

teacher, to induce the asking of questions'. This is very difficult. The native wants to be himself, plus European advantages, and without self-sacrifice.

With it all one has to go quietly and never be in a hurry however much one's daily life is in fact a continuous rush. One must not take people's failures too much to heart. Kindness does far more than scolding; and these people are extremely sensitive. They may show little in their faces when you are scolding them; but you can easily break their courage to return to you.

All in all this is a happy life, with so much building to do it cannot but be interesting. And the Sisters, now ten in number, are beyond praise.

NICHOLAS HUMPHRIES, O.P.

THE UPROOTED AFRICAN

'LITTLE CHICKENS GO IN TWOS' (*Zulu Saying*)

AN African becoming a Christian in South Africa passes through a remarkable experience of two complete worlds; two religions wholly contradictory, two social systems as different, and two methods of church organisation adapted to the separate social systems. Most natives are still born in tribal circumstances, either in the Reserve Territories, Zululand, Basutoland, Swaziland and the others in which natives are under their own chiefs and ancient tribal laws; or at least they are born on European farms on the veldt, where their immediate family and social life is the tribal one, although they are not within a tribe.

Let us suppose a heathen becoming a Christian, for most of our adult Christians are still first-generation Christians, and consider his experience.

He is born into a wide sunlit land, an awe-inspiring creation whether it is the limitless, treeless sweeps of the veld or the great black barren 'Dragon' mountains. He lives in some sort of an oasis, valley or riverside or near water on the veld. He lives under a burning sun the year round, but with tremendous cold at night in winter, violent short rains and hailstorms, peril of crops and beasts. The earth is not friendly as in temperate climates. Insects are dangerous. There are snakes. It is not a land to rest on the grass, or splash in the water. But it has a stirring beauty, vastness, stillness, wonderful fruits, sudden grass and flowers after a brief rain, a light that is polished and air like wine. You may see red hills in South Africa and a green cloud; it is exotic, and the brown men who live in it love colour.

The Bantu religion grows out of the earth. It is ancestor worship, the service of those in the 'dreamland', the tending of their cattle and the guardianship of their 'praise-name', so that they will receive you. You in your turn will appear to your descendants through the life force of an animal, speak to them in tongues from the grave, advise them, see that the balanced simple life that is just possible in so bare and uncertain an earth is carried on. Native religion and philosophy (at least in so far as they are articulate) see life not as a choice or a progress but a cycle of the incarnation of one force, the Totem of the ancestors, in different persons. The Sons of the Crocodile or the Lion, into whose ancestors their might passed, carry it forward. The Ancestors are propitiated by purifications and the sacrifice of animals. The pagan boy goes through initiation, trials of pain and circumcision, an intense sex-training meant to ensure fruitfulness, training in the service of the Ancestors.

After initiation the boy is worked into the tribal life. It is a perfectly balanced social system according to its creed. By the classificatory kinship system the relationship of father, mother, brother and sister is arranged right into the distance. No one is ever lost or alone, for the father's brothers are other fathers, to take over the mother and child if he dies; father's brothers' sons and daughters are brothers and sisters away into the distant cousinship. Their support, economic, moral, defensive and ritual is simply pledged and not questioned. There are no orphans, no widows involuntary, no starving relatives. Life is firmly collective. Conversely, in marriage a girl, usually by preference a near relative to the child of the father's sister, is supported by her sisters, who step into her place if she dies or fails to bear children. Wives run the house and hoe the fields. Groups are arranged against groups. If a child-bearing woman pass from one clan in marriage, cattle are transferred to her clan to redress the balance—and to guarantee her good treatment. Under this system, getting just sufficient meat and grain from the earth, sharing it, the African lives. Behind the sudden and fiery joys of love and war is a solid background. It is a perfect adjustment to the 'good life' on a cursed earth, allows maximums of pleasure and excitement, balancing them back with law which is not an imposed conqueror's law but a growth of beloved custom. All is summed up in song. Music is life to the African, great magnificent chordal melody in which the spirit of the people is drawn forth in praises of the totem spirit among them.

There is a darker side to all this. The cult of the spirits continually overbalances into the service of evil, merely because evil is strong. There is witchcraft, ritual murder for medicine, the power of the smellers-out and witch doctors. For the service of the spirits is

experimental rather than moral, propitiates those who need it and help most. But chiefs and their councils continually curb witchcraft. That with which the Church must war is not so much positive superstition, which gives way the sooner, but the deadening satisfaction of a perfectly balanced and earthly life.

The Church wars with it in the Reserves in the grand old style: mass baptisms and confirmations; excommunications; tremendous public penances—two years back to catechumenate, months of labour at the mission and the like. The natives are not used to flat regularity—one-low-Mass-a-week-for-fifty-years style. They are brought into great demonstrative occasions, the bishop riding in with a trail of hundreds of horsemen, the women hinneying; baptism and confirmation in hundreds, preceded by several days retreat. There are plain evils, great efforts, passionate sins, and little of the half lights of intellectual controversy about religion. The Church fights an open battle with evil. Everyone is checked by his surroundings in the collective manner. Whole families, because they are corporate, and brothers are as one, are held guilty of one delict. Social problems are different, where there is no individual insecurity, only a general poverty of land that drives men out to bring back money.

And it is here that the break comes. Most native men have to spend anything up to twenty years of their active life away from home working in the mines or towns. A relatively small percentage, in industry and municipal service, are able to settle near their work in locations, i.e. townships for married natives. But the other two categories which by far outnumber these, those in domestic service and mining, are not allowed to bring their families to work. This system has the worst possible social and moral effect on the natives. There is virtually no sex morality among these migrant labourers—it is the perpetuation of war morality, men away from home for years and grass widows at home. It leaves children fatherless, land untended. It adds to all the other disabilities of the natives here, who are as badly off economically as the poorest in any other part of the world, this great evil: that the family does not share the blow. It is split, and the woman and children at home, and the man away, without an immediate loyalty, wobble along as best they can and getting what fun they can.

But it is not precisely of this that I want to speak here. It is of the contrast in Catholic life and missionary method caused by this migration. Whether it is with the migrant bachelors and spinsters of the compounds and domestic service, or with the location people in the towns, the kinship bond is broken. For the location people are mixed of a dozen tribes, with conflicting customs. The 'collec-

tivist' missionary system of the reserves, the publishing of everything, the support of the Christian village with its prayer-house, small school, catechist teacher, etc. . . . all has to be so modified as to make a complete change. And the natives, especially the 'raw' mining men and the domestic, whose minds are not here but in that life of the Reserves, are not ready for this. They have to be treated individually, and with a fraction only of the care and instruction of the Reserve Territories.

To give some examples. The tribal idea of truth is not the same as ours. For several thousands years the tradition has been that truth is owed to your father and your clan. Outside that no one has a right to know your secrets. For everyone is a potential enemy. Also court procedure, especially as connected with witchcraft ordeals, was simply the plea of not-guilty. Africans can not therefore be trusted to give an accurate account of their own status. Moreover they see Christianity very much as a quest for status. 'To return to your seat' is to be absolved. Everything up to now, under a non-ethical view of life, under the Ancestor cult, has depended on your status among the people, which continues beyond the grave in men's praises. An African will therefore often 'lie' to get baptism, going through an arduous catechumenate, while he has two wives. Only extraordinary faith can throw off a hundred generations of customs in one generation, and the history of the faith of the peasantries of Europe is parallel here. European Christians are scandalised by the lack of respect of truth of African Christians. But they have not visualised all this background: truth is for your brothers only; status is life. The Church has visualised it. The universal missionary system of Southern Africa therefore is that every Christian carries a Church letter when he moves from his parish, and only after showing it can he be admitted to the Sacraments. In the towns, however, where it is hard, often morally impossible, for them to get to the Sacraments, we have often to act where and when we can without this safeguard. Of one tribe, of whom about 400 have passed through the mission where this is written in the last five years, only one out of the four hundred has shown a Church letter. Writing letters to their homes is not easy. Africans often do not know how to give their address. They forget their Christian names, and have a bewildering number of surnames, which they use differently on different occasions. I have baptised twenty men of one tribe in March, and found their surnames mostly changed by the time they were confirmed in May. One needs to know tribal customs and technical words intimately to identify them. Rivers may be flooded so that letters do not reach for three weeks or so. We have to get on largely without Church letters, and to take the native on the Rand very much as an

'individual', talk to him, make him explain his own status, get him to act like a European.

Another example of this conflict of two systems is the 'cattle marriage' customary throughout Southern Africa. At the time of marriage the father, supported by his brothers and clan, give cattle for a girl to be married to his son. It is no more 'selling' a woman than the converse dowry system of Europe is 'bribery' of the man to accept the woman. It is a continual rebalancing of the social strength of families and groups, and also acts as a guarantee of good treatment of the woman. In some tribes the father or brother of the woman need only drive back the cattle, if she is ill-treated, and can collect his daughter or sister. The Protestants clamoured about 'cattle marriage'. But the Church, with wider experience, has never objected to it. But now under the migratory way of life of the Africans it has become a real problem. A native marrying in the Transvaal has to marry under three forms of law: Tribal Law (as regards cattle and consent of guardians), Transvaal Law and Church Law. To synchronise them is difficult. Very often it is impossible to find relatives with the authority to arrange the Native Law side of the marriage. The tribes are all endogamous, mostly of specially preferred cousins, and if a marriage is done here without full arrangements of their 'lore' the Africans do not feel it is complete, though they may agree to it in words; or else there is trouble when a man tries to take a foreign wife home. Either she will not go, or is coldly received. Yet many men from territories a thousand or two thousand miles away spend most of their prime here. Owing to the colour-bar 'fear policy' they are not allowed to bring their own women into the Union. Under these circumstances the law allows a minister or magistrate to overrule native custom, and give agreement for a marriage. But the dangers of this—because of the state of mind of a native being married outside his customs—are so great that it is most rarely done. Again here is the same problem. Out of a collectivist life they are thrust into an individualist life, and yet may return to the other, and they fall between two stools.

Many other examples of this need of a complete change of the social psychology through which the faith must work could be given. We cannot have the great dramatic feasts they have in the Territories here in the towns. We cannot have public penances. We cannot have the same power of music which means even more to the African than ceremony. Anyone who has heard a congregation of two or three thousand in a Reserve sing their indigenated forms of the great Catholic hymns, in their own harmonies, can feel what is lost when in our mixed congregations hymns are sung scrappily in four or five languages in one service. The several-day camp retreats of large

numbers of persons, regularity of instructions among people whose time is their own, the publishing of every name for recognition or for information that will forbid baptism or marriage, all these means which are well suited to the people, largely go by the board in towns. And they are not yet ready to do without them. They have lived longer than anyone clearly knows in a collectivist system, in which no one stood by himself, answered for himself, even thanked for himself, but in which the group was as one. There is so much good in their customs, so much notably superior to European economic individualism in their tribal mutuality, so much respect and courtesy and loyalty in their family life, that the Church has joyfully entered into it all and used it. It has only had to condemn things which were done without conviction, or from fear, or pressure of social circumstances: sexual excesses, especially in Initiation; witchcraft and ritual murder; divorce, polygamy and the like. They need their good customs as the 'civic' background without which the faith can hardly work. And yet they cannot have them. The labour migrations of Southern Africa, apart from the more immediate language, economic and moral problems they have produced, have forced the native out of his whole background and given him no new settled status. However settled were that status it would take generations to learn a new social life, no longer based only on kinship but on new local and occupational groupings. As it is the process cannot even be started. If Pius XI could say that social conditions could be serious obstacles in the pursuit of salvation, surely this one of having no social background at all is a chief among them. The natives who have moved to the towns have no part in civic life, no representation or responsibility in their own reintegration. The others, and by far the majority, migrate between two social systems, never settling properly in either.

Missionary articles are supposed to be picturesque and give accounts of progress and numbers, and happy pictures of coloured first communicants, and so to stir those at home to give for the work, or to come and join in it. But sometimes the people at home should also hear of the undermining influences that so often make the statistical records misleading. To date all Southern African missionary work (for Angola, Nyasaland and Portuguese East Africans have already been lured into the net of South African and Rhodesian industry), is faced with an issue which it has not yet as a whole attempted to resolve. That problem is migration, the undermining of the new faith by the destruction of social background, and, incidentally, the creation of a type of man, rootless, amoral, socially restless, who makes the best material for Communism. The effects of all this can be seen in a representative situation such as the hospitals on

the Witwatersrand, where one meets every Southern African tribe, and finds about one in five of first generation Christians 'practising'.

The Dominican native missions on the Rand have nearly a quarter of a million of these uprooted Africans as their portion—the equivalent of one-thirtieth of the native population of South Africa. Of these about 2 per cent. are Catholic. Of the remainder perhaps half are of one or other of the forms of Protestantism, or of some combination of Christianity with heathen custom, such as one gets in the African separatist churches. A half are still plain heathens, largely ready for conversion if we only had the men to get among them and speak their many languages. The chief inspiration of the work is that, among people so utterly dislocated in their social life, and where only half the congregation at a time ever properly hears a sermon, a large number are held by the great common liturgy and sacraments of the Church. Here one can really have a vision of Catholicity. And, from a very human point of view, there is real delight in dealing with a people as simple and spontaneous as children, if also as erring. Anyone who works with him is bound to feel he is as true a man, and as worthy of service, as any other men that God has made.

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