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IN THIS ISSUE:

THE DREAM OF THE EARTH is an abridged version of a classic Thomas Berry view of the universe. In his many writings Berry wonders about the revelations of the universe and the place of humans in it. We are changing the chemistry of the planet. We are putting our skewed human interests in conflict with the created universe. Our "cultural coding" is deliberately set against our "genetic coding" in this present age. The consequences are disastrous. The supreme need of our times is to bring about a healing of the earth through a mutually enhancing human presence to the earth community. A missionary imperative today?

The article EVE: ECOLOGICAL VOICE OF THE EARTH is an Indian viewpoint. Jyoti Sahi, an artist and theologian, reminds us that we need to listen to the voice of the earth, to be in tune with creation, - the voice of God. Jyoti is aware that a male dominated culture has led, - maybe irrevocably, to the rejection of the idea of the earth as feminine. Listening to the voice of the earth is being aware of the Cosmic Covenant made by God with Noah and every living creature on the earth. He examines other inferences of the Covenant in scripture and the demands of the wider ecumenism. He does not examine in detail the effects of pollution on the environment in his sub-continent. But Bhopal, - like Chernobyl, has become part of contemporary language. They represent contemporary threats to human existence. Have we learned any lesson?

Robert Clobus asks: WHAT MORE - AFTER JUSTICE AND PEACE AND OPTION FOR THE POOR? A lot, he believes. A missionary for twentyfour years in West Africa, he wonders why the ecological destruction around them never entered their missionary and pastoral planning. He proposes to the Society of African Missions, of which he is a member, that they make

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respect for the integrity of creation a major concern of their forthcoming General Chapter in 1989.

The concluding article returns to the topic of the 1989, Villa Cavalletti SEDOS Research Seminar: EVANGELIZATION AND POPULAR RELIGIOSITY. Luis Maldonado outlines the various DIMENSIONS, LEVELS AND TYPES OF POPULAR RELIGION. He distinguishes nine main features of popular religion and identifies six different sociological forms of Catholicism. This is a useful contribution towards clarifying some of the meanings of popular religion in the so-called third and first worlds.

There is also News and Coming Events - with a note on the SEMINAR on THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION: A MISSION IMPERATIVE for which this issue of the Bulletin is intended as a preparation.

NEWS

NEW MEMBERS OF SEDOS. We welcome back to membership of SEDOS the RELIGIOUS OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY. The Superior General is PATRICIA CONNOR, R.S.C.M. and their address is via Adelaide Ristori 96, 00197 Roma. (Tel. 8119698).

CONGRATULATIONS TO Michael Amaladoss, SJ. on his election as Vice-President of the International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS) at their triennial meeting held at the Augustinianum - July 1988. Fr. Amaladoss is a member of the General Council of the Jesuits and a member of the SEDOS Executive Committee. Rev. John S. Pobee, Associate Director, Programme on Theological Education, World Council of Churches, Geneva was elected President, succeeding Sister Joan Chatfield, MM. the outgoing President.

SEDOS MEETING ON SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID. In May 1988 nine leaders of the main Christian Churches in South Africa came to Rome to see the Pope. On Thursday, May 26th, over two hundred members of international Congregations present in Rome came to meet these leaders at a meeting organised by SEDOS. The presence on the platform of this ecumenical group of different races, was, in itself, an eloquent witness. The Church leaders were:

Archbishop George F. Daniel, Catholic Archbishop of Pretoria;
Archbishop F. Buthelezi, Catholic Archbishop of Bloomfontein;
Bishop M. Biyase representing the Catholic Bishops' Conference of South Africa;
Mrs Virginia Gcabashe of the South African Council of Churches;
Dr. Xhoza Mgojo of the Methodist Church;
Reverend Paul Makhubu of the Independent African Churches;
Archbishop Desmond D. Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town;
Reverend Sol Jacob, Coordinator and Secretary of the Delegation.

During the two hour meeting the members of the Delegation shared their concerns, fears, hopes about the situation in South Africa to-day. Their coming to Rome to see the Pope was one of their last efforts to influence the course of events in their country.

At the close of the question session Archbishop Tutu startled his audience by the simplicity and directness of his reply to the final question - "Have you a dream for the future of South Africa?" "Certainly", came the instant reply - "simply that I will wake up one morning and find that I am a citizen in my own country!"

Then he moved quickly to the microphone and as he passed behind the line of seated leaders he said to each one of them "Stand-up!", - "Stand-up!", with the notable exception of Archbishop Daniel, the only white member of the delegation. Then from the podium he pointed to each one of the standing Church leaders, gave brief personal details about them, their leadership of dioceses and churches in South Africa, their education, their university degrees in many cases, their great responsibility as Church leaders.

And he ended dramatically, "Do you know? Not one of them has a vote in his or her own country!" He pointed good humouredly to Archbishop George F. Daniel, and added: "Yes he can vote - he is white!" And pointing to a young Anglican cleric in the audience he added, "You see that young man? He is my secretary. He too can vote! He is white! I cannot ... can you imagine that!!"

Archbishop Daniel ruefully remarked to me afterwards. "Neither have I a vote really, for I cannot in conscience vote in these elections which are based on apartheid."

COMING EVENTS.

INTEGRITY OF CREATION: A MISSIONARY IMPERATIVE

Note the CHANGE OF DATE for this SEDOS Seminar. It will be held on NOVEMBER 2, (not October 26 as indicated in the September Bulletin) at the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Via Aurelia, 476.

The Speakers are BERNARDO PREZWOZNY, OFM. Conv. of the Franciscan Centre for Environmental Studies, Via del Serafico, Rome.

FR. JOHN MUTISO MBINDA, Co-Secretary of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church Preparatory Group for the 1990 WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES WORLD CONVOCATION on JUSTICE PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC).

The Seminar will open at 9.30 and conclude at 16.30 hrs. Registration should be made without delay.

SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION IN ITALIAN - ENGLISH - FRENCH.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING AVAILABLE IN SEDOS DOCUMENTATION CENTER
IN PREPARATION FOR THE SEDOS SEMINAR.

Dorr, Donal. SPIRITUALITY AND JUSTICE. New York, Orbis Books, 1984.

McDonagh, Sean. TO CARE FOR THE EARTH: A CALL TO A NEW THEOLOGY, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1986.

Continued on page 88/325.

THE DREAM OF THE EARTH: OUR WAY INTO THE FUTURE

Thomas Berry.

("Dream of the Earth" (Le rêve de la terre) est une version abrégée du point de vue classique de Thomas Berry sur l'Univers et sur la façon spéciale de l'existence humaine dans ce milieu. Dans ses nombreux écrits Berry s'interroge sur la révélation de l'Univers et sur la place qu'y occupent les hommes. Nous changeons l'organisation de la planète. Nous mettons nos petits intérêts humains en opposition avec l'univers de la création. Notre "code culturel", actuellement, est délibérément en contradiction avec notre "code génétique". Les conséquences en sont désastreuses. La tâche principale de notre temps est d'entreprendre l'assainissement de la terre par une mise en valeur réciproque de la présence humaine dans la communauté. N'est-ce pas aussi une urgence missionnaire?)

We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth and the imperatives of our own being. Each of these the universe, the planet earth and our genetic endowment - has a creative power and a vision far beyond any rational thought or cultural creation of which we are capable. Nor should we think of these as isolated from our own individual being or from the human community. We have no existence except within the earth and within the universe itself. We must consider ourselves as activating a dimension of the universe and of the earth.

Our Genetic Coding: Our bonding with the larger dimensions of the universe comes about primarily through our genetic coding. This is the determining factor. It provides the constant guidance in the organic functioning that takes place in all our sense functions, in our capacity for transforming food into energy, in our thought, imaginative and emotional life. In a particular manner the genetic coding brings about a healing whenever we sustain any physical injury. Our genetic coding enables us to experience joy and sorrow on appropriate occasions. It provides the ability to speak and think and create. It establishes the context of our relation with the divine.

Spontaneities. All this is carried out by the spontaneities within us.

In earlier times these spontaneities were considered as revealing the natural law, the ultimate inner norms of guidance for human contact. Those spontaneities are the human phase of those instincts that enable a bird to build its nest, find its food, and discover its migratory route. Ultimately these instincts come from that mysterious source whence the universe came into being as articulated energy particles acting together in some ordered context. Saint John tells us that in the beginning all things took on their shape through the word. The word was seen as psychic and personal. This was the

numinous reality through which all things were made and without which was made nothing that has been made.

This spontaneity as the guiding force of the universe can be thought of as the mysterious impulse whereby the primordial fireball flared forth in its enormous energy, a fireball that was the present in its primordial form, as the present is the fireball in its explicated form.

The Dream. As with any aesthetic work, we attribute the present fantastic expressions of shape and colour, scent, feeling and thought especially to the imaginative capacities of the artist, for only out of imaginative power does any grand creative work take shape. Since imagination functions most freely in dream vision, we tend to associate creativity with dream experience. The dream comes about precisely through the uninhibited spontaneities concerning which we are speaking. In this context we might say: In the beginning was the dream. Through the dream all things were made and without the dream nothing was made that has been made.

Human Participation in the Process. While all things share in this dream, we, as humans share in this dream in a special manner. This is the entrancement, the magic of the world about us, its mystery, its ineffable quality. What primordial being could, with no model for guidance, imagine such a fantastic world as that in which we live? The shape of the orchid, the coloring of the fish in the sea, the winds and the rain, the variety of sounds that flow over the earth so constantly, the resonant croaking of the bullfrogs along with the songs of the crickets and the pure joy of the predawn singing of the mockingbird.

The excitement of life and the sustaining of psychic vigor are evoked by our participation in this stupendous process. Even before we give expression to any intellectual statement about the natural world, we stand in awe at the stars splashed in such prodigal display across the heavens, at the earth in its shaping of the seas and the continents, at the great hydrological cycles that lift such vast quantities of water up from the seas and rain them down over the land to nourish the meadows and the forests and to refresh the animals as the waters flow down through the valleys and back again to the seas. We marvel, too, at the millionfold sequence of living forms from the plankton in the sea and the bacteria in the soil to the larger life forms that swim through the oceans and grow up from the soil and move over the land.

From our vantage point as humans we can sketch out the great story of the universe from its beginning until now. We can recognize the earth as a privileged planet and see the whole as evolving out of some cosmic imaginative process. Any significant thought or speech about the universe finds its expression through such imaginative powers. Even our scientific terms have a highly mythic content - such words as energy, life, matter, form, universe, gravitation, evolution; even such terms as atom, nucleus, electron, molecule, cell organism. Each of these spills over into metaphor and mystery as soon as they are taken seriously.

A Creative Universe. As regards the origin and shaping forces in the universe, the geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky considers that the universe in its emergence is neither determined nor random but creative. This word "creative" is among the most mysterious

words in any language. As with our words generally, this term too has been trivialized. Its numinous, its magic qualities have been diminished, also its visionary quality. We have substituted our real world of facts and figures for our visionary world.

The human, we must understand, is genetically coded toward a further transgenetic coding whereby we invent ourselves in the human expression of our being. While this capacity for self-formation is a high privilege, it is also a significant responsibility, since the powers we possess also give us extensive control over a wide range of earthly affairs. This cultural coding, once it is articulated as the functioning norm of a human community, is handed on by educational processes through parental care from the moment of birth. After birth a long educational process takes place that requires not only a family context but also the assistance of a larger human community.

Because this cultural coding is freely determined, it finds expression in a wide diversity of forms throughout the human community. Once established as the normative reference of reality and value within the community, this cultural coding is carried on and expressed in the language and in the symbols that are learned quite early in life.

Our Special Human Mode of Being. All these are means whereby we articulate our special mode of being and fulfill our role in the universal order of things, all in response to the spontaneities that emerge from our genetic coding; ultimately, of course, from the larger community of life, from the integral functioning of the planet earth, from the comprehensive functioning of the universal order of things and from that numinous source whence all things receive their being, their energy and their inherent grandeur.

Over the centuries this cultural coding of human communities has been articulated in its early paleolithic tribal phase, in its neolithic village phase, then in its classical civilizational phase when the more populous centers arose with their more spacious architecture, their written literatures, their more elaborate religious, political and economic establishments.

These achievements which are sometimes designated as the full realization of the human mode of being have a certain tendency to disintegrate in the manner that we are presently experiencing. Giambattista Vico, the 18th century Neapolitan interpreter of human history, considered that this was the period when a second barbarism, a barbarism of refinement, erupted in the civilizational enterprise. A new descent into a more primitive state must then come about, an immersion into the natural forces out of which human cultural achievements came about originally. The forces of primitive imagination once again were required to renew the cultural integrity. A new contact with genetic coding was mandated.

THE FIRST RADICALLY ANTHROPOCENTRIC SOCIETY

This is a dangerous process if we are not fully sensitized to what our genetic coding is telling us. It has become especially dangerous in western civilization when our cultural coding has set itself deliberately against our genetic coding and the instinctive tendencies of our genetic endowment are systematically negated. Such is the origin of our present situation. Our secular, rational, industrial society with

its amazing scientific insight and technological skill has established the first radically anthropocentric society and has thereby broken the primary law of the universe, the law of the integrity of the universe, the law that every component member of the universe should be integral with every other member of the universe and that the primary norm of reality and of value is the universe community itself in its various forms of expression, especially as realized on the planet earth.

The immediate advantages of the new way of life for its prime beneficiaries has been evident throughout these past two centuries. But, now, suddenly we begin to experience disaster on a scale never thought possible in former times. For a long while we looked back at prior times with their mythic accounts of how the world came into being. We looked back at these stories, at the revelatory dreams of these earlier peoples with a certain disdain for those dark ages.

We were the sane, the rational, the dreamless people, the chosen people of destiny. We had found the opening to a more just society, a more reasoning intellectual life. Above all we had the power to re-engineer the planet with our energy systems, our dams and irrigation projects, our great cities. We could clear the forests, drain the marshes, construct our railways and highways, all to the detriment of the other living forms of earth, to the elimination of needed habitat, to obstruction of migration paths, to cutting off access to waterways. We could subdue the wilderness, domesticate the planet. We were finally free from the tyranny of nature. Nature was now our servant delivering up to us its energies, altering its biological rhythms to accord with our mechanical rhythms.

The human condition itself could be overcome by our entrepreneurial skills. Nuclear energy would give us limitless power. Through genetic engineering we could turn chickens into ever more effective egg-laying machines, cows into milk-making machines, steers into meat-making contrivances, all according to human preference, not according to the inner spontaneities of these living beings as determined by their genetic coding, a coding shaped through some billions of years of experiment and natural selection.

The Magic Word "Progress!" Although it was long ago discredited as an illusory belief, we still hear the word spoken with a kind of religious reverence, even as a final norm of reference in any consideration of reality and value. Loren Eiseley has written a description of our present relationship with nature. "We have re-entered nature, not like a Greek shepherd on a hillside hearing joyfully the returning pipes of Pan, but rather as an evil and precocious animal who slinks home in the night with a few stolen powers. The serenity of the gods is not disturbed. They know on whose head the final lightning will fall."

Suddenly we awaken to the devastation that has resulted from the entire modern process. It can best be summarized in the title of the first effective scientific critique given twenty-five years ago, in 1962, by Rachel Carson in her work, *Silent Spring*, a title taken from Keats' "The sedge is withered from the lake/and no birds sing." The book itself is dedicated to Albert Schweitzer who tells us: "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. We will end by destroying the earth." This is a bitter moment, not simply for the human, but for the earth itself. The biblical slaughter of the innocents is only a faint foreshadowing of the slaughter of the innocents taking place in these

times when the innocents are not simply individuals capable of replacement within their species, but the slaughter of species themselves, irreversibly, eternally.

Our Millennial Expectations. Our sense of endless progress emerges from the millennial expectations of our scriptures. From the prophetic period onward our scriptures speak to us of a period when the human condition would be surmounted, when justice would reign, and the fruits of the earth would be available in lavish abundance. All this fostered in our western tradition a profound resentment against our human condition. We somehow did not belong to the community of earth. We were not an integral component of the natural world. Our destiny was not here. We deserved a better world, although we had not even begun to appreciate the beauty and grandeur of this world or the full measure of its entrancing qualities.

What we seem unwilling or unable to recognize is that our entire modern world is itself inspired not by any rational process, but by a distorted dream experience, perhaps by the most powerful dream that has ever taken possession of human imagination. Our sense of progress, our entire technological society, however rational in its functioning, is a pure dream-vision in its origin and its objectives. The difficulty is that this dream of millennial transformation to be achieved by science and technology under the direction of the modern corporation is thought of as the truly real, the singular reality controlling all things and giving meaning to the whole of history.

We are Changing the Chemistry of the Planet. The change that is taking place in the present is not simply another historical transition or another cultural transformation. Its order of magnitude is immensely more significant in its nature and in its consequences. We are indeed closing down the major life systems of the planet. We are acting on a geological and biological order of magnitude. We are changing the chemistry of the planet. We are altering the great hydrological cycles. We are weakening the ozone layer that shields us from cosmic rays. We are saturating the air, the water and the soil with toxic substances such that we can never bring them back to their original purity. We are upsetting the entire earth system that has, over some billions of years and through an endless sequence of experiments, produced such a magnificent array of living forms, forms capable of seasonal self-renewal over an indefinite period of time.

Norman Myers, a specialist in the rainforests and vegetation of the world, said that the "impending extinction spasm" is likely to produce the "greatest single setback to life's abundance and diversity since the first flickerings of life almost four billion years ago." Paul Ehrlich, from Stanford, who has studied these questions of extinction for over twenty years, made some of the most startling statements in his observation that "humanity will bring upon itself consequences depressingly similar to those expected from a nuclear winter." He expects this to be accompanied by the famine and epidemic disease generally associated with the concept of nuclear winter. Enrlich considers that to look to technology for a solution "would be a lethal mistake." His final suggestion was that "Scientific analysis points, curiously, toward the need for a quasi-religious transformation of contemporary cultures."

BEYOND TRANSFORMATION OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

My own suggestion is that we must go far beyond any transformation of contemporary culture. We must go back to the genetic imperative whence human cultures emerged originally and from which they can never be separated without losing their integrity and their survival capacity. None of our existing cultures can deal with this situation out of their own resources. We must invent or reinvent a sustainable human culture by a descent into our prerational, our instinctive resources. Our cultural resources have lost their integrity. They cannot be trusted. What is needed is not transcendence but inscendence, not the brain but the gene.

The pathology of the present is manifest in the arrogance with which we reject our role as an integral member of the earth community in favor of a radical, anthropocentric life attitude. The supreme moment of rejection of our role as an integral member of the earth community was reached in the work of Thomas Huxley in his famous Romanes Lecture given in 1893 on Evolution and Ethics. Human social progress he considered as "a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process..."

Sigmund Freud wrote even more strongly to this effect in his essay on Civilization and Its Discontents: "Against the dreaded external world one can only defend oneself by some kind of turning away from it if one intends to solve the task by oneself. There is, indeed, another and better path: that of becoming a member of the human community, and, with the help of a technique guided by science, going over to the attack against nature and subjecting her to the human will."

Both Huxley and Freud saw the human as essentially alien to the larger community of creatures. We are too good for the natural world. In ourselves the natural world goes beyond itself into a new and more sublime form of grandeur. Neither Huxley nor Freud had any idea of the disastrous consequences of such an attitude on the integral functioning of the earth. These consequences are only now becoming manifest. We are the generation when the day of reckoning has come. In this disintegrating phase of our industrial society, we now see ourselves not as the splendor of creation but as the most pernicious mode of earthly being. We are the termination not the fulfillment of the earth process. If there were a parliament of creatures its first decision might well be to vote the humans out of the community as too deadly a presence to tolerate any further. We are the affliction of the world, its demonic presence. We are the violation of earth's most sacred aspects.

Beyond Our Anthropocentric Traditions. It is not easy for us to move beyond those basic humanistic ideals that have directed our cultural traditions. These anthropocentric traditions have determined our language, our intellectual insights, our educational programs, our spiritual ideals, our imaginative power, our emotional sensitivities. Our traditional languages express most clearly the anthropocentrism whence our difficulties have emerged. Our imagination is filled with images that sustain the present direction of our culture. Our spiritual values are disorienting with their insistence on the flawed nature of the existing order of things and the need for relief by escape from the earth rather than by a greater intimacy with the earth. Constantly we assert the value of the human over against the merely resource values of the natural world. Our legal system fosters a sense of humans as having rights over against the rights of natural

beings. Our commerce, industry and economics are based on the devastation of the earth. Disengagement from such basic life commitments requires a certain daring.

If this is difficult, we might recall the story of the Titanic on her maiden voyage. Abundant evidence indicated that icebergs were up ahead. The course was set, however, and no one wished to alter the direction. Confidence in the survival capacities of the ship was unbounded. There were already a multitude of concerns in carrying out the normal routine of the voyage. All of this is a kind of parable for ourselves, since only in the most dire situation do we have the energy to alter our way of acting on the scale that is required.

The Need for a New Cultural Coding. We cannot obliterate the continuities of history. Nor can we move into the future without guidance from the more valid elements of our existing cultural forms; yet we must reach far back into the genetic foundations of our cultural formation for a healing and a restructuring at the most basic level.

The new cultural coding that we need must emerge from the source of all such codings, from revelatory vision that comes to us in those special psychic moments or conditions that we describe as "dream." Poets and artists constantly invoke these spirit powers which function less through words than through symbolic forms. This is why dream life is so important, for in this condition the verbal noise is diminished and in the quiet, detached from ephemeral forms, we awaken to the ultimate shaping forces that illumine our understanding and guide our actions.

In moments of confusion such as the present we are not left simply to our own rational contrivances. We are supported by the ultimate powers of the universe as these make themselves present to us through the spontaneities within our own being. We need only become sensitized to these spontaneities, not with a naive simplicity but with critical appreciation. This intimacy with our genetic endowment, and through this endowment with the larger cosmic process, is not primarily the role of the philosopher, priest, prophet or professor. It is the role of the shamanic personality, a type that is emerging once again in our society.

More than any other of the human types concerned with the sacred, the shamanic personality journeys into the far regions of the cosmic mystery and brings back the vision and the power needed by the human community at the most elementary level. The shamanic personality speaks and best understands the language of the various creatures of earth. Not only is the shamanic type emerging in our society but so is the shamanic dimension of the psyche itself. In periods of significant cultural creativity this aspect of the psyche takes on a pervasive role throughout the society and shows up in all the basic institutions and professions. The great scientists do their best work through this dimension of the psyche.

If the supreme disaster in the comprehensive story of the earth is our present closing down of the major life systems of the planet, then the supreme need of our times is to bring about a healing of the earth through this mutually enhancing human presence to the earth community.

ECOLOGY: THE SUBVERSIVE SCIENCE

Ecology can rightly be considered the supreme subversive science.

In responding to the external situation and to the imperatives of our own nature, these ecological movements are threatening all those cultural commitments that have brought about the present devastation of the earth.

The ecology movement is answering the counter-genetic process that was inaugurated through the industrial revolution. Even deeper than the industrial process this ecological expression of the genetic imperative is demanding a reorientation of the entire religious-cultural order itself. Only recently, however, have the religious, cultural or educational programmes taken the ecological movement seriously. The first and most powerful impact of the ecology movement is felt in a rising resentment toward the economic and industrial processes that are the immediate causes of the difficulty.

Three Basic Aspects of the ecology movement can be observed: its confrontational, transformational and creative aspects. Such movements as Greenpeace and Earth First have a powerful confrontational aspect. The arrogance of the industrial order requires an opposed force of somewhat equal order of commitment. The power of the industrial system is in a pervasive feeling throughout the society that nothing must be left in its natural state. Everything must be sacralized by human use, even though this is momentary and the consequence is an irreversible degradation of the planet. To the ecologist survival is possible only within the earth system itself.

Beginnings are being made. A multitude of institutional changes are being effected. The World Bank is reassessing its activities over these past years. Older destructive programs are being abandoned. New ecologically viable programs are being introduced. Healing of damaged ecosystems is in process. The World Wildlife Fund is beginning to associate its work with the spiritual traditions of the world. The United Nations Environmental Program is becoming more effective. The International Union for Conservation and Development has taken leadership in establishing the World Charter For Nature passed by the United Nations Assembly in 1982. The World Resources Institute is providing an amazing amount of information on what is happening to the planet. The Worldwatch Institute is also providing a much needed assessment of our present situation. These are relatively new institutes that must be added to much older organizations.

In addition to the confrontational and transformational movements that are presently functioning we find those even more significant movements that are creating the vision and the functional processes about which the new cultural as well as the new economic, social and legal structures can be developed. Of special mention here might be the bioregional movements. A bioregion can be described as an identifiable geographical area of interacting life systems that is relatively self-sustaining in the ever-renewing processes of nature.

A New Archetypal World. What I am proposing here is that these prior archetypal forms that guided the course of human affairs are no longer sufficient. The universe is revealing itself to us in a special manner just now. Also the planet earth and the life-communities of the earth are speaking to us through the deepest elements of our nature, through our genetic coding. In relation to the earth we have been autistic for centuries. Only now have we begun to listen with

some attention and with a willingness to respond to the demands of the earth that we cease our industrial assault, that we abandon our inner rage against the conditions of our earthly existence, that we renew our human participation in the grand liturgy of the universe itself.

Yet, while we commune with these powers through an intuitive psychic, even shamanic, mode of presence, even when we indicate the disaster of alienation from these powers and their guidance, there remains the question of critical discernment. Whatever comes forth from this new age of communion with the universe and with the wisdom of the earth must pass through a critical moment of reflection.

What we are seeking is a post-critical, a second naivete. Not the naivete of pre-critical, unreflective innocence. This is a supreme test of human sagacity. Freeman Dyson's illustration of this is the journey to the South Pole by Scott and Amundsen. Scott achieved the goal but perished on his return journey. In the process he created something of an epic story in modern times. Amundsen got there and returned safely. What is the difference and what is the lesson? One of the discoverers of the frozen company of Scott later wrote in great admiration of Scott and the tragic account of his death. Then he added: "But tragedy is not our business. Survival is."

Amundsen, more modest in the equipment he used and the path he chose, had the precious gift of sagacity. He used dogs instead of ponies and machines. He went the less acceptable path. Somehow he knew, somehow in his planning and perhaps in his dreams he communed more profoundly with the numinous forces that guide our destiny. He combined this vision with the limited technologies that were needed. The lesson is there for ourselves and for future ages.

- end -

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N.Y. 10994.

(Due to pressure of space this is a considerably
shortened version of Thomas Berry's article - Ed.).

EVE: ECOLOGICAL VOICE OF THE EARTH

Jyoti Sahi

(L'article: "Eve: Ecological Voice of the Earth" nous présente un point de vue indien. Joyti Sahi, un artiste et un théologien, nous rappelle que nous devons être attentifs à la voix de la terre, que nous devons être en harmonie avec la création, la voix de Dieu. Jyoti se rend compte qu'une culture à dominante masculine a conduit, peut-être irrévocablement, au rejet de l'idée d'une terre féminine. En écoutant la voix de la terre nous prenons conscience de l'alliance cosmique établie par Dieu et chaque créature vivante. Il examine d'autres implications de cette alliance dans les Ecritures et tire des conclusions concernant l'oecuménisme. Il n'examine pas en détail les effets de la pollution sur l'environnement de son sous-continent. Mais Bhopal, comme Tchernobyl font partie de notre vocabulaire contemporain, comme des dangers pour notre existence humaine. Avons-nous appris la leçon?)

The old Testament speaks of a voice which cries out from the very earth. Thus, when Cain killed Abel, God says, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth" (Gen 4:10-12).

I would like to relate this to the mysterious voice of which Isaiah speaks. "A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for the Lord, every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain, and the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. (40:3-5).

There are many passages which speak in the Bible of a Voice which comes to us through creation. Thus, for example, Elijah on Mount Horeb witnessed how "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke to pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice..." (1 Kings 19:11).

Creation - the Voice of God. It is this "still small voice" of creation that we are called to listen to. It is a voice which reminds us that human justice is linked with the integrity of creation, that the human being does not live in a vacuum, but in a responsible relationship with the earth. When we speak of ecology in the context of a Biblical faith, we speak of this relationship, and the way in which God addresses humanity through creation. As Eckhart was to insist, Creation is the voice of God - the way in which the Covenant is communicated to humanity. It is necessary therefore for us to learn to listen to the "Voice of the Earth."

The earth has often been characterized as feminine - as a Mother from which all of us derive sustenance. The feminist movement has often repudiated the equation "woman as nature" because this has been used by a male dominated culture as a way of exploiting woman in the same way as nature has been exploited. But the voice of the Earth is also very much the voice of women in the world of today. It is necessary for the future of all human beings that this voice be listened to. This voice is also associated with those who are "downtrodden" or "broken" - that is, those members of the human community who are very close to the earth. The name "Adam" itself derives from "Adamah," a word meaning the clod of earth from which the primal human being was fashioned. It is to this earth that the bodies of the dead return. To listen to the voice of the Earth is to listen to the children of the earth.

THE COSMIC COVENANT

It is in this context that we could understand the idea of a Cosmic Covenant, which God made with all creation. We can trace the outlines of the Covenant in various parts of the Old Testament. For example, we could discern a covenant which God made with Eve, the very centre of Life in evolving nature. The name Eve means Life.

We read in the third chapter of Genesis that God said to Eve: "I will multiply your pains in child-bearing, you shall give birth to your children in pain." I feel that this is not simply a curse on Eve, though that is how the passage is generally understood. There is a deeper significance in the pain of birthing which finds its ultimate expression in the pain of God in the person of Jesus as suffering servant.

Creation a Process of Birthing. God is intimately involved in the process of Creation. Creation is not just an end-product, a thing which is to be possessed, or looked after as an object. It is rather a way of being and communicating through life. As artists, we perhaps have a different understanding of creation as a process of birthing. The theology of art rests on the assumption that God has called the human being to share in the act of creation - this is the "gift" given to humanity, not only to represent the lordship of God over creation, but the creativity of God even now operative in nature. The call to be in the Image of God, can be understood in this way, that we are called to be imaginatively involved in God's creative work.

It is in this context, then, that we must understand God's Covenant with the human person and community, as a relationship of mutual trust, and hope, in which the "integrity of Creation" is affirmed. It is not possible to comprehend the significance of God's ever-renewed Covenant, outside this work of creation.

Affirmation of Life and Renewing Creation. "Covenant" is a way, a 'sadhana,' which draws the human being ever deeper into the mystery of Creation. What is being celebrated in the Covenant is the affirmation of Life and the constant programme of renewing Creation. Our approach has often been too mechanistic and legalistic when trying to define the meaning of terms like Creation, Covenant and Stewardship. It is not that God made a creation which got spoilt, and now he has promised a new creation. Or that there was a

first Covenant, and then another Covenant, because the first one did not work. Creation is constantly being renewed - daily we are called to witness and be responsive to the new creation that is being born in and around us. The same is true of the Covenant - it is a constant relationship with a loving Creator who freely gives, and also who passionately demands our cooperation.

The Covenant with Noah. It is in this spirit that we must return to study the creational import of the various Covenants which form the basis for the economy of Salvation. Take for example the Covenant with Noah, which we could call part of the Cosmic Covenant. It begins with a blessing to "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 9), and proceeds to a demand:

I will demand an account of every man's life from his fellow men; he who sheds man's blood shall have his blood shed by man, for in the image of God man was made.

But what here appears only to be justice in human terms for human beings is extended to all life:

God spoke to Noah and his sons, "See, I establish my covenant with you, and with your descendants after you, also with every living creature to be found with you, birds, cattle, and every wild beast with you; everything that came out of the ark, everything that lives on earth...

When the bow is in the clouds, I shall see it and call to mind the lasting Covenant between God and every living creature, of every kind that is found on earth."

So the covenant is not only with human beings but with the whole of what we call nature. It is in this context that we must also understand the injunction: "You must not eat flesh with life, that is to say, blood in it." Hidden in this law is a deep and ancient reverence for life, symbolized by blood. Also, we can reflect on the mysterious significance of another incident:

Noah, a tiller of the soil was the first to plant the vine. He drank some of the wine, and while he was drunk he uncovered himself inside his tent.

Whereas originally nakedness was innocent, here we find that it becomes the symbol of a profound sense of guilt. But yet this fruit of the Vine, giver of joy to the heart, retains its mysterious significance, and we find another figure in the story of the Cosmic Covenant Melchizedek, King of the Salem, coming to bless Abraham, with an offering of bread and wine. Again the blessing itself is significant, pointing to a new type of priesthood: "Blessed by Abraham by God Most High, creator of Heaven and Earth."

Creation itself becomes Eucharist. Humanity is not to be justified through a sacrifice involving the shedding of blood, but rather through a new dispensation wherein the Priest Christ offers the whole earth, the whole of Creation. Creation itself becomes Eucharist, under the symbols of Bread and Wine, offered by the Pagan King of Peace (Salem). In the mystery of Creation as Eucharist, we have also a return to the basic idea of Creation as the essence of Joy and Goodness.

ECOLOGY AND ECUMENISM

It has been pointed out that in the image of the non-Jewish King Melchizedek, who appears mysteriously from the vast tradition of human spirituality, we have another glimpse of the Cosmic Covenant. In fact this figure, so like a Vedic Rishi, opens up for the inheritors of Israel a new possibility for Ecumenism. The sense of sacredness in creation, the consecration of Earth as symbol, these are the earth-affirming resources of many primal forms of Faith. Melchizedek, in the dual role of King and Priest, represents both the sovereignty of the Creator over all that has been made, and also the sacramentality of the created order, which, in the priest, is consecrated to a higher reality towards which all Creation points, as to something beyond itself. It is in this sense also that we speak of the artist as a priest - not in the act of making, but in the act of offering, of giving back to the Source of Creation all that has been received from it as Gift.

Ecumenism is born out of an awakening to the truths enshrined in belief systems other than one's own, a realization that dialogue is essential for life and growth. The word ecumenical comes from the Greek oikumene, which means the whole inhabited world, the home of all living creatures. The universal vision is essential to all Catholic Culture.

A Wholistic Approach. Ecology is really quite a modern discipline which is based on a wholistic, or systemic approach to reality. Nothing exists in itself - the reality of any entity depends on the way in which it interacts with other entities. It is this realization which helps us understand the delicate balance which makes life possible, the almost fragile interrelatedness which characterizes our biosphere, and which has been the condition for that miracle which we call life. This balance in nature has been compared to the bloom on a flower or fruit, or the delicate moisture which we find bathing the surface of the earth at dawn, which we call "dew". These images have been used to describe grace. It is the grace which makes of the whole universe a habitat of God's creatures.

I have often thought of those words of Jesus: the foxes have their holes and the birds their nests in the trees, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. For the Bible, humanity is but a sojourner on this earth; the spiritual children of Adam are called out into the wilderness, to wander in hope of a promised land which can never be "possessed" and exploited in the way that the agricultural descendants of Noah had imagined. Perhaps we find here the key to the mystery of his sense of shame and nakedness.

Mission - Ecology - Ecumenism. The universal is the unclothed - 'digambara' -, that which cannot be tailored to the cloth of human culture. Without this sense of the eternal and unconditioned I suspect that all efforts at inculturation will fail.

The relation of the Mission of the Church to Ecology, and Ecumenism is, I feel, its call to address its concern for all Creatures, beyond all boundaries of caste, colour or creed. Our effort to listen to the Ecological Voice of the Earth should lead beyond narrow communalism, or religious fundamentalism, to the broad issues which confront all who work for Peace and Justice on Earth today.

This is the ultimate commission of Christ - to go and preach his gospel to all the nations, and all creation. To announce the gospel to all creation is to respect all creatures, as St Francis respected all creatures and preached to the birds. For us this is perhaps just a rather charming story - but in the charm of this story there lies deep theological truth, which we have yet to understand. It is here that we need a new consciousness which understands creation in a new way.

Perhaps our dialogue with other Indian religions will help us to perceive nature in a new way. Ecumenism has to transcend its in-house concerns about inter-relations among different denominations of Christians, to become a much wider discourse on how all human creatures must cooperate with nature.

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JUSTICE AND PEACE; OPTION FOR THE POOR; WHAT MORE?

Robert Clobus S.M.A.

(Robert Clobus se demande "Et puis quoi encore?" après la justice et la Paix et l'option pour les pauvres. Bien des choses, à son avis. Missionnaire pendant 24 ans en Afrique Occidentale, il se demande pourquoi la destruction écologique qui les entourait n'a jamais fait partie de la planification missionnaire et pastorale. Il propose à la Société des Missions Africaine, à laquelle il appartient, de faire du respect de l'intégrité de la création un thème majeur de son future Chapitre Général en 1989).

1 Introduction.

Justice, peace and option for the poor are closely related. They have been enshrined in the aims and objectives of most, if not all the religious institutes in the Church since the late 1970's as being at the heart of our missionary concern today. But something new is happening around the globe. A new awareness is growing that these concerns may not go far enough. This new insight is vocalised especially outside church circles in the world of environmentalists but also, strange as it might seem, in some of the physical and biological sciences. A new understanding is growing that social justice and peace can never take root unless we recognize that the relation between humankind and everything that exists is deeply disturbed and needs healing.

Humanity, if it wants to survive, must rediscover its own place within the totality of creation and must recognize its complete dependence on the self-sustaining world. In the absence of such a discovery we will never be able to achieve genuine justice and peace for the whole of creation. We need to widen the parameters of our concept of justice and peace to include the integrity of creation.

I suggest that our Society for African Missions includes this wider concern in its deliberations during the forthcoming General Assembly of 1989. It is part of our missionary concern to care - not just about people, but about the totality of life. All life forms and life-systems have a right to exist where they are in their habitat. They need each other. No justice can be built on exploitation and no integrity can exist in a world which is torn apart in disharmony.

2. The SMA Commitment. The involvement of the SMA with people of Africa since the 1880's has made it very sensitive to the spiritual and material needs of those people. Our missionary endeavours in the fields of evangelization, education and health-care have helped to bring about change within the tribal societies. Through these endeavours, at least in part, they were assimilated into the Christian family and into the family of nations. This transition has been very

rapid and has brought with it many gains like independence, education and technical know-how. There is however another side to all this. It broke up complex tribal societies and alienated many people from their old way of life. We recognize increasingly that the end of the colonial era has not resulted in cultural and economic independence. Complicated systems of exploitation have taken over in many regions.

The indebtedness of many third-world nations to the first world, for instance, requires that poor countries reduce their living standard, submit to growing poverty and export increasing amounts of their scarce resources in order to survive. Many African nations now live in greater dependence on the outside world than they did a century ago when our first missionaries went to West Africa.

Those who suffer most are always the same - those at the margin, the peasants, the poor, the migrants, the dispossessed, the minorities, the sick and disabled.

3. Everyone's Need - Everyone's Greed. Mahatma Ghandi once wryly observed: "There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed". When we expose oppression of the poor by the rich have we really come to grips with the roots of structural injustice? We need to recognise that among the poor we must include all the planet's living creatures and the impoverished planet itself. In our Christian concern we aim to provide an equal share for all people but in doing so we tend to ignore and to drive away all other creatures from the increasingly scarce sources of food and living space. We are only beginning to realise that concern solely for humankind undermines the fruitfulness of the earth and indeed its very viability. We oppress the earth in our scramble to survive. This appears to me to be the underlying injustice which permeates our modern exploitative mentality and influences our actions. It prevents the laying down of healthy foundations on which peace and justice among people can be built. The perverse system of exacting resources from the poor to support the lifestyle of the rich places the whole world at the mercy of the merciless.

Referring to Isaiah's Year of Jubilee Jesus announced that he saw himself as being sent to proclaim a time of restoration for the whole earth - the Lords year of favour (Is. 61. Luc. 420). There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. What are we doing to reflect this challenge of Jesus in our behaviour?

4. What is the New Concern? Environmentalists are often accused of being sentimentalists. They create an uproar over tree-cutting and worry about fishponds and snail-darters! They want to preserve forests and wildlife species by setting aside portions of the earth for animals and plants. There is great truth in their concern. The earth is more than a backdrop for men's activities. With all its assets it is unique. In its wholeness it is alive - a home for all creatures, including humankind. Its ability to sustain life is so delicately balanced that no form of life can exist on its own. This mutuality has been described as the 'web of life'. People and plants, bird and prey, flower and insect co-adapt continuously, spiraling upwards in every more intricate patterns of interdependence. To cite one example - humankind cannot exist without the bacteria to break down the food it consumes. Ultimately, everything depends on everything else.

This century has seen an acceleration of destruction. We are using up, consuming, polluting and destroying in such a way and at such a rate that the Earth has no defenses or answers to this onslaught. It withers away. Soon there may be nothing on the table for rich and poor alike. We attack what is so beautifully called 'The integrity of Creation'. Aggression towards the Earth is diametrically opposed to stewardship, caring and genuine Christian thinking. It is to humans alone that God has given the task of stewardship. God's promise not to forsake the Earth again has been handed down to humankind, His image and likeness on Earth. (Gen. 9: 12-16).

5. An Experience in Mission. Reflecting on my own twenty four years working in Ghana I now see how contemptuously the Earth has been treated as a source for making a living and as a source of wealth. We are all witness to the overgrazing of the savanna, the depletion of the forests, the extractive methods of modern and now outdated traditional agriculture, the overfishing of the seas, the pollution of land and water and the indiscriminate burning of vegetation. These assaults have degraded West Africa, causing in many places a collapse of the eco-systems signaled by changing weather patterns. The lifeless desert creeps relentlessly forward.

Much of this destruction has been brought about by the plundering policies of colonial powers followed by the policies of the local elite and multinational corporations. In the traumatic changes of the past century the indigenous people of the land have themselves lost touch with Mother Earth. By their sheer numbers in their struggle to survive they have contributed considerably to the imminent collapse of the environment. None of this has been reflected in our pastorate.

6. A Blueprint for Action. I wonder sometimes why we, as missionaries, as pastors, as institution, are so slow to recognise what really happens to our world. Part of the reason is that what is now expected of us does not seem to correspond to what we originally set out to do. We brought the Good News as something 'New', presuming it had never been heard. We failed to understand that people had sustained themselves all alone on precious insights into the Good News which was 'Old' to them in a way. They recognized it in their accumulated wisdom and pact with nature.

Many of our missionary activities are still geared towards introducing the 'Good' which is 'New' instead of reinforcing what is good 'in the Old'. Progress should not mean breaking with the old and embracing the new but rather should lead from the old into the new, enriching both old and new.

The challenge to mission in the present day has to be rooted in the past; it can only be understood once we have made a choice about what kind of future we want. This choice is the option between harmony and extinction; between shared life and extermination.

Before we commit ourselves to action, we missionaries must have the honesty to admit that, influenced by our background and outlook, we have underestimated the necessity of a caring attitude towards the earth. Secondly, that it is our duty to incorporate this concern into the aims and objectives of our Society. Thirdly, that a missionary society like ours must be in the forefront of this new but long overdue concern.

7. How can it be done? This 'Total Care' ministry, here envisaged finds a place in current Church thinking. I refer you to Donal Dorr's 'SPIRITUALITY AND JUSTICE'. Dorr describes four different mindsets which have prevailed in Catholic Church thinking in recent times. (Pp. 197-204).

To these four I add a fifth, that, first and foremost, God's Kingdom is God's Creation, understood in its widest sense as the whole evolving Universe. More especially for us now it is the planet Earth as part of the Universe. God's kindom is the 'Story of the Earth', with humankind playing the leading role. In this mindset the uniqueness of humankind is fused with its responsibility for the rest of creation. Humankind is 'Creation grown self-conscious of its beauty and meaning'. Humankind, with its awesome powers derived from the Earth must take charge of the Earth, in God's name as both creature and caretaker.

We are at the brink of a new age in which heart and mind, religion and scientific discoveries, strength and weakness seem to merge. It is a privilege to live at this moment in time, both as individual, and as Missionary Society. It is the moment, the 'Kairos' where it matters so much how we act. We long for the homecoming of the poor, the bursting forth of God's Kingdom in a setting and environment, in which our joy can be celebrated. This will be a celebration of the integrity of Creation - the dazzling interplay of God's creatures in God's presence. It was foreseen by Isaiah as the time of Peace and Justice when he urged the poor of his time not to look backward because God will do the unexpected, the un hoped for. "Behold I am going to make something new". (Isaiah 43:18-19a)

8. Conclusion. I would like to suggest to the my Society of African Missions:

1. That we embrace the vision of God's Kingdom of Integrity as a dream to be realized in our time.
2. That we live inspired by the Vision of the future.
3. That we recognise the need for an all-embracing concern for the living world to be part of our witness.
4. That we familiarize ourselves with this 'Total Care' attitude and with the concrete situation in West Africa where it must find expression.
5. That we work out a plan of action in West Africa on how to integrate environmental care in our pastoral care.
6. That we commit ourselves to such a plan which, considering the inter-relatedness of environmental situations, calls for an intra-regional, i.e. West African approach.
7. That we invite all missionary Congregations and the local Churches to reflect and act with us on our task in this world.

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Ref. This is a slightly abridged version of a Proposal presented to the Central Administration of the Society of African Missions, Via della Nocetta, 111, 00164, Roma.

We are grateful to the Editor of the Justice and Peace Newsletter of the Society for permission to publish this Proposal - Ed.

POPULAR RELIGION ITS DIMENSIONS, LEVELS AND TYPES

Luis Maldonado.

(Notre dernier article revient sur le thème du Séminaire de Recherche de SEDOS en 1989, à Villa Cavaletti: EVANGELISATION ET RELIGIOSITE POPULAIRE. Luis Maldonado esquisse les différentes dimensions, les niveaux et les types de la religion populaire. Il distingue neuf caractéristiques principales de la religiosité populaire et identifie six modèles sociologiques du catholicisme. Il s'agit-là d'une contribution très utile pour éclairer la signification de la religiosité populaire dans le 1er et le Tiers-Monde).

Medellin and Puebla: The interest in popular religion, within both the Catholic Church in general and pastoral theology in particular, was aroused by the meeting of the CELAM in Medellin in 1968, and consolidated by that at Puebla ten years later.

The new movement's concrete origin has also influenced its approach. In effect Medellin was concerned with popular religion for two reasons: first, that it was reacting against an élitist approach to pastoral practice, and secondly, that it was counteracting a pastoral practice characterised by a very European, particularly central-European, culture.

The élitist approach resulted from the excessive influence of such specialised movements of Catholic Action as Jec, Joc, etc., which basically centred on the so-called teams of militants (never more than a few persons). It also arose from the way, in which liturgical reform was developing - that is to say, through very 'select' groups, of rather refined, aesthetically-inclined culture, completely bourgeois, middle-class, not at all 'of the people'.

Pastoral Practice for the Masses. Opening the way for popular religion is, therefore, in essence, an invitation to a pastoral practice for the masses. More than that, it is a powerful recall to the vocation and desire which the Church has had and repeatedly demonstrated in the course of the twenty centuries of its history, namely to be a Church for the masses, and never to succumb to the temptation to allow itself to be reduced to a mere sect. Popular religion is where the masses are. That is where the vast majority of the population is to be found, at least in countries belonging to the Catholic tradition.

In the Latin-American Church, certainly, the movement is biased towards the multitude, along with the Basic Community movement, which forms a link between the masses and the little team of militants. It serves as an organ of critical awareness and of spiritual and prophetic inspiration, capable of bringing to life and evangelising the rather ponderous body of popular religion.

For another angle, since Medellin (and also since Gaudium et Spes), there has been an explicit quest for a synthesis between the faith and indigenous cultures - that is, the great task of inculturation. And popular religion is precisely a vast, colossal example of a by no means negative syncretisation between the Gospel and peoples' own cultures, their own creations, heritages, and pre-Christian legacies.

The Present Situation: Is the phenomenon of any interest at the present time outside Latin America? We have to recognise a paradoxical fact. In some places it could be said that popular religion has almost disappeared or has been repressed, marginalised or distorted by its environmental context, so that it has degenerated into superstition, sorcery, astrology, etc. Thus in some developed countries, and in large cities, great movements of population, secularisation and the technical-pragmatic mentality have caused it almost to disappear.

By contrast, in other places (not always underdeveloped) popular religion is enjoying a boom, or is at least holding its own and maintaining a surprising attraction, even for young people. So far as places of pilgrimage are concerned, in Europe as well as elsewhere, there is a definite increase in the number of visitors. It may be said that all this is no more than a resurgence of interest in religion resulting from the current crisis-situation, and a belief that the end of the world is near. However it becomes complex reality, comprising a multiplicity of elements. The same could be said of the concept or category of 'people'.

Who are "the People"? In fact when we try to explain who or what is the subject of this 'popular' religion - that is to say, the people - we find that there are two lines of interpretation, both of which deserve to be taken into account.

It was Medellin which first understood the word 'people' to mean the poor people, the mass of peasants or marginalised urban workers, suffering a whole range of deprivations. It is the opposite of a minority, in both a quantitative and a qualitative sense.

But there is also the view held by other bishops and theologians in Latin American - notably the Argentinians - who already some years previously had interpreted 'people' in a different way. The word is taken to mean not a section, a sub-group or a fraction, but a totality. By 'people' they mean the people of the nation - in the case in point, the Argentinian people. According to them, the concept of 'people' has three constitutive elements: a collective subject, a common culture, and a common history.

The documents from Puebla (i.e. from the Third Conference of Latin American bishops in February 1979) try to hold together the two meanings which the word 'people' had acquired through the studies of previous years.

Contemporary Sociology also has this tendency to be not exclusive but conciliatory, and tries to hold together and even to give expression to both concepts of 'people':

(1) The people who belong to the same country and live under the same laws; they may hold in common the same origin, the same religion, language, culture.

(2) 'People' as that part of the nation or of the population which considers itself to be in opposition to the classes which are better off,

have more education and more power.

To sum up, it is clear that we must not deny the unity expressed by the global concept of 'people'. But neither can we ignore its divisions, the splits which appear in it precisely because of the confrontations and separations which it contains, and which have their origin in unjust economic systems of ownership, production and distribution of resources. It is also clear that these two ways of understanding 'people' must be reflected in popular culture and piety, since these are the multiform expression of the plural reality of the people. And it is clear there is no such thing as a single, unchanging popular religion. There are different popular religions which vary to the extent that historico-cultural circumstances vary.

What is Popular Religion? M. Meslin, Professor of the History of

Religions at the Sorbonne delivered a paper at the First International Colloquy held in Quebec in 1970. His conclusions may be summarised as follows: Popular religion is the quest for more simple, more direct, and more profitable relationships with the divine.

a) The quest for 'more simple relationships' means the attempt to get away from an over-intellectualised, over-conceptualised, cerebral, abstract, 'dogmatic' form of religious practice. It is a quest for more intuitive, more imaginative forms, in which the feeling and the imaginative force of the people can be fully developed and expressed.

b) The quest for 'more direct relationships' means the rejection of clerical and clericalistic mediation between persons and the divinity. Such mediation is seen more as an obstacle or oppressive wall than as communication and service.

As can be seen these first two aspects are, or can be, in themselves, perfectly positive, and would bring about an enrichment in any kind of religious practice, so long as they remained in contact with other criteria.

c) The third aspect is the one which might turn out to be more negative: the quest for 'profitable relationships' - that is to say, for the satisfaction of the desire that religion should be useful. Here we are bordering on magic, superstition and fanaticism, which are a constant threat to and a frequent defect in popular piety.

Meslin's paper was criticised in the Quebec Colloquy for being based on a questionable presupposition. It presents popular religion as a reactive phenomenon, as though it only arose a posteriori, by way of reaction to the corruption of something which existed previously. There are writers who think that the very opposite is the case. The popular form would come first, and the secondary, later, derived form, in so far as it was opposed to the popular form, would be the official, institutional one. In this respect popular piety can be compared to popular speech, popular medicine, popular wisdom, popular music, etc. These can all be seen as primary forms from which are derived the literary language, scientific medicine, academic philosophy, etc.

What we can say is that there is a certain dialectical relationship between the popular and non-popular (whether it be called official, institutional, or whatever). And, above all, it is possible to make a distinction between what is truly popular and what is popularised; between

what is originally and genuinely born from the people and what is introduced into it in different ways. Clearly what is popularised is not always negative. On the contrary, any human group which was wholly inbred culturally, and which did not have the benefit of receiving and assimilating external values, would be condemned to sterility or entropy. This would be ethnocentrism of the worst kind.

NINE MAIN FEATURES OF POPULAR RELIGION

If we now set these observations in the context of a fuller and more complex description, we can indicate nine main features which are characteristic of popular religion.

I would place first 'the magical element', understood positively as the sense of super-rational, 'the intuitive', the substitution of an Aristotelian or Cartesian logic of distinction and separation by a logic of participation, communication and association.

Two other typical features are 'the symbolical' and 'the imaginative' - that is to say, the sense of the image, of the association of images, the creative fantasy, etc.

A fourth feature is what we might call 'the mystical', understood as the powerful, emotive, living, experiential context of all the religious activities of the people, as well as the 'stretching of awareness' which is sought in them or through them.

Two further dimensions to be distinguished are 'the festive' and 'the theatrical'. Popular piety is eminently celebratory and loves the expressiveness of the total spectacle, of the multi-coloured performance, of the production which takes the street, the market-place, a section of the town, or the whole town, as its setting. A fundamental ingredient within the festival and the spectacle is the element of farce, mockery, humour, criticism.

'The communal' is an eighth aspect of the piety which we are analysing. More appropriately we might describe it as its context, its essential setting. The people are grouped together in confraternities, brotherhoods, associations, to channel their religious practice. And their celebrations or festivals consist often of a general exchange of group contests, services, invitations that is to say, of a great 'potlatch', to use the term by which such things are described in the phenomenology of religion.

The last dimension we have to mention is the political one. Popular religion has often contributed to the preservation of a people's self-awareness and has sometimes led to a struggle for dignity, emancipation and liberty.

THREE MAIN LEVELS

If we wish to analyse the phenomenon of popular religion at greater depth, and, at the same time, in a more concrete way, taking account of its place in the life of the Church we shall have to distinguish three main levels:

1) The Anthropological Level, that profound level of a man's existence as part of the natural order and of social and family life. Here we may

observe that, for example, the great religious festivals of the people are centred on the solstices (Nativity, and St. John the Baptist) and the equinoxes (Easter, the Virgin Patrons), on the stellar phases of the agricultural work-cycle, as well as the important occasions in family life (being born, growing up, getting married, falling ill, dying). This level clearly leads on to another deeper one.

2) The Religious Level. The reason is simple: these cosmic, natural and human realities appear as great symbols of the transcendent, which they express and reveal. Through their power, through their life-giving and regenerative fecundity, all these realities of sun, moon, earth, fire, water, air, stone, mountain, human body (both masculine and feminine) become great hierophanies which point to the sacred and awaken the sense of mystery.

3) Grafting of the Christian Element on to the other two levels. The festival of 'the undefeated sun' at the winter solstice leads into the Nativity; the spring festival of the vernal equinox is converted into Easter. The rites of initiation are transformed into our sacraments of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist. And so on.

This is not an opportunist, proselytising operation of appropriation by the first Christians. It is the step from creation to 'salvation history'. It is the synthesis between nature and revelation, between the cosmic and the historical, in the universal design of the one God who 'speaks to us in different ways, and, in the end, has spoken to us through his Son' (Hebrews 1:2). Life is not only a matter of fertility. It is a matter of the Easter transition from bondage to liberty, and, above all, from death to resurrection in Christ.

Encultured Evangelism: Popular Catholicism. If this synthesis, which today we call encultured evangelism, is well carried out, we need speak no longer of popular religion but of popular Catholicism. Popular Catholicism then turns out to be a well-balanced, harmonious form of human existence, a form which today we, who belong to the so-called developed societies, long for, because, we lack either the cosmic, natural dimension, or the historical-prophetic dimension.

In face of the destabilising forces in our world today, we need to recognise that at certain times and in certain places popular Catholicism has been an example of fruit in season, because it has given the people a harmonious form of existence which has been deep, experiential, satisfying, enjoyable, embracing life's most intimate realities, material and sexual, and without any repressive Manichaeism or dualism. At the same time life has been structured, committed, liberating and critical.

Nevertheless in many other cases popular Catholicism is something very different, and seems to contain powerful contradictory cross-currents and a mixture of opposing values.

CONCLUSION: DIFFERENT SOCIOLOGICAL FORMS OF CATHOLICISM

In conclusion I offer a brief summary of the different sociological forms in which popular Catholicism can be said to manifest itself today.

1. There are the remains of pre-Christian, archaic, village religions, surviving in forms which are more or less magical, superstitious, pagan or mechanical. These may be the relics of a protest against the imposition of Christianity by force, through the exercise of political power.

In Gramsci's view, these are a form of reaction on the part of oppressed, marginalised, exploited or underdeveloped classes against the dominant classes, allied, at various times, with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This is the dialectic between dominant and subordinate religions or cultures.

2. There are also a number of popular religious forms or practices which have remained alive and retained their strength and effectiveness from very ancient times. These are not mere relics or fossils coming to us from the past.

But there exists in addition a resurgence and renaissance of certain ancient rural traditions which are gaining a new lease of life (pilgrimages, patronal festivals, the Marian cult). This movement represents an effort to overcome the contradictions inherent in an industrial civilisation (uprooting, emigration, depersonalisation, being lost in the mass, anonymity).

3. In a sense we might also include in the previous category the numerous charismatic-pentecostal groups which are to be found everywhere in both rural and urban settings. Their members are often peasants or urban workers, but they also include middle-class people. Here we find a longing to participate directly in a more spontaneous, more emotional or experiential way of life and form of religion, in the face of the mechanisation and standardisation of our technological society. This is what Max Weber calls the charismatic phase in religion, over against the bureaucratic institutional phase.

4. There are many groups and quasi-religious associations which form themselves into movements in search of healing, health. They are based on ecclesiastical models, and their leader, the healer, is like the saint. He or she has trances, visions, and performs healing miracles.

The explanation is similar to that for the previous section. Those who are marginalised in society, and for whom medicine is depersonalised, are seeking substitutes and reassurances.

5. A fifth category consists of Afro-Catholic and Amerindian cults in the American continent. Such groups are seeking to express a cultural identity repressed by colonial society and present-day capitalist - technological society.

6. A form which ought to be recorded as falling within the scope of this article, in spite of its peculiarities, is that of the popular basic communities. In fact these communities correspond to a tradition of popular movements which were already to be found in the Church back in the fourteenth century. They were formed around groups of penitents, converts, etc. Then and now such communities have come into being as forms of denunciation of, or protest against, the Church's close links with the powerful. They represent a critical awareness of the official Church as the Church of the rich, standing over against the Church of the poor.

One Last Classification We end our synthesis with one last classification. The relationship between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the people may be expressed as follows:

Ecclesiastical authority has at different times taken up four different attitudes: proposition, prescription, tolerance and proscription.

The people's reactions have been similarly varied, passing from voluntary acceptance, forced submission and syncretism, to rejection and repudiation.

- end -

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