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### IN THIS ISSUE

Three categories of people, the blacks, the Amerindians and women, are presenting new challenges to church and society as the theology of liberation comes of age. These groups have been oppressed for centuries by their colour, race and sex. They are bringing into theology new issues, a new method and a new language. MARIA CLARA BINGEMER develops the contribution of women to theology, doubly oppressed as they have been by their socio-economic situation and by their sex. As a woman theologian she emphasizes some feminine

insights of modern theology particularly in the context of Latin America. She points to the female perspective of the Trinity. Women theologians, she writes, are seeking to recover the word rahamin, "womb", to refer to Gods' love. God's female maternal womb is fertile and compassionate. The celebration of the Eucharist is symbolized by the female body. Feeding others with one's own body is the supreme way God chose to be sensibly present in the midst of the people. The Eucharist is his person

given as food. Maria Clara applies this to the female body which multiplies in other lives, gives itself as food and nourishes with its flesh and blood. She sees this lived in a special way by the women of Latin America.

Two articles look at the future of missionaries and mission societies. One is by HUGH McMAHON, a Columban Missionary at present in the Philippines, and a past member of the General Council, or governing body of the Society of St. Columban. The other is from Africa and is by DR. PAUL KALANDA, Bishop of Moroto Diocese in Uganda. Fr. McMahon raises questions, Bishop Kalanda offers some answers - not to the article of Fr. McMahon which we received only this week, but to the malaise of missionaries in many parts of Africa today. Readers will note similarities in the questions being raised from two widely separated geographical areas and some similarities in the tentative answers to the question: Whither mission today?

There are two articles about the missionaries' way of life. DR. NICHOLL was not writing especially with missionaries in mind but those of us who heard him at the SEDOS Seminar on LAITY IN MISSION may recall his reflections on the identity of the layperson in mission. Lay or cleric, missionary or not, we are called to share in the divine nature, to relish the "deep things of God", to share in the mystery of the Cross of Christ. There is a message here for all who follow the missionary path and so we felt free to add "A MISSIONARY IMPERATIVE" to the title of his address which was THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH.

JONATHAN J. BONK is a missionary of the Reformed Tradition. We print in this issue the first part of his article which appeared recently in MISIOLOGY. Roman Catholics will not find it difficult to identify with his challenge to programmes and policies for recruiting missionaries. There is much for missionaries to ponder in these two contributions.

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## NEWS

### "UNIVERSAL" CATECHISM

Many of those in mission are interested in the proposed Catechism, but aware of the significance of culture in announcing the Gospel message, they are concerned about the reception of any Catechism which would claim to be "universal". Reports of a meeting held at Woodstock Center in Washington are not encouraging. Following are excerpts from a January 29, 1990, Catholic News Service release.

A Symposium of 15 U.S. experts in catechetics, scripture and systematic, sacramental and moral theology was held at Woodstock Center in Washington on January 27-28, 1990. They discussed the First Draft of the "Universal Catechism" which was circulated in December '89 to the world's Bishops for

consultation. The panel of scholars sharply criticized the Draft.

Bishop Lucker, of New Ulm, Minnesota, a long-time specialist in catechetics and the only Bishop at the symposium, said one of the biggest problems the Bishops face in responding to the Draft is lack of time. The Vatican has asked all Bishops to submit their criticisms and suggestions by May 31, giving five months at the most for consultation. He hoped there would be substantial changes in the final text.

Other panelists criticized the catechism's structure, its use of scripture and its use of natural law

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## WOMEN IN THE FUTURE OF THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

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María Clara Bingemer

It is audit time in Latin America. The theology of liberation is coming up to its twentieth birthday. It is time to look back to the past in order to be able to recognise the present, and having recognised it, to be able to desire and construct the future. It is time to ask some questions. After these twenty years of laborious construction and slow consolidation, what does the theology of liberation look like? What is its future?

To answer these questions we have to look at the faces of those who have the leading roles in this theology, those without whom the theologians themselves and even Latin American theology would not exist - the poor and oppressed.

Today, however, the faces of these poor and oppressed look different. Three types in particular are emerging, attracting attention and presenting new challenges to church and society - the blacks, the Amerindians, and women. These groups, oppressed for centuries by their colour, race, and sex, are now essential for an evaluation of the theology of liberation and for any attempt to glimpse its future because they bring into theology new issues, a new method, and a new language.

Women in particular are the focus of this paper. Their state of double oppression - by their socio-economic situation and by their sex - calls for the attention of society and the church. Their presence in the development of Latin American theology has recently been felt with increasing weight and frequency. Their ideas and their language have already been recognized as among the most serious and solid products of Latin American theology. This presence enjoyed by women in the theology of liberation enables us to hope for a bright and joyful future. The mouths and hearts of these once

silent and invisible workers for God's Reign now speak a message that says, "Rejoice!" The half of humankind that thought of itself as absent from theology's discourse - and in particular from the theology of liberation - has now made itself present and is speaking.

### WOMEN AS PRACTITIONERS AND SUBJECTS OF THEOLOGY

One of the fundamental features of the Latin American theological venture known as the theology of liberation is that it is a collective theological enterprise. The theologian of liberation no longer regards herself as someone who thinks, writes, and speaks in isolation out of her individual experience, her reading, done on her own, or her own insightful reasoning. She sees herself as the spokeswoman for the great mass of oppressed persons who have recently woken from centuries of the most bitter oppression of all kinds, and who are now standing up and rediscovering themselves as responsible and active initiators. They are eager to rewrite history from their own point of view. They want to reinterpret the liberating message of God's covenant with the people and Jesus Christ's liberating act in terms of their own situation of captivity turning that message into a source of strength and strategy in their struggle.

Theology comes into this process as an ally and the theologian as a spokesperson. Sharing in the faith-lives of these oppressed persons, the theologian finds her raw material. She then returns it to them in the form of a worked out, systematic argument. The oppressed have helped to bring this theology to birth and, along with her they too are creators and theologians.

Having the word of God and the gospel of Jesus as their only wealth, the women of the Latin American poor are taking over the leadership of the majority of the bible-groups and basic ecclesial communities. They are giving the church a new look and a new vigor. Women's future in the theology of liberation is thus the future of the liberation of all human beings, men and women, who call out for the God of life, who brings liberation - socio-economic, political, cultural, racial, ethnic, sexual - from every type of death.

### **Theological Method**

Women's entry into the domain of theology brings with it a new way, a new method, of conceiving and expressing a 2,000-year-old theology. Entering into the domain of theological reflection with their specific and different bodiliness, open to ever-new and innovative messages, available for invasion and creative fecundation, destined to be host and protector of life, women are revolutionizing the rigor and system of theological method. Their present irruption into the rational male theological world of the past is as disconcerting and new as that of the woman, who with her presence and her perfume in John's Gospel (12:1-8), invaded the meal taking place within the very strict social and ritual norms of Judaism. Breaching expectations and regulations and following the impulse of the desire that overflowed from her heart, the woman filled the space with a new scent, which none could avoid breathing in.

The presence of women in theology brings with it this same air of the new and unexpected. The female way of doing theology is finding its place and gaining ground. The courage to pour out the perfume at someone else's party is followed by the moment at which the perfume poured out struggles and collides with the ancient scents that have traditionally formed the environment. The present theological field is made up of this plurality of scents, sometimes apparently incompatible, and of

ten in conflict.

### **Born of Desire**

The future of the female way of doing theology is therefore inseparably linked with desire. The cold circumspection of purely scientific inquiry must give way to a new sort of systematics springing from the impulse of desire that dwells at the deepest level of human existence. It combines sensitivity and rationality, gratuitousness and effectiveness, experience and reflection, desire and rigor. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). If this is so, in the beginning God can only be the object of desire, - not of necessity nor of rationality. Theology - which seeks to be reflection and talk about God and God's word - must therefore be moved and permeated in its entirety by the flame of desire. At a particular point in its articulation, reason, science, and systematic rigor have their role and their place but they can never suffocate desire, never tame the divine pathos, which, from all eternity, has broken silence and become a loving word, kindling an irresistible desire in the hearts of women and men. Theology is called humbly, to bear witness to, and give an account of, this burning desire. Born of desire, theology exists as theology only if it is upheld and supported by desire.

### **WOMEN AND THE BIBLE**

Women and the poor in Latin America rediscovered the Bible at the same time. Women were present when the poor who had been kept out of the way, outside the word of God, discovered once again the book that was theirs, the book which spoke of their struggles, their hopes, their desires, and their covenant of love with a compassionate and loving God. They felt deeply involved and identified with the great accounts of liberation contained in scripture. Jesus' treatment of women as described by the Gospels proclaimed to them the good news of the reign as a discipleship of equals. On the other hand, in their reading of the Bible

they came up against the problem of the clear marginalization of women in various passages of scripture in both Old and New Testaments. This drew the attention of women who were becoming aware of their situation particularly women theologians specializing in holy scripture.

The work of these new biblical scholars revealed something new - there is a difference between reading the Bible from the point of view of the poor and reading it from a woman's point of view. Whereas a poor man may find himself affirmed and defended by the word of the living God throughout the holy scriptures, the poor woman in contrast, does not know as a woman, how to deal with the texts that seem to marginalize her and treat her as an inferior human being. This problem is all the greater in that the poor communities where this explosion of biblical renewal is taking place are particularly marked by patriarchal and male-supremacist ideologies. In this context reading biblical texts that seem to reaffirm female segregation may help to confirm women still further in the oppression that crushes them, and this time with the very authority of the word of God.

Because of this, Latin American women biblical scholars are working particularly with women from poor communities for a deeper understanding of the nature of biblical texts. They present the text as the testimony of a people, a faith-community within which divine revelation is transmitted as a saving word always supporting the lowest and oppressed people who include women. This spirit of the revealed text relativizes the antifeminism of a patriarchal culture that may have given a negative tone to some parts of the Bible.

In addition they are attempting to recover the origins of Christianity from a woman's perspective. In so doing they bring to light and emphasize the women who appear as builders of the history of salvation. A traditional interpretation often forgets them or relegates them to a secondary plane.

Examples are the Egyptian midwives of Exodus 1, the subversives Tamara and Agar who felt completely free to question the Jewish law, the whole legion of women in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles playing an active part in the early stages of the church.

#### **MARY OF NAZARETH, TRAVELING COMPANION**

Speaking about women from a Christian point of view inevitably means speaking about Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus venerated by Christianity from the beginning as the perfect woman. Mary was, and continues to be presented to women as the model to be imitated, and inwardly assimilated. However, traditional Mariology has often presented an image of Mary that, instead of promoting and liberating women, has confirmed and confined them in their ancient oppression. Submissive and passive, entirely absorbed in domestic activities, idealized and exalted for her individualistic virtues, Mary of Nazareth was a source of perplexity rather than inspiration for those involved in the struggle.

The theology of liberation set out to recover the figure of Mary in its liberating and prophetic potential. Stressing above all the text of the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) this theology gives to the poor women of Latin America, to the women who lead the basic ecclesial communities, a Mary whose face is no longer only that of Our Lady, glorious Queen of Heaven, but also and primarily an elder sister and traveling companion. In Latin America this prophetic and liberating Mary takes on many loving faces: the Morenita of Guadalupe who appeared to the Amerindian Juan Diego in Mexico, the black Aparecida who allowed herself to be found in the waters of the river Paraiba in Brazil, Nicaragua's Purisima, Cuba's Virgin of Charity, and so on. In all these, Mary the valiant and prophetic daughter of Sion, committed to justice, faithful to her God and people, inspires and strengthens women's unity and struggle, redeeming and ennobling them in their own eyes.

## THE THREEFOLD GOD IN A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

### God

For some time now theology has begun to see the need to conceive and speak of God in the feminine, to believe in, invoke and proclaim God in the feminine. It is no longer adequate to reflect on the Divine Mystery that creates, saves and sanctifies us as identified primarily with one of the two sexes. Rather the Divine Mystery should integrate and harmonize the two sexes without suppressing their enriching differences while at the same time it transcends them. To achieve this, theology has to go beyond traditional theological concepts which see a woman as God's image only in her rational soul and not in her sexed female body. It has to go beyond seeing God as andromorphic, conceived and understood in male terms identifying the divine party (God) in the covenant as male and the human party (Israel, the church) as female.

### Christ

Christology, developed from a woman's viewpoint, has sought to be a way into this new conception of God. The form this has taken in Latin America has been the key that the liberative approach has used throughout its study of the Gospels - an analysis of Jesus' egalitarian behaviour as revealed by his encounters and relations with women. One of the clearest ways in which Jesus broke with tradition has to do with women. His behaviour toward the women marginalized by Jewish society was not only new, but even shocking, surprising even his own disciples (John 4:27). Women were singled out as beneficiaries of his miracles (Luke 8:2; Mark 1:29-31; 5:25-34; 7:24-30) and leading recipients of the good news he brought.

**Redeemed Bodiliness** As well as breaking the taboo that marginalized women, Jesus redeemed their bodiliness which had been humiliated and proscribed by Jewish Law. In curing the

woman with the hemorrhage who was thus impure to the Jews, he exposed himself to the risk of making himself impure by touching her (Matt. 9:20-22). In allowing his feet to be touched, kissed, and anointed by a known public sinner he provoked his Pharisee host to cast doubt on his prophetic status (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus also allowed further women to question and influence him. His encounters with them changed not only them, but him too. The Gospels show us Jesus learning from women and giving way to their requests. He did so with his mother Mary when he advanced his "hour" in Cana (John 2:1ff.). He did so with the Canaanite woman, who "dragged out of him" the miracle she wanted with much pleading and so set in train the process of the proclamation of the good news to the gentiles (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30).

### The Trinity

Nevertheless, it is not so much in Christology as in the doctrine of the Trinity, in the mystery of the communion of the three divine persons, the unquestionable center of the Christian faith, that the main breakthrough to a concept of God in women's terms is being sought. To say that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not, and cannot be, in any way equivalent to saying that the divine community is composed of three persons identified as male. Women theologians in Latin America today seek to recover the word rahamin, "womb," to refer to God's love as the biblical root of the experience of God. Countless Old Testament texts, especially in the prophets, refer to God by this part of the female body. Thus in theology - feminist or not - God the Father is being called also Mother or, Maternal Father or Paternal Mother. This divine female womb, pregnant with gestation and birth, identified with the Father, appears also in the incarnate Son. In the Gospels Jesus is driven to cry out his frustrated maternal desire to gather under his wings the scattered and rebellious "chickens of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:34). It appears in the Spirit, the divine ruach, who in the labour of creation

"hatches" the cosmos which will burst forth from the primitive chaos. The Spirit is sent like a loving mother to console the children left orphaned by Jesus' departure (John 14:18,26) and to teach them patiently to pronounce the Father's name, Abba (Rom. 8:15).

### **The Womb of God**

A rich future is in store for the theology of liberation in the female dimension of God. The poor, discovering themselves as active makers of history and organizers of liberation, are experiencing God as the God of life embodying the very fullness of life and the only source from which to derive hope in the situation of death which is their everyday experience. God's female maternal womb, fertile, in labour and compassionate, enables this liberation to come about with force and firmness but also with creativity and gentleness, without violence. Once God is experienced, not only as Father, Lord, strong warrior, but also as a Mother protecting and loving, struggle is tempered with festivity. Permanent and gentle firmness ensures the ability to be strong without losing tenderness. An uncompromising resistance can be carried on without excessive tension and sterile strain, - even with joy. God's compassion, as flowing from female and maternal organs, takes on itself the hurts and wounds of all the oppressed. A woman who does theology is called to bear witness to this God with her body, her actions, her life.

### **EUCCHARIST CELEBRATED AND SYMBOLIZED BY THE FEMALE BODY**

The liturgy has a predominant place at the base of the Latin American church and in a special way in the basic ecclesial communities. The women of poor communities find a privileged space in the liturgy in which to express their work and their struggles, - in the unions, the mothers' clubs, the neighbourhood associations, the community gardens and canteens, and in the various other forms of popular com-

munity organization. The eucharist, celebrated where women are active participants, is both the subversive memory of the Lord's death and resurrection, and the agape of the New Testament church (Luke 2:46).

### **Woman's Body, Eucharistically Given**

There is another dimension of the Eucharist in which women find themselves. This is the strict significance of the sacrament as the transubstantiation and real presence of the body and blood of the Lord which is given to the faithful as food. Feeding others with one's own body is the supreme way God chose to be definitively and sensibly present in the midst of the people. The bread that we break and eat refers us back to the greater mystery of Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection. It is his person given as food; it is his very life made bodily a source of life for Christians. It is women who possess in their bodiliness the physical possibility of performing the divine eucharistic action. In the whole process of gestation, childbirth, protection and nourishing of a new life, the sacrament of the eucharist, the divine act, happens anew.

Throughout Latin America, in the rural areas and the poor districts on the edges of cities, there are millions of women conceiving, bearing and suckling new children of the common people. Sometimes they do it with difficulty, pain, and suffering, sometimes with the last trickle of life left in them. The female body, which multiplies in other lives, which gives itself as food and nourishes with its flesh and blood the lives it has conceived, is the same body that wastes away and dies tilling the earth, working in factories and homes, stirring pots and sweeping floors, spinning thread and washing clothes, organizing and chairing meetings, leading struggles and starting the singing at liturgical celebrations. Woman's body, eucharistically given to the struggle for liberation, is really and physically distributed, eaten and drunk by those who will - as men and women of tomorrow - continue the same

struggle. Breaking the bread and distributing it, having communion in the body and blood of the Lord means for women today reproducing in the community the divine act of surrender and love so that the people may grow and victory may come.

Women who do theology in Latin America and who share the same sacramental vocation, the same eucharistic destiny with their sisters from the poorest environments, are

called to open a new path, a possible future so that this sacramental act may become more present, recognized and believed, in Latin America's journey toward liberation.

Ref. This is an edited version of María Clara Bingemer's "Women in the Future of Liberation Theology", in The Future of Liberation Theology, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1989. pp. 473-490.

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## THE FUTURE OF MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

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Hugh McMahon, SSC

The Missionary Societies of Priests, which at the beginning of this century formed the spearhead of a new age of mission expansion, are today struggling through a crisis of confidence and vision.

Faced with a new understanding of human capabilities and relationships with God, they find themselves unable to shake off age-old thought patterns and practices; they cannot agree on where they should now be focusing their energy. Rather than accept that radical change may be demanded of them, they would prefer to believe that minor adjustments in their activities might suffice. In such a situation it is not strange that they should be seeking new reasons to stay on in familiar roles and works rather than embrace challenges which call them into the unknown.

How did this situation arise and what has it to say about the future of

existing Missionary Societies?

### The Early Perspective

Missionary Societies founded over the past 150 years were designed to serve a theology which saw the conversion and sacramental care of souls as the most urgent task of the Church. Until the 1950's, if there was any dispute about the goal of mission it was whether the establishment of a local Church had priority over the immediate dispensation of the sacraments. Traditionally, urgent sacramental needs were considered the more important. In most cases newly arrived missionaries were appointed to parishes where they could minister (in Latin) rather than allowed time to learn the local language and culture, study the needs of the people and decide how best to be of help.

This was no accident. The Clerical, non-Religious, Missionary



Societies had the diocesan priest as their model. Their seminary training was identical to that of their brother traditional diocesan and parochial

structures.

Even though they had separate Society superiors, on the missions one of their members usually became bishop and had authority over them in day-to-day matters. They saw themselves as missionaries because they wished to work in non-Christian areas such as Africa and China but basically they regarded their priestly role as synonymous with what they had to offer as missionaries.

This vision and model of mission served well in the years of Church growth. It facilitated the establishment of new dioceses and parishes, of seminaries and catechetical training centres. Thanks to these missionaries, local Churches began to take shape with their own clergy and lay leaders. The missionaries themselves had the satisfaction of knowing they were making salvation available to others and setting up a Church which eventually would be self-sufficient.

Two worries loomed on their horizon: that a day might come when the local Church they had established would no longer need them and that sometime in the future there would be no more new countries which would welcome their services.

Vatican II, however, presented them with a more fundamental challenge which drove their earlier concerns into the background.

### **Coping with the Trauma**

When Vatican II accepted the concept of pluralism it not only affirmed the possibility of salvation outside the Church but also opened the way for a belief that it would never again be possible to define or make an enduring statement on any truth, much less the object of mission. One of the reasons why the task of re-orientating mission has been delayed is the misconception

that such an objective is itself impossible.

When the Council recognised the presence of God in other religions it also acknowledged God's involvement in social and cultural affairs. Thus the Church had not only to re-discover its role in the plan of world salvation but also to go outside ecclesiastical boundaries and become involved in secular issues and affairs. For missionaries this challenge was particularly painful. They worked in unfamiliar cultures, each with its own complex traditions and religious background, which had previously been considered worthless and imbued with superstition. Their theological training had not prepared them to go outside traditions structures, to take other world views seriously or join in affairs that were not strictly religious.

In practice, Vatican II de-skilled and de-energised the older missionaries and the resulting loss of morale did little to encourage young people to make a permanent commitment to mission. In renewal Chapters over the following years Missionary Societies tried to come to terms with this situation.

In most cases the majority of members showed a reluctance to accept the need for radical changes. They believed they could 'modernise' by publicly committing themselves to the new issues of development, social justice, ecology or sharing between Churches. These activities also vindicated their continued presence in familiar works and roles.

Time had to elapse for them to see that such tasks were the responsibility of the whole Church and not specifically missionary. Even the duty of promoting missionary concern in an established Church is that of the local bishops. The fact that reaching out to these as yet untouched by the Christian experience is the basic and unchanging touchstone of mission had to be faced and the necessary reconstruction undertaken. Some Societies did give recognition to the priority of 'first

evangelisation' and tried to keep that ideal before their members. However, certain factors held them back from making any major break with their traditional attitudes.

## **OBSTACLES TO TRANSFORMATION**

### **1. Limits of a Model**

The one-third of the world's population which has not heard Christ's message lives mainly in areas where the traditional clerical approach to mission is ineffective. For political and religious reasons visas will not be issued to missionaries and direct evangelisation is not permitted.

This situation calls for 'sowers of the seed' who can survive in the culture as part of a small group, outside normal parish structures and often doing secular work either to earn a living or justify their presence. Older missionaries feel themselves incapable of making this transition and are cautious about encouraging younger members to take up the challenge. Even the remaining strictly missionary tasks in the Churches to which they are attached are often beyond their present capability. Only when a clear and unanimous call is made to their basic missionary instinct will they find the resolve to undergo the necessary retraining themselves or wholeheartedly support younger members who seek new solutions.

### **2. Leadership Crisis**

It had been hoped that a move from appointed to elected superiors in Missionary Societies would provide more open and prophetic leadership. However, with an aging membership, anxieties about change and a growing expectation that personal desires and frailties would be given priority in the making of appointments, it was inevitable that people with sympathetic personalities or conservative managerial histories would be preferred.

The new missionary situation calls for re-training and re-organisation,

However, in the Catholic Church there is a remarkable shortage of university level mission study centres and periodicals dedicated to researching key missionary issues. So far, the few efforts that have been made in that direction have undergone considerable hardship due to a lack of appreciation and support by the wider missionary community. Until a new leadership emerges that can inspire members with a renewed spirit of mission the necessary infrastructure will not be created.

In the pre-Vatican era, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith often played a useful role in directing the attention of Missionary Societies to the unevangelised areas of the world. Now this responsibility has been passed on to local bishops and Mission Superiors whose experience or vision might not be as wide.

### **3. Diminishing Numbers**

The aging membership factor is another obstacle to initiating any 'new age'. However, if older missionaries are encouraged to use their present skills and experience, either in meeting the remaining missionary tasks in their present assignments, or in launching the new initiatives, this potential barrier could be overcome.

There is no longer a need for large number of missionaries. The new demand is for small groups of properly motivated and trained personnel. Therefore if older missionaries can take their mind off the falling numbers and recognise the falling ability to meet changing needs they could make a valuable contribution to the transition.

## **THE PAIN OF REGENERATION**

The future of Clerical Missionary Societies depends on their ability to change from the model of diocesan priest to that of witness or pioneer. If they can overcome their inherited mind-set they will be in a position to articulate a new and compelling vision of mission which would re-energise and re-unify their own members and attract new candidates to their cause. It would

give them a basis on which to assess their existing commitments, look for entry-points into unevangelised areas and meet other new needs of world mission. This re-orientation of mission would also create the long awaited opening for laity in cross-cultural evangelisation.

When mission is no longer associated with pastoral services but seen as basically a reaching out to non-Christians, use can be made of the numerous laity who seek a genuine involvement in the Church's missionary apostolate. Indeed, the laity are in ways better suited to some of the new demands of mission. Their professional qualifications can often give them a presence in environments that would be hostile to traditional clerical approaches.

The fact that the Korean Protestant Churches are preparing to send 2500 lay missionaries to the Philippines in 1990, while the Korean

Catholic Church is dispatching five there as its first tentative effort, is significant. There is something lacking in world-wide Catholic missiology and pastoral organisation which has so far excluded the serious participation of laity in mission. The Clerical and Religious Missionary Societies could create the openings, training and support system for lay missionaries once they come to terms with the fact that the needs of world mission are the main and principal responsibility of their Societies.

A combination of renewed Clerical Missionary Societies and the emerging lay missionary groups should take the Church into the next century with a life-giving enthusiasm that would benefit all of humankind. Can the existing Missionary Societies make the necessary changes or is it time for a new type of missionary society to be born?

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## MISSIONARY COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL CHURCHES

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### AN EVALUATION

Paul Kalanda

#### Introduction

In many countries of the AMECEA (Association of Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) the church seems to be fairly well established. One of the visiting bishops who experienced the faith of the Christians at Namugongo, the Uganda Martyrs' shrine, on June 3, 1989, made the following categorical statement: "Uganda is a Christian country: full stop".

What the bishop implied is that the Christian faith has struck deep roots into Ugandan society. The church is so firmly planted that there does not seem to be any further need of missionary personnel from outside. Some missionaries, in fact, are convinced that their services are no longer required in Uganda. And yet if any of them seriously asks a Catholic bishop in Uganda, or in any other of the

AMECEA countries, (Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi or Zambia), the answer would be that there is a continuing need for foreign missionaries in all these countries.

### **The Present Situation**

It may be true that in many AMECEA countries the church is reasonably well established and flourishing. They have a good number of indigenous personnel, priests and religious, who can do the work without the help of expatriate missionaries. It is equally true that in these particular churches, there are indigenous personnel who sometimes show signs of wanting to manifest their identity and autonomy, and who thus, do not look at the expatriate missionaries with the same welcoming attitude as in the past. They desire to give shape to their own local church and to manage everything by themselves. They give the impression that the expatriate missionaries are merely tolerated rather than wanted. But the decisive factor should be the people's real pastoral and ministerial needs. At the same time, either due to deaths or departures, but especially because several Missionary Institutes no longer receive many new vocations, the number of expatriate missionaries has diminished enormously during the last twentyfive years.

### **Searching Questions for Missionaries**

Doubt about the relevance of their continued presence in Africa and the shortage of vocations, give rise to heart-searching questions in the minds of many missionaries. Some now ask themselves what exactly their specific missionary role and presence should be. How they can remain faithful to their Founders' charism whilst collaborating with the local church personnel in proclaiming the gospel? The changed and changing conditions faced by the people, among whom they carry out their apostolate, compel the missionaries to put such questions to themselves. They are challenged to work out the best strategy for communicating the Good News to the people and where necessary

to adjust their established missionary methods of evangelization.

### **Adaptation to Changing Situations**

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI said that "evangelization must have its message adapted to the different situations of humankind" (No.29). In a number of the AMECEA countries we have gone through changing situations which have demanded and continue to demand a great deal of adaptation and adjustment. The people are still trying to overcome their many problems: famine, chronic diseases, illiteracy, poverty, injustices, violence, insecurity, and so forth. It must be admitted that in all our countries, the church, supported by the presence of foreign missionaries, has always stood by the people in their struggles.

In some countries, such as Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan, the people have experienced special difficulties due to protracted civil wars. People in these countries have lived in a state of unrest and turbulence for several decades. They still do so today. Many have been killed or displaced; much property has been destroyed; a good number of institutions like churches, schools and hospitals, have been destroyed or abandoned; local Christian communities have been dispersed; some church personnel have been killed; others have been arrested, kidnapped, or forced to abandon their flock. Those who have remained with the people are living in conditions of untold hardship. The church, with the help and support of its missionaries, governments and non-governmental organizations, tries to identify itself with and to assist the people in their suffering and trials. In such a state of affairs missionaries have collaborated and continue to do so with the local churches.

### **A NEW VISION OF MISSIONARY PRESENCE**

The situation described above has given rise to a new vision and meaning

of missionary presence. Many missionaries have begun to realize that their vocation and mission is to continue being present with the people, to share in their difficulties and sufferings as well as in their joys and hopes. It has taught them that the presence of a missionary among the people he or she is living with and serving, remains significant, even when the specific work he or she initially came for is reduced to a minimum.

Many missionary personnel are now asking themselves what God is saying to them through the present situation. They are concerned about their missionary vocation and how to carry it out. This leads them to reflect on themselves as agents of evangelization on their reduced numerical strength, and on how they can continue to relate to and collaborate with other pastoral agents in the same local church. They are reviewing in particular the need for a continued but improved working-relationship with indigenous priests and religious and especially with the diocesan bishop. They are aware that the real work of consolidating the local church in Africa must be done by the Africans themselves. Many expatriate missionaries recognise that the role of overseeing pastoral responsibility must be entrusted to local church authorities; the latter must assume the leading roles more and more; decide upon the scale of values and priorities; choose their own pace; decide how their apostolic programmes should be implemented. This was the vision and conviction of many Founders of Missionary Congregations, and, to a great extent, that vision has been achieved by many of them

### **Missionaries' Today?**

Some missionaries and some groups of local personnel do not see the place and continued role of expatriate missionaries in the work of consolidating the church in Eastern Africa. They consider the church to be already well established and to have enough local personnel and vocations to cater for the future. They would like to see the mis-

sionaries move to other parts of the world where the need for initial evangelization is greater.

However, many of us bishops, and other far-visioned Christians, do not share such a view. People who press for excluding missionaries tend to forget that in Eastern Africa not all areas are equally evangelized. Even in those areas where the church is said to be already well established, Christianity still needs to be deepened and consolidated further, and expatriate missionaries are still needed to carry out some specialized forms of apostolate. Examples are: urban apostolate; chaplaincies in higher institutions of learning; formation ministry in institutions like seminaries, novitiates and catechist training centres. That has always been and continues to be the position upheld by all AMECEA bishops.

### **Indigenous Members**

Expatriate missionaries have dwindled so much that many have begun to accept the painful truth that they are no longer capable of doing the same amount of work as in the past. They now acknowledge that it would be unwise to maintain or extend their field of missionary collaboration. This, naturally, makes them feel sad. But instead of feeling unhappy and discouraged, missionaries should try to discern what the Lord is saying to them, through such circumstances. Many International Missionary Institutes see the decrease of vocations from their traditional areas of recruitment as a providential sign that they should begin to admit local candidates. This is necessary to ensure the Founder's charism shall not die out from lack of membership and that they might render continued cooperation with the local churches in Eastern Africa and in other parts of the world.

I find such a trend very positive because it refuses to limit the charisms of the Founders of Missionary Congregations to their home churches only. I must, however, add that for such a move to be sincere, successful

and meaningful, the new members must find amongst the expatriate missionary communities an atmosphere of openness, and a welcoming international attitude. The Africans who join those Congregations should be made to feel equal to their expatriate companions and respected as full members.

#### **COLLABORATION WITH THE LOCAL CHURCH**

Collaboration with the local churches calls for the expatriate missionaries' readiness to adapt the gospel message to the changing situation of place, time and culture. This implies that the methods of evangelization must vary accordingly. As Paul VI said: "In order to be complete, evangelization must take into account the unceasing interplay of the gospel and of man's and woman's concrete life. That is why in evangelization, the message must be adapted to the different situations which are constantly being realized" (Evangelii Nuntiandi: No.29). It is the duty of all the agents of evangelization to find the most timely, and effective modes of communicating the gospel message to the people. I do believe that in most particular churches, if not in all of them, common pastoral plans or guidelines of some sort have been given by the diocesan bishop, the leading pastor of the local church. There is no better and safer way to follow, than these diocesan directives.

Some missionaries may be tempted to follow methods that they have found in books or that they have come across in other dioceses. However, to introduce such methods, without the permission or knowledge of the diocesan bishop, would only cause confusion and ill-feeling. It would reflect a desire to become the leader rather than to accept to follow the given leadership of the local ordinary. It would also reflect a lack of confidence in the bishop's ability to lead the particular diocese entrusted to him. That would not be conducive to peaceful and harmonious collaboration. It would instead, be a real provocation which

would become divisive and scandalous to the flock.

This does not mean that personal initiatives on the part of the missionary are discouraged - on the contrary, they are most welcome. The role of a missionary is not to be reduced to rendering mere formal service to the local church. The expatriate missionary is expected to appraise the needs of the church, to challenge the situation positively, and to help the local people decide upon their priorities and contribute to their realization.

#### **The Beneficiaries of Coordinated Evangelization**

Missionaries should also take into account the beneficiaries of the work of evangelization, namely, the people to whom they are trying to bring Christ's message. Not all people have attained the same degree of depth of faith. Some may be just hearing the gospel message for their first time. Others may already have heard the gospel and been baptized but still need to deepen their faith in order to convert completely from unchristian practices and mentality. A third category consists of the Christian communities which have just been formed but which still need to be followed up and accompanied in their journey of growth in faith. A fourth category is made up of those who were baptized long ago but who have subsequently ignored the church. They too need to be reached and re-evangelized. This happens especially among the elite. They can be called latent Christians,

It is necessary to have a good grasp of their language and culture to reach all these categories of people and to understand well their problems and mentalities. Without this, it would not be possible to help in aptly building and developing the local church.

#### **DIALOGUE BETWEEN ALL PASTORAL AGENTS**

Collaboration requires sharing and exchanging of ideas and resources to coordinate better the work of the

apostolate. Regular meetings between the bishop and his councilors, on one hand, and between these and provincial or regional councils of both men and women religious on the other hand, are most desirable and commendable. Where the missionary superiors and councilors and the diocesan bishop and his councilors meet only separately, their impact in the work of evangelization is bound to be less effective. Joint meetings could sit once or twice a year to study and work together on the needs of the church in the diocese. They would form a forum in which the missionary personnel together with the local pastoral workers could suggest new initiatives in different fields, new ways for better collaboration and adjusted forms of apostolate. Joint meetings would also be an excellent setting for learning more about the apostolic needs of the diocese and planning together to meet them. (Mutuae Relationes: No. 38; Perfectae Caritas: No. 23).

#### **Cooperation Between Missionary Institutes**

There is need for better coordination and more cooperation between the different Missionary Institutes in order to maximize the efficiency of the

limited personnel in a diocese. In a number of countries in AMECEA region, there exists at national level, a well organized system for facilitating cooperation between the different institutes of men and women religious. These organizations help their members to share their experiences, and to get to know, respect and help one another. Together they study common pastoral problems in order to serve and to collaborate better with the local churches (Mutuae Relationes: No. 48 & 59). Unfortunately, such arrangements do not yet exist at diocesan level, it would be very desirable and most helpful, if they did.

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### **THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH: A MISSIONARY IMPERATIVE**

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Donald Nicholl

Our vocation as missionaries is towards the very source of all truth the truth in itself, which we long for, not primarily for its use to us but, above all, because we believe it is in the truth that we live, move and have our being. Which means that at the very beginning of our search, we are confronted with a paradox: since our being depends upon the truth, since we will cease to be as human beings if we

depart from the truth, it follows that in order to preserve our human being we may have to lose our lives rather than depart from the truth. Being, in truth, is more than life.

#### **The Search for Truth**

Nothing one does, at any moment whatever of the day or the night, is without consequence in one's search for

truth. So as not to betray one's calling, therefore, one's every breath, one's every thought, word and action has to be ordered towards the truth. The consequences of this thesis are not to be realized, of course, by any series of syllogisms but only by trying to put them into practice over the whole of one's allotted span. It is not the person who speculates but the one who does the truth, as the Evangelist says, who comes to the light.

We are responsible for even the chemistry of our blood. If, for instance, we take into our bodies what is bad for them by eating and drinking foolishly then our body chemistry deteriorates and our blood becomes jaundiced and bitter, as a consequence of which our thoughts also are likely to become bitter. That sense of joy which gives birth to true thought is impossible if we ourselves are bitter and if we fail to honour these temples of the Holy Spirit which are our bodies. Or, as Jesus tells us, 'The eye is the lamp of the body. It follows that if your eye is sound your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased your whole body will be all darkness. If then the light inside you is darkness, what darkness that will be!'

And just as we have to be careful as to what we take into our bodies, likewise we must exercise discrimination over what we allow into our thoughts and our feelings. What we choose to read, for example, or what we consume through the television tube, is never an indifferent or neutral matter; either we shall be edified and recreated by it or else we shall be disedified and trivialized by it. Also, throughout the ages discerning human beings have always known how deeply we are affected, for example, by the music to which we subject ourselves. Some of you may be familiar with those fateful words of Lenin about Beethoven's music:

"I know nothing more beautiful than the Appassionata. I could hear it every day. It is marvelous, unearthly

music... But I cannot listen to music often; it affects my nerves. I want to say amiable stupidities and stroke the heads of the people who can create such beauty in a filthy hell. But today is not the time to stroke people's heads; today hands descend to split skulls open, split them open ruthlessly, although opposition to all violence is our ultimate ideal..."

And if these words of Lenin provoke in us the wish that he had indeed chosen to listen more to Beethoven and had consequently stroked peoples' heads instead of splitting their skulls, then let us not be too pharisaical about it. Rather let us bethink ourselves of all the various kinds of noise that we ourselves both emit and receive daily in our noise-filled world which in their turn also lead, though by less obvious paths, to the splitting of skulls, to say nothing of the hardening of our own hearts.

It is the moral virtues that are of fundamental importance in the search for the truth, more important by far than the possession of a quick brain; for it is only the pure in heart, as Jesus says, who will see the truth. Hence our whole being has to become what our Hindu friends call ekâgratâ, or one-pointed, meaning that every available cell of our being has to be directed towards the truth, so much so that we ourselves become transformed, as it were, into signposts pointing beyond ourselves towards what is utterly beyond the power of human vision. The way in which we discipline ourselves to becoming so one-pointed was delightfully illustrated on one occasion by Archbishop Ramsey. When asked how long he spent each day in private prayer he replied, 'One minute. But it takes me half an hour in silence to get to that one minute.'

#### **A Habit of Reverence**

A precondition for this one-pointedness, this readiness to worship the source of all truth, is a habit of reverence for all creation that is far



removed from the mind-set of those who are fashionably thought of as intellectuals.

An attitude of irreverence and disrespect towards those who in the past had struggled for truth eventually proves to be self-defeating because it makes light of one profound and inescapable feature in the human desire to know. I am referring to the vein of sadness and tragedy which runs through all our efforts to know, whether that effort be directed towards knowing one another, or knowing one's self or knowing God.

### **Blessed are those Who Mourn**

I puzzled in vain over this feature of our longing for the truth for many years until one day when illumination came to me - it came surprisingly enough, from St. Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the beatitude, Blessed are those who mourn. There St. Thomas says that this beatitude is the special beatitude for those whose calling it is to extend the boundaries of knowledge. St. Thomas' assertion is, to say the least of it, intriguing and naturally provokes one to ask why is this so. The answer Thomas gives is that whenever our minds yearn towards some new truth then we become afflicted with pain, because our whole being wishes to protect the balance of inertia and comfort which we have established for ourselves; and the pain is a symptom of our distress at its disturbance. Moreover, we experience a sort of bereavement when those formulations, images and symbols through which we had in the past appropriated truth have now to be abandoned. For those formulations, images and symbols have over the years become part of ourselves. To lose them feels like losing part of ourselves. And we mourn that loss as we would mourn the loss of a limb.

### **Acknowledging Error**

To acknowledge that you were wrong about some important issue dear to your heart is extremely demanding and, therefore, extremely rare - not so easy

or so frequent, strangely enough, as the readiness to confess to sin. Some years ago, for example, I pointed out to a friend of mine that a beautiful section in one of his books hinged upon an assertion of fact which was not correct. He was mortified when he realized that what I said was true and he promised to alter it in later editions. There have been many subsequent editions of his book but no alteration. It is not easy to abandon a beautiful piece of one's own writing.

By contrast, think of what nobility of mind was displayed by the late Cardinal Bea, one of the giants of the Second Vatican Council. For most of his adult life Cardinal Bea had been a professor of Biblical Studies, a very thorough, sound, rather conventional expositor of Scripture. Then one day he appeared as usual in his regular class and, to the astonishment of his students, began his lecture by saying that he had now come to realize that the principles upon which he had based his scriptural exegesis for nigh on fifty years were misguided, and he would therefore have to begin all over again.

That, it hardly needs saying, took a great deal of doing. But even Cardinal Bea's action was almost as nothing compared with a further affliction that seems to descend on all of us at some time when we try to answer the call of truth. After all Cardinal Bea had only to acknowledge an error which could be put right. But what do you do when you have striven over your whole life-time to seek the truth, invested all your energies in the search, and then one day you are overwhelmed by the feeling that the very longing to know which has inspired you was an impossible one and that all your striving has been in vain?

### **The "Great Doubt"**

This terrifying experience is common, so it seems, to truth-seekers in all the world religions. Zen Buddhists, for example, name it 'the Great Doubt', that stage which significantly enough, immediately precedes the break-through

into satori, or enlightenment - though it has to be noted that the connotation of our word 'doubt' gives too negative an impression of the Buddhist meaning since the state of mind indicated is in no way passive but fiercely positive in its determination to hang on.

Here, in the Western tradition, the very word we use to indicate the crisis we have come to is itself significant. We speak of a *crux*, a cross, a crucial moment. And the word is appropriate because crucifixion is the intrinsic form of human knowledge. The trajectory of our search always brings us to a point where - limited, conditioned beings that we are - we are brought face to face with the unconditional. And whereas with values such as justice and mercy and gentleness we can be content to have them to some degree and on certain conditions, with truth it is not so. The demand of truth is unconditional, absolute. If we dare to face the truth it strips us of attachment to anything less than itself.

### "Bewildered unto Death"

'He was bewildered unto death' is how St. Mark describes the Great Doubt that the Son of God experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was brought face to face with the unconditional will of the Father, stripped of every support except truth. And throughout the Christian centuries one hears in thousands of hearts the echo of that agonizing cry in the Garden.

When there is no worst, when rational considerations no longer offer any foothold, the only choice for a human being is either to abandon oneself to despair or else to exercise the virtue of courage, and to hang on. We no longer have anything visible or tangible to sustain us, so our only hope has to be in what no eye has seen nor ear heard nor human mind conceived. And the door to that hope is opened by the exercise of courage, which is itself a form of faithfulness.

Yet if we do not abandon truth we shall discover that truth has not aban-

doned us. On the contrary, it is at precisely this moment that we make the most wonderful discovery of all. We discover that what we had thought of as the story of our search for truth was in a deeper sense the story of the truth seeking us out. We see that our longing for truth was not something generated by ourselves but must have been implanted in us from the beginning. The seed of hope had already been secreted in us before ever we answered the call to spend our lives searching for the truth. It was our response that caused the seed to germinate; and that seed comes to fruition in the form of the special beatitude for those who mourn; because now after the Great Doubt as the Gospel says, those who mourn will be comforted.

### The Spirit of Truth

For the truth-seeker, however, whose eye is single, there can only be one legitimate consolation for the mourning that has afflicted him or her: that is, the gift of truth - ever more truth, ever deeper truth, nothing else. According to the Christian tradition that gift is not an abstraction but a person, the Holy Spirit, of whom Jesus said, 'I will not leave you comfortless but I will ask the Father to send you Another, who will be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, who dwells with you and is in you, and who will guide you into all truth.'

Consequently the whole aim and the consolation of the Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. This fact about the Christian life is frequently not recognized because whereas, within the economy of the Three Personed God, the Son images the Father and the Spirit images the Son, the Holy Spirit remains unimaged by any other person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit, therefore, as person, remains unmanifested, hidden; for just as the air itself remains invisible to us but acts as the medium through which we see and hear other things, so the Spirit does not reveal to us his/her own face but shows us always the face of Christ. The Holy Spirit is

transparent, pointing not to himself/herself but always to the risen Christ.

The Holy Spirit will not be manifested as person until the restoration of all things, until the final redemption. In that moment the image of the Spirit will be revealed. But even now, as St Paul tells us in that magnificent eighth chapter of his Letter to the Romans, we are aware that all who are moved by the Spirit of God are already the sons and daughters of God and that through our inarticulate groans and the groans of the whole creation the Spirit is pleading for us; and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means.

#### **Partakers of the Divine Nature**

It is that same reality to which St. Paul is pointing in his Letter to the Corinthians when he writes, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the human heart the things which God has prepared for those who love God, but God hath revealed them unto us by the Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God'.

The Spirit, then, fulfills Jesus' promise to lead us into all truth, that great and wonderful promise, so that you may become partakers of the divine nature - sharing in the very life of God, plunging ever deeper into the unfathomable being of God.

And if our immediate reaction to these promises that we may become sharers in the divine nature is a faint-hearted suspicion that such a transformation is impossible, then let us learn otherwise by studying the lives of those who have had the courage to believe the promises, the people known as saints.

#### **The Light of the Spirit**

Witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit still continues to work even in our own day, was given to my wife and myself only three weeks ago. A Danish man with whom we have recently become friends was describing to us his experiences in 1945 as a teenager in the Danish underground. He was captured by the Gestapo and they tortured him in an effort to extract from him the names and plans of his underground comrades. Unlike almost everyone else in the situation he did not pretend that he did not know of their names and future plans. 'Yes,' he said 'I do know them, but you must realize yourself that I cannot tell you.' And so after further threats and torture, he was placed in the death cell to await execution. Alone in the cell, so he told us, he had no fear, but was filled with such peace that is beyond human understanding - and his cell itself was completely filled with light - the light of the Holy Spirit. For us that was a sign that our friend had indeed received the Holy Spirit, the Consoler, who is promised to those who mourn for the truth's sake.

Let us pray for one another that, we, being truth-seekers, may likewise receive that consolation, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

(Donald Nicholl, a graduate of Oxford University was for many years a Professor at the University of San José, California. He devotes much of his time at present to lecturing and writing. He is author of the book Holiness. He has a particular interest in inter-religious dialogue. He was a resource person at the SEDOS Mission Seminar on Laity in Mission).

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REFLECTIONS ON RECRUITING  
MISSIONARIES TODAY

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Jonathan J. Bonk

A full-page advertisement for John MacArthur's book, The Gospel According to Jesus (1988) caught my attention recently. The top two-thirds of the page is blank except for what appears to be a small, classified advertisement of the sort appearing in newspapers everywhere. This is what it says:

"Help Wanted. Volunteers willing to sell all they own and give proceeds to the poor, quit their job for full-time assignment, and leave home to work in other countries".

"Must be willing to postpone rewards until later. Possible loss of friendships and popularity. For more information see Matthew 19:21."

Of course, no Christian mis-siologist can be unfamiliar with this text. Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." These words were spoken to a spiritually devout, wealthy young volunteer for whom, Mark tells us, Jesus felt a deep affection (Mark 10:21).

It seems clear that Jesus was not very adept as a recruiter! For despite the young man's evident sincerity, obvious ability, superb qualifications, deep religious devotion, and eagerness to serve. Jesus - far from enlisting this youthful enthusiast - practically drove him away. In this instance, the price of membership in Jesus' little band was so preposterously inflated as to virtually ensure the exclusion of all men and women of sound mind.

In other instances, however, criteria employed by Jesus were so lax as to jeopardize the integrity of both himself and his mission. It is inter-

esting to note that when Jesus recruited men and women who would within a few years turn the world upside down, questions of health, education, vocational qualifications, technical skills, experience, psychological compatibility, linguistic aptitude, and even theological orientation do not seem to have been raised. Many of his recruits were distinguished chiefly by their singular lack of distinction by the standards of that day. Several of Jesus' closest associates were socially unsavory men and women of rather doubtful reputation - a tax collector, a Zealot, and a former prostitute, for example - intimate association with whom confirmed in their doubts those already skeptical of the notion that this Jesus might be the Christ.

Could this organization, comprised as it was of a motley little company of nondescript, rag-tag followers, have met the membership criteria of contemporary, respectably accredited Catholic or Protestant mission societies? It is doubtful. The bookkeeper was a crook; an audit would have blown the organization apart. "Policies" governing mission funds were haphazard, with predictable results. Recruits were few and of poor quality. In three years virtually nothing substantial had been accomplished. There was constant friction with more orthodox religious and civil leaders.

Recruits were not offered a support and security package worthy of the name. Unemployment benefits, insurance, and retirement plans could hardly be a part of the infrastructure in an association headed by one who promised all who joined persecution, suffering, discomfort, and early death. Practical questions of "outfit" and "passage" and "ministry funds" were dismissed on the grounds that such concerns were worthy

only of pagans! (Matthew 6:25-34). Naturally, such an organization could not attract the "best" recruits. Only the socially, economically, politically, and religiously - perhaps even mentally - marginalized could or would fill a niche in such an organization.

### **What was Jesus Recruiting for?**

He was recruiting for the reign of God which was not of this world. He was recruiting followers who would wage war deep inside enemy territory, utilizing the weapons and tactics of weakness, suffering, and vulnerability - the only weapons which can make any headway against the powers of spiritual darkness dominating this dark world.

### **What Are We Recruiting For?**

This is a question that can be answered at several levels:

**Institutional Level,** At the institutional level, successful recruitment ensures the survival of the agency, the viability of its commitments, the expansion and diversification of its programmes to keep pace with the changing times, and the growth of its support constituency. Few can be unaware of the institutional pressures giving rise to the need for more personnel.

**Personal Level** At the personal level, those directly involved in recruitment well know what they are recruiting for! For them, success is determined by the number and quality of the persons recruited for their mission society. The recruiter's task is to metamorphose abstract lists of personnel needs and vocational opportunities into qualified missionary candidates, eager to enter the fray under the auspices of a particular mission. To that end, the recruiter must be on the road for months at a time, following a beaten path - or is it a rut? - from school to school, from church to church, from camp to camp, where he or she must vie with representatives of literally hundreds of other mission agencies in the usually sedate competi-

tion for a share of the desperately short supply of recruits.

No interested young person is turned away. The scale and the diversity of mission needs combine to ensure that there is a place for everyone. Training institutions and international conferences are organized around the proposition that the world is in desperately short supply of Western missionaries.

Missiological projections abound, all of them attempting the difficult task of forecasting the future. Church growth should and can occur; unreached peoples should and can be identified and evangelized; by means of sound research, appropriate strategies, qualified missionaries, and effectual prayer, the peoples on this globe - even the resistant masses of burgeoning "world-class" megacities, supercities, and supergiants - should and can be "reached".

**Theological Level** At the theological level what are we recruiting for? It is only when we ask this question theologically that some disturbing elements begin to intrude into our hopeful projections and busy recruitment strategies. When recruitment for the contemporary missionary task of the church is brought into theological focus, it becomes evident that all is not well on the Western front. For while many mission agencies can point to growth in personnel, budget, and activities, and while college and seminary mission departments attempt to cope with a resurgence in mission interest on the part of growing numbers of students, it seems that we have all but forgotten that the battle is a spiritual one. As candidates for spiritual battle, we have perhaps never been so ill equipped to enter the fray.

Returning to Matthew 19:21, any Western mission agency with work abroad must take serious account of two facts: (1) in a very literal sense, recruits will necessarily be from within the ranks of this world's "rich young ruler" class; and (2) these latter-day "rich young rulers" - so eager to

follow their Lord to the ends of the earth - will be proclaiming the gospel in a world where poverty is the norm. Many, perhaps even most - were their services to be solicited on the terms outlined in Matthew 19:21 - would sadly decline the invitation, for they have many possessions.

### THE MISSIOLOGICAL COST OF AFFLUENCE

The price missionaries must pay for their participation in affluence has never been higher. In exchange for comforts and efficiency, Western missionaries must inevitably sacrifice a measure of apostolic versatility and effectiveness.

1. It is a fact, for example, that Western affluence generates strategies which cannot effectively reach the poor. Western missionary endeavors have, for the most part, bypassed the burgeoning urban poor of the world's great cities. Viv Grigg, a New Zealand missionary well known for his work in the Manila slums, recently spent two years of intensive research in eight of the great Asian cities, seeking, in his own words "to know how the great mission surge of the last decades had established the church among the urban poor". He was forced to conclude that "the greatest mission surge in history has entirely missed the greatest migration in history, the migration of third world rural peasants to great megacities" (Grigg 1987:261)

Neglect of the world's poorest people by the church's richest missionaries is not a case of simple oversight. The fact is that our affluence makes us uncomfortable in the context of insoluble poverty. The very strategies which ensure Western missionary longevity, efficiency, and comfort make residence among the urban poor impossible. Western missionaries - intuitively sensing the hypocrisy of ministry without identification, but unable or unwilling to pay the price of identification with the poor - avoid the garbage dumps and shantytowns, focusing instead upon upwardly mobile

elements of city populations. The tragic result is neglect of peoples who, historically, have always been most responsive to the good news.

2. Another tragic consequence of Western affluence may be deduced from our evident inability or unwillingness to see the West as a desperately needy mission field. Contrary to notions popular in the folk Christianity of the West, the Christian Scriptures teach that the field is the world. That is, every person alive has been born on the mission field! In the words of Ghanaian theologian C. G. Baeta:

"The idea of one part of the world evangelizing another will not bear scrutiny. Missions are not a movement from the haves to the have-nots, from the educated to the illiterate. They are a movement from the fellowship of faith all over the world to all who stand outside this fellowship, wherever and wherever they may be. (Niles 1962:194)"

Possibly because of the relative affluence of the West, and because it continues to manifest much of the external trappings that have come to be associated with Christianity, the Western church tends to see only the non-Western world as a "mission field".

3. There is a third consequence of missionary affluence: By accepting affluence missionaries and mission societies forfeit the right to preach a desperately needed prophetic word to self-satisfied Western Churches. Few are in as good a position to see the spiritual deterioration and advancing decay of the Western church as are its missionaries on furlough. But by personally indulging in its affluence, they forfeit the right to speak.

### WHAT SHOULD WE BE RECRUITING FOR?

It is clear that there must be a change of direction. Among the richly varied theological motifs running through the pages of the New Testament, three are of such broad significance as

to touch upon every other facet of Christian faith and practice: the incarnation, the cross, and weakness as power.

### **Incarnational Missionaries**

We need to recruit incarnational missionaries. The incarnation is at the very heart of the Christian faith. "In the beginning was the Word..." John wrote; and "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us" (John 1:1,14). Paul, echoing this most elementary of Christian teachings, reminded the churches in Galatia, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law..." (Galatians 4:4-5). For many of Western missionaries, the word incarnation is merely a theologically descriptive, rather than a missiologically prescriptive term (Philippians 2:1-11). Yet it is from the incarnation - not from Marshall McLuhan - that missionary communicators learn that the medium is the message. The living word must always be made vulnerable flesh.

The incarnation teaches us that power, speed, mobility, comprehensiveness, efficiency, and success are not the measure of missionary strategy. Jesus came into the world - not with an impressive show of force, but as the powerless, vulnerable child of a peasant mother. All the creative and sustaining power in heaven and on earth was his (Colossians 1:15-17), yet he willingly entered his own creation as a helpless, dependent, suckling infant, occupying only one or two square feet in the bottom of a manger, needing to learn obedience and grow in wisdom. The Word made flesh grew up poor, lived his rather provincial life surrounded by and in sympathy with the poor, and died poor. In carrying out his mission to save the world, he walked about Palestine for three years, often delayed by crowds and hampered by the religious establishment. Coming in the "fullness of time," he was to all practical purposes unaware of "hidden" or "unreached" peoples in the world next door. Had there been some cosmic

miscalculation? How could such a sentence, operating in such a way and from such a base, hope to accomplish his Father's purposes for himself or for the world?

Of course, his credibility could have been enhanced had he come instead as the privileged, gifted, well-bred, highly educated, cultured, heir-apparent to the throne of some powerful, affluent king. Doubtless, it would have made sound strategic sense had he postponed his debut until the age of the global village - with its jets, computers, flush toilets, telecommunications networks, mass media, public health programmes, and human rights organizations at his disposal, to make the accomplishing of his mission more realistic.

But was the life of Christ really the preposterously naive, ill conceived, amateurish fiasco that it appears to have been by modern missiological standards of strategic planning and performance?

The answer, of course, is clear. There were more appropriate ways for him to authenticate his claims to being the Son of God. There were more effective ways of inaugurating the reign of God. Even then, in the absence of motor vehicles, airplanes, computers, and highly technical communications media, there were more efficient ways of proclaiming the good news. Despite the absence of marketing consultants and advertising specialists, surely there were practical means available for packaging and marketing the Word made flesh.

The fact is, however, that the messianic modus operandi was not accidental but deliberate. The temptation to prove his sonship and to fulfill his mission by means of personal association with and demonstrations of power was deliberately and utterly rejected (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). His mission would - because it should - unfold in poverty, weakness, and obscurity. The inspiration behind Peter's subsequent suggestion that Christ's

mission should be carried out by a more attractive means was traced to Satan himself, and Jesus' rebuke could scarcely have been more scathing: "Out of my sight, Satan!" he said to Peter (Mark 8:31-33).

The missiological lessons of the incarnation are clear. "As you have sent me into the world, I have sent those whom you gave me into the world". Christ prayed as he pleaded with his Father for those who, like him, were "not of the world" (John 17:17-17). "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus", Paul reminded believers at Philippi, whose methods for achieving personal objectives appear to have been only too natural (Philippians 2:5). At the very least, the incarnation means giving up the power, privilege, and social position which are our natural due. Christ's mission in Christ's way must always begin, proceed, and end with the great renunciation. And this sacrifice is made not merely with reference to "what could have been" back home, but by the standards of the people among whom the missionary is called to incarnate the gospel. This does not leave much room for the power-generating, status-inflating, career-building, self-protecting affluence.

### **Vulnerable Missionaries**

We need to recruit vulnerable missionaries. The cross, likewise, is not merely a symbol of the atonement, but a prescription for the only way of life promised to all who would follow Jesus.

But there is a disturbing, and therefore often ignored, thread of truth in New Testament teaching about the cross: Those who would follow Christ look forward not only to the comforting prospect of "pie in the sky in the sweet by and by," but to suffering and death in the here and now, for Jesus deliberately chose to make the fellowship of the cross an integral part of what he offers each would-be disciple. "Anyone," he said, "who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38).

These words were spoken in the context of the natural tendency of his followers - then as now - to put personal concerns before obedience to God.

### **Weak Missionaries**

We need to recruit weak missionaries. The third paradoxical element characterizing mission done in the New Testament way is weakness. Humankind has always been awed and cowed by power. Power of various kinds - military, political, social, economic, ecclesiastical - is avidly sought and clung to in the natural course of human affairs. We Westerners are a privileged people; privileges require protecting; protection requires power in the case of missions, the power of money, excellent organization, well-educated missionaries, and skillful strategies.

According to the New Testament, on the other hand, obedient followers are neither to strive for nor to maintain personal power and privilege; all that they do is to be marked by personal vulnerability and self-giving. The mission which truly serves its head never looks for ways of gaining and wielding power but for ways of subjecting itself on behalf of others. No other pattern is consistent with incarnational or cross-bearing mission.

The apostle Paul's Damascus Road conversion - from power to weakness, made him the most effective of the earliest missionaries. Having understood the futile incongruity of utilizing worldly power in carrying out Christ's mission, Paul, in his letters to the Corinthian Church, repeatedly returns to the theme. "God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong," he reminded the quarreling church (1 Corinthians 1:27). He made it clear that to be a missionary (an apostle) meant, in God's mysterious strategy, to be "on display at the end of a procession..." (1 Corinthians 4:9), least among the prisoners of war, condemned to a public death.

Paul spent his last days almost



alone, in a Roman dungeon, a frail old man whose life was finally snuffed out by executioners at the behest of a powerful state. It is hard to imagine a weaker, more vulnerable person than this. Yet, as Kosuke Koyama observes,

"Through Paul who was imprisoned, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, threatened by all kinds of people, hungry, thirsty, cold and exposed, God touched the foundation of history, and he let Paul touch it too. (1976:77)."

Western Christian mission societies grappling with economic power at the theological level, must of necessity subject all personal, family, ecclesiastical, and strategic plans and policies to these three questions:

(1) Do they reflect the incarnation, or are they essentially self-serving?

(2) Is the cross both the message and the method, or is self-preservation the bottom line?

(3) Are people more impressed by Christian Mission's stability and strength or by its weakness?

The answers to these questions will determine the Christian-ness of both our missions and our missionaries, and may give us some intimation of the future of Western mission societies as a vitally Christian spiritual force.

Ref. Missiology, Vol XVII, No.4,  
October 1989. 616 Walnut Ave.,  
Scottsdale, Dayton, OH 45406, USA.

- end -

**NEWS** continued from p. 24

rather than christian discipleship as the framework for moral teaching. They described it as containing theology from the 1950's in many ways. It was inconsistent and selective in its use of official church teachings from the Second Vatican Council and the postconciliar era, ignoring or even contradicting some important insights in conciliar and postconciliar teaching. It failed to make needed distinctions between central or essential truths of faith and peripheral elements and between established doctrine and theological views.

There is an enormous amount of background from the traditions of the church ... not only of the West, but of the East as well. One of its most glaring weaknesses, however, is that it suffers from what computer people would call an 'information overload' with no guidance as to what is more important and what is less important.

Several of the panelists criticized the text's reliance on natural law as the framework for moral teaching. The weakest part of the document is its moral section, according to one panelist. "It takes one waning, legalistic model of moral life, ignoring the more scriptural model of discipleship of Christ as the norm for Christian living. Whereas Vatican II treated the laity as A Creative Part of the Church the Draft treats the laity as An Obedient Part" was how he described it.

A Professor of Moral Theology said one of the strong points in the document is its incorporation of church

social teaching in describing christian life, but he objected to the whole morality section being developed under the rubric of the ten commandments. While there is strong teaching on human rights in the text it is placed under the seventh commandment, not to steal. The national catechetical directory developed by the U.S. Bishops in the 1970s places the decalogue in the context of the liberation of Israel from oppression and slavery in Egypt, but the Draft catechism ignores the scriptural context in which the commandments were given. By treating them from a natural law framework the text ignores the question. "How well are they linked to the core teaching of Jesus Christ?"

The section on sacraments and liturgy received the highest marks from the group, but it also was criticized. It contains such things as the absurd statement that the Eucharist is not a meal, a statement that contradicts scripture and Catholic doctrine.

Ref. NCNS. January 29, 1990.

## CHINA UPDATE

JEROME HEYNDRICKX, CICM., addressed a very well attended meeting on THE CHURCH IN CHINA AFTER TIANANMEN at the SVD Generalate on January 19, 1990. He had just returned from a two-month stay in China. It was a most informative meeting on the latest developments concerning the Church in China.

COMING EVENTS

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MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE GROUP

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Next Meeting: February 23rd, 1990  
at P.I.S.A.I., Piazza S. Apollinare, 49  
4.30 - 6.00 p.m.

The group will be introduced to the work of the Pont.  
Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies.

Host Michael Fitzgerald, M.Afr.

Facilitator Bernard Maes, CICM.

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HAITI GROUP

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Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 20  
at SEDOS  
4.00 - 6.00 p.m.

Facilitator Jan Hanssens, CICM.,

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DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

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JUSTICE & PEACE USG/UISG PUBLIC MEETING

Generalate of the FCS

Tuesday, February 27, at 15.30

Speaker: Fr. SPILICK, SJ.

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LOCAL CHURCH  
PRACTICES AND THEOLOGIES

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MARCH 20, 18.00 hrs. to MARCH 24, 14.00 hrs.

AT VILLA CAVALLETTI

RESOURCE PERSONS: IVONE GEBARA, Brazil    EFOE J. PENOUKOU, Burkina Faso  
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Dear SEDOS Reader,

We are including this flyer to notify you of an excellent resource that is available to you on AIDS prevention and control. It is produced on a monthly basis with the support of Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, Misereor, WHO, Nemisa, Medicus Mundi and is free of charge to developing countries, it is an excellent tool for those in medical, educational and pastoral work. Check on the availability of past copies. Write directly to the UK address and in general terms state why the newsletter would be helpful to you. The SEDOS Secretariat.

JUNE 1989

# AIDS action

ISSUE 7

## Cooperation and coordination

As this newsletter goes to print, over ten thousand people will be attending the Fifth International Conference on AIDS/HIV infection, held this year in Montreal, Canada. Over the past few years, the number of individuals, community organisations and governments working on AIDS has increased almost as rapidly as the spread of the disease itself. But until the results of our collective efforts can be seen — that is, until HIV transmission is reduced to a minimum and better health and health care have been achieved for all — there is much to be done.

Much of this work lies in promoting effective cooperation and coordination between the thousands of community, national and international organisations involved. No one group can fight this disease alone: government policy-makers need local activists, and local activists need government grants. All of us need to ensure that scarce resources are not wasted, tasks are not duplicated and that health messages are complementary, not contradictory.

Most important of all, national and international programmes need an "Early Warning System" when things go wrong or could be done better. In many cases, non-government organisations (NGOs) working at the community level are best placed to sound the alarm.

Such organisations are beginning to coordinate their efforts to ensure that warnings or concerns about the effectiveness of programmes are acted upon. Governments, too, are recognising the vital role of NGOs, particularly those with long standing community based experience, in national care and prevention prog-

rammes. Many have acknowledged the need for greater cooperation with NGOs, expressed through recent resolutions at the World Health Assembly.

In this edition of *WHO Report* (centre insert) Bob Grose, External Relations Officer for the Global Programme on AIDS, stresses that government cooperation with NGOs does not mean control of NGOs. But if this is to remain true, NGOs need effective ways of voicing their demands. How can this be achieved amongst many different, and sometimes small, organisations? Quite simply, by getting together and discussing the issues concerned — both with each other, with the WHO/Global Programme on AIDS and with National AIDS Committees. This is

happening, for example, at international meetings (such as the NGO forum *Opportunities for Solidarity* held in Montreal (see p.7); greater NGO representation on National AIDS Committees and the formation of NGO AIDS consortia (such as the UK consortium of development agencies reviewed on page 7).

As a result, NGOs are able to ask key questions from a stronger standpoint: 'Where is our promised supply of HIV testing kits? Does the National AIDS Committee have effective community representation? Why can't we publish statistics? Why are infected people losing their jobs and what can we do to stop it?' Community based NGOs are now becoming strong enough to ensure that their questions are answered.



A UK non-government organisation (NGO), The Terrence Higgins Trust, offering telephone counselling on AIDS/HIV infection to worried callers. Governments are beginning to recognise the vital role of NGOs in national AIDS programmes.

John Cole/Network

### In this issue . . .

- **Diarrhoea and AIDS** your questions answered
- **Community care** the Northwest AIDS Foundation (USA)
- **Counselling** an African experience
- **WHO Report** the role of non-government organisations in National AIDS Programmes

## AHRTAG

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