85/No.11   1st July, 1985

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IN THIS ISSUE: We draw readers' attention particularly to the article
               of Michael Amaladoss. On Page 226 he summarises one
of the most serious questions about the "why" of mission to-day:

*"We affirm that Christ is the unique saviour. And yet at this
time it is a fact of experience that the vast majority of peoples are
relating to God without any reference to Christ. To play with con-
cepts like implicit/explicit offers no solution to the problem. I
think that current scholastic categories are unable to cope with the
situation".*

He goes on to answer the question "Why Mission to-day"? and to
describe the task of mission. And he concludes with a modest but
important request that when we think of cultures and religions we do
not do so in the abstract, as social scientists, but think of the
people who embody these cultures and religions in their lives, and
think of God calling all peoples to enter the mystery of his Kingdom.

"Christ in the members of his Body in Africa is himself African".

Edward Braxton was reminded of these words of Pope John Paul II
when he attended the SECAM meeting last year in Kinshasa and saw the
emergence of an African Church for Africans. Other continents, he
believes, would do well to look to the Churches in Africa in order to
learn.

Gerard Arbuckle delivered his lectures at Manila, in an Asian
context, but what he has to say about culture is valuable also in a
wider context and contains helpful insights into the causes of tension
within the Church to-day.

Independent Churches in Africa. This initial paper of an on-going
study may be unique in that it is
an account of how the Independent Churches (a name with which they
themselves do not easily identify), in South Africa see themselves.
The study is being facilitated by Rev. Frank Chikane and Fr. Albert
Nolan, OP. of the Institute for Contextual Theology, Johannesburg.
Rev. Chikane was to have presented this paper at the Centre for
African Studies at London University on May 29 but was unable to do
so personally as he was arrested again in recent protests in Johan-
nesburg. (He had already been imprisoned for six years during which
he was tortured.) The paper is of particular interest in understand-
ing the Churches, known as "Spirit" "Ethiopian", "Independent",
"Allidura" in countries of Africa. Text available at SEDOS Document-
ation Centre.

Integration of Faith & Culture. Fr. W. Jenkinson, SEDOS Executive
Secretary and Fr. Michael Amaladoss, SJ
of the SEDOS Executive Committee attended a Seminar, May 12-17, on
this topic at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh. The text of the Con-
ferences and the proceedings will be published. The Seminar con-
cluded by drawing up a "Schema for the Continuing Study of Faith and
Culture". It will appear shortly in SEDOS Bulletin.

Order of Friars Minor: Congratulation to Fr. John Vaughn, OFM, who
has been re-elected as Minister General of
the Order at their recent General Chapter in Assisi.

"Update: South Africa in the 1980s". Published by the Catholic
Institute for International
Relations (CIIR) at 22 Coleman Fields, London N1 7AF, England. We
recommend these "Updates", No.3 of which was issued in June, 1985.
They are carefully researched sources on the latest developments in
South Africa dealing with the Economy, State Strategy, Black resistance,
and the Churches in South Africa.

They are updates of CIIR's basic analysis contained in South
Africa in the 1980's. (Available in SEDOS Documentation Centre.)

Corrigendum: SEDOS Bulletin 85/No.10. For Page 206 read 205
and for Page 205 read 206.
Synod of Bishops on the Laity: Although the Synod has been postponed
from October 1986 to October 1987 the
Council for the Laity went ahead as planned with the meeting of Inter-
national Associations and movements scheduled for June 20-23, 1985, at
Rocca di Papa, outside Rome. During the first-day there were three
presentations: "The participation of the Laity in the Evangelization
of Culture", Professor Rocco Buttiglione; "The Reflections of the
Catholic International Organisations on the Presence of Christians in
the Transformation of the World", Madame Geneviève Rivière; and "The
Contribution of Young People to the Building up of a Civilization of
hove and Life", Mr. Paulo Fontes.

THE TASK OF MISSION
IN RELATION TO VARIOUS CULTURES, TRADITIONS
AND OTHER PEOPLES OF FAITH

Fr. Michael Amaladoss, SJ

PART II

Corrigendum: SEDOS Bulletin 85/No.10. For page 206 read
205 and for Page 205 read 206 (in Part I of
Fr. Michael Amaladoss' article).

*(Suite de l'allocution du Père Amaladoss au Chapitre Général
à Maryknoll en décembre 1984.*

*Dans les pays où la tradition culturelle et le pluralisme re-
ligieux sont particulièrement évidents, il existe un défi radical à
l'idée généralement reçue pour justifier la mission. Le Père se
demande si le concept de "un seul troupeau et un seul pasteur" doit
se réaliser dans le temps, ou s'il ne s'agit que d'une communauté
eschatologique. Dans ce dernier cas, l'Eglise est appelée à demeurer
un signe, un petit troupeau, un levain caché. Le Père justifie
ensuite les motivations de la mission d'aujourd'hui).*

Religious Pluralism: It is at this stage that one can reflect over
the phenomenon of religious pluralism within
the same socio-cultural context. The people are called to live and
build up together a new world. But they confess different faiths.
Many scenarios are possible. I shall just evoke a few typical ones
that would help me to make my point. Where a vast majority of the
people belong to a particular religion, one may be tempted to think
of a "theocratic" state in which people of other religions are
allowed to survive. Another solution is to promote a purely secular
public order where religion becomes a strictly private affair. The
public order could be thought of in terms of a social contract or
simply left to a balance of forces, economic and social. But any
system of values would demand some sort of a religious foundation,
even if it is implicit and common in the sense of non-demoninational.

Another possibility is a positive, even public acknowledgement
of the religions and their role in the public order; they are ex-
pected to co-exist peacefully (for example, in India and Indonesia).

The scenario that I prefer would be one in which all religions,
through dialogue, would collaborate to provide a common inspiration
towards a common commitment to build a better world, without
detriment to their various specific faith commitments. Common action
will have to be mediated by an ideology and appropriate socio-political
and economic structures. But underlying these is a level of motivation
and inspiration that is religious. I believe that religions can
collaborate even at this, properly religious level.

Such collaboration is, of course, problematic. Faith is a firm
commitment to the Absolute, not in the abstract, but as mediated by
a historical religious tradition. Pluralism in religion is pluralism

of these mediations, since there is only one Absolute God. The pluralism becomes a problem when each one absolutizes one's own particular mediation as final and definitive, in relation to which the other mediations are relativized.

This pluralistic situation can be approached at two levels.

A sense of Community. There is a level at which all feel a sense of community. There is only one God. He has a plan for the world. He is calling and leading all peoples to their final liberation and fulfilment. There are certain common human values which all recognize. It is possible to discover, experience, enlarge and even mutually enrich this community through dialogue and common action - what the Asian Bishops often call the dialogue of life. We are even called to achieve this community. The specific elements of each one's faith are not involved here. One can demonstrate these things to the others. One can say that one is here at the level of "reason" (in the terminology of the First Vatican Council), not dichotomised from faith, but as the common ground underlying faith.

At the level of faith itself I can think of different ways of approaching pluralism. One can compare the different symbol systems that people adhere to as the History of Religions does. Secondly, considering other religions from within one's own faith-perspective, one can relativize - one has to - all other religions. Thirdly one can move from systems of belief to people who believe.

Religion is not primarily a system of doctrines or of symbols. It is a person - in a community - responding in faith to God who calls. It is a realm of freedom and conscience. One can hardly compare relationships. One can only respect the other and the mystery of his/her freedom. The call and the response are in history, in the context of a tradition. But the variety of ways in which he calls men is as much God's mystery as the ways in which he is leading them all to unity.

Pluralism is a fact of experience. To accept it is to acknowledge that God may be calling the other in ways different from mine. I can witness to my faith, respect the other and seek a convergence through dialogue. Dialogue is authentic only in so far as each one is completely loyal to his tradition and witnesses to it. There is no relativism here, but a dialectical interplay of absolute commitments based on the freedom of God's call and man's response.

Starting from this positive experience of a pluralism of commitments should we develop a new theology of religions? We affirm that Christ is the unique saviour. And yet at this time it is a fact of experience that the vast majority of peoples are relating to God without any reference to Christ. To play with concepts like implicit/explicit offers no solution to the problem. I think that current scholastic categories are unable to cope with the situation.

We have to move from the tendency to reify everything in the name of objectivity, from an overly christological language to an economy of the Spirit, from physical categories of cause and effect to personal ones of freedom and symbol, from a linear view of history to a

dialectical spiral one, from an exclusively historic to a faith-mysteric vision of the world, from factual memory of the past to eschatological hope.

This is not the occasion to attempt this new theology. But without solving all these problems one can talk of mission in the context of a positive appreciation of religious pluralism and of the meaningfulness and legitimacy of dialogue, in which one is ready to receive as much as to give.

The reality of Judaism offers a brief illustration of what I am
trying to say.
That Christ is the fulfilment of the Mosaic covenant has not made the existence of Judaism illegitimate. The relationship of : christianity to Judaism is not linear but dialectical. St. Paul grappled with this mystery without success (Romans 9-11).

Is it possible to proclaim the Good News and at the same time be open to the fact that the other person is being called by God through a different way?
Is it possible to keep on witnessing to the Good News with the conviction that even when one is not called to total adherence to it, one may still be challenged and transformed by it?

Is it possible to accept humbly that one reason for the un-attractiveness of the Good News could be our own poor response to it? Is it possible to listen to God speaking to us through the other and to let ourselves experience hitherto unknown aspects of his mystery?
Is it possible to take both proclamation and dialogue seriously as dialectical moments without subordinating somehow one to the other?
Is it possible to feel secure enough in one's identity not to be threatened by difference?
Is it possible to assume and integrate the tensions that are inevitable in an interplay of freedoms and make those tensions creative rather than divisive? I think all this is possible.
I think all this is possible.

WHY MISSION?

What is the motivation for mission in a religiously pluralistic world? One is on a mission because one feels called to share the Good News one has received, because one is aware that it is not only for oneself but for all (to be accepted in various ways).

Secondly one is on a mission because one is convinced that the Good News has something specific to contribute to the growth of a new humanity, in dialogue with other living Faiths.

Thirdly one is on a mission because the Good News can hardly play its role effectively unless it is visibly and socially present in a culture as a local church, indigenous and inculturated.

The experience of the pluralism of religions challenges radically the world view which used to motivate mission. I am not sure today that the world is moving towards a time when there would be "one flock and one Shepherd". Such a community may only be

eschatological and in the meantime the church may have to remain a sign, a little flock, hidden leaven. Sometimes it may even be called to die with the Lord with the firm hope that God will raise it up again.

Since we do not claim to undersand the total mystery of God's plan for the world, we should be more open to listen to and to discern the action of the Spirit among peoples. The Spirit that moves me to proclaim is the same Spirit that draws others to listen to the Good News. If these two movements of the Spirit do not meet it is the Spirit's mystery, and blows where it wills. But the Spirit's urge that I proclaim does not become less valid or less urgent. On the other hand it is also my task to read the signs of the times and d to discern responsive individuals or groups who feel drawn to the Good News, whatever be the circumstances that favour or provoke such response.

Baptism appears as a Vocation to mission visibilizing the presence of the Good News among peoples. It is not merely an interior conversion but a call to witnessing action. In history there has always been a dialectic between authentic conversions and sociological ones following the principle of "cujus regio, ejus religio". In a post-colonial world, among developed cultures and great religions, Baptism will once again become, not an opportunity, but a challenge and a vocation.

THE TASK OF MISSION

The Kingdom: In the background of our foregoing reflections it is not difficult to spell out the tasks of mission in a pluralistic world. Jesus proclaimed a Kingdom of freedom, fellowship and justice. The primary task of mission is to help to realize it. In a multi-religious situation it would call for dialogue and collaboration in a common commitment with all men of good will who represent the forces of change, in solidarity with the poor. This dialogue will take place at different levels: sharing leading to mutual understanding, listening to the Scriptures and praying together, common life and action. I would envisage basic human communities in such a situation rather than basic christian communities. The dialogue would also cover all dimensions of life: economic, socio-political, cultural and religious. It is in their common commitment to build up human community that they will discover their complementarity.

The Local Church: In the service of this Kingdom, the local church must be built up. This is the next task of mission. to build up a church, indigenous and inculturated. This is a total creative program. The urgent task is to set up inculturated organizational and ministerial structures. One has also to develop an indigenous spirituality and worship, create a relevant theology. Inculturation need not be a special effort. If the christian community is really and fully involved with the people in building a better world it will inculturate itself automatically. Any other process of inculturation will be alienating and inauthentic.

Inculturation: There will be a dialectical relationship between belonging to a multi-religious human community and

belonging to a christian community. Without the first one would be
marginalized; without the second one would lose one's identity. For
the christians, being a visible social group is necessary to be
effective witnesses to the Gospel. To constitute such a visible,
viable group in a culture where one does not exist already is also
a task of mission. One should be careful however that this should
be an action of the Spirit in freedom with no colonial overtones.
It is indeed a delicate task in which the missionary, as a facilitator,
guides the natural growth of the community, without in any way uproot-
ing it.

Particular care is necessary when the culture the gospel en-
counters is a popular or folk culture. An easy temptation would
be for the people to integrate various elements from the culture
of the missionaries, rather than integrate into the main-stream of
the national "great tradition". The result would be a creole group
that loses its roots, is marginalized, has little impact on the
"great tradition" and becomes unsuited to its witnessing mission.

Ministry of Reconsiliation : A particular task of the christian
community in a pluralistic world would
be the ministry of reconciliation. Various tensions are bound to
arise in a society with a variety of cultures and/or religions. It
could be the special mission of the christians to promote unity and
fellowship by witnessing to peace with justice in a Spirit of self-
sacrificing love.

Foreign Missionaries: The tasks of mission outlined here can be
adequately fulfilled only by a local Church.
What then is the role of the foreign missionaries? It is their task,
first of all, to make the christian community present where none
exists. But once there is a nucleus, theirs will be a subordinate
role of facilitating and supporting. While they must adapt themselves
to the way of life of the community which they are serving, they
should resist the temptation to go native.

Culture is a symbolic world one is born into. One does not
change cultures as one would change dresses. One would be certainly
enriched by dialogue with other cultural traditions and one would
also enrich the others - but on condition that one remains basically
oneself. By being foreign, one makes present in a local church a
dimension of the universal church - the catholicity of the church.
Besides,the foreigner by his/her very presence keeps reminding the
local church of its missionary vocation and tries to save it from
becoming an institution.

If the task of mission is seen in a total and integral manner,
it would be delicate for the foreign missionary to get involved in
certain types of sociopolitical action. On the other hand the foreign
missionary also reminds the wider community of the international
network of mission. The credibility of the missionary and of the local
church will partly depend on the activities of the other local churches.

The image of the mission, in India for example, cannot be divorced
from what the "christian countries" have done and are doing. This
wider perspective may be a reason why missionaries are not welcome in

some countries. Can tasks of mission also include certain types of action by the local churches in the home countries of the missionaries?

Conclusion

I shall limit myself to one request by way of conclusion. When you think of cultures and religions do not think of them in the abstract as a social scientist might do, but think of the people who embody them in their lives and think of God calling all peoples to enter the mystery of his Kingdom.

- end -

MISSIONARIES GOING TO CHINA AND INDO-CHINA

"Put no obstacles in their way, and for no reason whatever should you persuade these people to change their rites, customs, and ways of life, unless these are obviously opposed to religion and good morals. For what is more absurd than to bring France or Spain or Italy or any other part of Europe into China? It is not these that you should bring but the faith which does not spurn or reject any peoples' rites and customs, unless they are depraved, but on the contrary tries to keep them . . Admire and praise what deserves to be respected"

Ref. Instruction of Propaganda Fidé to Missionaries dated 10th November, 1659.
(Collectanea S.C.P.F. Vol.1, n.135, P.42).

AN AFRICAN CHURCH FOR AFRICAN PEOPLES
The Seventh General Assembly of the Symposium
of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
(SECAM), Kinshasa, Zaire, July 15 - 22, 1984
"CHRIST IN THE MEMBERS OF HIS BODY IN AFRICA IS HIMSELF AFRICAN"
John Paul II

Edward K. Braxton

*Le Père Edward Braxton, prêtre de l'archidiocèce de Chicago,
est directeur de Calvert House, le foyer catholique des étudiants
de l'université de Chicago. Il a pris part à la 7ème Assemblée
Générale du Symposium des Conférences Episcopales d'Afrique et de
Madagascar (SCEAM) qui s'est tenue à Kinshasa (Zaire), du 15 au
22 juillet 1984. Parmi les sujets principaux qui ont été traités
figurent l'Afrique du Sud et la Namibie, l'intégration de la
promotion humaine dans l'évangelisation, ainsi que le projet d'un
Concile Africain. Le rite Zairois de la messe était particulièrement
impressionnant. Il écrit: "Nous ferions bien de tourner nos yeux
vers l'Afrique, pour pouvoir nous instruire".*

In an effort to examine in practical terms the forces that
impede the discovery and development of the African person, the
assembly noted key external and internal factors.

Among the external factors: the permanence of the colonial situation
particularly in Namibia and South Africa;
Western Capitalism's domination through multinational corporations
encouraged by national ruling classes, political, cultural and
economic forms of neocolonialism and the unstable world economy that
weakens the value of African currency.

Among the internal factors: Social fragility brought about by the
destruction of the foundations of tra-
ditional society and the instability of the elite who have been
educated abroad and who are often like foreigners among their own
people; the fragility of new political and economic institutions
that have been copied from the West and have no meaning for the
African people; cultural fragility that is due to the absence of an
elite who are really involved and find their roots among their own
people and due to the absence of leaders and thinkers who are able
to develop original and independent thought. When this ideological
weakness is added to the problems of political instability, the
crisis in Africa is exacerbated.

They further noted that human development in Africa is made
difficult because of widespread corruption, contempt for human
dignity, violations of human rights, tribalism, prostitution,
embezzlement of state revenues, wasting of national wealth on prestige
projects and the poor administration of public property. As a result
African countries that have been richly endowed by nature are falling
into economic and social disaster. They noted these problems not in
a posture of self-blame but in an attitude of frankness and honesty.

Turning their attention directly to the church, the participants in
the symposium ex-
pressed their gratitude for the work of the missionaries and the
material generosity of other churches. But they also stressed that
the model of Christianity that has been generally accepted is one
imported from the West. Thus, in the missionary school of theology
it is possible to speak of the "conversion of pagans," an expression
that is alien and offensive to the cultural and spiritual nature of
African peoples. They stressed that authentic evangelization pre-
supposes the translation of the message that is to be transmitted
into the idiom of the people. In this way, the African people can
develop their own theological reflection as they build up their local
churches.

Coming to the heart of the matter, the SECAM working paper stressed
that the proclamation of the good
news of salvation will be credible in Africa only if it avoids the
onesidedness of a purely past-historical, spiritual salvation and
integrates human promotion as an essential element of evangelization.
It was obvious from the discussions that Africa, like the rest of
the church, has suffered from a dichotomy that so separates the
spiritual from the temporal that a dualistic anthropology results.
Thus we can overlook the words of St. James who tells us we are
hypocrites if we see our sisters and brothers hungry, naked and in
desperate need and all we do is wish them well or tell them how God
will care for them in heaven but do nothing to help them now.

The African hierarchy was unequivocal in stressing that such
a view cannot be maintained today. It is in direct opposition to
the teachings of the Vatican Council and the papal social encyclicals
Mater et Magistra (John XXIII), *Populorum Progressio* (Paul VI) and
Redemptor Hominis (John Paul II). The church has learned that justice
and the task of the advancement of every human person are integral
parts of her evangelization.

It is not a question of whether to evangelize of whether to
work for human progress. These are different dimensions of the same
activity. To this end, they resolved that evangelization should no
longer be directed toward isolated individuals taken out of their
environment, but toward persons as members of communities and parti-
cular cultures.

Among the ongoing projects discussed were the growth of the
new Center for African Biblical Studies; ministry to youth and the
increase of vocations to the religious life and the priesthood; the
efforts of the church to find ways to aid the estimated 5 million to
10 million refugees in Africa; the possibility of a Catholic University
of Africa (a subject of particular importance in the light of the
nationalization of church-owned schools by many governments) and the
proposed African Council.

The African Council: The African Council may well be one of the most
important ideas discussed at SECAM. The idea
of an unprecedented assembly of the church in Africa has been germi-
nating among theologians, bishops and the laity ever since Vatican II.
In May 1980 the bishops of Zaire expressed their desire for an African
council to Pope John Paul II. In 1982 the Pope informed Cardinal
Paul Zoungrana, the president of SECAM, of his interest in the project.

He asked the church in Africa to examine the idea carefully. In 1983 the bishops of Zaire repeated to the Pope their wish to see the convening of an African council. The Holy Father agreed in principle with the need for a joint consultation to examine concerns that are pressing to the continent as a whole, in union with the universal church. In the light of the youth, size, rapid growth and unique historical, catechetical and pastoral realities experienced by the church in Africa, the general topic of evangelization, inculturation and human promotion has been proposed for the council, which might be held within the next decade.

In the careful discussion of the proposed all-Africa gathering, attention was given to different usages of the words "council" and "synod" over the centuries. It was suggested that the history of the church has tended to give a more decisive theological and juridical importance to a council rather than a synod. The new Code of Canon Law is very clear on this point. Some argued that it was better to speak of an African council and thus avoid reducing the assembly to the consultative status of the present world-wide Synod of Bishops. It seemed the clear hope of SECAM that if the meeting were to be held it would be a deliberative council. Because of the faithful communion of the African bishops with the Holy Father, there was no doubt that the historic gathering would be "cum Petro et sub Petro."

"Zairian Rite Mass": A high point of symposium was the liturgy in the Rite Zairois de la Messe. Developed over a 10-year period under the leadership of Cardinal Joseph Malula, Archbishop of Kinshasa, the "Zairian Rite Mass" is perhaps the most creative response to Vatican II's mandate for indigenous liturgical expression in the world. Those who, like myself, were enamored of the Rev. Guido Haazen's "Missa Luba" of 20 years ago will find it but a faint foreshadowing of the Zairian Mass.

While it is unmistakably the Roman Catholic Eucharist, everything in the celebration has been adapted to the African culture with the help of experts in evangelization, anthropology, liturgy and African ritual. The uncluttered sanctuary was brightly painted in white, red, green and black traditional African patterns. The flowing robes of the choir, ministers and celebrants were woven in green, brown and orange. The language was not the French of the Belgian colonialist but the native African tongue. The rite began with the "announcer" dramatically coming down the aisle striking a gong-like instrument calling the assembly to prayer. The ministers of the Mass entered in a swaying dance-like procession. The solemn processional candles were alternated with spear-like ornaments. The celebrant wore a very ample and festive chasuble. His head was covered with a ceremonial cap that indicated that he represents the whole clan, the people of God. He venerated the altar on all four sides with great reverence. During the Eucharistic prayer the sanctuary was surrounded by a circle of ministers moving in eloquent gestures of prayerful awe.

The rite lasted about two hours, but it seemed much shorter because of the rich atmosphere of prayer and celebration. The ebullience of the congregation was contagious. Chants, applause, acclamation, spontaneous prayer and dialogue with the priest added to the familiar atmosphere. The music was extraordinary.

Drums, tom-toms, guitars, accordions and ancient African instruments provided the background for the enthusiastic singing. And everyone sang, the old, the young, men and women. The church was packed and every participant was caught up in the spiritual rapture of sound. As we sang, we sculpted the air with our hands in clap-like gestures that embodied the meaning of each song. Though we did not know one word of the language, we never felt outside the bonds of spiritual communion electrifying the congregation of St. Alphonse de Kin-Matete. I do not believe that there is anything like it anywhere else in the world. The Americans present agreed that praying in this way was an experience of a lifetime.

The church in the United States and Europe has contributed and continues to contribute missionaries, financial aid and other re- sources to Africa. This generosity gives us a special place in the hearts and prayers of African Christians. But the vitality and the vision of the Seventh Assembly of SECAM dramatically state how much the church in Africa has to offer us in return. We would do well to look to Africa in order to learn from this young church in such areas as evangelization, catechesis, vocations, collegiality, spirituality, liturgical renewal, ecumenism, outreach to youth,in- digenous theology, support of the family, fidelity to the faith in the face of opposition, injustice and extreme poverty, as well as the church's role in human development.

"Christ – is Himself African": The more one learns about the church in Africa the more one realizes that the day may not be too far off when that great continent will be sending missionaries to the very countries that first brought her the faith. SECAM demonstrates that she is becoming more and more aware of the full meaning of John Paul II's words to the bishops of Kenya, "Christ in the members of His body in Africa is Himself African."

(The Text has been slightly shortened).

Ref. AMERICA, November 24, 1984.
    America House, 106 West 56th St., New York, NY 10019, USA.

– end –

C'LTURE, CONFLICT, CONF'SION:
BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL NORMS

Gerald Arbuckle, SM

(These are two extracts from a General Introduction to Culture *and Culture Types made at the East Asian Pastoral Institute Summer Courses, May 29 - June 29, 1984. The overall theme of the course was* Reconciliation. *Fr. Arbuckle describes models of alienation which arise from cultural disintegration. These are pertinent to an understanding of the demands of inculturation. He then draws some conclusions from this analysis as a way of understanding the dramatic and sudden changes which took place in the Church in recent years.)*

The example of the fish, taken from its natural habit of water, is helpful to keep in mind during this consideration of cultural 'anomie'. The fish, out of the water, fights for its life, but it gradually dies without its indispensable support system. What happens to people, then, when their culture breaks down? What happens to cultural norms when cultures are under pressure of change, even conflict, from outside and within?

What happens to individuals when these norms are removed, placed in grave question etc.? What rituals of 'reconciliation' develop to help people rediscover an identity, a security? Are there processes of 'reconciliation' which can be used with a world in change?

What K. Cirtautas says is pertinent to our question: "There is a difference between a felled tree and a felled human being. The tree is also powerless...it is doomed. An uprooted human being may be equally powerless, but he is conscious of his fate...A nervous sensitiveness will remain, even in such fortunate individuals as those who were able to take root in the new soil. But an experience of such traumatic severity leaves physical and mental scars which are indelible."

ALIENATION THROUGH CULTURE DISINTEGRATION

There are five broad ways of reacting in the face of cultureee breakdown which can be expressed in different models. In practice, a particular reaction will be accompanied by other reactions, but there will be one that is predominant. Predominance is what the models deal with.

Model 1: This model is that of alienation reactions: Alienation typically occurs in a setting like that of a colonial situation where the so called 'superior' cultural looks down on the local culture. It occurs, too

in a country where there are minority racial groups. It can take
various forms, for example, retreatism, whether by a kind of
resignation, obsessive sensitivity or aggression. The resignation
is at times only an outward acceptance of cultural inferiority; but
it can become a complete loss of confidence in one's own values and
an interior acceptance, as well, of what the dominant culture is
saying.

The alienated group may become extremely sensitive about their
'inferiority' in the presence of the dominant group, even preferring
to ride in taxis than in buses to avoid any attention! The flight
from a reality that is too painful, often takes the form of excessive
drinking, highly emotional religious revivalist movements, obsessive
TV viewing - a kind of compensatory forgetting of what is hurting.
The agression which frequently appears amongst these groups is
spontaneous rather than deliberately planned, and is the fruit of
the frustration experienced by the continual undermining of their
traditional values.

The agressive behaviour can be directed at the dominant power
or at themselves. If the former, it may take the form of rape which
becomes a kind of revenge for what the whole dominant system is
responsible for. Verbal aggression in the form of jokes against the
oppressors is at times the only way left to get back on a dominant
culture which will not accept other values. Joking can be a form
of 'reconciliation' in this context. Agression directed at one's
own group, i.e. deflected aggression, is the taking out on those
whom one loves and shares common values with, the frustration ex-
perienced by continual non-acceptance from the controlling cultural
group.

Model 2: The reaction here is that of 'anomie' or the almost total
                                             loss of meaning in
life. It effects every aspect of life, the psychological, the
emotional, the social, the spiritual. In itself it is a kind of
culture, a culture of poverty, a poverty that reaches into every
corner of a person's being.

Thomas Merton speaks of a people whom prejudice surrounds and
hems in, victims of vice, misery and degradation. Anomie is loss
of human dignity when hope becomes a forgotten word and man's spirit
becomes enslaved.

Culture values give hope and meaning to life and when those
values are violently destroyed, hope disintegrates and people even
begin to die. The culture of anomie is the culture of normlessness,
a culture of nomads. It is written on the expressionless faces of
those afflicted by it.

Model 3: Here we have rituals of self-help and group reconciliation.
                                             People begin to recognize
what is happening to them and try to take their future and their
survival into their own hands. 'Nativistic' movements may appear,
attempts to go back to the past and discover one's cultural roots
in the hope that through these meaning will again be found for life.
The excessive nationalism at present in Iran is an example of this:
it is a rediscovery of roots, but the intention in this case un-
fortunately is to remain there and not to move forward. That kind of

search for the roots of the past is stifling; you cannot remain beneath the soil, else you die. Fundamentalist movements in the various Churches are examples of seeking for the symbols of the past, combined with a retreat from any adaptation demanded by the present and the future.

People need to have the courage to move forward once they have made meaningful contact with their roots. This can be achieved as a 'rational' approach when the third generation of migrants, for example, endeavours to return to a cultural past that their parents had shown scant interest for. A less attractive form of this 'rational' return is supplied by gangs and sects.

The aim here is to reach some kind of identity with deliberately worked out symbols that are contrary to 'societas'. The more violent the movement, the greater the indication of just how much meaning has been lost. The sect movement was particularly strong in the decade after 1968 because of the severe cultural disorganization of the late sixties and early seventies.
   A new identity was often sought by a total absorption in the group. With regard to Church movements like Pentecostalism, Ronald Knox in his boo. *Enthusiasm* comments that such movements in full power are the unmistakable signs of a Church and society in turmoil and of a people losing its identity.

Then there are the 'irrational' movements like communism where people are caught up in an unreal dream of what might be. Communes became popular, as we know, in the United States particularly, after 1968. Their life was limited since their emphasis was unrealistically person-centered, completely given over to the idea of self-fulfilment. Other groups like the Mormons seek their identity in a strongly theocratic society which is often very materialistic in its orientation.

Model 4: Alienation within families. When a migrant family for
                                        example moves into a new country
a tremendous educational gap often opens up between the parents and children; and yet the children are not fully accepted by the new society. What might be rituals of 'reconsiliation' in this context?

Model 5: Alienated Elite: Confusion in Allegiance - Perhaps an
                                                    example taken
from the Church will illustrate this best. Religious often have opportunities for higher education denied to a great part of their society; they may belong to an international congregation which broadens their vision beyond 'parochial' boundaries; often there are opportunities for travel; their range of experience is wide and enriching. As a result they move to the top of the pyramid of social stratification, and may lose feeling for people who are at lower levels. There is a cultural gap between them...again the need for 'reconciliation'.

An example of a ritual of 'reconciliation' in the social sphere: In one part of the Pacific there was an alienated group from the mountains living on the sea coast. They had been forced to build their houses over the sea since no land would be given them. They were not accepted by the local inhabitants, no one would talk to them and their poverty was extreme. So depressed and demoralized did they become that an acute form of alcoholism gripped the men.

Then a missionary priest became interested in them, spent much time
just listening to them, questioning them over a period of months,
unobtrusively helping them to articulate their own needs and surface
their major concerns. After some months the people came to the
decision to ask the missionary for a loan for the purchase of a large
fishing net so that their own diet could be improved. With the net
they caught more fish than they needed so a make-shift freezer was
built to store the extra fish and a 'development coop' was proudly
begun in a simple way. Visitors would be escorted by the people to
the site of the freezer and its advertising sign, and 'their' coop.
pointed out, surrounded by Chinese trading signs. The people had
come through a ritual of reconciliation, and in that liminal ex-
perience had rediscovered themselves, and recovered their self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

<u>Culture change is as inevitable</u> as the sun rising and setting. No
one can freeze a culture. The more
rigid any attempt to stop cultural change, the more catastrophic will
be the change when it happens. Change can only be faced authentically
if it is owned up to with a sense of the past and a sense of dignity.
Of course the first step is to be *aware* that there are groups within
the society that are poor, oppressed, alienated or marginalized. Once
identified, there is need to discover the dominant model of alienation
operative in the group, and to create the necessary rituals of self-
help reconciliation. And it is the group itself that must do all
this, the 'helper' acting as a facilitator or a catalyst. Those who
have such roles must themselves have been 'reconciled' in a kind of
liminal experience of death and rebirth, as they try to help people
less gifted than themselves, or who have lost the meaning of their
life. They must be 'converted' to those they serve.

CULTURAL BREAKDOWN AND 'RECONCILIATION'
IN THE CHURCH

Prior to Vatican II the Church was a very self-contained and
secure culture in its own right. One author speaking of the Catholic
Church in the United States said that of all sub-cultures in the United
States the Catholic Church was the best organized, the most secure and
the most integrated of groups. It had its own laws, its own forms of
dress, its own hierarchy, its own very clear value system. The world
had to adapt to the Church and not the Church to the world. It was a
kind of ghetto culture, one that had developed out of the need to defend
itself against the Reformation and the evils of the world. The pivotal
symbols were clear and universally accepted; the roles of bishops,
priests and religious were unambiguously defined.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE POST-VATICAN II CHURCH

Quite suddenly and very dramatically changes began to take place. In 1966 religious congregations had possibly the highest recruitment rates in history. But by 1968 they were beginning to think about selling off their large seminaries, novitiates and scholasticates that were no longer filled with students. And that process has continued. The Church had become exposed to two cultural revolutions which shook the security of Catholic culture, especially in the Western world. The meaning,system and values which had been regarded as 'Catholic' suddenly seemed to have lost their importance for so many people.

The first movement was "the revolution of cultural disorder," as it has been called. Between 1966 and 1972 the Western world went through a revolution of culture and values such as has never happened with the same intensity in the West before. Only the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment could be compared to it. In the areas of art, music, education and politics, what had been acceptable before 1966 was no longer so. It was a 'liminality' period in which, at all levels of Western culture, efforts were made to get rid of the order, security and predictability of the world before 1966. If there had been order in music and art, there now had to be disorder, a liminality experience of chaos. Uncertainty became the cult of that period. Clothing no longer clearly distinguished men from women and there was the beginning of the 'jean' culture. The cult of disorder was a reaction to a world that was judged to be over-structured and too predictable.

The second cultural revolution was the cultural breakdown of the Catholic Church. The opening paragraph of the document *The Church in the Modern World* says 'that the hopes, the anxieties, the frustrations of the world are the hopes, the anxieties, the frustrations of the People of God'. In that simple statement we understand that the Church is no longer to be a ghetto Church, but a missionary Church in and through the world. But the doors were thrown open to a world that was in unnatural turmoil, in a cultural state of disorder. The Church was not prepared to face such a world. The pivotal symbols that supported the Church were being dramatically undermined and often by Catholics themselves. Not only were the most 'subversive' statements made, at times by leading churchmen, but these statements were carried into catholic homes through the mass media.

As a result of the shock caused by the frequency and intensity of church criticism, unheard of before by the catholic faithful, the Church went into a critical state of liminality. Radicals were deliberately trying to shock the Church. The traditional symbols were under attack in anti-symbolic language. The ambiguity of many of the statements of the Council documents, an ambiguity that was unavoidable in a time of transition, lent itself to the creation of

different 'sides' on many church issues, all charged with deep emotion.
A church left and a church right was a new experience for catholics
who had grown up in a Church that was uniformly center.

A Liminal State of Crisis: The Church then as a culture went into a
liminal state of crisis. We should of course
be grateful for Vatican II and for all the efforts at revitalization
since that time. We had become so self-contained and so self-centered
that, as a Church; we were unreal. One result of this whole movement
has been a greater emphasis on the value of fraternity and community,
a movement that was akin to what was happening in the secular culture
of the Western world. Respect for the individual person, the culti-
vation of each one's freedom, the avoidance of any form of authoritarian-
ism were all highly prized values. The beauty and value of inter-
personal relations as the locus for finding God was emphasized at
the expense frequently enough of the 'vertical' realationship with God.
It was as if God existed only to be the support of our human relation-
ships.

There were, of course, instances of violent rejection of the
changes that were taking place. Reactionary movements like that
headed by Archbishop Lefebvre sprung up, and the intensity of the re-
action and the support that was given to it were strong indications
of the degree of turmoil and cultural breakdown in the Church. New
forms of 'cargo cults' developed: religious orders placed unrealistic
hopes on general chapters, provincial chapters - and the documents
they produced - and on a constant round of community meetings. All
these have their importance of course, but only if they are part of
a real renewal of spirit.

Authentic Renewal: We are on the verge, I believe, of an authentic
renewal of church life; a real ritual of recon-
ciliation is developing in the Church. I can see it happening at
many levels. Religious are beginning to discover their vocation of
being a "liminal" witness for the rest of the world. Their 'liminal'
lives must symbolize an option for powerlessness in a world that is
power hungry; an option for poverty, in a world where wealth is a top
priority; a deliberate choice to be 'little people' in a world that
looks for prestige.

In the renewal of religious life we are witnessing a desire to
return to the powerlessness of the gospel poor, as well as a return
to prayer as the key factor in any revitalization of the spiritual
life. The Church, and religious life in particular, is in a vulnerable
period of liminality where she has been stripped of her accustomed
supports and long standing status. Our meaning both for ourselves and
for the world comes not from any advantage in education or whatever,
but from the strength of our faith, hope and love. So there is a
ritual of ' reconciliation' going on in religious life, as a conse-
quence of the stripping away of culture supports of the 'societas' of

the Church prior to Vatican II. There are many renewal movements in
the Church today which can be looked upon as rituals of reconciliation,
for example, the Marriage Encounter Movement, the Pastoral Renewal
Programs, etc.

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Note:

"Liminal" experiences, refered to in these extracts are dealt
with in some detail in an earlier section of Fr. Arbuckles's present-
ation. Life is seen as a process whereby we move from 'societas' to
'communitas' (through a liminal experience) and back again to 'societas'
with a renewed vitality, sense of purpose and desire to live.

An example of such an experience would be shipwreck in which
four prestigious passengers find themselves together with two deck-
hands in the only life-boat that survives the sinking.

All previous roles and titles, all that which distinguishes some
from the other in 'normal' life, disappear in a radical return to
what it means to be just a human person intent on survival in the
face of the sea as a common enemy. There is only one critical issue
to attend to - staying alive. In this 'liminal' situation people
relate as people, and not as established roles would predetermine.

Once, however, the life boat reaches safety roles re-appear and
become important again, for 'normality' returns as a life pattern.
If life is to be normal, there is need from time to time to rediscover
and relive intensely the values which are at the very foundation of
our human lives or the life of the group.

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Ref. East Asian Pastoral Review, Vol.XXI 1984. No.3.

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RECOMMENDED READING

CONSTRUCTING LOCAL THEOLOGIES

by Robert J. Schreiter, CPS.
Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York.   Pp.192

"This book is an excellent practical tool for all persons concerned
with listening carefully to a culture so that the gospel message
takes deep root for the sake of the Christian community and its ex-
perience of Christ.   There is breadth of scholarship, rich respect
for tradition, and openness for future development of one of the
most important missiological issues facing the church today through-
out the world."   Marcella Hoesl, Head of the Department of Mission,
Selly Oak Colleges.

SPIRITUALITY AND JUSTICE

By Donal Dorr, S.P.S.
Gill and Macmillan, Dublin and Orbis Books,
Maryknoll, New York.   Pp.260.

"This book is a very personal one – much more so than is common in
religious or theological books.   I decided to include personal ex-
periences and impressions because I feel that a lot of today's
theology is written in an academic desert.   I am trying to find ways
of bringing life into theology.   This experiment leaves me rather
vulnerable – but maybe that is a good thing.   It may perhaps encourage
others-especially those who may disagree with me – to respond rather
than just react.   My highest hope for the book is that it would lead
to a dialogue.   In such a dialogue we could perhaps speak God's word
to each other-to challenge us in our complacency and to give us Good
News in our weakness" from the Introduction.