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RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION IN AN URBAN SOCIETY

Whatever happened to the churches? To whom are they speaking these days?

Christianity and other major religious traditions developed their symbolic language and their patterns of communication in a pre-industrial world and in the largely oral culture of rural villages. Christianity did adapt rather remarkably to the possibilities of the print media. But now the urban pattern of life, the technical-scientific mode of thought and the electronic media are influencing radically the pattern of human life.

Sociologists of religion conclude that religious aspirations are as strong as ever, but that people increasingly do not find the expression of their religion in the "main-line" churches. Can Christianity and other religious traditions contribute to a greater understanding of the meaning of human life and human destiny in urban society? The answer to that may depend very much on how the churches adapt their language and their pattern of communications in an urban world.

This CSCC NEWSLETTER surveys current research on religious communication and especially recent studies of religious symbolism, the most characteristic thought-language mode of religious communication. In the REVIEW ARTICLE, we examine recent studies of religious communication and of symbolism from the point of view of four different disciplines: sociology of religion, David Martin, specialist in the process of secularisation; communication -- the visionary and innovative thought of Pierre Babin and Marshall McLuhan; theology, a pioneering book on the theology of symbolism by Charles Bernard; and anthro-ology, Victor Turner, an authority on religious symbolism in his field today.

One of the most important areas of research for religious communication is that of religious symbolism. In the REPORT ON CURRENT RESEARCH we give reports on some of the projects in progress and on major centres where research of this type is being done.

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION . . . WHERE TO BEGIN THE RESEARCH

Considering the burgeoning research efforts in nearly every area of communication -- instructional, intercultural, organisational -- it is remarkable that one finds little or no research in religious communication. It seems religious leaders in the established churches are not asking questions about communication. One wonders if there is a relationship between this lack of questioning regarding communication and the clearly documented decline of the churches as significant institutions in modern society.

When religious leaders or administrators of religious communication programmes do pose questions for research, this generally follows the lines of "market research". Understandably, they want to know who is listening to their broadcasting stations or programmes or what might be the effects of a particular programme. They tend to assume as given the medium they are using -- radio, television, audiovisuals -- or the language form -- frequently a message essentially derived from abstract, systematic theology. They also tend to assume as given a traditional audience and the traditional time-place structure of the communication event.

Although "effects evaluation" has its place, it may not be the most effective use of resources because it will only confirm as good or bad what is already being done. There may be more basic questions which will suggest a totally new approach.

Moments of Significant Communication

Most religious communicators assume as the basic model of communication the sermon in church, and they want to use the microphone or TV camera to enlarge upon this. But Pierre Babin suggests that whatever may be the communicative events leading to religious experience and growth, today they rarely follow the model of the sermon or the religious education class. We really

know little about the context of significant religious communication, but it is suggested that it is more likely to occur in the contexts of informal meetings or at times of crisis in life.

Victor Turner, in analysing the institution of religious pilgrimage with its rich use of the symbolic mode, has brought out the communicative power of one area of religious life that many would not consider as "communication". Are there other such important but unnoticed moments of communication?

The Socio-Cultural Background

Much religious communication appears to be premised on an audience in rural villages of an advanced agrarian society. Indeed, a great deal of religious broadcasting is aimed precisely at this audience or one which still has cultural roots in such a society. In an excellent essay, in Theological Studies, December 1978, "The Situation of Modern Faith", John Coleman summarises findings of sociologists of religion showing that such a social context is quickly and irrevocably disappearing. Religious aspirations may be as strong or stronger than ever but there is more pluralism in religious expression. Explicitly religious organisations are losing their monopoly over the religious impulse and have less influence on public institutions. The demand is for more participatory, communitarian religious expression. But except for studies such as Babin's (cf. Review Article) no one has begun to analyse seriously the implications of the phenomenon of the urban, pluralistic society for religious communication.

The mass media themselves are an important influence on this sociocultural development. The churches, knowing that the media are a factor in the values of their constituencies have led the way in broadcast reform. But, lacking any broad criteria of humanistic social and personal development, the reform movements have got

tied up in arguments over sex, violence and dirty words. Are these the important issues? Is it time for an assessment of these reform programmes lest they discredit themselves and the message of the churches they represent?

The Choice and the Use of the Media

In an interesting article in the April 7 issue of America magazine, "Nine and a Half Theses on Religious Broadcasting, Thomas Clancy reports that religious broadcasting is booming. There are, for example, "more than 30 television stations and 600 radio stations exclusively devoted to religious broadcasting (in the U.S.), almost all of them owned by evangelical Protestants." There are an estimated 250 radio stations operated by the Catholic Church in Latin America, many of them the most listened-to medium in their area.

Although the raw statistics are impressive, what is actually achieved in this religious broadcasting may not always be so impressive. Detailed case studies of successful radio stations in Latin America have indicated that much more is required than just speaking into the microphone or appearing before the TV camera. It requires a carefully planned and often complex relationship with local religious and popular based organisations, a multi-media combination of print and broadcasting, and a continuing perceptive study of socio-cultural events. Many of these broadcasting stations with an audience outside of the pious few have won the hearts of the people only by entering into current public discussion.

Organisations such as the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) are questioning seriously the content and orientation of some religious broadcasting (cf. CSCC NEWSLETTER, Spring, 1979). There is also widespread questioning by many experienced religious communicators, such as Babin, regarding the uncritical use of the mass media for religious communication. In this view, religious communication on the public networks must be so bland as to be misleading or must actually support the existing

questionable economic and sociopolitical values controlling the mass media.

The Language of Religious Symbolism

The basic mode of expression of religious language is symbol and parable. Not only the affective emotional impact of this language but also the imagery and the fundamental logic follow that of symbolic meaning. Yet most religious communication tends to use indiscriminately and unconsciously a theological mode of expression which has developed to meet the need of abstract metaphysical argument or apologetic, defence argument. The last thing the theologians have thought about is developing a language which speaks to the imaginative and affective roots of the human personality and enables a person to experience the transcendent. Much more systematic study is needed of the use of religious language for audiovisual communication or even for the face-to-face sermon.

A major effort is being made in the sociology of religion to move beyond the stage of "parish sociology", that is, simply, the counting of attendance, towards study of the symbolic content of the religious message and the religious organisation. David Martin's Breaking of the Image, reviewed in this issue, is a step in that direction. As we noted in the last issue of the CSCC NEWSLETTER, after years of research evaluating the effects of instructional media, it is seen that research on the content and form of the message may be much more useful.

Religious communication at its best uses a language of love and poetry. The market research model, with its mystique of high-pressure advertising and selling, is probably not appropriate and is likely to distort research in religious communication.

Robert A. White, Editor.

REVIEW ARTICLE

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY DIMENSIONS OF RESEARCH IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

David Martin, The Breaking of the Image: A Sociology of Christian Theory and Practice (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, forthcoming).

Pierre Babin & Marshall McLuhan, Autre homme, autre chrétien à l'âge électronique. (Lyon: Editions du Chalet, 1977).

Charles A. Bernard, Théologie symbolique. (Paris: Téqui, 1978).

Victor Turner and Edith Turner, Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

DAVID MARTIN: UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGIOUS PARADOX

In his forthcoming book, The Breaking of the Image: a Sociology of Christian Theory and Practice, David Martin explores how a particular religious tradition develops a fundamental structure of ideas and how these ideas generate the imagery, symbolism and language of the tradition.

Martin, a professor at the London School of Economics, is best known for his trilogy on secularisation: The Religious and the Secular, A General Theory of Secularization, and The Dilemma of Contemporary Religion. The present book comes as a personal postscript to these studies and, one suspects, from a rather personal involvement in the discussions of revamping in liturgy, language of the Book of Common Prayer, and other current changes. Like a number of social scientists who have achieved a profound integration of their religious faith and scientific methodology, the author is rather put off at some of the professional reformers among the clergy. In her book, Natural Symbols, Mary Douglas defends the Bog Irish who had their Catholic identity rituals, such as not eating meat on Friday, taken away from them by the religious modernisers. In this book Martin is clearly annoyed by the "efficient", "supermarket" clerical mentality of "getting the cars in, getting the cars out," covered over with a veneer of radical chic and groupiness. He would expect the priest to be a bearer of the word who has a sense of the sacred interiority and latent transcendence of the symbols and language with which he is dealing.

Debates over liturgy and language suggest deeper questions. Why is it that in Christianity there are periods of iconoclasm in which the old images, rituals and popular devotions must be thrown out and the new brought in only to be thrown out again by another generation? More fundamental, what is the basic grammar of symbolism which needs to be known in order to speak the Christian language with sense? How do the prophets, poets, artists, architects, musicians, and dramatic activists put together the symbols and images to convey the central message of Christianity? To these questions, Martin brings the conceptual tools of the sociology of religion.

The Structure Beneath the Imagery

In the author's view, each of the great religious traditions has made a fundamental option in its vision of the world and the transcendent. Once the option is made, the inherent logic of this world view begins to work itself out within the range of possibilities, always guided by the structure of the basic categories. Choosing the Judaic stem, Martin follows its basic logic through the dialectic of three great movements flowing from this initial vision: Christianity, Islam, and ... yes ... Marxism. In effect, he talks mainly about the Christian tradition.

The potential for imagery in the Judaic stem, according to Martin, centres on "positive transcendence" and "the idea of unity." The transcendent God is one. From transcendence, the beyond toward which men search, flows

the idea of movement. And from impelling movement comes the symbolism of road, pilgrimage, marching, the disciplined army in route, exodus, the promised land and the seeking of light. But movement implies its opposite: conservation, wandering alienation, sense of arrival and establishment.

The idea of unity has an equally compelling imagery: bringing persons together, the unity of God, the unity of mankind and the central ideas of universality, equality of mankind and solidarity against evil. Unity also implies its opposite: the diversity and the particular which must ultimately be brought into the universal, unified holy space.

Dialectics of Transcendent and Secular

The inherent tensions of movement and conservation, universal unity and the diversity of the particular become apparent when the logic of transcendence and unity meet historically with the social realities of natural religion. The demands of hierarchy and authority clash with the ideal of universal equality. The blood ties of family and homeland are contrary to the spiritual brotherhood. The cherished cultural traditions of past generations must go before the unity of mankind. This confrontation generates a symbolism of limits and partition which makes the transcendent present, but defends the holy: the sacred city, the walled garden, the consecrated virgin, the railing before the sacramental presence.

But the double structure of symbolism which is erected to preserve and protect the transcendent continually returns to haunt it. In the effort to make the holy universal, the virgin is finally transformed into the holy mother of the family and the patron of the earthly city. The holy brotherhood develops hierarchy. The sacred city is identified with eternal empire. Spiritual pilgrimage finds expression in secular development. Political power becomes sanctified and, eventually, Babylon. Then, the image must be destroyed and the partition rebuilt -- only to be destroyed and rebuilt at some later period of history.

The Imagery of Paradox

The frustration of this continual dialectic causes a search for a resolution and generates a new line of imagery, that of incarnation. The incarnation obeys both principles, the "protection raised around grace and the carrying of the universal in the tiniest possible unit." The language of Christianity is essentially the language of paradox. The symbolism of the sacrificial son of Abraham and of the suffering servant, which surfaces like the peak of an unconscious archetype early in the imagery of the Jewish tradition, lies as a dormant seed ready to blossom into the vision of Jesus as the suffering servant uniting heaven and earth. A relatively minor theme becomes central. From this flows the imagery of the cross, the seed destroyed to bear fruit, weakness confounding the mighty.

The second part of the book examines how this imagery of paradox is expressed in liturgy, preaching, patterns of communication and sacred music. Here it becomes apparent how critically important it is that those responsible for communication in the Christian tradition understand the basic logic of paradox in the symbolism and know how to express themselves in terms of this imagery. Martin accepts present changes as an aspect of the continual making and breaking of the image. However, he would prefer that the artists and poets enter again for a truly new and creative expression of the sacred rather than have a slipshod reform which only destroys something antique but beautiful. Particularly interesting is the chapter on music as a religious expression evolving further and further away from its ritual base. Today music has become a surrogate church for many, the only place they can find a trace of the transcendent.

It may be difficult for some in the field of communication to see how this sort of study is useful, accustomed as they are to viewing communication in terms of dealing with a medium and "selling a message" whatever the message. The book also gives the impression of "working papers," raw, spontaneous, complex thought, at times repetitious and

unintegrated. However, Martin has made a path-breaking contribution which helps us to see that before a message is shaped for the medium and the audience, it must be examined in its own inherent

mode, logic and structure of meaning. Then the message more easily unfolds into the medium and before the audience. And the audience may feel less "sold" and more respected as human persons.

BABIN-McLUHAN: LET THE IMAGES BE BROKEN, LONG LIVE THE IMAGES

In Autre homme, autre chrétien à l'âge électronique, Pierre Babin and Marshall McLuhan argue that Christianity is in the midst of one of the image-breaking periods referred to by Martin. The religious spirit is trying to break out of a social and symbolic structure created to defend the sacred and to open a new space for more authentic religious expression. Theirs is not a simplistic gospel of "Bring on the audiovisuals." Rather they see a complex interaction of changes: an increasingly urban, pluralistic society; the introduction of the mass electronic media; changing religious sentiments; and shifts in the "communicable moment" of religious communication. The response to this should be nothing less than a fundamental change in the social organisation and pattern of communication of the Church.

The book is principally the reflections of Babin ("flashes" he calls them) on his experience with youth and religious communication in recent years and the results of research at his Centre Recherche et Communication at Lyon. The insights of McLuhan lie scattered in a series of tape-recorded conversations with Babin and are either "brilliant" or "pure speculation" according to the reader's feeling about the McLuhan thesis. But it is the first time that McLuhan has applied his more recent ideas directly to the question of religious communication.

The authors feel that the Church must take into account a radical change in religious attitudes: a rejection of large "cold" organisations; an anxiety for authenticity as the fundamental value; a quest for an ethic open to pleasure, desire for a religion of experience and affectivity, an awakening of interiority and openness to the Spirit, attraction to the mystical in

oriental religion, and interest in a religious life marked by music and the visual. They do not see these changes as a rejection of religion, but as a search for new forms and new places for discovering the sacred.

New Media, New Expressions of Faith

One of the most valuable contributions of the book is Babin's comparative analysis of the way Christian religious belief has been communicated in the late Middle Ages, in the period of Protestant and Catholic Reform (from 1540 to the recent past), and now in the era of the electronic media. The framework for analysis -- pedagogical systems, forms of presentation, and the structure of communication -- provides a useful methodology for research in religious communication.

In the Middle Ages there was little individual training in terms of formulae of knowledge to be retained, but rather participation in community celebrations of the liturgy and processions especially at the times of the great liturgical feasts. With the omnipresent imagery of the statues, architecture and other artistic forms, the people lived in a culture of symbolism, and popular theology interpreted the visual as multiple expressions of the sacred pointing to the transcendent. Because it was an oral culture and it was impossible to reproduce exactly the same text for wide distribution, there was less insistence on precision and intellectual content. But in Babin's view this allowed more spontaneity and control by the people themselves. In this respect there was a deeper religious response.

In the Sixteenth Century, with the introduction of the print media, the demand came for a more uniform and intel-

lectual religion. Luther, and later, Catholic leaders were scandalised at the "ignorance" of the faith and the "anarchy" of religious belief. The result: the printed catechism with its formulae to be memorised so that all would be committed to the same "faith" in all parts of the world. At the same time there came the seminary, a professionalised rather than charismatic clergy, a binding together of the Church by canon law, and a more cerebral religion of set formulae and lists of defined moral practices.

The New Religious Pedagogy

In the present audiovisual civilisation, says Babin, the pedagogy is changing from memorisation to personal discovery. The form of presentation changes radically from emphasis on communication in abstract ideas to communication of deeply felt experience. The logic of audiovisual presentation is that of sharing feeling, movement, imagery, sensation of sounds -- the logic of imagination and symbols.

Also changing are the place, the time, the type of people responsible for presentation, and the potential audience: from the school, the place of the book, to the place of the small informal group; from a rigid time schedule of students, teachers and the clergy, to moments when people want to reflect on a period of transition or a crisis in life; from priests, teachers and catechists as religious functionaries to charismatic spiritual leaders, group animators and parents.

Babin is one of the few people in the field of religious communication who sees clearly that the churches cannot simply graft the electronic media onto the old structure, but that there is a need for reorganisation in terms of the small base community as the place of liturgical and faith expression. The once-and-for-all schools and seminaries must be complimented by systems of permanent education. He calls for a participatory church, stimulating horizontal exchange and witness, and a church with much more popular, spontaneous expression. This, he suggests, would be a kind of return to the faith of the Middle Ages.

Education for the Mass Media

Babin also outlines a penetrating analysis of the social and moral impact of the mass media which would be helpful to broadcasting reform groups presently preoccupied with a sex, violence and sweets-in-the-breakfast-food critique. The problem, as Babin sees it, is the bombardment of information, opinion and advertising so that there is a loss of a personal integrating belief system, a tendency to live in a constant agitation of superficial images and emotions, and a jumping from one popular trend to another. The response, he suggests, is not a new puritanism or censorship, but education for taste in pleasure and an awakening through education of a sense of personal awareness and "interiority."

Babin shares the distrust of many regarding a reliance on the mass media as the preferred means of religious communication. In a final chapter he shows how group media are more attractive to youth and a much better means for developing a sense of personal identity in a mass popular culture.

The authors may be far too optimistic. There is little evidence that the hierarchies of the main-line churches in North America and Europe are willing to move toward an emphasis on small communities or group media. They are attracted to the magic of the Billy Graham mass media model. The mass media model helps to retain the power and uniformity of the present. The participatory, spontaneous church may be some time in developing.

Babin may also be too optimistic in expecting the language of the churches to shift to the audiovisual mode with its emphasis on the imaginative and affective experience. The language of the churches reflects its theology, and theology has moved progressively away from the symbolic mode, rich in imagery. In many ways, contemporary Christian theology and theologians are unprepared for an audiovisual culture in the Church.

In Théologie Symbolique, P.

Charles Bernard is concerned with the same kind of problem in theology that Babin sees in religious education: the tendency among theologians to give priority to speculative theology, expressed in the language of metaphysics. However, religious experience has always found its fullest human expression at the level of symbolic language. Here is conserved the richness of direct sensation: the imaginative metaphor, the gesture and music of ritual and the archetypal imagery of the great religious writings. It is time, he argues, to restore to its former importance in theology the symbolic mode, and to show how speculative-philosophical, symbolic and mystical theologies interrelate and support each other.

He is also concerned with the tendency of superficial popularisations of Freudian psychoanalytic theory to dismiss religious symbolism as simply subjective projections with no foundation in the real world. This and the error of viewing symbolism as nothing but a useless relic of man's primitive past, have led many, unfortunately, to dismiss the symbolic mode as unimportant in knowing and expressing the experience of the transcendent. The tendency of our civilisation, with its emphasis on the technical and functional, does not invite us to the contemplation of the beauty and meaning of signs. As a result, the richness and beauty of our religious experience is lost, and we are left only with religion as moral imperative and as abstract intellectual questioning.

Symbolism, Openness to Ultimate Meaning

Bernard does not consider the problem from an historical-cultural perspective as did Fawcett in The Symbolic Language of Religion. Fawcett contends that Christianity, by moving its theological reflection out of the realm of symbolism to the defence on the plane of metaphysical and scientific discussion, has gradually isolated theology from the more immediate experience of the sacred and from popular religious expression. However, he does provide a good dis-

cussion of the development of the theology of symbolism among Christian theologians.

In the first part of the book, Bernard analyses the nature of symbolising activity and its relationship to man's spiritual quest whether that be within the context of an ethical-philosophical religion such as Buddhism or in a religious tradition focusing on the transcendent as that of Hinduism and Christianity. He shows that in seeking to express ultimate meaning and values -- for example, the problem of evil -- man must go to the language of symbolism.

The Psychological Basis of Symbolism

Bernard presents a good analysis of the psychology of religious symbolism using both the Freudian but especially the Jungian theories of personality. The most important function of symbolism is its ability to express the richness of direct experience and the affectivity of man rooted in the unconscious. The symbolic mode by preserving the imaginative association, the tone and rhythm of poetry, and human gesture is able to express far more of reality. "In the religious order (of thought), God is not, for symbolic consciousness, experienced as ipsum esse subsistens, but he is the Father of Heaven, source of all things." (p. 52). More important still is the fact that since symbols arise out of the archetypal basis of the human subconscious, symbolic language communicates with the motivational base of the personality. The author explores at length the basic religious spatial and personal archetypes and shows the relationship of these to the spiritual life. He also shows how symbolism links persons to the environment and implies a harmony with the world in contrast to scientific language which makes nature an object.

In the second part, Bernard enters into the great symbolic themes of Christian religious tradition: the quest for the kingdom, light and life, and the mystical union with God. The author, a professor in the Institute of Spirituality at the Gregorian University,

Rome, has written extensively in spiritual and mystical theology, and his focus tends to be the phenomenology of the spiritual life. In the third part of the book, he discusses the transformative power of symbolism in ritual and sacrament.

There has been considerable discussion of the need for a "theology of

communication". This book is a landmark because it explicitly discusses the problem of a more fully expressive language in theology and establishes a relation between systematic theology and artistic creativity for the audiovisual medium. It is also important for bringing theological thought closer to the religious sentiments and interests of contemporary urbanising, audiovisual man.

ROLAND LeCLERC: *Symbolism, the Language of Religion and of the Mass Media*

In connection with Bernard's Théologie Symbolique, it is worthwhile mentioning an interesting study by Roland LeClerc, L'Experience religieuse pour l'homme de audio visuel.

LeClerc cites three stages or levels in man's approach to the absolute which establish three languages or modes of thought: the purely imaginary or mythological, the functional or scientific and the symbolic. In the imaginary mode, man allows his free floating dreams to create a world of fantasy and myth. The functional is a language of technical control for solving man's immediate problems, but it is not the mode of thought of openness to the absolute in which man seeks a further meaning of life and it is not the language growing out of a desire to transcend the present situation.

The language of symbolism lies between the extremes of the mythological and the functional. Like the functional, symbolic thought deals with a real world, but it is open to a continual unfolding of meaning and a movement toward the transcendent in and beyond

history. LeClerc suggests that symbolism keeps drawing man beyond his present state toward new creativity and the discovery of new meaning in his existence. In Christian language for example, the "kingdom of God" and "the Christ" are symbols which are grounded in historical realities but keep leading persons to their ultimate possibilities.

Functional modes of thought may give man power over his environment and satisfy his immediate needs, but, without a language of hope and meaning, this can lead to further questioning, scepticism, and, ultimately, the loss of any real creativity in human history.

The language of symbolism, unlike the purely functional which operates at the level of consciousness, rises out of the unconscious psychic force and has the power of engaging man's deepest emotions and personal commitment.

Copies of this essay are available from: Office des Communications Sociales, 4635 Avenue de Lorimier, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2H 2B4.

VICTOR AND EDITH TURNER: COMMUNICABLE MOMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Pierre Babin notes that the communicable moments of religious experience for most people today are likely to occur in the intense "hinge" events of life: in personal crises, in a weekend excursion to a monastery such as Taizé, or in preparation for a major decision or a new role in life. It is

a moment of reorganisation of life goals and the total situation -- the group atmosphere, the informal wisdom of the "guru" present, the symbolism of the place -- all communicate. Too often, religious communicators project a stereotyped model of communication without having examined in a richly phenomeno-

logical way the experiential context of communication events.

The anthropologists, Victor and Edith Turner, in their book, Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, have provided an excellent example of an in-depth description of a communicable moment and, incidentally, show how anthropology can contribute to the field of communication. Victor Turner must be regarded as one of the outstanding scholars of religious symbolism in the field of anthropology today, and he understands the methodology of studying symbolism in context. In recent years, pilgrimage has been the focus of study of the Turners. The present work on Christian pilgrimage is one stage in the long-range comparative research into this institution in various religious contexts, but one senses that their religious background enables them to be unusually perceptive participant observers of the pilgrimage experience at St. Patrick's Purgatory in Ireland, Lourdes or Guadalupe in Mexico.

Experience of a "Liminality"

The Turners are interested in pilgrimage as a case of the institution of liminal ritual in life, that is, a major, once-and-for-all crossing of the threshold to a new life. Unlike the well-known rites of passage which are more of a movement into structured social roles, liminality refers to a relatively institutionalised context in which individuals or groups may reorganise or change the values of life in open-ended fashion. Although a pilgrimage may be made in fulfillment of a promise in thanksgiving for a heavenly favour, the Turners show that more central is the experience of personal transition as one makes this significant and, frequently, difficult trip.

Pilgrimage enables a person, who feels life adrift, to set aside the mundane routine and join in a symbolic journey to a central sacred shrine which embodies the religious and, often, the nationalistic political ideals of the pilgrim. Pilgrimage is a phenomenon of the great religious traditions in technically more advanced civilisations and flourishes in modern industrial societies

with improved transportation and communication. The goal might be Mecca, the shrine of Guadalupe, or, if you are a young student in Latin America, Havana, Cuba. It is in a context of vacation, festivity, tourism, eagerness for new sights and sounds, exciting discovery, in short, an openness to a total human experience. But it is also symbolic arduousness, penitential, purifying of the forsaken past and a demonstration of new commitments.

Communication through Symbols

Most interesting from the point of view of religious communication is the summary description of the arrival at the sacred centre or shrine:

"Toward the end of a pilgrimage, the pilgrim's new-found freedom from mundane or profane structures is increasingly circumscribed by symbolic structures: religious buildings, pictorial images, statuary and sacralised features of topography . . . Underlying sensorily perceptible symbol-vehicles are structures of thought and feeling . . . (which) derive from the words and works of the religion's founder, his disciples or companions and their immediate followers . . . Between founders and setting . . . there exist sets of relationships which together compose a message about the central values of the religious system. The pilgrim, as he is increasingly hemmed in by such sacred symbols, may not consciously grasp more than a fraction of the message, but through the reiteration of its symbolic expressions, and sometimes through their very vividness, he becomes increasingly capable of entering in imagination and with sympathy into the culturally defined experience of the founder and of those persons depicted as standing in some close relationship to him . . . Religious images strike him, in these novel circumstances, as perhaps they have never done before even though he may have seen very similar objects in his parish church almost every day of his life" (pp. 10-11).

A Communication Centre

The authors do not enter into

all of the communicative dimensions of this one religious institution, but there are many. Most pilgrimage centres of similar liminal experience, have a series of talks, discussions, or short courses which initiate the participant into a language which becomes the basis of a continued communication after the introductory experience. In most cases pilgrimage centres maintain a newspaper or radio station. For example, the immensely popular education-cultural-religious radio station, Radio Santa Maria in the Dominican Republic, began broadcasting from a pilgrimage centre which is deeply rooted in the affections of all social classes and the station continues to be identified with this centre. Not a few other religious radio stations in Latin America have

taken the name of the "Voice" of the national shrine. The site of the radio station itself, like Vatican Radio, the broadcasting sites of some of the evangelical programmes in the United States, or even Radio Havana give the message an aura of authority and sacredness among the listeners which ordinary broadcasting stations lack.

The Turners have not intended to write a book specifically about communication, but in taking one institution in a particular religious tradition and examining this carefully in the light of a general theory of personal and social change such as liminality, they have told us vividly how one type of religious communicable moment occurs.

REPORT ON CURRENT RESEARCH

Studies of Chinese Religious Symbolism

Fr. Daniel Ross, S.J. and his students in the sociology department at Fu Jen University in Taipei, Taiwan, have begun a study of the religious symbolism in four major religious groups in Taiwan: Buddhists, popular religions, Protestants and Catholics. A sample of 414 persons were interviewed using what is called the "semantic differential test." That is, respondents are presented with a graphic portrayal of 25 different popular religious symbols and are asked to rate on a scale the degree to which the symbol appears to them good or bad, strong or weak. This is an attempt to measure the feelings people attach to graphic symbols.

The initial results have been interesting. For example, both Protestants and Catholics rate symbols of Christ relatively at the same level on a scale of emotional attractiveness, but Catholics rate the symbol of the Virgin Mary even higher. All four religious groups see the symbol of the snake as emotionally repulsive. On the scale of power, Christians see the cross as strong, but popular religions see it as a sign of weakness.

The meaning of religious symbols will also be analysed along the lines of

sex, occupation, ethnic background and age.

This research has been carried out with the support of a grant from the Institute of Missiology of MISSIO in Aachen, Germany. A full report of this initial study will soon be available from Daniel Ross, S.J., Sociology Department, Fu Jen University, Hsinchuang, Taipeih sien (242), Taiwan, Republic of China.

Philippines

The East Asian Pastoral Institute is putting a major emphasis on applied research regarding theological language, symbolic expression and religious inculturation. The staff includes persons with backgrounds in theology and anthropology. Research in religious symbolism is being directed by Adolfo Nicolas, S.J., EAPI, P.O. Box 1815, Manila.

Africa

Studies of comparative African religious symbolism are being carried on by P. Georges Defour, pb, professor at the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique at the Université National du Zaïre and assist-

ant director of the Centre Inter africain de Recherche et D'Animation Pastorales des Jeunes in Bukavu, Zaire. In addition to his collection of materials on religious symbolism in Zaire, P. Defour is surveying religious personnel in various parts of Africa regarding: 1) the most important traditional and contemporary religious symbols; 2) the meaning of these symbols for the people and the application to the customs and rites of the particular group.

Some preliminary analysis of these data on African religious symbolism is included in Defour's Religions traditionnelles africaines. Further information may be obtained from Georges Defour, pb, Centre Bandari, B.P. 162, Bukavu, Zaire.

Another important centre of research in the area of religious symbolism in Africa is that of P. Hochegger, s.v.d., Centre d'Etudes Ethnologiques Bandundu, B.P. 19, Bandundu, Zaire.

Popular Devotions of American Catholics

Related to the studies of religious symbolism is the research of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). CARA is currently in the initial stages of a long-term study of Marian devotions. The presupposition in this research is that these popular devotions which have been central aspects of Catholic religious experience have declined in importance. If there is a provable decline, what are

the reasons for this, what expressions of popular religiosity have replaced them, and what are the needs and desires of American Catholics in this regard?

For the immediate future, CARA is focusing on the Guadalupan devotion and at present is studying the historical background of the apparitions and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe preserved in the shrine in Mexico City. Eventually, CARA expects to carry out a sociological study of the meaning of this Marian cult both historically and among present day Mexicans and Mexican Americans. A further phase of the general study will focus on Marian devotions among the general Catholic population in the United States.

Project director is Gordon Henderson, S.J., CARA, P.O. Box 29150, Washington, D.C. 20017.

India

Fr. Michael Amaladoss, S.J., Rector, Vidyajoti Institute of Religious Studies (23 Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi 110054) has written much on the theology of symbolism in the Indian context and coordinated meetings of Christian Indian artists.

The Christian artist, Jyoti Sahi is writing The Child and the Serpent, a study of popular religious symbolism. (J.Sahi, 'Vishram', Silvepura, Turbanahalli PO, Bangalore North 650 057, India).

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