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## **New Trends in Adolescent Catechesis: Methods, The Catechetical Experience**

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shore up loyalty to the Fatherland rather than to the then existing regime. Resistance was undreamed of and the rare *Jagerstatters* were hounded and executed as depraved lunatics.

With the return of normalcy after 1945, neither clergy nor laity showed signs of having learned a lesson. The reaction of the Bavarian peasants in their brutal and unchristian handling of the refugee problem illustrates what the mentality of the Church was all over the country.

Carl Amery claims that his book was written to defend a thesis and is intended to bring about a fundamental change to the present tragic condition. The thesis runs: German Catholicism today is almost exclusively dependent on the ideas of value and virtue which prevail in the milieu of the majority—a selfish, closed society with a veneer of religion to give it a semblance of respectability and stability. This majority's course is defined by its ideas and aims, not by the demands of the Gospel. With an effort to overturn this hypocrisy Mr. Amery would uncover the wounds with the bitter prophetic aggressiveness of a Jeremiah. His remedy for each conscientious Catholic is to exhibit a simple honesty and courage to face up to the truth; to discover his true place in reshaping society; and to steel himself to face losses in material possession, in reputation, in prestige, and even to face persecution from the Church itself. This recommendation is plausible, but hardly any more far-reaching than what many others have said. Hypocrisy is a deadly, perennial, incurable human weakness. One wonders wearily if there is any remedy....

In the light of recent *trahison des clercs*, the ordinary Catholic layman in any country finds himself armed, it seems, with conscience alone to guide him in the soul-searing problems of nuclear war, civil rights, population explosion, and with the massive identification of institutional religious health with gross material achievements. Carl Amery's book gives some valuable insights. It is regrettable that the book is not more comprehensive, more coolly composed, and better translated.

VERNON POORE, F.S.C.

## NEW TRENDS IN ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

METHODS, by Pierre Babin. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967. 187 pp.

THE CATECHETICAL EXPERIENCE, by John F. Murphy. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968. 126 pp.

Most religion teachers and catechists today are in search of methods and techniques that would enable them to overcome their students' seeming apathy and boredom. They want to know the way

to make the Good News relevant to adolescents of today and thereby reach their hearts with it. Babin's latest book with the English title *Methods* would therefore appeal very much to them.

It should be pointed out, however, that Babin uses the word "method" in three different shades of meaning. In the first section of his book, he uses it to mean "a direction which is definable and regularly followed." In this sense, a reading of his previous work, *Options* (Herder and Herder, 1967), which presents approaches for the religious education of adolescents, will clarify more fully for the reader what he means by the Covenant Method.

The second part of the book is concerned with "method" as "the carefully worked-out approach, the rationally organized plans, the present and practical means to be used in view of the aim to be reached." Here the author emphasizes the importance of knowing the mentality of the students, their thinking on a precise point of revealed truth, before the teacher can determine and develop the appropriate approach to the religious education of his class.

In the third section, the author proceeds to explain some methods and techniques such as the teacher-directed presentation and dialogue, group study and discussion, reading and research, the interview and student presentation, such as the panel, role-playing and the tribunal. It is here that "method" is taken in the strict sense of "procedures to insure in an economical way, a pre-determined result."

Underlying Babin's methodology (the French original bears the title *Méthodologie*) is the fact of the Incarnation. The teacher must "be with" the adolescents, taking them as they are in their concrete situations, and searching with them, strengthening them, helping them to grow. This would presuppose, on the part of the teacher, a great deal of personal reflection. For he himself must first be fully imbued with Christ's Message and be true to himself. He must be open and constantly listening to the inspiration of the Spirit as He blows where and when He wills.

Consequently, it would be a terrible mistake for a teacher simply to take the methods and techniques presented in this book and arbitrarily use them in his class. A strict adherence to the methods presented in the third section without previous reflection on the real needs, actual capacities, and concrete situations of the students would only lead to either a disorganized catechesis or one that is full of activity and indiscriminate consideration of ideas without real assimilation and purposeful learning and growth on the part of the students.

In short, Babin's book will be meaningful for the teacher who already has had fundamental training in catechetics. This implies a

familiarity with theology, a basic understanding of the psychology of the adolescent, his needs, his aspirations, his interests, his language and, preferably, actual teaching experience as well. Such a teacher, however, would most probably be already acquainted with a lot of ideas expressed in this book. Nevertheless, having them presented here in a clear, detailed manner can be very useful for the teacher; in moments of desperation, he can always experiment with some of the methods he has not yet tried as he struggles towards new discoveries and greater creativity with his class.

That such discoveries, creativity and insights are possible for a teacher who is willing to embark on a kind of catechesis for adolescents based on a truly dynamic understanding of faith and revelation is richly illustrated by John F. Murphy's book *The Catechetical Experience*. Where Babin writes of what can and should be done, Murphy presents his readers with what was actually done. This book is really an unedited, unrevised journal of his day-to-day experience in teaching religion to high school seniors. It tells of his courageous, at first rather reluctant transition from the teacher-centered to student-centered approach in religious education.

The religion teacher would do well to reflect on certain features of Murphy's "experience." For him, two elements in his experience during that year (1965-1966) greatly affected him and changed his approach to catechetics: "the first was my willingness to explore and examine my own approaches and motives; the second was my willingness to be more open than before to the voices of my students." The first element was triggered off by an invitation from a fellow religion teacher to plan and work through a theme for the coming school year together. In the opinion of this reviewer, this element of teamwork, of examining and analyzing approaches and goals together, is sadly lacking among most religion teachers. Consequently, considerable opportunities for improvement and progress and mutual learning are lost.

The second element, that of listening to the students and to the workings of the Spirit in them, requires a lot of daring and honesty. While adhering to the basic theme for that year ("Community of man and God"), the author left himself open to surprises coming from reactions and insights expressed by students in class. He was humble enough to accept the fact that at times some of his students did not share his own enthusiasm over a particular point or event, or that his own questions would not provoke too much discussion. He became more aware of a variety of reactions from the students, ranging from sleeping right in front of him to a joint spirited involvement in the matter under discussion. And the experience of listening, while enabling him to truly communicate with his students, also gave him a deeper understanding of his personal relationship with them.

The author was likewise open to various means and possibilities of helping his students understand the theme for the year. These were, for instance, talks given by persons involved in community work, films, newspapers, magazines and active participation in the liturgy in a downtown parish.

For a teacher who has attempted the same approach, it is *not* difficult to realize right away that such "willingness" often demands a high price from the teacher, not so much perhaps in terms of preparation for class, but in terms of a going out, an emptying of oneself. Tremendous self-control and patience are not enough; he must have an attitude of loving concern for his students, a concern for their real growth in Christ.

At the end of his journal, Murphy has added a reflection. Should anyone feel that reading through the journal is a waste of time, he should at least read this reflection. It is not long. The insights shared here by the author with his readers are not empty theories; they are the fruits of his meaningful, at times painful and difficult "catechetical experience." He has become more conscious of the tensions and difficulties facing a religion teacher today, something noteworthy coming from someone who has had considerable teaching experience and who was quite familiar with the catechetical literature being steadily published before he set out on his "adventure." (He has translated at least two of Babin's works, *Options* and *Methods*.) Now he is no longer certain that "the faith-by-feeling method is the answer" but he realizes that being a member of the pilgrim Church demands a "willingness to go forward and to search long and strange paths." It demands faith; but he feels that the faith of the young and the faith of the older ones are meeting more and more in conflict. "What are needed, perhaps, are not answers, but reflections, questions, and observations." What is needed is a basic reorientation of the meaning of faith, seeing it not so much as a "state of being" but as a "process of growth."

There is much in Murphy's brief reflection at the end of this slim volume that merits long consideration. It is evident, however, that for a similar catechetical experience to be truly fruitful and enriching for teacher and students alike, the teacher must have had previous preparations for it. For it will demand from him the courage and the willingness to be open to himself and to his individual students, the readiness to suffer hurt as well as to rejoice in growing with one's students.

Each of these two books, Babin's *Methods* and Murphy's *The Catechetical Experience*, is, in its own way, the unique expression of what two dedicated catechists have experienced. To those unfamiliar with their basic approaches and attitudes, these books could just be a

source of discouragement or simply be two more volumes in the catechetical shelf. But to those who share the writers' orientation, they could be companions in a worthwhile enterprise, an invitation, as Murphy says in his reflection, to "move constantly deeper into new terrain," always seeking "to discern new signs of direction."

JOSÉ MARIA FUENTES, S.J.

## PHILIPPINE KORIDO

ANG PUTING TIMAMANUKIN: Isang dula nina Paul Dumol at Gil Quito. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1968. x, 18 pp.

The *korido* of nineteenth-century Philippines narrates the "life and history" of a romantic hero, the travails he undergoes and the obstacles he overcomes in pursuit of his end. *Ibong Adarna* typifies this genre in that it portrays the basic structure of the *korido*: a king is ailing and nothing but the song of the Adarna can cure him of his melancholy. His three sons embark in quest of the bird. The two elder brothers fail to surmount initial tests (they are turned into stones) but the youngest, because of the kindness he shows an old beggar, is able to harness all the forces he is faced with. He gets the bird but is betrayed by his brothers who return with his prize. As nature will have it, however, the Adarna does not sing until the prince returns and the brothers are punished.

It is not difficult to see the tradition to which *Putting Timamanukin* belongs. The reverie, which constitutes the play, dramatizes a scene in the quest of four people. The three kings, like their biblical counterparts, are in search of the "waters of the silver star." Hari Mala (for *Malaking Bata*), leader of the three, seeks the waters which alone can give life to his dying crops. Hari Pepe (for *Pipi*) will bathe in the waters to exorcise himself of the shadows which lodge in him and bind his tongue. Like the three princess of *Ibong Adarna*, he will bring water with him to sprinkle over the red waters where his daughters had dissolved. Hari Ale (for *Alingawngaw*) yearns for his lost wisdom, which is a mere echo now. The main character, Animong Bata (*animo* is a pun on *anino* or shadow and *animo*, like a), the "shadow" of a paralytic boy, pines for his *puting timamanukin*, Asa (Hope), which he lost when his parents quarrelled and left him.

The three kings, like the hero of the *korido*, travel over mountains and lakes, undergoing trials in their search for the waters of the