

Notes

GENERAL CHAPTERS: Several SEDOS members have held their Chapters recently. We send congratulations and good wishes to PATRICIA CONNER, RSCM, newly elected head of the Religious of the Sacred Heart and to SARAH SUMMERS, SCMM, newly elected head of the Medical Mission Sisters. We look forward to meeting both of them for the first time at the SEDOS Annual Assembly on December 10, 1985. Sincere thanks to MARY MILLIGAN, RSCM, and to GODELIEVE PROVE, SCMM, for their close collaboration in SEDOS projects. Godelieve served as SEDOS Vice President for three years until 1984 and as an Executive Committee member before that. We pray that the Spirit of God will accompany both of them in their new surroundings.

Congratulations also to GUSTAVO ALONSO, CMF, re-elected to a second term as head of the Claretians and to ANTONIO PANTEGHINI, SCJ, re-elected as head of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. We look forward to continued collaboration with both of them and their institutes.

MISSION IN A NEW WORLD ORDER? There are developments so profound in the world to-day that they cannot be excluded in treating of Mission. We venture to propose three: the search for world peace with its concomitant scandal of the arms industry; the global aspects of mankind's evolution which infers the absolute necessity of economic and cultural co-operation at world level; feminism, implementation of the consequences of a true mutuality between the sexes and equality of human rights for women. It seems hardly credible to discuss mission to-day without reference to these three basic topics.

We call readers' attention to some recent publications touching on these global concerns. "THE IMMORAL QUESTION" in MISSIONE OGGI, No.7/1985, deals with the Italian arms industry. It is "The Business of Shame" - a business in which Italy excels, in which "Made in Italy" is a sign of sophisticated expertise. This honest analysis could be applied to other countries of Europe and beyond. MISSIONE OGGI is a review published monthly in Italian by the Saverian missionaries.

Two works dealing with the future of planet earth are worthy of study: ULTRA - EVOLUTION ET DEVELOPPMENT: REGARDS SUR UN MONDE A CONSTRUIRE, (see Book Notes in this issue) written in French is an excellent study, concise and clear of the evolution of mankind. It looks to "Ultra-evolution" - an agenda for studies of the future of mankind with particular reference to socio economic developments, north-south dialogue, evolution at the level of society. The author writes from a background of more than 20 years service in the "Third World" mostly in Rwanda.

STAR WARS AND THE STATE OF OUR SOULS by Patricia M. Mische of Global Education Associates, published by Winston Press is a plea not to take into outer space our old habits of war but to base a new vision of the earth on the best creative, spiritual, scientific and humanitarian developments over millions of years of earth's existence, to discover at last who we are on this wonderful planet and who we are capable of becoming.

Missionaries' lives should reflect transparently the goodness and simplicity of the Gospel. But they live out their lives in an evolving world. It is good to remind ourselves that mission takes place in that world.

BIBLE STUDY IN THE CARIBBEAN TODAY

PART II

Michel de Verteuil

(Il n'y a pas une manière simple de lire la Bible, même pour les gens simples. Il ne faut rien ajouter ni enlever aux histoires. Elles ont une dimension universelle; elles sont symboliques. Pour comprendre leur message une discipline d'ouverture est nécessaire. On peut les entendre bien des fois sans les comprendre. L'étude de la Bible demande aussi la discipline de la prière - il faut la lire en la méditant. Une fois qu'on est entré profondément dans une histoire de la Bible on priera spontanément... Personne n'a à nous le dire. Lire la Bible est un acte libre, de gens libres qui interprètent leur histoire d'une manière créative).

STORY READING AND DISCIPLINE

I have said that one of the problems of bible study is that there are scholars being scientific about it while others are doing their inspirational reading. It is customary to speak of the second group as "simple" people. I always find it difficult to ascertain what exactly this simplicity consists in, but the general idea is that once you are prayerful and sincere you will get a deep message from the bible, especially if you consider yourself not up to serious study ("this teaching is too high for me") or do not have the time for it.

A "Simple" Way? To my mind the whole notion of a "simple" way of getting to the heart of the bible passage is dangerous. None of us comes to the bible simply. We come with our prejudices and resistance to change and God for his part has assured us that his ways are not our ways, his thoughts not our thoughts. Something (or somebody) has to give.

If we experience the encounter as simple it merely means that we have twisted the passage to suit ourselves, and the many examples in the history of Christians justifying all kinds of inhuman behaviour by recourse to the bible are there to warn us how easy it is to do this. My experience in bible teaching is that any group of Christians, no matter what their social class or educational background, need a rigorous discipline, an asceticism, to come to an awareness of their story on the one hand and of God's on the other, the complicated process that Jesus described as being converted and becoming like little children.

We read in Deuteronomy that Moses told the people:

"You must add nothing to what I command you and take nothing from it". This remains, in my experience, a practical warning of the need for discipline in bible reading.

"Taking nothing" from the passage: I find that people tend to isolate one line from the rest of the passage and then set it up by itself, "Jesus wept", "I am the bread of life", "call no man father". Isolating it like that they are then able to fit it into their narrow world view. But a bible passage, like every story has movement and we must watch this movement very carefully and attentively. We must discipline ourselves not to interrupt - nor to conclude too soon that we have understood the passage.

It is difficult to manipulate the text if we listen to the whole movement. In fact we often find a part of the passage that is awkward because it does not seem to fit our story (why did Jesus say "where two or three" and not "many", why did he say that the mustard seed is the "smallest" and not merely "small"); at this point many give in to the temptation to "take something" from the passage. We should rather accept the challenge and ask ourselves how the detail in fact fits our experience. Hans Rudi-Weber, a contemporary scholar, tells of an Indian peasant who said that the difference between the bible and other books is that we read other books but the bible reads us; it takes discipline to let ourselves be read by a bible story.

"Adding nothing": We need discipline too if we are to "add nothing" to the bible. Bible stories, especially gospel stories are sparse; there are few details to stir our imagination. So what do we do? Sometimes we supplement, say, Mark's account with Matthew's (like borrowing from Matthew's account of the temptation in the desert to add some details to Mark's account), treating the evangelists like errant school children who have forgotten some point in their homework and must be prompted by somebody else in the class. Or then we make our own additions, "Jesus must have smiled", "the people must have been surprised", "Peter must have remembered". This kind of imaginative filling out of the bible story may be helpful; the problem is that very frequently what we are adding comes from our own prejudices and soon we are laying more stress on this addition than on the actual passage, "putting aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions". We say that Jesus had a gentle voice, that Mary stayed at home to wash the dishes or that the apostles were uneducated, all of which additions, if we think about it, serve to reinforce our pre-conceptions of how God works.

Bible reading must start from the conviction that God inspired what we have before us and there is sufficient there to summon us to repentance if only we open ourselves to it.

The discipline of openness: The bible, according to its own evidence, "cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely". Frequently we apply a passage to vague realities like "people" or "they" or "what sometimes happens" with the result that it passes us harmlessly by. We must force ourselves to answer concrete, personal, questions from the passage: when have I sat by a well and who was Jesus who came up and asked me for a drink? When did I receive something from God and complained that others got the same even though they came at the eleventh hour only? Where did I see four thousand people fed in a desert place with five barley loaves and two fish and who was the small boy who was called on to provide this inadequate food?

The bible is a story of particular people in particular circumstances but it is also a universal story and to discover it as such demands

discipline too. The story of Jesus is the story of all the goodness that has ever existed (and more). Israel Old and New is all humanity struggling against the odds to become God's people; Mary - all those who wait faithfully for the fulfilment of their aspirations; the Pharisees - all leaders who have let themselves move from service to domination. Many Christians narrow the scope of the bible story so that it becomes a private story, one in which they or their congregation or their church are at home and all others consigned to the exterior darkness. Here again a good method necessitates that we ask the right questions of a passage. We must ask ourselves how is the story universally true. In this way we experience the thrill of discovering that our story is a bible story which is symbolic, giving us a new insight into life, the nature of God and of how people are, how goodness or evil operates, how God is patient and how he tempers justice and mercy.

This art of seeing a bible story as universal is difficult to learn but it is crucial since it attacks at the root the tendency of many Christians to live in a closed Church world and lose their sense of mission to the wider society. Bible reading should help us to grow in wisdom so that we can fulfill our vocation to be light, salt and leaven, to interpret for our contemporaries the great parables of life which they see and see again but do not perceive, hear and hear again but do not understand: why the grain of wheat must die, why the poor are blessed and why striving to save one's life is the sure way to lose it. It should make us perceptive so that we can unmask the stratagems by which evil in every generation manages to conceal itself, all that is covered becoming uncovered everything hidden now made clear.

The bible read in this way gives us hope since we are able to see Jesus at work in our world and can therefore assure those who despair of our society that the light still shines in the darkness and that the darkness has not conquered it. It shows us too that the claims of the world continue to be fraudulent and that Jesus was perfectly right to say that we need not be afraid of it: Pilate is still a coward who has forgotten that he would have no power if it had not been given to him from above; the man born blind is still wiser than the theologians, the desert remains a safe place where angels look after us; the criminal hanging on the cross - really a son of God. Bishop Helder Camara has quite rightly said that no book is more subversive to an oppressive regime than the bible.

The Discipline of prayer: Finally, bible study requires the discipline of prayer. For the past few centuries it has been divorced from prayer, but it was not so in the first centuries of the Church and we must return to the practice by which the bible is read meditatively. We need the discipline of prayer first because it is only in an attitude of inner quiet that we will be able to open our deep selves to the passage. Then once we have entered deeply into a bible story we will pray. No one has to tell us; spontaneously we will find ourselves thanking God for the Jesus people who are reaching out to publicans and sinners of our society, praying that the Peter we have identified will have the courage to leave the boat, asking God to have mercy on all Pharisees (including ourselves). We must treasure this moment of biblical prayer because it is then that bible reading ceases being a mental activity and becomes one which involves our whole selves, so that like St. John we can speak of,

*"Something which has existed since the beginning,
that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes,
that we have watched and touched with our hands".*

Since moreover we have identified the story as universal our moment of prayer will be a moment of communion with all humanity; indeed it will often be a communion with the movement of nature also, as in the gospel parables or in St. Paul's cosmic vision:

"From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free".

CONCLUSION

It is evident that reading the bible as a story, as I have outlined it, is an act of freedom, free people interpreting their story creatively. We can be sure that one result will be the flowering of religious art. Where the bible is read creatively, it must happen, as it has happened right through the history of the Church, that Christian communities become creative, they construct churches that are imaginatively adapted to the environment, sermons are alive, the liturgy is enhanced by music, paintings and dance which emerge from the community itself.

This of course is only the beginning. A community that experiences itself as creative in its worship will naturally be creative too in finding solutions to its social and economic problems. Then indeed it will be clear that the bible is the power of God, the power to set captives free.

Ref: SEDOS Documentation Centre No.1/1128

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

GROWTH OF THE NATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL
IN NIGERIA

On Saturday, June 22nd, missionary history was made at Gwarwalada, Abuja, when Father John Osom was ordained priest and nine others ordained deacons and admitted to permanent membership in the Missionary Society of St. Paul. Bishop Anthony S. Sanusi, Ordinary of the National Missionary Seminary and Society, was the ordaining bishop.

In his homily, Bishop Sanusi, recalled the proposal of Cardinal Ekandem to the Bishops' Conference at Kaduna in September 1976 to establish the Society. The Bishops' acceptance and commitment to the project is now bearing its first fruits. Founding the Missionary Seminary and Society of St. Paul was an act of faith by the whole Nigerian Church. Most dioceses did not yet have enough priests but the obligation was on all to be missionary.

Before being ordained a deacon at the ceremony each one took the solemn oath of permanent membership in The Missionary Society of St. Paul. They promised to observe the Society's Constitutions, to obey the Society's superiors and to accept any appointment given in accordance with the Constitutions.

First indigenous missionary Society,
of Secular priests in Africa.

Today there are in all, two priests and nine deacons in the Society. In three years, 1988, it could have 33 priests and 16 deacons making 49 permanent members in all. By then, if the Institute is successful in carrying on missionary work and has proved itself viable, it should be well on the way to having its own internal governance and in another three years to holding its own Chapters. That is how one can foresee, with God's help the growth of the Society according to the Constitutions given to it by the Episcopal Conference.

St. Patrick's Missionary Society have helped to staff the Seminary from its foundation in 1976. It is located at Iperu-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria (Postal address: P.O.Box, 11).

Ref. The National Missionary Seminary of St. Paul, Press Release.

SCHEMA FOR THE CONTINUING STUDY OF INTEGRATION OF
FAITH AND CULTURE
INSTITUTE OF WORLD CONCERNS, DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY,
PITTSBURG. MAY 1985.

*"The split between Gospel and culture
is without doubt the drama of our time...."EN.20.*

(Environ soixante-dix représentants de diverses disciplines académiques se sont réunis une semaine à l'Institute of World Concerns, Université Duquesne, Pittsburg, en mai 1985. Les conférenciers ont été: Donald Senior C.P., Rev. Vergil Elizondo, Robert Schreiter C.P.P.S., Michael Fogarty, Richard T. Knowles, Gerald Persha, M.M., William McCready, Bishop Tshishiku Tshibangu, Michael Amaladoss SJ, et Mgr. Joseph Francis SVD. Ci-dessous la déclaration finale du Séminaire.

Le discours d'introduction a été donné par Frans Timmermans CSSp. Prochainement la publication intégrale sera faite sous forme de livre.)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Institute of World Concerns, Duquesne University, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, invited a number of persons to reflect upon the question - the Integration of Faith and Culture: the Mission of the Church. The international group present at the seminar represented varied academic disciplines and a diversity of ministries; the participants were for the most part Roman Catholic.
2. Through input and exchanges during the seminar, the parameters of the subject became clearer, as well as those areas where consensus has been attained. Several points emerged which indicate the aspects that still need to be addressed. The present schema is an attempt, however limited, to gather these aspects for future study and development.
3. Faith, as used in the schema, describes the response of a people to God from within the context of who they are, what they experience, their self-understanding and their ways of communicating. This understanding of faith emphasized more the process of faith than faith's content. This arose out of the seminar's concern for the integration process. While the focus is on the Christian faith, it is recognized that faith is an experience belonging to the human condition and cannot be limited to Christian faith.
4. Culture, as used in the schema, describes that which enables a human group to interpret and to express its understanding of the human mystery. Culture is being changed and deepened in many ways; it has multiple forms and levels. There is a constant interaction among cultures.
5. The study of the integration of faith and culture is one, which, of necessity, is interdisciplinary.
6. The points in this schema are not listed in priority.

II. SIGNIFICANT POINTS FOR ONGOING EXPLORATION OF THE PROCESS

1. The primary locus of God's action is human life, which in turn expresses itself through culture. All peoples have basic religious needs; the religious sphere is the most radical sphere of all in cultures. Any religious tradition is a way of life as much as it is a view of life.
2. The integration of faith and culture is an imperative and a fundamental task for every local church. It is essential to include local churches of western societies in the missiological discussions which focus on the integration of faith and culture.
3. In every place the people must explore the way in which they understand and interpret their human condition. This understanding may be legitimated or challenged by the Gospel. The incarnation of the Christian message has not yet fully been integrated with the diversity of cultures. This is an ongoing process.
4. Cultures as a human endeavour is beset by pathologies and is in need of continual transformation. The paradox of finitude and freedom is found in all of human life and is the foundational source of both its creative and pathological expressions. The Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection enacted in Jesus points the way to salvation in culture. Jesus Christ is the expression of what the paschal and transformative pattern of grace looks like in human life and what that grace mystery invites humanity to become.
5. The steady emergence of a world church is forcing western Christianity to confront the pluriform pathways to the human and divine. The Holy Spirit's involvement with human life leads peoples through their different faiths to respond to God and to integrate faith and cultures.
6. Genuine respect, trust and acceptance are foundational to the realization of a world church called to be an inclusive community through a communion of local churches. That respect, trust and acceptance are best exemplified in an attitude of listening in a community.
7. An important and pervasive aspect of early Christianity and its texts points out two orientations:
 - a. The objective of an inclusive community is mandated by the Gospel message as exemplified in various New Testament illustrations where it is achieved through boundary-stressing and boundary-breaking, e.g. in the healing stories.
 - b. Early Christianity incorporated the message in a transcultural medium in order to communicate the need for an inclusive community.
8. Plurality presents a challenge not only for individual integration, but calls for corporate response and integration. The relation between individual and corporate response needs further exploration.

III. QUESTIONS RAISED IN THE SEMINAR

1. The relationship of western Christians to their own cultures is clearly in need of study. Specifically for U.S. Catholics, there has been the suggestion that we do not know well enough our own history

and the attempts to integrate our faith and cultures. Moreover, whether our contemporary cultures are in decline, or at least in crisis, and deeply resistant to integration with faith is also a question.

2. The attraction of ideologies and a global 'pop' or 'anti-culture', especially in cities, raises questions about the nature and power of our faith.
3. There was ambiguity about the mandate of an evangelizer. Is the mandate a right, a call or an invitation? Either within their own culture or across cultures, can contemporary evangelizers be content with sharing, listening, challenging and a ministry of presence as opposed to one of leading and exercising power?
4. Looking back over the past, is there a need for transition and reconciliation that would allow evangelized to be healed from suffering caused by past errors?
5. What are the empirical grounds for hoping that there are cultural universals which are profound?
6. As for the Roman Catholic Church, are its juridic organizations flexible enough to include more cultural pluralism? Is there even need for extending the number of rites so that law and ritual might be more inculturated in this way? Can this flexibility be extensive enough for its members to join other Christians and other faiths for relative purposes using relative means in ambiguous social situations?
7. Despite attempts at renewal for several decades, the nature of theology and its manner of being communicated is still criticized for being isolated from lived experience. How can theology have a more comprehensive base and a more public audience?
8. What other means besides making statements can the Church use to influence structures in societies?
9. How can the themes raised in this seminar be developed by the specific challenges of two areas that were only touched on: e.g. Eastern European experiences of culture and faith—and cross-cultural understandings and experiences of women concerning their historical and current status?
10. What relationship has faith to the role of technology in culture and to the economic systems of various cultures?

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL CONCERNED WITH THIS PROCESS

The Seminar has viewed the INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND CULTURE as the continuation in time and space of the process of the Incarnation of the Word of God in the Power of the Holy Spirit. Hence there are serious attitudinal and behavioural implications.

I. All of the people of God are called to:

- a) believe that the integration of faith and culture is possible, even if it is difficult;

- b) rely on the power of the Spirit Who is the main invisible agent in this process, while at the same time approaching the process with a great deal of openness to the expressions of the Spirit's life indicated in signs of the times and to change;
- c) persevere in it with courage despite all of the difficulties encountered, knowing that "He who has begun this will bring it to completion";
- d) realize that each culture has many beautiful aspects which can enrich the external manifestations, and even the content, of faith;
- e) accept the fact that each culture also has negative elements which must either be purified by the faith, or challenged by it;
- f) encourage a pluriformity of manifestations of the integration of faith and culture, and live comfortably with that pluralism;
- g) include the participation of all groups within the Church in this process, actively seeking the involvement of those segments which are marginalized, such as, youth, the elderly and the poor among whom women are the greater majority;
- h) be willing to tolerate mistakes in this process.

2. Evangelizers of their own culture are called to:

- a) lead other members of the Church in exhibiting all of the qualities of above.
- b) assist the rest of the Church to acquire these qualities;
- c) undertake actively the acquisition of adequate knowledge of their culture in its aspects, positive as well as negative;
- d) appreciate and affirm the positive elements of their own culture and recognize in humility the negative ones;
- e) see themselves as the catalysts, under the guidance of the Spirit and in dialogue with the universal Church, of the integration of faith and culture;
- f) cultivate a mind-set which looks for the "both-and" in formulating their responses to the relevant challenges rather than maintaining an "either-or" attitude;
- g) develop a deep commitment to the essentials of the faith blended with an openness to all that is cultural in it;
- h) value the importance of the wisdom and philosophies of the people - symbols, music, art, poetry, dance and other significant expressions of culture - and accept the cooperation of those gifted in these expressions of ~~culture~~ with the process of the integration of faith and culture;
- i) attend to the literate, oral and "secondary oral" aspects or dimensions of a culture, so that faith may be appropriately and effectively present in all media, furthermore attending to the non-verbal aspects of a culture, especially image and touch;

- j) commit themselves to preach the entire Gospel without compromise or adulteration while recognizing that there is a "hierarchy of truths" in each faith.

3. Cross-cultural Evangelizers are called to:

- a) accept the fact that the local church is the primary agent of the process of the integration of faith and culture, and they are supportive agents as well as stimulator-catalysts;
- b) provide themselves with appropriate preparation (e.g. anthropology and language) and adequate theological reflection to become receptive and responsive to the new culture in which they are now living;
- c) be with people of different cultures, receiving and responding to them appreciatively and joyfully, learning from them and sharing with them, particularly their cultural values, symbols, music and art, but above all becoming friends with such people while living with them;
- d) be ready and willing to ask for a change of place and/or ministry whenever they realize, or are told, that they are not suited to that culture, or they are no longer needed;
- e) share willingly with local people whatever expertise they have in order to enhance their integration of faith and culture by building on the conditions and customs present in the people;
- f) offer as gifts the cultural and faith experiences of their heritage to their new friends with a sense of equality, always remembering that these experiences, if they are to enrich others in the sharing, must first be acceptable and meaningful to them;
- g) cope with the fact that kenosis is part of any process of the integration of faith and culture, accepting it joyfully as integral to evangelization;
- h) recognize that within this perspective the only mission and evangelization possible in the future is the "mission of accompaniment", which will eventually lead to inculturation;
- i) consider themselves as bridges between cultures and peoples, and as reminders of the universal church to the local church in which they live;
- j) strive to discover the transcultural symbols which refer to the local church as well as to the universal church and use them for joint faith celebrations.

4. The Church as a whole is called to:

- a) consider the integration of faith and culture as the mandate for and the right of every local church;
- b) accept the foundation of this mandate in the Biblical tradition of breaking boundaries by Yahweh, Jesus and the Apostles, witnessed to in the pluralism of the early church;

- c) continue the process of the integration of faith and culture initiated after Vatican II and not regress into a monocultural Church, characterized by an uprooted and intellectualized faith;
- d) encourage all local churches to engage in the process of the integration of faith and culture; support those churches which have begun it, but have not yet produced fruit; and give full approval to those local churches which have already begun a fruitful integration of faith and culture;
- e) welcome the widespread initiative of the "bottom-up" movement in this process, while providing an "enlightened leadership" to it;
- f) understand that each culture needs to be "evangelized" and not only "sacramentalized".

- end -

 MESSAGE DES EVEQUES DU BURUNDI AUX FIDELES

(Traduction du texte kirundi)

(Witnessing to Christ frequently involves suffering and death. This is the lot of countless catechists and Church leaders simple men and women to-day. The publicity which surrounds the deaths of priests and religious does not extend to them. They are largely unknown. In this pastoral letter the Bishops of Burundi encourage their people to stand firm in the face of what many see as the beginning of an age of suffering. Foreign missionaries are being expelled or having their visas refused. Restrictions are being placed on the celebration of Mass. The Bishops seek to avoid a confrontation to keep open the possibility of dialogue. The text has been slightly shortened due to pressure of space).

Chers frères dans le Christ,

.... C'est Dieu qui nous a chargés de diriger la communauté chrétienne. Il est de notre devoir de vous rassembler, de faire de vous une communauté vivante, de vous encourager pour que vous ne soyez pas dispersés comme un troupeau sans berger. Certains sont inquiets à cause des critiques qu'on leur fait pour leur foi. Soyez sans crainte, Jésus-Christ en qui vous avez mis votre foi est le Fils de Dieu. Il s'est fait homme pour nous sauver. Il est le Maître de tous les hommes, sans exception.

Jésus-Christ n'est ni le Dieu des Européens, ni celui des Africains, ni de quelque autre race que ce soit. Il est Dieu pour tous les hommes, de tous les pays. C'est cet enseignement que vous avez reçu, et c'est le même enseignement que l'Eglise continuera à transmettre, n'avez donc aucune crainte, soyez plutôt forts dans votre foi. C'est la parole de Jésus à ses disciples qui dissipe nos peurs: "Même si vous rencontrez des difficultés, gardez votre foi. Le serviteur n'est pas au-dessus de son Maître" (Mt. 10, 24-25). Jésus annonçait à ceux qui croiraient en lui qu'ils passeraient par la même voie que lui. Ils seront traités comme il a été traité.

DES PRETRES, DES FRERES, DES SOEURS ET D'AUTRES COLLABORATEURS
ETRANGERS ONT DU QUITTER NOTRE PAYS SANS L'AVOIR SOUHAITE.
LES FIDELES EN SOUFFRENT.

Nous voulons vous assurer que nous partageons avec vous cette souffrance. Dans l'Eglise de Dieu, il n'y a pas d'étrangers; nous formons une famille qui rassemble les hommes de toutes les races, de tous les pays. Ces prêtres, ces religieuses, sont venus annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ, tel que celui-ci en a donné l'ordre à ses disciples. Ils ont bien rempli leur mission: vous savez ce qu'ils vous ont apporté au plan spirituel et matériel. Ils vous aimaient et vous aussi vous les aimiez. On comprend votre peine.

La Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ et les Commandements de Dieu qu'ils nous ont enseignés ont contribué au progrès moral des jeunes et des adultes; ils ont aussi renforcé l'esprit d'unité et de paix. Nous exprimons notre reconnaissance pour tant de bien qu'ils ont fait. Nous appartenons en effet à la même famille des enfants de Dieu. L'Eglise, dont nous avons été membres dès notre baptême, ne connaît pas de frontières de pays ou de races. Nous ne serons donc pas séparés de ceux qui partent, nous sommes des frères, l'unique sacrifice de la Messe continuera à faire notre unité autour de l'Unique Seigneur.

Nous l'avons déjà rappelé, l'Eglise est une famille qui rassemble tous ceux qui croient en Christ. Cette foi nous vient de Dieu. C'est lui qui a envoyé chez nous les apôtres originaires des pays d'Europe. Cette foi reçue est un don précieux que nous tenons de Jésus-Christ, venu habiter parmi les hommes de toute la terre. Nous devons être témoins de cette foi dans notre pays et à l'étranger. L'Eglise du Burundi a d'ailleurs déjà commencé; nous avons des frères et des sœurs qui sont partis annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle du Salut dans d'autres pays.

LES SYMBOLES DE LA FOI DES CHRÉTIENS

L'an dernier, à certains endroits, on a arraché des croix. Les chrétiens s'en sont inquiétés, nous partageons nous-mêmes cette inquiétude et nous en avons fait part aux responsables de notre pays.

À Pâques de l'année passée, nous avons envoyé un message pour vous rappeler le devoir de respecter la croix et les autres symboles de notre foi chrétienne. Vous en connaissez les principaux: les crucifix, les statues des saints, les chapelets, les médailles, les églises, tous les objets consacrés, les cimetières. Respectez ces symboles et faites-les respecter.

Dernièrement nous avons envoyé un communiqué qui vous indiquait les modalités pour célébrer le sacrifice de la Messe au cours de cette période. Il n'y a pas de doute, chez beaucoup, ce communiqué a provoqué de l'étonnement. Nous avons précisé qu'il s'agissait des mesures prises par le Ministre de l'Intérieur. Dans certaines régions il y a eu des emprisonnements ou des peines d'amende. Nous ne comprenons pas ces mesures. Vous savez bien que la messe du matin se célèbre très tôt, avant les heures de travail. Participez à cette messe celui qui le désire; nous avons même cessé de sonner la cloche. D'ailleurs, ceux qui ont un travail matinal ne viennent pas à cette Messe.

L'Eglise a toujours encouragé le travail; le fait de prier n'empêche pas de travailler; la prière, au contraire, donne de la force.

Ceux qui prient avec foi sont des personnes qui mènent une vie intégrale, qui respectent Dieu et qui respectent aussi les lois de leur pays. Toutes nos richesses matérielles et spirituelles viennent de Dieu. Nous ne pouvons donc pas renoncer à le prier. C'est Dieu lui-même qui nous a prescrit de travailler (Gen. 1,27). Le Fils de Dieu lui-même, Jésus-Christ, nous en a donné l'exemple. Nazareth il exerçait un métier qui le faisait vivre, lui et ses parents. Mais ce travail ne les empêchait pas d'adorer Dieu et de lui rester fidèle. (Act. 20, 34-35)..... Ce conseil que nous vous donnons est le même que celui de Saint Paul aux chrétiens de Thessalonique: "S'il y a quelqu'un

qui ne veut pas travailler, qu'il ne mange pas non plus." (2 Thés. 3,10-13). Vous aussi, travaillez, mais priez aussi. Nous espérons que même les responsables comprendront cela.

COMMENT TEMOIGNER DE NOTRE FOI AUJOURD'HUI

Dans cette période, nous avons besoin de lumière pour savoir travailler sans renier notre identité de fils de Dieu. Nous avons besoin de courage pour agir avec vérité et avec justice. C'est une grâce à demander à Celui qui a fait de nous les frères de son Fils. Voici donc ce que nous vous recommandons:

1. Priez sans cesse: Les difficultés ne manquent pas. Priez le Seigneur Jésus, avec beaucoup de confiance. C'est lui qui nous a dit: "Priez et vous recevrez, cherchez et vous trouverez, frappez et on vous ouvrira "(Lc. 11,9). Que les parents et les enfants prient ensemble à la maison; récitez ensemble le chapelet. Ayez toujours confiance, votre unité, votre prospérité, sont assurées par Dieu, le Père de tous. Avant d'aller au travail et au retour, trouvez un moment pour prier. Vous aurez ainsi témoigné que nous croyons, comme chrétiens, que notre force dans le travail et notre prospérité, sont un don de la Providence, de Dieu, Père de tous les hommes.

Que dans chaque paroisse on institue un jour d'Adoration au Très Saint Sacrement; recevez souvent les sacrements, surtout l'Eucharistie, le Sacrement de la Réconciliation et l'Onction des malades. Rendons toujours grâce à Dieu pour les biens qu'il nous donne; il pourra même ainsi nous en donner de plus grands.

2. Ayez toujours le souci d'écouter l'enseignement de la Parole de Dieu:

La Parole de Dieu
est source de notre

foi, c'est elle qui nous enseigne comment il faut être fidèle à Dieu (Rm. 10, 14-17).

Comme il y a eu une réduction de jours dans la semaine où l'instruction religieuse peut être dispensée, que ce soit pour les retraites ou pour les visites en succursales, nous croyons que vous serez toujours disposés, comme auparavant, à venir à l'instruction chaque fois que l'occasion se présentera. Les gens qui ne reçoivent plus d'instruction, risquent de retomber dans l'ignorance; ils peuvent oublier ce à quoi ils ont cru ou ce à quoi ils ont renoncé. Ils finissent même par ne plus distinguer le bien et le mal. C'est une situation dont Saint Paul a prévenu son disciple Timothée: (2 Tim. 4,3).

3. Souvenez-vous toujours que vous êtes les témoins du Christ: Lors de votre

initiation par l'Esprit-Saint dans le sacrement de la Confirmation vous avez promis d'être les témoins fidèles du Christ. Vous avez promis aussi de partager votre foi avec les autres et de leur transmettre la Parole de Dieu. Cela est une responsabilité de tout chrétien. Ce n'est pas uniquement les prêtres qui ont cette mission. Soyez vigilants pour que rien ne s'arrête dans les activités dont l'Eglise était chargée. Soyons solidaires pour réaliser ensemble tout le travail dont nous avons la responsabilité au sein de l'Eglise.

4. Partout où vous êtes, soyez des hommes justes: Le Seigneur Jésus nous dit ceci:
 "Soyez saints comme votre Père céleste est saint" (Mt. 5,48). Les autres croiront que nous sommes les enfants de Dieu et que nous sommes les témoins de son Fils, s'ils voient que nous l'imitons en parole et dans notre comportement. Que chacun de nous s'acquitte de son travail avec soin, avec justice et équité. Il faut que nous évitions la paresse et la négligence. Recherchons l'entente parmi les voisins, c'est la voie pour atteindre l'unité de tous. Soyons respectueux à l'égard de tous, les grands et les petits. Aimons toutes les personnes, les petits et les adultes, les pauvres et les riches. Dans la peine et dans les difficultés, évitons toute critique et toute contestation. (Tite, 3, 1-11).

Nous terminons ce message en vous adressant les conseils que Saint Paul a donnés aux chrétiens d'Ephèse: "Conformez votre vie à l'appel que vous avez reçu; en toute humilité et douceur, avec patience, supportez-vous les uns les autres dans l'amour; appliquez-vous à garder l'unité de l'esprit par le lien de la paix. (Eph. 4, 1-3).

Fait à Gitega, le 20 août 1985

Vous Evêques: + Joachim RUHUNA, Archevêque de Gitega;
 + Stanislas KABURUNGU, Evêque de Ngozi;
 + Roger MPUNGU, Evêque de Muyinga;
 + Evariste NGOYAGOYE, Evêque de Bubanza;
 + Michel Ntuyahaga, Evêque de Bujumbura;
 + Bernard BUDUDIRA, Evêque de Bururi;
 + Joseph NDUHIRUBUSA, Evêque de Ruyigi.

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 INCULTURATION AND THE BIBLE

Roger Grealish, SSC

(Dans cet article Roger Grealish décrit brièvement l'interaction entre révélation et culture, telle qu'elle est illustrée par les Ecritures. La Bible non seulement montre la nécessité de l'inculturation, mais comme le P.Grealish nous le fait voir par quelques exemples tout à fait appropriés, elle illustre comment cela s'est passé. Les auteurs des Ecritures ont essayé de transmettre la révélation par Dieu de lui-même au peuple et ils ont dû utiliser les instruments culturels qui étaient à leur disposition. Ils ont été sujets à des méprises et à des distorsions. L'article de M. de Verteuil et la déclaration du Séminaire de Duquesne, aux pages 287 et 292 de ce numéro, se rapportent à cette discussion. Roger Grealish, de la Société de St. Colombar, enseigne au Séminaire de Turrumurra, Australie, où il a une expérience pratique des exigences de l'inculturation).

In this paper I intend looking at some biblical precedents for the phenomenon of inculturation. I hope to pursue this by first making some general comments regarding inculturation in the Bible and then by identifying particular instances of this in the Old and New Testaments.

GENERAL COMMENTS

That God works in and through reality which is historically conditioned is the given/presupposition behind all the writings of the bible. The very expression 'Word of God' brings this out clearly. It means divine revelation to which human beings have given expression. In other words, while we believe that the words of the bible do in fact mediate something of God, 'they remain very much human words, reflecting partial insight and time-conditioned vision'. This time/historical conditioning of the words includes their cultural conditioning - they are very much the expressions of a particular culture at a particular time. Hence they are always affected by the limitations of human insight. 'For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as of old the Word of the eternal Father, when he took to Himself the weak flesh of humanity, became like other men' (*Dei Verbum*, 13). This incarnational theme is very obvious in the manner in which divine revelation is expressed in human words in the biblical writings.

Historical Criticism: One of the positive aspects of historical criticism (i.e. searching for the meaning of the text in its historical context) is the underlining of the specific historical and cultural conditioning of the biblical texts. Biblical statements are always historically and culturally determined writings. The insight and truth of the bible was made incarnate in the thought and expressions of a given culture; so that apart from the categories of some culture the truth of the bible cannot be expressed; there is no such thing as a Gospel detached from any cultural expression, it

is always intertwined with its cultural context.

One of the disciplines involved in historical criticism is redaction criticism (i.e. attempts to isolate the perspective/emphasis of the author as revealed by the manner in which he has modified his sources/traditions). Redaction criticism emphasizes that because biblical writings are always written to particular pastoral situations, the cultural, political and societal character of that situation greatly influences the selection and formulation of those writings.

In other words, the biblical writers take *the context* being addressed as seriously as the message being proclaimed. In this regard Donal Senior has written. 'Recent Gospel exegesis has continuously emphasized that the evangelists are not mere transmitters of tradition, handing on messages from the past like the members of a bucket brigade. The Gospel writers creatively interpret tradition for the sake of their own communities'. Thus the Gospel writers were not content to repeat formulas and stories just because they belonged to the tradition, but they reformulated them and reinterpreted them in such a way that they could speak to the situation and respond to the needs of the particular community being addressed. In biblical religion God always takes the context seriously - so much so that he always acts within a pre-existing pattern of human existence as formed according to social and cultural values. That is the pattern we see repeated throughout the pages of the bible. The way of God, Immanuel (God-with-us), is to work and speak in and through the totality of a people's culture, to purify it and redirect it.

Acculturation in Old Testament: That seems to be the general procedure of the acculturation process in the Old Testament - 'Different moments of that process are detectable: (a) the eruption of new ideas and events that do violence to the *status quo* and create a new synthesis; the exodus, the conquest and settlement, the exile - these and other disruptive moments are seen as salvific by the Scriptures; (b) interludes in which new ideas, structures, and insights are absorbed by the people; this is a period of indigenization; (c) the cycle comes full term but yet advances with a new synthesis under the prophetic challenge that shatters Israel's complacency, purifying its politics and social structures and opening up new vistas.'

An important stage in this process of acculturation is the third part of the above cycle, the prophetic challenge. In other words, uncritical and complacent indigenization was not allowed to continue unchecked. It was often critiqued in the light of the first challenging ideals. So from the biblical perspective, while it is important to meet God in and through a culture, it is also important to appreciate the need of being critical/countercultural in regard to that culture. In other words, while biblical religion strives towards indigenization it also criticizes and transforms a culture.

PARTICULAR INSTANCES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

As far as the bible is concerned God works in all areas of life, secular as well as sacred. Secular events such as the Exodus from Egypt and the settlement in the land, and non-Israelite celebrations such as the harvest feasts became absorbed and transformed into Israel's pattern of life and cult, and ultimately recognized as sacred events, rituals in which the God of Israel made his presence felt.

This expansive spirit which enabled Israel to discover the sacred in the secular at home, is also evident in the way it 'freely borrowed and adapted its language, cult and culture from the surrounding nations.' The similarities and parallels between ancient Near Eastern creation stories and the Genesis account of creation are well known. Although Israel did not take over those stories completely but subjected them to a thorough process of critical theological reflection, nevertheless the biblical writers took these pagan stories and used them as a kind of 'scripture' in the telling of their story.

Such a central Israelite reality as covenant shows its indebtedness to ancient Near Eastern treaties; there are a number of common elements in those treaty texts with biblical texts connected with covenant.

The Patriarchs: This same interaction between Israel and secular culture is to be seen in the way Israel's ancestors, the Patriarchs, willingly accepted and interacted with Canaanite forms of worship and lifestyle; they worship their God at the traditional Canaanite shrines (Shechim, Bethel, Helron, Beersheba); in fact the 'God of the Ancestors' appeared to Abraham at Canaanite holy places; Abraham prayed to God under Canaanite titles. During the Patriarchal age as reflected in the bible, divine revelation operated under local conditions.

Mosaic Period: During the mosaic period, despite many new elements being introduced, human environmental influences continued to shape many facets of Israel's life. The rules and needs of the desert dictated styles of worship and religious customs e.g. the 'tent of meeting' was collapsible and so was easily rolled up and transported from oasis to oasis; the structure of the 'ark of the covenant' was such that it could be carried from place to place. Two other important religious institutions which go back to this time show how local customs left their mark upon Israel. The seventy elders of Israel owe their origin to the influence of a pagan Midianite priest, Jethro, upon Moses (Exodus 18). Jethro advises Moses to delegate authority, to share leadership responsibilities. This practice later received theological endorsement in Numbers 11.

A second example of how a secular societal custom influenced Israel's theological understanding can be seen in its adoption of the term *gō'ēl* ('Redeemer'). This was the title given to that member of the clan whose responsibility it was to ensure that nothing of the clan's property (material wealth and persons) was ever lost. If a clan did lose something/someone, it was the task of the *gō'ēl* ('the nearest of kin') to redeem that thing/person - to bring them back within the security of the clan structure. This secular image was taken over by Israel and became the favourite prophetic image for God's love and fidelity to Israel. In Isaiah 43:1-7 Yahweh is spoken of as Israel's Redeemer, who would bring back his sons and daughters from the slavery of exile into his realm, into the land.

Monarchy: The idea of monarchy did not spring up spontaneously in Israel. One of the reasons given in the bible for Israel's call for kingship was the emulation of foreigners (1 Sam. 8:5). It was also part of Israel's response to the threat of the Philistines. So the form of religious authority in Israel was radically changed (from charismatic leadership to monarchy) due to the influence of international and secular forces.

The Prophets: The prophets insisted that the boundary-breaking sovereignty of God was operative within and through the international politics and military expeditions of foreign pagan nations. They are seen as God's instruments in purifying and transforming Israel (Isaiah 10: 5-15). Hosea was very critical of Canaanite fertility rites and yet he dared to use a symbol borrowed from that religion. He borrowed the symbol of marriage to interpret the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Hosea 2: 19-20).

Babylonian Exile: During the Babylonian exile it gradually became more evident to Israel that the horizons within which Yahweh was working were not restricted to the boundaries of the nation of Israel. During this time things happened that Israel thought could never happen: sacrosanct institutions like kingship, temple, city of Jerusalem were obliterated and Israel was carried off from 'the land' to a pagan land. They now realized that not only was all that they had considered essential in the past not really so but that God could be found even in an unclean land.

Between the exile and the time of Christ, Israel tended to develop a ghetto mentality chiefly through its special concern for ritual and ethnic purity. However, in the books of Jonah and Ruth, that Jewish mentality was challenged to continue to be sensitive to the wider horizons of God.

PARTICULAR INSTANCES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Four Gospels: As has been already noted the biblical writers were always conscious of the cultural, social and pastoral context of the community being addressed. Only when that context in its totality was taken seriously could their message be perceived as 'good news'. In the word of Elizondo '...if the gospel is not re-interpreted through the expression, language, and symbols of the faith community, it will appear as a foreign, lifeless, as even destructive doctrine, not an incarnated, life-giving power.' So, for example, we can speak of the four gospels as four examples of the contextualization of the one Gospel of Jesus Christ. Up until the 1950's authors were trying to harmonize the four Gospels and to write a 'life of Christ'. Now people are more willing to acknowledge the differences between the gospels and to appreciate them as four different stories addressed to four different contexts. Consequently we find within the New Testament a proliferation of forms and a wide variety of theologies. These forms and theologies correspond to the multiple needs of the communities and are attuned to the wide variety of cultural backgrounds.

Languages: That same desire to communicate the Gospel in a culturally intelligible way can be seen from the following example. Jesus spoke in Aramaic during his historical ministry yet the 'writers' of the New Testament did not hesitate to use the language and thought categories of Hellenistic culture in their reflection on the person of Jesus. The Greek used in the New Testament is the popular Greek vernacular (*koine, common*) spoken all over the Hellenistic world. Because of the cultural embeddedness of any language, a certain inculturation takes place in every real translation. The fact that the New Testament reproduces an originally Aramaic proclamation in Greek

is a measure of the early church's commitment to inculturation. It proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world of its times not in the original 'sacred' language but in the idiom of the common language of the people.

Paul: The important issue of the relationship between culture and Christianity was raised and resolved in the very early years of the emerging Church, in the time of Paul. Paul had to debate strongly with the Jewish Christians who had erroneously confused Christianity with their own ethnic conventions and cultural practices. Paul was able to distinguish the meaning of being Christ-like from what the Judaizing party insisted were central to being Christian and which they wished to impose upon all Gentile converts to Christianity (Acts 15: 1-30; 17: 22-28; Gal.2: 1-4). Paul insisted that Gentiles did not have to adopt Jewish cultural forms (e.g. circumcision) in order to become a Christian.

'Boundary breaking': Paul was so convinced of the boundary-breaking potential of Christ and His mission that he was not afraid to learn from secular culture and to adopt some of its categories and language so that the Gospel would be accessible for more people. One possible example of this is in Paul's use of '*Mysterion*' ('Mystery'), a comprehensive term to describe the salvific plan of God. Of the 27 times the term is used in the New Testament 20 of those occurrences are to be found in the Pauline literature. So it seems to be a special term for him. It is obvious that the theological background to this term is not to be sought in the Hellenistic Mystery religions but rather within Judaism itself. Since the term itself was used extensively in the pagan mystery religions, why would Paul have been so attracted to it to describe the plan of God in Jesus Christ? Perhaps the reason can be found within the context of Paul's missionary vocation. He who wanted to be 'all things...' (1 Cor.9:19-22) would naturally seek for common ground with his Hellenistic audiences and would endeavour to proclaim the 'good news' in terminology already familiar to them. One such familiar term was *mysterion* which Paul borrowed and invested with a completely new content, and so communicated his Gospel.

Another example of a similar spirit at work in Paul is to be seen in his speech at the Areopagus (Acts 17: 22-31). In verse 28 of that speech Paul described the character of God by means of two quotations: "In him we live and move and have our being" and "For we are indeed his offspring". Not only are these quotations from pagan poets, but also they referred unequivocally to Zeus, the chief god in the Greek pantheon. And yet Paul uses them to depict the character of the Christian God. Indeed, the whole of the Areopagus speech is a striking example of the way in which Christian truth could be expressed with the categories of paganism'.

CONCLUSION

The high point of the question of the interaction between God and culture in the entire bible is to be seen in the fact that in Jesus Christ not only did God become human, but he became Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee. 'The Christian understanding of the relationship between God and humankind is dominated by this incarnational theme which takes seriously the meaning of finitude, flesh and history'.

This incarnational principle means that God speaks to all peoples in and through the real physical flesh of their own culture. The bible makes that point abundantly clear. It also makes the point that even though God is open to all cultures He is slave to none. While the bible constantly speaks of God in terms of 'God-with-us' (Immanuel), He is never allowed to become merely a tribal god.

Ref.

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INCULTURATION: AN IRISH EXAMPLE

Father Ryan preached a short sermon, telling us to enjoy this lovely May-day and be thankful to God for the sun, without whose glorious light and warmth we could not live. He told us that when the people of Ireland were heathen, they worshipped the sun; now we worship God, the maker and governor of the sun. 'In heathen days,' he said, 'the sun was called by several names, one was Grian and another was Bel. On may-eve the people lit fires on the hills to guide the sun from the gloom of winter into the joy of spring. On Midsummer-eve they lit the fires again in honour of summer; and on Hallow'een when summer ended, once more fires burnt on the hill tops, this time to light the sundown into the place of gloom which we call winter. They were called the fires of peace.

'The church taught the heathen Irish the truth about the sun and the moon and the stars, and that God rules over the heavens as well as over the earth and over the people of the earth. The Church says to the Irish people; there is no harm in lighting bonfires on the hills, but let us light them now to the great glory of God and let us remember the Holy Ones who loved and served God, and whose vigils the church keeps on the same days that the heathen Irish kept in honour of Bel, the sun. We remember St. Philip and St. James on May-eve, St. John on Mid-summer-eve and Souls of the Dead on Hallow'een. On these days,' Father Ryan said very earnestly, 'I bid you put away all fear. Dance the old dances, sing the old songs, remember, if you will, but with pity and laughter, the old heathen customs and charms of your forefathers, and be thankful all the time that Christianity has taught you to dread none of these heathen things, and to know that Almighty God keeps you safe by day and by night, all your life long.'

From. *The Earm by Lough Gur* by Mary Carbery.

Mercier Press.

Quoted in *Columban Intercom*.

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