

merely to draw the readers' attention to the need for on-going research and to new methodologies being introduced by the renewal of historical study in this field. It is important and critical that such work be carried on by both Chinese and Western historians, working in close cooperation with each other. For this reason, our Foundation is organizing an International Conference to take place in Louvain in September of 1990 on the Historiography of Catholic Missions in China.

The Conference will bring together church-related historians as well as secular scholars from both East and West to share the results of their research, to discuss new methods and approaches, and to bring their critical acumen to bear on evaluating the past with an eye to possible directions that might be taken in the future. It comes at a critical time in the history of the Church in China, which is now in the process of reorganizing itself. It is our hope that the Conference by working to understand the past, might be of some service in supporting the Church in China's efforts to create that future.

THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF LOCAL CHURCHES: ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

by Arnulf Camps



During the past few decades, the study of Church history has been undergoing a process of change. New dimensions have been added and new methodologies have revitalized its traditional approaches. No longer is Church history the private reserve of a few historians in search of the past. It now attracts an ever-increasing number of scholars concerned with mankind's future. These scholars, who represent a variety of disciplines, have become keenly aware of the impact the Church has had, and continues to have, on the development of cultures. They are now studying Church history within the larger framework of the history of mankind. In this paper, we wish to present our readers with a general overview of this new renaissance in the field of Church history, indicating significant changes in methodology and underlining certain new

dimensions that are being added to this traditional discipline which is now in a state of renewal.

Changing Methodology

It seems to me that in recent years there have been two major changes in the way Church history is being done. The first has to do with new perspectives in regard to traditional source materials, and the second with the introduction of oral history to complement these conventional resources.

The traditional sources for studying Church history have always been original documents which are usually found in archives, and published materials that are readily available on the bookshelves of libraries. In the past, the historians relying on such sources brought to the material at hand a decidedly Western perspective. Being themselves Westerners, they were primarily concerned with the spread of westernized Christianity through the agency of western missionaries. They focused on such things as the number of converts, how many churches were erected, the obstacles missionaries confronted in foreign cultures, and the lives of their heroes and martyrs. There was little interest shown in how Christianity was received by the local people and integrated into the local culture.

While reception-history has yet to be written, this new perspective has now come to the fore, thanks largely to the efforts of local historians working within the context of their own cultures.

A fine example of this new approach is The History of Christianity in India, a two volume work published in Bangalore in the early years of the present decade. Volume I traces Christian origins in India from its earliest beginning to the year 1542 and is the work of A.M. Mundadan. J. Tekkedath continues the story in Volume II up to the end of the 17th century. Four more volumes are planned for this series. Both authors present the history of Christianity in India not as something detached from but as an integral part of India's socio-cultural history. They focus on the Indian Christians, who they were, and how they understood themselves, their social, religious, cultural and political encounters, and the changes resulting from these encounters as they went about the task of appropriating the christian gospel. Both writers do this without diverting their attention from Indian culture as a whole and the history of the larger society of which the Indian Christians were a part.

A similar project is also being carried on by the Commission of Studies of the History of the Church in Latin America (CEHILA). The Commission has been working since 1973 on a ten-volume Church history of Latin America. Already 7 volumes have been published. They include a general introduction, the history of the Church in Brazil, Mexico,

Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, along with a history of the Latin American Church in the United States. Yet to come are works on the Caribbean, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay. The Commission involves both Catholics and Protestants in a joint effort. What makes this series different from previous histories is its new perspectives. It is history as seen through the eyes of the poor, by the believing Christian, and has a pronounced ecumenical and pastoral orientation. It also does equal justice to the roles played by both men and women.

At New Delhi in 1981, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) pledged to re-write Church history from the point of view of the oppressed. Since then, it has pursued this goal through international consultations, and national and regional workshops. This is another example of how the methodology of Church history is undergoing significant modifications in its traditional perspectives.

The second important change in methodology has been the introduction in recent years of oral history to supplement the traditional written source materials. The study of oral history, the legends and myths of antiquity, is well-known in cultural anthropology, but its introduction into the study of general history has been of recent origin. It consists primarily of extended interviews recorded on sound-tapes with those who have been participants in the actual events.

First attempts to use this method for the study of Church history took place at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands, where a group of scholars and missionaries began a project in 1976 called Kom Missie Memories (KMM). Some 1,000 interviews have already been recorded and the work continues up to the present. This growing collection has been used as source material for a number of doctoral dissertations. Some examples of these are: J. Cornelissen's Pater en Papoea, Kampen 1988, which describes the attitude of a group of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart towards the people of Irian Jaya in Indonesia; J. Breetvelt's Dualisme en Integratie, Kampen 1989, which studies the problems arising in Africa between African directors of hospitals and western doctors; and A. de Jong's De Bijdrage van Nederlandse Missionarissen in Oost-Afrika, which studies the influence of Dutch missionaries in East Africa on nation-building and establishing a local church.

With many more doctoral dissertations now in preparation, we can begin to speak of a Nijmegen-tradition of studies using the oral history approach. Steps were taken to broaden the scope of this method when CREDIC, a French organization working in the field of missionary aspects of Church history, met at Nijmegen in 1988 to draw up plans for further international cooperation in this area. Contacts have also been made between Nijmegen and the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS).

There are many advantages to be gained by using the oral history method. Perhaps one of the most important is that the main actors in this historical drama, the missionaries and the people among whom they worked, will now have direct input in the recording of that history. This will allow historians to come to a more personal understanding of, and consequently a deeper insight into the events of mission history.

We note with interest here that Jean Paul Wiest also used oral history sources while researching his recently published History of Maryknoll in China: 1918-1955. Wiest had at his disposal a taped-library of over 200 interviews with priests, sisters, and lay people who were directly involved in the work of the Maryknoll Fathers in China up to 1952. Geurdina Verstaelen-Gilhuis also made good use of the oral history method in her study of the Church in Zambia. From Dutch Mission Church to Reformed Church in Zambia was done with the help of a great number of interviews with local people in that country. She also devoted a few pages to comments on the relationship between the written and oral sources in her work.

It seems to me that the oral history method has a great future in the writing of local church histories. It also will have a significant influence on the way the modern Church looks at its own recent history. Through oral history, we can come closer to understanding the personal motivations of missionaries, and we can gain valuable insights into how the faith has been received into the local cultures. This approach will also help historians to sharpen their critical judgments by providing them with more exact information on which to base those judgments, be they positive or negative. This will allow us to walk the road that leads to the future perhaps with more caution, but also with more confidence.

NEW DIMENSIONS IN CHURCH HISTORY

In part two of this article, we wish to point out three current phenomena that are adding new dimensions to the study of Church history: the sudden interest being shown by missionary organizations in their own history, the rediscovery of Church history by historians of general history, and the changing nature of missionary motivation.

The constant barrage of criticism being leveled at missionary methods of the past, the changes in political status of former missionary territories, the expulsion of missionaries from several countries (most notably China), and the dwindling of their number throughout the missionary world, all contributed to a kind of pessimism among the missionaries themselves. It had caused them to question the value of their past activities and the usefulness of writing their histories down. Fortunately, this attitude is changing. Jean Paul Wiest's work on Maryknoll in China is an excellent example of how this spirit of pessimism is being

overcome. Another example is A.J. Austin's Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1888-1959. The Paris Foreign Mission Society has recently published two books on the history of its former missions: Lumière sur La Corée (Korea) and Guy Marie's Le Vietnam des Martyrs et des Saints (Vietnam). Other recent examples of the renewed interest in missionary history is F. Mires' La Colonización de Las Almas, Mission y Conquista en Hispanoamérica (in Latin America), and the abovementioned work of Geurdina Verstaelen-Gilhuis on Zambia.

While we are all familiar with the classic source material published from the archives of the Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans in the past, today we are discovering new approaches to old material. Modern mission histories search the past not only with the intention of evaluating it, but also for the purpose of finding ways and means to enter into new relationships with those local churches which were once missionary territories. This is something quite new and adds a different and exciting dimension to the study of Church history, as missionaries seek to forge new links with their past. Again we can only give a few brief examples of this current phenomena. A student in Louvain is now at work on the history of Flemish Franciscans in China; the Dutch Franciscans are preparing a history of their mission activities in Indonesia, Japan, Brazil, Pakistan, India and China; a member of the Dutch Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart is writing a history of his confreres in Irian Jaya; while the Sisters of Heerlen solidify plans to begin writing their history in China, the Dutch Augustinian Fathers are preparing a history of their missionary work in Bolivia and Indonesia. Our examples are limited, but they do indicate a world-wide trend.

Why this sudden interest by missionary organizations in recording their history? Certainly one reason is the desire to record the experiences of former missionaries while they are still alive. Their views are seen as indispensable for the writing of any future mission histories. But there is also something else motivating them. There is a genuine feeling of nostalgia among missionaries for the people among whom they worked in former times. They recognize how much their lives were enriched by them and feel somewhat impoverished by the severing of former ties. They are also aware that communication cannot be restored without undergoing some process of self-examination. Today's missionaries are convinced that valuable lessons can be learned from a study of their past history.

To illustrate this I would like to give an example from my own experience. One of my students is a Franciscan seminarian from the Philippines, who is writing his doctoral dissertation on the missionary charisms of that Order in his country. The Franciscan history to which my student belongs dates back to the 16th century. In his investigations, he has discovered that the early Spanish missionaries were men of deep

spirituality. They lived lives of genuine poverty and were truly humble friars. They were also knowledgeable in the languages and customs of the peoples among whom they worked. But my student also found them lacking in two important areas: they had great difficulty in accepting Filipinos into the Order, and they contributed to the tension between Muslims and Non-Muslims. There were reasons for both of these failings. The Spanish friars were schooled in a tradition that held the humanities in high esteem, while disregarding the value of non-literal cultures. They also brought with them the anti-muslim prejudices which resulted from the centuries' old conflict between Christians and Muslims in Spain. When an independent Filipino Franciscan Province was finally formed about twenty years ago, my student tells me, these local friars delved into the history of their past in great detail. They treated it with great respect, but also not without criticism. This enabled them to find their own identity and to place themselves at the service of the local church in new and fruitful ways. This is just one example of how new approaches to the past can lead to creative ways of dealing with the present.

A second factor that gives a new dimension to Church history has been the rediscovered interest in mission history by scholars outside the discipline. This has come about largely through the study of European migration. Since 1492, the peoples of the European continent have spread themselves across the world. This phenomenon is presently the object of intensive scholarly research. Western peoples harbour feelings of guilt, and they desire to come to terms with it. Nor was it only a matter of secular state policy; the churches were also involved on many levels. For this reason, secular historians are very much interested in the role missionaries played in its history.

Again we can only give some small indications of what is going on in this field. Urs Bitterli, in his Die Wilden und Die Zivilisierten, Deie Europäische Uberseeische Begegnung, has studied in depth the various kinds of contacts Europeans and non-Westerners had formed from the 15th to the 18th centuries. His is an excellent example of 'mentality-study' as it seeks to clarify the pre-conceptions on which European expansionism was based. It must have come as quite a shock to those early European migrants when they first discovered great religions and vast cultures so different from their own. And it took a long time for them to come to terms with what they found.

In Germany we find many new studies on the relationship between Christian missions and German imperialism and colonialism. They trace the rapid rise of nationalism in Germany at the turn of the century which staunchly defended 'Das Deutschtum' (the German identity) and its historic task and mission. German missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, were children of their times and often in sympathy with such a

mentality. This resulted in the rather strange mix of evangelism and colonialism we find during that period of Church history. We mention here two German scholars, H. Gründer and Klaus J. Bade, who have contributed much to this area of study.

While Dutch colonialism was motivated by a desire for economic expansion, the Dutch also felt they had an ethical mission to civilize and educate. Dutch missionaries assumed a large share in this by taking upon themselves the building of schools, hospitals and other social welfare institutions. Whether or not these institutions were of any help in involving the local people in their own destiny and culture is another question. H.L. Wesseling in his Indië Verloren, quotes Sir John Seeley: "We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind..." It seems the French also are doing some re-examination of the collective conscience, as Tzvetan Todorov's Nous et Les Autres, la Réflexion Française sur la Diversité Humaine would indicate.

More to the point are two other recent publications: T.O. Beidelman's Colonial Evangelism, a Socio-historical Study of East African Mission at the Grassroots, and Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920, which is edited by T. Christensen and W.R. Hutchison. These studies contain a large number of case-studies, all done in great detail. We need much more of this kind of work before we will be able to formulate adequate general conclusions. But, for the present, it has already become quite clear that the missionary enterprise did have many close links with colonial and imperialistic undertakings. There are many examples of this. The French semi-colonial domination in China was often (but not in every case) defended by missionaries who were convinced of the necessity for flying the French tricolor and the Vatican flag together. They needed protection, and was not France after all the 'eldest daughter' of the Church? Many American missionaries defended imperialism and colonialism as a moral equivalent of the defence of 'christian civilization'. Many Swedish missionaries considered evangelisation as a condition for modernisation. It is important to study these things and take them into consideration when writing mission history. And while there is no need to belabour the point, it must be said that most missionaries suffered from one or another of these questionable motives. It is only through becoming more conscious of the negative factors involved that we can hope to form new positive relationships with peoples, cultures and religions. These studies indicate how useful it is for us today to draw appropriate conclusions from the past. A new missionary age will be quite different from those of the past and it must begin with a conversion of mind and an acknowledgment of past mistakes. This also enables us to return to the original missionary ideal of Jesus and his early followers.

A third new dimension of modern mission history can be found in its treatment of missionary motivation. Recent studies have shown that what motivates missionaries to 'go forth and preach the gospel' has undergone many modifications and changes through the centuries. This provides an important counterbalance in the study of mission history, and while the historical study of missionary motivation is still in its initial stages, a beginning has been made. In our recently published work Ecumenical Introduction to Missiology (Oecumenische In-Leiding in de Missiologie), J. Jongeneel and I were more concerned with the inner dynamics of mission--the missionary movement as movement--than a repetition of outward events, which could easily be found elsewhere. What we discovered was that missionary motivation is in a constant state of change. For example, mission as understood by the Spanish and Portugese Padroado system shows marked differences in terms of motivation than the approach of Propaganda Fide. Again, the missionary movement of 17th century France was permeated by a new spirituality which was the root source of its dynamism. When interest in missionary activity dwindled away to almost nothing during the 19th century, it was revived and given new impetus by Pope Gregory XVI, Pius IX and their successors. It comes as a surprise to learn that the topic of mission was hardly mentioned at all during First Vatican Council. And when it did come up, its relevance was limited to the missions in the Near East. What is also apparent during the era of imperialism dating from 1878 to 1914 is the divergence of opinion between the popes and missionaries themselves. The popes were more alert to the impending social changes and the dangers involved than were the missionaries. In the years after 1914, the popes took steps to prepare the Church and the missionaries for a new decolonized world by stressing the need to develop a strong native clergy, to build up the local churches, and to loosen the unnecessary ties that bound the faith to western cultures.

It is important for us to study these dynamics in our approaches to Church history, especially local church histories. And while there are many who would still like to limit Church history study to the retelling of events, this new dimension cannot be ignored or passed over as insignificant. Through it, we are able to discover the inner vitality of the missionary movements, which can also serve to strengthen our faith in the continual presence of the Lord, active within the local churches.

It is the Lord and His Spirit who constantly add new dimensions and new impetus to the missionary activity of the Church. One might say that it is indeed the Lord of History, who, within the context of history, is guiding his people down through the ages. This conviction can be a source of courage for the faithful and their leaders as we continue to respond to the Church's mission mandate to 'go forth and preach the Gospel to every nation'.

Today the study of the history of local churches is more important than ever before. Local churches, once dependent on foreign missionaries, have matured and stand ready to assert their rights and assume their responsibilities as full members of the universal-church. These local churches are more than willing to join hands with other local churches in the universal-Church, which Vatican II tells us exists in and through the local churches. If there is a tension today between particularity and universality in the Church, this is a healthy tension. But the problems involved ought to be addressed and the tensions resolved. The study of mission history can help in this by placing the problems in historical perspective. Historia magistra vitae. Many solutions have been found to the problems created by mistakes made in the past. But we must not forget that it is the Spirit of the Lord that animates and imparts dynamism to all the local churches, who are one in the Lord. The study of this history keeps the Church alive, vigorous and creative.

THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF MISSION HISTORY

by Jean-Paul Wiest



A decade ago, someone interested in the development of Christianity in Third World countries could without too much difficulty keep up with scholarly publications written on the subject. Today, however, the number of books studying this same topic has substantially increased. The assistance of Bibliographica Missionaria the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Missiology, Tripod and the like has become more important to guide through the thicket of mission-related histories. Although these bulletins provide some evaluation of the reliability and quality of these studies, there seems to have been only a few attempts to discuss their relevance. (1)

The expression mission history serves as an umbrella to types of writings that vary widely in form and in scope. A partial survey of the field reveals that labels, which should not necessarily be interpreted as derogatory, are often used to distinguish one type from another. 'In