While religion has often been domesticated by socio-political forces, it has also been a prophetic force periodically giving rise to reformers and reform movements. The Buddha was certainly not the first, but the best known "Protestant".

A desire for a just social order has gone hand in hand with a call to deep personal freedom. A traditional spirit of tolerance has allowed an easy intermingling of cultures in the past, though in recent years various communalisms, fanned by political and economic factors, are surfacing.

'We have become painfully aware of situations in some countries where Baptism carries with it not only its basic meaning of death to sin and life to God in Christ, but also sociological implications severely detrimental to the socio-economic life of the prospective christian. Hence, we are forced to ask if Baptism can be urged under these circumstances on those who want to adhere to Christ but would find life extremely difficult in the new sociological situation that Baptism would put them. Will it not be enough to bring them to the point of Baptism by desire? We admit our inability at present to give a final answer to this painful question.'

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Moving on to the phase of reflection I shall focus on two broad areas: Cultural diversity and religious pluralism. This would lead me to raise the question: Why evangelize?

In a situation of cultural diversity one speaks of inculturation, sometimes described as the dialogue between gospel and culture. The implied assumption seems to be that Gospel, which is something supra-cultural, the divinely revealed Word, encounters culture, which is everything that is not the Gospel and the fruit of human effort. The Gospel enfleshes itself in a particular culture saving and fulfilling whatever is good in it. It is in this manner that on the one hand the Gospel, and the church, realize concretely their catholicity and on the other unify and perfect the universe in Christ.

This vision that seems wonderful in the abstract meets various difficulties as soon as we consider experiential situations. Within the context of a christian Society it is quite legitimate to speak of an encounter between Gospel and culture. It is an on-going historical dialectic that takes new forms with every new generation. But in a society that is not christian the Gospel does not come in some disembodied form, but expressed in a cultural tradition that goes from Judaic through Graeco-Roman to the culture from which the missionary comes.

Inculturation, then, takes the form of inter-culturation. It is not merely a problem of cross-cultural communication, because the Gospel does not come simply as a message but with a baggage of dogmatic, liturgical, organizational and legal traditions.

It is more than acculturation which is a natural process when two cultures encounter each other, conditioned by economic, social and political, besides cultural factors and determined by the dominant forces of the situation.

The Gospel really seeks to become the "soul" of a culture. This is a process of kenosis and enfleshment, of dying and rising. The Good News has to be discerned from the symbols and structures in which it is expressed and has to be re-expressed in the symbols and structures of the new culture. This is not an abstract process of translation, but the living effort of a community that seeks to make its christian faith

THE CHURCH IN INDIA

How is the church present to this situation? The church still has a foreign visage, foreign structures, rituals, symbols; foreign funds and control; association with the colonizers. In many areas it is the religion of the economically poor and of the culturally backward. The way of life of the christians may largely be Indian, but their religious visibility is western. Because of its strong presence in the fields of education and health it may be seen as the bearer of modernity and western values.

The church has not really made an impact on the religio-cultural main stream, even though some socio-political reformers have been influenced by the values of the gospel, almost inspite of the church. One feels a tolerated, but somehow illegitimate, minority. People would like the church to remain western and its efforts at inculturation are regarded with suspicion. Any aggressive proclamation is resented, because conversion and consequent education and socio-political awareness is threatening since it upsets social and political structures and relationships.

Inter-religious dialogue remains an activity of a few elite groups. People tend to distinguish between the church-institution and the person of Jesus and his good news. The educated Indians may not only feel religiously superior comparing the personal God of the christians to their impersonal Absolute, but would be conscious of what they consider the failure of christianity in the West. Inculturation and the building up of a local church continues to be an elite and often frustrating activity.

AWARENESS OF MISSION IN ASIA

It is in the midst of this situation that the christian is on a mission. What is one's contemporary awareness of this mission? I shall here summarize the current consciousness of the church in Asia as expressed in various Seminars and study sessions over the past 14 years.

Evangelization is proclamation of the Gospel. But in the context of Asia it takes the form of a three-fold dialogue: dialogue with culture, leading to the building up of an inculturated local church; dialogue with other living Faiths, resulting in mutual understanding and appreciation, praying together and collaboration in common life building a better world; dialogue with the people, especially the poor, helping their integral liberation.

Evangelization therefore has a two-fold focus: the Kingdom and the church: the church is at the service of the kingdom, ready to undergo the paschal process of death and resurrection. Grass-root communities are seen as the bearers of the gospel. The task of witnessing to the Good News also calls for ecumenical collaboration. (As a matter of fact the ecumenical movement was born in the missions). An International Congress on Mission that met in Manila in December 1979 raised an interesting question (in its workshop on Theology) that is worth recording here.

the inspiration of its life, worship, reflection and action. In the process the new culture too has to face the prophetic challenge of the Gospel and be transformed. This is how a new local church is built up with its spirituality, worship, art, organization, reflection and praxis.

Everyone says today that inculturation and the building up of the local churches is necessary, even urgent. What should have been a natural process had been blocked for centuries, for reasons that we need not go into here. But efforts to remove the blocks do not seem to be succeeding. The atmosphere of freedom and spontaneity that such a process would require is nowhere evident yet. As a matter of fact even in the traditional christian societies the church seems to be losing in the encounter between gospel and culture.

The problem becomes even more complex if we consider that the culture which the evangelizer encounters is not a body without a soul; it is animated by another religion. The inter-culturation then becomes also an inter-religious encounter. There may be a growing dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, the church and the state, religion and culture in christian countries. One cannot project it on to other situations.

One cannot either consider growing secularization as inevitable. One cannot really build up an Indian church, develop an Indian spirituality, without in some way encountering and integrating Indian religious experience. One cannot really inculturate without using some of the basic symbols of the tradition, even if, in the process, they will have to be re-interpreted.

There is a growing awareness today that God does reach out to people through their religious scriptures and traditions. If they are the words of God in some way -- seeds of the Word, if you like-- they are also addressed to us and meaningful to us, especially in the living context of that historical tradition. Thus inter-religious dialogue is an integral element of the process of building up a local church.

Dialogue between religions is not always between equal partners. Aloysius Pieris speaks of cosmic and meta-cosmic soteriologies. The former's world-view centers round cosmic powers while the latter reaches out to a meta-cosmic beyond which however is very much involved in the cosmos. The meta-cosmic soteriologies are normally well developed whereas the cosmic ones remain at a popular, sometimes tribal level. An integration between a developed and a popular religion that encounter each other seems almost inevitable, even necessary. Mass conversions are often of this type. Besides it is through such integration the metacosmic-soteriologies find a popular base. The cosmic and the metacosmic are also linked to weak & strong cultures. The situation however is very different when two great religions encounter each other. Let me simply state that christianity has not made much headway in Asia faced with other great religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.

(The concluding section of this article will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin.)

ORDINATION OF A METIS OBLATE
ALBERTA-SASKATCHEWAN

(Inculturation is not simply a matter of dress, dance, old customs but respect for these is a sign of the growing respect for the culture of the Native Indians of Northern America).

LAC STE ANNE, Alberta: Thousands of Indians and Metis trek each year from as far away as the Northwest Territories and Montana in the U.S. on a pilgrimage to the shores of this historic lake. In 1984 there were the usual prayers, celebrations and meetings with old friends, but there was something special for the 20,000 people who came. Garry LaBOUCANE, a Metis from Red Deer in Central Alberta, was ordained an Oblate priest in a ceremony that reflected the ancient Christian and Indian religions.

As he stood and knelt before Archbishop Joseph MacNeil of Edmonton, Garry held an eagle feather, the Indian symbol of courage. "A woman handed me the feather during the ordination," he said. "It is usually given to people for something honourable." A man burned sweetgrass; the smoke rose over Garry as he lay prostrate before the archbishop, who wore vestments made of moose hide.

The mingling of the Indian religious practices with the Christian ordination signalled the direction Garry wants to take in his priestly life; he sees his ministry as one of healing to the Indian people.

Born in 1947, Garry became an Oblate in '68 but left after three years. He obtained a Master's in Education, taught for four years on reserves, then rejoined the Oblates. His studies for the priesthood took him to Newman College in Edmonton and to Berkeley in California. His first assignment: the parish of St Albert, now a modern city, but not so long ago the home of great Oblate missionaries like Bishop Vital GRANDIN and Father Albert LACOMBE, who planted and nourished the faith in Western Canada.

A 96-year-old pilgrimage of faith: For hundreds of years Indians have been coming to Lac Ste Anne, once called Devil's Lake but now "God's Lake" to the Native people of today. The founder of the mission in 1845 was a secular priest, Fr. Thibault. Fr Lacombe, also a secular at the time, succeeded him in 1852, made his novitiate there and his first vows as an Oblate in 1856.

Drought-stricken Indians came to the mission in 1888 to pray to the white man's God. Their prayers were answered. The following year, Fr. Joseph LESTANC initiated the first pilgrimage with 200 faithful. Since then pilgrims have come without fail on the feast of St Anne - a three-week journey for some in the old days but still a three-day bus ride for many.

During the five-day pilgrimage the smoke of several thousand Campfires lies low over the mission on a 30-acre site, 40 miles from Edmonton. Tents, trailers, campers and a few teepees, parked close together, house the 20,000 pilgrims or more. Ninety percent of them are Native people.

A team of over 30 priests, most of them the people's own missionaries, administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation and offer Masses in various Native tongues. They bring Communion to the sick in their tents, bless each pilgrim individually, and at sunset lead candlelight processions around the Stations of the Cross. For those who cannot crowd into the church/chapel - it seats only 2,000 - the services with their ancient and soul-stirring hymns are heard all over the grounds through a public address system.

Genuine piety and faith mark the pilgrimages at Lac Ste Anne. An Oblate who comes every year with his people observed: "The faith you witness in the pilgrims, their humility, their warmth and love fill and strengthen you." The real message of the pilgrimage may have been summed up by a Metis Oblate, Fr. Pat MERCREDI (+1982). Speaking in Cree at the pilgrimage of 1977, he said, "I am supposed to be here to preach to you, but today your faith is preaching to me."

Ref. OMI, Information, (English) 219/85

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EVANGELIZATION AND AFRICAN RELIGIONS

Rev. Robert Rweyemamu

(Lorsque Vatican II a élaboré son texte sur le dialogue avec les autres religions, les religions traditionnelles, ancestrales et tribales n'ont pas été mentionnées, non par oubli, mais intentionnellement. Cette décision a pu être maintenue pendant quelques années après le Concile, non seulement chez les catholiques, mais aussi parmi les Eglises de tradition protestante. Aujourd'hui, la nécessité du dialogue avec les religions traditionnelles, parmi lesquelles les religions africaines, est bien reconnue.

Le texte qui suit est seulement l'introduction d'un essai sur les relations entre l'évangélisation et les religions africaines. Nous recommandons à nos lecteurs de se reporter au texte complet, publié dans le N. de novembre 1983 de "Omnis Terra").

INTRODUCTION

1. African Religions: As the evangelization movement was on high tide at the end of the XIX century, Europe was taken by surprise when Alexander Le Roy (1) announced that the primitive peoples of Africa were deeply religious. The Christian West was confused and embarrassed. The strong reaction which came out automatically was: "if the black Africans have a religion, what is the whole fuss now about our Missionary Enterprise?"

Men and women had been ready to dedicate themselves and even lay down their lives for the noble cause of evangelizing and converting pagan Africa. Fortunately the writings and lectures of the missionary Bishop and expert that Le Roy soon became, did not halt the movement. The enterprise went on and gathered momentum, the Spirit inspired the missionaries to go to announce God, whom, without knowing they already worshipped (Acts. 18:23). That was, in fact, Le Roy's point.

In order to discover and evaluate the religious life of the African and other non-Christian peoples, Le Roy succeeded in getting the foundation of the Ethnographic Society with the headquarters in Bruxelles in 1912. Soon after the initiatives of the Missionary of the Divine Word, made it possible to establish the Review "Anthropos" as well as organise the International Ethnographic Weeks for the study of Comparative Religions, with special reference to the primitive religions of Africa.

2. Concept and Nature: Much has been done since 1900-1910 on the subject of African Religions. Much interest has been aroused and research has been carried out along a wide range of geographical areas and cultural zones. Today there is hardly any tribe that has not been studied, and hardly any aspect of African religious experience that has not been covered, surveyed and reported.

It is enough to consult *Anthropos* for original essays, and then the subsequent contributions in monographs and articles. All this has been undertaken with a view to demonstrating to the world what African beliefs, morals, rituals, customs, myths, symbols are and how they compare with the creeds, moral ideals and spiritual practices of the Christian religion.

Although some questions remain to be answered and aspects have still to be clarified to the mind of inquirers, the results of research and study have confirmed:

- a) that African religions are religions in the true and scientific meaning of the term - founded on faith in the one Divinity, hope in Him for life (salvation) and communion with Him for blessing, strength and happiness;
- b) that they are not to be reduced to primitive, animistic forms, the way early sociologists thought them to be;
- c) that these religions are not only concepts, but possess also the systematic and organic nature of the great religions;
- d) that they are "traditional", for they depend on the local cultural traditions for their existence and mode of transmission and sphere of influence;
- e) that they are a social phenomenon which represents a spiritual experience of and a living contact with the supernatural realities, rather than formal stereotyped structures.

In synthesis, that is what has been reached concerning the original nature and specific characteristics of African Religion.

3. Growing Interest: One can say that sufficient light has now been shed on the topic of African Religions. There has been much work done especially since 1960. The wind of political change gave wings to general enthusiasm for the rediscovery of African traditional values and religious heritage. The political revolution sounded a retreat back to the sources, to reconquer the "Lost Past", in order to give the Continent the pride of its cultural identity and unity, in the wake of African personality, *négritude*, authenticity, indigenization and inculturation.

In this movement several agencies have played a major part: the "Société Africaine de Culture (SAC)", with its organ "Présence Africaine", then the Churches through the Theological Faculties (2), Pastoral Institutes and Catechetical Centres; the Governments working through the Departments of Religious Studies and, last but not least, the Vatican Secretariat for non Christians.

In the course of this presentation we shall not have much space to refer to the general aspects which have already been dealt with, as well as to the various positions which have been clarified in the above-mentioned sources. We leave this to the reader's private interest and initiative. We shall be able to come back at a later page to the exposition of the religious values which the African Religions carry within them, for this point is of particular relevance to this inquiry.

A. EVANGELIZATION AND AFRICAN RELIGIONS

1. Importance of the Subject: There is perhaps no theme which bears so closely on the missionary pastoral activity of the Church in Africa today as the question on the "encounter between Christian Evangelization and African religious cultures".

Considering the matter from a theological point of view, we can say that this problem, set within the African context, acquires particular relevance. Indeed it appears to be most actual in the line of doctrine and most urgent in the line of action. We would like to make this point clear from the outset. Though we will not be able to elaborate on the theories underlying this study, we nevertheless feel it useful, as an introduction, to trace the process on which the truth and importance of this talk is based.

2. Relevance of African Religions: The Continent is engaged in this debate. Experts and masters in various branches of science, intellectuals, artists, politicians, and interested in the subject of traditional religions, alongside professional theologians and missionaries. They all seem to agree on one point, namely that as far as Africa is concerned, the prospects for true evangelization, as well as for radical conversion and authentic christianization will remain dim, unless the desired encounter between the two religions, the Christian and the traditional, takes place within the clear terms of reciprocal understanding.

We could substantiate this statement by statements of authoritative persons and names of prestige belonging both to the ecclesiastical and secular worlds - members of the African Society of Culture, professors of Higher Institutes, fellows of the Theological Association, Catholic as well as Protestant, the Episcopal Conferences. To these are to be added the acts of several Congresses, which in the past have taken the problem of the dialogue between Christian Religion and the religions of African traditions. We leave it to anyone who has time to consult missionary bibliography and turn its pages: he will find out that this theme recurs indefinitely.

Values of Cultures : With greater stress laid now on the values of African cultures, greater importance has also been given to traditional African religions. Indeed it was enough to apply the principle that each culture evolves round some central element, which forms its heart and core, and this element is - religion. Thus the religions of various ethnic groups, appeared in a new light as being the nucleus of African cultural heritage, and this was recognised to be equally social and spiritual.

Consequently the religious phenomenon became the object of new interest and people began to look at those patterns of popular religiosity with feeling, while nostalgia increased for the "old time religions", being the real expressions of authenticity, in opposition to other "foreign" types, notably Islam and Christianity. Furthermore, a case was brought against the Christian religion, at which accusations were levelled for having been a divisive element, an estrangement, that had made Africans "déracinés" - lose their roots, a religion that has torn apart the soul of African personality, by destroying those values that had held the communities together on the foundation of the moral and spiritual life and had ensured the strength of a profound

religious sense, by which the people lived and expressed their identity. In the last analysis, this attitude implied that the imported religions had caused the decline of their real religions, with the effect that the African today fitted no more the one or the other.

3. Evangelization Contested: Some literary descriptions have been drawn in publications by Africans depicting the situation of the negative aspects, amounting to claiming evangelization as a failure. In Colin Turnbull's "L'Africain Desemparé", the case of Matungi is quoted. Chinua Achebe has "The Things Fall Apart" and "Arrow of God" in "Religion in Western Thoughts", "Ngugi wa Thiong'O", "The River Between" and others like Mongo Beti of Cameroon.

These writers may exaggerate, but the feelings are well founded.

Politicians also have their part represented by Walter Bühlmann's "Process at Addis Abeba"(3).

More pertinent is the situation seen in light of tension between Christian evangelization and the African religions which still hold the grip on the cultural and traditional way of life.

At the Synod of Bishops 1974, the Voices from Africa echoed the same remark. Of 32 present, 21 (4) told the Assembly that evangelization was at the crossroads in the Continent, precisely because the old traditional religions still held sway on the masses and even on the convinced faithful and well educated Catholics. In their heart of hearts, in the subconscious, the Christians feel torn between two influences and live in a double world. Isidore de Souza expressed this in a phrase: "l'Africain ecartelé" (5).

4. Impact of Traditional Religions: All this amounts to stating that even evangelization must pay special attention to the cultures and to the impact of cultural religions. Evidence has shown what happens when this is not sufficiently done. The situation in Africa is grave: the errors or the failures of the past have brought about prejudices and misunderstandings. As evangelization continues, there is no need to expose the local Churches to another process, this time, call it "The Process at Dakar - Négritude" or "The Process at Kinshasa - authenticity".

The Second Vatican Council warns us that the method of evangelization ought to take into account the cultural contexts (AG n.10). It means that the religious traditions are of capital importance. There should be such a dialogue that effectively brings the message of the Gospel to bear on, permeate the real soul and mentality of the people.

The African case demonstrates that the effort in evangelizing, converting and christianizing the individuals without touching the family, the clan, the community and without bringing the Gospel to bear on permeate the real inner soul of the person and the society, would be doomed to relative failure.

For Africans, religion is within the cultural set-up as a traditional and community affair, just as they lived their existence and life-ideals. The same applies for the Christian religion, if it is to be lived and not only known as a mental exercise or professed as an external rite. V.Y. Mudimbe had strong remarks to make at the

Congress at Kinshasa in 1978 in his paper: "Le Christianisme vu par un Africain" (6) - in a word, he saw that in Africa Christianity can be said to be an artificial and superficial religion. Okot p'Bitek maintains that the God of Christians is another divinity to be added to the list of the traditional ones, for Christianity has just scratched the surface (7). One can go on adding similar observations.

The truth remains that the impact of traditional religions is paramount, and evangelization has now to move and face them. On the same front, the menace of syncretism by separatist groups, is interpreted as failure on the part of the evangelizing effort in reaching somewhere closer, within the dialogue with the cultural sentiments of local religions.

NOTES

1. LE ROY A., (1854-1938) missionary bishop, writer and ethnologist, specialist on problems about Primitive Religions, and Evangelization in Africa. Missionary in Zanzibar, Tanganyika and Kenya from 1876; Vicar Apostolic in Gabon, 1892 and finally Superior General of his Congregation (C.S.Sp.).
2. THEOLOGICAL FACULTIES in Africa: Catholic - Kinshasa, Abidjan; Protestant - Ibadan, Makumira (Tanzania), Kisangani (Zaire), Durban (Southern Africa).
3. BUEHLMANN W., Processo ad Addis Ababa, Ed. Paoline, 1978.
4. BUTTURINI G., (a cura): Le Nuove Vie del Vangelo: I Vescovi Africani parlano a tutta la Chiesa, Emi, Bologna, 1975.
5. DE SOUZA I., Pouvons-nous rester africains tout en étant membres d'une Religion dite importée? in: TELEMA 4 (1975) pp.23-33.
6. MUDIMBE V.Y., in: Religions africaines et Christianisme, Colloque de Kinshasa 1978, Faculté de Théologie Catholique Kinshasa 1979, p. 165-176.
7. CAGGIANO P., Sotto Processo, in: NIGRIZIA, No. 7, Luglio 1981, p. 49-52.
- 8.

Ref. Omnis Terra, November 1983, Via di Propaganda 00187 Roma, Italia.

ANIMATEURS SPIRITUELS POUR LES
GRANDS SEMINAIRES, KANANGA, ZAIRE

(Sedos Executive Committee decided to circulate the following request for spiritual directors in the Major Seminaries of Kananga on behalf of Mgr. Bakole Wa Ilunga. Contact the Bishop at B.P.70, Kananga, République du Zaïre.)

Kananga, le 9 mars, 1985

Très Révérends Pères,

L'Évangélisation de la région du Kasayi (situé au centre méridional du Zaïre) a commencé le 8 décembre 1891 par l'arrivée du premier missionnaire de la Congrégation du Coeur Immaculé de Marie (Scheut). Il n'y a donc pas encore 100 ans, mais pendant ce temps Dieu a répandu sa grâce de façon si abondante que maintenant 60% de la population est catholique.

Là où en 1891 il n'y avait aucun catholique, il y a maintenant 1 Archidiocèse et 7 diocèses-suffragants.

Depuis quelques années nous nous réjouissons de l'éclosion de nombreuses vocations religieuses, tant masculines que féminines: de nombreux candidats et candidates se présentent chaque année et demandent leur admission dans les Congrégations diocésaines et internationales (surtout Scheut, Ordre du Carmel, Serviteurs et Servantes des Pauvres, Soeurs de la Charité de Gand, etc...).

Depuis quelques années nous assistons également à de nombreuses demandes d'admission au Grand Séminaire. Nous nous en réjouissons très fort mais nous voulons suivre les recommandations de Sa Sainteté le Pape conseillant une sélection sévère et une formation très valable. L'unique Grand Séminaire de Kabue, fondé en 1934, a donné naissance, pour l'ensemble des 8 diocèses du Kasayi, à un Grand Séminaire Interdiocésain comprenant actuellement 4 sections:

- le Theologicum de KANANGA (4 années de théologie)
- le Philosophicum de KABUE (3 années de philosophie)
- le Philosophicum de MBUJIMAYI (3 années de philosophie)
- le Philosophicum-Theologicum de LODJA, qui vient d'ouvrir ses portes en novembre 1984 avec une 1^{re} année de philosophie.

Ce qui manque surtout pour ces Grands Séminaires, ce sont des "formateurs", pas tellement des "professeurs", mais des prêtres sérieux et spécialistes en spiritualité pour être des animateurs et accompagnateurs spirituels ("patres spirituales" comme on disait à l'époque) des grands séminaristes en formation.

Un prêtre fidei donum, du diocèse de Valence, accomplissait cette tâche au Philosophicum de Mbuji-Mayi; il vient de tomber gravement malade et a dû rentrer en France pour toujours. Deux Pères Scheutistes accomplissaient une pareille tâche au Theologicum de Malole; ils sont décédés tous les deux en peu de temps.

Par la présente j'adresse une demande et une supplication au SEDOS en vue de trouver 2 ou 3 prêtres, compétents en spiritualité, qui accepteraient de venir au Kasayi, pour au moins 2 ou 3 ans, comme animateurs spirituels et exemples vivants des futurs prêtres. Leur présence serait une aide très appréciable pour nos jeunes Eglises particulières et constituerait en même temps un lien de Charité et de Foi avec l'Eglise universelle.

J'ose exprimer l'espoir que le SEDOS pourra nous aider à trouver ces quelques saints prêtres dont nous avons besoin.

Je remercie d'avance le SEDOS et je le confie à la bienveillance et l'amour de Dieu, Père, Fils et Saint-Esprit, et à la protection de la Sainte Vierge Marie.

+ BAKOLE WA ILUNGA
Archevêque de Kananga

- fin -

CHURCH AND INCULTURATION
A CENTURY OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN EASTERN NIGERIA

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(Cette année, on va célébrer le centenaire de la première prédication de la Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ au Nigeria de l'Est. Le P. UZUKWU, dans un opuscule commémoratif de ce centenaire du Catholicisme Romain, se demande si le message évangélique a bien été inculturé parmi les Ibos. Les déclarations des derniers papes, les documents de Vatican II et les intuitions de la théologie moderne de l'inculturation signifient sans doute l'élimination "de l'écran occidental au travers duquel l'Évangile a été présenté aux Ibos au cours des cent dernières années." Nous vous donnons ici le cinquième et dernier chapitre de cet opuscule. N.D.L.R.).

INCULTURATION

Our analysis of the merging of certain elements in the traditional Igbo experience and practice of priesthood and leadership with the received western christianity's practice of ministry shows the urgency of a theology of inculturation. An overly clerical Roman Catholic Church with a hierarchically organised priesthood is matched with a dimension of the Igbo religious world where priests are concerned with the affairs of their spirits and where a social status is ritually hallowed. But this priestly and hierarchical model fails to address a fundamental dimension of Igbo religion (*Chukwu*, God). *Chukwu* - creator, giver of destinies, establisher of order and life in the universe - is not served by a priesthood. *Isi-chukwu* (head of *Chukwu*) or *eze-chukwu* (king of *Chukwu*) is abominable language; but *isi-muo* head of spirit, (i.e. of the cult) and *eze-muo* (King of spirit) are the Igbo names for the priest.

Furthermore, there is no question of rank/order/privilege when *Chukwu's* children stand before him: Every person is unique and created unique by *Chukwu*, each fulfilling his destiny. If one becomes *oso* (titled), *isi-muo* (priest of a particular spirit), *Eze Nri* (King of Nri), it is part of the unfolding of one's destiny which, Igbo myths say, is given and chosen and which is embodied within the personal *chi* given to each Igbo by *Chukwu* at creation (birth).

Thus it appears reasonable to assert that the priestly and hierarchical (status) model of the church transmitted by christian missionaries appealed to the Igbo desire to achieve success and to the Igbo worship of those spirits which missionaries called idols. Without much reflection an operative theology of identity has been worked out in Igbo catholic church practice between western

christianity's church order and Igbo worship of spirits (or 'idolatry') along with title-taking. We do not think that this is the best the Igbo could make of conversion to christianity. We think that neither Igbo religion nor christianity is served in this merger. And in this centenary year, our call for inculturation theology is indeed very relevant.

(a) WHAT IS INCULTURATION?

Since the second Vatican Council, Roman Catholic church authorities have been addressing very positively the question of Gospel and Culture. This has culminated in the recent establishment by John Paul II of a Pontifical Council for Culture (L'Osservatore Romano, Jan. 18, 1983).

Oftentimes when one talks about African culture, minds are filled with dress, dance, 'quaint' art work - modes of the past. But culture is dynamic and living, and not only past-oriented. It embraces socio-economic and political organisations of a people within a given environment; it has a depth-level (generally called structural history) where people struggle to express and reflect on the mystery of its contact with the universe. At this depth-level the questions of life and death, of God and the spirits undergirding the universe, are posed.

Inculturation touches all three levels of culture - the passing modes, the socio-economic and political institutions, and the structural history (questions of life and death etc.). But inculturation theology concentrates on the level of structural history where changes are hardly discernible and where the heart of the culture is encountered. I would define inculturation theology for the Igbo as that theology which works towards the encounter of Igbo structural history and the heart of the proclamation of the gospel.

Because this theology must be christian, it becomes an incarnation of the christian message in the heart of Igbo culture so that the christian way becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies Igbo life, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation (cf Horvath, 1981).

Because this christian theology must speak to the Igbo universe in a way that makes sense, it takes seriously Igbo insight into life-death, man, God, and the invisible hierarchies, addressing the questions raised in these domains in such a way that the Christ becomes the unifying and restituting factor.

This theology takes very seriously the pronouncement of Vatican II that the Church is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any way of life, customs and practices but can "enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves" (Gaudium et Spes, No. 58; see Ad Gentes, No. 22). Thus this theology will cast off the western screen through which the gospel has been presented to the Igbo in the last 100 years.

Inculturation is not adaptation of western Christianity to the Igbo language. Western Christianity cannot be 'fixed' into the Igbo universe as if language were a neutral code. Rather inculturation of the gospel into the Igbo universe would reveal an original reflection and praxis - there would be a mutual compenetration of gospel and Igbo universe so that the language of the gospel transforms Igbo language and a new christian Igbo language emerges. (cf Whorf, 1956). The inadequacy of adaptation is shown in the dominantly western (clerical) understanding of the church by Igbo christians.

True enough, Igbo cosmology and ritual practices constituted the base from which life in the church (ecclesiology) preached by missionaries was perceived and accomodated. But it is a church life which is in itself incomplete and defective, a life which points more to status and rank ('hierarchology') (cf Congar, 1965, p.45) than to a community filled by the Spirit of Christ. This "hierarchology" would attract the modern status-seeking Igbo who has bastardized traditional title-taking by overstressing its economic and political advantages to the detriment of the spiritual and ethical rigour. Inculturation theology rightly starts by exposing the insufficiency of sewing this western clerical church onto the new Igbo christian communities and projects a more dynamic path for the encounter of gospel and culture.

(b) FOR A LIVING CHURCH IN IGBOLAND

Inculturation in so far as it has bearing on a living Igbo church-community involves a review of ecclesiology. Since there must be mutual challenging between the heart of the gospel and the heart of Igbo culture for there to be a new creation, conversion is imperative. For a living church, this conversion involves a review of what we have described above as the Igbo reading of the missionary message.

First of all the missionary message as filtered into the mind of the Igbo must be challenged by the gospel. The societas perfecta (perfect society) theological model with all the necessary ecclesiastical structures should be questioned and completed by the pilgrim-community model - a community following Jesus and having nowhere to lay its head. Biblical images of church-community as People of God, Household of God, Body of Christ, recuperated by the second Vatican Council to describe the experience of God dwelling among his people would correct the institutional ecclesiology of Vatican I which exalts clerics and looks down on other members of God's household. But to safeguard the manipulation of the biblical images by an incipient institutional theology, inculturation theology must introduce a freshness into ecclesiology by insisting on the equality of God's children in God's house (Heb 3:6; Gal 3:28; note the importance of the *personal chi* principle among the Igbo), the importance of each member of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:14-27), and the pride of all who are called people of God (1 Pt. 2:9-10).

The exaggerations of this institutional theology as seen in the way church order is practised among the Igbo requires that if the gospel is stumbling block, the right stumbling block must be presented. About ministry in the house of God, Mark's Gospel presents the right stumbling block thus:

"You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles Lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you;

but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (*Mark 10:42-44*).

Ministry in God's household is fundamentally service and not status. Inculturation, stressing conversion, challenges a deficient institutional ecclesiology which lent itself further to abuse in a success-oriented society.

On its own Igbo culture has ritual checks and balances for containing abuses. But as soon as Igbo people become Christians, which implicates a moving away from traditional religious rituals to rituals directed by a faith-confession of Jesus as interpreter of God, the door becomes open for inroads of residues of traditional rituals which have not been confronted with the new confession. This is what happened when Igbo Christians established identity (without reflection) between title-taking, priestly service to spirits and the Catholic priestly ministry along with religious profession, knighthood, etc.

(c) MOVING AWAY FROM THE LORD-TYPE CLERICALISM

Inculturation involving conversion leads to mutual confrontation between gospel and culture. Igbo tradition takes up arms against the Roman Catholic claim of ordaining "priests of God". The heart of Igbo religion and practice insists that God is the absolutely singular - everything is reduced to him and he resists being reduced to anything else (cf Uzukwu, 1985; Horvath, 1980). Everyone of his children stands before him - all constituting members of his household. This possibility of standing before him goes before any talk of ministry - it is the primordial ministry. All members of his household constitute thus a priestly people. All services in the household are absolutely dependent upon this capability to stand before God.

Without going into all that the theology of ministry involves, we note that inculturation in Igbo church-community would highlight the God-basis of community being a priestly people and remove the confusion of the present practice of the Igbo church whereby ministerial priesthood is thought to be the same as ministry to spirits created by God. This confusion in a way reduces *Chukwu* to created spirits (*alusi, muo*) who need the service of priests conversant with their changing moods. For the Igbo this reduction is abomination; and for the Jewish-Christian, such a practice must be rejected as idolatry.

Leadership in the Igbo church should plunge back into the New Testament experience of ministry as obedience to the Lord and service (Jn. 13:16). It is the Spirit of Jesus within the community which raises leaders to feed and tend the flock (Jn. 21:15-16). Leaders are authoritatively commissioned by Jesus Christ (I Cor. 12:28f) and in the same Spirit they are also commissioned representatives of the community (2 Cor. 8:23; Acts 13:2f). If they are authorized by the Christ in the Spirit-filled community to share in the ministry of building up this household of God, this choice is never seen as individual achievement nor is it directed towards such achievement: "It is indispensable to recognize", says Rengstorff, "that the community rather than individuals is the sphere where Jesus

works as the risen Lord, and that His apostoloi (apostles) can be His fully accredited representatives only as members of it" (Rengstorf, 1964, p. 434). That is why their apostolate as authorized representatives of Christ in the community is described by John not as ruling or deciding but as "feeding" and "tending" (Jn. 21:15-16).

Ministry in community cannot thus be identified with Igbo priestly mediation to spirits and oracles whose language and changing moods must be understood by the priest and interpreted to the people. Nor can the call be regarded as personal achievement and arrival at a status where one lords it over. Rather it is a ministry whereby the minister raised by the Spirit of Christ (which animates the community) and recognized as commissioned by the community (through prayers and imposition of hands) symbolizes God's gift in the community. The minister is not the Christ, and yet he truly represents the Christ. In other words, despite his weakness and sinfulness, and because he is one with the community of the redeemed, God's promise and action of salvation is revealed in his ministry in the community. Just as Igbo people surround the kola-nut with images of fellowship, honest intention, love, etc, the priest ministering in community mediates God's work of salvation as accomplished in the Christ and as continually building up the community.

The minister does not stand between the people and God as a means (to reach God-like in oracles and spiritcult), he does not enter the sanctuary (like the Jewish high priests) to intercede for the people (this has been set aside by the unique mediation of Christ (see Epistle to the Hebrews), rather his ministry reveals the correct sense of sacrament in the church. In other words, in his person and ministry we see a revelation of what supasses what we see and touch - God's household being built up and being given life in the representation of Christ's service unto death in this accredited servant of Christ and community. In Igbo tradition such community leaders can be compared to heads of families, clans and village-groups who embody the ancestral experience and mediate the presence of God and ancestors in their service of community.

Inculturation presupposes a meeting of cultures. There is no profound inculturation until ultimate questions of the cultures are related and confronted. The denial by Igbo tradition of a priesthood dedicated to God liberates the experience of God from being imprisoned by a privileged class and urges the Igbo christian community experiencing renewal and conversion to re-examine the inherited western clericalism in the light of the New Testament. Old Testament priesthood already under probe in prophetic and New Testament writing becomes still more shaky before the Igbo experience of God. Inculturation theology insists that God is not a property of any one religious tradition, rather the celebration of God's uniqueness in Christ becomes richer in communities where there is a profound encounter of cultures.

(d) PARTICIPANTS IN THE CHRIST

The mediation of Jesus as the Christ comes into sharper focus in Igbo christian community. Igbo christians confess Jesus as the one who stands transparent before God so that God's will for man's

good be accomplished in and through him. In its sacerdotal christology the Epistle to the Hebrews (see Schillebeeckx, 1980, pp.237-293) says that Jesus was chosen from the community of men, was plunged into the reality of human suffering, was obedient to the will of God (in suffering), made his life (and death) a sacrificial offering, and this offering was declared agreeable by God, and entering into the presence of God, he sat to make intercession for us. Those of the household of God can now enter with confidence into this presence, the chief worshipper is Jesus the anointed one himself (see Hebrews 5; 10; 12);

Again we cannot go into all that is involved in the confession of the Christ for Igbo christians. We note, however, that Jesus the Christ is the prophetic manifestation that God is among us, that we have easy access to God. This access to God is easy to understand in Igbo tradition. Various Igbo myths stress that founding ancestors were sent by *Chukwu* to instruct the community that *Chukwu* is creator and giver of destinies. This is the story of Nri and Ezinihitte origins.

This confession of the Christ makes relative the traditional Igbo perception of spirits and spirit-cult and the fear of return to chaos through abomination. The threat of evil (spirits, persons, things, acts) remains, but instead of the services of a priestcraft being sought to remove abomination, evil is now overcome under the sign of Him who is raised. Since the Christ is the exemplar, participating in him becomes configuration to him. This configuration (or 'christification') (see Malula, 1983) implicates following Christ's way. For the Igbo church this means being plunged into the human Nigerian situation, making life-death a sacrificial offering for fullness of life, and pleading with God for the transformation of society (conversion). Worship and ethics would merge in such a renewed Igbo christian community. Consequently one could easily conclude with Paul:

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rm 12:1-2).

Ref. E. Elochukwu Uzukwu CSSp. *Church and Inculturation: A Century of Roman Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*. Pacific College Press Ltd., P.O.Box 21, Oruwulu -Obosi, Anambra State, Nigeria, 1985, Pp.37.