MISSION METHOD AND THE AMERICAN INDIAN

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ONE SHOULD harbor no illusions about missiology: a neat method can be formulated and a beautiful theoretical system constructed. But as with any other kind of pastoral theology, only more so, missiology in practice is subject to unpredictable and unclassifiable forces, and so demands constant adaptation in theory. In this we should be glad, for it is in going out to meet pastoral and cultural needs that theology departs its dogmatic and academic haven, to discover anew that its very identity involves missiology: it is *sent* to serve God's word, and is always painfully conscious of the provisional nature of its task. And yet it can ill afford false modesty. The failure to take a reflective approach to missions to "non-Western" cultures has led to the frequent barbarisms of a naive evangelism, and to gross contradiction of Jesus' insistence that he came not to destroy but to fulfil whatever in the past has pointed humanity toward God or mediated God to His people. It is the purpose of this article to propose a modest structural approach to a missiology of theory and praxis, situating it in a particular mission context.

The Church's mission policies have from early times shown glimmers of cultural enlightenment, from the writings of Justin Martyr through Pope Gregory I to Bede the Venerable, to some of Rome's instructions of the seventeenth century, embodied in the practices of missionaries like de Nobili and Ricci, and reflecting some of the compassion of a Las Casas. Jean de Brebeuf stands out among the North American missionaries for his sensitivity to culture, as do the short-lived Marquette and, later, Pierre de Smet. But the principle of cultural empathy and adaptation has been obscured in the work of Catholic and Protestant missionaries alike, most especially, it seems, among the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere. Only in very recent years did a widespread effort at a more sophisticated, not to say more Christian, method of mission theology begin to develop. While openings to this development were quite evident in the encyclicals *Evangelii praecones* of Pius XII and *Princeps pastorum* of John XXIII, extensive attention to cultural adaptation did not become a major issue in official teaching until Vatican Council II. However, the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church did not simply emerge from the Council floor without historical antecedents. A renewal plan in mission catechetics and liturgy had begun prior to the Council, especially in the years from the late 1940's on. The International Study Week on Missionary

Catechetics was held in Eichstätt, Germany, in the summer of 1960. The themes that emerged from this symposium already presaged the attitudes that were to shape the mission decree of the Council fathers.

Many of the papers at the symposium espoused the cause of cultural appreciation and adaptation, and many of the speakers emphasized that native cultures should be appreciated as fertile soil and even already as bearing seeds of the word of God. Two very prevalent themes of the conference revolved around kerygma and culture. The comments of a number of symposium members show how the thought of influential Catholics was leading in the direction of more profound cultural appreciation. Valerian Cardinal Gracias of Bombay, soon to be a leader in the Council, developed the ideas of *Princeps pastorum* to argue for adaptation to local cultures. In terminology that theologians now prefer to avoid in cultural dialogue, the Cardinal described the triple role of missionary catechetics: to "break the charms of paganism," to lay the foundations of a new life in Christ in the new Christians, and to plant Christianity in every member in such a way as to build for future generations.[1] In a more dialogue-oriented tone, he added: "Adaptation is like endowing the organic unit of the catechism with flesh and blood and the features of the people to be evangelized."[2]

Bishop Manuel Larrain of Talca, Chile, citing Cardinal Mercier's emphasis on the value of both theology and sociology in the training of priests, stressed the value of listening to the culture for "the calls of souls" given "in an unfamiliar language of the spirit."[3] He added:

> Wholesale condemnation of all the values of a culture for not being apparently Christian is a serious mistake which may be made by the catechist in his work of preaching the gospel. Upon penetrating more deeply into this culture, he may then exclaim with Jacob: "This place is sacred, and I knew it not." There are many stones which may turn into a "Bethel."[4]

Walbert Bühlmann presented a strong and perceptive paper on adaptation. The life-experience and the language of a culture are essential to the missionary. "Paganism," which he placed within quotation marks, must be given a serious bearing on catechetical training.[5] In "Christianizing paganism," it "is not our task to make Christians 'out of pagans,' but to convert the pagans as such to Christ."[6] Paganism is in some sense analogous to the Old Testament as *paedagōgos eis Christon*.[7] It receives its real meaning in Christianity along with its

[1] Cf. Johannes Hofinger, S.J., *Teaching All Nations: A Symposium on Modern Catechetics* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962) 22.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid. 35.
[4] Ibid. 36.
[5] Ibid. 66.
[6] Ibid. 67.
[7] Ibid. 68.

fulfilment,[8] and is no more a risk of syncretism than if one preached Christianity directly in the consciousness of the hearers.[9] In developing a continuity, one is obliged to learn something about paganism, whereas by breaking continuity there is the danger that the new will be driven into but not grafted onto the old and that the two will go on living side by side, without any relationship to each other.[10] Bühlmann's essay concluded with the lament that there is still no trace of a handbook to help the missionary blaze a trail from paganism to Christianity.[11]

J. Valls expressed in a forceful and concise form an equally critical problem in missionary work. Discussing *Evangelii praecones* and *Princeps pastorum*, Valls observed that adaptation means not only adapting the message to ancient cultures; it means a like sensitivity to new social, economic, and political developments and the problems they create.[12] Religious instruction would have to confront these problems and include them in its syllabus.

The final publication of the symposium included a total of twenty-eight articles by experts covering the entire field of missionary evangelization, catechesis, and worship. I have cited only the more striking references to cultural adaptation, but the reading of this volume fills one with a sense of that spirit already breathing in the Church, and of the winds of urgency blowing back to the centers of Europe and North America, where they mingled with the development of kerygmatic theology. With such input as this, any ecumenical-council debates and decrees on missionary activity were not likely to be untouched by the forces of change. Missionaries were aware that they and their predecessors may have indeed brought the gospel "to the nations," and that they had perhaps done much for the development of peoples. But they were becoming increasingly and agonizingly conscious of the need to escape from their own culture-bound ideas and methods, and of the damage this ethnocentrism had often done to both cultures and evangelization.

This consciousness emerges, along with many other questions, in the opinions expressed during the Second Vatican Council. The floor speeches and written opinions on the mission schema, however, do not show a simplistically "liberal" thrust. The various critiques of the original schema called for a far more practical decree that would touch on matters of organization of local churches, the lay apostolate, the social problems of the Third World, communism and atheism, indigenous clergy, and so forth. As Cardinal Gracias pointed out, the Decree

[8] Ibid. 69.
[9] Ibid. 71.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid. 72.
[12] Ibid. 207.

on the Missionary Activity of the Church is one of great weight,[13] and, as many speeches show, a mission document is by implication a document on ecclesiology. This naturally meant that the debates and opinions would range over a vast field of theology and social science. What is of interest for this paper is the emphasis on the missionary as learner of local cultures and social conditions, so as to be able to face them in dialogue and to be able to develop the teaching of the Christian faith. Since this paper presents a method and example for examining, understanding, and dealing with the local scene and the indigenous culture, I shall describe how the Council fathers discussed these matters.

On the subject of "non-Christian" religions there was extensive discussion and exchange. Unfortunately, at this stage of missionary thought in the Council there was little discussion of the possibility of native religious culture being a part of authentic Christian life and worship. In his floor speech, Bishop Joseph Attipetty of Verapoly (Malabar) did allude to the presence of some salvific grace in "men who are inculpably ignorant of Christ," even as he stressed the urgency of renewed evangelistic efforts.[14] In reference to the original schema, he offered an important observation:

> In what sense are we to understand "Christian culture"? In the contemporary expression or usage of the word "culture," such an expression as "Christian culture" can give excuse to non-Christians to assert that evangelization is a diffusion of a foreign culture different from their own. It is better to avoid the expression and to point out that the principles of the Christian religion help to elevate the culture of different peoples.[15]

There were indeed accompanying arguments, some of them quite vehement, reasserting the absolute necessity of baptism and the formula *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.[16] There were warnings about false religion, paganism, heresy, schism, and "diverse errors," and laments about the timidity of those bishops concerned about dialogue with non-Christians.[17] However, the major thrust in the area of culture was certainly positive. Thus, Odemar Degrijse, superior general of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission Society, said that "This spirit of adaptation is a specific element of the missionary vocation."[18] Emile Joseph de Smedt of Bruges spoke eloquently on dialogue with non-Christians, pointing out how the whole Church is called to co-operate with men of good will.[19] In a positive tone, the Church should invite all

[13] *Acta synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* 3, Periodus 3, Pars C (Vatican City, 1975) 678. Henceforth cited as *Acta*.

[14] Ibid. 478.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid. 491.

[17] Ibid. 495; also 568–70.

[18] Ibid. 501.

[19] Ibid. 509.

religions to an *aggiornamento*, in a dialogue that should be characterized by avoidance of any selfish desires, by the shunning of political prejudices, by patience, by respect for the religious liberty of all.[20] The disputatious tone in which a triumph might be gained over the "adversary" would be destructive to dialogue, which should breathe the spirit of which the Lord gives the example.[21] Many missionary or Third World bishops called for sensitivity to cultural symbolism, elimination of paternalism, church juridicism, and colonialism. All of this would demand renewed scientific preparation, especially in biblical and patristic theology, in sociological and demographic studies.[22]

Bishop Charles-Marie Himmer of Tournay proposed for missionaries the following questions: How does one move into the Third World of today? How best does one dialogue with workers and farmers? How can we avoid colonialism? How do we act with prudence in economic matters? How do we form catechists for our time?[23] Bishop Michael Moloney of Bathurst in Gambia detailed a scholarly approach to Moslems, showing a sense for the phenomenology of religion, as he stressed mutual respect, dialogue, social and economic co-operation.[24] Bishop Edmund Peiris of Chilaw (Sri Lanka) showed the influence or at least the spirit of early Church Fathers as he observed that pagan authors and philosophers have always contributed greatly to Christian theology.[25] He offered what might be called a precautionary formula for missionary work: "The colonial way of acting is proper to those who, well aware of the glory and power of their own nation, think that they are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ by imposing their own customs on others."[26]

While such opinions went into the formation of the social and cultural aspects of the Decree, we should also observe the written opinions of Cardinal Gracias, which seem in some respects to have moderated the document. Gracias wrote: "The concern of the schema seems to be more missiological than doctrinal or dogmatic, as if it is addressed to students of missiology rather than for the clear teaching of the faithful."[27] He lamented the hesitancy to see the Church as *medium salutis* in a unique way, and objected to the practice of some "progressive missiologists" who exaggerate the supernatural "good things" in non-Christian religions, as if these were per se sufficient for salvation without the Church. The schema should more forcefully

[20] Ibid. 511.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid. See speeches by Bishop Albert Conrad de Vito of Lucknow (Kanpur, India), 514–17; Archbishop Robert Dosseh Anyron of Lomé (Togo), 518–19; Bishop Joseph Fady of Lilongwe (Malawi), 528.

[23] Ibid. 548.

[24] Ibid. 577–80.

[25] Ibid. 587.

[26] Ibid. 588.

[27] Ibid. 677.

present Christ as not just the palatable fulfilment of religious aspirations, but as the scandal of the Crucified.[28] He added:

> Because the schema is more concerned with "missiology" than with the dogmatic principles of the mission of the Church, there can be a tendency to diminish the Church. In the dialogue with the non-Christian religions there cannot be a question of a dialogue between "equals." By divine institution the Church is and must be unique.[29]

A written opinion of Bishop Ambrose Yeddanapalli of Bellary (No. Bangalore) expressed fears based on these problems cited by Gracias. Whatever their theological validity, his reflections were prophetic of the attitudes of missionaries in recent years. He stated that, since the schema granted the possibility of salvation without knowledge of Christ, the Church might be seen as only an extraordinary means of salvation, so that there would be a profound effect on the morale and the zeal of missionaries, who would have to answer the question why we should lead men to the Church rather than leave them in good faith.[30]

As regards social and cultural matters, the Decree emerged as a synthesis of the foregoing arguments, but with a definite bias toward greater cultural adaptation. Before summarizing the points it makes, I would point out that the thrust of these statements, as well as of the present article, is not, strictly speaking, to deal with dialogue with non-Christian religions. The intent here is to relate to the equally thorny matter of those who choose to be Christians and yet possess a native religious culture of their own—generally what we call a "primal religion" rather than a "world religion." How the Church might confront this problem, as well as the social problems arising out of the clash between tribal and modern society, is the subject of this article.

DECREE ON THE MISSIONARY ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

As with other documents of Vatican II, the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church does not stand alone but carries on the expansive spirit of the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on Non-Christian Religions. In this Decree the basic theme is that of the Church as sign of Christ's presence in various cultures. The New Testament experience of the mission of the Son and the Spirit is the mandate to communicate the fulness of divine life.[31] This bedrock theological principle is accompanied by an equally basic call to evangel-

[28] Ibid. 678.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid. 650.

[31] Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, no. 2 (tr. Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher, *The Documents of Vatican II* [New York: Guild, 1966] 585).

ical praxis: the Church is expected to walk Christ's road of poverty, obedience, service, self-sacrifice, and death.[32]

The Decree cautions missionaries about the need for careful deliberation in the face of radical changes that take place alongside or because of gospel proclamation, and in this it enunciates a very important principle: "Besides, circumstances are sometimes such that, for the time being, there is no possibility of expounding the gospel directly and immediately. Then, missionaries can and must at least bear witness to Christ by charity and by works of mercy, with all patience, prudence, and great confidence."[33] It further states what it means by this rather puzzling notion of a "direct gospel": "Christ and the Church, which bears witness to him by preaching the gospel, transcend every particularity of race or nation and therefore cannot be considered foreign anywhere or to anybody."[34] The perils inherent in this assertion have been pointed out by many critics of Christianity, and the danger of cultural arrogance still looms in the following statement, which nonetheless serves as a steppingstone to a renewed missiology.

> But whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, this activity [the preaching of the gospel] frees from all taint of evil and restores to Christ its maker. . . . And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, is not lost. More than that, it is healed, ennobled, and perfected for the glory of God, the shame of the demon, and the bliss of men.[35]

We have seen how this kind of statement can be and has been taken more as a de facto statement that mission preaching can do no wrong, rather than a charge to preachers to sensitize themselves to persons and cultures. But the Decree forestalls much of this obscurantism in its enunciation of the incarnational principle that Christ bound himself to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom he dwelt.[36] From this principle comes the corollary that all Christian witnesses are to share in the cultural and social life of human beings with whom they work, being familiar with national and religious traditions, in order reverently to lay bare "the seeds of the word" which lie hidden in these traditions.[37] And in the light of this principle, while every opportunity to preach the gospel must be taken, the Church "strictly forbids forcing anyone to embrace the faith, or alluring or enticing people by unworthy techniques."[38]

[32] Ibid. 5 (*Documents* 590).
[33] Ibid. 6 (*Documents* 592).
[34] Ibid. 8 (*Documents* 594).
[35] Ibid. 9 (*Documents* 595–96).
[36] Ibid. 10 (*Documents* 597).
[37] Ibid. 10 (*Documents* 598).
[38] Ibid. 13 (*Documents* 600).

The Decree urges that training of local clergy should be painstaking both in the mystery of salvation as revealed in Scripture and in their own culture. "In their philosophical and theological studies, let them consider the points of contact between the traditions and religion of their homeland and the Christian religion."[39] This statement pertains also to deacons and catechists, and the furthering of such ministries is encouraged. In urging the founding of religious communities, especially of contemplative orders, the Council likewise recognizes the work of the Spirit in cultures prior to or outside of Christianity: "Let them reflect attentively on how Christian religious life may be able to assimilate the ascetic and contemplative traditions whose seeds were sometimes already planted by God in ancient cultures prior to the preaching of the gospel."[40] All of these sensitivities to local history have as their goal the establishment of a self-sufficient local church, nourished in a faith developed through catechesis and liturgy that harmonizes with "the genius of the people."[41]

The Decree wisely includes, in its respect for culture as well as for the Church's tradition, a recommendation for the grounding of missionaries in a profound Christian life, in the personal qualities necessary for implementing such policies: openness, perseverance, initiative, constancy, prayerfulness, sound doctrine, as well as training in languages, ethnology, linguistics, history and science of religions, sociology, and pastoral skills.[42] All such qualities and skills will be needed if local customs and divine revelation are to be reconciled, while avoiding "every appearance of syncretism and false particularism."[43] A difficult undertaking it is and, as more than one ethnologist has pointed out, a seizing of the tiger by the tail. The remainder of this article will be an exploration of a possible method for taming the ferocious tiger of universal-particular religious confrontation.

MISSIOLOGY AND LIBERATION

Later in this paper I shall discuss, using the Native American ministry as my example, the specific ways in which a missiology might deal with social injustice and oppression. But because of the widespread attention to liberation theology, not only in its Third World contexts but in its application to North America as well, a general statement about how such conditions of injustice may be confronted by Americans will be in place here. One major criticism of most liberation theology is that it is generally treading foreign soil in North America. Such a

[39] Ibid. 16 (*Documents* 604).
[40] Ibid. 18 (*Documents* 607).
[41] Ibid. 19 (*Documents* 608).
[42] Ibid. 25 (*Documents* 615); 34 (*Documents* 622–23).
[43] Ibid. 22 (*Documents* 612–13).

critique is based, of course, on the absence of adequate descriptions of injustice in North America, as well as of methods for dealing with the unique kinds of North American oppression. Clearly, given the acceptance of Christ's mission as one of liberation from sin both in the individual and in society, the first step must be to understand conditions in those societies where oppression is manifest. To "missionaries" confronted by that "other America" that is the Indian society—urban or reservation—I suggest the following description, which may also contribute to the fuller analysis of injustice in North America.

Gustavo Gutierrez has put forth a definition of theology as "critical reflection on praxis," as an analysis of signs of the times and the demands they place on Christians.[44] Following this, Gutierrez' pursuit of a theology takes up the question how theology relates salvation to man in his historical process.[45] As one examines the historical process and its treatment of the American Indian, two elements of oppression loom over all others as being the most defiant of solutions. While Indians share the common need of all oppressed peoples for all the elements of social healing, I would suggest that two problems confront them which, as long as they remain unsolved, will render reform in education, health services, employment, economic self-sufficiency, even political power merely fragmentary, *ad hoc* remedies.

The present struggle of Indian people against their most obvious scourge, alcoholism, is a battle against a symptom of two devastating disorders, one following upon the other. The first of these is social and cultural rootlessness—rootlessness in spite of the fact that much of Indian cultural practice still endures. It is a malaise that afflicts most tribes (not so strong apparently among the Navajo and Pueblo peoples), a malaise produced by the growing number of Indians who cannot identify with their own traditions, whose traditions have been made to look foreign and even ridiculous by the policies of most government and church leaders. Consequent upon this deprivation is the second disorder, an alienation both from the Indian's own cultural identity *and* from the culture that has been imposed upon him if he wishes to survive as a human being. Worse, the dominant *secular* culture presents the Indian with a division in his life that he never knew in tribal life: that between religion and society. His natural tendency to place all tribal activities within the context of the sacred has often been made out by American governmental policies to be a reactionary mentality. The churches have not until recently treated him much better, imposing many foreign cultural demands in the guise of the

[44] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis, 1973) 6.
[45] Ibid. 45.

gospel, thus in effect *secularizing* Indian culture within a brief space of less than a century.[46]

It is the purpose of this particular method, then, in a certain contrast to those liberation theologies that are so wary of "primitive mentalities," to pay great respect to tribal religious life, with the belief that so much of it is expressive of the universal spiritual needs of all humanity. Within that religious context, I shall study suggestions for a cultural living of the gospel which may call Native Americans to the life of Christ and the Church, even while offering them some form of *modern* Indian identity contiguous with the traditional identity. Because Indian people suffer from such deeply-felt alienation, I shall strive to develop a theology of "belonging," based on unifying symbols. Drawing this theology out of what still does exist as praxis, I propose to approach that renewed sense of participation which Hervé Carrier has described in detail for European and American Christian churches.

Joachim Wach, in his *Sociology of Religion* and *The Comparative Study of Religion*,[47] has argued for the profound effect of religious experience in social life. I have already sketched out a brief description of Indian religion that employs his categories of creed, code, and cult.[48] What Wach can tell us here leads us into vital reflections on historical process. He points out that, sociologically speaking, religion has a

[46] The knotty history of this alienation is best learned through patient listening to Indian elders as they describe their childhood and youth education in government or church schools. However, written references are plentiful. For the testimony of government research reports attributing social decay to religious and cultural deprivation, see Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, *American Indians: Facts and Future* (New York: Arno, 1970); National Institute of Mental Health, *Suicide, Homicide and Alcoholism among American Indians: Guidelines for Help* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1973). Further, John Collier's *Indians of the Americas* (New York: Mentor, 1947) gives numerous citations on the same problem. Collier was for a long time Commissioner for Indian Affairs and sought to develop understanding of their cultures among non-Indians. For information on Christian missions, W. Howard Harrod's *Mission among the Blackfeet* (Norman: Oklahoma Univ., 1971) provides one example of Catholic and Protestant policies vis-à-vis one Indian culture. Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. has published a study of Protestant missions to Native Americans, dealing especially with the missionaries' identification of Christianity with white European-American values and mores: *Salvation and the Savage* (New York: Atheneum, 1972). Edna Kenton has edited *Black Gown and Redskins* (London: Longmans, Green, 1956), which is a compilation of material from *The Jesuit Relations*. The evidence points consistently to the failure of the churches, despite all zeal and good will, to separate the gospel message from a particular type of European culture.

[47] Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1967); *The Comparative Study of Religions* (New York: Columbia Univ., 1966).

[48] See Martin E. Marty and Dean Peerman, eds., *New Theology No. 9* (New York: Macmillan, 1972) 121–50: "American Indian Religion and Christianity: Confrontation and Dialogue."

twofold effect. It is positive, cohesive, and integrating when it is part of a people's natural history, and negative and disintegrating when it comes as a new faith proclaimed from without.[49] While the gospel may indeed be a salutary challenge to all "natural" orders and to "religion" in the Barthian sense, it also profoundly threatens social cohesion by creating a new world in which old conceptions and institutions may lose their meaning.

Wach proceeds to point out how the preaching of a new faith, even if it is of a universal character, may be revolutionary, leading to the reinterpretation of the traditional element.[50] This is what occurs when the proclamation takes place in a group that is more or less homogeneous, and indeed such changes did occur when Christianity was brought into Native American cultures. But Wach adds another significant statement: in culturally higher, differentiated societies, the background of converts is very heterogeneous, and this is more the situation in most tribes today, where far greater differentiation exists among tribal members. Thus, with the advent of Christianity, accompanied by modern technology, most Indian tribes have passed from a primal homogeneity in religious customs and ways of belonging to a state of great diversity and even of confusion and disorientation. Hence, there is *still* a missionary situation, but one in which the primal unity of culture is no longer present to act as a partner in what might once have been an uncomplicated dialogue with Christianity.

Wach asks how the integration of so disparate a group might take place. The disparateness is evident within Indian society today, as old Indian religious leaders combine in themselves both their tribal religious life and Christianity, as many older and middle-aged Indians who bought the white American version of Christianity express bewilderment over the new Christian openness to tribal tradition, and as young Indians seek a reactionary Indian religion without having the linguistic or psychological background to truly benefit by it. Here we see connected the phenomenon of that frighteningly large number of Indians who turn to the tragic religious surrogate—the bottle. In the face of this, the authentic religious belonging of the believer is his liberation. Carrier's study, even though intended for organized church groups, provides several significant guidelines.

Carrier begins with a hypothesis that by now most theologians and religious sociologists have no problem accepting: religious behavior and experience, while irreducible to other forms of behavior, have the effect of organizing and unifying *all* aspects of behavior.[51] This unification, or

[49] Wach, *Sociology of Religion* 35. [50] Ibid. 36.

[51] Hervé Carrier, S.J., *The Sociology of Religious Belonging* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965) 31.

lack of it, when the individual shows himself to have either solid religious and social moorings or to be alienated from such foundations, can be traced to the culture of his environment. While we must never forget the power of religion as a personal road to salvation, accepting, with James and Whitehead, the solitary nature of religious experience, we cannot understand the individual's behavior apart from his culture, nor can the culture be understood apart from study of personal behavior.[52] Religion, or the experience of transcendence, produces an attitude, defined as "a disposition or structure of dynamic factors positively or negatively orienting behavior with respect to a psychosociological object."[53] A basic source of attitudes is the experience of *belonging*, and it may also be an object of attitudes or an attitude in itself. While Carrier writes in the area of institutionalized religion, our study of most mission belonging-situations must focus not only on this institutional experience but also on the tribal aspect. The so-called "primitive" man, as Carl Jung pointed out, has even greater need to be supported by belonging within a complexus of rituals and beliefs.

Secondly, we must pay attention to what Carrier calls "conversion" as a sociological experience: a total adhesion, often accompanied by a crisis, to the values shared by a community, an experience tending toward the reunification of the personality and its social integration.[54] Soren Kierkegaard built his entire writing apostolate upon the assertion that very few of his countrymen were really Christians who had been truly "converted." Kierkegaard, of course, saw conversion as radically individualistic, but his analysis of apathy fits our context. Such a situation fits the Christian churches, and is perhaps in greater evidence in many mission cultures where there has been neither conversion to Christian values nor a conversion to tribal religious values that formerly came through rites of initiation. This total absence of conversion, with its consequent alienation, is sadly evident within the present Native American societies. Younger Indians in many tribes no longer undergo their own cultural religious experiences, and the Christian experience is neither understood nor sought. Since the breakup of their whole culture, Indians are increasingly devoid of the symbolic ritual source of communication, which Carrier describes thus:

> It is a pattern of ceremonial conduct expressing the religious life of communities and establishing a relationship with a reality which transcends deeds and words. The rite has a unifying effect. It counteracts tendencies towards anomie, for it creates a "we feeling" and has the power of identifying the individual with the group.[55]

[52] Ibid. 42.
[53] Ibid. 54.
[54] Ibid. 66.
[55] Ibid. 111.

The symbolic pattern achieves what tribal society and religion ideally achieved: a self-sacrificing readiness to serve the good of the community.

Thirdly, then, the importance of an integral culture to both individual and collective life is re-emphasized. Carrier states Clyde Kluckhohn's thesis that culture stems from behavior and terminates in behavior.[56] If the symbols and religious values die, the culture dies as well, and behavior becomes aimless and disordered. Somehow the values must be transmitted, and the transmission can occur only through some healthy cultural milieu. Carrier refers to the instructions of Pope Gregory I to Augustine of Canterbury, the essence of which was that, in the preaching and practice of Christianity, the missionary should create minimal disturbance at the core of native culture.[57] The image the group has of itself is its source of cohesion.[58] Even if some individuals are converted to Christianity, the group as a whole may float anomalously in a limbo of nonidentity. Carrier's whole study from here on dwells on the problem of disaffection, especially in adolescents and young adults. He particularly notes the observations of psychologists (Gordon Allport especially) that most of their patients are suffering from religious vacuum. We know how closely William James related the loss of religious experience and the flight to alcoholic spirits.

Finally, Carrier discusses the stabilizing and maturation of religious attitudes.[59] Total behavior must be transformed – in relation to family, tradition, and culture. The person and the group must unify experience within a synthesis, to find some form of group cohesion. The experience of the sacred is a source of power in this search.[60] All of this evidence points to the delicate position of the Christian minister working within a "primal" culture. If the message of the gospel is to be liberating, it cannot include the destruction of personal or collective identity. If that identity is already damaged, the process of liberation must include a renewed search for integration. Hence the next step is a quest for a method of religious inculturation.

A METHOD FOR GOSPEL INCULTURATION

Building on the hypothesis that, while various social programs and political activities are essential to Indian survival and freedom, the Church will best serve their deepest needs by striving to create a sense of religious belonging, we then have need of an ecclesiological and missiological method. Over the past six years of studying ways to establish religious dialogue with "primal" societies (those in which many or all the elements of precritical religious experience are discov-

[56] Ibid. 122.
[57] Ibid. 157.
[58] Ibid. 208.
[59] Ibid. 209.
[60] Ibid. 279.

erable), I have found no theologian of more help than Bernard Lonergan. For our purposes, the value of his method lies in its transcendental approach, calling for openness in the learning subject to intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Any missiology must be pre-eminently a hermeneutic of experience, and to this end Lonergan's method seems to be our best attitudinal guide. Thus I adopt Lonergan's definition of method: "A method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results."[61] Since missiology is a full-blown theological discipline, all of Lonergan's functional specialties apply to it, with the functions of interpretation, history, dialectic, and communications as most important in dealing with primal cultures. The specialty of foundations is also important, since it works on the level of deliberation, evaluation, and decision. I will concentrate on the basic attitudes of the method.

While in mission work, especially within a damaged culture, one has no naive expectations of steady progress, the definition of method still serves as a description of process. It has been my experience, and that of many colleagues in religio-cultural dialogue thus far, that cumulative results are recognizable in discussion and therefore in theory. The first step in the process is Lonergan's famous behavioral norm: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible.[62] These transcendental precepts describe an "intending" (*in-tendere*)—the attraction of the subject to know all about its object. The use of phenomenology of religion will demand that the subject (here the missionary as learner) discipline himself or herself to follow Lonergan's precepts through the use of the fourfold process: (1) experience, (2) understand, (3) judge, and (4) decide.[63] Living within at least two cultural traditions and two worlds of religious experience as he is, the missiologist employs the method in relationship to his "intending" of two objects: (1) his own faith tradition lived in the culture in which he was reared (and perilous indeed is the situation of the missionary who approaches a strange culture devoid of one of his own) and (2) the religious experience, whether purely primal (few of these are left) or amalgamated, whether fairly integral or badly damaged, of the native culture as he finds it.

THE METHOD IN DETAIL

In applying the transcendental method to his own faith experience, the missionary (one "sent" by divine mandate to preach the gospel) should bear in mind that, as a believer, his faith is a gift of God that is infinitely greater than his religion. And yet he does have religion and

[61] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 4.

[62] Ibid. 20.

[63] Ibid. 15 ff.

is a religious person. This famous Barthian distinction between faith and religion, whatever its limitations, will stand him in good stead. He will understand that, while he lives a transcendent act of faith that frees him from cultural entrapment, he is still in need of religious experience—of signs and symbols and rites that are meaningful to him and give expression and real assent to his faith.[64] Reflection on his own cultural experience of faith will sensitize him to the religious and cultural needs of those to whom he preaches "the faith." He will also realize to his advantage that Christians share, in the outward forms and human experience of their faith, many common spiritual forms with believers of every persuasion.

The Christian who plans to enter into a strange culture must persevere in some method of interpreting his own faith. According to the method I am utilizing here, he reflects in the following way: 1) He *experiences* his own faith—his conversion. No minister of religion can safely or creatively enter a strange environment to dialogue with it until he has come to a deep appreciation of his own faith and his own cultural ways of expressing it. Obviously, then, extensive and intensive training in spirituality is a part of his background. He will have had challenging spiritual direction, frequently intensified in retreats and other forms of spiritual exercise. Regular prayer, communal and private, will be part of his life, and the presence of God will be his ultimate strength in loneliness and isolation from the warmth of familiar surroundings.

2) He *understands* his own and his church's faith life through theological reflection on the lived experience of faith within the Church. Theology must function as the critical tool of his ministry. In a sense, this makes life harder for the missionary working among societies where critical reflection is not prevalent. Reflection and critical thought are "alienating"; they set him over against his experience and render him less spontaneous, whereas the primitive person does not reflect critically on his religion but simply does it. In this, the "primitive" should hold a place in all of us. Theological understanding must, therefore, rely on meditation and prayer methods that train the missionary in spontaneous prayer and the contemplative way. Part of the method of self-analysis, along with philosophy and theology, anthropology and psychology, will be something like the *Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola: a training in a discerning spirituality of the heart and affections.

3) He *judges* the quality of his own faith life and makes adjustments

[64] Charles E. O'Neill, S.J. "Acatamiento: Ignatian Reverence in History and in Contemporary Culture," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 8/1 (St. Louis: American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, 1976) esp. 8–10.

necessary for growth. Discernment of spirits is essential, as one tries to be open to God as well as to culture. The outgrowth of prayer and reflection, then, is judgment as to the communication of the word of faith—in this case, judgment that it is good to tell others about the saving event of God in Jesus Christ and the Spirit.

4) He *decides* to communicate his own experience. This is the goal of method, as Lonergan tells us in the chapter on communications. Communication is the basic task of missiology, however much more it may have to consider in its total work. The method of theologizing on the missionary's personal gospel experience will yield "cumulative and progressive results" in proportion to the genuine effect it has on his proclamation. The criterion of discernment, besides the basic loyalty to Christ's Church, must be that of a growing conversion driving one to proclaim the gospel.

The "much more" to be considered in method begins with the kinds of study a missionary needs prior to his meeting with the alien culture, accompanying his training in Christian growth. His education should include, as the Decree on Missions urges, anthropology, psychology, sociology, religious phenomenology, and history and philosophy of religion. These studies should prepare him for the confrontation with the culture, a confrontation that our method advises him to undertake in two phases. To explain this, I will use as a model the meeting of the missionary with a Native American culture. There are the initial confrontation and the in-depth confrontation.

Initially, the newcomer to Indian reservation life must be prepared to experience considerable culture shock: he is virtually in a foreign land within the boundaries of his home country. Indians will, of course, often tell him that his "home country" is Europe, thus adding, generally good-naturedly, to his initial shock. With the training I have described, however, he will more openly face this experience. It is an experience of what I choose to call a "wounded culture" (some have even called it a destroyed culture), afflicted with many kinds of social ills. Most Indians, especially those under forty, are losing or have lost the substance of their cultural heritage, including (especially) their language, and even many old Indians have learned to submerge their cultural practice of religion and find a substitute home in the Christian religion, if they find a religious home at all. Without the assurance of roots, the Indian is usually afflicted with feelings of inferiority, and shows these in the extreme form of reticence that white people have come to think is the Indian's "characteristic stoicism." As more and more Indians become articulate in the white American idiom, as we already see exemplified by writers like Vine Deloria Jr., N. Scott Monaday, and Hyemeyohsts Storm, we can be assured of a growing presence in our own experiences

of Native Americans who can deliver us from our stereotypes of the reservation Indian through challenging us in the idiom of our own intellectual world.

The newcomer to most reservations must nerve himself to face the dismaying epidemic of alcoholism that threatens to wipe out entire tribes, an epidemic whose in-depth causes and solutions are still shrouded in mystery. Family life will seem to be in decay, as it often actually is, and the number of church marriages by Catholics is dwindling. Illegitimacy is high, and children seem to be increasingly cared for by grandparents. Unemployment is widespread, and even where jobs are available the motivation often seems to be lacking. Attitudes towards the Church are generally passive, even among devout churchgoers, and if the missionary goes out to experience tribal religious rites, he finds a striking contrast to such passivity, as so many Indians show more enthusiasm and outgoingness in these ceremonies that look so foreign to the non-Indian.

Thus begins the practical effort to *understand* this data, and therewith begins a practical missiology. Inquiry into local tribal history is a step toward understanding the sources of cultural damage, especially the loss of language and customs, and thus also the sources of much anger and frustration. This effort to understand and interpret will include both social and religious history—policies of both government and church in dealing with Indian life and culture. Understanding of the alcohol problem has eluded everyone thus far. Analysis must take one of two courses: either the Indian is constitutionally incapable of moderate drinking, or else one must focus on social and spiritual vacuums created over the years, leading to the search for escape from anomie and boredom. The question is not merely one of education in how to drink moderately, although when alcohol was first introduced this was certainly a factor.

Understanding family decay is also a complex exercise. While it is true that Indian family life has suffered more and more because of such curses as liquor, unemployment, and boredom, the missionary must be on guard to note cultural influences still touching family life. Hence one will not necessarily identify the care of children by grandparents, traditionally part of an extended family structure in which elders were moral and religious teachers, with abrogation of responsibility, however much this may have become a latter-day problem.

Missiology then proceeds to *judge*—not as to moral imputability but concerning causes of these phenomena and their solutions. Obviously, at this point consultation within the tribe becomes essential. An example of this step would be the procedure at our own mission in dealing with alcoholism. A community judgment arrived at through

discussion by mission staff among themselves, with other church missions, with tribal leaders, social agencies, and the problem drinkers themselves, is that drinking generally stems from peer pressure (a powerful tribal force for both good and evil in former times), boredom, and lack of a positive sobriety support program. The judgment leading to a solution has pointed toward the establishment of a support-group center for recreation, group therapy, prayer, and companionship for problem drinkers. A network of co-operation with law-enforcement officers is also being set up.

Thus, *decision* and *action* center around social and pastoral procedures that direct themselves toward a practical liberation from the oppression of cultural and spiritual emptiness and demoralization. The decisions to establish such activities as an alcoholic center, a youth center, an expanded religious education center, and cross-cultural dialogue events are truly theological decisions. They are based on the theory that the very presence of the Church is a healing and freeing presence, and reflection on such events contributes to a cumulative and progressive movement of thought and action.

And yet, the four steps described above are largely, except for the cultural dialogue, a process of symptomatic treatment—the response to an *initial* confrontation. Hence we seek for the deeper confrontation at the level of spirit, where a fundamental sense of identity and motivation originate. Here is where the issue becomes more deeply theological and where a long-range program of renewal and liberation begins. At this level the theologian's training in religious studies and anthropology is obviously important. But even more critical is a training in the method of phenomenology, where one begins with a nonjudgmental observation of the data, while "intending," as a religious person or a seeker oneself, the signs of transcendence in the phenomena. Intentionality is here described as a seeking to meet a hunger within oneself (relation of subject-desiring-to-know to the object). Thus, phenomenological method does not mean apathetic observation; it means rather a willingness to suspend judgment until one has understood the phenomena. As a method, it allows the missionary to approach primal religion as a partner in a dialogue and a religious quest.[65]

The first step is again *experience*, the nonjudgmental meeting with the religion of the culture to which I intend to speak and with which I shall dialogue. Once more taking a local context as a model, I will describe the kinds of experiences one may have as one grows in the slow process of involvement in tribal religious life, an involvement

[65] Phenomenology here stems from Husserl and his school, but the source for applying it to our method is G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); on the method see 594–650, 671 to end.

certainly not dictated by mere curiosity, not even by a mere desire to know, but by the will to benefit as a disciple of the values to be found there. A beginning step here is to become familiar with the native language. In the context of most North American Indian cultures, this is not a *sine qua non* for beginning, since most Indians now speak English, having been forced into it. Sadly enough, English-speaking has been encouraged by a systematic effort of government and sometimes church to stamp out tribal language. But at the very least, the process of learning about tribal religion should be accompanied by an effort to learn that language so integral to the culture and to the religious symbolism.

The missioner must set out to experience and understand the indigenous prayer life, asking how the people pray and in what circumstances. At times their prayer will be both Christian and tribal in form, as when an elder is invited to pray in church. But a careful study will enable one to separate out much of the typically tribal mode of prayer. This experience will have to be unstructured and for a long time rather unfamiliar; never, perhaps, may one hope to receive detailed information and instruction about tribal customs and mythology. Study will mean that we must acquire the painfully tedious art of tactful questioning, and the virtue of waiting, often in silence, with the hope that some new understanding of our partner's deeper religious consciousness will be revealed to us. Such exchange comes only with endurance and suffering, for Indians as well, whose patience is even more tried by often having to communicate in the white man's idiom. But with the growth of trust, various tribal customs do open up to the missionary. The phenomena, in brief, manifest themselves in the following way, according to one local (Arapahoe) culture; workers in other cultures may find this catalogue of some help.

A CATALOGUE OF DATA

The reader should observe here that I am listing the phenomena as they present themselves, and not according to the ranking given by elders when they narrate a history of ceremonies and lodges, for many of these lodges are no longer active. But many rich forms of symbolism still thrive, such as the following:

Painting rites. The painting of the face is done on occasions of funerals or death anniversaries as a condolence, or following a violent death as a reconciliation prayer, or as a ceremony for healing or deliverance from impending evil. It is easy enough for all in attendance to participate, by kneeling within the circle as tribal elders, men and women, pass around to spread red paint on each person's forehead and cheekbones. Generally, trusted non-Indians will also be accepted in the

lodge of the Keeper of the Sacred Pipe for the painting against illness. In every case the observer-participant should learn from each small gesture of the rite.

Naming Ceremonies. Another ceremony to which nontribal persons can be invited rather readily is the rite of naming children or adults. This is a ritual at which the person is endowed with a proper Indian name. At times a missionary may receive a name as a special tribute or as part of a healing rite; for again, to receive a name may be a prayer for the recipient's general well-being. Different elders perform the rite differently, but the observer will often see the recipient instructed to stand in the middle of the room, perhaps turning to the Four Directions, and prayed over by the elder, who calls out the new name four times. The name received is a source of power and is not to be treated lightly.

The Sun Dance. Visitors are welcome, among the Arapahoe and Shoshone of the Wyoming Wind River country, and among some of the other Plains tribes, at their most important religious festival today, commonly called "Sun Dance." While severe restrictions are laid upon the visitors' activities (no cameras or sketching, in many places no tape recorders), one is free to stand at the lodge entrance to observe. Space is lacking here to describe the ritual, running as it does over a period of seven days in various stages.[66] It is enough to point out that the Sun Dance, constituted among Arapahoe by a four-day "Rabbit Lodge" and a three-day "Offerings Lodge," includes all of the elements of the tribe's ceremonial life and serves as an interpretation of the whole tribal life, history, and culture. The painful suffering to which central participants must submit through strenuous dancing and total fasting most graphically represents the Indian emphasis on learning through suffering.

The Sacred Flatpipe. As with many other tribes, the Arapahoe's most sacred possession is a pipe which, unlike the Sioux, who received theirs some three hundred years ago, the Arapahoe have held since the forming of the earth out of the primeval flood. A very special pipe, all of stone, the Flatpipe is never smoked, and it is seen only on solemn ritual occasions, joined either to long fasting or to an especially long and arduous Sweat Lodge. The true and complete tradition of the pipe can be learned only by a very few, even of the Arapahoe, and this only

[66] I have described the Arapahoe Sun Dance in its more visible aspects in *The People of the Center* (New York: Seabury, 1974) 54–64. A complete anthropological study of this Sun Dance was done at the turn of the century by George A. Dorsey, *The Arapaho Sun Dance: Ceremony of the Offerings Lodge* (Chicago: Field Columbian Museum, 1903). The present Arapahoe Sun Dance does not differ greatly from that described by Dorsey, though some elements have been dropped and others added.

with the giving of seven consecutive nights of feasts. The information is so privileged that it may never be easily acquired. In general, the pipe is symbolic to most tribes of divine care and protection, and to the Arapahoe it is the power-charged symbol of both the Creator and the People, since the earth was created for the pipe.

The Tipi Fast. Closely related to the Flatpipe is the ceremony of a three-day, three-night fast from all food and drink, with the pipe exposed in a special tipi, accompanied by rites and prayers, especially for healing or in thanksgiving for a favor. Participants, as in the Sun Dance and other fasting rites, enter the ceremony as the result of personal vows.

The Sweat Lodge. Originally the feature of one of the seven lodge-societies, the Sweat Lodge today is a ceremony open to any who are invited and of good will and a prayerful disposition; it is widely used among all Indians. The fundamental symbolism (a symbol to effect what it represents) is that of purification. The rite begins with the building of a large bonfire, within which some twenty to forty large round stones are heated to red-hot temperatures. An igloo-like structure, some ten feet in diameter and four feet in height, is built by draping blankets, tarpaulins, or skins over a willow frame, with a pit dug in the center of the dirt floor, which is spread with reeds around the edges. The stones are placed in the pit, and to the accompaniment of prayer, incense, rattles, and chant, cold water is poured over the stones in pitch darkness. During the intense heat of the ceremony, where there are generally four symbolic pouring rounds, prayer is offered for many intentions. In these rites the participants pray in a free and charismatic fashion.

The Wilderness Fast. Many tribes, especially of the woodlands and plains, have stressed the value of seeking a life-vision through prolonged suffering and discernment of spirits. Some tribes sent young people out around the age of puberty to seek their visions; other tribes reserved, and still reserve, the fast for adults and older adolescents. The seeker is left out on a lonely hill with only a bedroll or blanket spread in a specially consecrated sacred place, there to fast from food and water for three or occasionally four days, to "lament" and pray that the Father and the good spirits may send him the power of their presence. Some tribes restrict the ceremony to males, others open it to women as well. It is an experience of physical endurance, of solitude, perhaps of spiritual struggle, an exposure, nearly naked, to the elements of nature and to a type of total poverty—to being "pitiful," as the Sioux and Arapahoe put it. The rite is generally undertaken with some guidance from an experienced holy man.

The Peyote Cult (often called Native American Church, but not

restricted to that church). Peyote, a mild hallucinogen, is a late arrival in North American Indian life, less than a century old. Its usage is now widespread, held in all-night tipi ceremonies combining Indian chanting, drumming, and smoking ritually with certain Christian symbols like the cross, prayer to Jesus Christ, and public confession or testimony. The combined Indian-Christian mythos expresses the desire to experience visions, and fervent prayer for deliverance from destructive forces, especially alcohol.

This is not an exhaustive list even of Arapahoe customs. A large number of lesser practices will manifest themselves to the careful observer, and variants of the above will be carried on according to the lights of individual medicine men and holy men. For the missiologist, this small sample is enough to point out the need for a further-developed method of understanding. How, then, might one now understand these phenomena which, as Heidegger would say, must be "let be" or "let-manifest-themselves"? How does one enter into the deeper religious consciousness?

The essential here is to study the phenomena on their own terms as *Indian* culture, and more tightly as a specific tribal culture, employing the direct study methods already described. But tools of reflection are also necessary, and the general tool is the phenomenological method. Further investigation into this method will be aided by use of the categories of scholars such as Rudolf Otto, Gerardus Van der Leeuw, and Mircea Eliade. The authenticity of their studies is time and again borne out by the attempts of students of cultural religion, including the present author, to bypass their categories, only to find out how thorough was their homework—and in many cases their field work. The major categories they established have become tools of religious dialogue and common understanding among all faiths, but especially in the universal-tribal encounter. Here we find ourselves truly the children of one Father. With such tools, never should a missionary allow premature zeal for "pure religion" to lead him down a path of destructive polemics against tribal culture. Criticize he must eventually, and perhaps oppose or confront, but never without prior painstaking discernment. The principle of the "Presupposition" of Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* is applicable here:

> . . . it is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false. If an orthodox construction cannot be put on a proposition, the one who made it *should be asked how he understands it*. If he is in error, he should be corrected with all kindness. If this does not suffice, all appropriate means should be used

to bring him to a correct interpretation, and so defend the proposition from error.[67]

The statement is all the more applicable when partners in dialogue deal not so much with propositions as with fundamental religious experience, which does not easily lend itself to terms such as "correctness" and "error."

As a sampling of this application, I shall briefly discuss the major categories of Otto, Van der Leeuw, and Eliade as they relate to the Indian phenomena I have described above. I will also elaborate on basic approaches to primitive religion as these authors have developed them. This small sample may serve as a model for discernment within other cultures, including perhaps missions within middle America, the college campus, the urban ghetto, and even suburbia.

Rudolf Otto

While Otto has contributed vastly to the study of religion, both Eastern and Western, the contribution for which he is most famous is his "idea" of the Holy, that ineffable Reality which pervades and qualifies all religion. Otto helps us realize that the "modern" Christian cannot and should not claim a "faith" that can grasp experience in intelligible concepts and expect it to satisfy his religious needs. Arapahoe religion is no stranger to such experiences, any more than was primitive Christianity or the Middle Ages or the Reformation. The Arapahoe Mercy Prayer, heard so often in Indian situations, especially in the various forms of the Sweat Lodge, and either in the native tongue or in English, expresses the stance of human nature before the Holy: "Father, have pity on me, pitiful. I sit here praying upon the earth, pitiful; have pity on me, pitiful." A sense of poverty in the presence of God or of the sacred gift of the Pipe is evident as a response to the numinous and awe-filled. The entire tribal myth is so mysterious that it is hedged about with such safeguards as I have described, and the universe shows us signs of the "supernatural" ("that which we do better not to tamper with," as one older Arapahoe once told me). But Otto offers the missiologist tools of discernment as well as categories in his chapter on the primitive manifestations of the Holy, that is, what occurs in the "vestibule of religion."[68]

Otto discusses the place of magic (far more sympathetically than in the encyclopedic but somewhat simplistic fashion of Sir James Frazer)

[67] *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*, tr. Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola, 1951) 11.

[68] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford, 1967) 117.

in primitive religion. He gives attention to the religious role of the dead, of souls and spirits, of "power," of ritual purity, of demonism, and so forth in the life of primal societies. What he contributes here to the discernment process is a caution against being too ready to find a "primitive monotheism,"[69] along with an admonition to recognize the genuine aspirations of ancient religion—that myth is generally the anticipation of higher religious experience.

Otto shows us the process of examination of "the numinous" that touches on the problem of "primitive" versus Christian religion, and allows the missiologist to be both sympathetic and critical towards the primal experience, wherever he finds it. There are six points in the method. (1) The numinous unfolds only gradually in "moments" and by degrees, and some of these moments are of a cruder sort. (2) There is a confusion between true numinosity and "natural" feelings, and this situation calls for careful discernment. (3) The numinous experience itself will gradually spiritualize the primitive tendency to divinize natural phenomena, and will point the subject toward genuine transcendence. (Otto may be overly optimistic here, as even modern movements attest.) (4) Primitive numinosity can lead to a fanaticism that results in uncontrolled enthusiasm. (5) Primitive experience can often be interpreted wrongly in terms of an analogous experience, similar to the problem of moment 2 above: e.g., merely natural "horror" can become an experience of the numinous. (6) The primitive experience lacks rationalization and moralization, which the development of Christianity can give it.[70] Yet the experience can never be rationalized away; the factors of "inconceivable" and "incomprehensible" must not be lost. It should be clear to the discerning Christian that these points can be turned in upon his own faith experience, as well as outward toward primal religions.

Mircea Eliade

The missiologist's Christian experience can also render him sympathetic to primal religion via the work of Eliade, especially through his *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, which attempts to sort out the immense variety of hierophanies in religions around the world. Again the worker in the field quickly finds how accurately Eliade has examined and discussed the Sacred. American Indian religion reveals its intense absorption in sacred place, sacred persons, sacred stones and sky and water and fire, in the holiness of Earth. I cannot enter here into a treatment of all of Eliade's valuable patterns. Of great value to my immediate purpose is his stress on the importance of

[69] Ibid. 129.

[70] Ibid. 131–35.

symbol for all peoples. In a passage that can serve as a tool of study, he writes about "the logic of symbols."[71] This logic tends, on the one hand, toward an infantilism, that is, toward the multiplication of symbols ad infinitum as hierophanies, and to the categorizing of everything as sacred. On the other hand, symbol (as the Greek *sym-ballein* indicates) also serves to unify. In studying symbols, we should see there the philosopher desiring to make all creation one and do away with multiplicity and division.[72] Symbolic thought makes man himself a symbol, "a living cosmos open to all the other living cosmoses by which he is surrounded";[73] here again we find the *intendere* of the phenomenological method.

So the student of missiology who employs Eliade's principles is himself (again to stress the subject-object relationship of phenomenology) a seeker for unification. At the close of his chapter on symbols, Eliade states what seems to be a favorite theme:

> To primitive man, every level of reality is so completely open to him that the emotion he felt at merely *seeing* anything as magnificent as the starry sky would have been as strong as the most "intimist" personal experience felt by a modern. For, thanks chiefly to his symbols, the *real existence* of primitive man was not the broken and alienated existence lived by civilized man today.[74]

From this we can say, in observing ourselves, that there is truly a sincere intentionality in the modern who in his primal yearnings still weeps when beholding the heavens at night.

Gerardus Van der Leeuw

I have written elsewhere about the invaluable contribution of Van der Leeuw to religious phenomenology, including a clarification of the method itself.[75] Since that paper of two years ago, I have become even more intensely aware of how precisely he laid his finger on the basic experience and quest of primal religion and on the primitive aspect of modern religion, with his category of Power and its related categories of Will and Form. I have come to a more profound understanding of what it means for the Indian to seek power, and a grasp of how subtle and difficult the dialogue between theologian and medicine man must be if they are to arrive at some agreement about the simultaneous presence in one person or in one community of both the religion of

[71] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Cleveland: World, 1967) 453.
[72] Ibid. 455.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid. 456.
[75] Cf. Carl F. Starkloff, S.J., "'Evangelization' and Native Americans," *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits* 4/1 (Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Missions, 1975) 1–37, esp. 18–28.

power and the religion of grace. Van der Leeuw does not make these mutually exclusive, but he indicates what we must do to understand the common basis of experience. For purposes of discussion, his other categories (strongly paralleling those of Eliade) are valuable and should be studied. The concepts of Power, Will, and Form may be the most helpful notions available in the search for a method of dialogue.

Religion is a quest for power. To obtain power in any sense is liberating. Van der Leeuw's understanding of power shows us how this happens in the religious quest. When primitive man worships, he does not worship nature or the environment, as it may seem; he seeks power—the capacity to do something—grounded in the environment.[76] All power is dangerous; it is likened to a raw electric current that must be channeled and controlled. The most primitive aspect of all religion is the magical attempt to harness power.

But power as such is not the sole object of religion, though it may be of magic. Even in primitive religion there is more: "For in the three terms *Power, Will* and *Form,* there lies practically the entire concept of the Object of religion."[77] The primitive sought power but knew that there was a will, a personal reality, over against himself, with whom he had to contend for that power or from whom he might obtain power by petition. Power also became endowed with form for the primitive; it became an *event* in worship, acquired the form of a total prayer experience in dance, song, or other environmental acts of worship.[78] Van der Leeuw is concerned to show how all religion shares somehow in this triple phenomenon. Whether Power is a primitive force or the Pneuma of the New Testament, whether Will is a reluctant spirit or God the Father, whether Form is a primitive complexus of drumming ceremonies or the Solemn High Mass, the culture hero or Jesus the Lord, here the key to discernment is prayer: "When man recognizes first of all Form, and later Will, within Power, then the power-word, the conjuration, changes into prayer. Power operates only upon power; the potency of Will requires a second will."[79]

In prayer the missionary finds himself fulfilling the aspirations of religion and can more deeply interpret all religious longing that is implicit in every tradition. Prayer and theology, along with comparative religious studies, help to complete the missiological formation. The

[76] Van der Leeuw, *Religion* 49.

[77] Ibid. 87. In a footnote Van der Leeuw explains the term Form: "The term 'Form' is one of the most important in the present work. It is best understood by referring to recent 'Gestalt psychology,' which maintains that every object of consciousness is a whole or a unit, and is not merely constituted by the elements that analysis may discover; the English name of this system is usually 'configuration psychology.' "

[78] Starkloff, "Evangelization" 22–23.

[79] Van der Leeuw, *Religion* 426.

emissary to a foreign culture must straddle at least two worlds. It is a hard calling, and if he is ill prepared in discernment and the life of prayer, the straddling can become so interiorized as to rend and destroy him. Hence the importance of a theological formation in his own tradition, the study of universal religious experience, and an ascetical life grounded in the gospel. With such a background he may hope to form sound judgments about the religion of those to whom he preaches. He will first try to judge tribal ceremonies and beliefs on the basis of universal experience. As I have grown more familiar with Native American religion, I have come to see this rich tradition as having deep roots within human religious consciousness. Personal contact has verified more and more what Hartley Burr Alexander wrote in his introduction to *The World's Rim:*

> There is something universal in man's modes of thinking, such that, as they move onward in their courses, they repeat in kind if not in instance an identical experience—which, if it be of the mind, can be understood only as the instruction which the creative nature must everywhere give to a human endowment. The Indian gives an understanding of life colored and adorned by his own unique familiarities with a hemisphere or Earth which for many centuries was his only; this understanding is delivered in his own imaginative guise and following the impulses of his own artistic genius. But the fact that so created—by a unique people in a unique continent—it still in substance echoes what other groups of men in other natural settings have found to be *the human* truth, so that Aryan and Dakota, Greek and Pawnee, build identical ritual patterns to express their separate discoveries of a single insight, is but the reasonable argument for a validity in that insight which cannot be lightly dismissed.[80]

Thus, even without foreknowledge of the categories provided by religion scholars, one encounters a mythology of creation, of the origin of a people, of the reasons for death, of a primal sin, of an eschatology both personal and universal. In language studies one discovers the great emphasis placed on the Holy, with Otto's descriptions universally verified. The categories of the Sacred manifest themselves in the prominence of particular sacred things, persons, and activities. The experience of the shaman, the meeting with spirits, the sacredness of Earth and the other elements, the place of the Tree of Life in the Sun Dance, all resonate remarkably with human experience everywhere. The awe-inspiring reverence for asceticism and prayer is not only close to universal religious emotions; it even ranks, according to Wach, among the highest of primal forms of religion.[81]

[80] Hartley Burr Alexander, *The World's Rim: Great Mysteries of the North American Indians* (Lincoln: Nebraska Univ., 1969) xvi.

[81] Wach, *Sociology of Religion* 117–19.

This step in judgment is important, obviously, in that if what I encounter is human experience through which the nature of man is elevated, I must accept this experience as a valid one, whether or not it is canonized by church practice. It has a value at least for personal devotion. The second step is more difficult, yet perhaps more vital: this is the judgment involving that which has contributed to Christian practice throughout the centuries. I refer to a judgment about the practice of "transposition," which always teeters on the brink of syncretism, yet is different. Van der Leeuw calls transposition the variation of the significance of a phenomenon while its form remains unaltered, as when Bethel was transposed, through Jacob's revelation, from a local fetish to an authentic theophany.[82]

As brief examples within my missiological model, I cite several possible practices of transposition and the theory behind them. None is in any way hallowed by official ecclesiastical decree. Each is considered by local dialogue now being pursued in such places as the Wind River Reservation, Rosebud Reservation, Pine Ridge Reservation, and the Northern Cheyenne Reservation near Ashland, Montana, as possible means toward enabling native imagery to refract in clearer fashion the light of revelation. Again, I am speaking not of native rites or beliefs that Christian Indians might follow *parallel* to official church observance, for there are many of these. I am discussing possible changes or additions in church worship. On a more superficial level, there are the reflections over adaptation of native singing and dancing to Christian services. Still not of earth-shaking significance, but more profound and in need of study, is the use of Thunderbird symbolism as representative of the mediatorship of Christ, and of the Spirits of the Four Directions as symbols or mediums of divine providence.

A lively controversy exists over the practice of praying in church—either by a Christian minister or by an Indian holy man—with the use of a sacred pipe, a pipe derivative of a tribe's one Sacred Pipe, its most precious possession. Some pastors and Indian leaders among Sioux tribes are already practicing this kind of prayer, and some symbolic language has been used proclaiming Jesus Christ as "the Living and Eternal Pipe," prefigured Old-Covenant-wise by the tribal pipe tradition.[83] Needless to say, here one can find considerable room for concern on both sides. One Sioux medicine man prays with the pipe for his and

[82] Van der Leeuw, *Religion* 610.

[83] I refer here to some well-received but still controversial practices of Fr. Paul Steinmetz of the Pine Ridge Reservation. On the Wind River Reservation we have dropped any practice of praying with a pipe by missionaries, and this on the advice of Arapahoe elders. However, I would point out that Fr. Steinmetz is courageously breaking new ground for discussion.

others' temporal welfare, while he also receives the Church's sacraments for his eternal salvation. Whatever the theological validity of the use of a pipe in church ceremonies, the problem of transposition, as we try to understand the inner depths of symbolic language, is a grave one. Syncretism, the haphazard mingling of conflicting symbols, is a real danger here. While Christianity, as Van der Leeuw has observed, is indeed phenomenologically syncretic, this syncretism becomes perilous when it penetrates to central mysteries. Equally problematic, and no doubt insoluble as a conflict, is the Native American Church credo that holds peyote to be its sacrament "just like" the Eucharist. Here much may be solved through semantics, but any transposition—in this case done by Indians themselves rather than by any church group—is filled with problems.

Other areas of possible transposition, where the problems are not as great because the mingling of symbols may mean simple cultural enrichment, are: (1) the possible blessing of infants by a tribal elder within the baptism ceremony, thus dedicating the child to God and the good spirits; (2) the insertion of the Indian Naming Ceremony into the prebaptismal anointing, as an initiatory rite; (3) the use of a sweat-lodge rite as an accompaniment to the sacrament of penance; (4) the practice of the long fasts as spiritual retreats, imitative of Jesus' fasting. The basic problem of transposition is, of course, to discern the consciousness and "intention" in such practices, not to be needlessly rigid, but to be just to the cultures involved.

On these grounds the missiologist moves to *decision* and *action*. Fundamentally, the reflective process is not intended to demythologize, and certainly not to secularize. The purpose is to spiritualize, in Otto's sense of the word, to assist both the missionary and the native consciousness to live in faith in the work of the Spirit and the freedom this faith brings. The purpose of the transcendental method is reached with this free decision. We now have a method applied to a local situation (praxis). The decision for procedure, as part of a missiology based on the present discussion, might be described in this way: (1) to continue the cross-cultural dialogue and to share cross-cultural prayer and celebration; (2) to apply the dialogue to catechesis and sacramental life; (3) to develop a plan for communal sharing of experiences and to create "belonging"; (4) to direct theology toward adaptation of church law to cultural needs; (5) to develop a shared theology of culture; (6) to contribute church strength to necessary political activity and growth in moral life and decision-making.

Some examples of the adaptation work of missions on Indian reservations are the following:

1) Cultural dialogue: open meetings, in the traditional Indian ritual-

meal context, are held at some missions, with medicine men and tribal elders, to discuss common grounds and differences. One such dialogue has already produced the beginning of a bilingual text in comparative religion. As part of such dialogue, the missionaries are sharing in Indian religious life through wilderness fasts, sweat lodges, paintings, pipe ceremonies, and peyote meetings.

2) In catechetics, thus far, tribal resources are employed to construct workbooks and sample texts. Tribal elders aid in presacramental instruction. A gradual movement is under way to restore viable elements in Indian culture through instruction in tribal religion and language. Elders are doing blessings and instruction in baptism, confirmation and anointings. Clergy are co-operating closely with tribal leaders at funerals, which are always elaborate affairs consuming an entire day and two prior evenings. A typical Arapahoe funeral will include two wakes and services, a Requiem Mass employing drums, incense and prayer by an elder, Indian memorial songs, eulogies, a graveside service often lasting over two hours, a painting ceremony, a "giveaway" customary at Indian funerals, and a feast. The Church has its work cut out for it here to catechize about life and death in such circumstances, and it is an ideal opportunity. Finally, it is worth noting that the permanent diaconate is figuring in some tribes today; it shows signs of becoming a true cross-cultural ministry.

3) The plan for sharing, to create the "belonging" spoken of earlier, is based on the premise that Christian missions are best situated at present to be centers for worship, recreation, alcohol therapy of certain kinds, events for the aged, adult education, etc. In other words, the mission itself is now often a tribal phenomenon. There is great danger here of paternalism and dependency; education to self-development has to be part of the process.

4) Many missions are discussing the adaptation of church law and theology to social and cultural needs. These needs show up not only in worship but also in marriage preparation and annulment procedures, and are related to the current disruption of family life due especially to alcohol. More attention must be given to the traditional extended family in rearing children; this in turn could influence marriage legislation. Trial marriages are, like it or not, a reality, partly because Indians do respect the sacrament of matrimony and yet fear the consequences of permanent union within so precarious a cultural situation. Walking the line between laxity and severity here is a matter for prayerful discernment.

5) Dialogue among religious leaders is in fact turning Indian religion in the direction of a reflective theology. This, of course, changes the very nature of tribal religion and in turn calls Christian theology from

its more cerebral aspects to honor direct experience as well. With the entry of reflection into Indian religion, dialogue in theology has opened up on numerous topics. Here are several significant samples, as found among Plains Indian tribes.

The question of God. A discussion of the more personal and historical character of the Judeo-Christian God must be compared to the more distant High God of primal religion, although this impression of deity has altered much since the coming of Christianity. The common ground, at least with most Plains tribes, is that of a basic monotheism recognizing the "Great-One-over-All."

Jesus Christ. Dialogue centers on the metaphysical aspect of the vicarious suffering of Jesus through selfless love as the Bible describes it, compared to Indian religion's tendency to see Jesus more as exemplar of holiness, and perhaps in some late traditions as culture hero. The conflict is not insoluble; in fact, dialogue promises a richness drawn from Christian theology and various tribal traditions as they relate to Christianity. It is interesting that, in a recent meal-conversation between mission staff and religious elders, one of my long-time Arapahoe advisers pointed out that he thought that missionaries tend too much to speak just of Jesus and not enough of the Father, who, after all, "is the real Boss." Where might one find a more challenging statement for a development of Trinitarian theology?

Sin. Concepts of an "original sin" are common in Indian traditions, and the factor of corporate personality is well understood. Indian religion tends to stress the reality of an "objective sin" in both social and ritual actions, even where "full consent" is absent. This, too, is a topic rich in implications for growth in a theology of sin, especially the distinction between imputability and taking responsibility for the consequences of objective social evil, even where one has not directly caused it.

Eschatology. Some sense of history is present in both religious traditions, but Indian world views tend to stress space more than time, cyclical rather than linear concepts. Indians often reject or bypass the idea of eternal damnation, or at least a place like hell, believing that if one can obtain forgiveness from a fellow tribal member for an offense, God will always forgive our offenses. There are, however, ideas of a wandering of the soul as punishment for certain evil actions.

Grace. Here Christianity introduces what I call a spiritualized view of power: the idea of God's saving power as free gift of Himself. The indwelling Spirit is shown in the New Testament to be a Person to whom the Christian relates, even though He (or It) is also a Power within the Christian. Grace (or Power) in its fullest sense is, therefore, the Uncreated Grace living in dialogue with and within us. It is not

easy to contrast or compare the Indian view of power and spirit with this, because so much is analogous and yet in subtle contrast. The most common Indian understanding of power and spirit in Native American religion, while having elements of personal petition and dialogue, especially among the Plains peoples, tends to stress a more animistic conception, in which the practitioner strives to make contact with the various spirits dwelling in all things and to learn and acquire a share of their powers, so as to use them profitably for healing and other purposes.[84] Power is thus a kind of mana, available from many different spirit sources, which, to be sure, the Indian sees as individual and personal sources. In the Arapahoe view this is not just raw mana-power with an indifferent orientation; a holy man or medicine man will not use power for evil purposes, and will comfort his people who may fear sorcery by assuring them that no good spiritual power can be used in an evil way, and that good spirits can overcome evil spirits. But with all this, the relationship of most Indian prayer and ceremony to power is toward acquiring and using it as "medicine," understood as power applicable for various purposes, generally spiritual or physical healing, between which Indians see an intimate relationship. I see here a more pragmatic understanding of power or grace. But the distinctions between power and grace are not at all self-evident, and we still need discussion around this vital theological point. This is especially true since many forms of contemporary and traditional Indian prayer show sublime sensitivity to grace as bestowed by the Creator. Likewise, the various reciprocal exchanges between human beings and the spirits raise profound questions about humanity's relationships with the environment, and about the kind of mysticism of nature and vital forces that arises in the thought of Teilhard de Chardin. The Eastern Church concept of the Divine Energies also seems most sympathetic to Indian spirituality.

Prayer. Indian religion stresses petition and propitiation, even while giving some emphasis to adoration and thanksgiving. An interesting study is how prayer was taught in Indian tradition, with the emphasis on having reached a certain age before one was ready to pray at all. On the side of Indian tradition, at least that of the Sioux, Arapahoe, and Cheyenne, one cannot but be moved by the fervor of prayer and the tearful simplicity of prayer of petition, as well as by its spontaneity. The practice of reading prayers from a book has never been fully

[84] Joseph Epes Brown has called "animism" a rather "unkind" term; he prefers "a belief in a plurality of indwelling spirits." Brown points out some of the genuine values in such a world view in his "Roots of Renewal," in *Seeing with a Native Eye*, ed. Walter Holden Capps (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) 30.

accepted by traditional Indians, who so honor the personal word of the heart.

Morality. Questions on the permanence of marriage are a source of tension, but Indians have little trouble understanding the precepts of the Decalogue. Indian teachings on reverence, family solidarity, respect for the aged and weak and for the sacredness of speech have much to say to a white society where these qualities are decaying.

A final note on theological praxis pertains to missions as centers of tribal social life. Being such centers, the missions contribute to a tribe's political growth. Parochial schools are moving into local tribal control through a political process involving government contracts, obtained only through long, patient, persistent haggling with agencies of government. The educational work of missions still figures in co-operative farming practices and in the self-management problems tied in with newly found political and economic power.

CONCLUSION

The goal of a missiology, then, is far greater than a narrow sacramental ministry, or even a native clergy. It is that of a much richer spiritual and social life—perhaps in adapted liturgies, but also in the lives of persons who learn to benefit from tribal customs as well as from the Christian tradition, even in its non-Indian values where these are helpful. These may be Indian persons, they may be non-Indian missionaries. Anthropologists point out that once a primal culture enters the reflective stage, it becomes alienated from its primitive self and loses its spontaneity. This granted, it may be suggested that, in the face of the onslaught of technology, Christian theology might help the tribal spirituality to grow and survive. This survival cannot be a repristinization; it will have to be a new synthesis following upon the crisis of reflection. But the new I-thou that emerges could conceivably be a fresh page in Christian spiritual history. The centrality of the Christ mystery stands to be adorned by this rich piece of cultural mosaic.

In summary: We set out to initiate a normative method of mission theology, having recurring and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results. The operations of both theory and praxis are open to constant revision. The results are now proving to be cumulative, and already perhaps progressive. How much they will contribute to the Church's theology depends on the Holy Spirit, on those doing theology, and on the readiness of the teaching Church to be a learning Church as well.