

87/No.7

15th, July 1987

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IN THIS ISSUE: In 1986, the Executive Committee of the International Association for Mission Studies formally approved the study project "The Church as a Healing Community". The Executive Committee hopes that by tapping the resources of the international, ecumenical, and cross - cultural membership of the organization the long felt need can be met to adequately respond to the challenge healing puts before us not only by the new religious movements all over the world and by the traditional societies, but also by the African Independent Churches and the Charismatic movements within the established churches. In this article, Christopher Grundmann identifies some of the most relevant issues that must be addressed as part of the study project on healing.

Following this article, we have included two reflections of SEDOS members who are involved in the ministry of healing in Africa and India. Though their experiences are so different the need for a wholistic approach to health and healing emerges as a common theme in both reflections.

In this excerpt from a paper prepared for a meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Felix Wilfred points out how integral Asian religions are to the social, cultural and politi-

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cal life of the people. In Christianity one could easily draw a distinction between religion and culture, for historically the religion originated in Palestine and the culture, in the main, derived from the Greco-Roman world. With Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism both the religion and the culture have historically the same root. Therefore, traditional religion in Asia is deeply rooted in the life of the people.

Jerome Heyndrickx, who has been on many extended visits to China sees a new era dawning for the Church in China. The Church in China is being called to take its rightful place in the universal family of Churches. China can never again be thought of as a 'missionary territory'. Today the Church in China must be recognized and accepted as a local church on the road to full maturity. Our missionary task in China is over. That our task has now come to completion is made clear to us when we observe the mature and positive way the Church in China is taking responsibility for its own present growth and development.

A church is mature when - even from its own poverty - it sends missionaries to unevangelized areas and communities. Aylward Shorter, WF, writes that the Church in Africa today is doing this by assuming responsibility for a more intensive and extensive evangelization. The Bishops of Eastern Africa have adopted a policy of building small christian communities which are at the "cutting-edge" of the Church and which can make a decisive impact on society.

In Annotto bay, Jamaica, one of the most dynamic BEC-groups is located in an area in which the Church-life seemed dead for many years. Magda Meeusen, ICM, a pastoral worker describes the beginnings and actual functioning of the BEC-groups in the area in which she works. The community action undertaken by BEC members has brought both the members and the local community into deeper fellowship. Malicious actions have decreased, vicious attitudes healed and even court cases avoided.

NEWS: A number of General Chapters of SEDOS members are being held in Rome during these days. We send our congratulations and good wishes to MARIE HEINZ (USA) who has been elected Superior General of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, (White Sisters) and to her assistants Diana Hess (Switzerland); Suzy Hadderman (Belgium) and Maria Pia Navarro (Spain).

Also to MICHAEL DECRAENE (Belgium) elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Scheut) and his Assistants Paul Van Parijs (Belgium) Carletto Cenzone (Philippines), Kasanda Lumembu (Zaire), Jan Hanssens (Belgium) and Jaak Janssens (Belgium).

And to PATRICIA STOWERS (Samoa) who has just been elected Superior General of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (Marists). She is the first member of the Congregation from Oceania to serve as Superior General.

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## Healing as a Missiological Challenge

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Christoffer Grundmann

(Les Eglises établies ont de graves difficultés pour traiter de la question des guérisons. Le cas bien connu de l'ancien archevêque de Lusaka, en Zambie, Mgr E. Milingo, et la déclaration des évêques catholiques du Ruanda désapprouvant l'activité de la guérisseuse Eugenia Mukakalisa, âgée de 22 ans, en sont deux exemples. L'activité de guérison est une expérience universelle qui se rencontre dans tous les pays, en tous temps et en tous lieux. L'universalité des expériences de guérison correspond à l'universalité de la maladie et de la mort. La guérison est souvent ressentie par l'individu comme un retour "miraculeux" des forces après une période de faiblesse et de maladie. Dans la guérison se manifeste un pouvoir de soutien et de création de vie. On ne peut expliquer ce pouvoir. Dans les religions traditionnelles d'Afrique, les mouvements syncrétistes modernes d'Amérique du Sud et du Japon, et dans les groupes charismatiques au sein de l'Eglise Catholique, la guérison occupe une place privilégiée.)

La Mission chrétienne, par elle-même, est tenue de rendre témoignage au pouvoir guérisseur de Dieu. La Mission chrétienne doit être un ministère de guérison. Les Eglises doivent donc chercher une réponse valable au défi que posent les guérisons en examinant la théologie chrétienne authentique.)

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### ASSESSING THE SITUATION

It is beyond doubt that the established churches have severe difficulties in handling the issue of healing.

The Roman Catholic Church: In June this year the Ecumenical Press Service (EPS) passed on the following information: "Rwanda RC Bishops disapprove woman's faith healing - Kigali - Rwanda's Roman Catholic Bishops have issued a statement disapproving of the healing activities of 22-year old Eugenia Mukakalisa. The Bishops say her healing gifts are 'dubious', object

to the title 'mukiza' (savior) that supporters have given her, and warn about poor sanitary conditions at Coko, where she is based. 'Christ cannot approve of such disorder', the Bishops say, asking Christians to be very cautious of people who pretend to have super-natural visions or to be invested with a divine mission. We do also remind you that none is allowed to preach in churches or on the hills without the explicit permission of his Bishop.' The woman began her healing activities in April 1985, after, she said, she heard Jesus and his mother speaking to her. Nairobi-based Africa Church Information Service reports crowds continue to come to Coko, though they are smaller than before the Bishops' negative advice." (EPS)

A more famous case is that of the former Archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, E. Milingo. In 1973 - responding to the desperate spiritual needs of Zambia's 'first century Christians', still deeply imbedded in traditional spirituality - he discovered in himself special gifts for healing and driving out evil spirits. These gifts, he has always maintained, were rooted only in the complete dedication of his life to Christ. His healing sessions drew vast crowds and achieved astounding results - but soon he was accused of unorthodoxy, of neglecting his 'normal' episcopal duties, and even of immorality and dishonesty. After being summoned to Rome and subjected to intensive investigations he resigned his see. His loyalty to the Church has remained consistent, and today he's a special delegate to the Pontifical Commission on Migration, Refugees and Tourism.

The Protestant Churches: As far as Protestant Churches are concerned we see the very same picture. Because of the classical European and American models, churches proved unable to meaningfully resolve the problems of indigenous societies such as national identity or disease and illness. Thus, the African Independent Churches and the Eglise de Jésus Christ sur la Terre par le Prophete Simon Kimbangu for instance came into being. Rooted in the tradition set by the Christian mission they developed an ecclesiastical model of their own which appears to be more authentically and genuinely African. Protestant theology has as yet failed to adequately understand this phenomenon by simply neglecting or stigmatizing it as a matter of sects.

The Role of Healing Within Indigenous Cultures: We have to take notice of the role healing plays within indigenous cultures. Here the missiologists have to utilize the good material at hand provided by social and cultural anthropology and by ethnomedicine. Healing touches upon the whole set-up of the health services within a society and also touches upon the entire interpretation of world and life of that community, tribe and people. Thus, one necessarily has to discuss religious questions and assertions. This holds true for high-tech

medicine as well as for the rites and symbols of a medicine man and diviner. Any medical system and any kind of healing practice has to be analysed against this background to see what they really are about. A simple comparison or naive dismissal of non-Christian healing activities would not do any good for proper missiological understanding. What actually is a medicine man; a nganga, a diviner, an exorcist, a witch-doctor, a herbalist, a doctor, a physician, a nurse? What is the rôle they play within the particular setting? How do they carry out their healing activities? Do they observe a certain technique or a certain time or a certain rite? Which problems are they called to solve or which disease are they called to heal?

Healing in Syncretistic Religions and in Church Movements: Another aspect of healing has to be noticed as well, i.e. the world-wide occurrence of miraculous healing nowadays. In the modern syncretistic religions of South America, like the 'Umbanda' in Brazil and the 'Wodu' in Haiti, and in the 'modern Religions' (as they are officially called by their government) of Japan, like the 'Seicho no Ie' f.i., just to quote a few, healing plays a constitutive part. On the whole it can be said that people stress the religious aspect of healing the more they become secularized. That is why their people knowledgeable in healing take on religious responsibilities as well. To tackle the issue of healing in connection with the new religious movements one has to be prepared to tackle the whole problem of secularization.

Within the Christian Churches, the problem of modern civilization and secularization has to be considered in relation to the charismatic movements and healing.

#### THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF HEALING

The Churches have failed to provide a theology of healing. The theological vocabulary and imagination is not prepared to handle such dynamic and vivid movements. It has to be recognized that Christian mission in itself is bound to witness to God's healing power. Christian mission has to be a ministry of healing!

Jesus and Healing: In the life of Jesus, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and healing belonged together as two sides of the same coin. That's why Jesus commissioned the disciples not only to preach, baptise and teach, but also to heal the sick and raise the dead. In spite of the fact that medical missions have tried to do this since the middle of the last century and healing has taken place in church hospitals through the ministries of Christian medical professionals, the Churches have not succeeded in providing a sound theological basis for healing activities out-

side the medical setting. On the whole it is not only the present global religious situation which urges the discussion on the issue of healing, it is the Christian commission to mission itself.

The Process of Healing: Healing is a universal experience testified to by all peoples, and at all times and at all places. It cannot be reduced or confined to a particular season, era, religion or society. Healing is often experienced by the individual as the "miraculous" recovery of strength after a time of weakness and disease. In the process of healing a life-supporting, life-creating power expresses itself. This power cannot be explained. Contemporary high-tech medicine also depends on this healing power as decisive for the success or failure of sophisticated medical treatments. This dependence on a healing power is the reason for the religious dimension of healing.

The Universality of Suffering and Dying: The universality of healing experiences corresponds with the universality of suffering and dying. These experiences are somatic expressions of the fall and the new creation which God is bringing about. They also correspond to the universality of reflection and cognition as typical human manifestations of life (creation) along with the universality of the ambiguity of all things and phenomena. The different religions, cultures, healing activities and secular scientific medicine have to be re-examined in the light of the theology of creation.

Salvation is Present Whenever Healing is Experienced: Early Church writers frequently employed the motif of healing to demonstrate the meaning of the Christian Gospel. They developed the picture of "Christ the physician", "Christus medicus". Again this is not a matter of fixing a new label onto an old good. It is a question of encountering the power of the Gospel. Thus, in acknowledging Christ as the physician and saviour of all humankind, of all creation, healing takes on a different shape. Any healing-even that of a cut finger or a fractured arm-becomes a potential encounter with salvation. This holds true even if healing is understood in the broadest sense as the healing of memories or reconciliation with one another in society! Salvation is present wherever healing is experienced, however fragmentary.

Eschatology and Healing: Another theological aspect that needs re-consideration in this connection is eschatology. Healing as a sign of the Kingdom of God anticipates the eschaton, meaning that it is a foretaste of what God wants us to be finally. As such, healing can very well be understood as a spirit-filled experience of the presence of the life-giving God.

The Church and Healing: Healing prevents an untimely death but not death as such. Healing cannot be guaranteed either by modern medicine or by the nganga or medicine man or by Unani- or Ayurvedic medicine or acupuncture. Christians witness to the triune God, but they cannot manipulate God. The Church though often tempted, cannot own or control the special healing manifestations of God. As soon as this happens Christian faith has turned into religious imperialism which is characteristic of a number of healing sects. Reflection of the eschatological dimension of healing will certainly be of vital importance in distinguishing between Christian healing and any kind of healing sects. Healing as a sign of salvation is not at the disposal of Christians. Even the first disciples had to bear with this: the disappointed father of the epileptic child complains to Jesus: "I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." (Mt.17, 16).

The Challenge of Healing: The eschatological dimension of healing does not jeopardize the present engagement in any healing activity. It helps to endure the tension between what is experienced now and what is promised to become reality soon.

To sum up: any responsible answer to the challenge of healing has to examine the whole of the established Christian theology mainly the doctrine of creation and revelation, Christology, ecclesiology, the hamartology and anthropology (mainly in view of its somatic aspects) and eschatology. A huge task indeed.

Ref. MISSION STUDIES, Journal of the IAMS, vol.III-2, 1986 pp. 57-62.

(In connection with the alone paper on healing we are including two reflections from members who are involved in the ministry of healing in Africa and India. Their experiences highlight new aspects and broaden the discussion initiated above.)

#### SICKNESS, PRAYER, HEALING

Fr. O. Ikeobi, CSSp.

Modern Ideas of Health and our Ancestors: Health is often regarded as the absence of sickness in Western culture. This thinking has succeeded in pushing back biological death and it's shadows for them (and for many Nigerians who think like them). As long as they visit their doctors and take

drugs they consider themselves healthy. But their life of greed, competitiveness and fear of death surely mark them out as a very unhealthy group.

In our traditional society, health and illness, like life and death, are interwoven. They are aspects of one lived reality. Health carries with it integration into the community. It is not just the absence of disease but a sign that a person is living in peace and harmony with his/her people, that he/she is keeping the laws of the land and those of the divinities. Sickness involved community: the patient, the extended family, the village, the priest/medicine person, and the spirits. It is very different from our modern practice of securing a patient a bed in hospital and paying a stranger to inject him or her with drugs without referring to the patient's other problems which in most cases are responsible for the sickness. Our traditional religious leaders recognize their unique role and they face it with "faith" and undiluted dedication. Fear, uncertainty and inconsistent teaching are uncommon. These are the people who produced us.

Ref. LIVING WORLD Vol 1. No.3, July, 1985

(Fr. Ikobi is the Director of Catechetics in Onitsha Archdiocese. He is perhaps best known for his Tuesday Ministry of Prayer in Onitsha, Nigeria.)

#### HEALTH SYSTEM IN INDIA

Sr. Lily Rodrigues, SCMM  
Ms. Reena Fernandes.

Number of Doctors: The doctor-population ratio in India is 1:4,400. This does not seem to fall short of the Mudaliar Committee's expectations of 1 doctor to every 3,500. However, this figure is very misleading because of the difference in such a ratio in the urban and rural areas. In urban areas, it varies between 1 doctor to every 200 patients to 1 doctor to every 500 of the population. In some rural areas, however, it is 1 to every 11,000, or 1 to every 50,000 of the population in remote villages.

The Key Factor of Imbalance: "People are sick because they are poor; they become poorer because they are sick, and they become sicker because they are poorer." This quotation of B.R. Bloom is very true of the Indian context today. Sickness is beyond where it is manifested. The problem of the health system is a reflection of the problem of the larger society. Today, we are living in a form of society where the basic relationship of human beings has come to be exploitation of a large number of people only to favour a few. The key factor of imbalance is the control of an insignificant minority over the vast majority. The masses are deprived. Wealth and power are owned and controlled by a

handful of people. This is the economic base on which all the other forms of relationships are built, such as culture, religion, education, and the medicine system is no exception. Therefore, the medical system could be seen from this broad perspective of a super-structure imitating the base.

The Environment and Material Conditions

of Life Determine a Person's Health: While disease in humans appears symptomatically in various deadly forms, the origins of it are rooted in the social life of the individual. Humans can exist and live only in society. Therefore, all bodily illness, both biological and psychological, though in form, individual, in essence are social. The environment and material conditions in which the individual lives, determine the state of mind and body -- the health of the person.

Multi-factorial Origin of Disease: Modern medical science views the human organism mechanistically.

The health professionals' advanced training permits the recognition of only a specific cause and treatment of disease. This view deflects attention from the multi-factorial origin of disease, especially from the environment, work process, or social stress. It focuses on the individual rather than on the illness-generating conditions of society. It traces the sources of the illness to the individual life-style. It assumes that responsibility for disease and cure rests at the individual rather than at the collective level.

Working Conditions and Health: Probing into the Indian situation, the bidi-workers (those who roll cigarettes) are a typical example. Initially, an individual of 15 to 20 years of age is able to obtain optimum production of 1500-1800 beedies per day. But, gradually, this comes down to 700 and to less than 500 at age 35 to 40 years. What is the reason? Constantly inhaling the beedi smell in the ill-ventilated huts makes them predisposed to cancer, T.B., and asthma, which plague them at an early age, drastically reducing their efficiency and quality of life. Here, we have a social problem. For better health, they need good ventilation and better housing conditions. A little closer look would show that these beedi rollers are in the hands of a very powerful gang of "middle men" who squeeze the maximum and leave nothing but subsistence wages, that they may continue to have a high production of cigarettes.

Starvation Wages: In such a situation, with such starvation wages being the recompense for 10 to 12 hours of work per day, can the beedi rollers maintain their health at the cost of decrease in production which directly means starvation? In this sense, medical science offers no critical appraisal of class structure and the relationship of production, even in their implications for health and illness. We need to relate patterns of death and disease to the social, economic, and political structure of society, and the specific material circumstances under which people live and

work. The level of analysis has to be shifted from the individual to the stressful forms of social organization.

The Connection between Healing and Justice and Our Mission: Our

first sisters gave professional, medical, curative care to their patients, usually from a hospital setting. It was what was most needed at the time. Gradually, some who were caring for the sick, recognized the need to go into the community where patients lived and investigate the environment to see further causes of illness and poverty. As a result, more preventative measures were introduced. Education, public health programs, community development, and the efforts associated with them, were stressed. This led to sisters joining together with others in a community to search for the barriers -- the problems that needed to be overcome in order to bring health and healing and wholeness, not only to individuals, but to the community as well. The closer our understanding of, and identification with the people, the more we felt their oppression. Like some pebble dropped into a pond, our circle of compassion grows wider and deeper, and our need to find root causes grows more urgent.

Network of Oppression: Members of the Society continue this pilgrimage with people and the search goes on. This gradually leads to the discovery of a network of oppressive systems that lock peoples and whole countries in the grip of disease and poverty. To identify and change these systems is the work of justice -- global justice. In other words, it moves our healing mission along a continuum from individual sick persons to villages, to countries, and into contact with a common humanity and a whole planet that is wounded and in need of healing. All aspects along the continuum are part of our healing mission.

Evangelizing Systems: At the same time that our experience of mission was changing, so was the way in which the Church expressed its own mission. Today, the Church speaks of "action on behalf of justice, and participation in the transformation of the world as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation". Today, the Church speaks not only of evangelizing people but also of "evangelizing systems" in order to bring about the Kingdom of God. Human dignity and human rights are topics on the agenda of other worldwide religions, transnational institutions and professions. And the shrill cry for justice resounds with ever greater intensity throughout our one world.

Justice is an Essential Component of Healing: True to the times, MMS in their turn, proclaim that "Justice is essential to real healing...We are called to collaborate with others in the work of justice and social transformation...to participate in activities which affect justice, believing that work for justice is an essential component for healing".

Ref. Intercontinent No.167, 15th May, 1985 & No.170 January-February, 1986.

Sr. Lily Rodrigues, SCMM is a fourth year medical student at St. John's Medical College, Bangalore. She wrote this article in collaboration with Ms.Perera Fernandes, a medical social worker.

See also: "The Health Care Challenge", LATINAMERICA PRESS, 18TH DECEMBER, 1986.

"Le Point de vue des missionnaires sur la médecine autochtone." KERYGMA, 20 1986 p.121-139.

"Missionary Perceptions of Native Medicine and Traditional Healing Ways". KERYGMA, 20,1986 pp.51-58.

'We Have to Go On: Native Healing in Passage". KERYGMA, 20pp. 91-99.

"Father René le Major, O.M.I. Priest and Healer". KERYGMA, 20pp. 85-89.

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## Religion in the Texture of the Asian Life

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Felix Wilfred

(Dans le christianisme on peut facilement distinguer la religion et la culture: en effet, historiquement la religion a ses origines en Palestine, tandis que la culture, en général, est celle du monde gréco-romain. Dans l'indouisme, le confucianisme et le taoïsme la religion et la culture ont historiquement les mêmes racines. C'est pourquoi, en Asie, la religion traditionnelle est bien plus enracinée dans la vie des gens et est étroitement liée aux structures de la société. Quand le Bouddhisme quitta les rivages de l'Inde pour atteindre les autres pays de l'Est, il a été transformé par la culture, les coutumes et les caractères propres de chacun de ces pays pour devenir une partie intégrante de leur vie sociale, culturelle et politique.)

La force intarissable des religions dans la vie de l'Asie est illustrée dans le rôle important d'inspiration qu'elles ont joué dans les différents mouvements nationalistes et indépendantistes d'Asie. On peut voir dans les pensées et la vie de Gandhi comment la politique peut être pénétrée de valeurs religieuses et éthiques, si elle doit vraiment servir le bien commun.)

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Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Taoism, etc., have been a permanent source of spiritual energy down through millenia and centuries. There is practically no realm of life on which the vision and principles of these religions did not make a dent. These religions have been so much intertwined with the culture, art, music and politics, in short, with the spirit of the people, that they have withstood the tide of time and history with all its vicissitudes. These religions have survived the great Genghis Khan Empire, the Mogul invasion and Eastern expansion and the Chinese cultural revolution to narrate their stories still today. The following characteristics of non-semitic Asian religiosity have enabled it to be a part of the very texture of Asian life.

### A PERENNIAL FASCINATION WITH THE ULTIMATE MYSTERY

Some of the basic intuitions of the religions into human life

and the world and the ultimate mystery underlying all existence exercise a perennial fascination on the minds of the Asians in every generation, and supply fresh and unsuspected energies to meet the challenges of life. It is this which has given the lie to all predictions that with the advancement of materialism, secularism, science and technology, the Asian religions would disintegrate and be swept away. On the contrary, the fruits of modern technology have been availed of by the traditional religions to get even more re-invigorated and to exert their influence beyond their traditional boundaries.

### TOLERANT RELIGIOUS AND PLURALISTIC CULTURES

If religiosity is characteristic of Asian today, as at all times, no less characteristic is the intimate link between religion and culture. This fact is very vital for understanding the complex situation of Asia today and the challenges it presents to the mission of the Church. In Christianity one could easily draw a distinction between religion and culture, for historically the religion originated in Palestine and the culture, in the main, derived from the Greco-Roman world. With Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism both the religion and the culture have historically the same root.

Therefore, traditional religion in Asia is much more deeply rooted in the life of the people and closely interwoven with the fabric of the society. Even when Buddhism left India's shores to reach the whole of East, it was transformed by the culture, ethics and ethos of the people of the East to become part and parcel of their social, cultural and political life.

A Spirit of Tolerance and Peaceful Co-existence: These traditional religions in principle, and, by and large, as a matter of fact, exhibit a spirit of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Given the intimate link between religion and culture, this tolerance in effect means acceptance of a diversity of culture too. Christianity in the West for many centuries was identified with one culture and expressed itself as Christendom. In the whole of the Middle Ages there never arose any serious question of religious pluralism and diversity, and for the first time, with the Reformation taking a separate course, Christendom was faced with the question of finding a framework to accommodate this diversity. The solution was not in terms of tolerance and co-existence but by assigning territories for each religion cujus regio ejus religio.

Religious Pluralism without Secularization: It was not until the process of secularization set in that these frameworks for pluralism were broken up and new foundations were laid for religious diversity, though it took

many more years to make it consciously accepted reality. In Asia, on the other hand, religious pluralism existed as part of life without needing a secularizing process. This latter point is very important for a proper understanding of the encounter between the traditional religions and liberal values.

#### ENCOUNTER WITH NEW FORCES

Another characteristic of Asian religiosity is its tremendous capacity to adapt itself. Though there have been here and there reactionary tendencies vis-á-vis the modern scientific and technological outlook and liberal ideals, by and large Asian religions have reacted positively to the values they contain. Through this encounter religions have been led to a fresh understanding of themselves and a re-interpretation of their tenets in keeping with the wider exigencies and the demands of the time.

Hinduism: As for Hinduism, this process of re-interpretation initiated in the 19th century is still underway. As a result, the democratic values have been undergirded, as Radhakrishnan has tried to do, through Hindu understanding of freedom, search for truth, etc. Similarly, it has been shown by modern interpreters of traditional Hindu scriptures that the way of action and involvement (karma marga) is a way to liberation.

All this has not remained at the level of mere religious interpretation of doctrines but has inspired social reforms, a self-critique of Hindu practices, and has lent support to social transformations.

Buddhism: Similar developments are evident in Buddhism too, at the historical root of which was the experience of the Gautama of the realities of human suffering. No wonder then that Buddhism has developed in relation to today's experience of injustices and inequalities a great social thrust. Traditional Buddhist institutions are undergoing change and the monks and Sangha play an important role in social development. Noteworthy in this respect are the new Buddhist ways of life heralded in Thailand by the prominent monk Buddhadasa Bhiku in response to the process of modernization. In Korea the efforts to reinterpret Confucianism, Shamanism and Buddhism have given birth to popular liberative movements and minjung theology - people's theology.

Sense of Mystery: Contrary to what one generally imagines, the non-semantic religions of Asia are now much more open to change, transformation, and can fruitfully encounter the new forces of history. One of the reasons for this is to be sought in the deep sense of mystery these religions cherish. The mystery of God, world and human beings and the whole universe, according to the

vision of these religions, far surpasses what any single individual or group can comprehend and express. Because of the sense of mystery, there is no rigidity but a tolerance towards other religions and an acceptance of diverse experiences, without undue attachment to fixed formulations of orthodoxy.

#### ANTIDOTE TO PRAGMATISM AND UTILITARIANISM

Religions and religious traditions can be enslaving as well as liberating. Religions can and do play a legitimizing role of the status quo, but also can be the mainspring of a revolutionary upsurge leading to transformation of the sociopolitical realities. The process of modernization gave birth to a critical attitude vis-à-vis certain traditional institutions and have made people aware of their enslaving nature. At the same time, the traditional Asian religions have also adopted a critical attitude to the conception, nature and scope of the development models imported from without and put into practice in Asia. Against a development model conceived in terms of production, quantity, economic growth, profit, which could all undermine the quality of human life, Hinduism and Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism offer another model of development that will make people more human, create a spirit of loving kindness and compassion (Karuna). True development will take place when one renounces his or her cravings to accumulate goods, money and profit. The more such desires are reduced, the greater will be the development of society and the World. It is a development that forges ahead, relying on the Four Wheels of Buddhist teaching - sharing (dana), pleasant speech (piyaraca), constructive action (attacariya) and equality (samanatata).

The Religious Dimension of Development: The Society of today is not called upon to relinquish economic pursuits. What is imperative is that the progress of the society be based on nobler motivations than profit and egotism. Human progress cannot take place where one leaves aside the religious dimension, for the concern with the ultimate realities, or the interior of the reality, is that which should direct the goal of development as the welfare, growth of all and not of a few.

Disengagement from the Fruits of our Actions: The Vedas and Upanishads, but especially the Bhagavat Gita, present us with the ideal of nishkama karma. It is a way to detoxicate the venom inherent in our human activities, namely, the desire for fruits. Nishkama karma is the ideal of committing oneself to action without being attached to its fruits. Such actions are truly a sacrifice. All this may sound anathema in a society whose driving forces is the profit motive and competition.

The nishkama karma is not to be viewed as a deterrent to initiatives; it is not anti-growth. It is meant to make the action

free and forceful through disengagement from the fruits. It is a way to be master of one's own actions and not be their slave. Only when a persons is master of his actions through disinterestedness will he or she be able also to contribute to the well-being of the world or world solidarity - lokasamgraha.

Progress, social justice and social transformation, to the benefit of all humans, can be achieved only when development is dissociated from pragmatism and utilitarianism.

#### RELIGION AND NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

The perennial power of religions in Asian life is exemplified by the great inspirational role they played in the various nationalist and independence movements of Asia. While in the West the nationalist movements came into conflict with religion and entered into alliance with secular movements, in Asia they have been sustained by religious values and ideas. In Burma Buddhist monks (pongyis) played an important role in support of U Nu's campaign of 1960, and in Indonesia Islamic revivalism coincided with the beginning of the nationalist movement. As for India, though the Indian National Congress, which was started in 1885, had at its inception a secular ideology for its inspiration, it remained a very modest and quite insignificant one until Hindu religious values, ideals and symbols were associated with it to make it really a nationwide movement and power with a strong popular base. In keeping with their long tradition Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka even today seem to determine very much the political destiny of the country. They were a strong force behind the overthrow of the Kotelwala regime, and young monks were very much in the picture in the insurrection of 1975. One cannot forget the leading role played by Islam in the anti-Sukarno movement of 1965-1967. In Vietnam during the Diem regime the bonzes were in the forefront of the political arena and were the determining force in the overthrow of Diem's government in 1963.

#### THE CRESCENT ON THE ASIAN HORIZON - THE GROWING POWER OF ISLAM

Islam in the Asian setting of today is a very potent factor, and no one can afford to disregard it. In Indonesia Muslims constitute an overwhelming majority, though as to the exact percentage there is dispute between the official figure and the reality. In Malaysia most of the Malays belong to Islam and it gives them also, so to say, an ethnic identity. Pakistan and Bangladesh are Islamic states with 80 million and 73 million Muslims each, that is 96.8% and 85.9% respectively of the total population of the countries. The Muslim presence in India too is very significant. There are as many Muslims in India as in the entire Pakistan, that is, about 11.6% of the Indian population. In Thailand and on Mindanao island in the Philippines Islam is a minority but a very active group fight

for their rights in these two countries with a predominately Buddhist and Roman Catholic population.

Islam is Organically and Intrinsically Related to Politics: Anyone who thinks of Islam as a religion in the Western meaning of religion would be mistaken. Islam is a comprehensive way of life and it is organically and intrinsically related to politics. There is a whole Islamic conception of state, a legal system, social living and economic pursuits, education, etc. Therefore, it is understandable why Islam refuses to be consigned to a private realm as a religion or to coexist with a secular conception of the world. It is interesting to note in this connection how the "secular" ideal of the Indian constitution, understood as non-discriminatory policies towards religions, was accepted by the Muslim community in terms of a religious interpretation of the same, namely, that it is a "covenant" among Muslims and non-Muslims for the sake of peace and coexistence.

Muslims Opposed to Secularization: According to the testimony of a Muslim scholar, secularism is a very sensitive issue to the Muslims. The present educational system tends to perpetuate secular values. All branches of knowledge are for the Muslims religious in nature. The real dilemma for the Muslim is that we cannot separate religion from other subjects. The dualistic view of life - sacred and secular - is a problem for the Muslims, because the Islamic world view embraces all of life. That is why the Muslims want also schools (madrasah) run in the Islamic tradition and the application of shariah, Islamic laws, in the countries where they are the majority; and where they are a minority, they want these laws and traditions to be applied at least to the Muslim community. Islamic religious ideals are spread by the dak'wah missionary movement, and there are also several militant groups who react violently when other religions or the state impinge upon the rights and distinctive identity of Islam. We can name the theocratic organization of Darul'l-Islam in Indonesia, Angkatan Sabillullah (Organization of Holy Fighters) of Malaysia, Jamat-e-Islami in Pakistan and India. The upsurge of these groups often lead to bloody communal tensions and conflicts.

Islam has Tried to Accomodate Itself to Political and Cultural Realities: We should note further that, despite the traditional theocratic thrust of Islam in South and South East Asia, Islam has tried to accomodate itself to the political and cultural situation of the region. There are several groups which give a modern and more open interpretation to Islam, without renouncing its central tenets and ideals. In the countries where Muslims are the majority, though the whole state and public life are run with a Islamic thrust and often conflicts between the state and other religious minorities occur, still the intimate link between political life and religion is manifest in the fact that the same governments sometimes support other religions in celebrating their religious functions.

THE CHALLENGE OF A SAINT IN POLITICS

How politics should be permeated by religious and ethical values if it is really to serve the public good can be seen in the views and way of life of Gandhi. The intimate link between religion and political practice in the life of Gandhi was in keeping with the Asian tradition, which does not vivisection the life and its organic unity into different compartments. It is important to note that, far from making him shy away from politics, it was precisely his deep religiosity which led him into politics. He could declare out of his personal experience: "I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."

Not Sectarian Religion: The religion which permeated the whole political life and career of Gandhi was not a mere sectarian religion. It was not as a Hindu that he entered the political arena; this would have already introduced a communal element and could have become a source of division and a detriment to public good.

Right Means in Political Action: For Gandhi the substance and core of morality was truth. Though the ultimate truth remains beyond our attainment as an ideal towards which we should move, we participate in truth when we act morally and ethically in a correct way in every sphere of life. Therefore, the political activity and involvement which are permeated by morality are a way of experiencing truth, of growing individually and collectively. In a world which in all realms, and particularly in politics, is driven by achievement and success, in the process of which the whole question of means is disregarded, Gandhi underscored the importance of means in political activity. Politics can be redeemed only if we are ready to follow the right means for which we are responsible and which lie in our power. By following ahimsa (non-violence) and the goal of satyagraha (truth) in politics, he set a high standard in the political-field. If people follow the right means in political action, the end will take care of itself. He often compared the means and end in politics to the seed and tree. The means contain in themselves the end or in other words, the means is the goal in its making. "They say means are after all means. I would say means are after all everything. As the means so the end...Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits no exception."

Gandhi's Understanding of Democracy: The religious and spiritual roots of politics made Gandhi understand even an important institution like democracy in a different way from that of the secular and liberal tradition. Democracy is not merely an affirmation of humanism, the liberty of all. The deeper reason for democracy lies in the fact that the perception and practice of truth which should be the goal of politics is not the possession of one single individual or group in politics. No

one individual or group in politics has the right to impose his/her perception of truth on others. The will of all must be taken into account, and democracy serves this goal.

#### THE AMBIVALENT ROLE OF RELIGION

The considerations above show the pervasive influence of religions in Asian societies, politics, culture etc. The point to note here is that religions can be ambivalent as regards their influence; they can be a very strong force of legitimation of the situation of the oppression, as well as a powerful force for change and transformation. There is also another ambivalence. Religions can exercise a critique on the ways politics, economy and society operate, and inspire these with ethical and moral ideals. But they can also be made into political tools to suppress the poor, the weak and minority groups.

The question today is whether these Asian religions, which once played an important part in the nationalistic movements leading to independence, could play today a similar role in liberating the poor and oppressed, the weak and the minorities, and in defending human dignity and rights. This challenge applies to Christianity as well.

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Ref. "Sunset In the East" (The Asian Realities Challenging the Church and its Laity Today). This position paper was prepared for the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences FABC convening at the Major Seminary, Tokyo, Japan, September 16-25, 1986. FABC Papers, No.45.

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## The African Contribution to Evangelization

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Aylward Shorter, WF

(Une église a atteint sa maturité, quand, malgré sa pauvreté, elle envoie des missionnaires dans des régions ou des communautés non encore évangélisées. L'Eglise africaine réalise cela en s'engageant dans une évangélisation plus intensive et extensive, tout spécialement parmi les six millions de pasteurs nomades de l'Afrique de l'Est, dont la genre de vie et l'organisation sociale ont découragé et retardé jusqu'ici l'activité missionnaire. Les Evêques de l'Afrique de l'Est ont décidé de créer de petites communautés chrétiennes destinées à être le "fer de lance" de l'Eglise et qui peuvent avoir un impact décisif sur la société.)

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### AFRICAN CHURCH'S MISSIONARY VOCATION

Recently, Cardinal Malula of Kinshasa spoke angrily to reporters about European misgivings over the proposed African Council. "Let us speak", he said. "Trust us!" The maturity of a Church is evident when it assumes full responsibility for its own evangelization, even though it still depends to a certain extent on external resources. The African Council is one expression of the African Church's desire to be recognized as mature. A Church is mature when - even from its own poverty - it sends missionaries to unevangelized areas and communities. There is clear evidence that the Church in Africa is beginning to do this.

More Intense and Extensive Evangelization: At national, and even international level, hierarchies are assuming responsibility for a more intensive and extensive evangelization. One example is provided by the current attempt to address the problem of the six million nomadic pastoralists in Eastern Africa, whose way of life and social organization have discouraged and retarded missionary work. African diocesan priests

from areas where Catholics and priestly vocations are more numerous are now working alongside foreign missionaries among these nomads.

International missionary congregations are now beginning to recruit African members. If a polarization of diocesan and religious clergy is avoided, this is a very healthy development, for it shows that, not only church structures, but also mission structures are being handed over to Africans.

#### AFRICAN RESILIENCE

The African Church, and Africa as whole, have relied for long upon outside help. Without wishing to deny that there are real needs that can only be met in this way, or that rich countries have an obligation to meet these needs, there are at least two dangers that should be noted. One is that dependency becomes a habit of mind, in which case the Church can never find itself at home in Africa. The other danger is that foreign countries and donors give aid according to their own priorities and according to their own social and economic presuppositions. It can never be repeated too often that those who give aid should not supplant local processes, but support them.

The Poor Develop Their Own Response to the Gospel: Of course, there are sometimes agonizing dilemmas. For example, between saving the lives of thousands who live in famine areas and committing the crime of ethnocide - destroying a whole culture and social way of life. Can we countenance a culture in which there is a regular risk to human life? Yet, on the other hand, what are we saving lives for? Not so that people can become beggars in their own land, culturally and morally disoriented dependents on foreign charity.

Evangelization demands that material aid serves integral development, that local resources be recognized and used, that the poor be allowed to shape their own lives and develop their own response to the Gospel. Only then can they truly be themselves, and only then can their message to us who try to help them be heard. As we said at the beginning, we assume too readily that people need our help. We are the ones who need to hear the message of the poor, and for that, they must be allowed to speak.

#### ECCLESIAL "PEOPLE-POWER"

One of the most important decisions taken by the Bishops of Eastern

Africa in 1973, and subsequently endorsed in 1984 at continental level by SECAM, was the adoption of a policy of building small Christian communities. It was hoped that the policy would help to make inculturation a reality, while at the same time ensuring hierarchical control over a growing Church base. There is a tendency to make these small Christian communities too "priest-centred" and thus to stifle their initiative. Authoritarianism dies hard, and while it is perfectly true that the communities have a definite need of networking and servicing structures, they should play a charismatic and prophetic role, rather than a purely pastoral one.

Communities Can Make Decisive Impact on Society: Small Christian communities are "church", but they are not the "whole Church". They remain free associations of the baptized, living out in real life the faith which they express in their wider communities of celebration and proclamation. Of course, the communities are able to make an impressive contribution to the liturgical and pastoral activities of parish, particularly a large rural parish with scattered village settlements, or a densely populated urban parish of migrants and squatters. However, unless the communities are given greater freedom, and are encouraged, through leadership training and other forms of formation, to take wider interests, they will never make a decisive impact on society.

Small Christian Communities are the "Cutting-edge" of the Church: The small Christian communities have enormous potential for good. They are capable of releasing a "people-power" that can transform the African social scene, not in the sense of creating a political opposition, but of working positively within the socio-political systems, corrupt through the latter may be, to give a witness to the values of the gospel in social and cultural life. Small christian communities are not a device to make up for a lack of clergy. They are the "cutting-edge" of the Church - the place where Christian life is lived, where the evangelized become the evangelizers and where a new humanity can bring into existence the new society.

Ref. "Evangelization for a New Humanity and New Society in Africa, AFRICAN CHRISTIAN STUDIES, MARCH, 1987 pp 5-15.  
Rev. Dr. Alyward Shorter is a social anthropologist who has taught at the major seminary in Tanzania and at the Gaba Pastoral Institute in Kampala. At present he is teaching at the Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.

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## The Emerging Local Catholic Church in China

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Jerome Heyndrickx, CICM

(Une ère nouvelle est en train de poindre pour l'Eglise en Chine, qui entend prendre la place qui lui revient dans la famille des Eglises. La Chine ne peut plus être considérée comme un territoire de mission. Aujourd'hui l'Eglise de Chine doit être reconnue et acceptée comme une église locale en voie de pleine maturité. Notre tâche missionnaire en Chine est achevée. Il suffit pour s'en rendre compte, d'observer comment l'Eglise de Chine prend aujourd'hui ses responsabilités, avec maturité et d'une façon positive pour sa croissance et son développement.)

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It is my conviction that the task ahead is for us to continue to search out new modes of relationship with the emerging local Church on the China mainland. One way of proceeding is to encourage and intensify the mutual exchange of visits between Chinese Catholics and Catholics outside of China. After a modest beginning seven years ago, and following upon the visits of Cardinals Koenig and Etchegaray to China and the Catholic Chinese delegation to Montreal, this form of mutual exchange has been on the increase, especially during the past two years. It has resulted in the establishment of warm and friendly ties between numerous priests, religious and lay people on both sides.

Exploring New Ways of Communication: With the reopening of China to the outside world, the opportunity to foster friendly relations between the Church in China and outside local Churches has not only been made possible, but these relationships have also been allowed to develop on the highest levels of church authority. China has played host to Bishop John

Wu of Hong Kong (on two occasions, a delegation of 5 bishops representing the Federation of Asian Bishops, and Jamie Cardinal Sin from the Philippines. Recently, Chinese bishops have visited both Europe and the United States as guests of local Church organizations there. Such visits are not meant to minimize differences nor ignore the problems that await resolution, but they do go a long way in establishing an atmosphere of mutual respect which can serve as the basis for developing further new and positive relationships in caritate et veritate. Exploring new ways of communication, in a spirit of openness and candor, is the first step towards achieving a true and lasting communion. All indications point to an acceleration of these friendly visits in the future, and as relationships develop so, too, will a spirit of mutual receptiveness and acceptance.

Invitation to Lecture at the Shanghai Seminary: I myself have experienced an example of this when I was invited by Bishop Aloysius Jin to give a series of lectures to the seminarians of Shanghai's She Shan Seminary, where Bishop Jin is the rector. In attendance were 95 seminarians and my subject was the Second Vatican Council. That I should be allowed to lecture freely, openly and in great detail on the Council and its efforts to modernize and up-date the universal church, was something quite new and surprising for me personally.

Vatican II and the Church in the Modern World: I spoke to the seminarians of how Vatican II was the first council in church history to represent a true plurality, with bishops of all nationalities, races, cultures and people taking part. The European and Western dominance that had characterized previous Church Councils was no longer in evidence. Decisions regarding the future of the Church and the directions it must take in the modern world were made in a spirit of genuine collegiality. "What a pity," I added, "that, because of unfortunate historical circumstances, bishops from the China mainland were unable to attend." And I went on to express my hope that these bishops, in the not so distant future, might be able to assume their rightful place in the universal church's College of Bishops under the primacy of the Holy Father. "The Church," I said, "strives to be a community of brothers and sisters which, in a society characterized by science and technology, desires to participate fully in working for progress and modernization, while at the same time bearing witness to spiritual values by means of a life of faith that is meaningful and appropriate for the times and places in which we live."

The Church in China Must be Accepted as a Local Church: That such exchanges as these are allowed and encouraged is one more sign that times are

changing. A new era is dawning for the Church in China, one which beckons it to take its rightful place in the universal family of churches. It is a turning point in the history of the Church in China, and it might well be a turning point in the history of the universal church; certainly, a new chapter in that history is now being written. As the Church in China faces a new crossroads, one thing is obvious - there can be no going back to the past. China can never again be thought of as a 'missionary territory'. Today the Church in China must be recognized and accepted as a local church on the road to full maturity. The implications of such a realization means that we, who are on the outside, must continue our efforts to seek appropriate responses to this new and changing situation, and to work out positive methods for maintaining a close and supportive relationship with it.

Our Missionary Task in China is Over: Our missionary task in China is over. That it has now come to completion is made clear to us when we observe the mature and positive way the Church in China is taking responsibility for its own present growth and development. But this does not mean we, in the West, can put the church off to one side or forget about its needs. On the contrary, the new situation there offers us a new challenge: to relate to the Church in China as a genuine local Church within the world community of Churches.

A Relationship of Equality and Mutual Respect: The end of the Second World War saw much of the world emerging from centuries of colonialism. The colonial mentality could not help but taint our relations with China and the church in the past. Today, however, a new kind of relationship is demanded, a relationship based on equality and mutual respect. To rebuild relationship requires time, patience, and a strong commitment to slow, gradual growth. All of us, both inside and outside China, are now being challenged to rediscover each other's cultures and peoples, in order that we might renew and regain mutual appreciation and respect. We have much to explore and much to share. Scientific and culture exchanges (religion is an essential element of the latter) can be raw material for our growth and enrichment. The Chinese and Western Churches must move beyond the mistakes of recent history to achieve a relationship based on the meaningful exchange of both science and culture. Such an exchange cannot help but foster that highest of ideals - a universal sister and brotherhood founded on mutual respect, appreciation and equality.

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Ref. "Emergence of a Local Catholic Church in China?" TRIPOD, No.37  
Fr. Jerome Heydrickx, CICM, who has thirty years of experience working in Taiwan is presently the Secretary General of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation. The Foundation, which is located at the University of Louvain, actively promotes cultural exchanges between Europe and China.

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**Basic Ecclesial Communities in  
Annotto Bay, Jamaica**

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Magda Meeusen, ICM

(Un compte rendu personnel, court mais très intéressant, montrant comment des communautés chrétiennes de base, sont en train de transformer l'Eglise dans une région de la Jamaïque.)

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Small seeds are finding their way to the light! Beautiful things have happened through the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) in Long Road and May River, both belonging to the vast parish of Annotto Bay. How did it all start? In response to the request of many people, I am sharing with you some of my experiences in the BECs.

The Faith Community Gives the Impetus: In 1982, after the workshop in Balaclava, nobody really knew how to start a BEC, for it is so unique to each area. For about six months, nothing happened, until we finally plunged into it by calling a meeting of the "Faith Community" with a view of explaining what the BEC was all about. A group of people showed much interest, so we met every fortnight for a three-hour workshop. During the workshop participants from various communities learned through experience what BEC's are and how they function. After the workshop, participants began working in their local communities.

BEC-groups are Popping Up: In January 1984, the Long Road Community was ready to be divided into groups. Each group consisted of a number of houses along a particular hill or valley in the area. Within their own zone, the BEC-meetings move from house to house. These groups meet every two weeks on their own and as a pastoral worker I have a direct contact with these groups only every four to six weeks. Quite revealing has been the fact that the group manifesting the most dynamism is located in an area in which the Church-life seemed dead for many years.

In all groups many beautiful things have been happening: malicious actions have decreased, vicious attitudes have been healed, and even court cases have been avoided.

How Local BEC - group Meetings Proceed: To create a favourable atmosphere, each meeting begins with lively choruses. The host of the house welcomes the group and the leader says the opening prayer. In the early phase, people are informed of what a BEC is all about, so that new members and non-Catholics may be able to participate.

The first sharing of the evening deals with the joys and pains that were experienced during the past week and with the questions that came up. After this the sharing is put into a faith context. An appropriate Scripture text or the Gospel of the previous Sunday is read by two different persons with some time for reflection in between. The leader then invites all present to share about the Word of God, more particularly what it means in their daily life as lived in their own community. The sharing is followed by spontaneous prayers, often introduced by an appropriate chorus. After this the previous action point is evaluated, and a new action point, based on a need in the community, is chosen. The meeting ends with a roll call, dues given in support of the action point, a final song and prayer, and the sharing of a sing of peace with all present.

#### WITNESSING THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION

The witness of the group lies in its action. This has been so catching that people of other Christian denominations and even those belonging to no church have offered to help. It has not always been easy. Membership of the Cum See Group were criticized from the very beginning because they were repairing the potholes in which they stumbled with their load, while some people claimed that this must be done by the government. Others thought they were paid - people found it hard to believe in this sort of voluntary service.

Building Up Their Community: At one time, Edie Hill Group came out with 23 people to fix practically the whole track week after week - to the delight of those living in the valley. May Hill Group went as far as building a kitchen for an old woman who never had one in her whole life. Recently they even built a home for a very poor man who crawled at night under a few boards put together. "Dad" was discovered when he got sick and called for help - nobody knew in what condition the man was living. The women took turns to cook for him, the men built him a one-room house, and the children carried the materials. Every board and nail was begged in the area, and the generosity of the people provided him with a bed, spare mattress and bed linen. This lonely old man is so overjoyed that he is now asking for another room in order to socialize with his friends.

Also Enfield and May River Groups have done wonderful things,

such as cleaning up the homes and yards of sick and crippled people, doing the hard labour for a widow, working as a team in the fields whenever a worker needs many hands at once. One may well say that people give regularly one day's free labour for the building up of their community.

A New Church is Dawning!: On big feasts, such as Christmas and Easter, the groups celebrate together enjoying one another's fellowship. Doesn't all this sound like the spirit of the first Christian community of which people said: "See how they love one another!"

Ref. From the CATHOLIC OPINION, Archdiocesan paper of Kingston, Jamaica.

Quoted in ICM Focus, Suore Missionarie del Cuore Immacolato di Maria, Via Di Troili, 30, 00165 ROMA.

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## A New Theology of Creation

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### TO CARE FOR THE EARTH - A CALL TO A NEW THEOLOGY

Sean McDonagh  
Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1986

During the past year SEDOS members have attended Mission sessions at which a case was made and cogently argued for the inclusion of world peace and ecumenism as essential to any serious examination of mission to-day. Lay people constrained by the hard realities of professional disciplines may see this as another example of a rather typical lack of precision and clarity on the part of many missionaries to-day.

Now comes Sean McDonagh challenging us to consider ecology as a necessary constituent of real mission. True he does not claim it is impossible to engage realistically in mission without being involved in the struggle to care for the earth but the overall effect of this serious study is to arrive precisely at that conclusion.

Father McDonagh is well placed to make his case. A member of the Columban missionary Society he has been working for the last five years with the T'boli Tribal people in the Southeastern part of Mindanao in the mountains of Cotabato. An anthropologist, he has learned the language and culture of the people. For ten years before that he worked in the lowlands of Mindanao and taught anthropology at Marawi University, where almost the entire student body is Muslim. When I visited him there my fellow passengers, all Muslims, on the minibus going down from Marawi to Iligan asked me why I was there. They were happy with my reply that I was visiting Father McDonagh. They trusted him. Every section of the winding road, incidentally, was supervised by armed military.

Fr. McDonagh calls for a new theology of creation and claims that caring for the earth must shed light on many moral and ethical problems: on group, as distinct from individual behaviour, on the moral dimensions of social justice and their effect on the destruction of finely balanced ecological systems, on relationships between nations, some of whom enjoy preferential access to the resources of the earth, on the financial policies of developed countries, on selective restrictions in trading, on the moral

accountability of multinational corporations and many others.

In ten years time the T'boli people's heritage will be utterly destroyed unless there is a stop to the destruction of their native forest resources. There are only 70,000 of them but there are 20 million tribal peoples in the world. What is happening to the T'boli has a clear message for what may and will happen to those millions - and to the world. Can it be stopped?

Mc Donagh quotes from the United Nations WORLD CHARTER FOR NATURE - the first important international document to call attention to the moral dimensions of what is happening:

- a) Mankind is a part of nature and life depends on the uninterrupted functioning of natural systems which ensure the supply of energy and nutrients.
- b) Civilization is rooted in nature, which has shaped human culture and influenced all artistic and scientific achievement, living in harmony with nature gives man the best opportunity for his creativity, and for rest and recreation.

The document then calls for a moral code to guide human interaction with the natural world:

- a) Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth to man, and, to accord other organisms such recognition, man must be guided by a moral code of action.
- b) Man can alter nature and exhaust natural resources by his action or its consequence and, therefore, must fully recognize the urgency of maintaining the stability and quality of nature and of conserving natural resources.

The Author notes (p.211) that the 1981 SEDOS RESEARCH SEMINAR on the future of mission did not include CARE FOR THE EARTH among the present trends in mission. This book makes a convincing case for its inclusion in future Seminars. It is a disturbing book which we recommend to all missionaries.

W.J.