

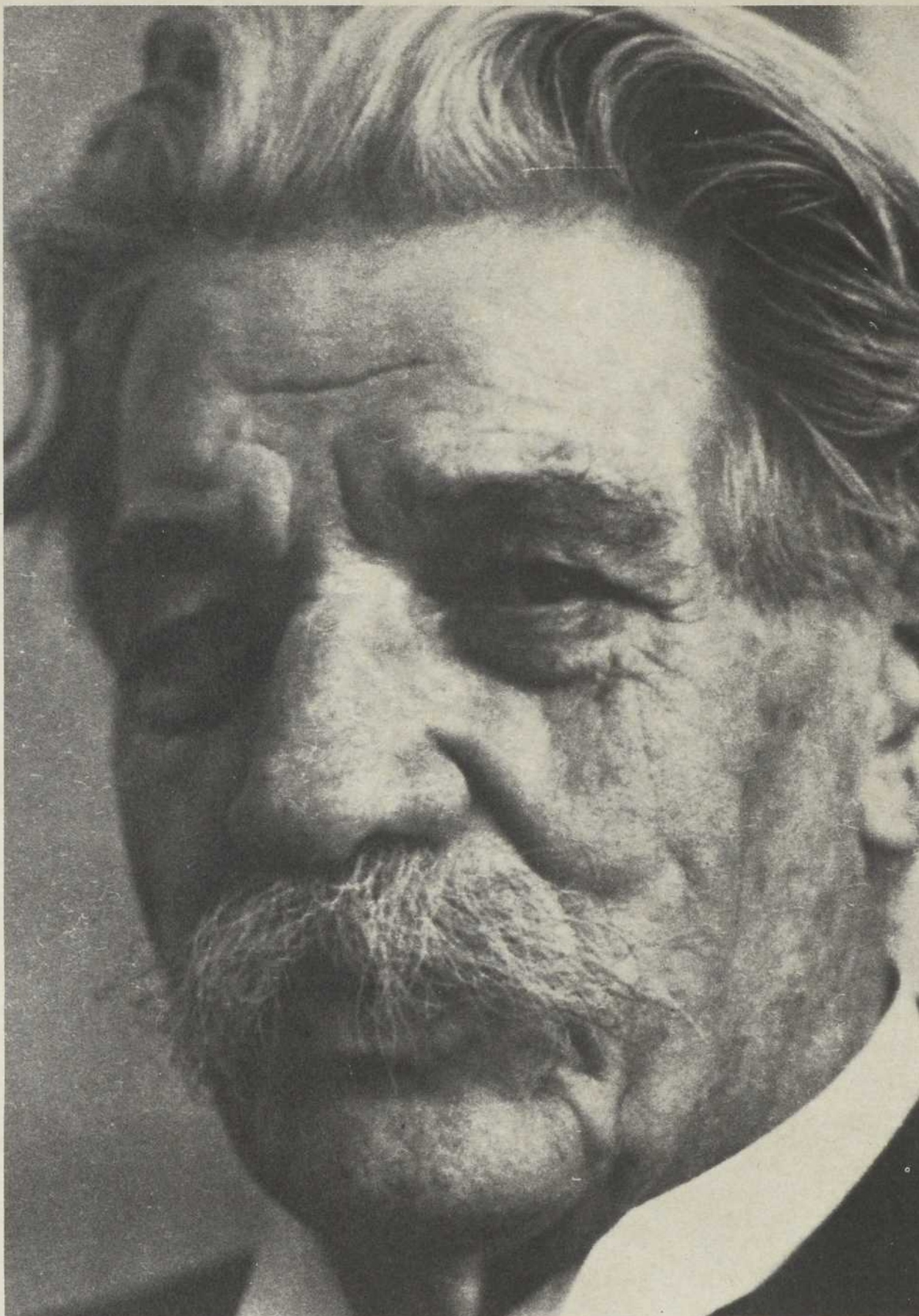


THE PRECURSOR



Market stall: a festival of colours.

July-August, 1972, Ville de Laval, Vol. XXX, No. 4



Dr. Albert Schweitzer, philosopher, musician, surgeon, and winner of the 1953 Nobel Prize for Peace.

The Precursor

No. 4 July-August, 1972, Volume XXX

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If it is true that reverence for life is the ultimate rule of the universe, there should exist a Lambarene in every man's life.

GABON

Albert Schweitzer has expressed the concepts of his philosophy in several volumes. However, they might all be summed up in the simple phrase which once flashed across his mind as he journeyed up the Ogowe River — reverence for life. This was the motivation of his endeavours through the years. Lambarene Hospital, in the heart of the African jungle, fifty miles from the equator, is a living testimony of the "great white doctor's" unique concern.

What mysterious attraction drew this minister, philosopher, and musician to a life of deprivation and hardship in Africa? He probably asked himself this self-same question in his declining years. His thoughts then drifted back, along the stream of time, to the beloved Alsatian village of Gunsbach. Although almost a century and thousands of miles separated him from his childhood home, he could still clearly picture his father's house, the brook where he had frolicked as a boy, the church where he had heard his father preach.

He was born on January 14, 1875. Life at home was frugal, but there was freedom and fun and an easy relationship between parents and children.

He did well in school except for mathematics and languages. His essays were exceptionally good.

In his father's church, both Protestant and Catholic services were held. The boy was profoundly impressed by religious ceremonies. Throughout his life, Albert Schweitzer yearned for quietude and contemplation. Deprived of these values, he could not have achieved genuine fulfillment.

LAMBARENE IS



YEARS OLD



Several dispensaries have been established in Gabon, throughout sparsely inhabited areas as well as in regional centres. First aid is dispensed (or if the disease is serious patients are conveyed to the General Hospital), regular consultations are held, and sanitary measures explained. The dispensaries usually comprise a small maternity unit where African mothers can learn about the pre-natal and post-natal care of infants.

This photograph from Gabon shows a white nurse counseling a young mother regarding her baby's feeding.



It was in church that he first heard the solemn strains of the Bach music which was to influence his entire life.

Albert learned to play the organ when he was five years old. Before he was thirty, he was being acclaimed throughout Europe as a brilliant interpreter of the great musician.

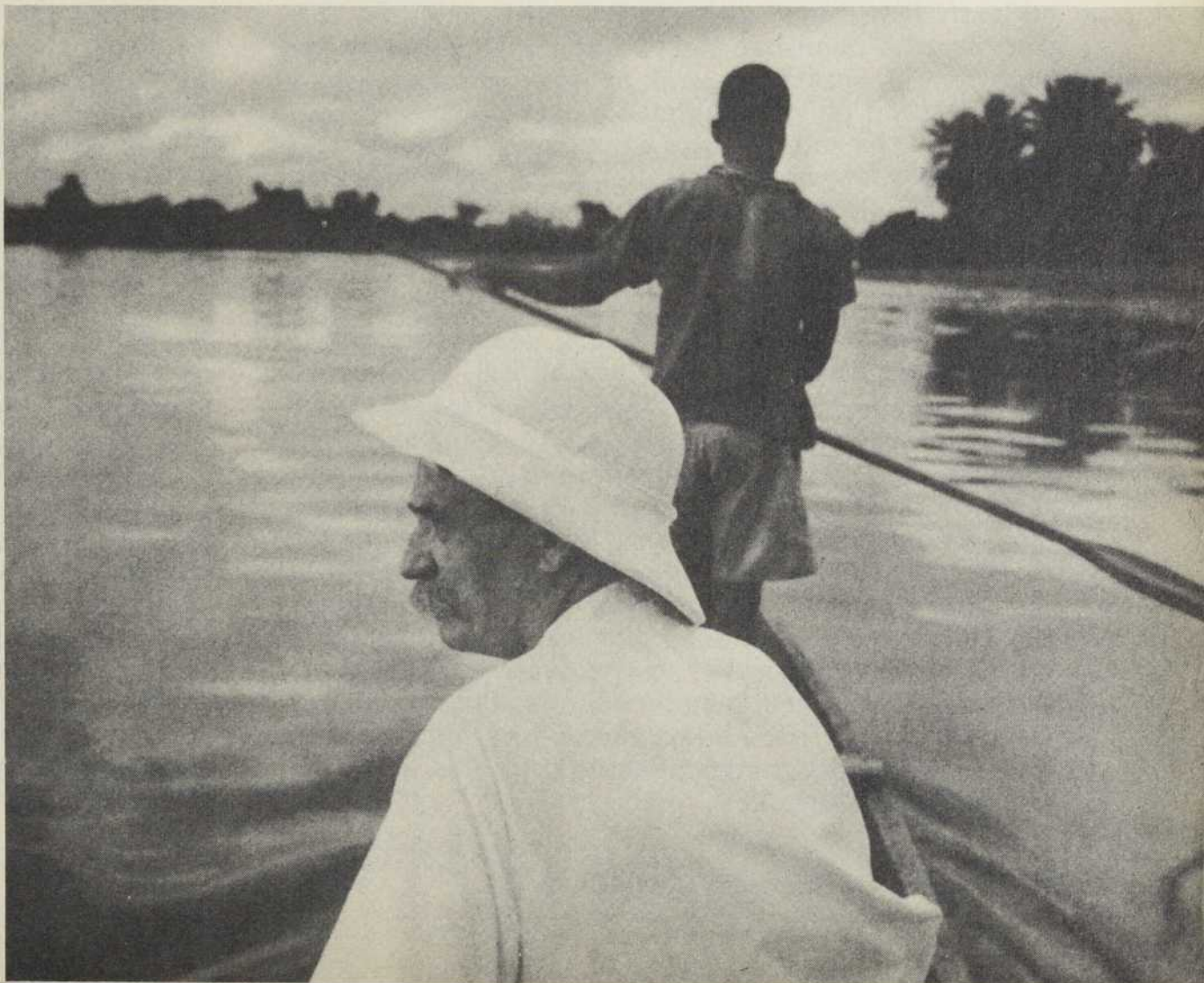
At the University of Strassburg — first as a student, then as a professor — he realized that the good fortune he enjoyed, in a world full of distress, was a gift he was bound to repay. Each man, he reasoned, has a duty to perform here below — to live, let live, and help live. Much will be required from whoever has received much.

Therefore, he made up his mind to work in the fields of music and scholarship until he was thirty, and to devote the remainder of his life to humanity.

Instead of pouring himself out in words, he would henceforth let his works express his faith. As a physician, his life would be his finest sermon. It would make the love of God credible.

Photo: Unesco

Doctor Albert Schweitzer travelling on the Ogowe River.



Lambarene yesterday

Already a doctor in theology, a university professor, an organist, and a writer, he began his studies in medicine at the age of thirty-five. He had often heard missionaries tell of the great misery of jungle inhabitants and of the neglect in which they were left. He resolved to spend the rest of his life helping them out. Accompanied by his young wife, he arrived in Lambarene in 1913. This remote jungle village was situated on the banks of the Ogowe River. It has since become famous thanks to the compassionate doctor who was to alter its destinies. Lambarene is a monument to the work of a lifetime. People from all over the world come to it to continue his work. Some stay only a few days, some remain for years. A few, like Nurse Emma and Madame Schweitzer, dedicate their whole life to its patients.

Technical facilities at Lambarene Hospital are not as important as the simple philosophy which motivates those who work within its walls. Lambarene is not so much a place as an idea.

When the "great white doctor" first came to this jungle village where he was to work, he found that only sleeping quarters had been provided by the Protestant mission. He transformed a miserable outhouse into a consultation room. At first patients were few, but the doctor's fame spread rapidly and they soon converged by the hundreds on the premises.

Thanks to funds raised by organ recitals given in Europe, he was enabled to build a modest hospital. In 1917, he was interned in France because of his German nationality. At this period, his health disintegrated so badly that it took years for him to recuperate. The war over, he published the two first volumes of *Philosophy and Civilization*, a work he had undertaken while in Gabon and pursued during his captivity.

In 1924, he returned to Lambarene, and began the construction of another hospital which would accommodate 200 patients. Between 1927 and 1939, he made several trips to Europe where he was asked to give lectures and organ recitals.

Meantime, the hospital grew into a large village complex where ducks, hens, sheep, goats, cats, dogs, and monkeys were allowed to roam at will. New cabins were put up for mothers and their babies. Mental cases were treated in separate quarters. Eventually, about 400 people resided in Lambarene, not counting the relatives of patients who lived there temporarily. Families accompanied the patients to cook and care for them. The native belief is that if an outsider prepares the food, it may contain poison or magic spells. Doctor Schweitzer made allowances for the African mentality and adapted his hospital to the local culture. Many Westerners criticized this procedure calling it primitive and outmoded. Those who "heard with their hearts" found the doctor's method was right for this time, this place, these people.

Patients came from all over West Africa; from the burning white desert of the nomads; from primitive hamlets; from ancient cities. Whole families poured into Lambarene, bringing with them a terrifying variety of diseases. Some were maimed by leprosy; many were shivering with fever; others were disfigured by elephantiasis, tumours, syphilitic lesions. The majority had never seen a doctor. For ages, this people had considered pain, illness, and death as the accepted way of life. Who could pretend to conquer fate? Now, down the only highway they knew — the Ogowe — they travelled to the haven of Lambarene.

Progress was slow. It took all of fifty years for the seventy-two buildings in the hospital complex to be completed. The buildings form an elongated pattern from east to west so that the sun may not shine directly on the sides or penetrate the double ceiling of the wards.

The hospital of Lambarene may not measure up to Western standards. It has been constructed to endure hostile jungle conditions and to conform, as far as possible, to local customs. Of course, some of these cannot always be anticipated. White doctors must cultivate a sense of humour. For instance, on one of their morning rounds, they may find a patient on the floor and a relative in bed, eager to share this brand-new experience. The patient, for his part, is quite agreeable.

Doctor Schweitzer had more than his share of frustration and trouble. Could he ever succeed, he wondered, in establishing harmony between nature and man in this environment? For half a century he struggled against the elements.

Torrential rains washed away precious plants and top soil; jungle growth threatened to encroach on the buildings; sickening heat sapped energies; the Ogowe River repeatedly went on the rampage, destroying everything in its path. He had to stand firm against aberrant superstition and the dread power exercised by witch doctors over the tribe. This constant struggle wore him down so that one day he confided to Joseph, his first medical attendant who worked for him for over fifty years, "What a blockhead I am to stay in this terrible land!" Joseph retorted, "In the eyes of men you may be a fool, but not in the eyes of God."

Albert Schweitzer gave fifty years of his life to Lambarene, but his influence was felt far beyond its boundaries and on far different levels. "If anyone should attempt to portray me," he once said, "he should not do so merely as a doctor who cares for the sick. The philosophy which inspires my work is my chief contribution to the world. I am not fond of technical phrases. My appeal goes out to thoughtful men and women in order to deepen their concern about elemental things, about the questions which haunt the minds of every human being."

One of the most important questions put by Albert Schweitzer was, "What is reverence for life?" According to him, this reverence arises from the simple fact



Doctor Schweitzer's tomb at Lambarene, Gabon.

Photo: Vivante Afrique

that, "we ourselves are life which wills to live". Acting upon this principle, we endeavour to preserve life, to promote it; never to destroy it, to injure it in any way or to repress life capable of development. In a word, reverence for life means that we must not be concerned only with our own individual life, but must promote the life of others. In this sense, each one of us can possess a Lambarene.

The "great white doctor's" action was not restricted to Lambarene. He fearlessly entered the arena of international controversy over the use of nuclear weapons. His conscience would not suffer him to remain silent. He contacted world leaders who might have the power to influence public opinion. Finally, in 1954, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. During a tour of England, in 1955, the University of Cambridge conferred an honorary decree on this great benefactor of mankind. He was also awarded the Order of Merit, Great Britain's most distinguished honour. Crowds followed him wherever he went. All wanted to meet the hero who had left civilization for the African jungle. The fame he had foregone pursued him through the capitals of Europe.

His concerts drew vast audiences. Few men have been so profoundly and universally admired. And yet, in the midst of the glamour of concert halls the thoughts of Doctor Schweitzer turned to Lambarene.

The 90-year-old man appeared to some critics as an anachronism. If so, he was a man ahead of his time, not behind it.

For several more years, he kept on working for those he loved. When the difficult job of administering the hospital complex was over for the day, Doctor Schweitzer worked far into the night. With the years, his burden grew heavier. Still he found time for meditation, for answering the never-ending stream of mail, and occasionally for enjoying an hour or so playing Bach. He died in his beloved Africa. He once had remarked, "An Africa good enough to live in, is good enough to die in."

No epitaph marks the grave where he lies, among so many other graves. The simple cross that shadows it he had carved himself. But is not Lambarene Hospital itself Albert Schweitzer?

(To be continued)

Sources: Radio-Canada

PRAISING THE LORD IS MY LIFEWORK

CARMEL OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY
AND OF SAINT JOSEPH
Box 74
CAP HAITIEN, HAITI, GREATER ANTILLES

Carmelite Monastery at Cap Haitien, Haiti.



Sister Paule Charpentier, M.I.C.
Cap Haitien Teachers College
Haiti

My dear Sister Paule,

Upon your request, I will try to resume in this letter the impressions of my companions regarding the numerous questions being asked today about the relevancy of contemplative life in a developing country. Thank you for your suggestions on this subject. They have made it easier for me to give clearer answers to an intricate problem. Many persons find it difficult to grasp the significance of our role as missionary Carmelites. Your own active missionary vocation is perhaps better understood. For our part, we are firmly convinced that through us the Church truly wishes to give all men an increasingly clearer revelation of Christ.

FOUNDATION: Mgr. Cousineau, C.S.C., bishop of Cap Haitien, had long wished to establish a Carmel in his diocese. In 1958, His Excellency visited our Brooklyn Carmel, in New York, with a view of obtaining a number of Carmelites for his Haitian mission. His project was received with enthusiasm by the little community, and negotiations proceeded apace. The chief obstacle in the way of realization was the lack of a sufficient number of French-speaking nuns. Finally, everything was settled in a satisfactory manner. The first group of Carmelites arrived in Haiti in the Spring of 1959. They temporarily took up residence at *Solitude Notre Dame*, a property of the Holy Cross Fathers, graciously placed at their disposal.

The construction of the monastery was launched in February 1960. On November 17, 1961, the first Mass was celebrated by Rev. Roland Lamy, C.S.C. Inauguration of the monastery took place on Dec. 8, 1961, feast of Mary Immaculate, patroness of the new foundation.

At present, we are eight Carmelites at Cap Haitien, belonging to five different nationalities: Haitian, Puerto Rican, American, French, and Canadian. Young Haitian girls are given the opportunity of responding to the divine call without having to give up the values of their own civilization. More so perhaps than any other, the contemplative life adjusts itself to the temperament, culture, and customs of the land wherein it flourishes. Our Cap Haitien Carmel is rooted in Haitian reality.

Its chief aim is to ensure the full and entire presence of the Church through contemplative prayer and apostolic activity in this country. The Carmelite must be a link between God and her brothers. This, not only when she is present at official prayer, but while she praises the Lord at all times and in all circumstances. The Carmelites represent the Haitian people before the Lord. They talk to Him about them and to them about Him.

Moreover, their presence here, in this developing country, is meant to be a testimony. It would be unthinkable for a monastery not to exercise a beneficial influence on its surroundings. We Carmelites are bound to give a constant example of poverty, of recollection, of charity, and of apostolate.

POVERTY: Our neighbours know that the nuns in our monastery practise poverty. They work hard, possess no luxury gadgets, have no money at their disposal. Their standard of living matches that of people around them.

CHARITY: Carmelite poverty is of the giving kind. The nuns work for their living, spend little, and give to the poor any surplus they may have. In a monastery, charity must be an active virtue at the service of the neighbouring community.

PRAYER: Carmelites gather for official prayer seven times a day. They daily spend two hours in silent contemplation and one hour in spiritual reading. Even while they are busy with household chores, the nuns keep united to God in heartsprung prayer. One of the deepest joys of my life as a Carmelite is to praise God in the name of our dear Haitian people whether I am in the chapel or at work in my office.

But you yourself know, dear Sister Paule, that the sense of the divine is on the wane in our modern world. Contemplative life is misunderstood, even in Haiti. You as teachers, should explain to your students the meaning and efficaciousness of our life of contemplation. How else could they learn to appreciate the Christian dimensions of the values we are living up to?

MISSIONARY LIFE: From its place in the heart of the Church, our Carmel radiates over the whole world; its activities which may be resumed in love become universal. "I sanctify myself that they also may be truly sanctified." A Carmelite dedicates herself to essentials in order to be free to help all men. She takes up her daily cross in this ecclesiastical spirit. The measure of her love is at the same time the measure of her efficiency as an apostle.

Our apostolate in Haiti consists in prayer, poverty, renunciation, always in a spirit of loving devotion to the Lord and to our brothers. We bear in our hearts the dreams, the hopes, the sufferings of the nation as a whole.

The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* comments on the mystery of cloistered life as follows: "Let no one think that by their consecration religious have become strangers to their fellow men or useless citizens of this earthly city. For even though in some instances religious do not directly mingle with their contemporaries, yet in a profound sense these same religious are united with them in the heart of Christ and cooperate with them spiritually. In this way the work of building up the earthly city can always have its foundation in the Lord and can tend toward Him. Otherwise, those who build this city will perhaps have laboured in vain." The true significance of the religious life, especially that of contemplatives, cannot be grasped except in relation to Christ Jesus.

Are we Carmelites equal to our sublime calling? We can at least say that we are tending towards the goal as well as we can, but we do need the assistance of the entire Mystical Body. Let us join forces in order to become bonds of unity among men everywhere.

Yours devotedly,
Sister Hélène de la Croix, C. C.D.

"What does the presence of missionaries

Young people from various lands have answered this question put to them by the editors of the "Precursor" a few months ago. The following lines present elements of reflection and of research.



Japan, Tokyo

A young Sophia University student shares his personal point of view with Suzanne Morneau and Noella Brisson, M.I.C.

Teachers have a great influence on their students, especially if they are missionaries. I have lived in a religious environment ever since I entered kindergarten. The experience I had as a student of St. Joseph's College — a mission school in Yokohama — changed my outlook on life in a significant manner. In the classrooms and on the campus, I saw many aged Brothers cheerfully going about their work, obviously dedicated to high ideals.

What they teach moves us deeply because we know they are sincere. I am not referring to religious doctrines only, but to other subjects like music and physics for instance.

Some of them know more about Japan than ordinary Japanese do. Moreover, they are full of experience and they really care for us. They can advise us and help us out when we are in doubt. The things they say often introduce us into a new world. Born and bred in various countries and influenced by diverse social backgrounds, they have a way of viewing life which is quite different from ours.

Our own Japanese customs and values may appear as entirely strange experiences to them. They help us all to realize that there may be several possible ways of doing things and that each may be right. Thus our minds are prepared to accept the gradual introduction of new and useful elements of change in our own way of life.

I have learned from the Brothers to be broad-minded and respectful of other people's opinions. If one wants to teach others something, one must never ram it down their throats.

At St. Joseph's College nobody ever obliged us to follow courses on religion. We were left free to do so if we wished. It may have been this considerate way of acting that eventually made us want to consider religious matters seriously.

On the other hand, the Brothers were true missionaries. They never missed an occasion of spreading the Good News, but they wanted us to make our own decisions and to use our own judgment. I admire them and their work.

Fumio Maeda

in your country mean to you?"

Hong Kong

A young Catholic Chinese teacher conceives the missionary ideal as follows. (Compiled by Evelyn Martin, M.I.C.)

The first thing that strikes me in the presence of missionaries is the courage with which they chose a life of self-denial, of separation from their family and homeland.

This example of disinterestedness reminds me that as a Christian I also have the duty of being an apostle among my own.

Their poverty and simplicity, their eagerness to be of service, their collaboration in the spiritual and material welfare of the people, recall the life of Christ living among men.

On the whole, the life led by missionaries presents an example of genuine Christian charity.

I consider the testimony borne by missionaries in my own country as extremely important from the point of view of the formation of a Christian community as well as that of the role played in the improvement of individuals and society.



During the last decade, more particularly, we have noticed how missionaries endeavour to come in closer contact with us. They give greater assistance than ever before to movements aiming at the betterment of the material situation of the people. We consider this as a great step forward.

A Chinese teacher

Bolivia (Irupana)



From the mountains of Bolivia, Gladys, a third-grade elementary school teacher and efficient collaborator in the pastoral affairs of Irupana, expresses her feelings concerning missionaries. (Murielle Dubé, M.I.C., helped compile this report.)

To summarize my opinion, I would say that a missionary is the incarnation of kindness, fraternity, and understanding.

Kindness Whether he visits quiet country villages or bustling cities, Indians or Whites, the same warm, friendly smile lights up his features. Anguish and fatigue weigh heavily upon him, his work is arduous, but through thick and thin that smile never fades.

The thought that he is one of us, made of the same earthly stuff, endears him to our hearts and spurs us to follow in his footsteps. There is, however, a negative influence which sometimes overshadows his life. We often fail to understand some of his attitudes.

Fraternity I have seen missionaries lift up the hand of a child to teach him the Sign of the Cross, grasp the weak and motionless hands of the sick to alleviate their sufferings.

I have seen them welcoming mothers, snatching them from the grip of death to enable them to keep on assisting their children. Wherever trials and tribulations abound, missionaries are eager to console or to guide, to teach or to encourage.

Steep winding trails do not prevent them from going out to those whom civilization seems to have abandoned. The forests often shelter them at night; the forces of nature are no obstacle in their daring apostolic ventures. Their contagious enthusiasm springs from the LOVE which they share with everyone for He who has sent them loves each man in particular as if there were only one.

Sometimes, they fail to get their message through to those they approach because of language difficulties or ignorance of certain matters such as local customs. But discouragement never triumphs; they continue their efforts to learn and to teach, winning their way into the hearts of the people, saving the life of many an individual, while daily giving up their own.

Understanding Material obstacles such as hunger and thirst, or social ones such as language difficulties and peculiar customs are not the only impediments they meet with. More formidable barriers exist. People do not always understand nor do they welcome opportune changes. They remain stubbornly attached to traditional customs and superstitions. Caught up in these human difficulties which they are practically powerless to overcome, the harassed missionaries may at times lose patience and be tempted to quit. But no one doubts that even if they were to leave, they would promptly return to the people they love and who need them so badly.

In my memory are etched the weary, grief-stricken faces of missionaries striving to make those around them understand that their sole desire is to provide a better life for all, a standard of living more worthy of their dignity as human beings.

Hospitals also are the source of many annoying problems. Patients wait until their diseases are so far gone that treatment is useless. Nonetheless, they keep on hoping for miraculous cures. All the missionaries can do in such cases is to give the sick ones large doses of tender loving care. This they never fail to do.

One of the pleasantest recollections of missionaries is that of crowds of happy children surrounding them, singing, dancing, and praising the Lord.

The missionaries were and still are the foundation stone in the life of Bolivia. Because of them, rural life has greatly improved, cooperatives have been organized, schools are flourishing, the sick are taken care of, recreational opportunities are available, work has become for many a commitment to the development programme of our nation.

Canada (Quebec)

The opinion of Canadians is slightly different. In fact, Lise Daniels, 18 years old, active member of the Jeunes du Monde Club, a student of Merici Normal School of Quebec, proves it by her answer to our question: "What does a person of your age expect from the missionaries at home?" (Compiled by Thérèse Lortie, M.I.C.)



Do the girls wear mini-skirts? . . . Do the boys let their hair grow? . . . How old are the couples in general when they marry? . . .

Questions! Questions! Always the same old questions; not often the right ones, let alone the most important!

I try to imagine myself in your shoes, you the missionary just back from Asia, Africa, Latin America where you have spent five, ten, twenty years of your life. How superficial and giddy we must seem to you! Our questions sound idiotic and irrelevant to the message you wish to share with us.

Please excuse us and remember that you also probably asked the same questions upon your arrival in a foreign land. At a time when I was craving for beautiful landscapes and the sight of different faces, I went to the Club meeting to see the slides you were showing. Curiosity was my primary motive for going, but I also wanted to have a clear conscience.

After several meetings, other questions came up. I wondered where all your dynamism and joy sprang from and was convinced they were not based on exterior factors. It was then that you chose to tell me of the heartfelt hospitality of your people, of the joy they communicated, of the rich folklore they possessed and so eagerly unveiled to you.

Thus, you pointed out to me the path that leads to universal horizons. I came to know you as a truly human individual, the type that acts up to convictions.

You made me aware of the fact that I need others, that they have a great deal to give me. You taught me to live for others because you adapted yourself to the human environment of another country so different from your own. The more I questioned you the more I realized how little I knew myself and how little I knew others.

Dear missionary, do not let our questions disturb you. The more we ask, the more our interest deepens. Curiosity gives way to commitment.

You are a dream come true; the typical being who acts and incites others to do likewise. You are at home wherever you are sent, you have lived a very useful experience in the line of adaptation. You may have felt lost upon arriving on foreign soil. I can easily understand that because I think everybody would feel the same way. That matter, however, was quickly settled. Everybody joined in to initiate you, but with what respect and tact! The people had the knack of integrating you into their daily life.

And now it is your turn to make use of that same knack of passing on information and sharing with us your splendid experience. Keep in mind your reactions at the start, your efforts to attain the goal you have reached today. Then, perhaps, you will understand seemingly curious and superficial young people . . . and even admit that a book cannot be judged by its cover.

Lise Daniels (18 years old)

Philippines (Davao)

A group of Davao College students (in association with Jacqueline Blondin, M.I.C.) tell us what the presence of missionaries in their country means to them.

When we speak of a missionary, we think first and foremost of one who has come to preach the Good News, one who has come to bring Christ to those who, as yet have not heard of Him.



Missionary work has been carried on in many countries and for several years already. Many are those who have sacrificed much and have even offered up their lives to proclaim the Gospel in pagan lands, where Christianity was unknown; in places where love and respect for human rights did not exist, and where there was no fear of the Lord.

Without the missionaries, many of our brothers and sisters in the Philippines would not have enjoyed the blessings of a Christian life and the bliss of freedom. We would not have fought the battle for independence nor built democracy if love, peace, justice, and freedom had not been instilled in us by zealous missionaries.

Missionaries are "Christ-like characters" giving most of their time out of love for our people, with the hope that the virtues being cultivated in each individual will urge him to strive for his salvation. They give spiritual advice to those who have gone astray, and bring joy to the young both in and out of the *barrios*.

We need one another. We are all brothers and sisters in the family of God. With the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, working hand in hand with several other congregations, we hope to bring peace to each Christian.

We cannot deny that our world today is a deeply troubled world. We need people who are dedicated to Christ, and who will project the light of truth, peace, and understanding on all events. We need the missionaries.

The presence of missionaries in our country means we still have pillars of hope to turn to. They alone can teach us more about the living God — Christ — the divine model. We ask for their assistance not only for the bodily needs of suffering masses in the slum areas, but also for the moral needs of our society. Yes, Sisters, Brothers, and Priests are needed to advise us on moral issues so that we may get better information than that provided by smut movies and dirty magazines.

Missionaries are a great help to our country. Without them our school children would probably lose faith and respect for elders. We have seen and read in dailies that there is an upsurge of youth crime in the country. On whom can we lay the blame? It is not a one-sided affair. Three social institutions are supposed to work jointly — the home, the school, and the Church. All three rely a great deal on the guidance and counselling of the missionaries.

Regardless of the changes brought by the times, we still feel grateful to have missionaries in our homeland to guide us lest we falter on the way. We still care for them for they are Christ's messengers — our sisters and brothers who have labored so hard and who will always work for us to make life worth living here below, in joyful expectation of the life hereafter.

From:

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY COLLEGE
Mati, Davao Oriental

Canada (Montreal)

The opinions of the younger set on the question: "What does the presence of the missionary in your country mean to you?" are worth having. Marie Paule Charbonneau, M.I.C., sent in several texts in which her 6th grade pupils expressed their idea of a missionary.



André-Stéphane Marleau
(10 years old)

A missionary is someone who goes to foreign lands to proclaim the Good News to the people and to educate them in the Faith. It is a proof of genuine love for others and a living testimony.

A missionary is someone whose heart is so full of love that he wants to give a great deal of it to the people of other lands.



Chantal Rivard (11 years old)

To be a missionary is to give one's life, to go out to help others, to spread the Good News far and wide. As I continue to reflect upon the matter, all kinds of words cross my mind: God, love, peace, happiness, sorrow, and joy. A Missionary to me is a bit of all that. Missionaries do all they can to bring others to believe in the Lord; they surely do their best.



André Gagné (11 years old)

To me, a missionary is a "person of love" who loves us and who loves everybody else too. . . Someone who has a heart. Whoever you may be and regardless of the colour of your skin, the missionary will always come to your help. He is someone who seeks your confidence so that in times of sadness he may bring you joy. By preaching the Gospel to you, he helps you to become a better person. Without our missionary friends, I fear we should be less happy.



Anne-Marie McLaughlin
(11 years old)

To become a missionary is quite an enterprise. You must possess a sensitive heart, open to all. You must give your life for others and offer all your own. To me, it is really an extraordinary thing.



Josée Ménard (11 years old)

A missionary is someone who goes to other lands to make known the Word of God, the Good News, and to help and love others. He wants to show us that love exists and that we can love one another.



Claire Mercier (10 years old)

The presence of the missionary is necessary in all countries in the world. A missionary is a benefactor. Never will we see him doing evil things. There are many missionaries all the world over, but we need a good many more.



Photo: Canadian Government Travel Bureau

Who can explain the secret pathos of Nature's loveliness? It is an unconscious memory of the lost Paradise. It is the sense that even if we should find another Eden we would not be fit to enjoy it perfectly nor stay in it forever.

Henry Van Dyke



Photo: Man and his World

PHOTO/REPORT



**Text and photo credits:
Gabrielle Ouimet, M.I.C.**

A French novelist speaks, in one of his books, of "the poem of market stalls dismantled every night only to be put up every morning".



This reflection reminds me of the varied, gaily decorated booths I admired during my stay in Bolivia. Every evening, apparently heedless of the trouble involved, vendors demolished their stalls and cheerfully set them again every morning. Many of these market stalls were poems of colour, harmony, and balance, especially those I saw in the La Paz market.

BOLIVIA

A stroll through Bolivian markets



On the shelves of these booths, were displayed finely dressed llama skins, hand-woven ponchos, bedside rugs in delicate shades of ivory, beige, black, and brown. Drawings in bright matching colours adorned drab, flimsy partitions. Inside, piled high in picturesque disorder, were sculptures in wood, leather cases, dainty slippers of fine vicuna leather, etc. The booth on these pages shows up ornate bedside rugs and ponchos, (Photos 1 - 2).

In La Paz, on either side of the Prado, the narrow streets climb up to the local markets. Indian women sit hunched up along adobe walls, hemmed in by their wares, Rosita stolidly awaits customers who will haggle over her lovely ponchos or her warm colourful blankets (Photo 3).

Many Bolivians still spin by hand the wool or cotton needed for their textiles. The accompanying photo shows Lolita spinning thread for a poncho or a shawl to be sold in the local market (Photo 4). Crude weaving looms are valued possessions, the heritage of one generation to another. Original hand-woven textiles may take months to complete, but they will stand years of hard wear (Photo 5).

This young couple, Carmen and Roberto, walk the streets of La Paz on the lookout for good bargains. Carmen wears a typical Indian costume: voluminous skirt, bright fringed scarf, and bowler hat set at a rakish angle (Photo 6).



PHOTO/REPORT



Two friends, one wearing modern dress, the other the traditional Indian costume each buy a fruit eight centavos (one cent) a piece. The boy vendor prefers selling his wares one at a time. What would he do all day, if he sold them by the dozen? (Photo 7).

Bolivian markets are ideal spots in which to stroll and observe at close range Indian life and customs (Photos 8, 9, 10). One of the most impressive experiences for the foreigner is to watch the vendors on the



11



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13

market place. Bolts of woolen goods are piled high on the benches or on the ground. Temporary walls of wattled bamboo are hung with blankets stunningly striped or amazingly figured with man and beast and bird of stylized design. On sale at less pretentious stalls are piles of vegetables, cereals, soft drinks, glasses filled with liquids dyed every colour of the rainbow. . . The markets of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz offer a great variety of tropical fruits: oranges, guavas, melons, the produce of fertile sunlit valleys (Photos 11, 12). Indian women, carrying their babies in their shawl, unconcernedly walk about the streets or just stand and stare at passersby.

Arched beneath his soaring load, until he finds a suitable spot where he can set up a stall, this Indian climbs up the narrow streets bordered by shops (Photo 13). His face is expressionless. Life seems one unending chore for him and his likes. If he is lucky, he will obtain fairly good prices for such peculiar wares as the foetus of llama or of pigs used for purposes of sorcery.

This Indian tries his luck selling brews of medicinal herbs or of magical concoctions. His stall is a very simple affair (Photo 14).

In these Indian markets the fixed price is unknown. Where would be the spice of life if one always knew in advance just what a vendor would ask for, just what a customer would pay? According to the Indian, the best customer is the one most clever at bargaining.

The vendor pays a tax for his space at the market. This tax based on the value of his merchandise, does not exceed two or three centavos a day. Indians rarely consider the cost of their time and labour. They count that day well spent that brings in a profit of 25 to 50 centavos. In the evening, when their wares have been put away, they enjoy the pleasure of dancing or watching the dancers.



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HONG KONG'S

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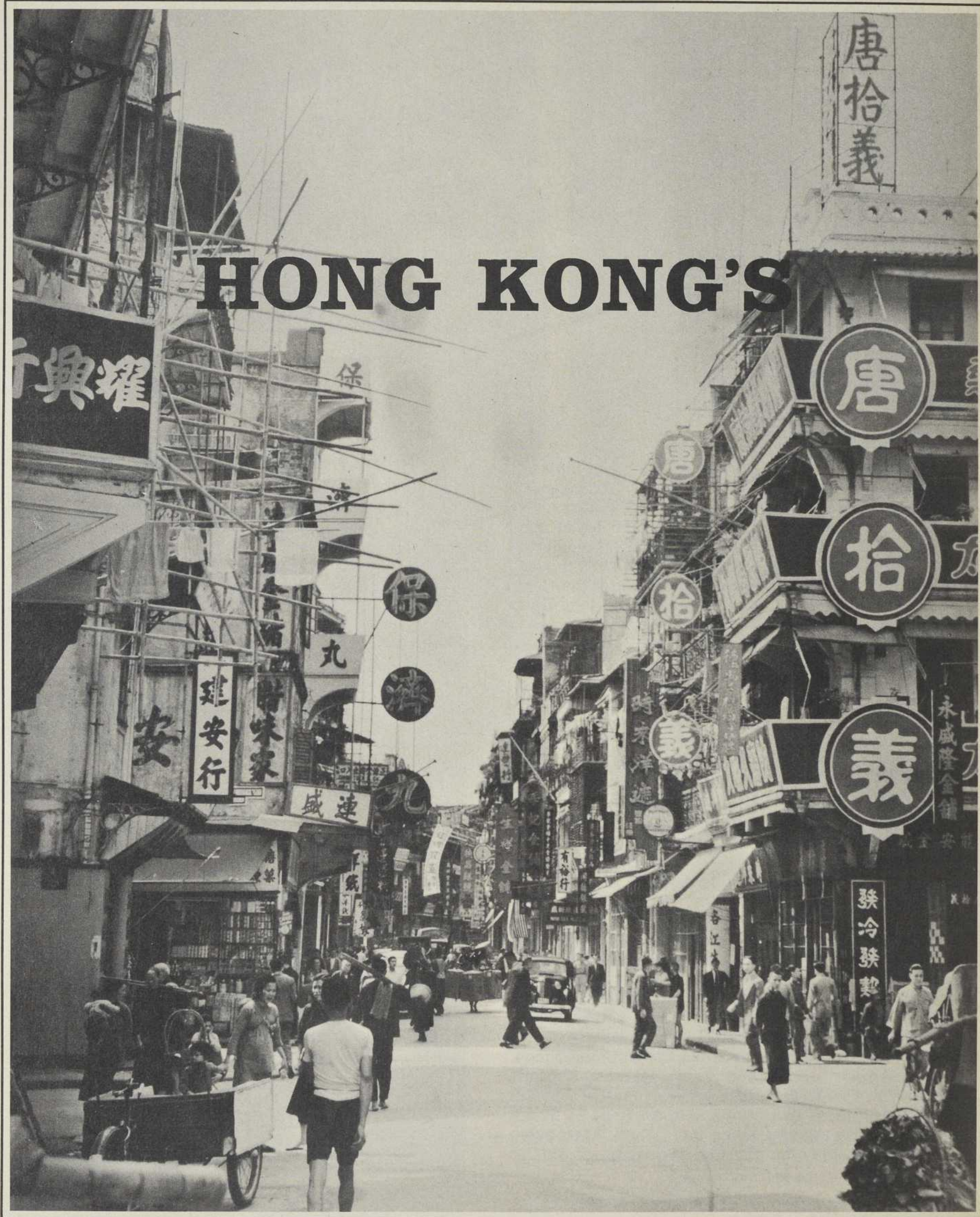
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VARIOUS PERSUASIONS

by **Sister Odile Malbeuf, M.I.C.**



Although a mere speck on the map of the world, Hong Kong has become a centre of attraction for numerous countries. It is the largest and, in my opinion, the most beautiful port in the Far East, and is glorified by such poetic appellations as "Fragrant Harbour", "Beautiful Port", "Peerless Jewel", "Pearl of the Orient". . .

The city of Hong Kong is divided into three districts: the Island of Hong Kong proper; Kowloon, at the tip of the peninsula; the New Territories, linking Kowloon to the mainland. It overlooks the safest and best-developed harbour in Asia.

The Island being mountainous, the only level land available for construction is a slender strip wedged in between the harbour and Victoria Peak. Overcrowding set public work planners thinking. Space had somehow to be made. The process of reclaiming land from the sea began one hundred years ago and is still being carried on today. Earth and stone left over from quarrying and excavation of the slopes and hills for building sites are dumped into the bay. Notable examples of this land reclamation system are Kai Tak Airport jutting out over a mile and a half into the sea and the new City Hall, Auditorium and Government Office complex built on reclaimed land.

Hong Kong became a British colony by the treaty of Nanking, back in 1842. Kowloon "territory of the nine dragons" was annexed in 1863. Situated in the Bay of Canton, Hong Kong has a population of 3,800,000 inhabitants. It owes its prosperous situation to the fact that it is a free port.

As Hong Kong entered the 20th century, schooners in the bay gave way to steam vessels. Old warehouses and docks were enlarged; new ones were built. With the advent of motorization, main roads were paved. Growth and prosperity were temporarily halted at the outbreak of World War II. Since then, however, the Colony has flourished as never before. Hong Kong is, together with Shanghai and Singapore, one of Asia's largest emporiums.

RELIGIOUS PERSUASIONS IN HONG KONG

Although Hong Kong has the reputation of being among the wealthiest cities in the Far East and a place where residents and tourists alike can enjoy every material luxury, there exists a deeply religious undercurrent. This is reflected in the shrines and monasteries of China's traditional religions as well as in a great number of Christian churches (Catholic as well as Protestant) always filled with worshippers. Most of the major festivals celebrated throughout the year are of religious significance. Almost every home or shop has its household shrine or "god shelf".

Approximately ninety per cent of the Chinese in Hong Kong are Buddhists or Taoists.

BUDDHISM

Regarding the introduction of Buddhism in China, there is a certain legend that the Han Emperor Ming, who reigned A.D. 58-75, once had a dream in which appeared a "golden man". He consulted the wise men of his realm who informed him that this must be the Indian teacher Buddha. Thereupon, the emperor sent an embassy to India in order to obtain the sacred texts. After several years, the envoys returned accom-

panied by two Indian masters of Buddhism. Thus was the "Good Law" introduced into China.

In its original form, Buddhism was more a philosophy than a religion. It taught that the state of perfection or happiness could be reached only by complete withdrawal from material things. Over the years, the Chinese associated it with all kinds of local cults and ceremonies. The use of magic formulas became amalgamated with existing religious practices.

One of the main reasons for the popularity of this religious persuasion in China seems to have been the importance given by Buddhism to women. Another reason which has been brought forward is that Buddhism preaches patience in enduring poverty and promises an eternal reward in a future life. Buddhist bonzes and nuns live ascetic lives. They shave their heads, wear a long robe of brown or grey cotton, and practise frugality in all things.

In Hong Kong as elsewhere, Buddhist priests perform their ceremonies in large temples or pagodas. Most families worship before their household shrines hemmed in by red "prayer slips". A pot of sand, in which sticks of burning joss are usually placed, stands before the domestic "god shelf" illuminated by red electric bulbs. According to Chinese tradition red signifies good luck and happiness. From my room, I often watch these flickering red lights which afford me many a moment of serious meditation. May the Light of the World soon illumine the hearts of these sincere people. Buddhist priests are invited to homes in order to officiate at weddings and funerals.

TAOISM

Taoism means "The Way". It was founded by Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher, at about the same epoch as Buddhism. Broadly speaking, it may be defined as the proper way, the right road, a conduct of life designed to give the greatest individual happiness, contentment, and peace of mind. For hundreds of years, the Chinese have combined these two religions with the cult of ancestors and certain superstitions.

In Chinese life where every act implies a religious meaning, the various persuasions have never destroyed one another. As the gods exist for the happiness of the people, new gods may be welcomed without denying the old. Each deity apparently has a special function. None of them are offended if others are worshipped or so the Chinese say.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism is not so much a religion as a way of life. The teaching of its philosopher-founder was practical and ethical rather than religious. He believed that proper outward acts based on the five virtues of kindness, uprightness, decorum, wisdom, and loyalty comprised the whole duty of man. Reverence for parents living and dead, is also one of the keynotes of his teaching. The ordinary Chinese believes that the moral conduct of the living profoundly affects the lives



of forebears who, although they have been gone from the world of the living, continue to watch over their descendants. Sentences from Confucius adorn the walls of many homes and even offices. "Can I remain upright and sincere in my business life?" "Truth and error are mixed here below, but in heaven they will be set apart".

ISLAMISM

The Church respects Moslems who adore the one true God, living and substantial, creator of heaven and earth, almighty, and all merciful. Mohammed's religion was called Islam by its adherents who go by the name of Moslems, "those who submit", that is to Allah's will even if its decrees remain obscure, just as Abraham submitted to the Lord. Islam believes in four great prophets, auxiliaries of God upon earth: Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed. Jesus is revered as a prophet, but he is not acknowledged as God. Our Lady is revered; Moslems pray to her with genuine fervour. Indian shops in Hong Kong carry images of "God", of the "Virgin", of "Jesus" as Moslems conceive them to be.

The faithful of Islam believe that God will one day reward risen men. They appreciate a good moral life. Their worship mainly consists in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

CHRISTIANITY

Between the years 1947-1963, the Hong Kong Christian Churches achieved remarkable progress. Since then, conversions have declined, but they are still relatively high in number, on the Protestant as well as on the Catholic side.

Foremost among the Anglican churches is Saint John's cathedral founded in 1842. In Hong Kong, there are over 300 denominations comprising 150,000 members. The various Protestant sects cooperate among themselves and with the Catholic Church especially with regard to social work.

Founded in 1941, the Hong Kong Catholic diocese is under the direction of the Milan Foreign Mission Institute. Today, the Catholic population numbers about 250,000 (1970 statistics). There are four bishops, two Chinese, one French, and one Belgian. All reside in Hong Kong. Priests number 348 of whom 116 belong to the Milan Foreign Mission Institute. The 11 brothers and 761 sisters (395 Chinese) belong to 22 different congregations.

The existence in a country of divers religious persuasions proves that world religions are endeavouring, each in its own way, to guide adepts in ways of truth, in doctrines which may bring peace and joy to troubled human hearts.

These modes of living and these doctrines may often contain kernels of truth. The Catholic Church respects everyone of them. However, she proclaims, as she is bound to do, Christ Jesus who is the way, the Truth, and the Life.

RETURN OF THE YOUNG

An impressive movement

In one of the most widely read weeklies in the United States, "Time", two editorials have appeared this year on an impressive movement of return to Christ among the young of today. A sign of the importance that the review attributes to it: in these two issues, the figure of Christ occupies the whole cover-page.

These two articles rightly drew the attention of numerous publications, among others the Canadian review "*Je crois*". The latter is published every month by the "*Messagers catholiques de la Bible*", which are part of the secular Institute Pius IX.

A lay institute dedicated to evangelization

This Institute really deserves to be brought to the attention of our readers, for it is specially dedicated to evangelization and its members are mostly young people full of ardour for the direct apostolate, particularly among those of their generation. We will publish a report on one of their most characteristic experiences in one of our next issues.

André Daigneault, who comments on the article in "Time" here, was born in Canada in 1939. He is editor of the review "*Je crois*" and follows young people's movements closely both in the United States and in Canada. In his article, under the title "Jesus is coming

back", he stresses the hopes that this movement of return to Christ arouses; so he precedes it with the following words of the prophet Amos: "Now days are coming when I will send hunger to the country. Not hunger for bread nor thirst for water, but the hunger and thirst to hear the word of the Lord".

The hippy movement

It goes without saying that the hippy movement is a complex one and that many young people who belong to it indulge in grave misdemeanours, drugs, sex, etc. On the other hand, a good number of them manifest really generous aspirations that can contribute to attracting them to Christ and induce them to follow Him. It is for us to encourage them and help them in their progress and in their apostolate.

What the review "Time" says

"Time", an international review with a very large circulation, on sale in very many countries, asked the following question: "Is God dead?" on the cover-page of its issue of 8 April 1966. On 26 December 1969, the same review asked another question, again on the front page: "Is God coming back to life?" Finally, on 21 June 1971, the cover of "Time" showed a colour photograph of Jesus with these words: "The Jesus Revolution".

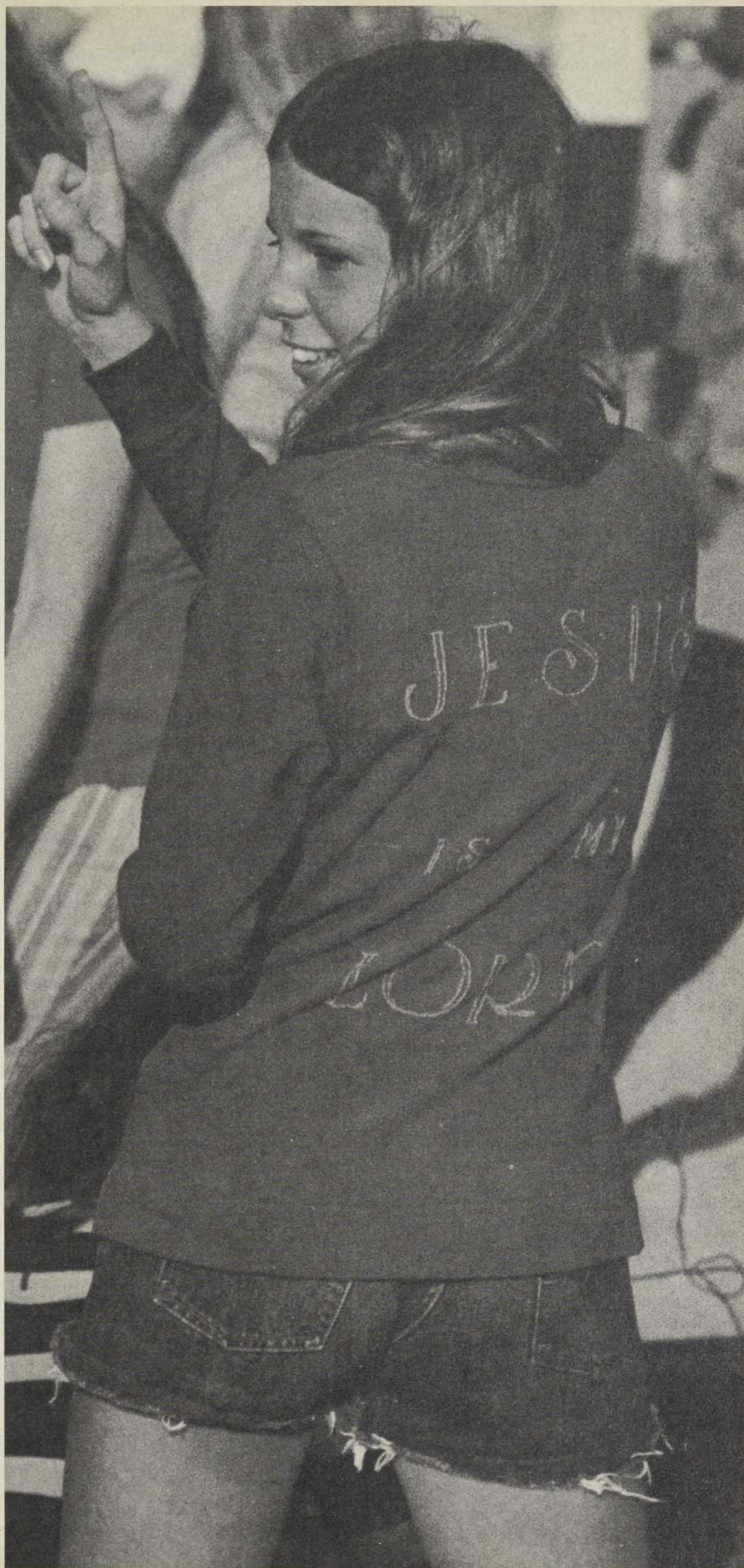
TO CHRIST

by André Daigneault



The Jesus revolution, a hope for brighter tomorrows?

Photo: Time





Some months before, the magazines "Look" and "Life" had published articles on this extraordinary and sudden return of thousands of young people to Jesus.

"Jesus is alive and well and living," the journalist of "Time" writes, "in the radical spiritual fervour of a growing number of young Americans who have proclaimed an extraordinary religious revolution in his name. Their message: the Bible is true, miracles happen, God really did so love the world that he gave it his only begotten son".

Like the fire of a new Pentecost

This young generation that has already experienced "acid trips", sex in all its forms and violence, is now turning fervently towards purity, self-dedication and love of their fellow men.

"They are afire with a Pentecostal vision for sharing their new vision with others . . . 'witnessing' for Christ . . . Christian coffee-houses have opened in many cities . . . Communal 'Christian houses' are multiplying like loaves and fishes for youngsters hungry for homes . . . Bibles abound".

Rejection of the "secular city"

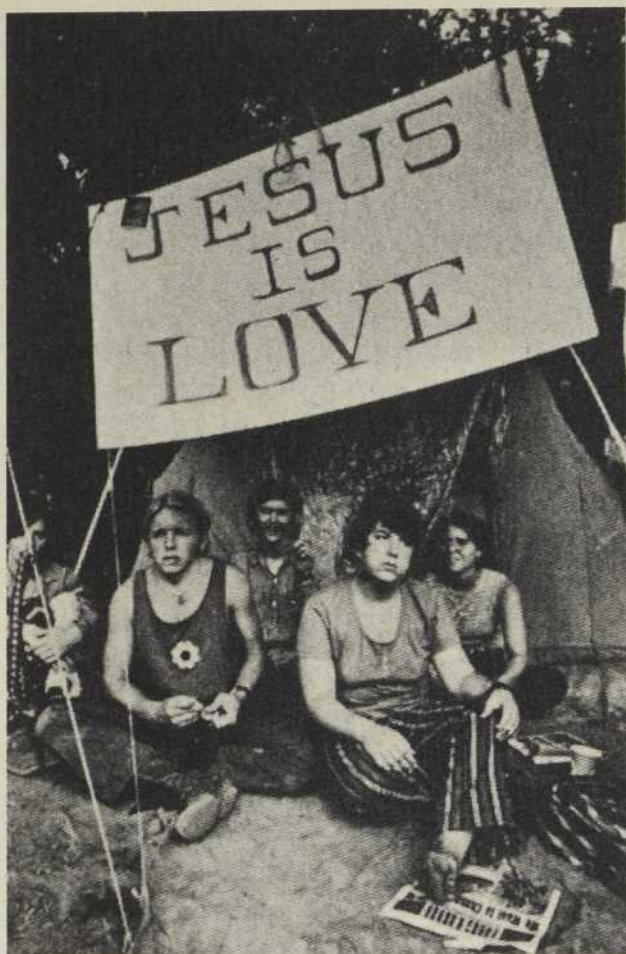
A young girl declared to a journalist: "This is the generation . . . (that had) acid trips in the seventh grade, sex in the eighth, the Vietnam War a daily serial on TV since you were nine, parents and school worse than 'irrelevant' — meaningless. No wonder Jesus is making a great comeback".

What is the strangest and most surprising thing is that this movement of Christian fervour conflicts with a whole generation of American theologians who were writing, not so long ago, on the "death of God" and secularism. Unlike these theologians of "horizontalism", these young people reject the message of Harvey Cox's "secular city" and announce that God is not dead and that Jesus will come back to judge the living and the dead.

"Some of the fascination for Jesus among the young," "Time" writes further, "may simply be belated worship of a fellow rebel, the first great martyr to the cause of peace and brotherhood. Not so, however, for the vast majority in the Jesus movement. If any one mark clearly identifies them it is their total belief in an awesome, supernatural Jesus Christ, not just a marvelous man who lived 2,000 years ago but a living God who is both Saviour and Judge, the ruler of their destinies".

The movement spreads

This movement of return to Jesus is now spreading to all layers of society, "Time" tells us, "from crew cut to long hair, right to left, rich to poor". It shows considerable staying power, several pastors say, for this effusion of the Holy Spirit began four years ago and is now talking on extraordinary proportions. Young people speak of Jesus as their personal friend, they pray together and share with over-brimming joy. There is a real return to the spirit of the first Christians. At Los



Angeles, groups of young people, dressed in sack cloth and daubed with ashes, do penance and bid the city come back to God or expect punishment. All over the United States, cases are seen of Christian families rejecting the present society and sharing everything like the first Christians.

Young people are now preaching in the streets, in schools and universities. Some of them who, a few years ago, had experimented with drugs and sex are now turning to God's Ten Commandments and rejecting forcefully the "new morality" and the "humanism" taught by some of their religious teachers.

Before 8,000 persons at a "Sweet Jesus Rock Concert" at Stanford University, a young twenty-year-old, addressing the crowd, courageously asked them to abstain from sexual pleasures outside of marriage.

The time is near . . .

Some of these young people are firmly convinced that we have entered the last phase. They proclaim that the world is on the edge of catastrophe and that the Judgment of God on the nations is imminent.

They say for example that pollution of the waters and air was prophesied by Isaiah and that the taking of Jerusalem by the Jewish people is an evident sign that the end is not far off.

Yet their message is one of hope. "Maranatha" (Jesus, come back), they say with extraordinary passion and joy.

What are we to think of this upthrust of religious fervour among these young people? It is certainly

necessary to be discerning, as St. Ignatius said. . . But I think it would really be too easy and dishonest to laugh at it or wave it away, on the pretext that these young people are exaggerating or that all this is not very orthodox.

Let us remember that Vatican II asked us to read the signs of the times and affirmed that the Holy Spirit is also at work among our separated brothers. Every day Christians, Catholics or Protestants recite the same prayer: "Thy kingdom come". Do we think that Jesus cannot grant our prayers?

The Day that must come

On 8 December 1954, Pope Pius XII exclaimed: "We are absolutely confident that in a shorter period of time than would be humanly foreseeable evil may be arrested in its course. We want Jesus to reign in the world. We pray to Jesus to hasten the day that must come when a new effusion of the Holy Spirit will envelop all Christ's soldiers".

Pius XI, before him, had declared in the same sense: "Saviour in anticipation the magnificence of that Day when the whole world will submit in goodwill to the sweet rule of Jesus Christ".

At the beginning of the Council, Pope John XXIII had made the following prayer: "Renew for our times the miracles of a new Pentecost".

For hundreds of years, dozens of saints and mystics have announced this "New Pentecost" preceded by a great purification (civil wars, revolutions, decadence, anarchy, etc.).



"In the end," the Virgin said at Fatima, "my Immaculate Heart will triumph".

Let us not forget that in the last hundred years all the messages of the Blessed Virgin have been "eschatological" in nature and prepare this "New Pentecost".

What the Church expects . . .

In his burning prayer to "hasten the kingdom of Christ", St. Grignon de Montfort addressed God as follows:

"Remember your Church, Oh Lord, in the effects of your justice. It is time to do what you promised to do. Your divine law is transgressed; your Gospel is abandoned; torrents of iniquity pour over the whole earth and sweep even your servants along; the whole earth is desolate. Will you leave all that abandoned, just Lord? Must not thy will be done on earth as in heaven, one day, and your kingdom come? Did you not show in advance to some of your friends a future renewal of your Church? Must not the Jews be converted to the Truth? Is this not what the Church awaits? Do not all the saints in heaven shout for justice? Do not all the just on the earth tell you: "Come,

yes, come Lord Jesus?" All creatures, even the most insensitive, are groaning under the weight of Babylon's innumerable sins and asking for your coming to re-establish all things" ("Treatise on real devotion").

Some years ago, on 23 October 1965, Pope Paul VI declared to the crowd of pilgrims:

"The expectation of the peoples is more anxious than ever, the sorry times, the danger to which peace is exposed, make it appear that God's Time is near".

Then, last year, on 13 May 1970, at the anniversary of the first appearance of the Virgin of Fatima, Paul VI spoke as follows:

"The pilgrimage of the Church throughout the centuries will end in the final meeting, glorious and eternal, with Jesus Christ . . . The Church has the feeling that this end is near, almost imminent".

Words of Vatican II

The last Council, in its masterly pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, recalls that, according to Revelation, "the world will be transformed according to God's plan". Thanks to this transformation, which will be the effect of "the return of Jesus", we will find all human progress, chapter 39 adds, "freed of stain, burnished and transfigured. This will be so when Christ hands over to the Father a kingdom eternal and universal: a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace. On this earth that Kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns, it will be brought into full flower".

What is happening is serious

"Jesus is coming back", some young people say. And why not? Is that not the great hope of the Christian?

Marcel Clément, the French Catholic sociologist, editor of the newspaper "*L'Homme Nouveau*" writes the following lines on this phenomenon of return to Jesus:

"Testimonies of American friends confirm that what is happening is serious. With some excesses, of course. But at the moment when priests and religious are being swept away like dead leaves in the wind of history, charisms, the charisms of the early Church, are springing up among the laity. It is perhaps through such signs that the New Pentecost will begin to appear".

So let us not be afraid to look at the "signs of the times"! For, as Cardinal Newman said so rightly, "I would rather be the man who, out of love for God and lack of knowledge, takes some unusual sight in the sky, a comet or a meteor, as a sign of the coming of Jesus, rather than one who, out of abundance of knowledge and lack of love, just laughs at this mistake".

**Christ to the World
Vol. XVI — No. 6**

MONGOLIA

LAND OF THE BLUE SKY

Mongolia's northern border is a wild broken country, thick with conifers, dotted with blue lakes. This was the heartland of the Huns and Turks and later of the Mongols. It still is the land of the yak, "the ox that grunts as it walks". This husky animal thrives on the scant vegetation and the thin air of the high mountains and plateaus.

In the south, the land is more gentle. Ridges and ravines are mantled with pine and tamarack. Most of the slopes are pasture lands. The Gobi desert, which occupies the greater part of the central area, is a sandy plateau with a few spots of pasture and brushwood.

Mongolia is roughly equal to the size of Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Portugal combined. The capital is Ulan Bator, a city of broad avenues and squares lined with modern government buildings and apartments. On the outskirts, mushroom the traditional *gers* or *yurts*, the snug collapsible tents of nomadic herdsmen.

Since the days of Genghis Khan, the essential details of this felt house have remained unchanged. Round, with expandable latticed frame and dome-shaped roof, the *ger* stands twenty to thirty feet in diameter. Layers of felt cover walls and roof, more being added as the temperature drops.

With the approach of winter, a wooden floor recessed in the ground is usually laid and covered with mats of thick wool. Many Mongolians still cling to this traditional tent which they move even into their cities.

Most Mongolians have black hair and golden skin, high cheekbones and straight prominent noses. Others have round faces, ruddy cheeks, and small button noses. Many are short and wiry, while some are a rangy six feet or more.

They are a cheerful, hospitable people. The visitor welcomed into a *ger* is expected to observe certain formalities. First he must ask, "How are you faring?" Three questions are then put to the host: "Is your

family well?" "Are the cattle fat?" "Is the grass plentiful?" The answer is always "yes", even if sickness plagues the family, the cattle is scrawny, the pastures dry. Conversation continues while the housewife serves tea followed by *airag* (fermented mare's milk). In the record of his travels Marco Polo noted that *airag* tasted like white wine. Some recent travellers have found it has the flavour of buttermilk mixed with champagne!

Several bowls of this beverage must be drunk to show appreciation. Next comes the *tarag*, a sort of yogurt, accompanied by various other dishes of vegetables, meat, and sweets.

Mongolians like to be neatly and formally dressed. Public opinion frowns on slacks and sweaters. Western dress is worn for office work. However, the *del*, a long coat of padded wool and silk, is still used.

The people enjoy dancing and singing. Music is in their blood. Their folklore expresses itself in variations of what they call the "long song" usually accompanied by a two-stringed violin, the *morin khour*. Their music conveys depth and feeling. The tunes recall the privations of men on the steppes where winds snarl and there is no place to find cover.

Largely illiterate a generation ago, the Mongolian nation now teaches its young people to write and read. It has adopted a Cyrillic alphabet of thirty-nine letters. The younger generations, however, are not cut off from their roots, from the ancient culture of their land. Old Mongolian script is still used in elementary schools.

As a rule, the Mongolians keep open minds. Yet, their culture is so far removed from Judeo-Christian influences, so unaware of the great universal stream of humane letters, that there is danger for them of becoming ideological puppets. What a tragedy this would be not only for this stouthearted people but for the whole world!



Photo: Vancouver Sun

VANCOUVER

SISTER'S SCISSORS KNOW NO BARRIERS

by Viveca Ohm
(The Vancouver Sun)

Two minutes for a profile? Sister Theresa is getting faster and faster. A piece of black paper, a pair of scissors, and before you know what's happening she has a dead-on likeness of you, or Trudeau, or herself, or the little boy in the front row.

Sister Theresa is an artist, a quick portraitist in the old art of the silhouette. She's also a diminutive French-Canadian nun of a missionary order, a first-grade teacher at Blessed Sacrament School, and a warmly enthusiastic person.

But that's not the order in which she prefers her vital statistics to be listed; she insists on a different and very specific order. "I'm a woman, a religious, a missionary, an educator, and then an artist. The first three are very important to me." But she readily agrees that seeing everything with an artist's eye helps her to fulfill all the other parts.

And make no mistake, she is a totally fulfilled artist who happens to believe that art is most rewarding as an educator's tool. "Why paint for yourself, when each child is a masterpiece?"

But her silhouettes also mean money for the school, one of the few French-speaking primary schools in Vancouver, and for all kinds of unexpected groups.

"Last night I was at a Christmas Festival at the Lutheran Church across the road, and I took my scissors." She estimated she did 75 cut-outs in two hours, and happily reports that "the priest told me, 'Sister, I think we raised \$100'."

Sister Theresa studied art in Quebec. But the physical exertion, of sculpture particularly, led to a muscular disorder of the hands, and she had to give it up.

At the time she also had a teaching certificate she did not particularly want to use. "But my father wanted me to be a teacher, and there are 26 teachers on his side of the family." In her 18 years with the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, she has taught everything from high school art to primary hodge-podge, and has long since discovered that she loves education after all.

The silhouettes first appeared at a time when she was a missionary visiting families. "I wanted to make them happy because I loved them so much." And picking up paper and scissors, she discovered she had a talent for quick likenesses. Here was a less strenuous outlet for her creativity, and Sister Theresa wasn't about to let it go to waste.

"It's amazing how happy a person will be when you look at him, concentrate all your attention on him, even if it's only for two minutes," she says.

On her desk are spread out mounted silhouettes of all the children in her class — their Christmas presents — and Sister Theresa is stuffing them into envelopes while a record player in the corner plays a French song.

She smiles, talks rapturously about the discoveries of teaching children, and apologizes intermittently for her charmingly French-accented English, and for her classroom, which she claims is cold and bare, although I found it full of good feeling.

The photographer comes in, covered with snow and cameras, and starts hip-hopping around her to get different angles. Sister Theresa is visibly embarrassed by the photo ritual, would rather do a portrait of the photographer than have him take pictures of her.

But he is too busy to sit still. She brightens. "Do you know what I can do? I look at you now, then I cut from memory."

For exactly five seconds she concentrates on his profile. "I could feel that," the photographer says in surprise.

She nods and starts clipping. Starting with the forehead and moving down, the paper makes a rapid circle through her hands. "I always cut upside down."

When the word "caricature" pops into the conversation, she is mildly offended. "I don't do caricatures. I couldn't hurt anybody's feelings."

"It's my way of being ecumenical," she smiles. "I use my little scissors to bring together, not to separate."

**Reprinted with kind permission of
"The Vancouver Sun"**

Sister enjoys making silhouettes.



ARABIA

Did you know that—

... the contribution of the Arabs to medicine was substantial? Arabic medicine flourished for seven centuries, during which time the Islamic religion was most influential. Famous centres of Arabic medicine were Bagdad, Cairo, Ispahan, Cordova.

... Arabic hospitals were well organized and included special divisions for eye patients, those suffering from fever, the wounded? There were both male and female nurses. In addition to treating the patients, the physicians taught students and conducted examinations.

... Greek medicine formed the basis of Arabic medicine? Students read Hippocrates, Oribasius, Aristotle, as well as the Roman Galen. That the influence of Greek medicine was great is shown by the fact that the Arabs called a department pertaining to drugs Unani medicine (Unan is the Arabic word for Greek).

... Abu Kabar Mohammad ibn Zakaria, popularly known as Rhazes (865-925 A.D.) differentiated smallpox from measles and introduced the use of animal-gut as sutures? He was a famous student, then a teacher at the school of Bagdad.

... the most talented physician of the golden age of Arabic medicine was Abu ali al Hussein ibn Abdallah ibn Sina popularly known as Avicenna (980-1037)? He was famous as a philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer. He recorded his observations and experience in his book Q'anun or the "Canon of Medicine" which remained an almost indispensable authority for physicians of all countries until the end of the seventeenth century.

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