

### CONTENTS

---

#### **IN THIS ISSUE** 226

---

#### **INDIAN MYTHS AND THE TWO TESTAMENTS**

Carlos Mesters 227

---

#### **SECULARIZATION AND INDIA:**

#### **MODERNIZATION AND RELIGION IN AN EASTERN COUNTRY**

Michael Amaladoss, SJ 233

---

#### **THE SYNOD FOR AFRICA:**

#### **FIVE THEMES AND SOME ISSUES AT STAKE**

Chukwuma J. Okoye, CSSp 241

---

#### **WOMEN IN JAPAN: A REPORT OF A WORKSHOP**

Roberta Ryan, SSC 252

---

#### **MISSION MOMENTS**

Mission Opportunities - Peru • Aftermath of War - Liberia •  
Debt Trap - Zambia • Preparing for CELAM IV - Santo Domingo 255

---

**COMING EVENTS** 258

## IN THIS ISSUE

Contributions are from four parts of the world.

CARLOS MESTER'S concludes his conference on the relationship between Indian (Latin American) myths and the Old Testament. In fact, his treatment of the topic involves also the New Testament and Christ's message of Good News. "Christ has nowhere entered the heart of the Indian myths as the New Testament entered the generative core of the Old," he says. He offers very practical proposals to those engaged in evangelization and the Christian instruction of Indians today. In analysing the importance of the land to the Jewish people and the traumatic effects of their Exile, he concludes that the land holds an equally critical place in the Indians' approach to Christ. They too must have their chance to live their 'Old Testament' in order to encounter Christ. The problem of the land is as fundamental to their survival as it was to the Jewish people.

MICHAEL AMALADOSS, SJ examines the process of secularization in India, how it is related to modernization and what effect it has on religion. Secularism need not be the natural consequence of secularization, nor of modernization. And in fact it is not, he maintains. He examines in some detail the effects of secularization on India, on its belief, ritual, social systems, political organization. Religious pluralism is enshrined in its constitution. There is, at present, a growth in fundamentalism and communalism as well as a deep seated tradition of tolerance. There is an increasing autonomy of the 'secular' in relation to the 'sacred.' This is an

inevitable consequence of modernization. Fr. Amaladoss refers only to India but states that implicit comparisons are inevitable with secularization in 'western' countries. We would add that there may well be explicit comparisons and much to be learned by 'the West.'

The Special Meeting of the Synod of Bishops for Africa has launched a widespread programme of preparation throughout the continent. In many Local Churches the preparation is profound: in others superficial or scarcely existing. There are still many uncertainties about the actual Synod - where and how it will be held. But the preparatory process is promoting a contemporary analysis of the African Church and of its responsibility for evangelization, and of its self identity. CHUKWUMA J. OKOYE, CSSp., in a wide-ranging article looks at the five main themes which the Synod will study and makes suggestions for four special items that should be addressed by the Synod. He sees the Synod as a very important step in the evolution of an authentic African Church which will have questions and proposals to offer not only to itself but to the Universal Church.

There is finally an account of a workshop held in Japan on the position of women in that country - in the home, in the workplace and in the Church. As in the case of India there are implications - implicit and explicit, for the wider society.

There are notices of important events. We invite members to take particular note of the one-day special seminar on 'The Theological Background to Inculturation' which will be held on October 5, at the SVD College.

# INDIAN MYTHS AND THE TWO TESTAMENTS

Carlos Mesters

*(This is the second and final part of a talk given by Carlos Mesters, the Brazilian theologian. The first part appeared in SEDOS Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 3, March 1992. In this second part of his conference Fr. Mesters refers to the two Testaments. Hence our title. The text appeared originally in Nelen Yubu. It has been slightly abbreviated. Ed.).*

## C. THE GOSPEL BROUGHT TO THE INDIANS



was to contain the gospel message is destroyed, the basic foundation for evangelization and ongoing Christian instruction is no longer there.

In a number of cases, Indians have been obliged to abandon their myths; stories of the Old Testament and the life of Jesus have replaced them. The result of this approach is that a number of tribes have lost their identity and subsequently disappeared. The survivors, as isolated individuals, drift along without a corporate memory. They are alienated from themselves, their origins, and the land that was once theirs, but now no longer receives them. Other tribes were able to defend themselves; for centuries they managed to hide their myths. On the surface they passed for Christians, but in their hearts they continued to be what they had always been. They masked and conserved their myths, their observances, their customs. Thus, they managed to survive without losing their particular identity.

This centuries-old resistance reveals the conserving energy of the myths whose vitality helped the tribes traverse over 400 years of dark exile in their own country. Evangelization resulting in a people's exile from their

### 1. Some Negative Effects of Evangelization in the Past

Myth not only re-vitalizes, but it is also linked to evangelization and Christian instruction. Changing, distorting, or obliterating myths means doing violence to what Indians possess as most truly their own. It is equivalent to tampering with someone's personality. To destroy the personality of another by violence or brain-washing is anti-human and anti-gospel. In the same way, to destroy a people's myth by an approach to evangelization which does not respect the tribe's 'difference' and its personality is also anti-human and anti-gospel. Because the receptacle that

identity is contrary to the pedagogy God used with the twelve tribes of Israel. It is also contrary to what the Church has always taught, namely that 'grace builds on nature'. Grace does not destroy persons, less still can it destroy a whole tribe. This does not however mean that Jesus Christ cannot be presented as the substitute for myths and their fulfilment.

## 2. The Gospel does not Destroy Myth but Fulfills It

Evangelizers must imitate Jesus. That means: first, become incarnate among the Indians so that the word of the evangelist becomes flesh of their flesh. They must, like Jesus, live among them thirty years, to preach for only three. To reveal to us the Good News of liberation, God did not mount a cultural invasion or commit violence. He made himself equal to us in everything, except sin, and took on himself our human condition. He lived with us, entered the fabric of the 'invisible web' which the Old Testament spread over the space and time of the people, and spoke from within their lives. The Old Testament was not destroyed by Jesus' message; it was the receptacle of his message, its groundwork and point of departure.

The Good News of Jesus removed the outer sheath that enclosed the flower of the New Testament within the bud of the Old. To us, evangelizers and teachers of the Good News, belongs the task of preparing the ground, of watering, of tending, until the 'Old Testament of the Indians' develops, sheds its outer wrappings, blooms and reveals the beauty of its flower.

## 3. Jesus Christ and the Indians' Myth

There are a number of tribes considered 'converted' or Christian. Some of these are genuinely quite devout. To what point have they been evangelized? Paul was converted and believed in Jesus Christ because in Jesus he encountered the answer to the question that flowed out of his past as a Jew. He found in Jesus, the YES of the Father to the promises and hopes embedded in

his Jewish spirit. Paul was Jewish to the core and it was at that deepest core of his Judaism that he met Christ. The Old Testament did not incorporate into itself the new event of Christ; the new event, Christ, incorporated the Old Testament and gave it a new meaning. And so, if there has been true evangelization among the Indians, it is not enough to look at their outer practices. We must see the inside, the new mentality from which they look at life. This is the 'conversion,' the *metanoia* and the transformation that Jesus asks of them.

To know if Christ has really touched the Indians' life in depth, we must look at the place he has come to occupy in their myths. Has Christ been incorporated into the myths or the myths into Christ? In the first case, we cannot call it true evangelization, for Christ would have been absorbed by the myths and neutralized. In the second case it would have been an evangelization, because the myths would have been retold from the cast of the new consciousness generated by Christ. That is, Christ would become the key to their interpretation and the new point of reference for understanding life.

From what we know of present-day Indian myths, Christ has nowhere entered the heart of these myths as the New Testament entered the generative core of the Old. In some tribes, nevertheless, we can observe small changes in the myths and see the fruit of a retelling influenced by the gospel. To the contrary, in other myths, it seems that Christ is only superficially present. This near absence of Christ from the Indians' myths invites us to undertake a serious examination of our consciences and a basic review of our evangelization efforts.

## 4. The Central Problem: Confusing Faith with Religion

As we have already said, faith and religion, though inseparable, are not the same thing. The evangelist lives his or her faith in the form of a religion inherited from his or her culture. Not knowing how to make the distinction

between faith and religion, they transmit occidental forms and expect these to kindle in the Indians the same faith, awaken the same hope and reveal the same love of God the Father. This is impossible! In reality what happens is the following - instead of transmitting the Good News of God, they impose and transmit a culture, engendered in the past, by the ways people in Europe pursued life according to the gospel.

Without realizing it, they import Jesus packaged in an alien culture, a culture which is often hostile to the Indians. The Indians then reject Christ or do not understand the message of Good News. The Christ who came on the banners of the colonizers can hardly be perceived as a liberator. The problem thus remains: to Christianise or to occidentalise? To Christianise or to Catholicise? To put it otherwise, we have the same problem today that rocked the Church of the first century: to Christianise or to Judaize?

#### 5. Christianise or Judaize?

The problem that troubled the early Church was this: must Gentiles observe the Jewish religion? Yes or no? The first one to raise the question was Stephen and he paid a steep price! Later, the practices of the community in Antioch brought the question under scrutiny, for in that community, the gospel was preached without requiring gentiles to observe the prescriptions of Jewish law. Some Christians in Jerusalem, however, did not support the practice. These conservative Christians did not accept the practice of the community of Antioch. There were arguments and confusion. An assembly was held to discuss the subject. Paul and Barnabas were delegated from the community of Antioch.

They argued that to be saved in Christ, faith was sufficient; it was unnecessary to observe the whole law of Moses. This position was dangerous and liable to provoke Jewish anger against the Church. Paul puts it clearly at the end of his letter to the Galatians, 'Those who want to impose circumcision on you do so only out of

self-interest; they want to escape persecution for the cross of Christ' (Gal. 6:12). Those from Jerusalem were for Judaizing; those from Antioch were for Christianising. At the conclusion of the assembly Peter decided the affair in favour of the opinion from Antioch, and James brought to bear a few simple conditions enabling smooth relations in the life of the community.

Today the problem remains. What do we want to do - Christianise or Italianise, Brazilianise, Europeanise? Paul, with Peter's support, responded that the goal of evangelization was to preach Christ as Good News for all peoples.

#### 6. The Hidden Mystery: Everything was Created by God for Christ

The decision of the Council of Jerusalem opened doors; pagans began entering the Church, bringing with them the richness of their cultures. This new approach led Paul to a theological reflection about the Council's decision. Paul's reflections are set out in his letters to the Colossians and to the Ephesians. The orientation of the Old Testament to the New is a pattern for how God works among all peoples.

God has created all things in Christ and for Christ. All things are oriented towards Christ. There is a parallel between the stories of the Jewish people and that of the Indian people in the Americas. When Paul preached the gospel to the pagans of Athens, his reference was not to the Old Testament of the Jews but rather to the Athenians own 'Old Testament,' - the myths and history that marked their lives as the people of Athens. If he made use of the Old Testament, it was more as an example, a pattern for avoiding error, rather than a condition required of pagans wishing to become Christians. Reality, as experienced by the people to whom he was preaching the gospel, became the foundation and the starting point for evangelization. The revelation of the Mystery hidden in God that Paul speaks about in his letter to the Ephesians consists precisely in this discovery of the universal dimensions

of salvation. All peoples are destined by God for Christ: therefore in the life of the Indians, God is already at work, leading them toward Christ.

## 7. Fellow-Workers with God

Paul defined his mission as that of a 'fellow-worker with God.' We, too, are called to collaborate with the God who is already at work in the life of the Indians. If we attempt to enforce our ways on them, we are obstructing the treasures that God has placed in their lives. From the point of view of anthropology, everyone today recognizes the value and riches in Indian cultures, and for this same reason there are campaigns to preserve them. But from the point of view of faith, the value and riches these cultures bear within them have not been recognized.

How are we to be fellow-workers with God? In the Old Testament God directed the twelve tribes of Israel towards Christ in progressive stages. This is also true of the Indians. If there are mistaken elements in their myths, we are not the ones to convince them of their errors. When they discover that they are loved by God, they will discover in the framework of their own realities, the relative and limited side to things that they hold as absolute. It is for them to discover in Christ, God's YES to their deepest hopes. And though remaining Indian, Indian to the deepest core of their being, they will be able to accept Christ without rejecting their people and their culture. At the heart of their own myths, the Indians will meet Christ. Then, the gospel will truly be the Good News for them. It will make them more Indian than ever because their myths will have attained their fulfilment in Christ. Clement of Alexandria has said, 'The One God was discovered ethically by the Greeks, 'Jewishly' by the Jews, and spiritually by the Christians.' We may add, 'And God must be discovered Indianly by the Indians.'

## 8. Conditions for the Evangelization and Christian Instruction of the Indians

The following conditions are at the

heart of evangelization and Christian instruction among the Indians.

a. Knowledge from within of their life as Jesus himself knew the life of his people. The people's myths must be studied.

b. Living among the Indians, as Jesus himself lived among his people for thirty years. (We must never forget that the twelve tribes had 1800 years of preparation before Christ!) Only by *convivencia* does knowledge become concrete and alive.

c. A living faith and a conviction that God is already at work in the lives of the Indians, guiding them towards Christ. The constant interplay between study and *convivencia* will bring both the evangelist and the evangelized to discover how the Good News of the liberating presence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is at work in their lives and in their history. The result of such an evangelizing process will be that the evangelizers end up being 'evangelized' by those they teach.

## 9. Some Signs of the Times that Require the Attention of Evangelizers

Evangelists must always give attention to the signs of God. Today some graphic signs in the life and history of the Indians, reveal the stages by which God is leading them towards Christ.

a. **The Return of The Myths.** In a number of places Indians are once again interested in their own heritage. They are starting to retell their myths, and recover their stories, customs and festivals. For example, an Amazon *pajé* (religious leader) travelled all the way to Colombia in order to meet someone who could furnish him with a name for a genealogical list. In the Old Testament, during times of crisis, the same re-awakening took place as the people re-interpreted old traditions in the light of the present. Each re-interpretation marked a stage in the journey of the Jewish people towards Christ. Today the return to Indian myths, conditioned and motivated by a

number of social, economic and political factors, is a sign of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is at work leading his people towards Resurrection. It is of the nature of evangelization to encourage this return.

b. Time becomes history. As previously noted, myth has an ecstatic vision of time. It is like a revolving disc, always describing the same circle, never shifting from its spindle. This is the cyclical time of the eternal return. But in Peru, the Indians are beginning to discover a new notion of time, the prophetic, or linear notion. The disc rights itself, becomes a wheel and travels on. The Indians are beginning to retell their history, no longer as a cyclical phenomenon meant to absorb and neutralize historical events, but as a journey which has a starting point and a destination. Time is becoming history, and the people are on the move.

c. The diversity of Indian cultures. The fact that there are over 280 different Indian languages in Brazil, is enough to show that it is not possible to arrive at a uniform plan of evangelization. We must respect the individuality of each tribe. For example, everyone does not attach the same meaning to names - water, wine, the cross, tradition, kinship, marriage, death, and the afterlife. Each tribe has its universe and its 'religion'. Each has its own 'Old Testament,' its own path towards Christ.

d. Land rights. The urgent problem of the land is perhaps the greatest sign of the times by which God issues his call to those who evangelize.

#### D. EVANGELIZATION AND THE PROBLEM OF THE LAND

##### 1. The Problem

Many people say that the land is an economic and political problem, which bears no relation to evangelization. Some go so far as to say that the CIMI (Missionary Council for Indigenous Peoples) should worry less about land rights and more about the gospel. I

disagree. The land occupies as central a place in the bible, as it does in the life of the Indians. Seeking a land, taking possession of it and fixing its boundaries were fundamental for the Hebrew people. This continues to be so today in the lives of the Indians - that is why evangelists cannot ignore the problem, or say that it has nothing to do with the gospel.

When the bible speaks of the 'land' or the 'promised land', it does not refer to a spiritual place understood as a 'heavenly homeland'. This expression did not make its appearance until the 'material' homeland had already exercised its influence over the people. When the Old Testament speaks of 'land' or the search for a land, it means land in its most literal sense. Land as the object of disputes and struggle, coveted by many, but in reality offering refuge only to some.

##### 2. Land and Its Possession in The Old Testament

Abraham left his country and set out in search of another. Seeking a land, taking possession of it was an integral part of the people's cultural transition from nomads to cultivators. In possession of their land, the twelve tribes spread the 'invisible web' of the stories of their myths over a territory and turned the land into their 'home.' The land became their stage set, the 'space' where they encountered one another and their God. It was much more than a mere parcel of ground used for sustenance. It was not just an economic necessity, a means of producing crops. The land, this land, was the people's domain, where they found their identity. For this reason, the boundaries of the land were defined with great precision. Uncertainty in the demarcation of the land, reflected a people's uncertainty about their identity.

For the same reason, the holy sites were fixed and explained as places where the tribal patriarchs once passed. The people crisscrossed their country and made pilgrimages to these sanctuaries. They served as points for



remembering their identity as a people. People made their way to these sanctuaries when they wanted to encounter themselves, their past, and their God.

The Jewish people struggled for 200 years in defence of their borders and it led them to adopt a new system of government, the monarchy. Their struggles fill the pages of Judges and Samuel. The unification of their national territory was the origin of a new consciousness. In accord with the mentality of those times, the 'land' meant the territory where God reigned. Those who lived outside that territory put themselves outside the protection of their God. Thus when David had to flee before Absalom, he lamented bitterly that by fleeing outside the land, he would be going away from God's protection.

The loss of the land during the Exile was the greatest crisis in the history of the people of the Old Testament, because they lost their natural 'abode,' the land which gave them their identity. At the end of the exile, King Cyrus of Persia supported the people's return. Return was re-birth. Even without independence, they recovered their identity, for they were back in their own country. The 'land' was their memory; its mountains, rivers, sanctuaries all reminded them of who they were. The return from exile was a return to the father's house, a re-birth.

### 3. Teaching the Gospel

The problem of the land is fundamental to the Indians survival. To an Indian, the 'land' is much more than a parcel of ground that allows him to plant, harvest and eat his fill. Its first purpose is to be 'lived with' (which is what *convivencia* means). The language Indians use for the features of their land is tender and poetic. They live with the trees, the rivers, the animals,

the rocks, the mountains, the flowers. The possession and demarcation of their lands, under their own control and in accordance with their ancient traditions, is a fundamental element on their journey towards Christ.

Threatened with losing the land, they need a modern-day Cyrus to help them defend their land or recover what once belonged to them, as the twelve tribes of the bible did after their long exile of 400 years. The struggle for the defence of the Indians' lands is an evangelical task in our days, just as Cyrus' work was evangelical. If the people of the Old Testament had not returned to their country after the Exile, Christ could not have come as he did and history would not have been the same.

### CONCLUSION

All this brings me to say that the land is a critical point today in the Indians' journey towards Christ. Through it, God is issuing a call to those who believe in him and to those who wish to be his fellow-workers. He is asking us to walk with our brothers and sisters, so that they may live and not be destroyed. In the future, the great beneficiaries of today's struggle will not be the Indians but all peoples. We will all share the riches that the Indians will discover when they encounter Christ.

God gave the Jewish people the chance to live their Old Testament before the advent of the New Testament. The Indians must have - must receive - their chance to live their *Old Testament* in order to encounter Christ. To help and to encourage them to live these stages in their journey is the work of evangelization and the goal of the evangelizer.

Ref. *Nelen Yubu*, No.50, Autumn 1992.  
"Dadirri" P.O. Box 156, Drummoyne,  
N.S.W. 2047.



# SECULARIZATION AND INDIA: MODERNIZATION AND RELIGION IN AN EASTERN COUNTRY

Michael Amaladoss, SJ

*(Contemporary discussion presents secularization as a normal consequence of modernization. However, what constitutes secularization remains an unresolved question. There is a growing recognition that the process is conditioned by various cultural and socio-political conditions. Father Amaladoss explores the dimensions of this topic with reference to one country, India, but the implications are universal for mission).*

A certain tension between tradition and modernity is normal in the on-going dynamic progression of history. Every age claims to be modern compared to the ages preceding it. But most people give the term 'modernity' a particular content. Its elements are: the development of science and technology, with their consequent industrialization and urbanization, the growth of communication media, with regard to speed and extent, the use of reason in the search for knowledge and in technical and social organization, and finally the movement to a democratic model from a feudal political order. All these elements I would add have positive and negative poles.

## Science

Science, tries to understand nature, using the principles of rationality and immanence. It discounts non-rational and preter-natural factors in the explanation of natural phenomena. It tries rather to discover the laws that make nature function. A knowledge of the laws of nature makes possible prevision, control and production. Science demythologizes nature, and purifies religion from magic. But it can also lead to rationalism, which denies anything that cannot be comprehended

by reason. Rationalism cannot tolerate mysteries, even the mystery of the divine.

## Technology

Technology is the mechanical means developed for exploiting nature. It can facilitate development, increase production, control disease, or produce armaments. Technology can destroy nature and the environment, while creating the illusion that human beings are in control.

Industrialization promotes mass production and in so doing satisfies the needs of the poor for livelihood. It creates employment, a process which leads to the accumulation of capital, either private or state owned, and to a growing gap between the rich and the poor. Mass production gives rise to consumerism, creating artificial needs through marketing and advertising techniques. Efficiency and marketability become the only goals and profit the only motive for economic activity.

## Urbanization

Industrialization and the consequent market economy provoke the process of urbanization. On the one hand, this

helps to promote freedom and social mobility. But, it also gives rise to an atmosphere of individualism, egoism and competition. Traditional family relationships break up. Rootless masses of people are drawn to urban slums through immigration. Change characterizes relationships between people, between human beings and nature. Constant hurry and tension mar daily life.

#### Communication

Global communication can facilitate mutual knowledge and relationships through the sharing of information and increased mobility. Communication media can also be controlled and used to disseminate propaganda - some of it false. Mass communication is employed to promote economic growth, by creating needs through advertisements. Material for the evasion of life's harsher realities is produced in the form of entertainment.

#### Socio-Political Models

Changes in production methods have influenced the movement from feudal to more democratic forms of socio-political organization. Real power however tends to be with the rich; politicians are at the service of the economic elite. In any case, the economy rather than principle, fuels the hidden agenda of political action.

#### Tradition and Modernity

Looking at the process of modernization in this way, we see it not primarily as a socio-cultural reality focused on rationalization, but as a broad-based structure with an economic and political context which develops at the levels of ideology, ethos (values) and social relationships. We see that these developments are not natural or automatic, but involve the mediation of human freedom and choice. There is therefore a moral dimension to it. Rationality need not lead to rationalism. Productive abundance need not give rise to consumerism. Freedom need not lead to individualism and selfishness. The element of choice may be conditioned by historical and psychological factors similar to those that lead

adolescents in every generation to take their distance from their elders. Ultimately, growth comes out of a process of tension between tradition and modernity.

#### SECULARIZATION

The term 'secularization' discriminates between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' and emphasizes the growing independence of the 'secular' from the 'sacred.'

The starting point is a situation in which religion, representing the 'sacred,' provides the englobing meaning system for society. Religion underlies the way people look at the world and organize themselves as a community. It points to the proximate and ultimate goals of life that determine the system of values that governs human choices.

#### Impact of Modernization

The impact of modernization on this holistic reality is to introduce a process of differentiation. The physical sciences seek to provide autonomous systems of meaning at their own level so that religion is no longer a kind of *deus ex machina* used to explain physical phenomena. The social sciences try to imitate the autonomy of the physical sciences. The role of religion is then reduced to providing the ultimate meaning of life and reality. This can lead to a purification of religion from roles in society that are not proper to it. Some people, of course, can choose to live in the present and not bother about ultimate perspectives - that is, until they are shocked into asking ultimate questions through their personal experience of the 'problem of evil' or of the mystery of death.

#### Church and State

Where the dimension of the sacred has been institutionalized in society, such a growing differentiation can lead to a conflict between 'Church' and 'State' - the 'sacred' and the 'secular'. Thus a conflict in meaning may become a political conflict that triggers off moral postures and choices with regard

to roles that are not central to religion. These attitudes may also affect its function of providing meaning in life. The separation between Church and State may take legal or constitutional form so that a state that affirms its neutrality with regard to religion is called a secular state. The neutrality may be positive or negative when affirming a strict separation from any religious perspective.

### Religion as Institution

In so far as the process of modernization is due to mobility and freedom, it affects family and community structures, liberates individuals, affirms their freedom and choice of religious practice and frees them from traditional social support and control. This loosening of social control also affects other areas - politics, economics and relationships. In the field of religion this is seen as privatization of faith and religious practice. Such privatization has its impact again on religion as institution. One could say that it favours charismatic elements in religion over against institutional ones.

### Secularism as Ideology

The process of secularization may lead some to the acceptance of secularism as an ideology. Secularism has no use for ultimate meanings. It denies transcendence. It affirms the absolute autonomy of the 'secular' world. Most people may not hold to the ideology of secularism, but behave as secularists in practice. They are indifferent to the transcendent in life. Rationalism and secularism are philosophical positions and not scientific conclusions. Indifference to religious practice may be as much a moral choice as the unintended consequence of a style of life characterized by consumerism and a rapid pace.

Secularism, however, need not be the natural consequence of the process of secularization nor that of modernization. Many people who had proclaimed the death of God are now having second thoughts as they see the resurgence of religion. Sociologists now acknowledge that while modernization leads to

secularization as a growing differentiation of social institutions and an increasing autonomy of the 'secular' in relation to the 'sacred', religion and the sacred are not disappearing. They may in fact be finding new forms of expression. Besides, the tensions of modern life seem to be producing newer forms of religious response. Some people seek to be evasive of the tensions, looking for peace in the midst of a troubled world. Others find easy security in fundamentalism, as a bulwark against the uncertainties of modern life. Still others search for certainty and knowledge in various gnostic speculations and pseudo-scientific pursuits.

## MODERNIZATION IN INDIA

Though I have spoken of modernization in a general way, we now have to consider the manner in which it has affected India. I shall do so by developing three points: the bearers of modernization, the manner of modernization - especially in relation to westernization, and finally the effects of modernization. My aim here is not to explore the whole process of modernization in India, but to provide a context for this discussion of secularization.

### Bearers of Modernization

Among the bearers of modernization, I would like to comment briefly on four: education, development, political action and communication.

(1) Through education people are exposed to new ideas that challenge traditional beliefs and convictions. India has not yet attained universal literacy, but the school is not the only means of contact with new ideas. Mass media, the radio, film and television are bearers of new ideas to every corner of the country.

(2) Secondly, various development programmes have taken the practical message of science to all parts of the country. There is no one in India who does not know about electricity, pumps and fertilizers in the field of agricul-

ture and modern hospitals and medicines in the field of health.

(3) Though traditional socio-political structures have not disappeared, especially in rural areas, the phenomenon of elections has conveyed ideas of dignity and equality, freedom and participation, ideologies and their implementation.

(4) Communication and urbanization have facilitated mobility, which has not destroyed, but loosened family and caste structures.

#### Westernization

Owing to the colonial experience, modernization in India has taken the form of westernization. A well-known Indian sociologist, M. N. Srinivas, opts for the term, westernization, to describe what has been happening in India. From a material point of view, westernization explains the speed with which modernization has come to India - a colonized country. But at the cultural and political level, this mediation has provoked different kinds of reactions. At the religio-cultural level, the reaction has been one of re-discovery and reform of one's past heritage. Westernization has therefore led to a religio-cultural renaissance.

The movement for independence has also led to a search for identity. Religion is one of the roots of personal and social identity. Nationalism has led to a religious revival. This revival has been both reformist as exemplified by people like Tagore, Aurobindo and Gandhi and fundamentalist as represented by the RSS (*Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh*) and the Bharatiya Janata Party. A few like Nehru have focused on culture, but culture eventually uncovers its links with religion. It should be noted that the religious revival in India was serious enough to lead to the partition of the country at the moment of independence.

#### Effects of Modernization

What have been the effects of modernization, especially with reference to religion? Caste structures have been loosened, although they have not lost

their force as elements of social organization. On the contrary, they have acquired a political significance in constituting democratic pressure groups. They are losing their ritual and religious significance, not only for the relationship between the castes, but for the caste itself.

Secondly, there has been a universalization of religious symbols - some might consider it a purification. Certain elements of popular belief characteristic of the Little Traditions are disappearing and are being identified with or replaced by corresponding elements of the Great Tradition. In this way, modernization has promoted what has been called, *sanskritization*, not only in the cultural, but also in the religious sphere. Localized gods and cults are either disappearing or being integrated into a wider network, by being considered as a local manifestation of a more universally known and revered divinity. While this process may emphasize transcendental aspects of religion, the tensions of a developing country have helped to preserve pragmatic rituals, while the requirement of social belonging has kept alive rites of passage at key moments of life - birth, marriage and death.

Modern means of communication, facilitating travel and assembly, have democratized and popularized festivals, religious practices like devotional rituals and pilgrimages to sacred places.

Probably the most problematic effect of modernization in India is the experience of believers, belonging to different religious traditions, living together in one civil society and the impact of this experience on their religious beliefs and practices. The Constitution of the Indian Republic has established a secular State, open to all religions, though linked to none. In so far as a religion claims to be an englobing, meaningful system that influences all aspects of life, this effort to carve out a secular, civil sphere common to all citizens, whatever their religion, is a challenge to all religions to secularize themselves in the political sphere. The West has lived out this experience as the conflict between Church and State.

In India, since other religions are not organized and institutionalized in the same way as the Catholic Church, the experience is being undergone in different and tense ways. This is one area that is worth exploration in the discussion of secularization.

## SECULARIZATION IN INDIA

Has the process of modernization started a process of secularization in India? If the result of secularization is seen as secularism, then the answer is 'No.' Modernization has not led to any noticeable reduction in either religious belief or practice. David L. Gosling in a survey on the attitudes of Indian scientists to religion found nearly 80% declaring themselves to be religiously inclined. The survey itself, I contend, is flawed because it seems to assume an inevitable conflict between science and religion, particularly Hindu beliefs. This is a false presupposition. The distinction between the 'Real' and the 'unreal' or relatively real, as expressed in the well-known prayer: "Lead me from the unreal to the Real!", indicates that Indians would not place religion and science on the same plane.

### Religion in Society

Ambedkar in the north of India and E.V. Ramasamy in the south illustrate this point. Ambedkar fought for the liberation of the *Dalits*, outcastes in Hindu society. When he was convinced that the caste system was integral to Hinduism and that there was no hope of real liberation from within Hinduism, he rejected it as a system. Although he became Buddhist along with many of his followers, it was not because he rejected Hinduism as a religion. The link between Hinduism and the caste system prompted his choice.

E.V. Ramasamy was the founder of the *Dravida Kazhagam* (the Dravidian Movement.) Anti-Brahminism was one of its main planks. E.V.R. or Periyar (the Elder), as he was popularly known, declared himself an atheist. He extolled the secular character of Dravidian (Tamil) culture. Though he may have had a hard-core of followers who con-

sidered themselves atheist, most of the others followed him in his anti-Brahmin, anti-north postures and were not anti-religious. When this group splintered and the majority, as members of the Dravidian Progressive Movement, entered the political process, their attitude to religion became 'secular' in the Constitutional sense.

### Phenomenon of Secularization in India

The phenomenon of secularization in India can be analysed at four levels: belief or world view, ritual or practice, social system and political organization.

#### a. Belief

At the level of belief we see an on-going re-interpretation that operates by differentiating between reality and its manifestation in symbol. This effort is made both at the popular and at the elitist levels. At the popular level, surveys in different places in South India have shown that under the impact of modernity people may have given up belief in some local divinities, but there is continuing belief in a universal divine being, often described in terms of power (*shakti*). There is no hesitation in accepting various divinities as local manifestations of this one power. Some of these divinities may even cut across religious lines.

A distinction is made between this world as a relative and as an absolute ground. Thus peasants belonging to a Marxist organization, fighting for their rights and exposed to the atheist ideology of Marxism, still believe in the need for religion and in the power of the Absolute. Concepts like fate and speculations like astrology are given a certain validity at a phenomenal level, when no other reason seems available. When a convincing reason is at hand they are easily abandoned. Reflection at this level seems independent of belief in the Absolute. At the phenomenal level, one feels free either to reinterpret traditional symbols, to choose among them, or even to abandon them.

We see the same search for an absolute ground among the élite. The Absolute is cosmic, humanistic, creative

and artistic and thus rises beyond the limitations of traditional symbols. The Absolute however is not abstract, but can be very attractive as shown in devotional hymns. In Aurobindo, the Absolute takes a metaphysical form - idealistic and evolutive; and so progressively transcends and integrates the plurality of relative reality. For Gandhi, the Absolute is of the moral order, centred on Truth (*satyagraha*) and its pursuit in love (*ahimsa*). Political action is raised to the realm of the Spirit. Radhakrishnan saw the Absolute as philosophical, the advaitic reality that transcends, while integrating the varieties of name and form. He called for dialogue and mutual understanding. For Jawaharlal Nehru, the Absolute was humanistic, manifested as a civil religion which guaranteed freedom, dignity, equality and justice to every human being. Nehru was not particularly religious in any traditional sense, but he was not an atheist either.

These are representative samples. What they show is an effort to rise beyond particularities to a universal level, while remaining in the context of the Great Tradition of Hinduism. Their re-interpretations may be more sophisticated than the popular ones I referred to in the previous paragraph, but they are of the same order. Sacred narratives like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are acquiring a new presence through the medium of television and a new relevance through interpretation.

#### b. Ritual

At the level of ritual, the tendency is to simplify, 'purify' or sanskritize and socialize. The *samskaras* or sacraments, for instance, are reduced to a minimum that mark the essential rites of passage at birth, marriage and death. Bloody sacrifices are slowly disappearing. Festivals, without losing their roots in religion, are also becoming social events, expressions of identity and community. The media and other means of communication have democratized religious practice, especially in the forms of sacred music, pilgrimage and celebration.

#### c. Social Systems

Religious practice is becoming more personal, in so far as it is losing the support of social structures. Owing to the pressures of modernity, particularly in urban settings and to the phenomenon of the mobility and fragmentation of family units, the family as the context of ritual action seems to be disappearing. It is being replaced by other forms of public religious activity such as temple worship and sacred discourse. The caste system which had a religious foundation, described in terms of purity and pollution in life and in ritual action, continues as a socio-political structure. Its religious dimensions are disappearing. The rules of purity and pollution are no longer strictly applied. Open caste discrimination is illegal.

The *Dalits* themselves refuse to accept their ritual roles. Temples today are open to all. The hierarchy among the Gods which reflected the hierarchy of the caste system is being democratized through re-interpretation. The changes in the social order have challenged some of the legitimating functions of religion and in the process have relativised the legitimating role of religion itself in relation to society. This has brought about a growing differentiation between religion and society.

#### d. Political Organization

The option India made to become a 'secular' State at the time of independence from British rule, and the choice of Pakistan to become a Muslim State, were very significant decisions in the process of secularization. The Constitution of India codifies the first choice when it guarantees:

to all its citizens: *Justice*, social, economic and political; *Liberty* of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; *Equality* of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all *Fraternity*, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation. (The Preamble)

This ideal is obviously a 'secular,' this-worldly one, not related to any particular religion. The liberty given to religious belief and practice is further spelt out in Articles 25 and 26. Article 25 states:

(1) subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate religion.

(2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law:

a. regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;

b. providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

What is important to note is not the freedom given for religion, but the restrictions imposed on it in the name of public order, morality, health and the right of the State to regulate all aspects of the lives of believers. By removing certain areas of life from religious control and subjecting them to the control of the State, the Constitution imposes a process of secularization on religions.

#### Law and Religious Pluralism

The Constitution was framed with a desire to respect all religions in the context of pluralism. At the same time it had to affirm and defend fundamental human and social rights. The Constitution aimed at the formulation of a common civil code (Article 44) that would be applicable to all believers. Not willing to accomplish this by force, it allowed the continuation of personal and customary law, especially for religious minorities.

#### Hinduism

Different religions reacted differently to this situation. In the case of Hinduism, the Law Courts have con-

sistently imposed the secular model whenever it has been in conflict with claims made in the name of religious belief. Religion has been limited to the private and family sphere. A secular space was created in the public domain. Positive legislation has progressively limited the role of religion in the secular sphere. In the case of Hinduism, a certain secularization, a differentiation between religion and society is being promoted by law.

#### Islam

Islam has reacted differently and has also been treated differently. Defending their minority status, Muslims have clung to their personal law, resisting all efforts to move towards a common civil code. The State, in response, has bent over backwards to accommodate them. Among Muslims themselves, there are different opinions, a minority supports a secularizing approach to their religion with regard to its impact on social life.

#### Fundamentalism

Our consideration of the process of secularization in India will not be complete without some reference to the rise of fundamentalism and communalism, particularly among the Sikhs and the Hindus. Communalism implies that people who share a common belief also share common economic and political interests. It exploits the integrative power of religion for economic and political ends. For this purpose, it also promotes a certain fundamentalism in religion as a means of affirming a separate identity.

The rise of communalism comes as a challenge to the identity of India as a religiously pluralistic community. The only creative way of meeting this challenge seems to be to develop a new Great Tradition in which society is not seen as a totally autonomous secular sphere that is somehow cut off from various religions, but as a communion promoted through a method of dialogue and consensus. This will lead not only to a convergence on values, in mutual respect for varieties of beliefs and traditions, but also to a necessary secularization of every religion. By so



doing, each religion will learn to distinguish the absolute ground of its belief and practice from the relative manifestations of it in symbols and action in the secular sphere.

### EAST AND WEST

The title of this article seems to invite a comparative reflection. Since I have not described secularization in the West, it is unfair to make a comparison. So I shall try to limit myself to comments on our Indian experience, without perhaps being able to avoid an implicit comparison.

Secularization is not new in India. Buddhism is a secular religion compared to Hinduism. It not only rejects Brahmanic ritual and social order, it limits its concern to life in this world and chooses not to speak of the transcendent. Buddhism stresses morality and seeks to remove suffering through compassion and self-discipline. It is a religion of lay people, which stresses a positive role for women. Various *Bhakti* traditions seek to counter the radical differentiation between the renouncer of the world and the householder.

The *Avatar* is both immanent and transcendent and gives positive value to life in the world. The two great Epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*, illustrate the ethical complexities of secular life, within the context of ultimate liberation or *moksha*. The *Bhagavad Gita* seeks to legitimize conflict in the pursuit of justice and promotes the *karma marga* or the way of action.

### Sikhism

In the middle ages, Sikhism began as a secular religion, distancing itself from rituals and images and eventually seeking to found an earthly kingdom. The Dravidian culture of the South had its own secular tradition, evident in its early poetry, but continued in later traditions from the 16th through the 20th centuries.

### A Tradition of Tolerance

Though sectarian conflict was not absent, there is in general a tradition of tolerance in India with regard to differing world views. Where a merely rational approach sees contradiction and lack of logic, a holistic approach based on symbol sees opposites as complementary. While a concept is developed through logic, a symbol calls for constant interpretation. There are no sharp dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, matter and spirit, this world and the next. This approach does not spell confusion, but differentiated integration in a holistic totality. Such a holistic approach has been helped by, what A.K. Ramanujam has called, a context-sensitive way of thought. The context is as important as the text and is integral to the process of signification; the text is not isolated in the abstract. This can of course lead to a rigid stratification as in the caste system. But it can also lead to integration in a structured totality that respects differences.

Hinduism is neither institutional nor monolithic. This has avoided a conflictual relationship with the forces of modernization. Problems can be sorted out without complicating them through the introduction of institutional structures and personal tensions. The multi-valent character of Hinduism offers a space for mobility and freedom.

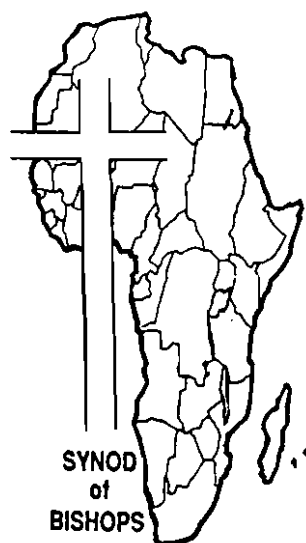
### CONCLUSION

Secularization understood as the progressive differentiation of social institutions, and an increasing autonomy of the 'secular' in relation to the 'sacred' is an inevitable consequence of modernization. Secularization however need not lead to secularism. In a religiously pluralistic society, secularization is even necessary as a means of promoting communion in difference.

Ref. *Exchange*, Vol. 21:1, April 1992,  
Journal of Missiological and  
Ecumenical Research, Rapenburg 61  
2311 GJ Leiden, The Netherlands.

# THE SYNOD FOR AFRICA

## FIVE THEMES AND SOME ISSUES AT STAKE



Chukwuma J. Okoye, CSSp

as underlined in the quotation from Acts 1:8, continually moves from the centre outward in order to bring the whole creation under the dominion of Christ. The Church, of course, nourishes herself from the same Gospel, hence proclamation includes the preaching of the Gospel to those 'inside' as well. The word, proclamation, however, calls attention in the first place to mission and missionary preaching of the Gospel.

### Mission

The Holy Ghost Congregation held a seminar last year for its members engaged in first evangelization. Participants were surprised to learn that so many peoples in Africa had barely been reached. Some of these peoples are now within the boundaries of dioceses, but it is often the case that the pastoral approaches of the diocese do not suit the missionary situations. Some bishops lack the funds and the trained personnel to look after the more missionary areas of their diocese. African missionaries are now increasing in number, but they generally lack the type of material and financial support which their counterparts enjoy. Diocesan clergy have begun to respond generously to the demands of mission, but the support systems need to be improved; also, more specific training for mission is needed.

### Introduction

On 6th January, 1989, Pope John Paul II announced a Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, and gave as the theme, *The Church in Africa Towards the Third Millennium*. This theme later expanded to become, *The Church in Africa and its Mission of Evangelization towards the year 2000; You will be my Witnesses* (Acts 1:8). Evangelization thus became the ultimate goal of this Synod. It is to be treated under five aspects, namely, proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and the means of social communication. In an earlier article,<sup>1</sup> I traced the genesis and objectives of this Synod. Here I intend to consider each of these five aspects marked for discussion, and to highlight certain underlying issues.

### 1. PROCLAMATION

Proclamation (*kerussein*) is the activity of a herald who has been sent to announce Good News. It therefore, denotes that missionary preaching whereby the Church carries the Gospel to the entire creation (Mk. 16:15), and,

### Missionary Cooperation

The clouds of debate have dispersed since F. Eboussi Boulaga, in 1974,<sup>2</sup> provoked the controversy on 'démision.' Missionary Institutes are needed and wanted in Africa to work in respectful dialogue and co-

responsibility with the particular Churches. An African bishop outlined the following areas of continued cooperation with missionary institutes:

mission to the unevangelized, deepening of faith, specialized apostolates, like the formation ministry (seminaries, novitiates, catechists' training centres, formation of lay leaders), urban apostolate, chaplaincies.<sup>3</sup>

Institutes which have resources but few personnel may wish to twin with indigenous foundations whom they may help both in formation and mission. They may also wish to do this for dioceses and even individual missionaries. Michael Decraene, (Superior General of the Scheut Missionary Congregation), suggested at a Commission VI Meeting in Rome of 26 November, 1990 that institutes could help provide recent books for libraries of seminaries and formation houses, and perhaps also grant bursaries for studies.

#### Vocations

Some missionary institutes have opened their doors to Africans. This is good provided that the effort required for mutual adaptation is made. In recent times, hundreds of institutes are pouring into Africa, many of them uniquely interested in vocations. Some of them have no roots in the place and no intention of sending down roots. Some institutes in Europe get vocations through the post. African girls in particular, are 'posted' to institutes they know nothing about, to serve, in some cases, to keep certain services going. It would seem to be in order to require that an institute be known and settled in a country for some time before it begins recruiting, or at least, that the first discernment of a vocation be necessarily done at home.

#### Missionary Priorities

The evangelization of the unreached is the top mission priority; beside it in Africa today, comes attention to the élite and to urban dwellers. The educated class and the élite in various institutions of learning are the agents of cultural change; they set the pattern

that is followed. The new mission is directed more towards evangelization of culture than to salvation of individuals. African cities double in population every few years. There is an influx to the cities, of people of different languages and cultures, many of them uprooted from the traditional religion of their homes and left rootless in towns. These are the people whom the Sects seem to reach better than us. Perhaps we need to revise our structures, perhaps the concepts of the territorial parish needs some adjustment. In any case, no parish must any longer be satisfied with the 'station service' approach. Each parish must strive to realize its missionary potential.

#### Small Christian Communities

Some regional conferences, for example, IMBISA and AMECEA (in 1973 in Nairobi and in 1976 at Zomba) have made an option for Small Christian Communities. Francophone areas sometimes call them, Living Christian Communities. Sometimes, the same idea is presented in the concept of Church as *Eglise*, *Famille de Dieu*, (Church as Family of God). The hope is that these communities will bring the faith down to the level of village and local quarter, to the concerns of daily living and to a web of relationships.<sup>4</sup>

The avoidance of the Latin American terminology, Basic Christian Community, would seem to be intentional. SCCs, in Africa, do not necessarily copy the praxis method and commitment to liberative struggle or even the particular 'liberative' reading of scripture of the BCCs. Yet, in Africa, SCC's are also meant to be a new way of being Church, of faith-sharing and of linking scripture to life, of diakonia and transformation of society through the force of the Gospel; a way of being Church as a 'communion of services,' where the necessary services to be rendered surge from within the community, and all feel equally responsible for evangelization and mission.

In this sense, the SCC's seem to have hardly started in Africa. Bishop James Holme-Siedle could write that "people have not the faintest idea what the

Small Christian Community is all about."<sup>5</sup> SCC's have either been confused with prayer groups or have become convenient parish out-stations or administrative sections. Bishops and priests fear that the SCC's could challenge their authority, deviate into fundamentalist or 'Protestant' interpretation of scripture, or worse, become splinter groups. In the judgment of an African theologian<sup>6</sup> genuine Small Christian Communities would demand changes in the present system of Church government.

### The Experiment with Bakambi

An experiment in evolving new forms of Church organization would be the *bakambi ba paroisse*, installed by the Zaire episcopate in 1975.<sup>7</sup> Bakambi are lay parish administrators to whom the bishop entrusts parishes, leaving the pastoral care of souls to the priest. Other lay faithful may be installed as parish assistants and pastoral animators in various fields. It should be recalled that jurisdiction or power of governance in the Church is no longer seen as requiring ordination, hence canon 129.2 foresees the cooperation of the lay faithful in the exercise of jurisdiction. Canon 517.2 allows the diocesan bishop, in case of shortage of priests, to grant a share in the exercise of pastoral care of a parish to a deacon, to other persons who are not priests, or to a community of persons, provided that a priest with faculties acts as moderator. The *bakambi* experiment recognizes administration as a charism of Christ's faithful not necessarily tied to ordination, and ministry as a concertation of 'services' within the community of which cult is only one.

### Authority and Participation

In the early stages of discussion on the *Lineamenta*, one heard a lot of criticism of the model of authority in the African Church. The danger is that this concern will not even appear in the Agenda of the Synod. Paul Gifford<sup>8</sup> satirizes the 'Big Man' complex among political leaders in Africa. He comments sadly that "many Churches have in large measure adopted this model of leadership" leading to a "Big Man dis-

ease among Church leaders and Christian council heads." If there is to be 'grassroots mobilization,' the Church in Africa would have to go behind certain models of Church government borrowed from feudalism in order to recover the dynamism of early Christian communities in the New Testament. This corresponds very much with the dynamism of village leadership, as opposed to political leadership in Africa.

### The School

In the early 70's, governments in Africa began to nationalize schools and other services hitherto run by Voluntary Agencies. What was at stake was not only state interventionism and the desire of new and insecure governments to control everything. There is evidence that certain leading foreign lending bodies insisted on this even though it meant simply more government spending. The Churches were right to oppose as unjust, the takeover of schools without compensation. The move, however, proved providential. It forced a re-thinking of the apostolate through schools, and incited the building of proper churches to replace the 'school-churches' taken over by government.

Governments failed to provide proper education in many places and are now asking Churches either to take back the schools or to build and administer new ones. This plea could be heeded where Churches have the means, provided that these Catholic schools do not become the preserve of the rich and the élite.

However, a re-thinking of schools seems called for. The earlier idea of a Catholic school was in the context of a 'church of the sacristy,' more concerned with itself than with the world. The Church should show itself ready to contribute to building society and to availing of the missionary opportunities afforded by the government school system.

### Formation

If one single priority is to be chosen, then surely it must be forma-

tion. Evangelization in Africa has passed through four periods with four different emphases.<sup>9</sup> From the earliest days until the Congress of Berlin (1885), it was the Christian village; then came the age of the catechist (until 1914); schools and teacher training colleges held the field until about 1950 - it was important to produce colonial administrative cadres; with independence around the corner, the Church began to emphasize seminaries and a native clergy.

Today emphasis must shift from bricks and mortar, and from the trio of church - school - hospital. It is time to implement the option of the 1987 Lagos Assembly of SECAM, to concentrate on formation of all sections of the People of God, priests, religious and the lay faithful. A bishop in Tanzania has started just such a programme - the undifferentiated formation of pastoral agents to serve, according to discernment and vocation, as priests, religious men and women, lay leaders.

## 2. INCULTURATION

Inculturation is not just a matter of the liturgy; it is my life as a Christian of Africa.<sup>10</sup> It is the meeting of faith with the depths of culture, "an interior transformation of authentic cultural values through integration into Christianity and the rooting of Christianity in various human cultures."<sup>11</sup> It is "Jesus at the centre of a new dance drumming a new rhythm"<sup>12</sup> wholly for Africa!

There are at least three levels of culture:

- forms, or symbols and particular traits apart from their meaning;
- functions, or the meanings, underlying relationships and institutions;
- psychology of a society, or the basic assumptions, values, drives; the starting-points in reasoning, reacting and motivating.<sup>13</sup>

This last tends to persist despite changes in external forms and conditions of a people. Inculturation deals more appropriately with this level of

culture seen as "a set of meanings and values informing a common way of life."<sup>14</sup> As an on-going process, inculturation takes account of social change, but it rejects that cultural imperialism which is hopeful that western culture will soon conquer and subject Africa also.

A caveat is in order here. It is said that in the United States of America, the Catholic Church seems identified with the élite and the middle class, whereas the Baptist Church seems to be the church of the blacks and lower classes. There are sub-sections even within a culture; care must be taken to exclude no segments of a populace.

### The Attraction of the Sects.

The Sects and African Independent churches wield an attraction especially over marginalized and new urban dwellers. Some of the reasons given for their attraction are the following: healing and care of the sick; ability to deal with evil spirits and witches; search for salvation in the circumstances of daily living; strong sense of solidarity and mutual help; an inculturated liturgy with free expression of prayer and of feelings; adherents quickly given challenges and responsibility. The Church in Africa has a question to answer as to how far it has made Gospel and Church a place where African Catholics are at home.

### Health

African societies relate physical health to spiritual well-being. Illness is a manifestation of deeply disturbed relationships. Healing means also the overcoming of adverse spiritual forces, the restoration of peace and reconciliation. It is thus that healing usually assumes the form of a religious ceremony.<sup>15</sup> The Church in Africa must find an adequate pastoral response to sickness and health so conceived.

### Marriage

In some localities, as high as 80% of adults are said to live in irregular unions.<sup>16</sup> The reasons most frequently

given are the high cost of bridewealth, migrant labour, and especially the African traditional 'marriage in stages.' It should be noted, however, that this situation is by no means general, and that there are places which record as high as over 90% regular unions. In fact, sometimes diverse missionary approaches have produced one or the other result among people with similar cultures! Be that as it may, it is in the area of marriage that one hears more often the call for an African Code of Canon Law. There is, for example, the suggestion that the sexual act (which now ratifies marriage) could give way to the conjugal act, understood as any act which in a given culture ratifies marriage. An example would be the girl being sent to cook for the prospective husband.<sup>17</sup>

### Liturgy

African instruments, song, dance, customs, have been introduced into the liturgy. An enormous amount of liturgical translation into the vernacular has been accomplished. There is need to relax the rules for liturgical translation to enable making of translations which would mirror the mentality and genius of peoples. It should be a priority to complete as soon as possible the vast amounts of liturgical translation still to be done. Specialists should be trained for this.

There have been two adaptations of the Roman Rite of Mass, the Ndzon-Melen Mass of Yaounde, and the Zairean Rite of Mass officially approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship on 30 April 1988, as the *Roman Rite for the Dioceses of Zaire*.<sup>18</sup> Is it premature to initiate necessary study for an African Rite of Mass and inculturated African liturgies in the other sacraments? One excuse usually given is that Africa is too diverse to have one liturgy for all. I have tackled this question elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> Here suffice it to say that the same people do not complain that the one Roman Rite of Mass is observed all over Africa, often in very poor translations into the multiplicity of African languages. Besides, there is an underlying similarity in the culture of sub-saharan Africa as shown in the

similarity of the accounts of traditional religiosity given in the *Responses to the Lineaments*.

One or two Rites could be devised as alternatives to the Roman Rite, and could even be offered also to the entire Church. *Lumen Gentium* 23 opens the door when it admits particular churches which "enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage and their own theological and spiritual heritage," *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 38, which prescribes the "substantial unity of the Roman Rite" should be read in conjunction with no. 40, which foresees more radical adaptations.<sup>20</sup> No less a person than Cardinal Ratzinger had this to say:

Prior to Trent a multiplicity of rites and liturgies had been allowed within the Church. The Fathers of Trent took the Liturgy of the city of Rome and prescribed it for the whole Church; they only retained those Western liturgies which had existed for more than two hundred years....I would personally support a return to the ancient situation, that is, to a certain liturgical pluralism....<sup>21</sup>

The Cardinal was addressing the particular question of the possible continuation of the Tridentine Mass under certain conditions, but the principle adduced would seem to cover other cases as well.

### 3. DIALOGUE

Not everyone is convinced about the necessity or the advisability of dialogue, especially in the face of recent events in many parts of Africa. The Synod would need to take a firm stand on this, and also to show clearly how dialogue relates to the Gospel.

#### Ecumenism

The Synod would have to declare a formal end to missionary rivalry and intrigue among Churches and Christian Communities, and an era of cooperation based on the common witness to Christ. It should be possible to act together for social development and the promotion of mankind, for using the mass

media to proclaim Christ, and for action in defence of human rights and moral principles.

There is cooperation already in many places in the translation of the Bible into the vernacular languages. Ecumenical Biblical Societies are doing a good job of making biblical material and bibles available. For example, at 50 dollars, the New Jerusalem Bible would cost 1000 Nigerian naira, or five months' wages of an average worker in Nigeria. Through ecumenical cooperation, it was possible to supply it at 200 naira. There are 2511 peoples and groups in Africa, and 1883 distinct languages. In 1980, there had been only 253 translations of the New Testament, and 99 of the entire bible.<sup>22</sup> With the shortage of experts, ecumenical translations are the only hope in many cases.

### Islam

In some countries of Africa, dialogue with Islam will constitute one of the great factors for peace and social welfare; concertation by Islam and Christianity in matters religious and moral may prove a necessary bulwark to the inroads of materialism and amorality, and in upholding respect for religion itself.

Statistics show Islam and Christianity at near parity in Africa. The figures differ, however, according to the sources. Three are offered for comparison.

	Christians	Muslims
Barrett	236,278,858	189,728,398
Encyl.Brit.	150,000,000	143,000,000
Missi.	130,000,000	163,000,000
	<u>Percentages</u>	
Barrett	45.4%	41.2%
Encyl.Brit.	37.5%	35.75%
Missi.	32.5%	40.75%

**Northern Africa.** Christian communities in northern Africa form barely 1 to 5% of the population, except in Egypt and Ethiopia. In Egypt, Coptic Christians form 10 to 12% of the population of 50 million. In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are just over half of the population of 31.5 million. Islam is the State religion, however, in most of the States of this northern zone. Christians there, often cannot practice their religion openly. The Synod must show concern for these Churches.

**Sub-saharan Africa.** The immediate sub-saharan belt has sometimes been the stage for violent confrontations between Islam and Christianity. Recent events in Chad, Sudan and Nigeria show the latent dangers in such confrontations. Petrodollars for the propagation of Islam are leading, in some countries, to Islamic fundamentalism and intolerance. Dialogue with Islam will prove particularly important in this zone of Africa.

**East Africa.** Islam entered the East coast of Africa through Arab and Persian traders and slave drivers who operated from Zanzibar, through Bagamoyo, and on to the Great Lakes. Their language merged with the native languages to produce Swahili. During the colonial period, Swahili Muslims were used as administrators, government interpreters and foremen on farms.<sup>23</sup> Islam spread along the railway and trade routes and held the economic advantage. In this zone it remains a minority and is pacific, even if in some of these countries, it is now vying for political power.

In Southern and S. Western Africa there are only pockets of Islam

The Synod should promote evangelical witness and disinterested service of monastic and religious institutes, especially of women, among Muslims. The Synod should also take up with the appropriate interlocutors the matter of religious freedom and fundamental constitutional rights irrespective of one's religion.



## African Traditional Religion

The 'religion of the ancestors' is indeed in crisis in many parts of Africa. It is not seen any longer as offering adequate answers to life's present problems and conditions. Adherents searching for answers often embrace Christianity. Nevertheless, there are still more traditional religionists than there are Catholics in Africa, and in quite a few places traditional religion is re-organizing itself and adapting to modern conditions.

Where adherents turn to Christianity, dialogue means inculturation and pastoral attention to the values of traditional religion so as to effect a living encounter between faith and culture. Where adherents still find meaning in their own system and practices, dialogue calls for respect for their religious experience, and a collaboration with them on the basis of the common human religious quest. Such collaboration is often necessary in order to change certain customs and usages which may be against human dignity or against Gospel values, or to bring the collective weight of religion to bear on the society.

There is a new attitude towards traditional religion. Barely thirty years ago, we still said after mass the *Prayer for the Conversion of Africa*, a prayer with the theological presupposition that all non-baptized were daily falling into hell. It was then common to see nothing but deviations and the work of the devil in traditional religion. Now we accept that since Christ died for all, the Holy Spirit offers to all men and women the possibility of sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ (GS. 22). Concretely this takes place through the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their conscience (Dialogue and Proclamation, 29).

The new attitude of respect may call for revision in some missionary approaches. Proselytism, interpreted as any undue influence or coercion in order to effect conversion, is to be rejected. This applies also to any

attempt to take advantage of the people's dependence on relief and development work or the force of a dominant culture.

## Dialogue with the World

There is need in many places to alter the pre-Council attitude to the world and the one-sided emphasis on individual salvation and individual justice. The Synod should promote a Church for the world, concern for social justice and the responsibility of Christians for social order and the transformation of structures. The Church should be eager to share services, and to contribute in every way to social welfare and human upliftment.

## 4. JUSTICE AND PEACE

It might have been better to have retained the title, "pastoral care in social areas" as was enunciated by the Pope in his Address to the Council of 23 June, 1989, for this readily invites a broader treatment.

The film, *THE MARCH*, presents the spectre of Third World peoples forcing the borders of Europe and America. Hospitality is now in short supply in the world community, restrictive legislation is becoming more common; so also is racial discrimination. The Synod may be able to act in concert with our sister Churches in countering this new phenomenon, also in promoting a more equitable world financial and social order.

The economy in many African countries is in a shambles. Western governments provoked the Third World Debt crisis by unilaterally raising interest rates as an antidote to inflation. African governments add their quota to the disaster through mismanagement and corruption. Millions are dying of malnutrition. Half of the world's 50 million migrants and 20 million refugees, are in Africa. Structures for social welfare and development have collapsed in most places. Schools, hospitals, nothing, works any longer. There is no social security in most places.

Here and there despots profit from traditional attitudes of respect to authority in order to hold on to power, depriving people of their civic rights.

During the Cold War, Africa was wooed by East and West; aid, even if with strings attached, was available. "With the end of the Cold War, Africa has lost whatever political luster it may once have had, and there are no geopolitical, strategic or economic reasons to catapult it to the top of the global economic agenda," writes Michael Chege, a Kenyan political scientist.<sup>24</sup> As Africa takes her destiny in hand, the experience and the solidarity of the Churches may prove crucial.

The days when Catholics were dissuaded from public office so as to save their souls is over. Social and political responsibility must become an integral part of the spirituality of African Christians. In South Africa, the Christian Churches and their leaders have definitely been a force for change. In Congo, Zaire and Benin Republic, Catholic bishops have played a significant role in the transition to democracy, being elected as Presidents of the National Assemblies convoked to effect this transition. Significant and influential statements on human rights and the economy have been issued by the Episcopal Conferences of Cameroun, Kenya and Malawi. These may be pointers to the increased involvement of the Church. This is a role, however, that properly belongs to the lay faithful, and it is hoped that the Church will cater for their adequate formation to social and political responsibility.

The Church in Africa has an impressive record in development and human promotion. This increased considerably since the 1980's when donor agencies, reluctant to continue giving money to corrupt and unaccountable governments, began to channel funds through the Churches.<sup>25</sup> It is necessary to rethink aid and development along cultural lines, and to set priorities which will promote real socio-development. One should also go beyond giving assistance, to promoting self-reliance and transformation of struc-

tures. This could take place, for example, by giving more attention to technical and professional education, and by promoting the transfer of workable middle technology.

## 5. MEANS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

The mass media have been called, "a modern and effective version of the pulpit."<sup>26</sup> Three areas would seem to merit attention.

First, publications and the press. The rising élite are hungry for the word of God, but adequate literature is scarce and prohibitive in price, if imported. It may be possible, in cooperation with our sister Churches, to establish a fund for promoting African spiritual and theological writing. The efforts of Missio in this area are acknowledged.

A Catholic national paper (or where possible, an ecumenical national paper) could be a potent force in the struggle for civic rights and in formation to civic responsibility; it could also be a forum for issues of faith and culture.

Second, audio-visuals and video-cassettes. Perhaps a Pan-African centre can be established for these aids to evangelization.

Third, radio, the commonest medium in Africa. Plans are said to be afoot for a Pan-African Catholic Radio Station based at Yamoussoukro. Anyway, each Conference of Bishops should give greater attention to evangelization through the radio.

## FOUR UNDERLYING ISSUES

I shall now briefly highlight four general issues important for this Synod.

### Integration of Faith and Culture

The Christian faith is in dire need of a new synthesis in the concrete lives of Africans. The underlying traditional religion knew no dichotomy between religion and life since religion covered the totality of life. This traditional

religion was insistently this-worldly and offered salvation in the present circumstances of men and women. With Western culture and the Christian faith, compartmentalization set in, and the Christian religion seems to have become one of the compartments and no longer seen as saving men and women in the present. In an emergency, people tend to turn back to the ancestors and spirits. J.V. Taylor writes: "If God remains 'outside' much longer, Africa's this-worldliness will turn to materialism."<sup>27</sup> The link between faith and culture is one of the main tasks of this Synod.

#### What Church for What Mission?

Efoe-Julien Penoukou correctly sees the stakes at the Synod as belonging to the area of ecclesiology: what type of Church for what mission of evangelization?<sup>28</sup> There were different ecclesiologies in the New Testament but communion in the one faith. Africa should be allowed to define her experience of being Church, and to elaborate corresponding doctrinal and pastoral perspectives. For example, the problem for Africa is not that of safeguarding the Roman Rite, says he, but if necessary to create new ones if these would help Africans serve and praise God better. It has been pointed out (in treating the Small Christian Community) that a new and dynamic model of Church is called for to replace that of Church as institution.

The Church in Africa should also examine its commitment to the poor.

#### An African Theology and Spirituality

H. Maurier began his survey with the affirmation, "*la théologie africaine existe*" (there exists an African theology).<sup>29</sup> For the fifty years from 1925 to 1975, there were over 2204 titles published in francophone Africa alone. He remarked, however, that theological writing in Africa tended to be circumstantial rather than systematic, and

that questions of method and content still remained to be settled.

Some Africans refer to the variety of cultural, religious, social and political realities in Africa, and posit theologies, not a theology.<sup>30</sup> Others insist with J. V. Taylor (*Primal Vision*, 23) that an African way of looking at things exists, that there is some unity in the African reality and in the nature of the problems to be faced in the African context.<sup>31</sup> The project of an African Theology is still on the drawing board. The Synod could outline definite tasks. The questions emerging during the discussions could help focalize research. In the long run, what is asked for is theological reflection on the experience of faith in African Christian communities.

#### Africa in the Communion of the Churches with Peter

The Synod is an opportunity to promote that mutual sharing of energies which is characteristic of the Church. The African sense of the sacred, of worship, of celebration, of solidarity... could become gifts offered by Africa to the Church universal. African missionaries could carry the African expression of faith to other continents. More sons and daughters of Africa could be prepared to take their place in the Curia, in the Vatican diplomatic service, in institutions of learning and in the administration of international institutes of consecrated life.

#### CONCLUSION

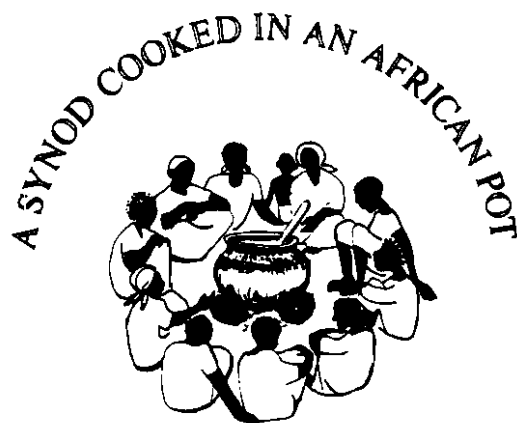
At Kampala in 1969, Paul VI made a promise and offered a challenge. He said, "You may, indeed you must, have an African Christianity." The Synod is an opportunity for the Church in Africa to answer for itself the question, "Who do you say that I am?" Let us pray and hope that it fulfils this promise.

---

1. 'The Synod of Bishops' Special Assembly for Africa - The Church. Universal and Particular,' - for publication in AFER and Spiritus

2. Carr, Burgess, Canon. "Engagement from Lusaka." *Spiritus*, 56, 1974. This article called for a moratorium on missionaries (All Africa Conference of Churches, Lusaka, May, 1974). The Catholic Bishops at the end of the 1974 Synod made a Statement on "Evangelization in Co-Responsibility."
3. Kalanda, Paul. "Missionary Collaboration with the Local Churches in AMECEA Countries Evaluated." *AFER*, vol. 31 (Dec. 1989).
4. Holmes-Siedle, J. Evaluations: "Overall view of the SCC's." *AFER*, (Oct. 1979) 273-285; A. Shorter. "The SCC's in Eastern Africa Evaluated," AMECEA Doc. Service, no. 299 (1985); J. Healey, "Four Africans Evaluate the SCC's in Eastern Africa," *AFER*, (Oct. 1987) 266-77.
5. "A Look at 17 Years of the Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa," *AFER*, 32/6 (Dec. 1990) 358-62.
6. Magesa, Laurenti. "African Culture: A challenge to the Church," *SEDOS Bulletin*, vol. 23, no. 1 (15 Jan. 1991) 24.
7. Cf. Archdiocèse de Kinshasa. "Les Ministères Laïcs à Kinshasa," 1985.
8. "Africa Beyond 2000". Paper presented to the All Africa Conference of Churches' Symposium on Problems and Promises for Mission, Mombasa, 9-15 November, 1991.
9. Hastings. A. "Church and Mission in Modern Africa," (London, 1967) 80ff.
10. Hyacinthe, Thiandoum, Card. "An interview on the Synod," originally in *L'Homme Nouveau*, 19 Feb. 1989.
11. 1985 Extraordinary Synod. Final Document, D,4.
12. IMBISA Synod Seminar. (16-27 Oct. 1991) 5.
13. Luzbetak, L.J. *Church and Cultures*. (1988) 74.
14. Lonergan, B. *Method in Theology*. Seabury, N.Y., 1972.
15. Theological Commission of the Zimbabwe Bishops' Conference, "Healing and Salvation in the Church," (1989) 3.
16. Priests of the E. Deanery of the Arch. of Nairobi. *AFER*, 33, no. 4 (1991) 178-183.
17. IMBISA Assembly, 16-23 Feb. 1992, *Instrumentum Laboris* no. 125.
18. For the Ndzon-Melen, see P. Abega, "Liturgical Adaptation" in Fashole-Luke, ed., *Christianity in Independent Africa*, (1978) 597-605; For the Zairean Rite, see L. Mpongo, "Le rite zairois de la messe," *Spiritus* 73 (1973) 436-441; E. Uzukwu, "Liturgy, Truly Christian, Truly African," *Spearhead*, no. 74 (Gaba) 58-66.
19. Okoye, Chukwuma J. "The Eucharist and African Culture. Preliminary Questions," soon to appear in *AFER*.
- 20 The AMECEA Synod Seminar, 4 had this as a burning issue.
21. The Ratzinger Report. Fowler Wright, 1985, 124.
22. Barrett, David B. *World Christian Ency.*, 1982, 12.
23. Oliver, R. *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* Longmans, 1957, 27, 240 ff.

24. Herald Tribune. 18 May, 1992 pp. 1 and 6.
25. Gifford, Paul. "Africa Beyond 2000," p. 7.
26. Paul VI. "Evangelii Nuntiandi," 45
27. "The Primal Vision - Christian Presence amid African Religion." SCM, 1963 82.
28. Spiritus, no. 123 (May, 1991) 196-212
29. "La théologie africaine francophone," Spiritus 88 (Sept, 1982) 227-45.
30. For example, Fasholé-Luke, E.W. "The Quest for African Christian Theologies," in Mission Trends, no. 3 (Paulist Press) 135ff; O. Bimwenyi Kweshi, "Religions africaines, un lieu de la théologie chrétienne africaine," Cahiers de Religion africaine. vol. XII. (1978) 218f.
31. For example, Dickson, Kwesi A. "Thology in Africa" (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984, 3; see also, Bishop Tshibangu, "La Théologie africaine," (Kinshasa, 1987).



# WOMEN IN JAPAN

## REPORT OF A WORKSHOP

Roberta Ryan, SSC

*(The report was prepared for Columban Sisters, but it merits a wider readership - "women's issues are men's issues." Nor should we presume that only the women of Japan have experienced an inferior status within their culture, in the work force and even in the Church. How many other women find themselves 'work widows' during the week and 'golf widows' at the weekend?)*

In mid-February, the Columban Fathers Justice and Peace office held two 1-day workshops in Japan, on the themes:

- Women in Japan
- Women in the Japanese Church
- Women migrant workers in Japan.

The workshop animators were: Sr. Naoko Iyori MMB (Mercedarian), Miss Etsuko Kaji, a Protestant lay woman, and Mrs. Hisako Ukita, President of Fujisawa parish council, (Tokyo)

The workshops began with simple self introductions, and the expression of hopes and expectations. Participants were then asked to look at a slide, and to share what they had seen. Many saw the face of a young woman, others, the face of an old woman. Very few saw both! Taking this as their starting point, the animators were quick to point out that we rarely see the whole of reality - more often than not we only glimpse half the picture! Using culture and language as their starting point they went on to show how both groups have helped to define, limit and oppress women in Japan in both subtle and blatant ways.

### LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

#### In the Language and Art

The phrase "a graceful Japanese woman" implies meekness, docility and subservience to man. While Japanese

proverbs are seen, on a first reading, as laudable and praiseworthy of women, ("Good wife, Wise mother.") They are seen by women today as responsible for stereotyping, streamlining and molding women into a role which allows men to control their lives and behaviour. Chinese characters, common to the languages of China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea, give some insight into how language mirrors the cultural perception of women. The character for woman/girl/daughter is derived from a kneeling woman; "to take hold of a person on the ear" + 'woman' means, "to marry a woman". In oriental art, notably landscape painting, the masculine is represented by steep slopes expressing courage and mastery, while the feminine is represented by gentle slopes implying docility and weakness.

#### In the Home

Within the family, girls are treated differently from boys. Sons are favoured with the best food and are better educated. The mother invariably takes the son's side and by-passes a daughter. Brothers lord it over sisters. At school, roll call always begins with boys' names. Be it in an elevator, at a restaurant or in serving meals, men always come first. There are special cups for husbands and wives, but the husband's cup is always bigger. Yet, when the same cups are made for export, they are the same size!

Many Japanese men claim that women have more power than their Western counterparts because they control their husbands salary. Yet Japanese women often experience this as confining them to the role of housekeeper. To men who say a mother's place is in the home, educating and shaping the hearts of the young, many women would reply that this is no longer possible. Schools and the education system have taken on this role. The pressure of long school days and tutorial programmes drastically limit the influence of the home on the child.

Another reality is that husbands, as company employees, are out from morning to night rendering the wife a work-widow during the week and a golf-widow on Sundays. Children in Japan, even though they nominally have two parents, are increasingly being reared by a single parent - the mother. Japanese women wonder if the West knows what it is letting itself in for by praising and encouraging the Japanese Corporate System that demands the total loyalty of the man to his company, even at the expense of his family life? In a recent Gallup poll 80% of the men polled thought that the company was more important than the family.

It was also pointed out that at Japanese weddings, the names of the bride and groom are not mentioned, only that of the two families, highlighting the importance of the family over the individual. Paradoxically in contemporary Japan, the trend to emphasize the importance of family life is growing because of problems caused by the decline in population growth and an aging population. It is now expected that a Japanese wife will care not only for her husband but for his parents as well. As more and more women are choosing not to marry, the men in desperation are turning to Bridegroom Schools for help and encouragement in seeking a wife. The task is even more difficult for men who live in a rural area. As a result, Asian brides from the Philippines and Thailand are eagerly sought after although there is no guarantee that their lives will be happy. It is another example of the

oppression of women who are seen as commodities to be bought and sold.

Pornography continues to flood the markets and contributes to sexism. Women are treated as objects rather than as persons. Asian migrant women find themselves abducted into the world of 'night pleasure' with no way out, because of their illegal status and constant state of debt. They are often kicked, beaten and brutalized. The question was posed - "Why do Japanese women, the government and the Churches remain so silent?"

### In the Work Place

Since World War II, women have continued to swell the ranks of the national work force, but the job opportunities are often limited to part-time employment well below their educational qualifications. A typical story was told of an employer who spotted a woman of ability and then contacted her husband to ask him if she could work 5 days a week instead of 3! She was very angry that she had not been consulted, while the husband felt it was only right that he should have been asked to make the decision. Part-time work is also another way of depriving working women of insurance benefits and bonuses. Part-time women workers in Tokyo earn 850 yen an hour; outside Tokyo they are paid 650 Yen an hour. By way of comparison, part-time male students earn 1,000 yen an hour for work. Who profits from women's labour?

Many women college graduates do not want to buy into the "sell your soul to the company" system, with its long hours and high stress level. They also know that their chances of promotion, within the system, are very limited as women are rarely included at decision making levels and so they opt for more traditional office roles. Still it is recognized that some women have made their presence felt in both the work and the political arena. Women are becoming politically active, although statistics show that only 4% of elected politicians are women. It is also widely acknowledged that recent citizen movements, nuclear and ecological campaigns have



been initiated, supported and run by women.

### IN THE CHURCH

The population of Japan is 120 million, 400,000 are Catholics, 60% of these are women. Our animator asked: Do women, who are the majority in the Church, truly and actively participate? If they do not what prevents them? What is the role and position of women in the Church?

Discussion centered around the following linkage questions: what do we mean by Church? and again, what do we mean by participation? and why do women get lost along the way?

Lack of confidence and poor self-image were singled out as being the reasons women did not take greater initiative at the parish level. Often, women themselves, wanted a man as head of a committee, even though it was the women who did all the work. In some Dioceses, however, more women

were becoming active and involved at parish council level. Women, too, were in the forefront when it came to speaking out on justice issues.

We touched also on topics ranging from, altarboys/girls, lay participation within the context of liturgical worship, lay leadership and models of Base Christian Communities, problems facing the Japanese Church as a result of the influx of migrant workers from the Philippines, Peru and Brazil. Time did not allow discussion about major themes such as, patriarchy, the hierarchical structure of the Church, or feminist theology.

Two concluding comments about the content of the workshop:

first, women's role in the Church reflects women's role in society;

second, women's issues are men's issues.

The questions, the concerns, and the solutions belong to us all.

Ref. Report of a Workshop in  
*Columban Intercomm.* June, 1992.



## mission moments

### MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

(PERU - U.S.A.)

"During my 24 years in Peru, I helped people to serve others and to enhance the good works they were performing. Now, back in the States, I am coordinator of the Maryknoll Affiliates, an outreach that provides new opportunities for doing mission work on a short-term or part-time basis. My new work expands the horizons of what I was doing in Peru.

Much of the work of mission is carried out by volunteers. In my first job in a shantytown on the outskirts of Lima, Peru, girls from private Catholic high schools came to our poverty-stricken barrio to teach catechism. The teenagers from our parish taught religion, reading and writing to children who could not go to school. Excellent teachers, they shone with enthusiasm and confidence during regional meetings. I was so proud of them. The young have ideals and want to contribute.

Because loan sharks charged poor families 20 percent interest per month, we helped the people start a credit union. They elected a butcher as president, a surprise because we missionaries did not know him. But the people assured us he was a good man. Their trust in his honesty made the credit union a success. Thirty years later, it provides invaluable service to thousands of people.

Later, in the high Andes among the Aymara Indian peasants, I worked closely with community leaders: midwives, shamans, organizers, musicians, athletes, craftsmen, knitters, artisans and healers. Their collective talents enabled their communities to survive and thrive. Leaders consulted the majority before making important decisions.

In the U.S., too, volunteers have given of their time and talents.

Many people wanted to be lay missionaries but could not accept the 3-1/2 years minimum contract. Some found mission opportunities for shorter periods both in the U.S. and overseas. The activity I now head gives such people an opportunity within Maryknoll, according

to their own resources, time and interests...."

From a letter of Jim Madden, MM.

Ref. Maryknoll's World  
Apostolate Bulletin  
Vol. 32 May/June 1992  
No. 371.

### AFTERMATH OF WAR

(LIBERIA)

"It is almost three months since I came to Liberia. As I look back now I remember the shock I felt at the devastation all around in Monrovia - the ruined university buildings, the shells of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Plaza Hotel, Doe's Mansion, the embassies in Congotown, and the bullet holes in almost every building in the city; in Sanniquelli (Nimba County) the piles of rubble where whole streets were destroyed; on the way to Ganta the huge tree trunks lying by the roadside where Doe's soldiers were ambushed and killed; in the towns the absence of street

lights and the darkness at night.

Every day I continue to notice the eagerness of people to speak about their experiences in the war - their flight from the fighting (often long journeys of days and weeks in the bush), the scarcity of food and the hunger, the loss of family members and friends, the destruction of property, and today, a sense of "Liberia will never be the same again." There are still 500,000 refugees in Ivory Coast and Guinea, the country is divided and there is still a long way to go before elections can take place.

As I listen to expatriate clergy and religious I realize that they, too, suffered deeply whether they remained in Liberia during the conflict or left and returned after the ceasefire. Among some there is a sense that while the crisis has brought intense suffering it has also presented the Church with an opportunity to look critically at itself and to begin anew the process of transformation; there is a realization that this is a *kairos* moment in the history of Liberia.

Perhaps it is easier for me, who did not suffer in the conflict, to feel the possibilities in this moment, to appreciate the power and potential of those who had to leave all they held dear and who, in that experience, have developed a new awareness of what is important in life.

I am conscious of the beauty and bounty of this

land - the rivers, the trees, the flowers, the abundant vegetation. I am touched by the warmth of the welcome of all the people I have met. I am encouraged and carried along by the interest and energy of those with whom I have been working since I came. It is not too difficult to believe in the presence and power of the living God, "Who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine", at work in this moment."

*Letter from Sr. Miriam Therese O'Brien, an Irish Sister of St. Louis. She went to Liberia to work for refugees after the war. She is re-establishing the National Pastoral Center which will soon commence a new training programme for lay community leaders.*

Ref. Liberia Working Group  
Jesuit Refugee Service  
No.6, June, 1992, Rome

---

## DEBT TRAP

(ZAMBIA)

---

The total debt service owed by Zambia for 1992 represents 86% of our export earnings. That means that almost all of the foreign exchange earned by Zambia goes not to importing petrol, medicines, spare parts, and emergency food, but for paying off countries and banks in the North. No matter how hard Zambians work and no matter how much the economy is

restructured, economic recovery and political stability is doubtful if everything has to be geared to meeting the enormous debt burden.

The Zambian Bishops said in a strong pastoral letter in March, "Some of this debt is admittedly due to our own poor planning, inefficient management, corruption and lack of commitment to the national welfare. But by far the major bulk of it is due to factors simply beyond our control: falling commodity prices (e.g., copper), rising import prices (e.g., oil), and increasing interest rates (caused by recessions in Northern countries). The biblical injunctions against enslaving people because of their indebtedness speaks to our situation today with particular forcefulness... We therefore join with the appeal of many Church leaders in demanding large-scale forgiveness of debts".

Ref. Peter Henriot, SJ  
Lusaka, Zambia  
12 May, 1992

---

## PREPARING FOR CELAM IV

(SANTO DOMINGO)

---

Four successive "working papers" (*documentos de consulta*), presented by the Latin American Bishops' Council (CELAM) in preparation for its 4th General Assembly in Santo Domingo,

October 1992, have been severely criticized by Latin American bishops. According to a report in *The Tablet*, a well-known Catholic weekly in Great Britain. Suspicions are mounting that Rome will insist on the elimination of exigencies and problems, pointed out by the bishops, in order to render their opinions harmless. In fact, a criticism by the bishops and the complaint that their contributions were being disregarded in the documents have induced Bishop Raymundo Damasceno Assis of Brazil, General Secretary of CELAM, to give his word that the bishops' point of view will be respected in a supplementary working paper which, indeed, has been recently published under the title "*Secunda Relatio*."

Analyzing this latest preparatory document, experts ascertain that it is, in fact, the first one to continue orientations formerly given in Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979). This is a summary of some of the important points

mentioned in the *Secunda Relatio*:

- The 1st part, *Pastoral View of Reality* gives a résumé of the evangelization of Latin America and an analysis of the actual situation.

- The 2nd part is a theological-pastoral contemplation on the working of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God and the New Evangelization.

- The 3rd part *Options and Pastoral Guidelines* reaffirms 3 options taken at Puebla: the poor, families and youth. It also proposes 3 further options for CELAM IV, in favour of the indigenous, Afro-Americans, Base Ecclesial Communities and the laity. The document stresses the importance of Base Ecclesial Communities, favours the theology of liberation and recognizes Bishop Oscar Romero and the Jesuits murdered in San Salvador as martyrs. The difference between the *Secunda Relatio* and the earlier working papers is noteworthy. The accusing

tone has been abandoned, unity and continuity with Medellín and Puebla are stressed, sectors trying to impose their orientation on CELAM are severely criticized. On page 85 it reads, "there is little prophetism in the Church; instead there is a backward movement, which tries to return to pre-counciliar pastoral and disciplinary notions. A new ecclesial conservatism and a certain hierarchical centralization can be observed."

The *Secunda Relatio* was greeted with relief by many bishops, though it is still possible that the document will be changed once again, as it has to get the approval of the Roman Curia. On the other hand, it is assumed that the bishops, who have given their contributions to this latest document, will be ready to stick to their convictions during the assembly in Santo Domingo.

Ref. Information No. 6.,  
June 1992, Missions-  
zentrale der Franzis-  
kaner E.V., 5300  
Bonn 2, Germania.

**COMING EVENTS**

**DATES TO NOTE**

---

**October 5, 1992**

**THE THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO INCULTURATION**

**Speaker: Michel De Verteuil, CSSp**

**SVD College, via dei Verbiti, 1**

**A full-day session : 9.30 - 18.00 hrs.**

---

**November 5, 1992**

**ECOLOGY AND WORLD DEBT**

**1)' The Religious Dimension**

**2) The Economic Dimension**

**SVD College, via dei Verbiti, 1**

**A morning session : 9.00 - 12.45 hrs.**

---

**December 1, 1992**

**SEDOS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY:**

**A LOOK BACK TO SANTO DOMINGO**

**also**

**SEDOS GENERAL MEETING AND PLANNING**

**SVD College, via dei Verbiti, 1**

**A full-day session**

---

**May 18-22, 1993**

**AFRICA: QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS TO THE CHURCH**

**VILLA CAVALLETTI**

---