



increasingly acknowledged by SEDOS members' General Chapters coming to grips with their social and educational outreach.

SALVATION. The 1989 Sedos Research Seminar will examine the relationship between evangelization and popular religiosity. KENNETH ENANG'S description of salvation as understood by some independent Churches in Southern Nigeria serves as a beginning of preparation for that Seminar. These independent churches see salvation as concrete, this worldly, touching the whole person - body as well as soul, healing, reconciling, communicating - a challenge to many western missionaries' understanding of evangelization.

A.T.Rs. Finally there are excerpts from recent statements on the importance of dialogue with people of TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGIONS. This will develop surely into dialogue with Traditional Religions outside Africa.

## NEWS

GENERAL CHAPTERS: Congratulations to:

HENRY BERLAGE, SVD. elected Superior General of THE SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD.

HELEN McLAUGHLIN, RSCJ, President of SEDOS, re-elected Superior General of the RELIGIOUS OF THE SACRED HEART for a second term.

FLAVIO ROBERTO CARRARO, OFM.CAP., re-elected Superior General for a second term.

### NOUVEAUX MEMBRES DE SEDOS/NEW SEDOS MEMBERS.

Nous souhaitons la bienvenue aux PETITES SOEURS DE L'ASSOMPTION dont la Maison-Mère se trouve en France: 57, rue Violet, 75015 Paris. La Supérieure Générale est Mère Céline HEON, P.S.A. La Procure à Rome est assurée par Madeleine TERMONT (Tél. 527-46-25).

Nous souhaitons aussi la bienvenue à la SOCIETE DES MISSIONS ETRANGERES DU QUEBEC. Leur Supérieur Général est le P. Pierre SAMSON, P.M.E. Adresse: 180, Place Juge Desnoyers, Pont-Viau, Ville de Laval, Qué H7G 1A4. - Tél. (514) 677-4190.

### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MISSION STUDIES (IAMS).

Their triennial meeting held in Rome at the Augustinianum and the International Centre for Missionary Animation at the Urbaniana was a unique ecumenical event. Over two hundred missiologists from various churches and countries shared their vision of CHRISTIAN MISSION TOWARDS THE THIRD MILLENNIUM from June 29th. to July 5th. Major presentations were made by Joan Chatfield, MM. the outgoing President, John Pobe, the new President, Enrique Dussel and Cardinal Paul Poupard. A final aide - memoire, SOME CONCERNS AND POINTERS FROM THE CONFERENCE - and the full Conference REPORT will be published in the coming issue of EXCHANGE. Noted features of the Conference were the shared worship services and the encounters with the local lay community of SAN EGIDIO. The

Conference concluded with a moving celebration of the Eucharist in the catacomb of S. Domitilla.

A further meeting was held at the Urbaniana from July 5th, to July 7th, for about 40 members of the Association to share information, developments and future projects in three very important areas of mission - Documentation, Archives and Bibliography. Considerable progress was made towards agreement on a common thesaurus and computer software. We will hear more from these sections of IAMS. Participants had a guided tour of the Vatican Archives established by Pope Paul V in 1611.

Dr. Willi Henkel, OMI. of the Urbaniana and the SEDOS Secretariat made up the local organising committee for the Conference.

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## COMING EVENTS

### IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### (1) APARTHEID UPDATE.

ALBERT NOLAN, O.P., JOHANNESBURG

OCTOBER 5TH; 16.00 HRS. S.V.D. COLLEGIO.

#### (2) INTEGRITY OF CREATION:

##### A MISSION IMPERATIVE

OCTOBER, 26TH; 9.30 - 16.00 HRS. TO BE ANNOUNCED.

#### (3) PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION.

DECEMBER 13TH; 9.30 - 13.00 HRS. AT FRATELLI CRISTIANI

#### (4) SEDOS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 1988.

DECEMBER 13TH; 14.00 - 16.30 HRS. AT FRATELLI CRISTIANI

#### (5) EVANGELIZATION & POPULAR RELIGIOSITY.

SEDOS 1989 RESEARCH SEMINAR; APRIL 11 - 15, 1989; AT VILLA CAVELETTI.

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**THE GOSPEL B.I.T. BY B.I.T.**  
**TOWARDS BUILDING BASIC COMMUNITIES IN AN URBAN SETTING**

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Paul Vaz, S.J.

INTRODUCTION

(This is the story of a remarkable attempt at building basic communities in the urban setting of Bombay. The story is significant because it draws attention to the possibilities of a kind of social activity generally neglected both by social activists (who concentrate on rural India) and by Church groups (which are usually preoccupied with building up their own denominational structures). The building of inter-denominational basic communities in urban settings not only leads to communal harmony by engaging the people of different communities in a common struggle for justice; but it leads into an involvement in a wide range of significant issues, which if pursued could lead to the transformation of the whole urban set up).

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(L'accent de la Mission se déplace inexorablement vers les agglomérations urbaines. L'expérience de PAUL VAZ, à Bombay, est exceptionnelle en ce sens que les gens avec lesquels il a travaillé étaient de religions différentes: Hindous, Néo-Bouddistes, Chrétiens, Mususlmans. Au milieu de ces gens très pauvres et marginalisés, il s'est mis à créer des communautés, une tâche apparamment impossible. Les femmes furent les premières à répondre à cet appel. La croissance des groupes féminins poussa à la création de groupes de jeunes et d'enfants. Des rapports inter-religieux spontanés se sont développés peu à peu. En fin de compte, un essai de communauté vit le jour, ce qui n'était pas facile pour des gens contraints depuis des décennies à accepter passivement leurs insuffisances et leur impuissance. Pour des expériences analogues voir le Bulletin de SEDOS: 1983, 10, pp. 189-192; et 15 pp. 281-285; 1984, 6, pp. 121-123; 1985, 1 et 2, pp. 9-12; 1986, 6, pp. 158-168).

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Sharing the Life of the People: The idea of building basic communities in an urban setting came to me when I was studying theology in Pune. A group of us had opted to do our theology from outside the Jesuit theologate at De Nobili College. We lived in a chawl (slum) about half a mile away and, using the resources provided by the theologate, attempted to work out an experience-based theology from below. Living outside the seminary and sharing the life of the people around us had a profound impact on our theology and on our lives. It was here, being with the people, sharing in their joys and sorrows,

their hopes and anxieties, that I began to realise how important communities were, and how it was possible to build communities by gathering people together on issues of common interest, like getting the landlord to supply an electrical connection or to repair a leading roof.

On coming to Bombay after my seminary studies I was sent to build communities among the urban poor of the city, working out of a centre for spiritual and social services run by the Jesuits of the Bombay Province. The centre was near the Bombay central railway station in the heart of Bombay.

#### THE B.I.T. CHAWLS

After much searching I decided to start work at the B.I.T. (Bombay Improvement Trust) chawls, which lie about a quarter of an hour's walk away from the centre. The chawls are three-storey blocks of one-room tenements which had been built during the time of the British for the municipal workers of the city. There are 20 blocks in the B.I.T. chawls, each with 80 rooms - 20 (ten by fifteen feet) rooms to a floor, with common bathrooms and toilets. A room is normally occupied by a family - though there are sometimes more than one, occasionally as many as four families in a single room. In all then there would be about 1600 families in the chawls.

Privacy is obviously an unobtainable luxury here, and the incredible overcrowding has its marked social and psychological consequences. Violent quarrels, high alcoholism, gambling, free consensual marriages are common. The number of children who drop out of school is high. The youth are largely unemployed. They read little - only film magazines, if anything at all. Sports, films, dramas, videos and other escapist entertainments are popular. Clubs of various kinds - the Mahatma Sports Club, Blues United, provide this "lonely crowd" with a sense of support and identity. Feasts are high points in the life of the chawl and serve to bring the people together.

Religiously, the population of the chawl is mixed. Most are Marathi or Gujarati-Speaking Hindus but some 160 families (10%) are Neo-Buddhist dalits, about 120 families (8%) are Christian and about 48 families (3%) are Muslim. These religious divisions are accentuated by political ones for various political parties have their members in the chawls, though the Congress and the Shiv Sena predominate. Economically the chawl dwellers are more homogeneous. Most of them belong to the lower middle class income group and a few (specially the dalits (untouchables) are even poorer. The social structures of the chawl are those of a village. Joint families live here. People belonging to the same castes and religion tend to congregate in the same block, even the same floor.

This chawl culture makes the people complacent and easy-going. But they also show a lot of openness and hospitality. Readiness to help the neighbour in need, especially in times of death, illness and accident is impressive.

Building Communities in the Chawls. How does one go about building communities in such a situation?

initially, I started alone and after a few months a team which included three professional social workers was formed. Later we had only two professionals and two voluntary animators. This was strengthened from time to time by young Religious in formation who joined us for varying periods (from a few months to a year) to gain experience. The team began by creating a rapport with the people in the chawl. We celebrated their feasts with them, attended their weddings, talked to them about their needs and expectations. Slowly a rapport was established, needs were expressed, a process of reflection and action began.

#### THE GROWTH OF WOMEN'S GROUPS

Women were the first to respond. The women of Block 4 showed a great desire to learn to read and write in order to be able to read the numbers of the buses and the sign-boards in the railway stations. Adult literacy classes were started for them. Soon women from other floors and other blocks joined.

The adult literacy classes brought out the women's needs. As significant words were elicited from the women so that they could be taught to read and write them, it became clear that water was, for the women, a burning issue. Some families had not been getting water for the past four months; others for the past three years! The group decided to take up the issue of water and to do something about it. Various alternatives were suggested and listed. Finally the women realised that since complaints had not worked they would have to go to the Ward Officer to protest. This, of course, required considerable courage on their part because protesting was not something they had been accustomed to. Both as women and as dalit women they had been taught to acquiesce passively in situations however unjust, never to protest against them. Over a series of meetings, however, their confidence was built up. They were brought to see themselves as human beings like any others, not as members of an oppressed caste and sex. They realised that they had a right to the water and that nothing prevented them from going to the Ward Officer to present their problem to him.

Appointment with the Ward Officer: An appointment was made with the Ward Officer and the whole group of women went to meet him in his office. A lively interchange followed. The somewhat sarcastic questions of the Officer, who obviously believed that dalit women should know their place, - ("Why do you need water?"; "I know why you are not getting enough water - because you bathe twice daily - see how well you are dressed today") were met with replies that were admirably clear, straightforward and honest. Finally, at the end of a long question and answer session, the Ward Officer said: "You think I can't give you water? I can give you water just now, here." "Sir", one of the women replied, "there is no point in giving us water here - give us water in our houses." A memorandum carrying the signatures of 60 families was handed to the Ward Officer, and he agreed to come to the chawls next day to verify the problem for himself.

Next day, he did turn up as promised and visited the first and second floors of the block. The task of taking him around and showing him the taps and the connections was entrusted to the women of each

floor. On his return he ordered the water connection to be laid on. The deputy engineer and the workers of the maintenance and repair department who were ordered to do this were upset because the people had gone to the Ward Officer, above their heads. They began upbraiding the women. The women replied: "We have been putting in complaints for the last three years and nothing has been done. How long do you expect us to wait?" For the next three days the Ward Officer himself came to see the progress of the work, and by the third day the water connection had been laid on.

The Dynamics of Community Buildings: I have narrated this incident at some length because, insignificant as it seems, it was a crucial point in the process of community building in the BIT chawls and offers a good illustration of the dynamics of community building. Talking to the people elicits an immediate need (literacy). Responding to this need leads to the awareness of a more basic need (water). Organizing the people to tackle this as a group, leads to awareness of themselves as a community. For not only was the people's self-image greatly boosted by the success of their agitation, but they began to reflect on the reasons for their success. These reasons were analyzed at their next meeting, and were formulated by them as follows: We succeeded because: (1) we were all united and supported each other; (2) we spoke up boldly and expressed our problem openly; and (3) we realized that we have a right to water as much as any other human being. These three points became the refrain for every subsequent meeting reminding the women that in common action lay their strength.

Other Issues Arise: The process of awareness-building grew spontaneously. News of what had happened reached other blocks and groups of women from the other blocks too began to get together to discuss their problems and do something about them. Issues like rations, drainage, sanitation were taken up. Gradually, interest shifted to deeper cultural issues like those of the rejection of girl-children in Indian society, the incidence of rape, wide-beating, the problem of the dowry system and so on.

Bride Burning: As the groups grew in the various blocks, inter-block meetings took place, which brought together women of different castes and communities. At one such meeting the issue of bride burning was put forward as one worth taking up. The problem was to get the women to express what they felt about it for the situation of the chawl women, in their culture of silence, is very different from that of the vocal middle class society ladies. The following method which was tried turned out to be a great success. A beautiful puppet dressed as a bride was brought to a session of the women. The women were asked to sit silently and watch. The puppet was placed before them. Then it was set alight with a match. As the women watched the puppet-bride burning, one could see their faces showing great emotion. When the ashes of the burnt puppet-bride were distributed among them some refused to take any. When their reactions were asked for, they spoke animatedly. But we noticed that the dalit women were not as vocal as the rest. Obviously more building up of their self-image was needed before they could have the confidence to speak.

The women's groups continue to function. Adult literacy and post-

literacy classes go on. New issues will doubtless arise to engage their concerted action.

### THE EMERGENCE OF YOUTH GROUPS

At the same time a member of our team began to work with the youth of the area. Contact was established with some of the youth who used to meet from time to time in tea shops. Film appreciation, play-acting, picnics, and training camps were used to bring them together. Somewhat prematurely (because I had to go for my Tertianship, the last stage in my Jesuit formation) the youth were organized into a group, which they called the Organization for a Better Society. Committees were appointed to take care of the following issues: (1) religious affairs; (2) children's activities; (3) supportive education and (4) a study circle.

\* Each committee had its own area of work. The religious affairs committee tried to organize meaningful Eucharists for Christians arranged for their faith formation through seasonal celebrations like those of Advent and Lent and organized floor feasts. For this they used a variety of methods, like drama, puppetry, street exhibitions, posters, flash cards and group discussion - often with considerable creativity.

\* The Supportive Education Project was an attempt to respond to the high dropout rate from school among the children, specially those of the dalits. Children were attracted by the 'Look and Learn' method developed by the youth, week-end outings, educational visits, environmental surveys, provided new and interesting processes of learning.

\* The study circle took up significant contemporary issues, with a view to doing something about them. Discussions thus led to outreach programmes like involvement with the pavement dwellers facing eviction; or helping in the rehabilitation of the victims of the Bhiwandi riots. This last was particularly impressive. The youth committed themselves to nearly three months of continuous service, helping victims to rebuild their houses and assisting them to secure compensation from a reluctant and inefficient bureaucracy. This meant the sacrifice of their week-end holidays; for some it even meant the sacrifice of their casual leave.

#### Spontaneous Inter-Religious Communication: Seeing the Christians

celebrate their feasts in meaningful ways, the Hindus thought: "Why not we?" So for Hanuman Jayanti they put up a thought-provoking drama showing the 'hanumans' of today - the little 'dadas' pushing people around in the ration queues, or the big bullyboy who does not attend school but forcibly takes away the notes of his little companion. They lord it over others, until the real Lord Hanuman comes along and says: "I was the Lord of the Universe the protector of the weak and the oppressed - see what you have made me today!"

Such expressions of spontaneous inter-religious communication encouraged us to organize inter-cultural meetings of youth in overnight camps, away from the chawls. There the values of sisterhood/brotherhood co-operation and service were reflected upon through simulation exercises and slide shows. Once again we realized the need for greater concentration on the dalits, for the building up of their self-image. Today one of our team workers is working with the dalit youth. Unemployment



and school drop-outs seem to be their main problems. We are countering these through vocational skills training. Twenty-five persons have already registered for various kinds of training.

Through all this a new youth cadre is slowly taking shape. We have a fine mix of Hindu Dalit and Catholic youth prepared to reach out to grown-up others. An interesting feature has been the turn out of grownup Hindu girls who had benefited from the children's study circle of previous years.

#### CREATING CHILDREN'S GROUPS

The activities of the youth have resulted in the development of children's groups. Children's study classes conducted by youth volunteers have grown into a supportive education programme for children (supplementing their school education by new 'Look and Learn' methods), in which even the SSC students are now actively involved. Creative activities are encouraged. On children's day 1981, for instance, children of the area, brought together by various voluntary organizations, were not given the usual children's party, but were invited to present the theme of child labour. Through skits, posters and songs they depicted the life of the child workers at railway stations, of shoe-shine boys, and of the boys working in hotels. Value education camps were started for the children by the team, and these have now been taken over by the youth leaders of the area.

#### COMMON CO-OPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

The focus on women, youth and children has not excluded common co-operative activities with wider outreach. Festivals and cultural education programmes bring together the local committees of the area, so that the animators are able to gauge the potential of the men-folk and come to know the power structure of the area. Thus eighteen committees collaborated in the Science exhibit organized by the team. This was a three-day programme aimed at bringing science down to the common people.

On the first day, information about various common diseases (like anaemia) and home remedies to counter them, was put across through songs and plays. A panel of doctors was available till midnight to answer the questions of the people. The second day brought telescopes from the Nehru Planetarium and microscopes from the Nehru Science Centre through which visitors to the exhibition could look at Saturn through the telescopes or see amoebae through the microscopes. On the third day, slide-shows showed how the drug companies exploit the common folk by marketing unnecessary drugs promoted through deceptive advertisement, and how their production pollutes the environment and creates occupational hazards for workers forced to work in unsafe conditions. More than three thousand people attended the exhibition. Expenses for it (amounting to about three thousand rupees) were raised by the people themselves through a door-to-door collection.

NEW MINISTRIES WITH THE URBAN POOR

The work of community-building in the BIT chawls has led to new areas of involvements in the problems of the city, in collaboration with other groups - some church-related, most secular. We have been involved in the agitation against the demolition of the homes of the pavement dwellers; in organizing road-side schools (with the help of the Bombay Teachers' Training Institute); in fighting for the rights of domestic workers, in working with child labourers, rag-pickers and hotel boys. Each of these forms of involvement would need an article by itself. I mention them here only to show how building basic communities in an urban setting, if it follows a proper method of presence, awareness and response, will lead, naturally and without artificial striving for relevance, to involvement in the major issues of the city.

Enrolment Alone is Full of Risk: Community-building in the BIT chawls has proved to be a creative and challenging task. It is by no means easy to animate people forced for decades to a passive acceptance of their 'Karma', brainwashed by religion and society into a deep sense of their inadequacy and helplessness. It is difficult to communicate the values of a basic community (collective self-reliance, sisterhood, brotherhood, co-operation, unity, respect for each other, service) in a world where a consumer culture increasingly preaches the opposite, and to people who have had to struggle hard (and competitively) to secure the precarious positions they occupy. Animators too are hard to find, because their work is taxing and their salaries low. Building up communities inevitably leads to involvement in issues which are full of risks, and to forms of action that are full of uncertainty. There are no precedents, no clear-cut guidelines in this work. "Wayfarer, there is no way," as the poet has said, "you make your way by walking."

Solidarity in the Struggle: And yet, in spite of all this, the work is immensely satisfying and productive. There are few things more stirring than to see a group of oppressed people come alive, build up their confidence in themselves, break their 'culture of silence', stand up in public to tell their story, and find solidarity in the struggle for their rights. The effects of such community-building, too, are far-reaching. Like ripples in a pond, they spread out, as we have seen, to touch many of the major issues of urban life. The building of basic communities in an urban setting is a work worth doing! In a city like Bombay (indeed in any city), bursting with chawls, slums, hutments and pavement dwellings, the potentialities of such work are immense. All that is needed are people who will set themselves to the task.

Ref. Vidyajyoti Journal,  
4A Faj Nivas Marg, Delhi 110054, India.  
Vol LII/No2, February 1988.

See also SEDOS Bulletins: 83/No. 15 (Oct. 15, 1983) 281 - 285; 84/No. 6 (Oct. 1, 1984) 121 - 123; 85/No.1 & 2 (Feb 1st, 1985) 9 - 12; 86/No. 6 (June 15, 1986) 158 - 168, for comparable experiences in Trinidad, Dublin, Nairobi and Latin America.

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## JUSTICE AND HEALTH

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Sarah Summers, M.M.S.

### INTRODUCTION

(Recent visitors to SEDOS Secretariat have spoken about the urgent need to promote medical services which are really at the service of the poor. There is a continuing tendency to channel more and more financial aid into sophisticated hospital services which benefit only a small percentage of the people. Dr. Margaret Marquart of the German Institute for Medical Missions, Tübingen and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Rome, during her visit here, to SEDOS, saw the missionary societies engaged in medical work as one of the last hopes for promoting low cost medical services truly directed towards the poor.

The following contribution is from an interview given by Sister Sarah Summers, Superior General of the Medical Missionary Society, to Sister Mary Punnathanam, staff member of the South Asia Religious News Agency in New Delhi. Readers will find it of interest both for its medical content and also for the unpretentious replies to searching questions on medical mission today: medical health and justice; relations with civil and ecclesial authorities: "collaboration" with marxists; option for the poor: Mother Teresa of Calcutta; vocations etc.

We are grateful to Sarah Summers for permission to publish this interview and also the additional comments from her letter to the Sisters of her Congregation on her return from an extended visit to India. Ed).

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(En 1984, les mass-media de l'Inde parlaient beaucoup des Soeurs Médicales Missionnaires. Elles ont soutenu courageusement, et se sont identifiées avec le petit groupe de caboteurs du Kerala sur le côté de Sud-Ouest de l'Inde (Cfr. Bulletin SEDOS 1981, 4, pp. 74-76; 1984, 17, pp. 383-384; 1986, 8, pp. 239-243). Les autorités civiles et religieuses ont été engagées dans cette lutte entre les puissantes flottes commerciales de pêche et les caboteurs. Le Pape Jean-Paul II a parlé de ce problème dans un discours à la Conférence Mondiale sur la Pêche organisée par la F.A.O. et de nouveau, d'une façon plus explicite, devant les pêcheurs de St. John, à Terre-Neuve, durant sa visite au Canada. (Bulletin SEDOS, 1984, 14, pp. 323-324 et 330.332). Voilà, en partie, l'arrière plan de plusieurs des questions posées à SARAH SUMMERS, lors de son interview. Selon elle, fournir de l'aide médicale aux pauvres soulève des problèmes beaucoup plus vastes d'analyse sociale et de justice, ce qui est déjà de plus en plus reconnu dans les Chapitre Généraux d'Instituts membres de SEDOS, lorsqu'ils se trouvent aux prises avec leurs problèmes sociaux et d'éducation. N.D.L.R.).

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

Sr. Mary Punnathanam, How do you see your Society's mission in India?

Sr. Sarah Summers. I can speak from the perspective of this district of North India. For a long time we were limited to the hospital expression of our healing ministry. But as the years have gone by we have become aware that it is not sufficient to treat patients as individuals: rather we have to treat them in the family and social context. The healing mission has become broader through our experience. It is broader in the sense that we find ourselves involved in health care which helps not only to prevent disease, but also enables persons to take their proper place in local communities to achieve their total well being.

We have come to realize that many issues connected with health are, in fact, related in justice. Therefore, we see justice as an essential element of our healing mission. We cannot expect people to be healthy if they do not have adequate water supply and good food, especially in a situation where the majority are deprived of essential requirements. A few corner all the benefits. I rejoice with our Sisters in their commitment to people and in their struggle for justice in health.

Why do some of your Sisters work with action groups with Marxist leanings?

Since the foundation of our Society, we have been encouraged to reach out and relate with all people of goodwill who work to build the human community regardless of religion, caste or creed. I am often struck by the fact that as long as we give bread to the poor, our mission is labeled as good charity. The day that we encourage people and animate them to lay claim to bread that is rightfully theirs we are labeled Marxists. I support my Sisters who are working with action groups. They have maintained dialogue with the congregation about their activities and are open to reflection. This is not a problem for me.

Some of your Sisters have created a "rebel" image through their involvement in activities relating to human rights. Can you comment?

Your question creates some confusion. For me, people who work for human rights are not rebels. The rebels are those people who prevent others from having human rights, who interfere with human growth and rebel against God's plan for humanity. I do not think any of our Sisters have a rebel image.

Do you think a handful of Sisters can bring about social changes?

I do not harbor any illusions that we are going to be the saviors of the world. Indeed, we are only 700 Sisters working in 20 countries. So, in comparison to the complex problems that face the world, we are a handful indeed. However, the image of the drop of water gently but firmly wearing away the rock, is a powerful image to me. I believe that each of us in different parts of the world, in our deeply committed way, tries to bring about social change. I cannot help but have faith in the fact that many drops of water falling on the rock will eventually wear it down.

How do you assess your relationship with Government and ecclesial authorities?

In North India, our relationship with the government is good. In many places we experience the support of the government for our mission particularly where we are involved in hospitals and primary health care activities and projects. With ecclesial authorities in general, I would say we enjoy a positive relationship. We have always felt that as we learn and reflect on our mission, new horizons are opened up to us and we see how our mission is evolving. We have been able to share this with bishops and priests. Sometimes, because of changes, there is not always an immediate understanding. However, having spoken with many of them, I understand that they are very appreciative of our mission and there is close collaboration in many cases.

How do you contribute to the United Nations call "Health for all by 2000 AD"?

Certainly in primary health care projects and community health programs, and we are serious about the immunization programs for children. The emphasis is on nutrition, safe water supply and tackling some basic communicable diseases. I believe in this way we are making a small but very valid contribution to the United Nations call of health for all by 2000 AD.

Isn't there some tension among your Sisters; some wanting the status quo and others calling for radical changes in the Society's mission? How do you propose to solve that?

That tension does exist. It would seem that every religious congregation has some poets who help us to dream and see new visions. We have some prophets to denounce injustices and announce positive alternatives and there are pragmatics who immediately move in to implement what the poets and prophets have pointed out. Sometimes the poets, the prophets and the pragmatics get into some quite lively discussions and from that, often some tensions result. But that tension is a healthy tension because it helps to link history with the present moment and with the claims of the future.

The image of the order as hospital nuns has undergone change recently. Could you spell out the new trends in the Society and how they influence work in India?

I found the medical care system in North India extremely complex and costly. My travel through North India has shown that a majority of the people live in rural areas. I see a contradiction between the sophisticated allopathic medical care system and the simple life of the people here. Probably only a very small percentage of the population profit by this system of medical care. The traditional systems of health and medicine get lost. We try to rediscover the ancient traditional system in a simple manner as a response to health and healing. Each of our hospitals in North India has a department of homeopathy and naturopathy with a herbal garden. We try to induct these systems in the life style of the people. I also believe the problem of alcoholism needs attention. We want to focus on the problems of addiction so that we can help change

the lives of people.

Why don't you have a specific identity as a religious? Your image as a religious does not tally with an Indian's image of a holy woman.

I have not been here long enough to know your culture or understand what would be the Indian image of a holy woman. I feel a little hesitant to respond to this question. Probably you are referring to the use of a common symbol or a simple form of dress. Our Sisters make great effort to dress very modestly, very simply and, in most cases, with some religious symbol. It is true that we do not have a specific identity as a congregation or as a group here in North India. But our identity goes much deeper than the clothes we wear. We hope that our identity as holy women can be sensed from the simple gospel way of life that we live and our serious effort to lead a life which brings us closer to the poor.

If "option for the poor" is your present motto, why don't you adopt a mission like Mother Teresa's?

It was my privilege to meet Mother Teresa here and have a pleasant conversation with her. She is a very dynamic and committed woman and the bonds of friendship between our two congregations are very close since she studied for some time at Holy Family Hospital before she founded her congregation. She knew Mother Anna Dengel. In the Church there are a variety of charismas and we complement one another by the gifts we bring to the Church and the world. Mother Teresa is working for the victims of unhealthy situations and injustice. She is tackling these problems in a caring and compassionate way. We, in our option for the poor, are working in a very caring and compassionate way also trying to help masses of people to find their way into the future. I feel that our charism and that of Mother Teresa's go very well together. We do not have to do the very same things.

Why do you have few vocations, whereas a congregation like the Missionaries of Charity gets more than it can accommodate? Don't you think people are still attracted to a life of charity and penance?

I do not know why we have fewer vocations. Since vocation is essentially a mystery, I am not the one to respond to that. God knows why certain people are called to one congregation, while others are called to other congregations. Our congregation is not so well known and we can put more effort into making the cause of justice known as we see it. That may attract more young women from India in the future. I believe that our Sisters are, in fact, leading serious lives of charity and penance.

What is your message for the Indian Church and religious?

How can I, after having been here only six weeks, make some kind of proclamation to the Indian Church and to religious? That would be assuming a lot! What I would like to say is, let us all continue to stretch out our hands, our minds and hearts so that we can see people as they are oppressed and work together for and with these people because the future of the Church and the future of India is with them. I would say that the recent documents published by the Conference of Religious, In

dia (CRI) certainly coincide with much of our charism as a Society.

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II Excerpts from a letter of Sr. Sarah Summers to the members of her Congregation following her visit to North India.

Contrast Between Rural and Urban Scene

There is an enormous gap between approximately 75% of the people who live in rural villages in a semi-feudal setting and those who have been incorporated into another era through technology and wealth. While most rural peoples are illiterate or semi-literate, 80-90% of investment and development takes place in the urban areas. Every year 5-6 million people are added to the number below the poverty line.

This reality presents profound challenges which need both reflection and action:

- \* how to distinguish between modernization and westernization?
- \* how to keep alive the religious and sub-cultural search without building up walls but rather building bridges?
- \* how to counteract the prevalence of corruption and violence as a way of asserting identity and power?
- \* how to eliminate patterns of domination, rich over poor, one caste over another?

CHALLENGES TO SISTERS IN MEDICAL MISSION

While one rejoices that the advances of allopathic medical care have saved lives and increased life expectancy, the question remains as to whom these advances really reach. In spite of the fall in adult death rate, child and infant mortality have not fallen to the same extent. Particularly vulnerable are unborn or new born girls who are given little protection or whose lives are deliberately taken: this is related to the low status of women and the dowry system (every female born into a family represents a potential economic drain on the family!).

Challenges to the Medical Mission Sisters Inculturation: It was evident to me that over the past years our Sisters have really made an effort to be more inculturated, simplifying life and continuing to cast off non-Indian expressions which had crept in over the years. However, there are still challenges since many are in mission in sub-cultures that are distinct from their own. There needs to be a continuing acquisition of fluency in the local languages if we are to really communicate with the people at their level. It would also seem preferable to utilize a form of Indian dress rather than the western uniform for staff and students in our hospitals.

Integral Health Services: There are various expressions of mission all

of which have an explicit relationship to the promotion of integral health of the peoples and justice (hospitals, training schools, grassroots, and holistic projects). However, there is a need to see the various expressions as complementary to one another, affirming pluriformity and not just tolerating it. Given the sophistication of the health care system as it has developed in India, there is a need to re-think our approach to health and healing. More simple and integral means are needed to promote life and real health for the masses of people. So we need to ask: are we utilizing our energies and personal resources in the preservation of the present medical care system or in the promotion of life and justice through innovative/creative approaches?

Community in Mission - Political Awareness: I sensed in all of our involvements a real sense of being a community in mission with others. There is also a growth of political awareness among many and how this consciousness relates to the Gospel message. As we walk with the people in their struggles, we will need to assume a real discipline of step by step and patient conscientization. Strategies will have to be carefully chosen so that we facilitate relationships and structures from among the people themselves -- localization -- and not become the center of mission ourselves.

Concern for Women: There is a growing consciousness regarding the plight of womankind. A recent gathering in Patna had brought together a large number of women from all over India, many of them from rural areas. Several of our Sisters participated in this event and were heartened to hear their sisters so articulate and committed to the cause of women's emancipation. In both the village involvements and in nursing schools, this is an area for stimulating justice and healing in the coming years.

Ref. Intercontinent, No. 185, May - June, 1988.  
Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries.  
645 Washington Blvd., Baltimore, Md. 21230, U.S.A.

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## SALVATION: AN AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

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Kenneth Enang

### INTRODUCTION

(We offer this article in preparation for the SEDOS Seminar on EVANGELIZATION AND POPULAR RELIGIOSITY, April, 15 - 19, 1989 at Villa Cavalletti.

Salvation is one of the key terms and concepts in Christianity. Indeed, for some people it is the centre of Christianity as a religion and everything revolves around it. While the term salvation occurs frequently in much of the preaching and writing done in Africa, surprisingly little careful study of salvation has actually been done. So we are very limited in our resources for any investigation of salvation. However, there is one excellent study which provides us with, at least, one window onto the African experience of salvation. The study is by a Roman Catholic priest, Kenneth Enang, SALVATION IN A NIGERIAN BACKGROUND: ITS CONCEPTS AND ARTICULATION IN THE ANNANG INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (Berlin, Verlag von Reimer, 1979.

The Annang people numbered about 1.2 million in 1977, living in the Cross River State in the south-east of Nigeria. Missionaries first arrived there in 1919, and the missions have had remarkable success in their missionary preaching and in the gaining of followers, so that over 50 percent of the total population of Annang has professed the Christian faith. Mission bodies come from several churches in Europe, including Methodist, Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches; there are also many indigenous churches that have sprung up in Annang as a result of separations from mission churches and from one another. Enang's book is a study of salvation among these independent (indigenous) churches, of which he surveyed and interviewed thirty-two.

Following is a summary of the summary of Enang's study taken from chapter six of John S. Mbiti's, BIBLE AND THEOLOGY IN AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY; Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1986. This introduction is also from Mbiti's chapter six. Ed.)

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(Le Séminaire de Recherche de SEDOS en 1989 doit examiner les rapports entre l'évangélisation et la religiosité populaire. KENNETH ENANG nous dit comment le salut est compris dans certaines églises indépendantes du Nigeria Méridional. Cette étude peut servir de préparation à notre Séminaire Pour ces églises indépendantes, le salut est quelque chose de concrèt, de ce monde, englobant toute la personne, son corps comme son âme; il guérit, réconcilie et fait partager. C'est un défi à la conception de l'évangélisation de beaucoup de missionnaires occidentaux. N.D.L.R.)

## I SALVATION

In the Annang language, salvation is rendered by the word "edinyanga". In its setting, the word has six different basic meanings.

### Negatively it means:

1. The transference from the state of danger to a peril-free one.
2. Freedom from physical attack.
3. Protection from whatever would inflict a jeopardy.

### Positively it signifies:

1. Increase and progress in the state that is conceived as safe, prosperous, glorious.
2. Maintenance of a peaceful relationship with the objects and persons on which and on whom one's own harmony and that of the world around one depend. These five different meanings lead into the sixth, namely actions which bring about "edinyanga" (salvation).

Thus the Annang can only say that they have been saved when the different eventualities which took place on their behalf and because of them, have produced a successful outcome in the end. The Annang believe their existence is constantly threatened. But they are aware that their existence is open to them with possibilities for making it meaningful. They therefore go beyond themselves and search for whatever makes their life useful, good and full of meaning. The Annang independent churches pursue salvation on four fronts: baptism, eucharist, Holy Spirit, and healing. We will look at each of the fronts in more detail.

## 2 BAPTISM AND SALVATION

The baptism ceremony in one independent church has eleven vows three of which state:

8. I herewith swear that I shall always read the scriptures.
9. I herewith swear that I shall renounce Satan and all his riches.
10. I herewith swear that I shall obey the Holy Spirit, live a Christian life all the days of my life so that, at my death, I will be buried by the church according to its rites.

Baptism is by complete immersion using the trinitarian formula. It is a rite whereby new members are admitted into their community. It is a very joyful occasion. Other church activities are suspended on that day and the feast continues, after baptism, in the homes of the newly baptized. Baptism as an initiation rite contributes to salvation in two ways. Firstly incorporation, which assures the recipients that baptism of salvation is christo-centric. The baptized are baptized into Christ. Secondly, the baptized are accepted into a community in which they can find their identity. But that alone does not exhaust the values of salvation inherent in baptism. It is a rite through which sins are forgiven. Original sin is not mentioned. Emphasis is only on personal sins and their destruction by baptism. Since baptism purifies from personal

sins, infants are not baptized.

Baptism is also viewed as protection, which is another dimension of salvation. It leaves an indelible sign on the baptized which repels the devil and protects the person from the devil's harassments. Baptism in Jesus' name is an anti-demonic rite. The name of Jesus effects not only exorcism but it remains also in the soul of the baptized to drive away any present and future assaults of the devil. When one is baptized, one has put on Christ at the very moment of baptism. Therefore, baptism protects one from misfortunes, ill-luck, dangers and disasters which the devil might cause. The condition on the part of the recipient is faith in Christ. Baptism without faith cannot help.

In traditional Annang religion it is held that benevolent divinities exist, believed to possess the capacity of rendering protection to needy and threatened people against the evil schemes of their supposed enemies. Now, with their unshakeable belief in the protective ability of Jesus Christ, the Annang independents have consciously or unconsciously, transferred the power to protect and prevent, formerly and originally ascribed to the divinities, to Christ.

#### Summary.

1. Whatever offers protection to people in order to make them survive is seen here in a religious context. This has been a fact among the Annang in their primal religion. It is only given a Christian qualification as far as the protection is believed to come from the the name of Jesus Christ into whom one is baptized.
2. A person who believes that his or her life is constantly under the threat of dissolution, caused by what one holds to be one's enemy, is ready to cling to a person or thing whom one recognizes to be in possession of the power to prevent this dissolution. This the independents believe to be afforded by Christ at baptism.
3. They believe that it is a meaningful occurrence which brings them into bond with Jesus Christ who victoriously and really saves them.
4. Men and women are beings with a strong passion for self-preservation. The urge to protect oneself from attack impels the adherents of the independents to keep their eyes on what provides them with protection and security. Where one is secure in life, one can say with some degree of certainty that she or he is in salvation.
5. The protection they want from Christ is protection in their concrete daily life as they live here on earth.

### 3. EUCHARIST AND SALVATION

The eucharist is another channel of experiencing salvation. One very striking aspect of the whole rite of celebration of the eucharist in these churches is the extensive and long preparations characterized by rigorous fasting for days, confession of sins and abstention from

sexual advances. Fasting lasts from three to seven days covering twelve hours a day, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Holy communion is for the independents a sacrament full of awe. Approaching it one has to be fully sanctified by a ritual ceremony embracing repentance, purification and reconciliation. The communion service is mostly a celebration full of life and gets right down to the marrow of the participants, fully punctuated with prayers, dances, sermons, announcements and concluding with a benediction. It is included in the Sunday service which starts at 8.45 a.m., and by the time the eucharist is celebrated it is about 11.45 a.m.

The frequency of celebrating the eucharist varies: some independents celebrate it yearly, others quarterly and some monthly. Those who celebrate it quarterly include at least Easter and Christmas celebrations. The eucharistic elements also vary and include the use of bread, biscuits, ground-nuts and bananas, soft drinks (like Fanta and tonic water), and in one case water. Biblical reflections give reasons for the use of water instead of wine. On the cross it was not wine which flowed from the side of Jesus but rather water and blood.

Not all are accepted to the communion table. Those mainly excluded are the unbaptized and, to some degree, those who do not prepare themselves through the long exercise of abstinence and confession of sins. Eating of the sacrificial victim is limited to those present at the sacrifice. Vestiges of traditional religious practices and ideas are still in the minds of the independent churches and in their actions. Their practice brings to mind the attitude of secret societies with regard to meals which are coveted privileges of full members and initiates who have complied with the requisites for membership. The Saviour at whose table they congregate is the same historical Jesus who shared with many during his lifetime on earth. Sharing in him mediates divine gifts which are meant for men and women in their concrete life.

In light of this idea the independents associate participation in the Lord with joy and happiness. When they share at the Lord's Supper they have expectations of immediate healing of their bodily ailments, blessings for their temporal undertakings, and welfare and protection from the forces which provoke a threat to their life. By participating in an intensified fashion at the eucharist each communicant expresses solidarity with the other - a contributive factor to salvation. By being together reconciliation sets in and peace rains like refreshing drops upon all from the one who holds the community together.

#### 4. HOLY SPIRIT AND SALVATION

Belief in the Spirit as a power from God is the nerve of the whole belief system with regard to the Holy Spirit. He is not only believed to be the messenger of God the Father alone but also a power sent by Christ to continue the work of salvation in the world. The Spirit has the main responsibility for salvation in the world and church. With regard to spiritual beings other than God, the Holy Spirit is the most powerful of all existing spirits with an enormous capability to cure, heal, provide fortune, good health and insure victory over malignant enemies and evil forces. Consequently, and judging exclusively in terms of what the Holy Spirit does, God and Christ are still believed in, they still speak

through the Holy Spirit, but they seem to be obscured by the strong dynamism of the Holy Spirit.

So these churches emphasize the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a belief for which they find biblical basis in the events at Pentecost in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea and Ephesus (Acts 2:1-4;8:15ff.;10:44-48;19:1-7), and the experience of the early Christians in the Corinthian community (I Cor. 12-14). They understand the main chapters of the Acts to imply an ecstatic baptism of the Holy Spirit clearly distinguished from water baptism. The gifts of the Spirit are manifested in ecstatic phenomena which include trances, violent movements of the body, speaking in tongues, and prophecy-which embraces visions, dreams and revelations.

Healing: is another central feature in which the gift of the Spirit is demonstrated. Possession trance occurs mostly at the summit of the service. At this moment, the church is sufficiently electrified with loud singing, intense drumming, clapping and feverish dancing. People twist and jostle to the music and thereby slide quickly into trance. It is mostly women who get possessed. Glossolalia finds its scriptural justification mainly in the Acts and First Corinthians. In the Annang independent churches it is one of the most central features and it is characterized as a gift of the Spirit. They vehemently accuse the old churches of withholding the Spirit and suppressing the gifts of tongues.

The Gift of Prophecy is believed to be a direct manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. Prophetic predictions are judged as the climax in the whole process of pentecostal revelations. Prophecy is so important that we can formulate its place of value in these words: the independent churches rise and fall with prophecy. Take it away, and you cut off the central nerve of their whole spiritual life and foundation. Usually the time for prophecy is during a service, a prayer meeting or in a short liturgical celebration. It is believed that the Holy Spirit can move anyone at all to prophesy. The messages principally give hints of and reveal approaching dangers.

Dreams: are also vehicles of divine communication and revelation. The purposes of dreams are threefold: spiritual; admonition and warning; spiritual message and group solidarity. Visions are one of the central means of communicating a spiritual message. The independents believe that they are a gift from the Holy Spirit to members of the church. In visions, the visionary perceives images of objects and persons which pass swiftly away. At the end, the visionaries enjoy a tremendous feeling of satisfaction, joy and peace, especially when the vision occurred in a trance state. The activity of the Spirit in the church is by no means exhausted in these external signs. It is believed also to be in operation in the church and in the members in a way that does not demand overt and externally perceivable features. In matters of discipline within the church, the direct hand of the Spirit is believed to be felt. During services and prayer meetings the direction of the Spirit of God is held to be real.

#### Relation between the Holy Spirit and Salvation:

1. The greatest portion of the message of the pentecostal revelations concerns affairs which constitute dangers to human life. The mere

discovery of their etiology is a major step on the way to salvation.

2. An aspect of salvation is seen in the precautionary line taken by members towards those about whom revelations are made. Enemies will not be able to attempt their evil schemes on members because of the precautions taken in avoiding any encounter with them.
3. Spiritual values like joy, peace and happiness, being experienced as gifts of the Spirit are interpreted by the members, involved personally in the experiences, as dimensions of salvation.
4. To receive forgiveness of sins through fasting is to get the saving favor of God and thereby escape any eventual retribution that may come as a result of evil deeds.
5. By strengthening community solidarity and reinforcing oneness the members feel a sense of belonging and acceptance which could be interpreted as a manifestation of salvation.
6. Salvation is brought to those to whom the community exercises practical charity at the direction of the Spirit.
7. Very significant in the whole of the spiritual revelations is the injunction of the Spirit to turn away from other gods to the living God. These churches believe they have salvation in him through the Spirit.

The Annang independent churches come to the concept of the Holy Spirit as a divine power laden with energy because of the Annang belief that the country is animated by belief in spirits. It is in the context of this spirit-filled culture that we have to place the belief of the independents in the Spirit of God as a mighty power from God.

#### 5. HEALING AND SALVATION.

The power and the presence of the Holy Spirit are made much more evident in healing of the sick. For most clients, especially those who deviate from old established churches to independent churches, healing is almost the only motive behind their change of allegiance. Interest in healing outweighs almost all other concerns for new church members. In the eyes of Christians in these churches, a church is a healing clinic. Members and the leaders differ here in no point. Based on the Annang religion and the Bible they believe in the supernatural causes of sickness. The healing procedure involves diagnosis, discovery of the cause of sickness, and then the cure. The means used for healing can be classified as physical and spiritual.

Physical Agents include water, oil and a variety of other agents. Water is the first and most important. Its ritual use in the context of healing covers the fields of washing and sprinkling the sick, drinking of it by them, injection of enemas and blessing of the homes of the sick with it to drive away the devil. In Annang religion water is used abundantly by traditional healers. The independents find scriptural passages which display water in its curative dimension: purification of lepers (Lev. 14:8 f); cleansing houses (Lev. 14:51 f.); Jesus' word that he is the living water and gives it (John 4:10, 14; 7:38); and the cure of the blind man at Siloam (John 9:7).

Oil is blessed and used in three ways: to be drunk, to be rubbed on the body, and spiritually, its smell drives away the devil which is supposed to be responsible for the sickness. The source of the use of oil lies mostly in the scriptures. (Mark 6:13; James 5:14; Luke 10:34).

Other physical agents include candles of different colours, incense, powder, fumes of carbide, perfume, kerosene, soap, white pieces of cloth, blessed handkerchiefs and aprons from the United States of America. Placed always in the proximity of the patient during cure is the crucifix which serves, in addition, to drive away the devil. At the same time it brings a healing remedy to the sick person when she or he looks at the healer who hangs on it in accordance with the command of Yahweh to the children of Israel in the desert to look at the bronze serpent and be saved (Numbers 21:4-9).

Spiritual Agents: These are much more renowned than are the physical ones. Prayer ranks as the foremost spiritual agent for cures of diverse diseases. Prayer runs like a red thread across all the healing rites in all the churches. The use of psalms as healing prayers has been of immense importance and some of the pastors can recite a number of them by heart. There are daily prayers for in-patients, but the special day for solemn prayers for the sick is Friday, the day Jesus died on the cross to bring salvation. The pastors and evangelists have emphasized the necessity of faith in God and the fact that without faith, cures and healing would not follow.

Fasting is practised. Those actually involved in the long fasts are members of the healing team but the patients fast also. Fasting is an indispensable spiritual and internal discipline because the self-humiliation and chastisement during fasting win God's favour and healing can therefore be rapidly achieved. Confession of sins at the healing rite is of special importance as a mark of religious practice to obtain God's mercy. When his mercy and forgiveness are obtained the sick can hope to be cured in accordance with the injunction and exhortation of the letter of St. James (5:16).

The place of healing is of great importance, usually a holy ground for performing most of the healing rites and indispensable for major cases. One such place is the consecrated area in the inner chamber of one of the churches marked by a large circle drawn on the ground with white chalk. It contains four other circles within it. Four candles are fixed inside it, opposite each other. A table stands there with a bottle of holy oil on it and a big basin in which water is usually blessed for healing. When one enters there one has to demonstrate reverence by taking off ones shoes.

Importance of Healing: It should be noted however that some churches reject medicine of all sorts apparently based on strong belief in prayer and faith in God. Looked at positively, the cures carried out in the churches are meaningful in meeting the needs of the sick. Practices of prayer, sacrifice, fasting, washing and drinking of blessed water have the intent of touching the heart and the root cause of sickness. Consequently, the independent churches function as hospitals though not with trained medical personnel. In Annang religion, healing is a part of the religious rite. The priest who sacrifices to

God can at the same time be the healer, the doctor and the psychiatrist. However, the strongest forces for healing come from the practices of Jesus and the early church. The early church was commissioned to perform cures of different kinds (Luke 10:9), and understood healing as a special charismatic gift practised in favour of the sick (Mark 16:18; Acts 9:17; 14:8 ff.). Most important in the practice of healing among the independents is the insistence on faith without which they believe that there is no cure.

Relation between Healing and Salvation: The independents equate healing with salvation. As understood already in the Annang religion, diseases, ill health, ailments and sicknesses are enemies of men and women. They destroy the proper functioning of the body. Such a state of evil spells categorically the absence of salvation. Health is therefore, salvation, and sickness is the glaring opposite of it. Health as salvation covers bodily well-being, its proper and harmonious functioning and spiritual soundness. If this complete well-being is present, there is salvation; where it is absent, the state is evil. The very word, "edinyanga," (salvation) with its derivatives like "unyanga", "ndinyanga" indicates good health, soundness of the body. Edinyanga means verbatim health, and health is verbatim salvation.

## 6. THE MEANING AND EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

Firstly salvation is liberation of people from the powers of the demon, from the traps set by evil beings, from ill health and the misfortunes of life.

Secondly, salvation is seen as wholeness, being in peace. Where one is in unity with oneself, with one's neighbours, friends and God, one can say that one is in salvation.

Thirdly, salvation is also good health, flourishing economic concerns and having children.

Fourthly, salvation is comprehensive. It takes into serious consideration the body and soul, the unity of the whole person. The whole person, not just a part needs salvation. The conception of an all-embracing salvation touches a theological depth when the independents see in it the action of God as God is revealed in his Son who cures the sick, defeats demons and liberates humankind from satanic oppressions and thereby sets the whole liberated person free.

Fifthly, there is a pragmatic view of salvation. The church is viewed as an institution and Christianity as a religion which pragmatically offers solutions to the difficult problems of life. Problem-ridden seekers are encouraged by the evangelists and pastors to repose their whole confidence in God. Their only duty is to pray, fast and confess their sins.

Sixthly, salvation is so extensive that it is world-affirming. This world is a stage where the Kingdom of God begins and where Jesus first began his message of salvation. However, some also maintain a powerful element of hope for a final deliverance through Jesus Christ.



SOME OBSERVATIONS.

1. The Bible: The Annang primal religion has been transformed into a better version incorporating full salvation. A very powerful inspiration has come from the Bible more than from the doctrines propagated by the missionaries. The old Testament view of salvation is not different from that of the independents. Neither is the viewpoint of the New Testament, especially the synoptic gospels. The clear and precious news of salvation proclaimed by Jesus in his teaching, his deeds, his forgiveness of sins, his healings and expulsions of the evil powers, all point towards what had begun in him - God's age of salvation and his Kingdom.
  
2. The African World: The leaders of the independent churches think it quite legitimate to open a church in which the African world can be brought in line with the universe of the Bible. Turning away from the mission churches is not a result of conflict of doctrine but a rejection of the form of Christianity in those churches. They maintain that the way God was presented to them in the old churches made God powerless in the face of the crippling problems shooting deadly arrows at them. The God of the mission churches was a remote one, too far removed from people. They are constantly confronted with evils, yet He was not interested in their destiny, He did not help. He was only interested in their souls and not in their general and total welfare, bodily and spiritual. But they turn to an independent church, narrate their problems, read the Bible and discover that God is powerful, He is not selective but is interested in the whole person, not just the soul. The evil forces which they believe to be their enemy are conquered by the power of God. They turn therefore to the independent churches where they are made to confront a powerful God who saves.
  
3. Spiritual Experiences: When they move from mission churches to indigenous churches, the Annang are confronted with a discovery of spiritual experiences: speaking in tongues, forecasting the future, revealing the causes of their troubles and misfortunes, tracking down of enemies and witches, seeing visions, the interpretation of dreams and allied spiritual experiences.
  
4. Liturgy: Perhaps more than elsewhere, the sharpest contrast to "mission" Christianity is perceived in the liturgical life of the independents. Liturgy in the mission churches is Western, cool and intellectual. There is no doubt that this appeals to the soul. But what about the body? The independents have come to terms with this need. Their liturgy includes dancing, praising God in varied hymns of African and biblical origin, clapping of hands and giving expression to the joy of God's presence in their midst through different bodily postures. Extensively they use local symbols which speak the indigenous language and express the innermost feelings of the people.
  
5. Christianity Alive: It is an undisputed fact that in the independent churches God alone grants salvation. We have not come across any church, nor been acquainted with any, which has denied the fact that salvation comes from God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Despite one-sidedness at certain focal points, they have been able to present Christianity as a religion that is neither dead nor

sickly but full of life. They tell people that the triune God proclaimed by Christianity still has a place in this world, close to men and women in their problems and hardships. In this way they have come closer to the African view of human life - a life which constantly needs to be saved religiously.

NOTE

John Mbiti from Kenya, author of the book which contains the summary of Kenneth Enang's Study (see introduction to this article) notes significantly: The purpose of giving this summary has been to illustrate from concrete examples one clear line of understanding, experiencing and interpreting salvation in African Christianity. What Enang writes about the Annang independent churches and their interpretation of salvation has many parallels elsewhere in Christian Africa. It is both concrete and specific in one area of Nigeria, but also general and widespread in many other areas of Africa.

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## DIALOGUE WITH PEOPLE OF TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

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### INTRODUCTION

(Three recent statements attest to the emerging recognition of the need for genuine dialogue with people of Traditional Religions in Africa and elsewhere. We give here some of the salient points from three statements - Ed.)

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(Voici enfin quelques extraits de déclarations récentes sur l'importance du dialogue avec les membres de religions africaines traditionnelles. Cela s'appliquera certainement aussi au dialogue avec les religions traditionnelles en dehors de l'Afrique.)

### I

#### LETTER OF THE VATICAN SECRETARIAT FOR NON-CHRISTIANS, AFRICAN BISHOPS; Rome, April, 1988.

Reasons for Pastoral Attention to the Dialogue: African Traditional Religion is the religious and cultural context from which most Christians in Africa come, and in which many of them still live to a great extent. Many Christians, at critical moments in their lives, have recourse to practices of the traditional religion, or to prayer houses, healing homes, "prophets", witchcraft or fortune-tellers. Some tend to join sects or so-called "Independent Churches" where they feel that certain elements of their culture are more respected. In some African countries some of the intellectual elite are declaring themselves to be adherents of African Traditional Religions.

The better these Religions are understood the more suitable will be the presentation of Christianity to Africans. Elements of Traditional Religion can enrich Christian catechesis and worship and find in it their deepest fulfillment. The Second Vatican Council urges deeper theological investigation in each major cultural area with a view to deeper evangelization. His Holiness Pope Paul VI, in his Message to Africa, Africae Terrarum, in 1967, and in his SECAM inauguration address at Kampala in 1969, and His Holiness Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic journeys in Africa, have given this pastoral effort their authoritative approval and traced the major guidelines to be followed. Both Popes have stressed the great responsibility which the Pastors of the Church in Africa have in this matter.

Dialogue with African Traditional Religion is to be understood in two senses: (1) With adherents who do not as yet want to become Christians, dialogue is to be understood in its ordinary sense of encounter, mutual understanding, respect, and mutual searching for the will of God: (2) With adherents who want to become Christians and with Christians converted from Traditional Religious, dialogue is to be understood in the wider sense of a pastoral approach with a view to a more adequate presentation of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the Church will have deeper roots in the African soil.

Some Elements of African Traditional Religion: The traditional religion could be studied as to its name, its major objects of belief, especially God the Creator, the place of the spirits and the ancestors, the fundamental rites in this religion, sacrifice, priesthood, prayer, marriage, the human soul, life after death, religion and moral life. Values such as sense of the sacred, respect for life, sense of community, family spirit, a spiritual vision of life, authority as sacred, and symbolism in a religious worship, could profitably be studied.

There should be no attempt to romanticize African Traditional Religion or culture. The research should also spell out the negative elements that may be found in it, such as inadequate ideas on the objects of worship, objectionable moral practices, degrading rites, polygamy, discrimination against women, human sacrifice and rejection of twins (where these are practised), etc. The study should be an objective and factual work.

The strength and influence of African Traditional Religion should also be studied, together with the effects of social change on it. New religious movements and religions which are often a mixture of traditional religion Christianity and nationalism, can also be usefully examined. An interdisciplinary approach from the point of view of anthropology, sociology and psychology will usefully complement theological reflection.

Some Key Doctrinal Points such as the following should be borne in mind: the revealed nature of the Message brought us in Christ, the centrality of Christ, the irreplaceable role of the Bible and Tradition, the unity of the Church, the role of the Successor of St. Peter in the communion of the local Churches with the Church of Rome and among themselves.

Finally the letter recommends that each Episcopal Conference should appoint a small group of really competent people who are able and willing to work on this research. The four higher Ecclesiastical Institutes at Kinshasa, Abidjan, Port Harcourt and Nairobi, and relevant research centres outside Africa should be of help.

## II

### FINAL STATEMENT OF A WCC CONSULTATION MINDOLO, ZAMBIA, SEPTEMBER, 1988.

The consultation was held in an effort to take the dialogue with

African Traditional Religions further and deeper. There were twenty participants from fourteen countries in Western, Central, Southern and Eastern Africa, representing various denominations of the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions. Among the participants were pastors, church administrators, teachers, lay persons and university and seminary lecturers.

Summary of Reports: Everywhere in Africa there is evidence of dialogue going on. African Traditional Religion continues to provide valid answers to ultimate questions of life for many. Nevertheless, there continues to persist in the official position of the Christian Church in Africa and elsewhere a negative attitude towards the African religio-cultural heritage, putting many African Christians in a position of ambiguity, interminable self-doubt, and uncertainty, which becomes a hindrance to this internal dialogue. The contemporary reality in political and social circles all over the continent is characterized by a resurgence of African cultural consciousness which has revealed that in fact the African worldview continues to claim the loyalty of a large proportion of the population of Africa.

Obstacles to Dialogue: The attitude of Western missionaries, who brought strong prejudices and distorted ideas and attitudes towards African peoples, their culture and religion, has become a heritage of Christianity in Africa and has been internalized by African Christians to the extent that it continues to bedevil efforts at dialogue even to the present time.

Another obstacle is the exclusivist claim of some Christians that full revelation and salvation are found only in Christianity, and the related doctrine of radical discontinuity between Christianity and other religions, in particular African Religion. Yet by and large Christianity, even as it is understood and propagated today, is closely identified with the Western self-image. On this premise, the only aim of dialogue becomes conversion of the adherents of African Traditional Religion to Christianity and Western culture. Because of this attitude, many Christians miss the intentionality of African Traditional Religion and as a result they end up with a picture of it which is debased and evil. Domination by the Western models of the approach to the Christian scriptures, theology and structures further hinders dialogue.

From the side of African Traditional Religion, there is a lack of sufficient and accurate documentation as its traditions are primarily unwritten. Also, African Traditional Religion is part and parcel of the totality of life. There is no distinction between sacred and secular in contrast to Western Christianity.

Recommendations:

Remove age-old stigmas by encouraging study and understanding of the roles, functions and intentions of specialists in African Traditional Religion.

Undertake a serious and concerted study of ancestrology in relation to christology and soteriology.

Begin dialogue at the local, national and regional levels among African Christians in Mission-founded churches, members of African In

digenous churches and devotees of African Traditional Religion.

Accept and uphold church members who show special gifts of the Spirit so that they may use such gifts within the Church for the good of the community and the glory of God.

Suggestions: Among these we note:

Christians in dialogue with adherents of African Traditional Religion should continuously affirm its rich potential as a vital element in building a more just and humane world community.

Representatives of various Churches and Traditional Religions be invited to participate in future continental dialogues and consultations.

### III

#### CONSULTATION ON PACIFIC THEOLOGY, HAWAI'I JUNE 1987

A consultation on the subject of "Pacific Theology" was held in Honolulu, Hawai'i. There were 23 participants representing members of the Anglican Communion, the United Church of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church, the Free Church of Tonga, the Church of the Lamb of God (Pentecostal), and the Congregational Church of Samoa. Participants offered a range of diversity, including laity, clergy, youth, elders and a near balance of men and women.

We note three of the recommendations adopted in principle at the consultation which are significant in the context of dialogue with African Traditional Religion:

\* Encourage and initiate frank dialogue with those people in the Pacific island communities who consider themselves to be practitioners of traditional indigenous beliefs.

\* Establish an institute or center that would promote, conduct and disseminate research, hold seminars and courses on Pacific theology, traditional Pacific cultures and traditions, and on Native ministry, located in Hawai'i.

\* Encourage and support further dialogue, cooperation, and participation between the Hawaiian and other Pacific islander churches in Hawai'i.

- end -

Ref. Current Dialogue, June 1988,  
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