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IN THIS ISSUE....

The importance of language and culture in shaping thought leads JOHN KIRBY to important conclusions regarding mission and formation for mission. Every language group lives in a distinctly different world and every culture is unique and valuable, logical and purposeful in its own legitimate way. From this perspective have arisen local theologies rooted in distinct cultural and historical realities, (black theology, African theology, liberation theology).

Language and culture learning witnesses to a conversion process - the conversion of the missionaries themselves. Missioners are really responsible for only one conversion - their own. It is up to the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

There are some important PROPOSALS from a seminar held in Nairobi, Kenya, in preparation for the coming Synod of Bishops for Africa. The proposals appear to be balanced and take into account the reality and the diversity of African cultures, colonial influences, the immense difficulties of communication and linguistic barriers in Africa. There

is a growing body of articles and news items about the Synod available in SEDOS Documentation Centre.

There are two items on China. One comes from FR. LAZZAROTTO, PIME who has a long experience of China. He spoke at the very interesting "Update on China" in SEDOS last June. The other is from FR. CHANG, SJ who lives in Taiwan.

The regime in China continues to stress respect for the maintenance of religious rights while at the same time it appears to increase control of cultural and religious initiatives. It is the Chinese themselves who will be responsible for overcoming divisions and misunderstandings. Fr. Chang asks that those outside China should be very careful not to report information which may be erroneous and to heed the Pope's appeal to be a "Bridge Church".

This issue contains the 1991 Subject and Author Index.

There are mission moments, news items and notices of coming events.

NEWS

SEDOS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY:

The Assembly in December 1991, was very well attended. Three speakers contributed an analysis of the "missionary" situation in Europe today, a period of great opportunity for sharing the Gospel with many who have been starved of it for half a century. It is a period which calls for great sensitivity in our relationships with our Orthodox sisters and brothers who have endured the suffering of being identified, willingly or unwillingly, with the prevailing communist regimes.

One of the speakers, spoke of the fear and loss of hope which seems to characterise the lives of Christians also in Western countries of Europe. The Assembly was voted one of the best

ever. The Assembly concluded with Mass celebrated in the St. John Chrysostom Rite by a group of monks and students from the Basilian College.

A few days later we celebrated our SEDOS Christmas Party. It has now become almost an integral part of the SEDOS annual programme of events. It began ten years ago in the rooms of the SEDOS Secretariat offices. We now celebrate it in the more spacious College rooms of the SVD to whom we are most grateful.

1992 SEDOS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The 1991 Annual Assembly voted the new committee members as follows:

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE LEARNING IS MINISTRY

John P. Kirby, SVD

(Fr. John Kirby is a member of the Society of the Divine Word, 46 years old, from the United States of America. He has a doctorate in anthropology from Oxford University. He is at present Director of the TAMALE INTERCULTURAL INSTITUTE in Ghana. The Institute is a joint enterprise sponsored by the Tamale diocese and the Divine Word Society and was founded by Fr. Kirby, SVD.)

Some missionaries have queried the priority given to learning a language because of the time constraints involved in a busy work schedule. Fr. Kirby makes a strong case for the priority of language and culture learning. It is ministry. This is an edited version of his article - Ed.)

Most missionaries feel that language and culture learning are important because they enable the missionary to better communicate the gospel message. Even for those dedicated missionaries who learn languages and cultures in order to translate the bible, language and culture is a learning pre-requisite for their ministry. Some missionaries would place greater importance on learning the language and culture than on any other missionary task because of the almost magical quality mastery of a language has in establishing instant relationships.

Language and culture learning are already ministry and constitute the most important dynamic for the evolution of a "World Church". I would like

to develop this theme in four parts:

- 1) Developments in the sciences of anthropology and linguistics and what they have been able to tell us about humankind and the importance of culture. The growth of these secular sciences has greatly influenced the Church's new understanding of itself.
- 2) Some practical factors which are bringing about a reassessment of mission perspectives and goals for our times.
- 3) The process of crossing over cultural barriers in terms of a conversion of the missionary.
- 4) What this means for the future of missionary formation.

GROWTH IN ANTHROPOLOGY AND LINGUISTICS

At the turn of the century anthropology was a branch of history which speculated about "human civilization". It was based on an evolutionary model with Europeans at the top of the pyramid and the rest of the people of the world placed somewhere on a developmental scale descending through the "civilized" to the "barbaric" and the

"savage". Historians of Western civilization assumed that by collecting data from extant societies, round the world, they could piece together a picture of their own silent past. No consideration was given to the various contexts in which these so-called "primitive" people lived nor to the meanings they gave to their customs, artifacts, and activities.

This began to change by the 1930s when anthropologists started to live among the peoples they studied, learning their languages and striving to see things from their (*emic*) perspectives. The meanings which the people themselves gave to their life, activities and artifacts, or the meanings embedded within their use and function, gradually replaced the *apriori* meanings Western ethnologists gave the objects of their investigations.

The study of linguistics began to look at the relationship between words and meanings. Whorf (1941) demonstrated the importance of language in shaping thought and culture. He held that people cannot think what they cannot say. In other words our perception of the world is influenced by our language and this, in turn, affects our behaviour. Whorf maintained that every language group lives in a distinctly different world, the structure of which can be known by studying the structure of their language. Through his work it gradually became clear that what people are thinking, their culture, their worldview and why they do the things they do, cannot be understood apart from their language.

Language-learning has come to be recognized as the door to culture-learning but language makes culture accessible and understandable, only if learned in the life-context rather than in the classroom or laboratory. Gradually, such studies produced incontrovertible proof that no society can call itself intrinsically better or more "civilized" by virtue of its culture. Each culture is unique and valuable, logical and purposeful in its own legitimate way.

Church and Culture

The Church began to respond officially to this revolutionary new approach to the study of humankind only after Vatican II. The resulting incarnational theology and concept of "World Church" have drastically changed our notions of Church and mission. Now dialogue rather than conversion is essential for forming the

Kingdom conceived of as a new cultural creation. This involves no simple overlay of western church culture upon the object culture but a genuine interior transformation of both sending and receiving cultures. Indeed, on this model, both are senders and receivers.

Pope John Paul II. has described it thus: "*Just as Jesus in proclaiming the Gospel used all the elements which made up the culture of his people, so the Church too must use elements taken from human cultures in order to build the Kingdom. However, inculturation does not mean just an external adaptation. Inculturation means the intimate transformation of Christianity in various human cultures.*" (Second Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio Finalis*, II, D, 4; reprinted in *CHURCH AND CULTURES* 1989)

This astonishingly new perspective has had the effect of raising anthropology and linguistics, when used in the service of the Church, to the status of true "ecclesiastical sciences". They are no longer mute servants to Church dogma but help to form a new theological perspective based in the Incarnation.

Theologies

From this perspective have arisen new "theologies" (Black theology, African theology, Liberation theology etc.) based on the view that all theologies are local theologies rooted in distinct cultural and historical perspectives (see Schreiter 1985). Such "contextualized"(2) theologies depend upon intimate knowledge of the cultural context for their meaning and proceed out of the local problems and needs of the people.

This perspective challenges the very foundations of faith. If faith is not embedded in culture and exercised in context, it is not true faith. That is, faith, in order to be faith, must be a product of living within one's own culture, not a borrowed or parallel culture.

By this perspective, as well, language and culture learning are no longer

simply the means to an end - bringing the gospel - they are an end in themselves. For the very process expands

faith and directs the discovery of the problem-solving Christ within different cultural contexts.

LANGUAGE LEARNING IS COMMUNICATION IS MINISTRY

Elizabeth and Tom Brewster, in *LANGUAGE LEARNING IS COMMUNICATION, IS MINISTRY* quote their colleague anthropologist, Charles H. Kraft as saying: "Indeed, if we do no more than engage in the process of language learning we missionaries will have communicated more of the essentials of the Gospel than if we devote ourselves to any other task I can think of". (Brewster 1982:160).

As a missionary in Ghana and having had the privilege of learning and ministering in three Ghanaian languages, I have always rather instinctively felt this to be true. Successful language learners get involved with local people, esteem them and learn from them. They build relationships from the outset and belong in their new society. When a missionary spends time with people he/she is following Christ's example of incarnational ministry. Language and culture learning are indeed already ministry.

Two recent publications have helped me to understand why language and culture learning are not simply a preparation for becoming missionaries but are in themselves the most important form of ministry for our time.

The first, by Father Anthony Bellagamba (1988), affirms and broadens the Brewsters' practical reasons for associating language and culture learning with ministry. The second, by Father Alfonso Nebreda (1987), adds a theological dimension to the practical. He helps us to understand the importance of cross-cultural formation as an internal dynamic increasing our faith and deepening our own conversion, thus providing a model for the conversion of others.

Bellagamba wished to show that the Church's approach to mission and to its understanding of itself as Church must change because of the changing historical reality about us. He names large movements or "megatrends" which are affecting our identity as Church and changing the nature of our ministry. All of these involve aspects of culture and tree a culture-conscious response of the Church.

Megatrends In Mission

- 1) "Culturalism": the fact that despite our shrinking globe, people are not dissolving into an amorphous cultural mass. The response of the missionary Church to this megatrend is inculturation. If what we do is alien to the people, at best the gospel will be irrelevant, at worst completely rejected.
- 2) The revival of religious experience in the West: this calls for dialogue, the object of which is discovery not conversion, discovery of a larger identity of God's people which is to include all the peoples of the world.
- 3) The movement toward small communities: the Church's response to this has already started in the formation of small communities of faith.
- 4) New ministries: the Church's ministry at present is inadequate. The hierarchical system is unwieldy, and it is too linked to Western forms for fulfilling only "spiritual" needs. New and different ministries must evolve to meet the world's real needs, spiritual and physical.
- 5) Church structures: the Western Church is no longer relevant; churches are empty; structures no longer

respond to Western needs, to say nothing of the needs of other cultures. By the year 2,000 70% of all Catholics will be in Third World countries. Already many of the fruits of change within the Church are coming from these parts of the world. We need "bridge builders" who are at home in two or more cultures, who can bridge the flow of knowledge, experience and experiment.

6) Globalism: we live in a world of socio-economic and political globalism. People must learn to live together and work together for the good of all. Cultural differences must be known and respected.

7) Poverty: it is increasing despite scientific and technical advances. The Church must recognize the centrality of the poor and oppressed in God's plan. The rich will begin to learn from the poor.

8) Church growth: those who have not yet heard the gospel are increasing. Christians will decrease from one-third of the population in 1970 to one-fourth by the year 2,000. The Church must open up new frontiers in spreading the Gospel.

Missionaries Of The Future

Against these magatrends, Bellagamba lists six crucial roles for the missionary of the future. All of them stress the importance of culture. Missioners must be:

1) Multi-cultural: they must easily move from culture to culture. In doing so they are to be a "type" for mankind as a whole.

2) Bridge-builders between cultures, religions and peoples: they must foster the dialogue between cultures, religions

and values. This is a secular task, normally assigned to anthropologists, development workers and cross cultural volunteers and is enormously appealing for today's youth. It is certainly not the popular image of missionaries.

3) Catalysts: if "culturalism" is here to stay the new era of "World Church" must be formed of many local churches, each of which is home-base for the culture of its peoples. In this case true universality means sharing in a greater fullness of the gospel event and challenging one another to grow.

4) Innovators: they evolve new and different ministries responding to the spiritual and physical needs of their people through intimate, affirming culturally homogeneous groups.

5) Friends of the poor and oppressed: they will stand for the rights of the underprivileged and work to change unjust structures. But, perhaps more than teaching the poor, they must be prepared to listen to them; more than saving them they must be prepared to benefit by their salvific message.

6) Explorers: of new frontiers going beyond the constraints of culture and the impediments of the mind and heart. The missionary helps the Church to rediscover that Church does not ultimately promote Church but responds to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Bellagamba's global perspective turns our attention to the larger process of molding a better world but a world which must maintain its more than 7,000 distinct cultural forms precisely because this great cultural diversity will provide new possibilities for growth. Language and culture learning are as important for discovering a new world as they are for "communicating" the gospel.

LANGUAGE LEARNING IS CONVERSION IS MINISTRY

My own reflections have led me to replace the Brewsters' idea of "com-

munication" with the concept of "conversion" as understood by Alfonso

Nebreda, SJ, in order to more fully convey the absolute interdependence of ministry and language and culture - learning. Language learning is indeed ministry but not just because it communicates the missionary's words or Christ's words, or even the missionary's whole "life-message", though there is a partial truth in this. It is ministry primarily because it witnesses to a conversion process - the conversion of the missionaries themselves.

Missioners are really responsible for only one conversion- their own. It is up to the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

Language and culture learning stretch and deepen our faith and demand the humble posture of one who has much to learn from a new fount of truth in open dialogue. By the discovery of a new creation in them they bear witness to this creation. By experiencing a new relationship with Christ in another's culture, the missionary both experiences a genuine conversion and sews the seeds for future conversion.

Deepening of Faith

For Nebreda, conversion primarily means a deepening of faith. It is a growing process and it is dynamic. We do not "keep the faith" but it rather takes hold of us in a long, slow process and involves our constant assent. He therefore says that we are all pagans in varying degrees of conversion, for there is always the possibility of regression or static commitment. If we are to continuously convert, then, a continuous openness and striving is required.

Conversion also means an awareness of the need to grow and respond to the changes that surround us. It is painful to be always in the process of becoming

with no place to stand. Seeing God's hand in all the meaningless events of our times demands the inward vision of faith (Ephs 1:18).

Dialogue

The second area of conversion is dialogue. Dialogue supposes humility before other persons and cultures recognizing that no culture has a monopoly on truth. Others have their share of the truth by which our own understanding can be enriched. Dialogue enables the missionary and the Church to participate in these riches.

Witness

Finally, there is the question of witnessing to a continual deepening of faith in an attitude of openness, in a dialogue that exercises both word and deed. If 80% of all communication is non-verbal, bearing witness to Christ in another cultural milieu means not only preaching the word but living it in ways that do not miscommunicate, i.e., in ways that communicate the gospel and not cultural ideosyncrasy. This process is nothing new. By incarnating themselves, they merely follow the example of Christ, the first fully enculturated sign of the Father. Conversion of the missionary, therefore, involves a process of actively discovering in themselves an ever more fully enculturated witness of the Father in cross-cultural habitats.

Before passing on the gospel message missionaries must have received it. Before preaching, they must have the gospel preached to them. Before expecting to be used as Christ's instruments to turn others to him they must turn their own hearts more and more to him in a never-ending conversion. For this simple but profound insight we are indebted to Father Nebreda.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSIONARY FORMATION

The Brewsters' arguments for language and culture-learning being ministry are necessary because they are practice-oriented, but they do not suf-

ficiently develop what is essentially a theological claim.

It is critically important to give a

theological basis to this argument in order to make the necessary policy changes in missionary formation and methods to respond effectively to the needs of our era. It is necessary to establish the pre-eminence of language and culture learning in theological terms in order to dialogue with theologians on the importance of these disciplines.

Our theological institutions exercise a virtual monopoly over structures of missionary formation. Decisions about what constitutes missionary formation are being made by scholars of Western formal theology - dogmatics, systematics, scripture, spirituality, church history, canon law, liturgy rather than by missionaries in the field and without consulting religious ethnographies or missionary research in the cross cultural sciences.

Finally, there is too much accent on theory and too little on praxis. The seminary environments in which missionaries are formed, whether they be in Africa, Asia or North America, are too Western, too cerebral and too academic. Where there is field supervision, it is either lacking entirely in cross-cultural input and analysis or pays only lip service to this need. Such centres are no longer capable of preparing contemporary missionaries to meet their enormous task. Today the very formation process must incorporate the dynamics of bi-culturalism.

If the needs outlined by Bellagamba are to come about then formation programmes must prepare missionaries for theological and personal flexibility not dogmatism; they must instill in them the attitudes necessary to transform themselves rather than others, continually, and the skills to become incarnated within other cultures - skills for language learning, culture learning and ministry learning in another cultural context. Furthermore, these skills must be learned not as a mere pastiche on the formal theological training but as the central component of the quest for conversion that must characterise the missionary.

In order to meet the needs of a growing Church and a rapidly changing world, missionaries of the present era must be trained in a radically different way - a way that combines theory and praxis in a cross-cultural environment. An essential component of this training must be context, even more important than the post-Tridentine requisite of formal theology. The theological link between language/culture learning and ministry, as discussed above, means that the theological/ministerial formation of missionaries must involve a cross cultural experience. Ministry must be learned in the field, not the classroom and in a cross-cultural context, not at home. Missionary formation today is theologically unsound without learning all three aspects of it in context (4).

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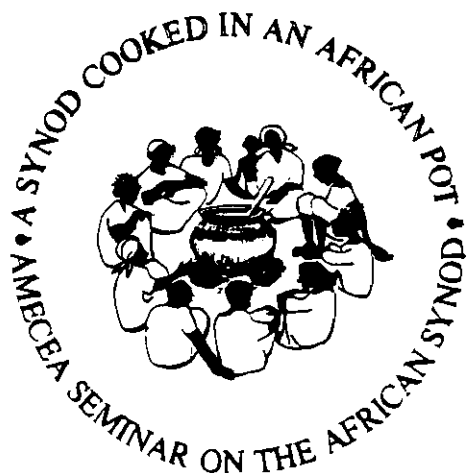
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PROPOSALS FOR THE AFRICAN SYNOD

FROM THE AMECEA SEMINAR,
September 16-27, 1991



(The following shortened version of the Seminar Report contains its main proposals for the African Synod. There is also a reflection from the participants entitled "A SYNOD COOKED IN AN AFRICAN POT." We include also the Seminar's introductions to the two Synodal themes of Evangelisation and Inculturation).

Introduction

AMECEA is seriously engaged at present in national and regional preparations for the African Synod. A Synod Seminar of AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa) took place at the Pastoral Centre of the Archdiocese of Nairobi, St. Balikuddembe, from September 16-27, 1991.

Delegates from the departments for pastoral and social communications of member episcopal conferences studied and reflected on the five Synod themes in the light of pastoral experience in their respective countries. The results of the seminar will be published in their entirety. We wish to share with you here only the most urgent proposals concerning the preliminaries of the Synod.

MAIN PROPOSALS

TIME

1. That the deadline for submitting proposals concerning the Lineamenta be extended from November 1991 to at least March 1992 for the following reasons:

- a) Africa is a continent with poor means of transport and communications;
- b) there are many languages into which the Lineamenta must be translated;
- c) Synod preparations at community level demand a different pace.

2. That the Synod be extended over a

period of at least three years with three sessions of one month each:

- first session: end of 1993
- second session: end of 1994
- third session: mid-1996

The reason for this is to maintain the participatory process throughout the synodal journey: Lineamenta, Instrumentum Laboris, Synod sessions and follow-up.

3. That there be a planned programme for implementation, follow-up and evaluation at regional and SECAM levels.

VENUE

1. That the Synod be held in Africa and not in Rome.
2. That synodal sessions be held in different geographical areas, e.g.
 - Luanda or Maputo: lusophone,
 - Abidjan: francophone
 - Nairobi: anglophone.

DELEGATES

That representation comprise, besides bishops, representatives of diocesan priests, religious (women and men) and the laity (adults and youth, men and women from grassroots communities, movements and associations) in order to make the Synod "totally, unmistakably, authentically African" (Archbishop Jan Schotte).

PROCESS

1. That the statutes of the "Synod of

Bishops" be adapted to include all God's people in this momentous event for the African church.

2. That the Synod be conducted in a genuine African way of consultation and decision-making, with ample time for listening, sharing and celebration.

3. That the periods between the proposed three sessions of approximately a year be the continuation of the Synod at local level. This should help

a) delegates to assimilate and reflect on the work done;

b) the faithful to be informed about the proceedings and to contribute to reflection;

c) delegates to return to the following Synod session with the enrichment of fresh insights and experiences from the local church.

A SYNOD COOKED IN AN AFRICAN POT

The pot has cracks. The fire has gone out. People no longer sing but weep and sweat to maintain their lives. The meat of yesterday has been eaten by the few. Millions of hungry people have gone empty.

The fire place with the cooking pot is a symbol in Africa for God blessing his people. Has God withdrawn his blessing?

Poverty and hunger prevail where cooking pots were once offering plenty. The fire of independence and of national pride has turned to ashes for the majority of countries in Africa. Innumerable woes cause people to succumb to hopelessness and despair.

The African bishops at a meeting with Pope John Paul II at Yamassoukro listed the causes of the many evils which beset the continent (*cf. Letter from Yamasoukro, Sept. 1990*). The Horn of Africa and other AMECEA countries

are no exception to the general situation of civil war, militarism, repression, economic disaster and political instability. In eastern Africa refugees from Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda, displaced people within and exiles from outside Kenya, Zambia and Malawi testify to the suffering of millions of people in their home countries.

The church in Africa is equally burdened with problems. As a loving mother she is suffering at seeing her children suffer. Being human, alas, she is also the cause of her children's tears. The negative features we observe in African governments and leadership we find also in her. There is little difference in life-style, in lack of service and attention to the needs of people. Her voice is rarely heard and is often too weak to rouse the conscience of powers that be.

She depends increasingly on outside sources, replacing the cooking pot by

other gadgets. She at times invents the needs which she calls foreigners to meet. She persists in outdated models of being church and has settled for an institutionalism which paralyses the initiatives of her creative children. Her structures are big and fat. At closer look they often are dry bones without the flesh of people's actual life experience. Clericalism prevails. Her personnel gets by nicely by living off these structures, loving the comfort, eating her money. Departmentalisation of her services covers up inadequacies and hinders her effectiveness.

Yet, the Church of Africa is also the mother who alone can guarantee the flourishing of all her children in the midst of adverse realities. As true mother of all nations she alone can lead the continent into a celebration of hope and peace. Her message is the message of Jesus. He is victorious over suffering and death. His word is the source of life and the light to their path.

Her responsibility is to bring about the kingdom of God in Africa. She alone can be the sign of hope that once again there will be a feast of life for all African people. Her cooking pot will be full and sweet with a taste all will recognise as being like 'home'.

We delegates of AMECEA, coming from the pastoral and communications depart-

ments of AMECEA's national episcopal conferences, have met in Kenya for two weeks to reflect seriously on the situation of the church in Africa in preparation for the Synod. Even at this very late stage in the period given to the Synod's preparation, we are surprised to see how little attention has been paid to this unique opportunity which the Synod offers to African people.

There are national episcopal conferences and dioceses which have not even begun implementing a programme of preparation, information, reflection and renewal at all levels of God's people. There are priests who could not be bothered whilst their flock is eager to get involved (cf. *AMECEA National Synod reports*).

However, there are also conferences and commissions, parish groups and diocesan and national assemblies, where people are interested and are getting excited about this opportunity of assisting the local church to be once again the source of life in this time of desperate need.

We hope that our time together, our prayer and celebration, our research, reflection and work will make up the ingredients which fill AMECEA's cooking pot with all we are looking forward to at the African Synod.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF EVANGELISATION

*"O unhappy Christian:
Mass in the morning
Witch doctor in the evening
Amulet in the pocket
Scapular around the neck"
(Zairean poet)*

Evangelisation in Africa must of necessity have a dynamism, a method and form rooted in tradition, which is different from what the church is doing elsewhere. An African artist says: *"Don't copy! Copying puts God to sleep!"* (Elimo Njau).

The kingdom of God in Africa will

have to be realised in terms of salvation and true meaning for all facets in the life and religious experience of her vibrant people.

Jesus calls all people to follow him and to come to the Father through him. Today Jesus is sending African disciples, - Africans, precisely, because their mission will not copy others but be marked by the powerful richness both word and symbol have in African tradition. Jesus wants them to be witnesses in their totality of persons. Jesus awaits them on their return and

rejoices with them because they have seen great things.

The African church has come into her own and looks to this Synod to be liberated from any bonds which prevent her from seeing these great things God had in mind when He created African men and women in His own image and

likeness.

It is time that the church allowed Africans dreaming of and longing for christian wholeness to become dance and song in reality.

(Topics and suggestions follow. Ed.)

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF INCULTURATION

Inculturation should be the characteristic expression of the renewal of the church in Africa, just as theology of liberation is central to the renewal of the church in Latin America. This is so for obvious historical reasons. Inculturation is not a romantic exercise in the past tense. Inculturation implies an awareness of cultural change brought about by internal dynamics or external influences.

It is important, therefore, for the African Church to take this challenge seriously, as it is expressed in A.G.22, S.C. 37-40, and as acknowledged by the African church itself. This can be seen through SECAM statements such as:

"We recognise the challenge of inculturation of Christianity in Africa, of an evangelisation in depth of African christians, which respects and affirms their specific cultural identity, and seeks to bridge the gap between faith and culture. In this important and delicate task, we are determined to proceed with courage, and faith, as well as with a due sense of pastoral responsibility" (VIII Plenary Assembly, July, 1988)

To these may be added the powerful statements of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II.

While it is useful to be aware of the fact that inculturation is a difficult task, given the problem that the only christianity experienced so far is one that the African has experienced with a 'split personality', this should not deter the African church from undertaking the task of discovering her identity.

With regard to the agenda as presented in the *Lineamenta* and the

questionnaire, serious attention should be paid to real burning issues affecting the church in Africa, some of which have been omitted or glossed over, by accident or by design, as Aylward Shorter points out. These should be tackled with an open mind, and not with 'beyond discussion' preconceptions. A few examples:

Canon Law:

In the very process of producing the new code, the African church was asking, 'Is our context really being taken into consideration'? And indeed, the code is published, with very little to offer for our pastoral problems, e.g. marriage.

Liturgy:

Authentic inculturation would seek liberation from article 40 of S.C. Efforts made so far reflect implementation of this article. The result is a dangerously superficial, patchy liturgy. Insisting for example, upon the retention of a wheaten Eucharist while adopting some slight African-type gesture at, say, the moment of 'consecration' is to follow the spirit of article 38, externally faithful to tradition, but internally deforming its meaning.

What is needed is: conviction, courage, commitment, liberation from fear.

(Topics and suggestions follow. Ed.)

The Full 20 page report is available from AMECEA, P.O. Box 21053, Nairobi, Kenya.

THE CHURCH IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF TODAY'S CHINA

SEDOS - 3 June, 1991

Angelo Lazzarotto, PIME

(This is an edited version of a paper given at the SEDOS Conference on China held at the Society of the Divine Word College on June 3, 1991. Other speakers at this Conference were Bishop Chang of Macao; Edward Malatesta, SJ; and Fr. John Tong. The Conference was facilitated by Jerôme Heyndrickx, CICM.)

Post Tiananmen Square

Just two years ago, on the night between June 3rd and 4th, 1989 - the Chinese army started its repressive action in Tiananmen Square. Since then, the Chinese leadership has been busy restoring order and regaining full control of every aspect of the social and cultural life of the country.

In the past few months, while the Western nations were locked in the Gulf war, the Beijing courts held several trials of dissident intellectuals and students accused of having instigated or taken a leading role in the "subversive and counter-revolutionary movement" in the Spring of 1989. The heavy sentences meted out, which passed almost unnoticed by the world press, were meant to turn over a new page in public opinion.

Today, the United States and the European Community countries are resuming their contacts and co-operation programmes with China, cancelling the human rights question from their priorities. On the other hand, with the present visit of the Chinese Communist Party's Secretary General Jiang Zemin to Moscow, a pragmatic stand is taken also by China with regard to the deep ideological changes marking the Soviet Union. The Chinese leaders are obviously determined to revamp the economy of their country, pushing ahead with modernization programmes.

To this end, they repeat their desire

to continue an open-door policy with regard to the capitalistic world, while imposing the purity of the official ideology on every sector of society and tightening control over all aspects of cultural life at home. They seem to have learned in their own way the lesson of the events that overturned the Marxist regimes in Eastern Europe and are anxious to prevent a similar evolution for China.

Contradictions Regarding Religious Freedom

Religion cannot, obviously, be underestimated as a potential factor of social change. In fact, the Chinese authorities seem to take religion much more seriously today than in the past. They apply to the 5 recognized religions (Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism) one of the *basic principles* on which the constitutional law of the country stands, that is the leadership of the Communist Party.(1) While repeating their desire to enforce the *policy of religious freedom*, they are mobilising their apparatus to control any possible deviation. To this end they utilise a basic policy paper, known as document No. 19, approved in 1982.(2)

The attitude towards religion, and more particularly towards Christianity and the Catholic Church is neither all rosy nor all negative. Many contradictions mark the whole of Chinese society today. Christianity, and the Catholic

Church within it, is experiencing an unexpected and extraordinary development, while passing through increasing difficulties and controls. As for the developments, it may be enough to quote one of the top leaders of the nation, Mr. Wang Zhen, vice-president of the PRC (3) in his Paper "The Challenge of Feudalistic Forces in Villages" said to have been sent to senior officials nationwide. Mr. Wang warns:

"Fewer and fewer people want to be enrolled in the Party or the Communist Youth League, yet more and more people want to join religious groups. In Handan county, Hebei province, last year, 813 people became Catholics while only 270 people joined the Party. And from 1982 to 1990, the number of Christians in central Henan province swelled from 400,000 to more than one million. Many of these new converts had made the previously unheard-of decision to voluntarily withdraw from the Party. Sixteen did so in the Langfang district in Hebei last year."

He added that:

"the eight places of worship in a village of Chegao county in Hebei (4) were bustling with life during the twice-daily bible classes, weekly masses, as well as at major festivals such as Easter and Christmas. In comparison, attendance at meetings organized by Party cells was unsatisfactory, despite the fact that proceedings were relayed by broadcast system and each attendee was paid one rmb (US\$ 0.19)."

Revival of Christian Sects

A copy of an official CCP internal document concerning the revival of some Christian sects and the great development of Protestantism in China, was made public in Hong Kong last month.(5) The circular, decrying the negative effects of the spreading of sects that had already been banned in the past, speaks also in more general terms:

In recent years Protestantism has developed rapidly, from 700 thousand in the early stages of liberation (i.e. in the early 1950s) to five million. This is largely due to the activities of the self-proclaimed evangelists.

Reference to the need to resist foreign religious infiltration is being currently repeated by leaders at all levels. The alarm was raised in China about a year ago by an important policy document on the subject, circulated among CCP leaders and relevant administration departments.(6) As an internal circular, it was meant for the Party only. It begins:

"According to reports, the infiltration of foreign religious forces in our country has become more serious in the past few years. We should therefore heighten our vigilance against these overseas religious forces".

"Methods of Infiltration"

The document then points out in a thorough way seven methods which are said to be the most frequently used by these foreign forces for religious infiltration into China:

- * broadcasting and smuggling of religious literature;
- * academic exchanges and the granting of scholarships to win over some overseas students;
- * providing funds for establishing factories, schools and hospitals which soon become strongholds of evangelism;
- * promoting tourism and visits to friends and relatives to conduct illegal religious activities;
- * giving support to underground Catholic forces to carry on anti-government Catholic Church activities;
- * providing funds to our country's clergy to win them over and cause division, as happened recently in Fuzhou;
- * infiltrating our country's border areas and minority groups, like Korean communities living in the northeastern region.

Most of these allegations were occasionally made in previous Party organs. But the comprehensive presentation and the stress placed on them manifests a leftist swing in religious policy which is being gradually felt all over China. Well known religious leaders, like the chairman of the Buddhist Association Zhao Puchu and Protestant Bishop K.H. Ting have expressed concern because of some expressions that

appear now more and more frequently in official documents, and that remind them of harsh times of the past. But pressure from the Party and government apparatus has not relented. On the contrary, top leaders have stepped up the campaign for more vigilance, calling a series of study sessions on the matter.

Increased Warnings

Unprecedented was a high level conference held in Beijing from the 5th to the 9th of December 1990. Held at the official Zhongnanhai residence, it was attended by 200 government officials responsible for religious affairs in the whole country. The official media gave it wide coverage. No less a dignitary than Premier Li Peng addressed the officials assembled at this national meeting. Three points were emphasized by him:

- 1) Party leadership must be retained;
- 2) Infiltration by "foreign hostile powers in Church affairs" must be resisted;
- 3) Leadership within the Church must be strengthened.(7)

Another event underlining the official attention to the religious issue, was the meeting, on January 30, 1991, of Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin with the top leaders of China's five religious bodies. Jiang Zemin said the Chinese government intended to "reinforce the implementation of the laws, regulations, and policies on religion; to protect normal religious activity and the rights of religious groups.

These warnings are not aimed at Christian forces only. During recent months there have been tensions and some clashes in the Western areas, where Muslim minority groups are predominant; the danger of a fundamentalist explosion inspired by neighbouring Islamic republics was taken very seriously. Another issue causing concern to the Chinese leaders is the persistent unrest among the Tibetan monks and large sectors of the local population. There again the authorities prove to be oversensitive to any moves by the Western world expressing honour or

recognition of the rights of the exiled Dalai Lama.

But - Respect For Religious Rights To Be Maintained

I mentioned that there are contradictory signals in the present implementation of China's religious policy. For instance, during the national conference held last December in Beijing, the validity of Document 19 of 1982 is said to have been restated, while admitting the need to correct the phenomenon of infringement of religious rights of citizens and the rights legally granted to religious bodies. In this context, it is interesting to note an effort to solve the tension that arose 2 years ago in the village of Yautong, in Hebei province. Injuries and even deaths occurred among the Catholic community in April 1989, when security personnel attacked them for occupying the site of their former church, which is now used as a government school.(8)

For the same reason, the Secretary General of the CCP, Jiang Zemin, when meeting with the top religious leaders on 30 January '91, went out of his way to reassure them that stronger administration and supervision over the implementation of the policy of religious freedom did not mean that the government had tightened its policy toward religion or that religious freedom would be affected. He commended the religious leaders for their patriotic support and the participation of religious bodies in building up a socialism with Chinese characteristics, upholding the principle of autonomy and independence.

To implement its policies without using too much force, the government is trying to win the cooperation of the officially recognized religious leaders. To this aim, periodical study sessions are specially organized for them. On the Catholic side, we know of a series of such seminars convened in the past six months in Beijing on a regional basis, for groups of bishops, priests and lay persons. At the study seminar held from 15th to 30th November last year for the seven northeast and northwest provinces, there were 61 participants:

26 bishops, 15 priests, 6 lay persons, and 14 government officials. Zhang Shengzuo, deputy director of the Party's United Front Work Department, stressed the following four points:

- 1) The revolution against communism in Eastern Europe can never happen in China, because the situation in China is completely different from that of Eastern Europe;
- 2) The Church in China must stand firm in its position of being an independent, autonomous and self-governing Church;
- 3) The government policy of religious freedom must be implemented;
- 4) A way must be found to educate underground Church personnel to make them change their thinking and join the official Church.(9)

...But Increased Pressure To Conform

In the circumstances, pressure is being put on the leaders of the Patriotic Associations to echo the party line. And this is true for all religions. Such a context must be kept in mind when we read for instance, that Bishop Zhong Huaide, the head of the Catholic Patriotic Association and acting president of both the Chinese Catholic Bishops' College and the Church Administration Commission has accused underground Catholics of inciting the masses to oppose the government. According to Zhong, these Catholics are taking advantage of political changes in Eastern Europe to launch illegal activities in the country. Another "patriotic" Catholic Bishop, Liu Jinghe of Tangshan is said to have spoken in the same tone on March 24, 1991 at the Chinese Political Consultative Conference in Beijing, where he represents the Hebei province.

The present drive of the authorities to "educate underground Church personnel to make them change their thinking and join the official Church" decries the sharp division marking all religious communities. It is difficult to imagine that it will succeed in healing the deep rooted split between the believers who accept and those who refuse the control and supervision of the state over their religious activities.

...Even To Control Culture

In the field of culture for instance, China has just launched a nationwide registration of all social groups in order to tighten its control over their activities. All 2,000 community groups in China are required to register with the government. A sub-group of the Chinese Talents Research Association has been ordered to terminate all activities, including publication of its journal, because of the group's support for pro-democracy activists in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations. According to a report of the semi-official "China News Agency", the group has deviated from "the political line".(10)

A professor in a well known Chinese University, writing recently in a confidential manner to a friend in Europe, mentioned the increasing difficulties experienced by intellectuals in pursuing their academic research. All publications have to be submitted for censure to special offices in Beijing. As the rule is now applied more strictly than before, he adds sadly: "our conclusions have to conform to the official line, before we can publish anything".

Varied Situations

Naturally, China being such a big country, the situations vary from place to place as do the application of the directives descending from the top. An overseas Chinese priest who went home recently to visit his relatives in Central China recalled a rather peculiar situation. In his own village, he was able to celebrate all the ceremonies of Holy Week with the wide participation of Catholics who flocked there even from distant places; he was even allowed to administer some baptisms and to use the new liturgy in Chinese.

But in the city which was the centre of his diocese, he found a very different picture. The only church officially open was served by a priest whom the Catholics did not accept because of his political stand; the authorities did not allow the community to gather in private houses to pray;

they placed controllers in front of the gathering points, imposed a fine of 30 rmb each on those who persisted in going there to pray.

Similar regulations are being enforced by many local governments. It is usually stated that all churches and prayer meeting points should practice the "3 fixes":

- a) fix the point of meeting;
- b) fix the persons who evangelize;
- c) fix the area that can be covered by the evangelizer.

The old "stick and carrot" policy is being applied today in a more systematic way. This is surely creating very serious problems for the unity of Christian communities. Yet the power of the Spirit is still operating in the present precarious conditions. Pope John

Paul II, speaking to the Taiwan bishops, commented about "reports speaking of the spreading of the Gospel through the hidden and unceasing apostolate of many generous Catholics, of the reopening of churches, seminaries and houses of formation for young people wishing to follow a life of consecration, and of a flourishing of activities at the service of the entire community". We can rejoice with the Pope as he goes on "praising the Lord for all that is being done with a loyal heart and in fidelity of Christ and his Church".(11)

Unfortunately, the development of Christian Churches seems to be giving some anxiety to top communist leaders. We should all pray that they may see the positive role that religion could play for the real development and modernization of China.

(1) The other 3 basic principles are the socialist way, the Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong thought, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

(2) Entitled "*Our Party's Basic Policy on Religious Questions During the Period of Socialism*", it was first circulated among Party cadres for study and discussion, and then published in issue No. 12 of 16 June 1982 (pp. 2-8) of the ideological journal "RED FLAG".

(3) News of an address given by Mr. Wang Zhen appeared in Hong Kong in one of the leading newspapers, the SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST on 12-3-1991; cf. ASIA NEWS, Milan, No. 89, 1-5-1991, p.205.

(4) He may refer to private meeting places that are quite common where there is no proper church.

(5) CHINA NEWS and CHURCH REPORT (CNCR), Hong Kong, No. 1775, 3-5-1991.

(6) Entitled "*Vigilance against Infiltration by Religious Forces from Abroad*", it was translated into English and made public in Hong Kong: CNCR, 15-3-1991,

No. 1754.

(7) PEOPLE'S DAILY, 6-12-1990;CNCR, 14-12-1990, No. 1712. The expressions "Party leadership" and "*leadership within the Church*" stress the basic point that it belongs to the CCP to dictate the limits of religious activities and to specify those considered as "normal" and therefore legal and tolerated.

(8) TRIPOD. Hong Kong, XI, No. 61 (Jan-Feb. 91), P. 71.

(9) TRIPOD, l.c., p.69; cf. ASIA NEWS, No. 85, 1-3-1991, p.109

(10) CNCR, 24-5-1991, 1790. Criticism expressed by some Taiwan Buddhist monks may be also the reason behind the recent refusal to allow pilgrim groups from Taiwan from visiting China, as they were doing regularly since early 1980: ASIA FOCUS (Hong Kong), VII, No. 20, 22-5-1991.

(11) This message of the Pope was delivered to the Chinese Bishops of Taiwan, on the occasion of their "*ad limina*" visit: L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (Engl. Ed.), 6-12-1990.

ON BEING A BRIDGE CHURCH

Aloysius B. Chang, SJ

(We believe our readers will wish to know about the Church in China today. Fr. Chang describes the situation there at present; the new freedom of religious belief and the restrictions still being enforced; the relations between the Communist regime and religion; the structure and membership of the Catholic Patriotic Association. He then gives an analysis of the "Official" and "Unofficial" Church and the inter-actions between the two - Ed.)

1. SITUATION IN THE CHINESE CHURCH

People of faith observe, analyze and judge situations within the context of that faith. I do not claim that the following discourse has absolute objectivity. None such exists. China is very vast. The Church there, quite naturally, is spread throughout an immense area and its situation differs throughout the various regions. It is important to keep this fundamental fact in mind.

1. THE ENVIRONMENT

A. Freedom of Religious Belief in a Communist Society

The Church of the nineties in China lives under a Communist regime which is different from that of 40 years ago. There is freedom of religious belief, but this freedom at best is tolerated by a communist and socialist government. Its understanding of religion is limited by its own ideology. It permits religion to have a community organization, liturgical expression and a religious discipline. Presently this is the only kind of freedom religious organizations can enjoy.

B. Restrictions Placed on the Freedom of Religious Belief

China's Constitution gives a very narrow interpretation of freedom of religious belief. It strictly prohibits any

foreign interference by those religions having world wide connections such as Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism. Religion is solely a matter for China's internal administration and foreign powers are forbidden to intervene in any way.

Because of its universal and international character as well as its administrative organization and structure, the Catholic church is in a worse situation than other religious bodies that do not have such centralized leadership. The primacy of the Pope, and the Vatican with its apparent political organization makes the communist government extremely suspicious.

C. The Communist Regime and Religion

Under the Communist regime religion exists for the good of the country and society. The Party's United Front Department has several bureaus, one of which is responsible for making religious policy, for implementing it and for governing religious bodies. Under the United Front Department and Religious Affairs Bureau, there is the Catholic Patriotic Association. The Protestant Church has the Three Self Patriotic Movement and its role is similar to that played by the Catholic Patriotic Association. The Buddhists, Taoists and Muslims also have a parallel associations.

The United Front and Religious Affairs Bureau use the Patriotic Association as a liaison unit between the party and government on the one side and the Church on the other. It is responsible for transmitting government and party directives and policies to the Church. In turn it also lets government officials know the Church's needs.

D. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA): Its Structure and Members

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association has a chairperson and a vice-chairperson; its membership consists of bishops, priests, sisters and lay Catholics. It is divided into national, provincial, urban and local associations, and it adjusts its policies and their implementation to fit the needs of the United Front Department. During its early years the Patriotic Association's way of working differed considerably from that of today. It has, however, made several contributions to the Church. Owing to the Association's mediation with the government many Churches have been rebuilt. Overall, it is a pliant organization apt at adapting its actions and communications to the party's policies. In itself it is not an ecclesial organization nor a community.

2. THE SITUATION

We must bear in mind that the environment in which the Church on the China mainland today finds itself is not favorable to religious freedom. This situation is something which all of us should realize and always keep in mind. The Church is split into two factions: the Official and the Unofficial Church. (This article used these two expressions rather than the more common but confusing terms "above-ground" and "under-ground" churches.) The Official Church is the one recognized by the government; the Unofficial Church is not recognized by the government. An antagonism exists between these two entities.

A. The Official Church

This Church exists by following party and government regulations and brooks

no foreign interference. It implements the policy of Independence and autonomy in church administration. It is noted especially for choosing and consecrating its own bishops. This causes an incomplete communion between the Local Church and the Holy See, especially on the level of law. In the past, owing to government pressure, the Official Church expressed a certain hostility towards Rome. Lately, however, this attitude has gradually mellowed. Today, the Official Church publicly recognizes that the Pope's pastoral ministry belongs to the content of faith. It even prays for him.

Noting this relaxation of tension, some people who do not live in China have overrated the Official Church, disregarding the fact that many problems still exist. We cannot deny that the Official Church's communion with Rome is truncated. This is true at least on the legal level, even though there is still a many-sided communion in faith. For example there is the communion of a shared faith in the Father, of a shared life in the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as common Scriptures.

Some will ask, "Why speak of a lack of communion on the legal level? Is not reality more important than law?" This may sound reasonable at first but since law is indispensable for social order and unity, our attitude towards it should be more positive. The Pope, representing the entire Church, makes use of his encyclical letters and speaks to the whole world. He wants the Church to have one voice. This is the Pope's unifying function, a role not found among Protestant churches.

The incomplete communion of the Official Church in China with the Pope is, I maintain, at the least, a legal question which hopefully one day will be resolved. An indication of this possibility lies in the fact that some bishops in China have already been legalized.

B. The Unofficial Church

We employ the term "Unofficial Church" rather than the "Loyal Church" or "Underground Church" -

the latter term is very ambiguous, evoking an image of the Church of the catacombs in ancient Rome - because the Communist government does not recognize this Church. This Church, on its part, does not accept the Party's demands that it be independent and self-governing. The Unofficial church firmly maintains complete union with the

Pope in order to safeguard the hierarchical nature of the Church and loyalty to his primacy.

There is an antagonism, even conflict, between the Official and Unofficial Church. Both, however, despite their differences, are influenced by the special circumstances in which the Church in China exists.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

We shall now analyze the situation described above. Obviously this process will involve making judgments. Our aim is to make these judgments within the spirit of the gospels, our faith values and the Church's tradition.

1. The Relationship of the Bishop to the Church

According to traditional theology (which still is valid today) the individual Church is a faith community of the people of God. It consists of the bishop, the clergy and the laity. The bishop holds the office of chief pastor in his diocese, safeguarding the Church's unity and catholicity. In other words, the bishop as head represents the Individual Church community and guides its life and activities while also being closely linked with the other pastors.

He must also be in communion with the Pope and under his leadership pastor his individual flock, otherwise his church cannot keep its unity and catholicity intact. He must have the permission of the Pope for his consecration and appointment to his individual diocese. Church law demands this. To be elected, consecrated and installed as bishop without the papal authority is not only illegal, but it also breaks communion with the Pope.

2. The Illegality of the Official Church

Today's ecclesiology and Canon Law both state that without Papal approval the election, consecration or appointment as bishop to a diocese is illegal. The ecclesial community which is under his pastorate is also illegal. This illegality breaks the communion of the

individual diocese with other bishops and the Pope and also with the entire church. Allow me to state clearly at this point that illegality and communion established by law should not be straightaway confused with the fundamental issue of salvation.

On the negative side, there is the external environment which creates fears, intimidation and the temptation to gain personal advantage. On the more positive side, there is the possibility of making an illegal decision based on pastoral needs. Unless one is personally involved in such a situation, it is impossible to understand the situation of one who is helpless, lacks viable alternatives and finds it impossible to have acted otherwise.

We must admit that even given this situation, the person who makes illegal choices cannot entirely escape all responsibility. Nonetheless a bishop who accepts consecration within the Official Church in order to provide for the sacramental and liturgical life and moral guidance of the faithful makes a contribution to the Church of this particular time and place even though his action is illegal. In a word, we cannot not deny the existence of the illegal act or the legal responsibility of the bishop concerned yet this responsibility differs with individuals. We must, by all means try to understand the situation.

Although we have said that individuals bear responsibility for their illegal actions, we have no way of judging the state of their conscience or their moral responsibility. Only the person in question can answer for this before God.

It is very important that we not try to judge the culpability of any member of the Official Church, rather we must try to understand the circumstances behind their illegal acts. The United Front and Religious Affairs Bureau uses the Patriotic Association as a liaison unit between the party and government on the one side and the Church on the other. It is responsible for transmitting government and party directives and policies to the Church. In turn it also lets government officials know the Church's needs. Some priests have married. Obviously their responsibility for cooperating with an illegal bishop is very different from the former two classes of priests.

Many of the laity who take part in the services of the Official Church know nothing about the legality or illegality of church matters. They are leading a life of faith and are receiving valid sacraments. It is useless to speak of responsibility as far as they are concerned. Summing up:

1. Priests, sisters and the laity who belong to the Official Church share in the illegality of the bishop who has been illegally consecrated and bear legal responsibility in varying degrees;
- 2) As far as moral responsibility is concerned only those persons directly and personally involved have the answer;
- 3) Persons, especially those who do not live on the mainland, should refrain from publicly discussing, analyzing and judging these matters of conscience.

3. The Legality of the Unofficial Church

The Unofficial Church is the one not recognized by the Chinese Communist Party and Government. Since the bishops in this church maintain full union with the Pope, they are legal in terms of Canon Law. At great cost to themselves, they face constant dangers but remain faithful to their belief in order to safeguard the church's orthodoxy. They are loyal to the primacy of the Pope and continue the Church's long tradition of martyrdom under persecution. The Church, in its long history, has never encouraged its members to compromise or deny their faith during times of persecution. We

must acknowledge that, as a matter of fact, the Unofficial Church has, for the past 40 years, remained loyal to the Universal Church and preserved Catholic unity.

Considering the circumstances in which they live and the difficulties they endure, we can understand why the Unofficial Church does not readily understand the Official Church and why they even maintain an attitude of hostility towards it. Those bishops in the Official Church whose status has been legalized now also enjoy complete communion with the Pope and the Universal Church. We must emphasize that communion with Rome is not just limited to matters of law. There are other links as well, e.g. prayer, Scriptures, Sacraments, etc. In saying this, I do not wish to minimize the importance of maintaining legitimate ties with Rome.

4. Theological Opinions

The Church today in China is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who permits a pluralism to exist within the Church. We have seen this from the various phenomena described above and from our analysis. the Spirit permits illegal bishops, acting under the principle of the "lesser evil", to be active in an atmosphere entirely hostile to a life of faith. The Unofficial Church too, under the guidance of the Spirit has safeguarded ecclesial orthodoxy and Catholic unity. Both sides are concerned about the faith and moral life of the Christian Community and both, in varying degrees, have to bear the pressures inflicted on the Church by the Communist regime.

In light of this most complex situation, interactions between the Official and Unofficial Church are of utmost importance. I would like briefly to propose three possible ways in which these interactions can take place:

- a) Mutual Communion
- b) Peaceful co-existence and
- c) Mutual antagonism.

a) Mutual Communion

What does this "mutual communion"

really mean? Is it limited solely to the love that Christians must have for one another? From the negative angle, this could mean avoiding conflicts at all costs; on the positive side, it could mean taking preliminary steps to cooperate along certain lines. As a matter of fact, there are many levels of communion already existing within the Christian Community. Both the Official and the Unofficial Church belong to the same Church of Jesus Christ, both share the same Trinitarian life of grace; both have received the same baptism and read the same Scriptures. There is a difference, however, in terms of hierarchical communion. As far as the Church's hierarchy is concerned, "mutual communion" means more than just saying that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. It also requires accepting the Pope's primacy.

b) Peaceful Co-existence

The second mode of interaction is

peaceful co-existence with each Church doing its own work without interference or conflict and working in the same area. This can be considered a viable, commendable and even ideal form given the present situation of the Church in China mainland and the difficulty of achieving a hierarchical communion at the present moment.

c) Mutual Antagonism

From an ecclesial viewpoint mutual antagonism is certainly not an ideal situation. Recrimination and discord do not accord at all with Christian love. The fact that each party has chosen to walk a different path is no reason for antagonism. Articles, biased on either side, which report these conflicts do not help the situation; they actually cause harm. Such matters can be reported but the "Bridge Church" should blame no one. If there must be blame, it should be laid on the environment hostile to religious freedom.

III. PRINCIPLES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE BRIDGE CHURCH

1. THE POPE'S APPEAL

The Pope, knowing the situation on the China mainland, has appealed to us, living outside that mainland, to bear the responsibility of being the "Bridge Church". He has called us to action. We cannot stand by uninterested in what is happening in China as though helpless, devoid of concern or feeling. God is speaking to us through this situation and through the Church's Chief Pastor who asks us to be the "Bridge Church". We respond actively to this call.

2. PERSONAL SUGGESTIONS

A. Five Principles of Action

Whether we are praying for the Church on the mainland or are offering it any form of assistance, our attitudes should be in conformity with the follow-

ing five points:

1) Compassion for both sides should be our hallmark. Although certain elements of the Church may enjoy some modicum of freedom, both are living under conditions which are not favorable to religious life and progress in faith.

2) We regret the Official Church's independent way of acting - at least on the level of law - and its break in hierarchical union with the Successor of Peter. We are also aware that the Official Church is to some degree responsible for this state of affairs and as such cannot escape all blame. We hasten to add that the Church's independence, self-government and self-support can be implemented while remaining within the bounds of Church Law. These three aims are an ideal for the Church and should in no way

constitute a reason for breaking hierarchical communion.

3) The loyal orthodoxy of the Unofficial Church should encourage us.

4) Hopefully both sides are maintaining the bond of love that holds Christians together. We must avoid entering into individual quarrels or doing anything that could exacerbate conflicts existing among different parties. If we, as the Bridge Church, act in this way, we will not only assist our brothers and sisters in China, but we may also be called upon to share in their suffering.

5) We believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church on the mainland. The Spirit is the one who preserves and develops the faith of the Christian Community. We maintain that this holds true for both the Unofficial and the Official Churches. Some Catholics from the Unofficial Church, owing to the humiliations and sufferings they have had to endure, do not understand why we have anything to do with the Official Church. The Catholic laity may not experience the problems discussed in this article, but priests and sisters often do. It is our duty to acquaint them with our position.

B. Directives For Action

During the years of the Cultural Revolution all religions suffered tremendous losses. Temples, churches, sacred writings need to be replaced. The Church in mainland China is in urgent need of all kinds of assistance. We of the Bridge Church must offer a helping hand.

Our desire is to help both the Official and the Unofficial Churches. When we extend help to the Official Church we are not saying that we agree with or support their position. Our assistance is aimed at preserving and fostering the faith. Illegality is a matter

of law which does not necessarily deny the presence of Jesus in the Church. When we see their real needs, we can not simply say: "You are an illegal Church; we will have nothing to do with you". How would this manifest the love of Christ? The Unofficial Church, of course, needs even greater assistance especially in the remote countryside.

C. Formation: A Primary Task

The training of leaders is one of the most urgent needs of the Church in the mainland. This holds true both for the Official and Unofficial Churches. The Official Church already has 20 seminaries with approximately 700 seminarians. While we emphasize that this is the age of the laity, we cannot deny that, at the present stage, China is in dire need of Church leaders from among the priests and sisters. Seminarians must be offered the best formation possible.

D. Reporting

The Bridge Church must be very careful in handing out information about the Church in China. Some reports originating in Taiwan are at times erroneous. This is bad for the Church in Taiwan as well as the Church on the mainland. It is also blameworthy. Those who write reports on the Church on the mainland should give their readers a sound, truly Catholic, constructive and reconciling point of view.

E. Suffering

The members of the Bridge Church will certainly experience misunderstanding and reproach but such sufferings are an integral part of being the Bridge Church.

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mission moments

"WHEN YOU GET HOME
TELL OUR STORY"

(El Salvador)

...And amazingly there was hope. We were with men, young and old, who had been imprisoned and tortured, but who continued with the struggle for human rights and for land. One of them could not speak for very long without coughing: when hooded for torture, powder and been poured into the hood and his lungs had been damaged. As others outside painted a banner for the following day's national strike, a union leader (who had been imprisoned with his sons) in a quiet and matter-of-fact fashion spoke of 17 union members killed in the last two months and 27 imprisoned. "Killing subversives is not a crime here", he explained.

"Subversive" in El Salvador clearly meant anyone from a priest to a union activist or indeed any landless peasant who protested. "This is our land", he said. "We love this land, there is no land more beautiful than El Salvador."

I left that land a changed person. I was probably more confused about the politics

of El Salvador than when I arrived, and there were clearly, no simple solutions. I had tasted fear and seen fear in men's eyes.

I had seen Christian Churches for which "take up your cross" could mean joining the Saviour at Calvary. I had heard of the courage of Archbishop Romero, of the Jesuits, of many others. Religious sisters shone out as tireless supporters of the poor. The rector of an Episcopal church in the posh part of town had broken with the tradition of acquiescence, as he found himself unable to give the bread of the Eucharist to those who had no bread, and embarked on a campaign to feed the homeless and the landless: and he too had tasted life behind bars.

And yet amidst the fear and the poverty there was not a plea for a basketful of Western aid, vital though that is, but the deep desire for freedom, freedom to plant and sow, freedom to build a new country, freedom to walk without fear.

"And when you get home, tell our story." They wanted people to journey with them, like the schoolteacher from Rochdale, the nurse from Manchester, two ordinary people whom we found in the middle of

nowhere, thousands of miles from their homes, taking time out to be with the poor and the voiceless. The land of volcanoes and lakes was producing heroes and heroines, saints and martyrs.

Ref: The Tablet,
Dec. 14, 1991.

POSTCARD FROM AL-DAHRIA

(Bethlehem University)

The Postcard arrived unexpectedly in my Bethlehem University mail box at the end of June. The address side of the card was unusual, for it had elaborate printed headings and instructions for the sender and receiver of the card in Hebrew, Arabic and English. I immediately picked out my name, Brother Patrick, from the rest of the handwriting which was in Arabic. Next my attention was drawn to the column dealing with details of the sender of the card. The writer's full name, family, identity card number and then, to my astonishment, a space entitled detainee number and the place of detention. The card was dated the 22nd of June 1991.

My curiosity was intense. Who was this? Who was the Palestinian in an Israeli prison? The short message, written in English on the other side of the card answered my questions.

Dear Brother Patrick,
Hello! How are you? I am at al-Dahria prison. I hope you are in good health and all the staff of the university are happy and with good news. Please help my wife; my wife is alone now because my family are outside the country. I will be released on the 9th of November, 1991 and I hope there will be peace and freedom soon. I hope I'll see you one day. Thank you and God Bless you.
Your friend, Jamal Offendi.

Jamal had been in my Shakespeare class during the spring term at Bethlehem University. He was neither a criminal nor a violent young man but someone who worked for his community. He had the courage to lead and to speak out against injustices in spite of the presence of the Israeli undercover police and the network of spies and collaborators who breed mistrust and fear in his oppressed community. I knew him as a fine young man in his early twenties softly spoken, always courteous and polite, highly regarded by his peers and an ardent believer in his Palestinian identity.

Jamal was married to a very attractive student called Manal who studied in another English literature class I taught. One day during the month of May he unexpectedly stopped attending my class.

Next day Manal came to see me: and if you can imagine her face and hear her voice and hear her say how

soldiers came at night, smashed in their tiny home and took her husband from their bed, you may begin to know how obscene and merciless military occupation can be. When at last she was given permission to visit him she discovered that they had transported him away into the tent compounds in the open cauldron of Ansar 3 in the Negev desert. Here the six months imprisonment without trial imposed on Jamal is euphemistically called 'administrative detention'. Jamal joined the tens of thousands of Palestinians who have suffered unjust and illegal detention. Imprisoned outside his country, he had been deported, an action contrary to the provisions of the Geneva Convention.

I have received hundreds of colourful postcards from all parts of the world, postcards gladly received though lightly discarded. But I shall always keep this white postcard from al-Dahria prison; it is the only one I have received from scores of my students who have suffered the arbitrary and brutal arrests that continue here. Detainee No. 21,857, it says, a stateless Palestinian, a man without rights, even those rights under this suffocating occupation. For I notice that he has no identity number which is an essential requirement for the card that enables him to move and to exist within the confines of his own home and the restricted areas established during and since the Gulf War on the West Bank.

Looking at the white card again I noticed 'Postage free', printed in the top right-hand corner: how ironic! Was this the only

sign of gratuity except, perhaps, as some sharp colleague of mine dryly observed, the free bus ride Jamal endured blindfolded and handcuffed on his way to prison?

Ref: The Month, Nov. 1991.
From a piece by Patrick White, a De La Salle Brother, who teaches English Literature at Bethlehem University. The second edition of his book *Children of Bethlehem* was published by Fowler Wright in November 1991.

A MINORITY CHURCH

(Pakistan)

...Poor God! And what dreadful uses we make of him, forgetting that we know rather less than more of him (St. Thomas says we are joined in Christ to the unknown which we call God). In times like these I feel very comfortable with those lines of Rilke:

You mustn't be afraid, God. They say mine to all those things whose patience does not fail...

They scarcely see how everything their hands can seize is glowing so hot that even by its extremity

they could not hold it without getting burnt...

Ah, God, don't lose your balance. Even he

who loves you and in darkness still can see

and know your face, when like a wavering light

he feels your breath, does not possess you quite.

And if at night by some you are guessed,

so that you're forced to come into his prayer: you're still the guest that onwardly will fare.

In October, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, had a training programme here at the Pastoral Institute for the documentation of human rights abuses, and last month, the Community Health Sciences Dept. of Karachi's Agha Khan University were here for a workshop for community workers. Most of the participants were Muslim, with some Christians, but the fact that they came to us, and the wonderful way in which Muslim and Christian, men and women, Pathan, Baluchi, Muhajir, Sindhi and Punjabi related to one another was, for me, a vision of the kingdom.

Just last week we had one of our research seminars, this time on ecclesiology, where we dreamed about the church we want to be, and realised the gift the Pakistani church has to offer the other churches. If it is true that the world church of the future will be (if it is not already) a minority church, then the way the church in Pakistan is living out this minority could be very helpful. It is a constant challenge to see in minority and powerlessness the very essence of what it means to be church; it is a constant challenge to resist all the seductions of the powerful to corrupt, coopt or domesticate the prophetic in the church.

Ref: From a letter of Chrys McVey, OP, Pastoral Institute,

P.O. Box 288, Multan, 60000 Pakistan.

MURDERED IN THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE

(Peru)

"We condemn in the most vigorous terms possible the murder of the religious Augustina Rivas and Irene McCormack and of the priests Zbigniew Strzalkowski, Michel Tomasek and Sandro Dordi, as well as the attempt to kill Father Miguel Company and the earlier murders of Fathers Hondarza, Acuna, Huaman, Santos and Saenz.

These crimes are unjustifiable and horrendous, as are the thousands committed against farmers, villagers, professionals, authorities or members of the armed forces and brothers and sisters of other religious confessions.

None of the priests and religious who were victims had endangered the lives of their attackers; their only offense was to practice the gospel, to spread it and to unite themselves with the needy and suffering people....

At this point I want to remind you of the harsh but well-aimed words of Bishop Romero before the bodies of his beloved priests also murdered in the brother

nation of El Salvador. He said that it would be sad if, when so many suffer death and persecution, there were no members of the Church among them....

If we had been a Church confined in our sacristies and concerned only with what happens within the walls, we would have had no problem; we would not have encountered conflicts or made anyone uncomfortable. But neither would we have announced the true message of Jesus Christ....

I repeat: it is because they took on the cause of justice that they have been murdered. It is they, united to our people, who are the bearers of the true cause of justice, and not those who turn to crime to impose their power through terror and destruction.

I call upon you Catholic students here and through you, all students and professionals in the country to put into practice right where you are this commitment to justice and peace for our blood-stained country.

May we know how to comfort each other in faith and to discern the way to be faithful to the Lord in the decisions and actions we must take. The Church will not renounce its prophetic task nor its commitment to the poor in this crucial hour."

Ref: LADOC, Jan./Feb. 1992 from the message of Bishop José Damert, President of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference.

Continued from page 2

President: Patricia Stowers, Superior General of the Marist Missionary Sisters;

Vice President Yves La Fontaine, Superior General of the Marianhill Mission;

Treasurer: Seán Fagan, Secretary General of the Society of Mary; (re-elected).

Committee Members: Teresa Clements, Vicar General of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph; elected for a three year term.

Cecily Paul, General Councillor of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary; elected for a three year term.

L. Kasanda Lumembu, CICM and Carlos Pape, SVD continue their membership of the Committee.

ZAIRE GROUP

Sr. Emily Mullen, SND. who spent 22 years in Zaire will facilitate a SEDOS Zaire Group. The first meeting of the group was held at the SVD College. Fr. Michel Decraene, Superior General of the Scheut Missionaries, addressed the meeting. He had just returned from a month-long visit to the members of his society in Zaire and was an eye witness to many of the recent dramatic events in that country.

Emily Mullen, SND, the Group facilitator left for a month-long visit to Zaire immediately following the meeting and will report on the situation there at the next meeting which will be held at the SVD College on February, 3rd.

HAITI GROUP:

The group met to consider the situation in Haiti following President Fr. Aristide's exile.

APPLICATIONS FOR SEDOS MEMBERSHIP

The following have applied for membership of SEDOS:

1. Bethlehem Mission Society
2. The Daughters of Wisdom
3. The Religious of Jesus and Mary

CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DIALOGUE GROUP

SEDOS members will be glad to know that the Christian-Muslim Dialogue Conferences, scheduled to be held in Autumn 1991 will now be held in February and March. (see coming events) There are few mission situations today including in Europe - where missionaries are not faced with the challenge of dialogue with Islam. We are glad that these conferences will be held and we recommend you to attend all three if at all possible. All are welcome.

TRENDS IN MISSION: TOWARDS THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

We are happy to note that the book edited by William Jenkinson, and Helen O'Sullivan, (ORBIS BOOKS, 1991) was selected by the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN OF MISSIONARY RESEARCH as one of the fifteen outstanding books of 1991 for mission studies.

COMING EVENTS

THREE CONFERENCES ON ISLAM

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE FAITH OF ISLAM

Speaker: TOM MICHEL, SJ

February 13, 1992; 3.30 - 6.00 p.m. at SEDOS

2. QU'RAN: ISLAMIC REVELATION AND BASIC TEACHING

Speaker: MGR. MICHAEL FITZGERALD

March 5, 1992; 3.30 - 6.00 p.m. at SEDOS

3. FUNDAMENTALISM IN ISLAM

Speaker: TOM MICHEL, SJ

March 26, 1992; 3.30 - 6.00 p.m. at SEDOS

The Speakers are from the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue

VILLA CAVALLETTI 1992 SEMINAR

5TH CENTENARY - A NEW AGENDA

Speakers:

FR. GUSTAVO GUTTIEREZ

Sgs. MARIA CLARA LUCCHETTI BINGEMER

(Early registration is recommended)

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