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Editorial

‘It is not easy to be a missionary today since one has to be extremely careful with the words used so as not to offend the sensitivity of others’. This sad complaint was often heard over the last months during encounters with some of our brothers and sisters. Yet, all our parishes are feverishly preparing to celebrate Mission Sunday and to proclaim and remind the parishioners that we all are missionaries. Hence the need for a ‘mutually fruitful dialogue with the counterparts of other religions’.

Jojo Joseph dares to propose the need to focus on our Theological Vocabulary and to evolve new terminology that is simple and comprehensible to the followers of other religions. His *Indirect Presence of the “Word” in Other Religions* is an ‘attempt to explain how Christians as well as others can take part in the salvific activity of Christ by reconfiguring their life to the prompting of the indwelling Spirit and by sacrificing their talents and resources for the benefit of others’.

‘*Creativity in Mission*’ is what **J. Cristo Rey, CME**, presents as a way of approaching the other person and engaging him/her in a fruitful dialogue. Creativity is not only to be used in our Pastoral methodology as the need goes deeper. How can we present the Christian Message in a creative way? How to be creative in presenting the roots of our human existence and our spirituality?

One way to foster our creative thinking might be to analyse some of the obstacles that block this creativity. **Rose Uchem, MSHR**, points to gender inequality as one of these obstacles. In *Gender Inequality as an Enduring Obstacle to Mission* the author highlights the need for an inclusive vision of mission and for a rethinking of the old biblical and cultural notion of women as men’s helpers.

Women as men’s helpers, living in order to serve men’s needs and desires, sounds too strong but this is the plight of many women in our midst today. **Philomena D’Souza, FMA**, writes about this form of slavery in our Christian Countries. In *Le trafic de femmes asiatiques, un esclavage des temps modernes* the author describes the vulnerability of women in Asia who may be misled, used and exploited. This is a real challenge to the Christian message.

To conclude this SEDOS Bulletin we wish to present our readers with the first part of the study by **Theo Aerts, SVD**. In *The Birth of a Religious Movement: A Comparison of Melanesian Cargo Cults and Early Christianity* the author compares and stresses the vitality of religious movements and the forms of revival they take through the years notwithstanding the fact that early promises regarding the end of time were not fulfilled. The faith of the people is stressed over and above the scholarly interpretation and expectations.

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Indirect Presence of the “Word” in Other Religions

- Jojo Joseph -

1. Introduction

This article draws inspiration from a recent paper, “Other Religions and the Salvific Mystery of Christ” by M. Amaladoss, S.J., in the *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* (Jan. 2006). The paper lucidly summarizes the current thinking of the Magisterium regarding the relation between Christianity and other religions. It draws on the concept of “Participated forms of Mediation” proposed by the late Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), and concedes that through some unknown ways, the paschal mystery and the salvific activity of Jesus Christ are operational even among the followers of other faiths who do not acknowledge Jesus as their saviour (nn. 5,10). Pursuing the concept of Participated Mediation further, this article proposes that Christ who presented Himself indirectly but positively to Abraham and the Mosaic community might be present in other religions also indirectly as Word of God or spiritual food, thus enabling the followers of other faiths also to participate in the paschal mystery of Christ. An attempt is made to explain how Christians as well as others can take part in the salvific activity of Christ by reconfiguring their life to the prompting of the indwelling Spirit and by sacrificing their talents and resources for the benefit of others.

2. Need for reinterpreting the salvific mystery of Christ:

The VJTR paper indicates that the Church recognizes the value and significance of other religions in the eschatological scheme of God. It also reaffirms at the same time that “Jesus Christ is the sole and universal mediator of salvation for all humanity”. According to the paper, followers of other religions may also obtain salvation, but it is the mediation of the paschal mystery that somehow enables it. It echoes the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and articulates the same position adopted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in their notification (2001) on the book, “Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism” (1997) by Jacques Dupuis, S.J. It does not attempt to explain how the followers of other religions can unknowingly participate in the paschal mystery of Christ. An imperfect understanding of the universality of the Paschal Mystery tends to encourage spiritual lethargy in some Christians who presume that membership of their religion, faith in Jesus and partaking of the Eucharistic meal “somehow saves” them. Hence a new interpretation of the salvific mystery is needed to challenge and inspire the average Christian towards a better spirituality and practice of the Gospel values by suggesting the spiritual connotation of the Paschal Mystery that lies dormant beneath its literal exposition. Without contradicting the Gospel in any way, it should also explain how the paschal mystery operates directly or indirectly and transforms the life of Christians as well as others, offering the opportunity of salvation to all people.

3. Proposing the operation of the salvific activity of Jesus outside Christianity

This article makes a new proposal which accommodates other religions within the eschatological scheme of God. It seeks to establish that the indirect presence of the Word outside the Christian revelation cannot be ruled out. The Gospel vouches for the pre-existence and indirect presence of Jesus Christ among the Israelite community led by Moses and also among our patriarchs like Abraham. The following words of Pope John Paul II also support the concept of the indirect presence and activity of the Spirit in every time and space. “*Second Vatican Council recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through the ‘seeds of the Word’... ‘the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in the paschal mystery in a manner known to God’ ... it is the Spirit who sows the ‘seeds of the Word’ present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ’ ... ‘the Spirit, who ‘was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified’ ... leads us to broaden our vision in order to ponder his activity in every time and place*” (RM, nn. 28, 29).

The new proposal seeks to make a simple modification in our traditional faith assertion like this: “The Word is the sole and universal mediator of salvation for all humanity”. *Redemptoris Missio* (n. 6) and the “Dupuis

Notification” very clearly invalidate any attempt “to introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ ... or between the Word’s salvific activity and that of Jesus”. In essence, the proposal suggests that the “salvific activity of the Word” is indirectly operative in the world from the “foundation of the world”. It may seem to contradict the view of the Church as articulated in the ecclesiastical documents mentioned above. But it aligns itself with the concept of “Participated Mediation” by indicating that Christ is present and active outside the Christian revelation from the beginning of time indirectly in the form of spiritual food or Word of God.

The above proposal can explain how the real-life practitioners of the ultimate teachings of other religions are participating in the saving ministry of Jesus even when they do not accept Jesus as their Saviour. It envisages that everyone including Christians have to overcome their sinful tendencies, practice selfless love and undergo the equivalent of “born-again experience” or “crucifying and resurrection experience” in order to become eligible for eternal life. Without this, no one can hear the prompting of the Spirit and lead a life in accordance with the will of God. We may further affirm confidently that no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless one “assimilates the spiritual food” of the Word of God (Jn 6:53) and attains spiritual communion with Him by treading the narrow path or living the Gospel values (Lk 13:23,24). This will challenge the average Christian to explore how to assimilate the Word of God and how to attain the “crucifying and resurrection experience”. This will also encourage the people of other faiths to study the Gospel and to see how its teachings enrich and complement the revelation or Word of God in their scriptures.

At this stage Christians need not declare whether any of the revealed scriptures of the world religions can come under the category: “the Word of God”. We may leave the issue open, or perhaps suggest a primary criterion that can be applied to any scripture to qualify it for being considered as compatible with the Christian concept of Word of God: If any scripture exhorts humans to undergo inner transformation or *metanoia* and to live in this world in tune with the prompting of the inner Spirit or Self, and if the end result of such inner transformation is the divine urge to love and serve all others unconditionally with an attitude of self-sacrifice, then that scripture can be said to be compatible with the Word of God.

“The Word” or “Word of God” seems to be the key in bridging the gap of misunderstanding and cementing mutual respect between all true religions, because most religions including Judaism understand this term and recognize it to be the ultimate spiritual food that gives eternal life to their sincere practitioners. The ultimate objective of the Word of God from the beginning of history is to establish the bond of unconditional love between all humans, through the “wine” of spiritual wisdom. It is quite possible to arrive at a consensus on the common goals of all religions with the clear understanding of why there are glaring differences in the expression of faith and in the means to achieve the ultimate objectives.

The above proposal is likely to raise innumerable questions, but this article addresses only a few of them, since this is an exploratory attempt to seek the opinion of theologians. This article uses the term “Word of God” in its broadest sense, in line with the prologue to John’s Gospel.

4. Pre-existence and presence of Christ among the Israelites as spiritual food

The Word of God reaches out and presents Himself as spiritual food to those who thirst and hunger for Him with a purified and softened heart. It tastes like sweet honey (Ps 119[118]:103; Jer 15:16; Ez 3:1-3) to those who seek and receive Him with due preparation. The spiritual novices or babes enjoy the Word of God like pure milk, whereas spiritually advanced persons who explore its depths enjoy its solid content (I Pt 2:2; I Cor 3:1-3). Jesus presented himself as the “Bread of life” or spiritual food that has come down from heaven (Jn 6:51-59). The epistles unambiguously state that it was Christ who was manifested as the “spiritual drink”, “spiritual food”, or the “spiritual rock” to the Israelites in their spiritual wilderness (I Cor 10:1-4). This proves the “pre-existence and indirect presence of Jesus alias the Word outside Christianity, among the Israelite community led by Moses”.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus identified Himself with the Father (Jn 10:30; 17:21). He often expressed Himself as His Word with no separation or dichotomy between His earthly and pre-existent roles. For example, He declares that He existed prior to Abraham even from the foundation of the world (Jn 17:5,24) and that Abraham rejoiced in Him (Jn 8:56-58). This again illustrates the pre-existence and indirect presence of Jesus outside the Christian revelation. John the Baptist confirmed the pre-existence of Jesus (Jn 1:15,30). The Apostles also shared with others their joy in having heard, seen and touched the pre-existent “Word of Life” (I Jn 1:1-4; 2:13).

We know that the ordinary Jews were offended and even picked up stones, when they found it extremely difficult to understand the literal as well as spiritual connotation of His words including His “pre-existence”

and “edibility” (Jn 6:60; 8:59). They could not realize that the words uttered by Jesus were that of the Father (Jn 14:24) and that Jesus was indeed the same Word of God who made Himself available to Abraham or other communities in the form of spiritual food.

5. Function of the eternal or pre-existent Word starts with Creation

The activity of the pre-existent Word is not limited to “revelation” through prophets or scriptures. The entire revelation of the evolving universe itself has been made possible “by and through the Word” (Jn 1:3; Col 1:15-16; I Pt 1:20; Heb 1:2,3). The universe is framed and contained by the Word (Heb 11:3) or Jesus (Col 1:17). The Gospel makes no division between the pre-existent Word and the Incarnate Word. The visible but ephemeral world is filled up or made up of an invisible and eternal spiritual reality or medium (Wis 11:7; II Cor 4:18). In short, the Word is the unseen agent and medium of creation.

“The Word” or Jesus is the “first-born”, yet uncreated and invisible Son of the Father or Eternal Spirit (Col 1:15). He is co-existent with the Eternal Spirit from eternity as an indivisible partner of the Holy Trinity or Ultimate Reality. Some of His other eternal functions include immanence and salvation. The pre-existent and risen Christ fills up and permeates everything (Eph 4:10; *cf.* Wis 1:7), remaining as the indweller of the universe and acting as our inner witness and conscience (Rv 3:14). The Word of God is a living and immanent dynamic spiritual reality or witness who discerns even the deepest desires and thoughts of His creation (Heb 4:12). He is the Light of the World enlightening everyone who comes into this world from the very beginning (Jn 1:9,10). The Word of God will come again to judge His own Creation, but His name or form remains a mystery (Rv 19:12-13).

Like Abraham and Moses, there were others also who rejoiced (Ps 119[118]:162) in the pre-existent Word. The Psalmists who preserved the Word of God in their hearts to keep away from sin (Ps 119[118]:11) and who contemplated deeply (Ps 119[118]:15, 27, 97-99, 148) recognized the eternal nature and activities of the pre-existent Word. They knew about His creative function (Ps 33[32]:6). They knew about the need for repentance, cleansing and regeneration (Ps 119[118]:176; Ps 51:2; 51:10). Psalm 119[118] is very illustrative about the nature and functions of the Word. The Word of God is truth. It illuminates our path and acts as a guide (Ps 119[118]:160, 151, 105, 130, 133). It is pure and invaluable (Ps 119[118]:140, 72, 162). It heals (Ps 107[106]:20). It purifies, renews, redeems, and saves all those who repent and follow the given precepts (Ps 119[118]:9, 25, 154, 41, 81,166, 174). In short, the Word of God creates, guides, regenerates, judges and saves the whole of creation throughout history.

When the pre-existent Word reached out to the prophets and patriarchs as spiritual food or Word of God before His incarnation, they all recognized Him through their inner eyes. After drinking or “assimilating” Him spiritually into their lives, they remained in spiritual communion with Him, during the rest of their lives. They did not foresee and acknowledge the Incarnate Word as their saviour. However, they became eligible for the Kingdom of God (*cf.* Lk 13:28). Obviously they knew how to worship the invisible God in truth and Spirit. Blessed are those who see and worship God with their inner eyes, rather than with their external senses and body. Some prophets who remained in spiritual communion with the Word desired to witness His physical manifestation, but in vain (Lk 10:24). Finally, when the Word humbled Himself (Phil 2:8) and manifested as a human being, only a minority group of righteous and spiritually enlightened people, including Simeon (Lk 2:25-31), Elizabeth and John the Baptist who earnestly expected the manifestation of the Word, were able to recognize Jesus. However, such “old wineskins” were not the main targets of His mission during His incarnation. He came in search of “new or empty wineskins” who had not assimilated the spirit of His old wine into their lives.

6. The agent of creation plunges into creation to offer Himself again as spiritual food

The Word of God came down to earth as Jesus the Shepherd, in search of the sinners or “lost sheep” among the Israelites (Mt 9:12,13; 15:24). He wanted to put the unrighteous people back on the right spiritual path as originally attempted by Him through the “Law and Prophets” (*cf.* Gal 5:14; Mt 7:12; 22:40). The majority of the Jews held the “Law and Prophets” or Word of God only in their heads and not in their hearts. They included the highly religious Pharisees and priests who were deeply committed to the literal and ritualistic content of the scriptures. Due to their spiritual blindness they could not recognize the voice of Jesus, the Incarnate Word. Despite their religiosity and scholarship in the scriptures, they failed to understand the significance of the scriptural prophecies and condemned Jesus unknowingly, thus fulfilling the same Scriptures that they used to read invariably on every Sabbath (Acts 13:27). Jesus recognized their ignorance (Lk 23:34).

The spiritual ignorance of the majority Jews indicates that it is not one's mere faith in a covenant, doctrine or religion that really matters, but the opening of one's inner eye (Ps 119[118]:18) to recognize the real unseen Word of God and to attain spiritual communion with Him. Even highly religious and scholarly people like Saul worked against the Word of God unknowingly until the thick scales of ignorance covering his inner eye fell down (Acts 9:17-22). Saul-turned-Paul was later instrumental in "opening the eyes" of many others (Acts 26:18). The need for spiritual worthiness and opening of one's inner eye to comprehend the Scriptures, to understand the mystery of Jesus and to benefit from the Eucharistic meal is as important as the primary faith in Jesus (Lk 24:31-32; 44-45; I Cor 11:27-29; Mt 13:13; Jn 9:39).

To "know Jesus" and "to be known by Jesus" is not an easy task even for those who think that they are His followers who share His flesh and blood regularly and even carry out prophecies and miracles in His name (I Jn 3:6; Mt 7: 22, 23; Lk 13:26,27). To "know Jesus" and to "eat Jesus" literally means accepting Jesus as the Son of God and sharing the Eucharist, but spiritually it means imitating Jesus by consciously seeking and executing the will of God. Jesus has indicated clearly that eating spiritual food means executing the will of God (Jn 4:32-34).

Unlike the Jews who picked up stones, Christians do not take offence at the "edibility" of Jesus. This is not because we discern the true meaning of the "Bread of Life" (Jn 6:51-59), but since we are quite content to think that Jesus was merely foretelling about the Eucharist, when He introduced Himself as the spiritual food that has come down from heaven. Many Christians do not realize that before Jesus came down from heaven, He pre-existed in history as spiritual food and that He can be present outside Christian revelation as spiritual food. We forget that Jesus the Shepherd admitted having other herds under Him (Jn 10:16). The earthly activities of Jesus neither diminish nor fully encompass His overall functions. We normally interpret His words narrowly to convey the meaning that only those who come to know and put faith in the Incarnate Word alone can attain salvation. This interpretation denies salvation to our early patriarchs and prophets, who lived their life in total surrender to the pre-existent Word of God. It also gives false protection to those Christians who are spiritually lethargic and believe that mere faith in the paschal event and participation in the holy Eucharist "somehow ensures" their salvation.

The scriptural indication that Jesus is a "pre-existent reality" does not evoke any surprise or reaction among Christians unlike the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus, since we perceive Him more as an omnipotent divine person than as a man of God. Despite this, we do not acknowledge His prerogative to reveal Himself indirectly to other communities or to facilitate salvation for others. We also normally underplay His unique role among the Israelites as a man of God or reformer who maintained constant spiritual communion or oneness with the Father. We may note that, though Jesus often talked in the first person indicating His pre-existent role as a partner of the Holy Trinity, sometimes He highlighted the natural limitations of His human role in order to convey a powerful message to us. He was subject to temptations or hunger (Mt 4:2). He said that He could do nothing on His own (Jn 5:30) and that only the Father in heaven knows the time when the world will get renewed (Mt 24:36). He experienced extreme agony and prayed to the Heavenly Father to remove the cup of crucifixion at Gethsemane. He felt weak in the flesh (Mt 26:38,39,41). He felt forsaken (Mt 27:46). He did not count Himself equal to the Father in heaven, in His embodied state (Jn 14:28; Phil 2:6-8).

We may note that despite being an indivisible partner of the Ultimate Reality and being the primordial agent of Creation, He plunged into His creation as a human being and subjected Himself to the laws of nature and also to the "Law" (Gal 4:4). He submitted Himself to the elders and leaders who represented the worldly authority within His community. He subjected Himself to their erroneous judgment and punishment, despite being innocent and right in His words and deeds. This apparently foolish intervention unfolds a divine master plan and leaves behind several sublime messages for mankind.

7. The hidden purpose and messages of incarnation

The Word chose to manifest Himself as a man **(1)** to reveal the nature and functions of the Triune God to the world, **(2)** to teach and enable humans to enjoy the same type of communion that exists between Him and the Father, **(3)** to invite once again those who had not yet taken advantage of the call given by Him earlier through His messengers, prophets, covenants and scriptures to repent and to undergo the transformation stipulated for attaining communion with the Father, and most important, **(4)** to precipitate the Kingdom of Heaven on earth through Christians who are supposed to act as leaven or catalyst amongst the pluralistic world community.

The incarnation and self-sacrifice of Jesus can be seen as a pre-emptive act designed to build up and enable a new and spiritually vibrant community of followers empowered by the Holy Spirit to save the world from the grip of growing evil tendencies. The saving act of Jesus will be fulfilled through His true and dedicated followers, in the fullness of time when

they steer the world to a peaceful, cohesive and sinless world or a Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The incarnation reveals that the Word really humbled Himself (Phil 2:6-8) to don the highly limited role of a human to demonstrate the limits of its spiritual potential to the unrighteous or spiritually blind and ignorant people within and outside the Israelite community. He wants all humans to join Him in sharing the communion that He enjoys with the Father (Jn 17:11,24). In other words, He wants all humans to overcome their carnal tendencies and to become “sons of God” or “partakers of divine nature” (II Pt 1:3; Rom 8:5-14). Jesus exhorts all humans to become as perfect and as holy as the Father in order to attain the “Abba experience” as demonstrated by Him personally (Gal 4:6; Mt 5:48; I Pt 1:15,16; Rom 8:15-30; 1 Jn 3:3). It is the “Abba experience or oneness with the Father in Spirit” from birth till death that clearly differentiated the divinity of Jesus from His humanity or, in other words, it is the Abba experience that bridges the gap between His humanity and divinity. The Abba experience is the birth-right and the ideal goal of all individuals. This is one of the key messages of the Gospel.

Another key message of the paschal mystery is that in order to attain the “born-again” or resurrection experience in our lives, we have necessarily to undergo the crucifying experience by emptying ourselves for the benefit of others (Phil 2:3-8).

8. Reflections on the operating mechanism of the Paschal Mystery

Let us examine whether it is possible to conceive of a mechanism which can explain how the paschal mystery operates and facilitates salvation among Christians as well as others. The Paschal mystery may not operate and facilitate salvation in those Christians who are spiritually lethargic and are content with mere faith and routine rituals. It may operate only in those who undergo comprehensive inner transformation (*metanoia*) and attain the “born-again experience”. This kind of transformative experience may be operative not only in the true disciples of Christ, but also in the followers of other religions who are guided by their scriptures containing the “seeds of the Word”.

A true disciple of Christ has to imitate Christ in his life. A Christian has to “die and resurrect” to attain salvation. Here lies the key to the mystery of salvation. It is essential to empty ourselves, to sacrifice our talents and resources and to burn ourselves like a candle in order to love and serve others as demonstrated and demanded by Jesus. For most of us this is an almost impossible task to achieve since by instinct, we are all selfish and seek only our self-survival and are not concerned about others not connected with us in any way. In order to lead a true Christian way of life, we have to transform ourselves drastically by a conscious elimination of all our negative tendencies that we have inherited and acquired during the course of our birth / life.

Even after our interim transformation, it is very difficult to maintain such a transformed state, unless the new habits are ingrained in the system of our body, mind and intellect or in other words, in our genes. It means that we may have to undergo the crucifying and resurrection experience constantly in our day-to-day life. This may give us the feeling that like sheep, we willingly subject ourselves to slaughter every day. Perhaps at a higher spiritual state, we may start loving and serving others automatically or naturally without conscious effort or without creating a feeling in us that we are sacrificing ourselves for the sake of others and God. After reaching such a state, we may perhaps claim that we have attained oneness with Christ by participating in the paschal mystery.

If such a state of natural Christ-like love for others is experienced or attained by the sincere followers of other faiths also as a result of the influence of their scriptures, then those scriptures can perhaps also be termed as Word of God. Christians can satisfy themselves that Jesus is indirectly present in other religions as spiritual food or Word of God. Then we can continue to hold the so called “exclusivist” creedal statements with a revised interpretation. Instead of saying that “Jesus saves”, we may now say that “The Word saves”. The new understanding leads us to believe that Jesus is present in all religions and that the Paschal Mystery is operating universally amongst all the servants of God who live according to the Word of God, even when they do not accept Jesus as their Saviour. We may realize that the same Jesus strives to save others also, in ways that have not envisaged earlier. Let us recall once again Pope John Paul II’s statement from *Redemptoris Missio* “...the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in the paschal mystery in a manner known to God...” (n. 28).

9. Jesus or the Word is the unseen centre and perimeter of all religions

The call to attain holiness and oneness with the Spirit is the hidden message not only of the Gospel, but also of the Word of God or “seeds of the Word” indirectly present in all scriptures. All religions exhort humans through different terminologies and techniques to achieve this goal. But no one in history has

demonstrated this personally as perfectly as Jesus. Those who accept the primacy of the Word of God and have transformed themselves spiritually according to its precepts will neither fail to recognize Jesus nor denigrate the deity of Jesus, if it is really the Spirit that guides them (I Cor 12:3).

We need to interpret properly **(1)** the role of Word of God as “spiritual food” and **(2)** the nature of transformation this food is expected to make in the believers’ lives. For example, we may examine whether the “old wine” and the “new wine” are expected to make the same or different effects among the Judaic and Christian communities who are served with these “wines”. We may also explore whether the goals of the “spiritual rock” that followed the Israelite community and the “spiritual food in which Abraham rejoiced” and the “Bread of Life” that came down to the Christians are essentially the same or different. The transformation and salvation that the Word of God effected in the lives of our early patriarchs like Abraham can give us enough clues to arrive at the answers.

The forgiveness of sins and salvific function of the Word can be found to be operating in the world as a consequence of repentance and reformation, in and through His prophets even before the paschal event (Is 6:7; Mk 1:4-5). For example, we can see that Jesus granted forgiveness of sins, even before He executed the paschal event. In fact the salvific activity revealed by Jesus and preached by the apostles is in operation from the beginning of time (II Tm 1:9-11). Jesus Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega (Rv 21:6; 22:13), remains the same, without any change before, during and after the Incarnation, guiding and saving all those who try to seek Him and hold fast to His eternal message of selfless service and neighbourly love. It is also very significant that the Gospel refers to Jesus as the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the universe” (Rv 13:8). We can proclaim confidently that the salvific activity of Jesus is operative wherever He is present directly or indirectly, inside or outside the Christian revelation, before and after the Incarnation.

Today the Christians who keep their spiritual eye and ear open can recognize that Jesus is living and operating in the world indirectly as Word of God through all the seen religions, prophets, sages and scriptures. The Word of God yearns to reach out to the whole of Creation and to establish a personal relationship with each of them. He recognizes the diversity of His own creation and the diverse methods His children adopt to access Him. He reveals Himself and offers Himself to them as spiritual food in as diverse ways as He pleases, but He has only one ultimate message to give – the message of the *Abba* experience and unconditional love of fellow humans. The inner message of the Gospel can be found to be in perfect harmony with the ultimate teachings of all religions. Spiritually enlightened followers of all religions undoubtedly recognize this fact through their inner eye, though this is beyond the comprehension of the ordinary religious followers who are committed only to the literal meaning and the ritualistic content of their respective scriptures.

The ordinary religious follower needs to be educated that every religion has its own unique religious practices, dogmas, rituals and faith experiences permitted by God to suit the socio-cultural background under which each expects to evolve physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. Christians should understand that they are specifically expected to respond to the call of the Divine for attaining perfection and holiness by faithfully celebrating and contemplating the paschal mystery of Lord Jesus Christ, and most important of all by imitating Christ in their lives.

All those who sweat and bleed selflessly for the spiritual and worldly upliftment of others are imitating Christ’s paschal mystery even when they do not know Christ. Surely they shall stand amongst the righteous sheep on the Day of Judgment (Mt 25:32-40) on account of their seeing God in their co-pilgrims on earth. The ultimate sign of true discipleship of Jesus is nothing but selfless service of others (Jn 13:35).

The real objective of religions is not fulfilled until man loves God by loving man (I Jn 4:20). The ordinary followers among the Christians will be challenged and stimulated to utilize their faith and to fulfill this objective, if it occurs to them that the Word of God exhorts followers of other religions also in various ways to attain the same level of perfection, holiness and neighbourly love. They should also understand that Christ’s call to make new disciples for Him is not meant to take precedence over one’s own inner purification and true discipleship. It is better to make true disciples for Christ rather than to add numbers to the Church. A true Christian is one who imitates Christ by loving and serving others unconditionally. We should not close our eyes to the possibility that “anonymous Christians” might exist in the world.

10. Paschal mystery seen through the eyes of *Advaitins*

Spiritually enlightened followers of other religions can indeed visualize how the Gospel message and

the paschal mystery corroborate their religious teachings. Let us examine how a typical Hindu, who follows the non-dualist or *Advaitic* tradition, reconciles the Gospel with the *advaitic* concepts. Spiritually enlightened *advaitins* have no problem in accepting Christ as the embodiment of their ultimate teachings. They realize that all humans have to expel all their negative attitudes and fill their mind with universal love, so as to attain oneness with the Spirit who is immanent within all humans as “*Atman*”, and within the whole of the universe as “*Purusha*”, and transcends the universe as “*Brahman*”. They also recognize that *Atman, Purusha and Brahman* are similar in some ways to “the Holy Spirit, the Word and the Father”. Terminologies of different religions seldom have equivalent connotations, but they complement each other.

Advaitins recognize that in order to fulfill the objective of human life, one has to consciously subdue and eliminate all sinful tendencies (*vasanas*) that have been inherited as well as acquired during one’s lifetime. They indulge in symbolic acts such as dipping in the waters of holy rivers and undertaking pilgrimages to holy mountains indicating respectively the cleansing of sins and spiritual progress. But they do not consider these acts as short-cuts or conclusive sacraments for attaining salvation. They recognize that a person needs to be twice-born (*dvijah*) which indicates that the old carnal man in them has to give way to a new spiritual man. For this, one has to choose the narrow path towards perfection and holiness and willingly prepare oneself for a life of crucifixion to enter into a resurrected life on earth as indicated by Paul (Rom 6:4-7; 8:17; Gal 2:20).

St John of the Cross who understood the above requirement, cautioned spiritual aspirants or novices to gird themselves to pass through the “Dark Night of the Soul” in order to attain the resurrection experience or oneness of soul with God. St Paul braced himself for holiness by comparing himself to a sheep that is being slaughtered all day long for the sake of Word of God (Rom 8:35-37). *Advaitins* can understand that the paschal mystery reinforces the undeniable fact that “crucifixion and resurrection” experience is essential for attaining salvation (Gal 5:24; Rom 8:13-14; 1 Pt 4:1-2). Without any hesitation, they can compare these concepts with their concept of “walking along the edge of a razor” for attaining “Self realization” (*Katha Upanishad*).

Advaitins may not have any difficulty in understanding the spiritual connotation of various terminologies such as “becoming dead to sin and resurrecting into the newness of life” (Rom 6:1-12), “being born-again” (Jn 3:3-7; I Jn 3:9; 5:18), “withering of a grain to enable germination” (*cf.* Jn 12:24), “putting off the old man and putting on a new man” (Eph 4:22-24) “purging out the old leaven and remaining unleavened” (I Cor 5:7-8) etc., since they all point unmistakably to the same process involved in the spiritual metamorphosis of an ordinary religious person into a renewed spiritual person.

In short, *Advaitins* recognize that the teachings of Jesus corroborate the *advaitic* principles and that all humans are expected to attain the same stage of perfection and holiness through conscious and progressive spiritual practices and to experience oneness with the Spirit or Father as revealed by Jesus. The spiritual practices of ordinary Christians focus attention mainly on washing or cleansing of the sins that are already committed, whereas the *advaitins* focus attention mainly on the cleansing and extermination of sinful tendencies or desires (Jas 1:14-15) that have the potential of germinating and growing into sinful acts. While Christians highlight the sinful nature of humans, *advaitins* consider all humans as potential partakers of divine nature (*cf.* II Pt 1:4). A comparative study of these approaches will be beneficial to both the communities.

11. Allaying some apprehensions

A doubt may still exist as to whether the physical events of the crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus are meant only for the salvation of Christians and whether they have universal significance. Undoubtedly, His entire earthly role, including the crucifixion and Resurrection are meant to put back on the right track all the unrighteous people of the world who have not yet heeded His call for repentance and spiritual transformation through any religion, and hence continue to remain active or passive sinners. Jesus targets the lost sheep of all communities (Jn 10:16) who have missed or neglected the call of the Word of God or spiritual food that exists within and outside Judaism and therefore remain spiritually “blind”, and “bonded” to worldly rewards and selfish desires. Through His followers He wants to spread out and accelerate the correction process initiated by Him amongst the unrighteous segment of the Israelite community and to make it coincide with the establishment of a Heavenly Kingdom on earth, where all humans respect, love and serve each other by remaining in close spiritual communion under His common guidance. The “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rv 19:9) figuratively sums up this eschatological target, where the old carnal world gives way to a new spiritual world where righteousness dwells in fullness (Rv 21:1; II Pt 3:13).

There is no need to worry about what will happen to Christian mission if Christians agree that the Word is active in the world through other religions. Religion or religions by themselves do not save their followers collectively or in groups. They are only facilitators that help the followers to undergo transformation individually and to experience oneness with the Spirit in order to become eligible for eternal life. Despite the existence of a large number of religions, the average followers of all of them, including the religious teachers, lose their way *en route* due to spiritual lethargy and ignorance and fail to recognize the ultimate message of their scriptures and to meet the specified objectives. All of them have to be re-invited to experience God through Christ and this can be done without contradicting or denigrating the truths found in other religions. Therefore, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

All those who have transcended the external trappings of their religions and understood the inner message of their scriptures are obliged to live the rest of their lives helping others to purify themselves and to love and serve others without expecting any personal return (*nishkama karma*). They understand that in order to attain salvation, one has to hold on to the unique religious activities specified in one's own religion and use them as ladders to reach the ultimate objective of leading a life in tune with the prompting of the indwelling Spirit or *Atman*. All spiritually enlightened people help others to attain this stage, irrespective of whether they belong to their own religion or not. However, this has to be done without leading to religious syncretism. During this process, they may have to face innumerable hurdles and sacrifices and "get slaughtered like a sheep all day long" in order to maintain their crucifying and resurrection experience. A Christian should normally offer the Christian path to others, but it is up to the others to accept or reject this offer. He should not feel disappointed if God wants the other person to be reformed through some other path.

12. Concluding remarks

Christians may declare that "the Word" or Jesus is the sole and universal mediator of salvation for all humanity and that His indirect presence outside the Christian revelation cannot be ruled out. By making this simple modification in our traditional faith assertion, the Church can restate her relation with other religions unambiguously. This can also explain how the followers of other religions can attain salvation through participated mediation of the salvific mystery of Christ, even when they do not accept Jesus as their Saviour.

It is the utmost duty of present-day Christian theologians to engage in mutually fruitful spiritual dialogue with their counterparts in other religions. This will help the followers of other religions to recognize that despite the differences in the religious and ritualistic language, the central message of the Gospel is not contradictory, but complementary to that of their scriptures. We will also become convinced of the indirect presence of Jesus alias the Word of God outside Christianity. Dialogue will also help us to enrich our theology by infusing compatible elements from external sources such as the Indian heritage. As exhorted by late Pope John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*, "*In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought*" (n. 72).

In the course of time, we will be able to evolve a theological vocabulary or terminology that is simple and comprehensible to the followers of other religions. This will result in more and more new people being attracted to the Gospel. In the course of time, everyone, including Christians will begin to understand the paschal mystery better and practice Gospel values in their lives and become eligible for eternal life, by wearing the "white robe of righteousness". Finally, "the Wedding Feast of the Lamb" may perhaps be attended by a greater number of unexpected guests from outside than by the expected guests (Mt 22:3). Mysterious are the ways of the Lord!

Note

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Creativity in Mission

José Cristo Rey García Paredes, CMF

Introduction

One thing we very much lack in our mission is creativity. Repetition, sequels, copies, and automation are common in our ministries. Innovation at different levels of mission is still lacking. We are satisfied with a superficial make-up, but things go on in the same way as before. The main reason for this situation is that we are not open to authentic experiences of creativity. And we are not open because we are afraid of entering a process that is very demanding and sometimes seems to be unbearable.

It is no wonder if we say that women and men religious, belong to a society of tradition, which is the Church. Tradition masters everything in the Church: beliefs, morals, liturgies, laws, so that we can say that to be a Christian is the same as belonging to a very traditional and stable Community. Perhaps things change on the surface, but our fundamental tenets of faith always remain the same. In this kind of society obedience and docility are exalted, while real creativity is looked upon with suspicion.

At the same time, we, women and men religious, belong to another society, the society of movement, a world in ongoing change. In a few years, even in a few months, devices, programmes, books, ideas, become obsolete. Everything in our society is on the move. The everyday of this world is surprising. We always witness the birth of so many things, but also the death of others. Our societies are, more than ever before, in an ongoing process of creativity.

We, Christian men and women, experience in ourselves the polar contraposition of these two societies. How to be faithful to both of them? Is it possible? Jesus has sent us to evangelize this world, the object of his passionate love. We cannot evangelize it without entering this society of movement, without embodying the Christian heritage in our way of thinking, of living, of feeling, of doing. This task, we have received from Our Lord, is called "mission". Mission in a modern world requires creativity. Because the men and women of our society are accustomed to creativity.

The Nomura Institute of Japan has classified the economic activity into four eras: 1) Agricultural; 2) Industrial; 3) Informational and technological; 4) Creative constant innovation. Those who in business are driven by creativity. Today, business is a creative activity demanding constant innovation. To foster creativity and innovation is the main concern of international companies such as IBM, Microsoft ... etc. today. They hire highly skilled self-motivated engineers and technical experts; but they welcome ideas from everywhere.

Can we, in a similar way, classify the history of Christian mission in four eras? Are we entering an era of creativity and constant innovation? In some places in the world the Christian mission is going from failure to failure. Our efforts have no success. We are not able to connect with the people. They do not read our books, they do not see or hear our programmes, they get bored with our ideas, homilies, teaching; some of our moral prescriptions are so far off the reality that many people think that they are prescriptions for angels and not for the men and women of this world. The people's most important religious experiences do not happen at the Eucharist, in reading the Word of God, but in devotional acts (images, processions, prayers, and other manifestations of popular religiosity).

What our evangelization offers seems to be less interesting, less challenging by the day. The reason is not only, nor mainly, because people are losing the faith, but because we have lost the power of creativity, because we keep the Holy Spirit imprisoned. Symptoms of this situation are the following: Is it not true that our ministries are – often – totally improvised and so "anything goes"? Is it not true that many people in the Church are not accustomed to serious work, to well planned projects?

Certainly, we are generous, and ready to be sent to even the most difficult places of mission.

The question, nevertheless, is what to do in that place after arriving. How much time do we spend in serious preparation of our activities, on the implementation of our programmes? It seems that in some places "wasting time" is the rule, and we see how repetition is not able to transform anything in those

human communities. It is disappointing that although some Congregations send personnel to some places, they are sent without well-planned mission projects, and ideas.

The mission of our time demands creativity. In order to be creative we need a new outlook and training to create a new atmosphere in our congregations and communities (culture of creativity). Besides, we have to follow up our missionary projects with quality controls and penalties, as is right and just. Unfortunately our superiors have been undemanding in this area of creativity.

After this introduction, allow me to present the itinerary of my talk. First, we will reflect on creativity itself: What is creativity? Secondly, we will try to present ways of fostering creativity at different levels. Thirdly and finally, we will discern the main paths for a creative mission in religious life in this new millennium.

I. On Creativity

Are you a creative person? What are the most fruitful and enjoyable experiences of creativity you have had? Have you ceased to be creative from a disappointment or for some other reason? Is it possible to be a creative person in your congregation, in your community? Is there room for creativity? To answer these questions we must first ask: "what is creativity".

1. What is Creativity?

a) Anthropological perspective

To be creative means to be someone with the ability or power to bring something new into existence. Creativity is the process of bringing something new into being. It is an encounter between "Being and Non-being" (MacLeis). A Chinese poet said: "We poets struggle with Non-being to force it to yield Being. We knock upon silence for an *answering* music". The Being, which the poem is, derives not simply from the mind of the poet, but from "Non-being". The "music" which is the poem, comes not from us but from the silence.¹

A truly creative act is an original production of some kind. Something unique and personal comes into being. In the life of the Church, the Second Vatican Council stands out as a great example of creativity. Creativity is a moment of higher synthesis.

Creativity can happen when we need to face the void and chaos of the "not yet existing". With great courage we let go of the familiar in order to enter into the creative act of bringing in a new order, a new arrangement of things. Creativity emerges from the tension between stability and change.

b) Theological perspective

The painting in the Sistine Chapel of God reaching out to touch the hand of man represents a transfer of divine inspiration to mankind. Creativity starts in us, religious, when we experience God's inspiring touch.

We read in the opening of the Book of Genesis: "Now the earth was a formless void..." (Gn 1:2). In Jeremiah we read: "I have looked at the earth, to see a formless waste" (Jer 4:23). Chaos in the Bible connotes its opposite: dynamic order, creation, life. The source of that creation or life is God. He decides to breathe. With that chaos begins to give way to cosmos. God, the Creator, is able to overcome chaos. He or She gives human beings the gift of creativity. That means: the power of overcoming chaos. Creative men and women are those gifted by the Spirit of God. Those who share the eternal Creativity, the magnificent imagination of God. With their gift of creative imagination people experience the inspiring touch of God. The Creator has created not only creatures, but creators too.

2. What is the Process of creativity?

Creativity requires passion and commitment, passionate involvement and engagement. Apathetic creativity simply does not exist. A person is creative not by simply sitting back as a spectator to what is happening, but *by being actively engaged in bringing forth the new and original*. Creativity requires a profound caring about what is happening. We must mind what is going on. In order to be truly creative, we must search out the essential meaning of things, as a painter tries, for example, to express the essence of a tree. Seen in this light, creative activity is a yearning for the eternal and the immortal. We try to express what is enduring, even clothed in a new, transitory form.

One of the problems with creativity is that it tends to be chaotic and messy. It grows in a non-linear fashion. We need to learn to shift our thinking, to work with chaos, because we can no longer avoid it. Embedded in chaos are the clues to a higher order. The great painter Paul Cezanne said: "We live in a rainbow of Chaos". The product of creativity is something original, not predictable.² The introduction of something new or different is innovation.

Innovation is the *implementation* of creative inspiration.

Resistance is a common reaction to the emergence of the creative. Our inner creative experience can be personally very distressing. Before the act of creation we are anxious. The emerging is felt as an emergency. We seek relief from our distress. We are tempted to grasp many forms, and it is generally an unpleasant sensation. Anxiety is a signal or warning feeling, it is the herald of something struggling to be born. Anxiety is a “not yet” experience, the moment of indecisiveness between letting go the old and grasping the new, between dying and rising. I fear that much creativity is lost to us because we quickly run away from our anxieties. We need courage to create.

“The impossible is often the untried” (Jim Goodwin).

However, “the moment of creative inspiration frequently occurs during a period of rest or relaxation, but only in those areas in which we are intensively committed”.³ Oftentimes the solution to a problem occurs during a dream or when our minds are turned to other things. Thus periods of intense concentration, study, work, pondering, and involvement, alternating with periods of leisure, solitude, diversion, and play, are vitally necessary for a creative life. Each person must discover for himself or herself what rhythms are necessary in order to be personally creative.⁴

3. Who can become a creative person?

Many people assume that creative thinking is a special gift, bestowed (bistoud) on only a few. Modern research from the fields of the cognitive sciences indicates that the ability to generate innovative ideas for change in our work is a common “gift” that we all possess.⁵

“Behaviour is generative; like the surface of a fast flowing river, it is inherently and continuously novel ... behaviour flows and it never stops changing. Novel behaviour is generated continuously, but it is labelled (leivol) creative only when it has some special value to the community... Generativity is the basic process that drives all the behaviour we come to label creative”(R. Epstein, Ph.D).

Modern research shows that:

- Everyone has creative abilities.
- The more training you have and the more diverse the training, the greater potential for creative output.
- The average adult thinks of 3-6 alternatives for any given situation. The average child thinks of 60.
- The longer the list of ideas, the higher the quality of the final solution. *The highest quality ideas appear at the end of the list.*
- Creativity is an individual process. Traditional brainstorming has been proven ineffective because of fear of social disapproval. Groups and communities are best for idea selection rather than idea generation.

4. Different kinds of creativity

There are different kinds of creativity: directed or expansive creativity, and transcendent or mystical creativity.

a) Creativity on demand:

Directed creativity or “*creativity on demand*” is the production of creative ideas with the intention to implement them. For this kind of creativity we have to use specific techniques, which allow us to perceive things freshly, criticize the current patterns and discover new ones.

By definition, a creative idea is an original, novel thought. The point is that creative thinking requires one to think in a new direction; away from or beyond one’s current mental pattern toward some new pattern. If one’s ideas are simply variations of existing mental patterns, they will not be considered novel.

The problem of creativity is that while we have the ability to think in new patterns, our minds are optimized to think with existing patterns.

b) Personal creativity:

When creativity works in the area of our spirit, we speak about *personal creativity*. *Personal creativity* is when we change the vision of ourselves in relation to the world. Out of this creativity we determine the next steps in life.

All of us are able to have a personal vision and to renew it in different circumstances of our life. The more we can act in terms of our own conceptions, the more whole and authentic we feel.

The highest form of personal creativity is vertical creativity, which happens in the mystical experience. It is very difficult to grasp this kind of creativity. It happens in a way that is hidden from our usual ways of understanding or learning. St John of the Cross has described the particular fears, anxieties and even terrors of the dark night of the Soul, where this creativity takes place. It is risky to enter into the realm of spiritual creativity.

c) The Synthesis:

Every person involved in a creative process knows what it is to be “enthusiastic”. “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm” (poet Ralph Waldo Emerson). Being involved in a creative process and being in touch with mystical experience are not as different as may be expected.⁶ The root of the term “enthusiasm” is *en-theos*, which suggests that a god is entering a person’s self, and inspires or even “seizes” him or her. Creative ideas are “received”, often at unexpected moments. At the moment of “illumination”, the person feels enthusiastic, and he or she is filled with a sudden beam of pleasure.

Even though some people perceive creativity as “profane” and mysticism however as “sacred”, they are highly similar ways of encounter between a subject and an object pole of experience.

II. Fostering Creativity

If creativity is so important in life, what can one do in order to grow in it? We can deduce some simple consequences for us and for our religious communities.

1. In ourselves

Fostering creativity in ourselves means paying attention to our dreams, being playful and nourishing our spirit with contexts of creativity around us.

a) Pay attention to our dreams

Our unconscious is a rich source of images, ideas and experiences that lead to new connections, and fresh thinking. Day-dreaming is a way to incubate the components of a problem and uncover solutions. Sometimes in dreams we experience in ourselves the sprouting of new ideas, of new models and patterns. They come to mind while watching TV, attending a lecture, meeting other people and so on. It is good to record them. We can apply the images and thoughts of our day-dreams to the apostolic projects we are working on. Our day-dreams show us new perspectives of mission. We can try the technique called “forced connections”. To give a very simple example: If we are thinking about a bird, think about the qualities of a bird, what a bird symbolizes for us, and how that could help us in our missionary project in a school, in a parish, or in future adventures, etc.

In the deepest centre of a religious, man or woman, there is a dreamer. In all of us abide dreams, which never came into existence. These dreams are struggling to come out. No wonder if sometimes we are surprised by such dreams. To suppress dreams is the same as killing our creativity.

b) Be playful

To be creative it is good to be playful. This is a clue to our genius; to our natural gifts and talents. Da Vinci, Edison, Einstein and Picasso all loved to play and they loved to explore. Their keen interest resulted in genius. Even God likes to play. *Lila* is Sanscrit stands for God’s play. What is God’s game? Creating the Universe!

Most of us work too hard and we don’t take enough time to play, to enjoy life. Sometimes we do not enjoy our communities because our meetings are not playful gatherings. Play generates joy and replenishes and revitalizes our human spirit. Playing clears away the mental cobwebs that keep us from thinking clearly. Play frees us from worry and stress, relaxing the brain and making it easier to be more creative. In her book “Deep Play” Diane Ackerman says:

“Play is an activity enjoyed for its own sake. It is our brain’s (brains) favourite way of learning and manoeuvring (*maniúvering*).... It governs most of society — political games, in-law games, money games, love games, advertising games, to list only a few spheres where gamesmanship is rampant. The spirit of deep play is central to the life of each person, and also to society, inspiring the visual, musical, and verbal

arts... Deep play is a fascinating hallmark of being human; it reveals our need to seek a special brand of transcendence, with a passion that makes thrill-seeking explicable, creativity possible, and religion inevitable".⁷

I am for a less serious and more playful religious life. Games in community are not "time lost", but the advent of creativity. Our soul guides us through our dreams, imagination and play. It is good to trust and listen to our inner guidance. The rational mind is important, but it is especially important the aesthetic mind.⁸ Dostoyevsky once proclaimed: "Beauty will save the world!".

We can fashion our community as a centre where joy, humour and play are the ways of welcoming creativity. It is not necessary to remark that play is meaningful in any community that is passionately committed to mission.

c) Nourish our spirit in contexts of creativity

Like artists, we are alert to the people, places and things that nourish our spirit and replenish us. Gertrude Stein made of her Paris home a salon for the leading artists and writers of the period between the First and Second World Wars. It is important to favour in our communities an atmosphere of creativity with our human resources, but also to invite to our community other inspiring persons or entering in to contact with them.

2. In our institutions

How can one find out what leading companies do to foster innovation? How to be innovative in our technological world? How to transform the way we live and work? What about the challenges our Congregation faces?

a) Technological system as a certain model

In the world of technology, wealth flows directly from innovation. Innovation flourishes when there is an appropriate *environment* for it. The ideal environment for innovation consists of multi-talented groups of people, working in close collaboration, exchanging knowledge, ideas and shaping the direction of the future. In a world of change, the focus is not on solving problems but on looking for the next opportunity. It is the ability to use creativity to find hidden connections and insights into new products or services, desired by the customer. This is an important piece of advice for us, religious. Spiritual and charismatic wealth flows directly from innovation. Innovation in our communities flourishes when we are able to create an environment for innovation. All the individual charisms are important to do it. Our Congregation will not answer properly to the voice of God in our times, if we are exclusive and not inclusive. That means: if we do not create an atmosphere in which each person can freely manifest the richness of his or her charism and is welcome in the laboratory of newness. Multi-charismatic groups, working in close collaboration, exchanging knowledge, ideas and shaping the direction of the future, give religious life a future. We have to understand that in this world, our main concern should not be about solving problems, still less communitarian problems!, but on looking for the next opportunity in which we can overcome all the problems. Sometimes instead of repairing the old computer it is better to buy a new one in the sales.

b) Ten strategies to develop creativity in our institutions:

- *To communicate clearly our vision and mission.* Innovation demands clear communication. Religious need to have a clear vision of where they are going in order to direct (dai-ret) their own energies according to this vision.
- Bureaucracy strangles creativity. We have to remove it. Sometimes too much consultation to people and communities tends to destroy creativity.
- Create a climate for an open flow of ideas, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Encourage interdisciplinary conversation to enhance creativity.
- A highly collaborative environment *demand*s a climate of real trust.
- Embrace diversity. We have to learn to work on diversity. It is important to encourage sensitivity and tolerance to the issues of minorities and women in mission.

This fosters a pro-active global spirit that embraces diverse viewpoints and cultures.

- Outsiders provide fresh points of view.
- It is important to inform our Congregations of the results, new plans, programmes, and methods.
- In order to stimulate and motivate creativity, try to recognize it.

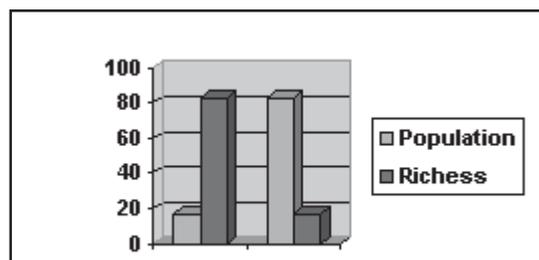
- Continuous learning, by giving the religious the opportunity to stay at the forefront of new theologies and pastoral methods. Although we religious are responsible for our own ministry development, it is good to have an advisor to assist us. It is important to be provided with the tools and training we need to grow.
- Innovation requires strong leadership that encourages creation and innovation and follows up the opportunities we meet. Leadership that encourages groups to develop their imagination.

III. Important paths for “creativity in mission”

Finally, I should like to mention two paths for creativity in mission in our day: Creativity in an alternative process of globalization and feminist Creativity. These are not the only paths but I feel they are the most urgent ones in mission.

1. *The path of catholicity: an alternative to globalization!*

We are in times of globalization. This is not only a sociological, but a symptomatic event in the heart of our humanity. Globalization is the result of a certain type of behaviour over many years and centuries. The main question is: what image of humankind does the ongoing process of globalization offer us? When we speak about universality, we are talking about the extension of the hegemony and supremacy of some nations over others. The dominant culture determines the rules of universality. The spirit of globalization is not a spirit of sharing, but a spirit of supremacy and hegemony. Supremacy of a form of trade. We know that only 17 per cent of the population possesses 83 per cent of the riches of our planet.



In the process of globalization we are not all equal. Globalization is ruled by the countries of the North. There is a globalization without utopia. What hope is there for the poorest in this process? We are not globalizing people, but things, merchandise. This is more the World of Coca Cola than the world of human beings. The main question for our mission is: How to pass from globalization to humanization?

No one nation, human group or community, gender – male or female – is able to express the totality of the human being. No particular culture is able to represent the whole of humankind. So humanity only exists in the sexual difference of women and men, female and male, in the same way humanity only exists in the whole multiplicity of peoples and cultures. The imposition of only one culture is a sin against humanity. If it is true that we only become a person in the encounter with a “You”, with others, we will never be an accomplished humanity without counting all peoples.

The Catholic Church offers a new way of globalization. The word “catholic” means what is in harmony with all human beings, what is open to the whole of humanity without restriction. Our understanding of “catholicity” is not a geographic one, but existential. The Church is catholic when it is open to a new covenant of all the peoples of the earth in a spirit of equality.

Neoliberalism constructs a world with two levels and categories: the world of Rulers and the world of slaves.

Our trinitarian vision of the world speaks to us about the equality of all people, and a sharing of equality. We need not only solidarity, but at the same time inter-equality. Communion must be globalized. This is a path for mission. This is a task for creativity in mission.

2. *The path of feminine creativity*

Western civilization, culture and the arts are *male*-dominated and *male*-oriented. Women’s highest artistic achievements are off the scene, seldom heard of, or if heard, deprecated, and finally viewed, but not observed.

The male perception of the arts has become accepted as the “universal vision”.⁹ This universality is a lie.

Women are struggling for authenticity. Simultaneously they illuminate their personal creativity. In doing so, they are opening new paths. Women do not easily find the means at hand to express and conceptualize their experience. But they are struggling to develop these means. Women are on the cutting edge of a new and larger vision. Their personal creativity is an absolute necessity for humanity. Women are creating a more general, new vision of womanhood. They will have to create new social institutions to support and enlarge this vision. To move toward authenticity involves creation, in an immediate and pressing personal way.¹⁰

I am dreaming of a time in which women in the Church, and especially women religious, will be able to manifest their creativity freely in the arts, in mission, in theological and philosophical thinking, in the different ministries, etc.

3. The path of creativity in Spirituality

It is good to be creative in pastoral methods. It is good to be creative in the presentation of the Christian Message. It is very good to be creative in leading and taking care of our Christian communities, religious communities. Nevertheless, it is best to be creative in the roots of our human existence, in our spirituality.

Do we feel the growth of our spiritual experience? Can we honestly affirm that there is a process of creativity at the core of our lives?

For instance, let me ask: What newness is there in my spiritual life in these last ten years?

I know that spiritual creativity does not depend of us. It depends on sharing the same Spirit as Jesus.

If there is no spiritual creativity in us, that is a sign that our relationship with the Spirit of God is very cold, or even non-existent.

Then, tell me: what kind of mission is that in which all is important, less the transmission of our spiritual experience of communion with the Spirit of Jesus?

Creativity in spirituality will show us the emergence of new spiritual paths, new spiritual Masters, a new wisdom for our times, new Johns of the Cross, new Theresas of Jesus. Your congregational charism needs mystical creativity in order to be translated into a new spirituality appropriate for our times and places.

Concluding Prayer

Creativity,
the hallmark of You in us,
Our Creator.

Creativity,
charismatic energies for healing
and transformation,
our Holy Spirit.

Creativity,
a movement of your Spirit
in the land of death,
Our Lord Jesus.

Creativity,
the sign of Our God
in the Creatures,
our Father and Mother.

Creativity,
in those who are truly
images and likeness of God,
But,
what creativity
in sin, in the demoniac world?
What creativity
where only a neurotic repetition of the same exists?
What creativity
where the Good Spirit
is absent,
where there is no
horizon of transcendence?

In order to be creative
 we need to be liminal.
 Only in the limits of this world,
 only there,
 is it possible
 to be creative,
 as You,
 our Community of Artists,
 Abbá, Jesus, Holy Ruah.

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Quotations about creativity and living creatively

- “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind there are few” (Suzuki, Shunryu).
 “Learning is movement from moment to moment” (Krishnamurti, J.).
 “The ‘silly question’ is the first intimation of some totally new development” (Whitehead, Alfred North).
 “Nothing encourages creativity like the chance to fall flat on one’s face” (Finley, James D.).
 “The whole life lies in the verb seeing” (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin).
 “Creativity is so delicate a flower that praise tends to make it bloom while discouragement often nips it in the bud” (Osborn, Alex).
 “It takes a lot of time to be a genius, you have to sit around so much doing nothing, really doing nothing” (Stein, Gertrude).
 “Sit down before facts as a little child, be prepared to give up every conceived notion, follow humbly wherever and whatever abysses nature leads, or you will learn nothing” (Huxley, Thomas).
 “The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes” (Proust, Marcel).
 “People only see what they are prepared to see” (Emerson, Ralph Waldo).
 “The man who has no inner life is a slave to his surroundings” (Amiel, Henri-Frederic).
 “Water which is too pure has no fish” (Ts’ai Ken T’an).
 “Muddy water when still becomes clear” (Progoss, Ira). “Everywhere I go I find a poet has been there before me” (Freud, Sigmund).
 “Everywhere I go I find a poet has been there before me” (Freud, Sigmund).
 “But words are things, and a small drop of ink, falling, like dew, upon a thought produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions think” (Lord Byron).
 “There is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost” (Graham, Martha).
 “Just as appetite comes by eating so work brings inspiration” (Stravinsky, Igor).
 “What will nurture the creative vision necessary to turn around a world possibly heading toward its own destruction? Music” (Hollander, Lorin).
 “Surrounded by the right sounds, we all can be invigorated, energized, and balanced” (Diamond, Dr. John).
 “The universe is full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper” (Eden Phillpotts).
 “The capacity for delight is the gift of paying attention” (Julia Cameron).
 “I would rather live in a world where my life is surrounded by mystery than live in a world so small that my mind could comprehend it” (Henry Emerson Fosdick).
 “A good traveller has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving” (Lao Tzu (570-490 B.C.)).
 “Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart” (Confucius).
 “Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting” (Karl “The Great” Wallenda).
 “The spider’s touch, how exquisitely fine! Feels at each thread, and lives along the line” (Alexander Pope (1688-1744)).
 “God gave us a memory so that we could have roses in December” (Anonymous).
 “Poetry is the art of creating imaginary gardens with real toads” (Moore, Marianne).
 “Every man’s work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself” (Butler, Samuel).
 “To do great work a man must be very idle as well as very industrious” (Butler, Samuel).
 “Learn to see, and then you’ll know there is no end to the new worlds of our vision” (Castaneda, Carlos).
 “The more you know the less you understand” (Tao Te Ching).
 “A mind too active is no mind at all” (Roethke, Theodore).
 “The world of reality has limits; the world of imagination is boundless” (Rousseau, Jean-Jacques).
 “Ah good taste! What a dreadful thing! Taste is the enemy of creativeness” (Picasso, Pablo).
 “The creative thinker is flexible and adaptable and prepared to rearrange his thinking” (Cropley, A.J.).
 “After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music” (Huxley, Aldous).
 “There is nothing better than music as a means for uplifting the soul” (Khan, Hazrat Inayat).
 “Imagination is intelligence having fun” (anonymous) (imaginación es la inteligencia cuando se divierte).
 “Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it” (Confucius).
 “My soul can find no staircase to heaven unless it be through earth’s loveliness” (Michelangelo).

- “Chance is always powerful. Let your hook be always cast; in the pool where you least expect it, there will be fish” (Ovid).
- “If you are seeking creative ideas, go out walking. Angels whisper to a man when he goes for a walk” (Inmon, Raymond).
- “Let the beauty we love be what we do” (Rumi).
- “Imagination is more important than knowledge” (Einstein, Albert).
- “Life is not an exact science. It is an art” (Butler, Samuel).
- “Lack of money is no obstacle. Lack of an idea is an obstacle” (Hakuta, Ken).
- “No great discovery was ever made without a bold guess” (Newton, Isaac).
- “I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me” (Newton Isaac).
- “The soul looketh steadily forwards creating a new world before her, leaving worlds behind her” (Emerson, Ralph Waldo).
- “Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we would find it not” (Emerson, Ralph Waldo).
- “The first key to wisdom is assiduous and frequent questioning” (Abelard, Peter).
- “The spectacle of the sky overwhelms me. I’m overwhelmed when I see in an immense sky, the crescent of the moon, or the sun” (Miró, Joan).
- “No great work has ever been produced except after a long interval of still and musing meditation” (Bagehot, Walter).
- “Solitude is the furnace of transformation” (Nouwen, Henri).
- “Success is not the result of spontaneous combustion. You must set yourself on fire” (Leach, Reggie).
- “Become as little children” (Jesus).
- “The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited” (Plutarch).
- “Creativity can solve almost any problem. The creative act, the defeat of habit by originality, overcomes everything” (Lois, George).
- “I can’t understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I’m frightened of the old ones” (John Cage).
- “He who wonders discovers that this in itself is wonder” (M.C. Escher).
- “Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind” (Rudyard Kipling).
- “Man is a make-believe animal – he is never so truly himself as when he is acting a part” (William Hazlitt).
- “Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life” (Berthold Auerbach).
- “Memory is the greatest of artists, and effaces from your mind what is unnecessary” (Maurice Baring).
- “We live in a rainbow of Chaos” (Paul Cezanne).
- “Imagination is a poor substitute for experience” (Havelock Ellis).
- “It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation” (Herman Melville).
- “That which seems the height of absurdity in one generation often becomes the height of wisdom in the next” (John Stuart Mill).
- “All art is but imitation of nature” (Seneca).
- “You don’t understand anything until you learn it more than one way” (Marvin Minsky).
- “How glorious it is — and also how painful — to be an exception” (Alfred de Musset).
- “The stories of childhood leave an indelible impression, and their author always has a niche in the temple of memory from which the image is never cast out to be thrown on the rubbish heap of things that are outgrown and outlived” (Howard Pyle).
- “Look at everything as though you were seeing it either for the first or last time. Then your time on earth will be filled with glory” (Betty Smith).
- “A writer writes not because he is educated but because he is driven by the need to communicate. Behind the need to communicate is the need to share. Behind the need to share is the need to be understood. The writer wants to be understood much more than he wants to be respected or praised or even loved. And that perhaps, is what makes him different from others” (Leo Rosten).
- “Every writer is a narcissist. This does not mean that he is vain; it only means that he is hopelessly self-absorbed” (Leo Rosten).

Notes

¹ Rollo May in his book *The Courage to Create* (1975), p. 89, characterizes creativity as an encounter between two poles, a subjective and an objective pole. The subjective pole refers to the experiencing person, the objective pole (however difficult to define) to the “world” or “reality”. Following MacLeish, May considers that the most appropriate term for the two poles is “Being and Non-being”.

² Cf. TODD I. LUBART, ROBERT STERNBERG, *Defying the Crowd: Cultivating Creativity in a Culture of Conformity*, Free Press, 1995.

³ May, p. 104.

⁴ Cf. BERNARD J. BUSH, *Belonging and Creativity*, in E.J. FRANASIAK (ed), *Belonging. Issues of Emotional Living in an Age of Stress for Clergy and Religious*, Affirmation Mooks, Whitinsville 1979, pp. 26-27.

⁵ Beliefs that only special, talented people are creative – and you have to be born that way – diminish our confidence in our creative abilities. The notion that geniuses such as Shakespeare, Picasso and Mozart were gifted is a myth, according to a recent study at Exeter University. Researchers examined outstanding performances in the arts, mathematics and sports, to find out if “the widespread belief that to reach high levels of ability a person must possess an innate potential called talent”. The study concludes that excellence is determined by: • opportunities • encouragement • training • motivation • and most of all — practise. “Few showed early signs of promise prior to parental encouragement”. No one reached high levels of achievement in their field without devoting thousands of hours to serious training. Mozart trained for 16 years before he produced an acknowledged master work. Moreover many high performers achieve levels of excellence today that match the capabilities of a Mozart, or a Gold Medallist from the turn of the century (The Vancouver Sun, Sept.12/98).

⁶ Receiving an idea, as being inspired by somebody or something is, in essence, not different from what happens in the mystic experience. The notion of receptivity or “passivity”, as a central defining element of both creativity and mysticism suggests the existence of two poles: an (internal) subject pole and an (external) object pole, and some kind of encounter in between. Both processes, creativity and mysticism, can only properly be understood if one concentrates on the dynamical relationship *between* these poles.

⁷ “Perhaps religion seems an unlikely example of playing, but if you look at religious rites and festivals, you’ll see all the play elements, and also how deep that play can become. Religious rituals usually include dance, worship, music, and decoration. They swallow time. They are ecstatic, absorbing, rejuvenating. The word “prayer” derives from the Latin *precarius*, and contains the idea of uncertainty and risk. Will the entreaty be answered? Life or death may depend on the outcome”.

⁸ “We gain a new perspective when we learn how many of the greatest scientific insights, discoveries, and revolutionary inventions appeared first to their creators as fantasies, dreams, trances, lightening-flash insights, and other non-ordinary states of consciousness” (Willis Harman and Howad Rheingold). Max Planck, the father of quantum theory, felt that the pioneer scientist must have “a vivid intuitive imagination, for new ideas are not generated by deduction, but by artistically creative imagination”. Einstein described his theories as a “free invention of the imagination”. His creative solutions to mathematical problems did not come to him in words but as visual thought forms, which had to be rationalized later; “conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously in the second stage”.

⁹ JOELYNN SNYDER-OTT, *The Female Experience and Artistic Creativity*, in DIANE APOSTOLOS-CAPPADONA AND LUCINDA EBERSOLE, *Women, Creativity and the Arts. Critical and Autobiographical Perspectives*, Continuum, New York, 1997, pp. 70-74.

¹⁰ Cf. JEAN BAKER MILLER, *Creativity With a Place to Go*, in DIANE APOSTOLOS-CAPPADONA AND LUCINDA EBERSOLE, *Women, Creativity and the Arts. Critical and Autobiographical Perspectives*, Continuum, New York 1997, pp. 24-27.

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Gender Inequality as an Enduring Obstacle to Mission

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Introduction

There is a growing consensus among mission experts about the value of collaborative ministry as one of the current trends in mission today. This is born out of the realization that the missionary mandate of Christ – “Go and make Disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19) – is addressed to all Christians by virtue of our Baptism. As the Vatican II document put it, “the Church on earth is by its very nature missionary” (*Ad Gentes*, n. 2; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1), and the obligation to spread the faith falls individually on every disciple of Christ. “Missionary activity is a matter for all Christians” (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 2, 71, 7 December 1990:). By the whole Church, then, is meant all its members, both men and women, lay and ordained.

Yet from the earliest times, Christ has always called from the number of his disciples, those whom he has chosen that they might be with him so that he might send them to preach to the nations. Thus, “the Holy Spirit ... implants in the hearts of individuals a missionary vocation and at the same time raises up institutes in the Church who take on the duty of evangelization ... and make it as it were their own special task” (*Ad Gentes*, n. 23). I belong to one of such institutes in the Church — the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary.

Over the years, much of the missionary activities that have been done on behalf of the whole Church have been carried out by missionary sisters and other women religious, also known as nuns or sisters. Yet at a closer look, one finds that these have been mostly in service type, back-stage roles. The clergy, in contrast, have taken centre-stage, monopolizing leadership and policy-making roles. Not that service type roles are not good enough. After all, that is what Jesus asked us to do as Christians. Rather the issue in question is: What kind of mentality has led to such a gender division of labour by which subsidiary roles have historically been left to women and leadership to men in the church context? What gender assumptions and theology lie behind such beliefs and practices? My belief is that the unspoken issue underlying the minimizing of women’s scope in mission and ministry hinges around the human identity of women. It raises a further question: To what extent do contemporary clergymen accept the equal humanity of women in reality? In this paper, “Gender Inequality as an Enduring Obstacle to Mission”, I shall try to address these questions by narrating selected missionary experiences in varying contexts which illustrate how some women and men have started calling into question and gradually changing some of the practices and myths that keep women in subordinate positions. This is being done not so much by talking as by taking some necessary action in small steps to bring about change wherever possible, setting precedence and stretching people’s imagination as to future possibilities; how humanity could be enriched differently if women were given more scope to exercise their leadership gifts.

In this paper, I share some of my own experiences of stretching boundaries in mission and ministry as a woman in the Church, an African and a missionary by profession in different cross-cultural contexts in West Africa and the United States of America. These experiences which also integrate those of other sisters who have similarly been on crosscultural mission elsewhere and are currently on mission in our home Church in Nigeria reveal a contrast and, in some cases, ambivalence. In some dioceses and in some parishes even within the same diocese, there is much recognition and acceptance of sisters’ ministry while in others there is only very little if any room to exercise the kind of ministerial and pastoral leadership they once exercised by way of collaborative ministry in other mission areas. A lot seems to depend on the orientation of the priests and bishops involved and this calls for reflection on their basic.

Personal Experiences and testimonies

Raised in South-Eastern Nigeria, I experienced evangelization first in my home through my parents and the extended family, and later through the school, the local Catholic community, and my peers at various stages of my development. As a teenager, I began to feel drawn to contribute to the life of my church community through organizing the choir, and teaching in the Sunday evening catechism classes. After I became a missionary sister, I taught religious knowledge (R.K.) as well as science subjects in secondary schools in Nigeria for four years and in Sierra Leone for three years. Teaching R.K. there was rather difficult because the vast majority of the students were Moslem. However they all loved reading the Bible and enjoyed the brief shared prayer sessions we had a few times. I taught full time in the school and facilitated pastoral ministries after school in our catchment parish. In addition to school work, I worked with the women, attending their meetings, being for them an animating and supportive presence. I also worked with the liturgy group. While in Sierra Leone, I came in contact with the 'Seven-Steps' method of Gospel-sharing disseminated from the Lumko Institute in South Africa, and its spirit of participative leadership. It fitted well into my style of ministry which veered toward facilitating people to foster a personal relationship with God through small group sharing and praying the Scriptures in relation to life experiences. In a similar way, I engaged in pastoral activities while I was directress of formation for my congregation in Northern Nigeria over a seven-year period, making a total of fourteen years' experience of pastoral ministries.

Collaborative ministry

Through my involvement, a functional liturgy group was inaugurated in the parish. I say functional because there was only a nominal liturgy portfolio previously and the man who held it simply took care of practical matters such as appointing lectors and other functionaries. I became involved in the mainstream of the life of the parish by attending the parish council meeting. When I felt a sense of where the parish was at, I indicated to the parish leaders how I could contribute in the area of liturgy. Shortly after that, Fr J.K., the curate, a Sierra Leonian, requested me to assist in planning a communal penitential service for the parish. I gladly accepted and did it. Next, a workshop was planned for the parish councilors, and I was also invited. I happily went and I participated actively. Before then, the understanding of the parish councilors was that all the spiritual matters were reserved for the priest(s), while all the material aspects of parish life were the domain of the laity. Hence the goal of that workshop was to help the councilors to realize that the Church was more than the clergy, and that their responsibilities as councilors included inspirational roles. Following that workshop, a number of committees were created, including a liturgy committee. I had made it clear that I had no intention of supplanting the man who was there previously but to collaborate with the group. So he became the chairperson while I was named the spiritual director of the group. At any rate I saw myself as an animator.

Meanwhile, I attracted more volunteers into the liturgy committee, including Sr M.C., an Irish sister from my community who had been following my stories of the developments in the parish with keen interest. Soon we formed a pastoral team: Sr M. C., Fr J.K., Mr J. F., and myself. It was just wonderful! Many great things followed after that. First of all, all those people who had been on the reading roster were invited to attend the liturgy committee meeting. Altogether, we were fifteen in number: lay men and women, two sisters and the curate. The parish priest, Fr M.J.C, an Irish missionary, was quite elderly and did not bother us. The team proposed to the committee the idea of coming together weekly to practice the forthcoming Sunday readings and to reflect on them together. It was not just those scheduled to read but all the members. They agreed to meet every Monday evening to allow enough time for the fruit of the sharing to sink in during the course of the week. I had successfully done a similar thing previously in a school situation in Nigeria and knew its potential benefits. It makes a group self-sustaining; and provides a forum for the lectors to improve their reading skills and to acquire an increasing sensitivity to all the verbal and non-verbal cues which help or hinder a proper communication of the word of God. Other members offered feedback to the lectors when they finished: first the positive ones, and then areas needing improvement.

Active Involvement in Liturgy

The liturgy group developed and went beyond this. Members showed a high level of commitment. Attendance was very regular, in contrast to other organizations in the same parish. It was quite astonishing because these people were workers who could do with some rest after work. I think there was an in-built motivation in the process. People experienced spiritual nourishment from sharing on the readings and a bond of collaboration also developed within the group. With time, the group felt that one meeting was not

enough for them. So, it was decided that Monday would be set aside just for the reflections and for exploring various possibilities for developing the liturgy. Saturday was chosen for another meeting to take care of rehearsals using the microphone. From then on, other things evolved. We aimed at animating the spiritual and liturgical life of the parish by making the Mass more meaningful and relevant to the life of the people. We tried to inculturate the liturgy and actively involve as many people as possible. We did this through various pastoral initiatives generated by the group during our regular weekly meetings.

According as themes lent themselves, we made up introductions to the readings. We invited a volunteer artist to design and produce posters that captured the themes for special occasions such as Advent and Lent. By way of inculturation, we sometimes substituted more culturally relevant gestures. On the Third Sunday of Advent, we used the traditional three blasts of the Mende chief's horn to signify: 'the Lord is near,' and again at the Christmas midnight mass, to announce the birth of Christ. On some special occasions we organized symbolic gift offerings, which featured dancing, and incorporated commentaries and prayers of the faithful.

Foot-washing

One of the initiatives we took while preparing the Holy Week liturgy during our first year together was to make the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday inclusive. All agreed that we would invite six women and six men to have their feet washed (Uchem, 2001:216). It fell to me to notify a certain elderly woman who was always at the daily morning mass in the parish. When I had finished giving her the message, 'Mama M.,' as we fondly called her, told me: "Sister, woman no be aposulu", meaning by that, "women were not Apostles". I explained it to her; and she confirmed that she did not want to have her feet washed. For her, it would have meant going against God's word. Though disappointed I had to respect her in her different space. We then got somebody else and completed our required number, twelve. I have since witnessed many instances of this kind of inclusion in various places in Ireland, some parts of Nigeria and the United States of America; and people's awareness in this aspect is gradually growing.

It was also the liturgy committee that gave impetus to the implementation of the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.) in Bo. From the committee prospective facilitators were selected and trained. The whole parish had to be prepared for the change from the old catechism 'question and answer' programme to the journey catechumenate programme, which was a more gradual process of sharing and initiation of the catechumens into the life of the Christian community. So, by a series of awareness programmes presented briefly in drama form during Mass on a number of consecutive Sundays, the R.C.I.A. was explained to the people: its meaning, benefits, and history as well as the responsibilities of the christian community toward the new members. The programme was just about to take off in earnest when I had to leave Sierra Leone for another assignment. However, the programme was in good hands, indicating the advantage of a team approach to ministry. The programme got off the ground very successfully and the group continued to evolve. The team kept me informed of the developments in the parish until the unfortunate civil war broke out in Sierra Leone and I lost touch with them. Nevertheless, the last I heard from them two years after I left was that they were then recruiting and training more facilitators to work with parents for the Rite of Baptism of Children. Looking back on some of my experiences of mission, one of those I treasure most is participating in a team ministry which empowered lay men and women to exercise ministry in partnership with their priest and in more responsible pastoral leadership roles than merely contributing money. Although there were some challenges along the way, it was a wonderful experience of being church. With this in view, wherever I have lived, I have tried to be involved in the life of the community. My approach has usually been characterized by inviting myself in. Often, this meant risking rejection, indifference or even opposition, initially; but almost always, appreciation grew with time regarding what I had to offer, and great bonds of collaboration then developed between us. Such was the case also when I lived in Northern Nigeria.

Involving the laity in mission

As Candidate Directress for my congregation in Kaduna, I brought into play my usual stance of combining my primary assignment, in this case formation ministry, with an evangelical outreach to my neighbouring community. I reached the people of Kaduna in three major ways: firstly, through an outreach ministry involving the young missionary sisters in training in our neighbouring parish of Rigasa; and secondly a diocesan appointment I held as Sister Adviser to the Catholic Women Organization (CWO) in Kaduna Archdiocese. In this way, I had contact with many of the women and shared in their concerns and learned from

them as well. The third major way I reached the people was through forming a support group for my community known as the Holy Rosary Associates (Uchem, 2001: 232). These were a group of lay people attracted by the following aims and objectives. To:

Share in the mission and charism of our congregation — a unique opportunity to exercise their own missionary calling, following directly from their Baptism. Participate in our mission through their prayers and support. Have an opportunity to deepen their spirituality as well as obtain the necessary help to make appropriate Christian responses to the challenges in their life situations.

The associates held their bi-monthly meetings in our house. The first part of their meeting usually lasted about one hour and was devoted to spiritual nourishment. This varied according to the occasion and the liturgical season. For example, sometimes we had mass; at other times, some other devotions; but most times, we had Gospel-sharing, based on the 'Seven-Steps' method, with necessary modifications to suit the group. However, whatever we did, we tried to make it creative and nourishing, "juicy" as some of the associates put it. The results were simply amazing. It was a deeply satisfying experience for them. For one thing, we maintained a participative spirit in whatever we did. By participative I mean involving as many different people as possible in roles and responsibilities. The second part of the meeting was the business meeting consisting of the reading of minutes, discussion of practical matters and reports on projects in support of our mission.

No Chaplains please!

Following several instances of disappointment because some priests failed to turn up for scheduled masses a member suggested that they should ask for a permanent chaplain so as to make it easier for the group to get mass regularly whenever they wanted. I knew that getting a chaplain would not solve their problem and might actually bring in some unnecessary complications. For example, if things did not work out between the chaplain and the group, the group might not easily get a replacement. I was still considering how to put across my thoughts without giving offense when to my relief a young gentleman who had joined the group only a short while before, spoke up: "We don't want any chaplain!". He went on: "When they come now, they will take over everything. We are happy to relate with the sisters as we are doing now". Well, that said everything! Nobody added or subtracted anything; that settled it. As Susan Ross has observed:

Many Catholics who have experienced the ministry of women in various capacities ... are beginning to question the wisdom of an all male priesthood and the deprivation of the wider community of the full exercise of women's gifts (1993: 202).

This is certainly true in my own experience. For instance, on one of the occasions I preached the homily at mass in the United States some Nigerians in attendance exclaimed in amazement:

"Onye si n'umunwanyị a maa chi nata fada?" (An Igbo expression for: "Who says women can't be priests?").

In a similar vein, a sister who works on the diocesan justice and peace desk recently shared her experience of a very similar reaction from people. She had occasion to speak in one of the churches in her diocese to encourage people to contribute generously to show a greater commitment to caring for the poor in their parish. When she finished giving her message somebody said out aloud "This person who spoke like this ought to be ordained priest". However, while some people accept the new developments [such as hearing a woman's voice in church] as welcome fresh air, others see it as competition with men. They still see women as "outsiders" to the human enterprise craving admission into the human fold, and ministry, as their own prerogative (Uchem, 2001: 129).

It is becoming increasingly clear to some people that there is no convincing reason for excluding women from greater participation in pastoral leadership. It gets quite ridiculous in those cross-cultural mission situations where, evidently, some people are behind the scenes providing all the dynamism in a parish; while there are some others whose role is simply to extend their hands in ritual or to give (or withhold) permission for anything to happen at all. Such situations in the church undermine the very essence of the missionary mandate from Christ which is directed to all the baptized.

Challenges Facing African Women Missionaries

There are certain challenges facing missionaries everywhere today (Uchem, 1995: 113-125). These include: the changing meaning and practice of mission; justice and peace (in face of so much injustice in our world); interfaith dialogue, inculturation, the rapidly changing world politically, culturally, socially, economically, technologically and so on. In addition, there is the reality of the environmental crisis, the HIV/AIDS

pandemic, the growing culture of terrorism in the world, and the power driven culture of war, with the resultant mass displacement of peoples. However, there are special challenges which concern African missionaries sent on mission to African countries. While these apply widely, “there are certain challenges which face African missionary sisters” (Uchem, 2002 a: 7-11), particularly, because of gender-based discrimination in two specific areas: ministry and financial aid.

Ministry

Firstly, there is a restriction of the scope of ministry in which sisters can be involved in most parishes and dioceses in the south-eastern parts of Nigeria. It is a very painful experience not to have free scope to do for and with our own people what we have been able to do for and with other people in cross-cultural mission settings both within and outside of Nigeria. Apart from teaching in schools or working in hospitals, some sisters had been engaged in all kinds of pastoral ministry just short of the Eucharistic consecration: serving in the capacity of Eucharistic ministers distributing Holy Communion in church, bringing communion to the sick and the house-bound, conducting communion services, and preaching the word of God; doing all these things not just when a priest is not available but by way of collaborative ministry. As illustrated earlier, some sisters have been pace-setters and boundary-breakers, pioneering many pastoral initiatives, animating the pastoral and liturgical life of the people; training facilitators for the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (the RCIA) and the basic Christian communities. Likewise, we had been fostering the faith development of people through seminars and workshops on topical issues; preaching and directing retreats not only for youth but also for adult groups of men and women in parishes and special prayer centres.

Unfortunately, some of our priests and people are not open to this kind of inclusive and shared ministry between the sisters and the clergy. For instance, in one of our communities, the sisters offered to serve as Eucharistic ministers in the parish, the parish priest refused saying that he was still very strong and capable for the work. Yet, he would sometimes invite junior seminarians to join him in distributing holy communion, which would otherwise take a very long time because of the long queues of communicants. The irony is that some parishes, including the cathedral parish, in the same diocese have sisters as Eucharistic ministers. In another instance, some sisters through the parish liturgy committee proposed that the washing of the feet should be inclusive of men and women. The members of the committee were quite open to the idea and had previously suggested to have altar girls but the parish priest refused. His reason in both cases was that it would mean only a short step away from ordaining women; that he would not mind it if and when the church gave approval but for now he would not want to go ahead of the Church in the matter.

Furthermore, in a retreat centre managed by some sisters in another diocese, one day, a priest failed to turn up for morning mass. After a long period of waiting, the community persuaded Sister C. A., one of their members to conduct a communion service for them; and many people from the neighbouring community were in attendance. They were almost half-way through the service when the priest turned up. Sister asked the congregation if it would be alright for them if the priest just carried on from where she stopped and all agreed. Sister went out to meet the priest and put the proposal before him. He said that he could go away, if they so wished, and come back in the evening to celebrate mass for them; but he would not say a ‘half mass’. So he began from the beginning and went over all the ground she had already covered. It was a most humiliating experience for Sister, as she reported. Previously, she had been in a variety of mission situations where she had conducted services for church communities. It really beats the imagination what kind of belief system and theology of church and ministry some of the priests act from. Thus, with only very few exceptions, the tendency of most of our clergy is to see the Church and ministry as their own property and to view sisters who want to be more centrally involved in the life and ministry of the Church as outsiders coming to usurp their ‘rights’ and ‘property’. All this goes on without a thought about how the people might benefit if sisters became more involved in pastoral ministry than the present arrangement allows. The other challenge sisters face which I want to discuss is the challenge of financial support which is somehow connected to the challenge of limited scope in ministry as just described.

Financial Support

Sisters work mostly in church-owned institutions where they receive not salaries but very small stipends, less than 20 per cent of what they would otherwise deserve if paid according to their qualifications or Government rates. They could earn enough income to make their congregations financially independent and self-sufficient. Such an arrangement of not getting salaries worked in the past when the missionaries were mainly from the North-Atlantic regions of the world. The expatriate missionaries were supported by

their own people and by their national Governments. Today, African missionaries, including Nigerians, on mission within and outside their own countries of origin are similarly expected to be supported by their own people. However, many church members simply cannot afford to give such financial support because of their difficult economic situations. That notwithstanding, in many parishes the people are taxed all the same and compelled by all manner of means to contribute to the support of the 'church', meaning the bishops and the clergy. Some well-to-do church members now take it as their obligation to support priests and seminarians financially and materially, but unfortunately they do not extend such support equally to sisters and their novices, that is, those in training. Sadly, sometimes, when some of the laity in some parish councils have moved a motion to give financial aid to sisters, some parish priests have been known to block these moves or downplay the sisters' financial needs with distorted presentations of the sisters' vow of poverty. The same mentality that sees the sisters as 'outsiders' rears its ugly head again around the issue of financial support of sisters in the way some priests negatively influence the attitude of the laity towards sisters.

In previous times, sisters could submit project proposals and receive funding assistance from overseas development agencies but this is very limited now as things have changed very much in recent times. Nowadays, it is very hard to find development agencies that have Nigeria, for example, on their priority list of geographical areas of interest. Even among the few that are open to considering projects originating in Nigeria, there is a presumption that the members of international missionary organizations are well off. Consequently, they give priority consideration to members of indigenous religious congregations. It then means that African sisters belonging to international congregations face a double challenge. One aspect relates to gender and the other, inter-racial dynamics in their struggle for financial independence which is a prerequisite for their autonomy and self-determination as a group. Moreover, contrary to the declared intentions of many development agencies, it is hard to find agencies that are interested in sponsoring projects that focus on structural transformation specifically through the conscientization of women. My wonder then is: If African missionary sisters are not economically and otherwise empowered but remain in a state of economic dependency on the male clerical system in the Church, or on their Western counterparts, and "dependency ... means control" (Uzukwu, 1996: 98), how can they be effective agents of structural transformation and empowerment for other women to whom they try to minister? It is indeed very difficult to see the way out of this double bind, and it is certainly a big drawback to the missionary enterprise.

The problem

From the foregoing instances on the national and international levels, it is clear that missionary sisters face gender discrimination, which slows down the progress of mission. Yet, the situation is somewhat ambivalent because sometimes opportunities have opened up for some experiences of inclusion in various situations not only outside Nigeria but also within the country, including some of the parishes in the south-eastern dioceses in Nigeria. Nevertheless, it is ironical that most of the restrictions in ministry and discrimination in financial support have happened more in the supposedly 'more Christian' South-Eastern parts of Nigeria than in other places. This is indicative of the extent to which the myths of male superiority and female inferiority and functionality have taken hold of the Christian psyche; reinforced by the anti-women sentiments and teachings of many Fathers of the Church.

As Anne Carr aptly remarks, male headship and female inferiority motifs underlie the invocation of the maleness of Jesus to exclude women from altar ministry. She traces the peak of such "oppressive uses of the Christ symbol ... to Thomas Aquinas who held that the male is the normative sex of the human species ... and that it is ontologically necessary that Christ be male" (Carr, 1988:165). Aquinas believed and taught that women were biologically defective, lacking the fullness of human nature mentally, morally and physically; needing to be governed by men and incapable of exercising public leadership in either church or political life (Uchem, 2001:148). Given this kind of faulty gender assumptions about women's nature coupled with the demonization of Eve and women in the Church's mission and ministry is not difficult to imagine. Again, considering the importance accorded the works of the Fathers of the Church in the formation of priests and seminarians, and the numerous incidents of discrimination against women, and the current anti-women attitudes, behaviour and sermons of some priests, it is obvious that they are still being influenced by the anti-women teachings of the Church Fathers. Perhaps, this explains why contemporary churchmen are unwilling to back their fine pronouncements with concrete actions for change in the assigned secondary status of women. They seem to be guided by a human development model which stresses alleviation rather than the eradication of the social ills women suffer. Hence, ten years after Pope John Paul II called on Episcopal Conferences to establish commissions to look into matters concerning women in Africa these have not yet been instituted (1995:124).

Many continue to quote biblical passages selectively to support their belief and practice of male superiority

and female inferiority, on the basis of the biblical stories of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis, or rather their male-centred interpretations (Uchem, 2001:179-190). They take it for granted that men and women are not equal by any means; that men are pre-eminent human beings and women are secondary, existing for men and not really human beings in their own right. Consequently, the passage about “wives be submissive to your husbands” (Eph 5:21-33 and I Cor 11:3-16) are still frequently used for wedding ceremonies without reference to Pope John Paul II’s reinterpretation of the same in terms of a “mutual ‘subjection of the spouses out of reverence for Christ’” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 15 August 1988: no. 24; Uchem, 2002b:39-40) which connotes equal partnership in marriage. Therefore, the obstructions sisters meet in the course of their missionary work reflect a much wider issue of gender bias rooted in most cultures of the world and reinforced by the biblical concept of ‘woman’ as ‘helpmate’ to ‘man’. In my view, this literal biblical notion is the root of the perennial gender inequality in the Church, which sustains a certain theology of Church, ministry and the human person which projects ministry as the exclusive preserve of the clergy. In practice, the inherited negative cultural tendencies, reinforced by the biblical myths and the Church Fathers’ teachings and their attendant functional views about women result in all kinds of exploitation, including economic and ideological exploitation of women (Uchem, 2003). It is quite interesting to compare the missionary experiences narrated earlier with women’s experiences of collaborative ministry in other parts of the world to see another side of the issue to which many do not advert. With reference to the American context, Luke Timothy Johnson put it this way:

“Women are carrying out most of the work of ministry in many, if not most, parishes. The same abuse of power with which the male clergy exploited but never fully honoured the ministerial labours of vowed religious women in parishes, hospitals, and schools is now being perpetuated in the exploitation of single and married women in local parishes. This exploitation takes place even as such women are denied ordination with the argument that only males can really represent Christ... [People] are so happy to see (and to be) women acolytes and lectors and Eucharistic ministers and catechists that they do not yet appreciate how such accommodation simply continues with slight variations the traditional exploitation of women under male leadership (*Sex, Women and Church, Doctrine and Life*, 2004: 541. Ask Adaeze for the original citation). It is very puzzling as to why many priests see ministry as their exclusive right and all other church members as their helpers. This was evident for example when a sister met a priest she had worked with on a team ministry several years afterwards and the priest had the effrontery to speak of how much assistance the sister was to him. Knowing that most sisters usually get things going in many situations, one could actually ask: Who was helping whom? If it is that even when a woman is the initiator of programmes she is still viewed as an ‘assistant’, one can say that it is the ‘helper’ myth operating again, even in the face of contradictory evidence. Something is certainly wrong with that. I, therefore, resonate with the missiological orientation of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, who impressed on our pioneer missionary sisters to resist the missionary priests who demanded subservience and house-keeping roles from them in the early days. “You are missionaries in your own right”, he insisted and usually referred to them as his fellow missionaries.

The gender inequality experienced by women, either as clients or as functionaries in the Church, causes disaffection between the clergy and the sisters and therefore constitutes an obstacle to mission. Moreover, it portrays the refusal of many of the clergy to accept women’s co-equal humanity and instead fosters a functional view of women. It militates against the realization of social and gender justice, which is an integral aspect of the very goal of the mission of Christ in the Church and in the world; for “action on behalf of social justice ... is an essential dimension of preaching the Gospel (*Justice in the world*, 1971, 6). Therefore, the complex problem of the assigned secondary status of women needs to be addressed and changed in the interests of development, justice, and peace as an integral part of mission, the proclamation of the Good News of Christ.

Confronting gender inequality in Christian belief and practice

The goal of mission is for people to experience reconciliation, a healing of alienation and to have a felt sense of the salvation which Christ has accomplished for all of humanity. This should not just be in fine abstract terms or relegated to an after-life only but is to be translated into concrete life situations (Paul VI, *cf. Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8 December 1975, n. 29). Salvation needs to be expressed in concrete terms which positively influence our social, economic, political and cultural context which at the moment does not favour all. The Good News has to be really ‘good’ and has to be ‘news’. If it simply mirrors the cultural provisions in our culture, it is no news and it is not good. It has to be a declaration of God’s will, and we do know that God’s will is for all to have life and to live it to the full (Jn 10:10). We find the concrete shape of

such news that is 'good' in the Gospels, in the form of what Jesus said and did to and for the marginalized people of his day and we get an assurance and a validation for our own social stance.

Although Christians have for centuries believed that women's subordination was God's ordinance, supported by the Bible, to be maintained in social relations, the evolutionary theory and contemporary biblical criticism challenge the literal biblical interpretations, on which women's subordination is based (Daly, G., 1997) and (Duffy, S., 1988). Therefore, a possible way forward toward implementing gender equality in the area of leadership, for example, is for Christians to:

- 1) Identify those Scripture passages which people tend to use to support discriminatory practices against women and re-interpret them in a manner consonant with the Good News of Christ;
- 2) Update methods of biblical interpretation especially the creation stories in Genesis chapters 1 -3 and the Deutero-Pauline texts, taking into account insights from modern biblical scholarship, an evolutionary worldview as well as the African concept of story (Uchem, 2002c); and
- 3) Include women in leadership and decision-making roles within and outside the Church.

To this end, it would be helpful to borrow a leaf from some ecclesiastical communities which have, to a great extent, done away with 'superiorship' models of leadership. They have adopted a participative model of leadership. In this model, decision-making is shared and is not the exclusive preserve of any one person or sub-group. The leadership post is rotated. This has the potential of bringing us closer to what Jesus originally envisaged when he admonished his first followers: "You know that among the Gentiles their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. You must be servants of each other" (*cf.* Mk 10: 41-45 paraphrased). If Christian communities, worldwide, should adopt a leadership model of 'a partnership of equals', it will go a long way towards reshaping the human imagination. Such a participative leadership model will recognize the equal humanity and agency of women and men. Leadership roles will be determined not by sex any more but rather by personal charisma, leadership gifts and training. A leadership model of 'a partnership of equals' will lead not only towards an inclusive vision of theology, Church and ministry, but also a radical transformation of the entire human community.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted an inclusive vision of mission and ministry arising out of sisters' lived experiences of actively contributing to bring about change in the *status quo*. Whereas the rules exclude them because they are women, they step forward and include themselves wherever possible until God's Reign comes in full. The paper has featured selected accounts of sisters' pastoral initiatives in various Catholic communities in different places. The missionary activities aimed at fostering greater lay participation in leadership in the spiritual, doctrinal and liturgical aspects of life in parishes. Some of the stories reflect a pushing back of gender, class and racial boundaries, and a stretching of people's imagination as to future possibilities.

The primary root cause of gender inequality in the Church has been identified as the biblical and cultural notion that women are men's 'helpers' existing to serve men's needs and desires. This, coupled with the anti-women teachings of the Church Fathers, has reinforced oppressive cultural beliefs and practices against women both in African countries and other countries of the world. Therefore, the integrity of mission and fidelity to the mission of Christ necessitate confronting the inherent gender biases in key biblical texts, such as those cited in this paper and re-interpreting them so as to release the Good News of Christ to transform our world by the power of the Holy Spirit. Since gender roles are socially and culturally constructed, and learned from generation to generation through the process of socialization, they can also be unlearned. Already, things are beginning to change, though only slowly. No doubt, such a phenomenon as domination and subordination, which took centuries to construct, will also probably take as long to dismantle. For further change to happen we need to look at the attitude of Jesus in the Gospels (Uchem, 2001: 198-201) and take that, not our cultures and traditions as guidelines for action. Our call as Christians is to conversion, toward being more like Christ. Men and women need to regard each other more as equal partners and work together as such for their mutual development as persons, for the growth of God's Reign in this world.

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Le trafic de femmes asiatiques, un esclavage des temps modernes

Sr Philomena D'Souza, FMA

[NDLR – A l'occasion du 23 août, Journée internationale de commémoration de la lutte contre l'esclavage et de son abolition, diverses manifestations ont été organisées pour, notamment, souligner que l'esclavage persiste et se développe sous de nouvelles formes (travail forcé, travail des enfants, prostitutions, etc.). Sœur Philomena D'Souza, FMA, a étudié la psychologie à Rome ; elle est animatrice d'ateliers de psychologie et de spiritualité féministe pour les femmes et les jeunes indiens. Elle est par ailleurs membre du Forum des théologiennes indiennes et travaille au Bureau des femmes de l'archidiocèse de Bombay. Elle a publié l'article ci-dessous dans *The New Leader* (bimensuel catholique publié à Chennai (Madras), en Inde), daté du 16-31 août 2005 (vol. 118, n° 16). La traduction est de la rédaction d'Eglises d'Asie.]

«Un ami m'a présenté à une femme... Elle m'a proposé un travail à l'étranger en me disant qu'elle prendrait en charge les frais de passeport. J'ai demandé si le travail avait un rapport avec le sexe et elle m'a assuré que non».

«J'ai été battue et forcée à avoir des relations sexuelles... Si nous refusions, on nous battait et on nous violait».

« Même en hiver, je devais porter des robes légères... Le patron me forçait à « servir » les soldats et les officiers de l'armée. Je n'ai jamais pu m'enfuir et quitter cette vie misérable parce que j'étais constamment surveillée par une femme », raconte Yupita, une jeune femme thaïlandaise de 23 ans qui travaillait à Okinawa, une base militaire dotée d'un centre « de repos et de loisirs » pour les forces américaines stationnées en Corée.

Qu'entend-on par trafic d'êtres humains ?

Le trafic d'êtres humains est une forme moderne de l'esclavage. Dans beaucoup de régions du monde, ce crime est devenu une des activités les plus rémunératrices, les femmes et les petites filles en étant les « produits de base ». Ce commerce comprend le recrutement, le transport ou la vente de personnes humaines par la force ou par l'utilisation de moyens frauduleux, dont l'unique but est d'enrichir le trafiquant. Des femmes trompées se retrouvent dans la prostitution ou dans d'autres activités liées au sexe, que ce soit dans les industries de loisirs, de tourisme, ou de l'hôtellerie, dans les bases militaires, ou sous forme d'esclavage domestique, d'exploitation de la main-d'œuvre, d'organisation de mariages forcés, d'exploitation d'enfants pour les courses de chameaux. Dans les cas les plus graves, elles sont tuées pour récupérer des organes à transplanter.

Les rouages du trafic d'êtres humains sont étendus et complexes. Toutes sortes de méthodes sont utilisées pour tromper les victimes comme l'enlèvement, les menaces, l'utilisation de drogues, les promesses mensongères d'emplois lucratifs, les faux mariages et autres formes de séductions. Avec la mondialisation et le changement rapide des marchés, de nouvelles formes de commerce de femmes et de nouveaux lieux se développent. Il en résulte que ce trafic d'êtres humains est devenu une activité criminelle peu risquée avec un taux élevé de retour sur investissement car elle est contrôlée par les réseaux internationaux de mafias bien structurées.

Une caractéristique importante d'un réseau illégal bien organisé est la coordination efficace d'un processus qui apparaît très fragmenté. Les membres de ce réseau travaillent ensemble et se protègent mutuellement. Il est ainsi difficile d'obtenir une preuve du crime car il existe un lien entre les coupables, la police et même parfois le système juridique. Ces dernières années, l'argent généré par ce système a même été supérieur aux profits réalisés par le commerce illégal de la drogue.

Le cas de l'Inde

Selon les chiffres fournis par les Nations Unies, au cours des dix dernières années, plus de trente millions de personnes ont fait l'objet de ce trafic à travers le monde. Parmi elles, environ dix millions sont des filles âgées de 5 à 15 ans, vendues pour le travail ou pour la prostitution forcée. Du fait de l'expansion du SIDA, la demande pour des filles vierges et pour des mineures n'a cessé d'augmenter.

L'Inde elle-même sert de lieu d'approvisionnement, de transit et de destination pour ce trafic, où des milliers de femmes et d'enfants sont exploités de jour comme de nuit. En Inde, les États du sud, tels l'Andhra Pradesh, le Tamil Nadu et le Karnataka, ainsi que les régions tribales du Jharkand, du Chattisgarh, de l'Orissa, aussi bien que les États du Nord-Est, sont les principales zones d'approvisionnement en femmes et en enfants susceptibles d'être expédiés comme esclaves domestiques et sexuels vers les grandes métropoles et les plages de Goa. Toutefois, c'est le trafic d'êtres humains à l'échelon international qui est le plus lucratif. Plus de 500.000 femmes bangladaises ont été victimes de ce commerce, la plupart d'entre elles étant destinées à l'Inde, au Pakistan et au Moyen-Orient. On estime qu'en Inde, 200.000 femmes népalaises seraient victimes de ce commerce illégal, avec un flux moyen de 5.000 à 7.000 femmes par an. Au moins 20 % d'entre elles sont des jeunes filles, âgées de moins de 16 ans, et elles aboutissent dans les bordels de grandes villes comme Pune, Bombay et New Delhi. Sur une estimation de 2,3 millions de femmes indiennes victimes de la prostitution, au moins un quart sont des mineures qui proviennent du Népal et du Bangladesh. En Inde, il existe plus de 1.000 « *quartiers de prostituées* », internationalement connus sous l'appellation « *red-light districts* ».

L'épicentre : l'Asie

L'Asie est à l'épicentre de ce trafic mondial. La Thaïlande est la destination de quelque 20 à 30.000 femmes birmanes victimes de promesses mensongères d'emplois. Concrètement, le nombre de maisons closes en Thaïlande est d'environ 80.000, et dans certaines « maisons », il n'y a pas de femmes thaïlandaises. Toutes sont étrangères, venant de Birmanie, de Chine du sud, du Laos, du Cambodge, du Vietnam et d'autres pays, situés en Europe de l'Est ou en Amérique Latine. En l'an 2000, on estimait à deux millions le nombre de femmes de nationalité étrangère victimes de ce trafic vivant en Thaïlande.

Paradoxalement, pendant qu'un certain nombre de pays asiatiques s'enrichissent, des femmes venant de ces mêmes pays sont victimes de ce commerce. Ainsi, on peut trouver des prostituées malaisiennes à Hongkong et en Australie. Des femmes thaïlandaises sont dirigées vers le Japon, Taiwan, l'Australie, la Malaisie et le Moyen-Orient. Des Coréennes sont envoyées à Hongkong et au Japon. En fait, le Japon détient le plus important marché de l'industrie du sexe pour ce qui est des femmes asiatiques ; plus de 150.000 femmes étrangères, majoritairement thaïlandaises et philippines, y sont employées dans le secteur de la prostitution.

Pourquoi les femmes et les filles asiatiques sont-elles si vulnérables ?

La vulnérabilité des femmes et des filles, particulièrement en Asie, est le résultat d'inégalités, de la discrimination et du statut inférieur qui est celui de la femme, ainsi que de l'autorité patriarcale et autoritaire déployée envers les enfants, surtout envers les filles. Le préjugé contre les filles est si fort que la naissance d'une petite fille est ressentie comme un fardeau financier, et, chaque fois que c'est possible, elle est supprimée dès le berceau, ou même avant sa naissance. Cela est encouragé par une mentalité assimilant les femmes à de simples objets ; les femmes sont *paraya daan*, la propriété d'un autre qu'elle-même dont on se débarrassera au moment du mariage. Sans liberté de choix et de possibilité d'une vie digne, les femmes et les filles sont faciles à tromper et à exploiter. Elles sont alors obligées de mener une vie caractérisée par le sentiment d'indignité, le rejet social et l'asservissement de la dette envers le trafiquant, sous prétexte de faire sortir sa famille d'une situation financière précaire.

Le profil type de la femme asiatique victime de ce trafic est pratiquement le même dans tous les pays. Elle est pauvre, peu éduquée et issue de milieu rural. Il y a également des exceptions : beaucoup de « *femmes mariées par correspondance* » viennent des classes moyennes inférieures et les emplois à

l'étranger dans le secteur des loisirs demandent que la femme soit capable de pratiquer l'anglais. Souvent, les familles ont été les premières à trahir leurs propres filles ou parentes. Les facteurs qui expliquent la vulnérabilité de ces femmes sont la détresse économique, la désertion de leurs conjoints, les normes sociales et les coutumes familiales qui leur sont défavorables.

Commerce et industrie du sexe

En raison de ce terrain de préjugés culturels défavorables aux femmes, les pays asiatiques sont devenus la principale région du commerce sexuel de ces dix dernières années. Le commerce des femmes ne peut pas être séparé des phénomènes de la mondialisation. Dans les années 1970, les institutions financières internationales ont encouragé le développement du tourisme pour en faire une industrie mondiale. Une forte pression a été exercée sur des pays d'Asie économiquement pauvres afin qu'ils s'ouvrent, se développent et deviennent des destinations touristiques exotiques. Le tourisme sexuel est devenu une source substantielle de revenus pour bien des pays et, à cause des profits générés, les gouvernements ferment les yeux sur les trafics internationaux d'êtres humains ou sur les femmes violées pour la «*prospérité nationale*». On estime que pour l'Indonésie seule, le chiffre d'affaire de l'industrie du sexe génère entre 1,2 et 3,6 milliards de dollars U.S. chaque année. Étant donné que de nombreux touristes mâles achètent ces aventures sexuelles dans les pays exotiques d'Asie, les rouages et le commerce du tourisme sexuel sont solidement établis.

Ces femmes «*servent*» aussi les salariés de haut rang stressés à qui il est coutume d'offrir des services de «*repos et de loisirs*», des vacances à l'étranger, ces avantages en nature étant inclus dans leur contrat de travail. Bars, villas sur la plage, hôtels, discothèques, cafés, casinos, cabarets, salons, séances de massage, salles de gymnastique, clubs pornos, messageries roses sont quelques-uns des lieux où ces femmes sont demandées pour satisfaire aux loisirs des hommes. Ces formes d'emploi peuvent être considérées comme autant d'antichambres de la prostitution. En effet, même si une femme est capable de supporter la pression et les conditions du travail où elle est amenée à se présenter comme sexuellement attrayante et à se prêter aux fantaisies sexuelles d'une clientèle mâle, la nature même de ces emplois la place dans un contexte discriminatoire et d'exploitation sexuelle.

La description du travail telle qu'elle est mentionnée dans les contrats signés avec les agences (danser, servir dans un bar, accueillir et distraire les touristes) est en fait très vague et trompeuse. Voici le texte d'une publicité publiée par une entreprise coréenne en Russie : «*Voulez-vous voir le monde et gagner de l'argent ? Venez nous voir !*». Le contrat étant vague et trompeur, les femmes ne savent pas qu'elles ont été recrutées pour l'industrie du sexe. Cela signifie qu'elles n'ont pas d'autre choix que de travailler dans la prostitution. Elles doivent gagner de l'argent pour payer leur dette au trafiquant, dette qui peut aller de 3.000 à 30.000 dollars U.S., selon l'endroit d'où elles viennent.

Dans certains pays, le trafic est aujourd'hui sophistiqué et il utilise des moyens de communication hautement technologiques tels qu'Internet en faisant la promotion de «*cyberprostituées*» ou de femmes «*temporairement vôtres*». La pornographie est tellement envahissante qu'une femme est divisée en diverses parties de son corps. Elle peut être juste une voix dans une messagerie rose ou une image dans des vidéos pornographiques. Lors d'une télé-conférence sexuelle, le client dicte les actes qu'il veut voir la femme accomplir devant ses yeux. La pornographie est disponible 24 heures sur 24 sur le câble ou sur Internet, et elle semble tellement banalisée qu'elle n'est plus reconnue comme telle. Ainsi, durant ces dix dernières années, les femmes d'Asie ont répondu à cette demande croissante et apparemment universelle d'esclavage sexuel.

Trafic et migration d'êtres humains

Il serait trop simpliste de croire que seules les nécessités économiques conduisent à ce genre de trafic d'êtres humains. En réalité, ce commerce est lié au consumérisme, à l'économie de libre-échange, à la sécurité alimentaire (ou à son absence), à une situation de conflits armés ou de bouleversements politiques, aux catastrophes naturelles ou provoquées par l'homme, et aux migrations qui en résultent. Dans de telles situations de détresse, les femmes et les jeunes filles peuvent facilement devenir la proie des trafiquants. Elles changent de lieu, mais le nouvel

environnement n'est pas nécessairement meilleur. Par exemple, les conflits ethniques dans les États du Nord-Est de l'Inde ont poussé des foules de jeunes femmes à quitter les lieux. Les syndicats du crime ont exploité avec succès les possibilités offertes par le phénomène des migrations de travailleurs et contribué à l'explosion mondiale du trafic des femmes.

Les femmes migrantes font l'objet de discriminations car ce sont des femmes venant de pays pauvres et qui se trouvent donc en dehors du système de protection sociale et légale de leur pays. Leur passeport et autres documents officiels leur sont confisqués et leur situation devient précaire car elles ne peuvent bénéficier de la protection juridique du pays dans lequel elle se trouve. Dans les familles où elles travaillent, elles sont à la merci de n'importe quel homme de la famille, voir même de jeunes adolescents. Telle est l'expérience des femmes népalaises et bangladaises en Inde, des femmes indiennes au Moyen-Orient et des femmes philippines dans presque tous les pays. Les mouvements massifs et sans précédent des ouvriers asiatiques et particulièrement des femmes migrantes montrent la persistance du sous-développement et du chômage dans beaucoup de pays d'Asie.

Commerce de mariages forcés

Un autre style de trafic qui mérite attention est la manière dont on fait du commerce illicite sous couvert de la forme institutionnalisée et socialement acceptée du mariage. La stratégie est d'envoyer des filles vers les pays occidentaux par l'intermédiaire d'agences matrimoniales.

Le commerce de «*commandes de mariées par la Poste*» a ainsi réalisé de grands profits en utilisant la détresse de femmes vietnamiennes, népalaises, pakistanaises, thaïlandaises, indiennes, etc. Aux États-Unis, au Canada, en Australie, au Japon, en Grande-Bretagne et en Allemagne, des agences matrimoniales offrent des contacts étendus et des services de rencontres «*sur mesure*». Les clients disposent d'un catalogue de femmes, venant ordinairement «*d'Extrême-Orient*», et qui sont supposées être passives, soumises – de parfaits esclaves sexuelles. Une fois que ces femmes sont «divrées» aux hommes, elles sont souvent soumises à de terribles tortures, à des violences et, en certain cas, elles sont vendues pour la prostitution. Étant dans un environnement étranger, elles ne bénéficient d'aucune aide sociale ou de leur entourage et elles sont trop effrayées pour s'adresser à la police, même lorsqu'elles sont des émigrées en situation régulière. Dans beaucoup de cas, la fille a entre 20 à 25 ans, et l'homme est âgé de plus de 50 ans. En acquérant ainsi une «épouse» orientale, ces hommes font une «bonne affaire» : esclaves sexuelles, personne s'occupant d'eux, aide ménagère – trois pour le prix d'une !

Il y a aussi ce qu'on appelle le système de l'épouse temporaire. Les hommes arabes qui résident au Pakistan pour une courte période peuvent prendre une femme qui fait la cuisine, lave les habits et assouvit leurs désirs sexuels. Après son séjour, la femme est abandonnée et, si des enfants sont nés, ils relèvent de sa seule responsabilité. À part les situations où les femmes sont consentantes pour se marier, il y a aussi les faux mariages. Les femmes vietnamiennes acceptées en Chine et qui s'attendent à trouver du travail sont vendues comme épouses ou concubines à des Chinois, souvent dans des provinces éloignées d'où elles ne peuvent s'échapper. La proportion des femmes en Chine étant déséquilibrée, dans un cas attesté par écrit, une femme a été forcée d'être l'épouse d'un homme et de ses quatre fils. Au Bangladesh, un « futur marié », accompagné par des hommes posant comme des frères, ou des cousins, ou pères ou oncles, parcourt les campagnes, allant d'un village pauvre à un autre, cherchant des familles qui souhaitent marier leurs filles. De cette manière, un grand nombre de « futures mariées » ont été rassemblées et emmenées en groupe au Pakistan, où elles ont été livrées à des trafiquants locaux. Des épouses du Bangladesh et du Népal ont été cédées par leurs maris à des hommes en Inde. Beaucoup de Pakistanais se sont mariés avec des femmes émigrées de Birmanie qui avaient fui ce pays pour échapper à la dictature et les ont fait travailler comme tisseuses de tapis au Pakistan. Leurs enfants, quand ils ont atteint l'âge de quatre ou cinq ans, deviennent des apprentis. Par conséquent, ce système procure aux hommes des maîtresses, des travailleuses et des reproductrices de main-d'œuvre pour l'industrie d'exportation de tapis. Derrière une façade de mariage, se cachent des situations d'esclavage qui sont une des formes de trafic d'êtres humains au Pakistan.

Une approche qui s'attaque à la menace

Le trafic des femmes est souvent perçu comme un simple problème moral des femmes et en

rejeter la responsabilité sur les victimes est la manière habituelle dont on aborde cette question. Il est important de se souvenir que le terme «trafic» se rapporte par définition à une action où l'on utilise la force physique ou la tromperie. La victime mérite la compassion et la sensibilité plutôt que le blâme ou la stigmatisation. La question que nous devons nous poser n'est pas : «Qui est l'objet du trafic et pourquoi ?», mais plutôt : «A qui ce trafic profite-t-il ? Qui vend ? Qui achète quoi ?». Nous devons remonter la filière du trafiquant plutôt que de décrire de façon sensationnelle le sort de la victime. Nous devons déplacer notre attention de la femme vers les trafiquants, leurs manières d'opérer, et les placer sous la haute surveillance des agences des États. Exploitation et profits sont les mots clés du trafic d'êtres humains. C'est par conséquent un problème de violation des droits de l'homme et, s'il n'est pas correctement compris, ce sont les trafiquants qui resteront libres et impunis. Ce commerce viole clairement le droit fondamental à la vie et à la dignité. Il viole aussi le droit à la santé, à la liberté et à la sécurité des personnes, le droit à ne pas subir de torture, de violence, de cruauté ou de traitement dégradant. Il viole aussi, pour les enfants qui ont été l'objet de trafic ou sont les victimes de mariages forcés, leur droit à l'éducation ; il viole le droit du travail et leur droit à l'autodétermination.

Les complexités du trafic ne peuvent se réduire à de simples lois sociales, à la construction de «foyers refuges», ou une «réinsertion» des victimes. Les victimes doivent être réintégrées dans leurs communautés de vie, plutôt qu'être simplement rapatriées. Et quand des femmes sont obligées d'émigrer pour gagner leur vie, la solution n'est pas de les en empêcher, mais c'est de leur permettre d'effectuer un voyage dans de bonnes conditions de sécurité.

Que faire pour empêcher ce genre de trafic ?

Chacun de nous en tant qu'individu peut faire changer les choses et aider à mettre fin à ce trafic de femmes et d'enfants :

- en s'informant et en attirant l'attention sur ce trafic. Il est vital de faire prendre conscience de ce problème dans les zones rurales et parmi les jeunes ; lorsque c'est nécessaire, créer un comité villageois de vigilance, parler de ce trafic de femmes et d'enfants aux amis, aux collègues, aux groupes communautaires, aux étudiants, aux paroisses et aux hommes politiques ;
- en en apprenant davantage sur le trafic de femmes et d'enfants en visitant les sites Internet des organisations qui luttent contre ce trafic ; collecter l'information et lire les publications sur le sujet ;
- en se joignant à d'autres, en devenant membre des organisations comme ECPAT et donner de son temps à des mouvements comme «*traquer les trafiquants*» ;
- en encourageant les campagnes ; quand c'est possible, prendre part aux campagnes contre le trafic d'êtres humains et faire des dons ;
- en écrivant : envoyer des lettres aux journaux et aux hommes politiques qui soutiennent la lutte contre le trafic de femmes et d'enfants est un problème de grande importance, et davantage devrait encore être fait pour éliminer ce trafic. Contacter vos représentants locaux et nationaux et leur faire savoir que cette question est très importante pour vous et pour votre communauté.

Conclusion

Cela fait déjà trente ans qu'un mouvement international de femmes s'est développé et qu'il a permis aux femmes de faire valoir certains droits. Il est toutefois regrettable de constater que pendant ce même laps de temps, le commerce du sexe s'est accru de manière considérable jusqu'à devenir une puissante industrie mondiale. Ne subvertit-elle pas et ne nie-t-elle pas les droits que les femmes ont acquis dans la lutte en faveur de l'égalité et du développement des femmes ?

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The Birth of a Religious Movement: A Comparison of Melanesian Cargo Cults and Early Christianity

- Theo Aerts, SVD -

I.*

Among the several names by which religious movements are known, the term messianism is one of the most widely used. It has, however, different meanings and referred originally to **(1)** a Jewish type of expectation connected with a future king or “anointed one” (in Hebrew: *mashiach*), but already in Jewish religious history it might be used for **(2)** eschatological dreams or expectations of the end (in Greek: *eschaton*) in which there is no personal saviour. From this well-known background derives its extension, by sociologists, to **(3)** all kinds of nativistic or revival movements, some of which are religious only to a minor degree. Another common name is “millenarism” or “chiliasm” (after the Latin or Greek word for “thousand”), referring to a blissful time lasting a thousand years.

The movements referred to are found all over the world,² but more particularly as independent churches in Africa,¹ as spiritistic movements in South America,² and as cargo cults in Melanesia.³ The two parts of the latter term already indicate that material-economic factors play a great role, but that ritual elements are equally important.⁴ When Melanesians, then, come to read the Bible, especially what it has to say about the origin and the spread of early Christianity, they are naturally reminded of many external resemblances to some extinct or still very active cargo cults with which they are acquainted.

For those less familiar with the phenomenon, we start with a short description of a typical, though less-known cargo cult of the Thirties, as found in an older mission periodical. Brother Bartholomew writes: “Last year (1931) one ‘King’ appeared in the bush of Kep. Three more Black rascals imitated him. People say that the ‘King’ spontaneously shot up out of the ground like a mushroom. A mass of natives made a pilgrimage to the four ‘Kings’. Father Dingels, too, went to meet them. They came towards him, walking in a single file and muttering between their teeth all kinds of nonsense. They looked terrifying, and Father Dingels could not get anything out of them; they were totally impervious. The ‘First King’ only said that his mother, who died long ago, was staying in the mountain of Kep and made all sorts of things for the natives. The White men, however, took these things and sold them to others. The second ‘King’ gave himself out to be a medicine man. All those who received medicine from him would never get sick; neither would they die. They promised the people everything possible: pots, canned foods, drums of petrol; everything would just come out of the ground. It was reported from Aitape that the people of Walman actually smashed their pots to pieces and then waited tensely for new pots; meat, canned foods, etc., to appear from the soil. Since the ‘Kings’ also acted against the Australian Government and told the people they did not have to pay any taxes, the administration sent four policemen to arrest the four ‘Kings’. Here in Wewak they were sentenced to three years’ exile on the island of Hasamatia, in British New Guinea. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that our catechists in Possau, Sassoja and other places had to close the schools. Several people have presented themselves to ransom the imprisoned Kings. The superstition of the pagans is so deep that, when I commented on the absurdities, they told me: ‘You just wait, a great deluge will sweep over the place of the government (in Wewak), and everyone will be destroyed’. Others warned: ‘Don’t talk against the Four (Kings), because they hear everything, and it will be bad for you. Overnight your head might turn back to front’, so that I always would have to walk backwards. Up to now, however, I still have my face in front”.⁵

This narrative not only contains a lot of details about the emergence and impact of an early cargo movement, but also indicates how it was judged by some outside observers. For them the movement was the work of some rascals (*Gauner*), an example of superstition (*Aberglaube*) and nonsense (*Unsinn*). With this attitude it would not be worthwhile at all to compare the movement with the birth of Christianity. It is, however, possible to have a more detached approach and to essay an appreciation from the point of view of those immediately involved; this we want to do in the following pages. We will then take into account many other messianic movements from Melanesia. Each one of them has its own structure and physiognomy; some are more secular than religious. We should, however, keep the concept broad enough to include the common features and therefore think it justified to extract from the many movements some points of similarity with what the New Testament tells us about the beginnings of Christianity. The parallels adduced will show the mechanisms operating in the formation of religious groups (Part I), even when they are silent about the motives and aims which animate the respective movements (Part II). When describing the resemblances each time we will give some relevant facts from the New Testament documents **a)**, and subsequently proceed with the comparative material from Melanesia **b)**.

1. The Traditional Background

a) By a traditional background we do not mean some data common to all messianic movements, but rather what is connatural and familiar by way of tradition for each individual movement; for the Jews this was their hope for a national Messiah.

The beliefs and expectations of a Messiah touch historical ground with the divine promise given to King David; he was told by the prophet Nathan that Yahweh himself would raise one of his descendants to supreme power, and that “his throne would be established for ever” (II Sam 7: 14-16). In times of later hardships, such as during the Syro-Ephraimite War about 740 B.C., the prophet Isaiah confirmed this promise to Ahaz, the fainthearted king of “the house of David”, who received the famous sign that already “the maiden was with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel (lit.: God-with-us)” (Is 7:14-16). But it was particularly after the Babylonian exile, when all the nations’ hopes were gone, when there was “no leader, no prophet, no prince, no holocaust, no sacrifice, no oblation, no incense, no place of offering” (Dn 3:38), that the expectation of a national deliverer came to life again, and moved the Jewish people, for some centuries, with ever new variations of the messianic hope. This we see in such figures as the “Suffering Servant” of Deutero-Isaiah (Is 49-53), the heavenly “Son of Man” of Daniel (Dn 7), the “Priestly Messiah” among the Essenes of Qumran, the “Coming Prophet” of the Samaritans, and in other ideal figures as well. We have only to turn to the rich inter-testamental literature, e.g., the Apocalypse of Baruch, or to late-Jewish books of history as I and 2 Maccabees to follow the process.

Even the New Testament can teach us something by means of such sympathetic figures as Simeon and Anna, who at the time “awaited the deliverance of Israel” (*cf.* Lk 2:25-38), or by means of the first reactions experienced by John the Baptist and by Jesus. John was asked whether he was the Messiah (Lk 3:16); with the same words Jesus was described when first approached by some of his future followers (Jn 1:41-45). The New Testament warns its readers against some false Messiahs, while the historian Josephus provides us with the names of some of the Zealot Messiahs, such as Judas of Galilee, Menahem and Simon bar Giora during the first Jewish revolt against the Romans (66-72 A.D.) and Simon bar Kosiba during the second and final revolt against Rome (131 A.D.).⁶ It is clear then that the expectation of a Messiah and his incarnation in historical figures were really something “traditional” in Judaism. This heritage was not lost, even with the destruction of the temple and the final dispersion of the Jews over the world; such catastrophes only made some adjustments necessary, so that the Messiah was no longer a military hero who would establish Jewish hegemony, but rather the spiritual leader who, one day, would reassemble the scattered communities and reconstitute a national home. Then God’s plan of a Golden Age would finally be realized. In Christianity another adaptation took place in which the Messiah had indeed come, and Christians knew themselves to be his People.⁷

b) The glory of ancient kings is not part of Melanesian culture, but here, too, we find a traditional

background in some of the myths which can explain the ever recurring appearance of new mass movements. One famous myth in New Guinea is that of the two brothers Kilibob and Manup.⁸ According to the old story the two brothers have different characters; one, as a rule, is wise and benevolent, while the other is foolish and malicious. The latter is responsible for many of the harmful things in the world; the former appears well-intentioned and is actively concerned with the needs of mankind. He makes, e.g., the first woman, teaches the proper way of building houses, the making of fences, the planting of gardens, etc. According to other versions, the brothers mediate in “bringing” or “giving” musical instruments (drums ...), tools (axes, sago beaters ...), weapons (spears, clubs, bows ...), or all kinds of useful plants such as coconuts, sago, taros, yams, sugar cane, etc. An important social element in these stories is that the different groups of native society receive different gifts; this, then, explains the inequality of status and the mutual relations based on them.

It is only one step further to the transfer of these intratribal differences of the past to later experienced differences between locals and Europeans. The first group would be related to the dark-skinned brother, the other group to the light-skinned one. The first would have received bows and arrows, while the others would have got guns; the first would have learned to build ordinary canoes, the others to construct oversea cargo vessels.⁹ The Madang area, with a tradition of cargo movements, starting as early as 1871, that is, with the arrival of the Russian scientist Mikloukh-Maclay, is the home of the “two brothers” myth. No wonder then that the Russian scholar was seen as one of the two brothers, the skillful Kilibob (1871/1900). When later the Germans came to the Rai coast, the military inferiority of the Madang people was again interpreted along the lines of the myth; it resulted from the foolishness of Manup and was also accepted as such (1900/14). Then for a time little concern is shown for the traditional story of the two brothers; at the same time, however, biblical tales catch the attention. Yet even now the behaviour of Ham, one of Noah’s sons (Gn 10:20-27), is interpreted according to the Manup model, thus explaining why Ham’s descendants were sent to New Guinea and lack the European cargo (1914/33). In a further upsurge, the movement was variously diversified, in some of its forms with a syncretistic identification of the crucified Jesus with Manup who was asked to return to New Guinea, and in other places an identification of God with Kilibob, while Manup became the incarnation of Satan (1933/45). In the following recrudescence of the cult, under Yali, Kilibob becomes the New Guinea God, with another identification of Jesus with Manup (1948/50).¹⁰

The example of the Yali Movement, in which a cult keeps coming back up to five times, is not unique; a longer examined case is the Koreri movement on Biak and Numfor (West Irian) which had, between the years 1855 and 1957, up to 45 (*sic*) ups and downs. A short description of the Yali case will, however, suffice for our purpose and illustrate how a movement fits into its own cultural framework.

2. The Historical Occasion

a) The previous considerations showed that in Judaism as well as in Melanesia messianic movements are deeply rooted in the respective spiritual heritage of the people; they may fade away, but will suddenly reappear with renewed force. For this they need an appropriate and sufficient historical occasion.

Jewish messianism was strengthened each time the external situation became unbearable. For instance, in the time of the young King Ahaz (c. 740 B.C.), when the smaller kingdoms of Syria and Israel (or Ephraim) had joined forces to shake off Assyrian domination and set out to convince the as yet unwilling little State of Juda, for Ahaz no human escape was possible. Consequently, conforming to its fame, Assyria would wake up one day and wipe all the subjects in revolt from the political scene. Against such a constellation the prophet Isaiah advised the King of Juda to resist the solicitations of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition and to trust only in Yahweh. God would assist his people, and the soon-to-be-born boy would be the visible sign of Yahweh’s unflinching care for his people. Something similar happened in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175-163 B.C.), when political independence was lost and a religious persecution oppressed the Jews. The impious foreigner, Antiochus, could draw upon “a set of renegades who led many people astray” (I Mc 1:11). He came to Jerusalem and stripped the temple of everything (I Mc 1:23), and later forbade everyone to

follow their own customs. Hence many Jews sacrificed to idols, profaned the Sabbath, and left their sons uncircumcised (I Mc 1:41-50). This led eventually to the Maccabean Revolt. However, the hope of a national theocratic State was not achieved, because the new leaders assumed both political and religious powers, which was very much against the convictions of the pious Jews. Nevertheless, the messianic movement remained alive and found ever new sympathizers to fight the political powers, which meanwhile had changed from Syria to Rome (63 B.C.), with the appointment of the half-Jew Herod, as King of Juda.

The situation of foreign oppression, national insufficiency, and religious expectation was “the appointed time” (cf. Gal 4, 4) for Jesus to come and start his mission among “those who labour and are overburdened” and bring them his messianic rest (cf. Mt 11:28). That social, political, economic, religious and other factors really weighed heavily upon Jesus’ contemporaries can easily be seen in his care for the social outcasts, in the uncertainty caused among the nationalist zealots, in his pleading on behalf of the poor (cf. Mt 19:21; Lk 14:13), and above all in his association with tax collectors and sinners and other rabble who “know nothing about the law” (Jn 7:49).

The spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire is another instance of the impact of messianic aspirations in times of unsettled social order. Before the advance of Rome’s rule, there were several independent peoples around the Mediterranean Sea; they lost their freedom and their territories became places of recruitment for Roman slaves. The latter organized some revolts which did not really succeed. The message of Christianity, however, was accepted by them, and from the lower classes it spread out to penetrate the whole of ancient society.¹¹ Again and again we see, then, an upsurge of messianism in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It seems that, whenever life’s burdens became too heavy, people were ready to throw themselves on the first available sign of hope, even when this sometimes led people astray by following “false messiahs”.

b) The birth of a nativistic movement occurs often in a time of political non-freedom, economic underdevelopment, and the breaking down of traditional beliefs, as happened among the Jews. Since the traditional world-view is characterized by an integrated experience, it is sufficient that one of its pillars should collapse to make the whole building crumble. The change, for instance, “from stone to steel” (to quote the title of R.F. Salisbury’s book) caused not only economic consequences among the Siane in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea, but by reducing man’s working time, allowed people to dedicate themselves to other fields of custom, having no direct connection with technology. As a consequence, new ways were opened to enhance one’s status, which, in a Melanesian context, is not without repercussions on traditional religious values.¹² The changes among the Siane took place even before European contact, and left no records of a religious revolution; still they show the force of obvious non-spiritual factors on the spiritual values of a people. That similar circumstances can cause a cargo movement, at least in its germinal state, was in fact witnessed among the Usurufa in the eastern Central Highlands of New Guinea, who were contacted not much later.¹³

It follows, from the examples given, that potentially greater forces are unleashed when, e.g., schools or missions actively strive to introduce new sets of values, and an open clash between the two systems becomes inevitable. However, a cargo cult does not always result. It is still a mystery why on some occasions objective factors and subjective expectations work together to start such a movement, and why in other cases this does not happen, but instead resignation and acceptance occur. There must somewhere be a point of no-return to be crossed. What is certain is that some circumstances, as described above, foster outbreaks of new religious movements; they are not, however, the all-explaining causes.

Familiarity with Judaeo-Christian history and the fact that most cargo cults are known to be post-Christian phenomena, has led to the belief that they derive from a misunderstanding of the Gospel message. This is probably not true, because the yeast of economic, social and political pressures go a long way to explain such movements, and these pressures initiated, outside Christianity and even in pre-Christian times, the outbreak of messianic movements. This wrong impression may well be due to the fact that Christian missions deliberately chose the groups to work with, that is, those who were in many respects deprived. Again, the missions were interested to report on their work, while information is lacking precisely for non-mission areas. Finally, the missions alone were not the agents of

change; they came as parts of a broader impact, which was not sufficiently realized by the missionaries themselves, and thus influenced the reports they left behind, on which the wrong impression is often based. The disturbing results that a change “from stone to steel” produced are, therefore, a welcome reminder to avoid any narrow or one-sided explanation in describing the origin of a cargo movement.

3. The Person of the Founder

a) Within a favourable historical setting, messianism usually comes to the surface through the efforts of a definite founder, who is known as such. Hence, the young movement offers a guarantee against vague rumours of salvation or doom which constantly sweep the world. Its impact is therefore greater and allows for immediate control, especially on the part of those who possess the traditional authority (*cf.* Mt 15:1; Jn 1:19).

Before his divine call, the founder usually lives a hidden life and is not particularly noticed. He often comes from an inconspicuous background, a “district of pagans” (*cf.* Mt 4:15) and a place about which people ask “whether anything good can come from it” (*cf.* Jn 1:46; 7:41). Sometimes, as in the case of Paul, there is some notoriety (because he persecuted the Church: Gal 1:13, *cf.* Acts 26:9-11), but this may not exactly be a preparation fulfilling the future role. Still, as regards his background, the Founder may be looked down upon just as the “son of a carpenter” (*cf.* Mt 13: 55), or — as in the case of Peter and John — as “people without any schooling” (*cf.* Acts 4:13). This did not improve when Jesus’ life had run its full course, because then his shameful death became “to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the pagans madness”, as Paul so aptly summarized it in his First Letter to the Corinthians (I Cor 1:23).

The beginning of a leader’s public appearance is often marked by a vision or some other type of divine commission, often after a time of isolation away from the people. We see this with John the Baptist, who “lived in the wilderness until the day he appeared openly to Israel” (Lk 1:80); and also with Jesus, who, after having grown up in Nazareth (Mt 2:23), is marked as the favoured Son of God at his Baptism (Mt 3:17) and then retires for forty days and forty nights into the desert (Mt 4:2), before starting to preach all over Galilee (Mt 4:23). Similar starting experiences occur also among some of his followers, before they begin their new life. A good example is the case of Paul who on the road to Damascus “saw” the Lord (I Cor 9:1 *cf.* Acts 26:13), an experience different in kind from all the other visions he would be granted later in life (II Cor 12:1-4; Gal 2:2). Paul too had his “retreat” of a few days in Damascus (Acts 9:9-20), but it is not sure whether the “fourteen years in Arabia” (Gal 1:17; 2:1) had the same function, or whether they were rather the first pastoral experience before becoming “the Apostle to the Gentiles” (Gal 2:8).

The passages about all these incidents are not admittedly pure historical reports, being coloured by Christian theology which was, after all, the way these early believers viewed their origins; still they lack nothing in historical probability. The same can be said of other elements concerning the person of the Founder, for instance, the multiplication of honorific titles given to him, such as Messiah, Lord, Saviour, Son of God, etc. which are so typical of a veneration which Jesus did not demand for himself, but which his followers spontaneously bestowed upon him.

b) It is a commonplace that leaders of a messianic movement are simple people who start their mission with an unusual experience. This is known to have happened to Evava (1920) and later to Filo (1942), who were both at the origin of a cargo movement in the Mekeo District, and who both claimed raptures and revelations.¹⁴ It is reported about Angganitha, in the Koreri Movement (1938), who was visited by a “man”, who cured her and said that he had chosen her to be “the messenger and the leader of the life that will not end”.¹⁵ It is true again of Tokeri, the Milne Bay Prophet (1893) who told the people that he had visited Hiyoyoa, that is the other world, from where he received his new message.¹⁶ More recent examples are found at the start of the Paliau Movement in Manus (1946). T. Schwartz, who wrote a monograph about it, distinguishes between “founding dreams and visions”, which tended to be innovative regarding the past culture, and later dreams, which were rather “confirmatory, mutually validating by repetition and independent testimony”;¹⁷ he so draws the attention to the different function of the same phenomena.¹⁸

After the initial experience, there are often signs that the enthusiastic people draw their leader into a role he initially was not willing to assume. The life of Yali (1945/55) is a case in point. Initially he was successful in starting a Rehabilitation Scheme to overcome the material and social chaos left behind by World War II. Yet his implicit acceptance of cargo ideology was not shared by the people who, already at an early stage, understood his aims exclusively in terms of the cargo myth. Frustrations from outside — as the failed mission to Port Moresby — but not less the growing enthusiasm of the people (who, e.g., sang to him a form of National Anthem: *singsing long King*), and the conscious efforts of others (as, e.g., of Gurek, his “theological secretary”) eventually made him an intermediary with the deities and the spirits of the dead.¹⁹ The evolution of such a veneration is not so well known in the case of other cult leaders, as, e.g., Mambu, who half a generation earlier was active in the same area, and who accepted such titles as *blakfelo king*, *blakfelo masta* and *king long ol kanaka*.²⁰

4. The Preaching of the Kingdom

a) Typical likewise of a messianic movement is that its conscious content — that is: what is preached about — is not, e. g., the founder’s personality or qualities, but a message given on a higher authority. Therefore John and Jesus announce the coming of “the Kingdom of God” (Mt 3:2 = 4:17). With these words they place themselves in the tradition of Old Testament prophetism, but above all they hand on their message as not coming from themselves (*cf.* also John 1:33; 7:16). Again when Jesus requires people “to believe the Gospel” or “the Good News” (Mk 1:15; Lk 4:18), he refers to the prophecies from of old (*cf.* Is 61:1-2), and interprets his whole messianic activity in the light of the traditional expectations. This is also the tenor of Jesus’ reply to the Baptist’s question (Mt 11:4-5) and of many other passages as well.

The new message is radical; accepting it demands a clean cut with the past; hence, the disciples have to leave behind “the boat and their father” (Mt 4:22) and to throw “everything” overboard (*cf.* Lk 5:11-28). When this is done they become members of a new in-group, who will know the mysteries, as distinct from “those who are outside” (Mt 13:11) who do not understand. This initial break with the past opens the road not to laxity, but on the contrary to a life of high moral demands, such as to “love one’s neighbour as oneself” (Mt 22:39), to “forgive not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Mt 18:22), or even to avoid every single evil thought (*cf.* Mt 18:8-9). The Sermon on the Mount is the best synthesis of this life in the Kingdom, culminating in the super-human ideal “to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).

From this point of view one can also understand: Jesus’ outspoken preaching against the ruling classes of Pharisees and Sadducees; especially telling is his indictment of the Pharisees and scribes (Mt 23:13-33), which was anticipated in the Sermon on the Mount, with its repeated sentence: “You have learnt how it was said to your ancestors. But I tell you ...” (Mt 6:1-18). There is clear evidence that these words reflect a later situation in which Jesus’ followers widened the gulf separating them from the traditional religiosity. For instance, the attitude towards the Temple. We know that Jesus regularly went there (*cf.* Mt 21:23; 26:55 = Mk 14:49) and that the custom was kept up initially by some of his followers (*cf.* Acts 2:46; 3:1); yet we soon see that others became less tolerant (Acts 6:13, *cf.* Mt. 26:59), thus bringing about the death of the first martyr, Stephen.

Besides the moral demands, particular attention should be paid to the eschatological note in Jesus’ teaching. In line with other Old Testament descriptions, he will tell that the Kingdom will break through amid a total destruction of the old order, with the darkening of the moon and the falling of stars (Mt 24:29), and such premonitory signs as earthquakes and wars, famines and persecutions, and an upsurge of all kinds of lawlessness (Mt 24:6-12). Even the calculation of such calamities has left its traces in the tradition (*cf.* Mt 10:23; 16:28; 24:34), although the text adds that “day and hour” remain unpredictable (Mt 24:36). These elements of Jesus’ teaching are not new but, as noted already, find their antecedents in Jewish tradition. Whether one prefers to call this subsequent use “syncretism” or a “new synthesis” is mainly a matter of terminology and of personal appreciation.

b) In cargo cults the “founding dreams and visions” imply that the prophet is backed up by a higher authority. According to the traditional frame of mind, this is either an ancestor or one of the

cultural heroes, who in days long past provided for all the needs of the people. Since the people now feel so frustrated, they have again learned to heed the words of this authority from beyond. The coming of the better time, occasionally referred to as the millennium (i.e., “the Kingdom of a thousand years”), is often linked with the rejection of “the old ways”, but it is not clear how far back this past time goes. There are cases in which the clean break refers to the *pasin kanaka* of the distant past; this happened in the Vailala Madness (1919/31) where old ceremonies, such as the piercing of children’s noses and ears were stopped, hair was cropped short, and even the wholesale destruction of masks and other cult paraphernalia was witnessed. At the same time “modern” customs were taken over such as setting up of tables, inclusive of table-cloth and flowers, the erecting of wireless poles with operator booths, etc.²¹ The same happened in the Namatanai and Paliu Movements where people not only started eating at tables, but quickly rejected traditional regulations about exogamy and bride-price, etc.²² Other examples of the same tendency are found in the Ava-Avu (Fiji 1937) and the Letub Movements (Madang 1939).

The rejection of the past can also refer to the recent past, that is to the European customs already adopted, which then means a complete nativistic revival of the *pasin bilong bipo*. Examples of this are found in the Tokeriu Movement of Milne Bay (1893),²³ where match-boxes and pocket-knives were discarded and armllets of leaves were again worn. Probably the most famous case occurred in the New Hebrides between 1945 and 1951, with the Cult of the Malamala (naked) folk in Espiritu Santo. Some of the prescriptions were to take off loincloths, leaf coverings and head necklaces, to destroy all property taken from the White man, to burn down all the present houses, etc.²⁴ That some of the measures inspired by this kind of approach had also economic consequences,²⁵ was seen, e.g., in the Bougainville Movement of 1935, until eventually a real famine sobered the enthusiasts.

Rejection of the past is not a once-for-all action, but rather the beginning of a new morality. As a rule, this new kind of behaviour is aimed at strengthening the community life and eliminating those customs and institutions which formerly occasioned friction and conflict. Henceforth the same standards will apply to men and women, and groups which were previously at variance will now start working together.²⁶ Sometimes it is said that the new morality is imposed “to please God”. If one admits that Melanesian morals are mainly socially oriented and not God-directed,²⁷ we would then meet here a non-traditional element, probably to be ascribed to Christian mission influence.

Connected with the two expressions of a clean cut with the past, is the intolerance against those who do not join the movement, that is not only against the sceptic Indigeneous people, but mainly against the ruling class, and in this instance, the missions and the civil administration; hence the pro-nationalist and anti-White manifestations of several messianic movements. Sometimes such aggressive attitudes form part of an imminent world conflagration in which the sky would fall upon the earth (as in the Filo Movement),²⁸ the land would be destroyed by earthquakes and floods (as in the Markham Valley Movement of 1932),²⁹ or the mountains would be flattened and form one great fertile plain – as in the Baining unrest in New Britain (1929) and the John Frum Movement in the New Hebrides about 1940.³⁰ The resurrection of the dead and their joining with the mortals on earth might also be part of the last day.³¹ Calculations about the time when all this will happen are also frequent, although in some cases a playback of biblical elements might be suspected. There are, however, instances where traditional myths show their influence once again. Whatever the origin of the single details, they all join together to make the cargo talk a convincing and otherworldly new teaching.

5. The role of miracles

a) The impact of the new message upon the people is greatly enhanced by Jesus’ impressive deeds for the benefit of others. This refers to his healings of sicknesses and diseases, and to his victories over the evil spirits (that is exorcisms, lit.: summonses by “adjuration”). In addition there are the wondrous deeds involving the Founder himself, such as his walking on the water (Mt 14:25) or his transfiguration on the mountain (Mt 17:2). Even if these actions are not seen as fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, as is usually done by the Gospel writers, they are still characteristic phenomena of a new religious movement. Miracles not only appear in the Master’s life, but he also gives his Disciples the power to do the same, and even greater, works than He did (Mt 10:1; Jn

14:12; also Lk 9:10). Detailed cases are reported in the *Acts of the Apostles*, where both Peter and Paul heal the sick (Acts 9:33-35 and 14:8-11) and bring the dead back to life (Acts 9:36-43 and 20: 7-12). There are even, in the early Church, extraordinary manifestations which are not matched in the life of Jesus, such as “glossolalia” or speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; I Cor 14) and other spiritual gifts as well.

One cannot doubt that the profusion of miracles and signs, by underlining the words spoken, explains on the one hand why “masses of people” followed the Jesus movement and for a while stopped his enemies from taking action, because “they were afraid of the crowds” (Mt 21:46). In the end, however, the decisive step could not be avoided any longer, and so the rulers preferred to let one man die for the people, to save the whole nation from being destroyed (cf. Jn 11:50). This was done on religious grounds.

There is, on the other hand, evidence that the simple people were not always clear about the motives and aims of the new movement. One example is the inclusion of Simon the Zealot (that is: the patriot) among the Twelve Apostles (Lk 6:15), although we do not know of any of his exploits. Deductions can be made, however, from the behaviour of Peter (Mk 8:32) and that of the sons of Zebedee (Mk 10:37), and especially from the fatal case of Judas Iscariot (Jn 12:4-6). The religious leaders used ambiguities of this kind to bring Jesus at last before Pilate (as before another District Officer) and there accused him of causing political disturbances and of opposing the payment of the imperial tax (Lk 23:2-5). By such moves they succeeded in turning the tide among the people, who at one stage had shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Mt 21:9), and shortly afterwards wanted him to be put to the cross (Mt 27:22-23).

Misunderstandings, though of another type, were not cleared away after Jesus’ death. Then — and this too is not unique — the early Disciples expected the return of their Master, and fell into such a feverish mood that some of them neglected their daily duties. It is not clear whether the poverty of the Jerusalem Church had anything to do with this attitude, but no doubts are left regarding the attitude of the Thessalonians, whom Paul had to warn against “brothers who refuse to work” and were “not earning the food that they eat” (II Thes 3:6-12). Such experiences led Paul to reassess certain elements in his understanding of Christianity, and fostered a shift from what is called “futuristic” to “realized” eschatology. Hence the changed attitude from I Thessalonians 4:16-18, on meeting the Lord in the clouds, to such a detached attitude which appears in Philippians 1:21-24, where the Apostle admits not to know what is better for him, to live or to die. A similar development is also found in the Fourth Gospel, which is notorious for playing down the apocalyptic statements of the synoptic tradition, so that also for this New Testament author all promised goods are already present in the Word made flesh.

b) Reports about miracles are not absent from messianic movements outside the Bible. As a matter of fact we often find healings, as in the Papuan Movements led by Maine (1912/19) and Evara (1919/31),³² the West Irian Movement under Pamai (1928),³³ and several other instances as well. Extreme examples in the same line may be seen in the cases of coma, death and resurrection which took place, e.g., during the Paliu Movement.³⁴ Even a miraculous feeding is reported in connection with the Mambu Movement. In this latter case the prophet distributed rice and fish allocated by the ancestors; the rice was said to have been brought by plane, the fish to have been caught in the river. This detail was of special importance since saltwater fish had been given, so that the people concluded that the very riches of the sea were available in the fresh water of the creeks.³⁵

Miraculous events also happen to the cult members themselves. In this category one can include the revelatory visions and dreams referred to earlier; in addition there are reports of shaking, as during the Vailala Madness in Mekeo and the Noise Movement on Manus³⁶ and of “speaking in tongues”, as again in the Mekeo disturbances and in other cults as well.³⁷ Some exceptional incidents occurred in the Koreri Movement where people believed that the body of Angganitha was “transfigured” at night with a marvellous light,³⁸ while her house too was miraculously lit, and some people saw great lights in the tops of trees.³⁹ This does not complete the list of extraordinary events by far.³⁹ That such a profusion of extraordinary happenings was a great stimulus in heightening the excitement and in obscuring the aims of the movement must be beyond any doubt. The followers

became assured that the new era was about to break through — and led them, e.g., to destroy goods and gardens and pigs.⁴⁰ For the authorities the excitement predicted trouble; hence it resorted to punishments for “spreading false reports”,⁴¹ and in more extreme situations, to torture and death.⁴²

As time passed, the miracles remained well remembered. Williams, who first described the Mekeo disturbances and who, after a decade or so went back to see the lasting results, testifies that at that time people regarded the past as “a brief age of miracles”, in which the earlier prophecies had come true and wondrous incidents had taken place.⁴³ In many cases, hesitations had evaporated and people “remembered” having seen the mast and the lights of the cargo vessel, or having heard the noise of the engines and the rattle of the anchor-chain. Even though a certain disillusionment had set in since no cargo was actually landed — the belief in the cargo myth had remained, maybe not as something still to come, but as something real in the past. No doubt the memories of these happenings were to influence some future events, some of which may still not have occurred.

6. Active Proselytism

a) The spread of a movement is fostered not only by the miraculous deeds of the Founder and of his disciples, but also by their active collaboration in winning others to their new way of life. Among the contemporaries of Jesus there is some evidence of Pharisees engaging in missionary work and “travelling over sea and land to make a single convert” (Mt 23:15); maybe the Pharisee Saul, who obtained letters from the High Priest authorizing him to arrest “any belonging to the Way” (Acts 9:2), was one of them. We do not refer here to the initial steps of some disciples of John, who brought others to Jesus (*cf.* Jn 1:40-45); they are not typical enough to stand the test, while the later acts of other disciples are not singled out at all. One gets the historical impression, especially from the Gospel of Mark, that at the beginning the whole apostolic group, including Jesus, was acting together.

For a later period the Book of the Acts of the Apostles provides more specific evidence, e.g., in the deeds of Peter and John (Acts 1-5; etc.), of Stephen and Philip (Acts 6-8), and especially in the activity of the Apostle Paul (Acts 13-28). Through the actions and options of these people — for instance in matters of temple worship, dietary laws and — circumcision — the movement won in concreteness and identity and was able to survive. This is not to say that the Founder did not contemplate the continuation of his work after his death. It rather means that the collaboration of different personalities brought shifts of emphasis which, in the end, benefitted the whole movement. So we find, besides the prophetic type, also the organizational talent, and next to the inventive brain also the one who knows how to sell the idea. Biblical scholars are here reminded of the different schools of opinions regarding Jesus and Paul as the Founders of Christianity.

b) Although there are cargo movements which apparently start anonymously, or more exactly, whose originators are not known from the existing reports, we should normally — as said earlier — reckon with a prophetic figure or Founder. This person is often not alone, but has specific assistants. Against a traditional background such a development is most unusual, since each ethnic group has its own set of norms and knows that others have theirs as well. Nobody, then, would think of proselytizing among his neighbours, so that, if this nevertheless occurs, one can easily suspect a non-indigenous influence.

Active proselytizing occurred in spreading the Vailala Madness. Its Founding Father was Evara, an old, brisk, intelligent man, and “obviously an outstanding personality”. He was assisted by Kori, “the Paul of Papua”, and helped by, among others, one Harea of Haruape, who made some inspection tours in the neighbouring villages.⁴⁴ In the Filo Movement, the Foundress was equally helped by a man or a girl, chosen from each village, to lead their people; the following quickly reached almost 2,000.⁴⁵ For Yali, we can establish a whole political organization, although at the beginning there was also some kind of trading in the “copyright” of the Kilibob-Manup myth, which was not the property of the inland villages beyond Madang.⁴⁶ Finally, in the Tanna Movement in the New Hebrides, there was a number of messengers, called “ropes of John Frum”, after the mysterious person who started the movement. It was largely due to their efforts, but also through the continued action of those who had been arrested and sent into exile, that the cargo ideas spread from Tanna to

the neighbouring islands.⁴⁷ It is obvious that the systematic work of such people tends to stabilize an otherwise loose movement, although there are also “cults” which started well organized, such as the Marching Rule on Malaita (1944) or the Bougainville Movement of the years 1935/39.

We can conclude our comparison as we began, stressing once again the vitality of religious movements which do not cease to have ever new leases of life. The fact that the promises are not fulfilled within a reasonable span of time, that the awaited cargo or end of the world do not come, has no great effect upon this vitality. This is a stern rebuke for those biblical scholars who believe that in the New Testament the delay of *parousia* (that is: Christ's second coming) was the most upsetting factor of early Christianity. These scholars underestimate the strength of a faith that on one occasion proved to be a rock to rely upon, and on which one can fall back, generation after generation.

Notes

¹ Cf. E. Andersson, *Messianic Popular Movements in the Lower Congo*, Uppsala 1948; G. Balandier, *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique Noire*, Paris 1955; B.G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 2nd ed., London 1961.

² Cf. R. Bastide, *Le messianisme chez les noirs du Brésil*, in: *Le monde non-Chrétien 1950*. L. Weingartner, Umbanda. Synkretistische Kulte in Brasilien, Erlangen 1969.

³ Between the early bibliography of I. Leeson (*Bibliography of Cargo Cults and other nativistic movements in the South Pacific*, Sydney 1952) and the more recent dictionary of H. Desroche (*Dieux d'hommes. Dictionnaire des Messianismes et Millénarismes de l'Ere Chrétienne*, Paris 1969), general surveys were published by P. Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, London 1957 (also 2nd augmented edition; New York 1968) and by G. Guariglia, *Prophetismus und Heilserwartungs-Bewegungen als volkerkundliches und religionsgeschichtliches Problem*, Horn-Wien 1959, whereas the abbreviated thesis of E. Steinbauer, *Melanesische Cargo-Kulte*, Munich 1971, will shortly be available in an English translation (Sydney, 1979). The more important monographs were written on the Koreri Movement (see note 15), and on such prophets as Paliu (see note 17), Mambu (see note 8) and Yali (see note 10).

⁴ J. Guiart/P. Worsley, *La répartition des mouvements millénaristes en Mélanésie*, in: *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 3, 1958, 38-46, esp. 40-43, have outlined the geography of the Melanesian Cargo Cults, and note in only 40 (of the 73 movements charted) the presence of the cargo myth proper. E. Steinbauer (note 3) gives the same absolute figure, but since he examines 186 different movements, he arrives at only 21 per cent of the cases having a cargo mythology. However, material prosperity and acculturation figure in resp. 90 and 91 per cent of the cases, so that the term “cargo cult” or “cargo movement” is still the best acceptable name (see the folding map in the book). The authors quoted, and also G. Guariglia (note 3) have proposed various typologies of Cargo Cults, whereas H.W. Turner, *Old and New Religions in Melanesia*, in: *Point* 1978/2, 5-27, made an application to Melanesia of the types identified earlier in Africa (cf. H.W. Turner, *A Typology for African Religious Movements*, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa* 1, 1967, 1-34). One should keep in mind, however, that the models given are not static, and that the motives of the various movements might change in the course of time, as observed by G. Guariglia (note 3), 265-274, and others.

⁵ Bro. Bartholomaeus (= J. Kubitzka SVD), *Bunte Missionspost: Wewak*, in: *Steyler Missionsbote* 60, 1932/33, 106-107.

⁶ Cf. W.D. Wallis, *Messiahs. Their Role in Civilization*, Washington 1943, 23-25. The author's earlier work: *Messiahs Christian and Pagan*, Boston 1918, was not available for consultation.

⁷ For the European revival of the old expectations, between the close of the XIth and the first half of the XVIIth centuries, see N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, London 1957.

⁸ An analysis of the many versions of this myth is made by R. Schubert, *Methodologische Untersuchungen an ozeanischem Mythenmaterial*, Wiesbaden 1970, 8-53. Four versions of the myth used in the Mambu Movement are printed in K.O.L. BurrIDGE, *Mambu. A Melanesian Millennium*, London 1965, 155-165, whereas two more recent versions (1973/76) are found in T. Ahrens/W.J. Hollerweger, *Volkschristentum und Volksreligion im Pazifik*, Frankfurt (1977), 75-80.

⁹ Compare R. Schubert (note 8), 9-10 and 53 (elements 1/h and 47/a) on the brothers' appearances, and pp. 37 and 48 (elements 32/1 and 44/f) on the different goods for locals and expatriates.

¹⁰ Cf. P. Lawrence, *Road bilong Cargo. A Study of the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District, New Guinea*, Manchester 1964, who on pp. 62 and 240 summarizes the five waves of the Yali Movement, of which later ramifications are treated by T. Ahrens (note 8).

¹¹ Attention has been drawn to this fact by T. Bodrogi, *Colonization and Religious Movements in Melanesia*, in: *Acta Ethnographica* (Budapest) 2, 1951, 259-292, esp. 280.

¹² Cf. K. Birket-Smith, *Feasts of Merit in East Asia and Oceania*, in: *Folk* (Copenhagen) 7, 1965, 23-37, esp. 28-30.

¹³ Cf. R.M. Berndt, *A Cargo Movement in the Eastern Central Highlands of New Guinea*, in: *Oceania* 23, 1952/53, 40-65, 137-158, 202-234; and further: *Reaction to Contact in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea*, *ibidem* 24, 1953/54, 190-228, 255-274; 25, 1954/55, 231-232.

¹⁴ See respectively P. Worsley (note 3), 80-81.88, and C.S. Belshaw, *Recent History of Mekeo Society: Cargo Cult*, in: *Oceania* 22, 1951/52, 5-8; quotation p. 5.

¹⁵ F.C. Kamma, *Koreri. Messianic Movements in the Biak-Numfor Culture Area*, The Hague 1972, 158.

¹⁶ Cf. P. Worsley (note 3), 52. See also p. 109, on the Namatanai prophet of 1938, or G. Guariglia (note 3), 116, on the prophet Ava-Avu, who was active about the same time in Central Espiritu Santo.

¹⁷ T. Schwartz, *The Paliau Movement in the Admiralty Islands 1946-1954*, New York 1962, 227, 393.

¹⁸ The Gospels conserve several passages about the virgin birth and the pre-existence of Jesus, which do not belong to the type of historical, observable facts like seizures, dream reports, etc., but in a way fulfill the same function of relating the messianic prophet to the divine and supernatural world. These passages have some analogy with the origin story of the King of Kep, who was believed "spontaneously to have shot up out of the ground like a mushroom" (cf. *supra* p. 3). One could also refer to the perilous escape of Yali, from Hollandia to Aitape, which after some years, became the starting-point of a belief that Yali was not a mere human being but a spirit of the dead. He had been killed at Hollandia and from there had gone in spirit form to Australia, where he had seen not only the King but also God Himself in Heaven. Cf. P. Lawrence (note 10), 125 and 160-161.

¹⁹ For the incidents referred to, see P. Lawrence, *op. cit.*, 138-139, 152, 195, 200-201, 219 note.

²⁰ G. Hoeltker, *Die Mambu-Bewegung in Neuguinea. Ein Beitrag zum Prophetentum in Melanesien*, in: *Annali Lateranensi* 5, 1941, 181-219; quotation p. 190 (also in his: *Menschen und Kulturen*, St. Augustin 1975, 369).

²¹ Cf. the detailed description by the Government anthropologist F.E. Williams, *The Vailala Madness and the Destruction of Native Ceremonies in the Gulf Division*, in: *Territory of Papua, Anthropology. Report No. 4*, Port Moresby 1923, 1-78, *passim*.

²² For these details, see T. Schwartz (note 17), 231, 235, 237, 334.

²³ Cf. P. Worsley (note 3), 52.

²⁴ J.G. Miller, *Naked Cult in Central West Santo*, in: *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 57, 1948, 330-341; quotation p. 331.

²⁵ P. Worsley (note 3), 119.

²⁶ As noted by P. Christiansen, *The Melanesian Cargo Cult, Millenarianism as a Factor in Cultural Change*, Copenhagen 1969, 17, one of the spheres which often undergoes a complete overhaul is sexual morality where the conduct imposed can vary from rigorous puritanism to uninhibited promiscuity. In the latter case especially one should judge the facts in their proper context, e.g., of the ancient customs which are revived; among these promiscuity was sometimes acceptable on well-defined occasions.

²⁷ L. Mair, *Independent Religious Movements in Three Continents*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1, 1959, 113-136, states on p. 128 that New Guineans emphasize, in their relation to their gods, coercion rather than placation, whereas P. Lawrence/M.J. Meggitt in their introduction to: *Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia*, Melbourne 1965, 14, note a difference between the attitude of bargaining and bribery of the Highlands peoples, as compared with the rule of reciprocity adhered to by the Seaboard peoples.

²⁸ C.S. Belshaw (note 14), 5.

²⁹ P. Worsley (note 3), 101.

³⁰ P. Worsley, *op. cit.*, 99 and 154.

³¹ Cf. T. Schwartz (note 17), 402 in relation to the Paliau Movement. Compare also P. Worsley, *op. cit.*, 148-149 in relation to the Runovora affair on Espiritu Santo.

³² See A.C. Haddon in: E.W.P. Chinnery/A.C. Haddon, *Five Religious Cults in British New Guinea*, in: *The Hibbert Journal* 15, 1916/17, 448-463; quotation p. 457, and P. Worsley, *op. cit.*, 78.

³³ G. Eckert, *Prophetentum und Kulturwandel in Melanesien*, in: *Baessler-Archiv* (Berlin), 23, 1940, 26-41; quotation p. 27.

³⁴ T. Schwartz (note 17), 295-298 and 308, with Plate 18. Years after the Vailala Madness, it was told that earlier one prophet of the movement had died and lain for three days, guarded by other leaders. During this time rats actually gnawed his ears, cf. P. Worsley (note 3), 91.

³⁵ G. Hoeltker (note 20), 190; also in: *Menschen und Kulturen*, 369. Whether it is correct to see this feat as an attempt of the prophet to imitate “the feeding of the five thousand” (*cf.* Mt 14:21), as thought by K.O.L. Burrige (note 8), 205, is not clear, but cannot be discarded either.

³⁶ *Cf.* P. Worsley (note 3), 76 and 188.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 80, 88, 91, 111; for other instances compare pp. 30,70, 137.

³⁸ *Cf.* F.C. Kamma (note 15), 159.

³⁹ There are, e.g., many examples of prophecies referred to by P. Worsley (note 3; see the index under: prophecies). One example is the prediction of the Madang air raid in early 1942, coming from an unknown prophet, which greatly impressed Yali. *Cf.* P. Lawrence (note 10), 122.

⁴⁰ See the examples in P. Worsley, *op.cit.* (Index under: destruction of goods). It might be added, though, that pig-killing followed by feasts has sacrificial overtones, and should not be seen as the opposite of “a hard way to salvation”, as suggested by L. Mair (note 27), 131.

⁴¹ *Cf.* P. Lawrence (note 10), 97.

⁴² This course of action was taken by the Japanese during the war, *cf.* F.C. Kamma (note 15), 179 and P. Worsley (note 3), 143. The executions of 1923 on Espiritu Santo, reported by P. Worsley, *op. cit.* 149, were rather for murder, although this action did occur because of cultic excitement.

⁴³ F.E. Williams. *The Vailala Madness in Retrospect*, in: E.E. Evans-Pritchard, ed., *Essays presented to C.G. Seligman*, London 1934, 369-379; quotation p. 373 (Reprinted in: F.E. Williams/ E. Schwimmer, ed., *The “Vailala Madness” and Other Essays*, London 1976).

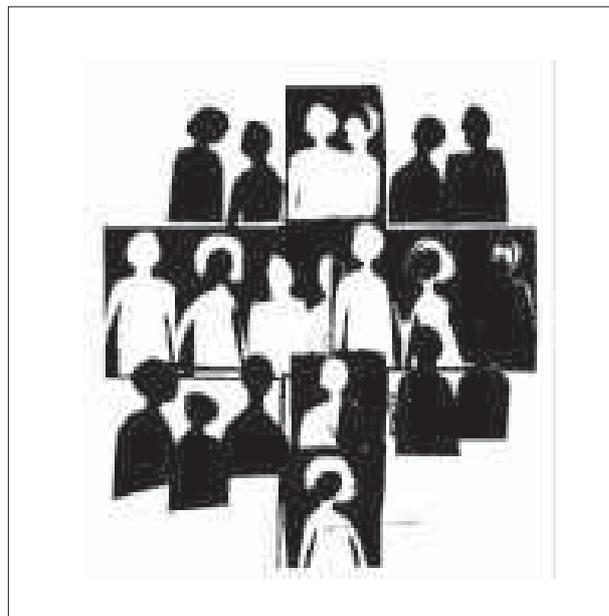
⁴⁴ F.E. Williams (note 21), 28, 30, etc.

⁴⁵ C. Belshaw (note 14), 6-7.

⁴⁶ P. Lawrence (note 10), 96. For a diagram of the later organization, see *ibidem* p. 205.

⁴⁷ J. Guiart, *John Frum Movement in Tanna*, in: *Oceania* 22, 1951/52, 165-177; quotations pp. 166 and 170.

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SEDOS Coming Events

- Annual General Assembly 2006 -

**Tuesday, 5 December, 2006
14:30 hrs**

Brothers of the Christian Schools,
Via Aurelia, 476 - Rome

- For SEDOS Members only -

- Open Conference 2006 -

**Tuesday, 5 December, 2006
16:00 hrs**

Brothers of the Christian Schools,
Via Aurelia, 476 - Rome

- More details will follow -

Seminar 2007

"International Formation for 'Missio ad Gentes'"

Please, take note of the dates:

24 - 28 April

Basic structure proposed for the themes to be treated:

- 1. Multicultural Formation***
- 2. 'Ad Gentes' Today***
- 3. Experiences of Multicultural Spirituality***

- Ariccia (Rm) - "Casa Divin Maestro"

- More details to follow -