

C R I T I C A L C O M M E N T

T H E M A K I N G O F I N D E G E N E O U S C L E R G Y

STUDENT : OUPA KGAGE OMI

LECTURER : PHILLIPE DENISE OP

DEADLINE : 09 NOVEMBER 1994

SAINT JOSEPH'S THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

BIOGRAPHY OF THE INTERVIEWEE

Emile Motea'pala was born in Rome, Lesotho in 1954 and grew up there. He is the youngest of a family of seven and has three brothers and three sisters. His mother died within the last year after a long illness. All his brothers and sisters are married and he has many nephews and nieces.

He joined the Oblates in 1974 and had a kind of experimental novitiate, in that, during part of it he did some study. After the novitiate he studied at the University of Lesotho, where he took a B.A. with a Philosophy major and graduated in 1978.

After his graduation he went from Rome Lesotho to Rome Italia where he lived in the Oblate Generalate in Via Aurelia and studied at the Gregorianum, from which he graduated in 1981. In 1981 he was also ordained priest and did a pastoral year. In 1982 he went back to Rome (Italy) where he did a Licentiate in Moral Theology at the Alphonsianum, graduating in 1984. His topic for his dissertation was in the area of the relationship between conscience and civil law, with particular look at conscientious objection.

His next posting was to St Augustine's Seminary in Rome Lesotho where he taught in the Seminary and, at the same time worked for the Bishop's Conference in the area of Justice and Peace, particularly in giving talks and conferences.

Emile's next major ministry was running a parish in GwaGwa. He found it an enriching experience, although it was remote from the intellectual stimulation to which he was accustomed.

Since he came to Cedera he has been (in his own words) catching up on his reading as is getting into things gradually.

Emile has a passion for gardening, especially vegetable gardening. In fact he is a man of nature. He confesses to loving wild life.

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE INTERVIEW

It is imperative to note that all the material equipments such as the tape recorder and the cassette were ready for the interview. I did not buy a new cassette for the occasion, but one "good samaritan" from my community provided me with the necessary equipments.

Since the cassette was not new, but rather empty as it were, one problem I encountered when I was busy with the transference of the recorded interview into the transcription, was the audibility of the interviewee and the interviewer. What I am trying to say is that there was a distracting sound in the cassette and this made the process of transcription tedious and the understanding of most part of the interview a bit difficult.

It was later that I realised that a microphone could have made a vast difference to the quality of the interview. A microphone could have been to my advantage and to the advantage of the interviewee because he is a kind of person who speaks very softly.

We both had no books or rather other documented sources for the interview, but all in all, the interview was good and enjoyable.

MY ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW SITUATION

The interview took place in the office of Fr. Emile. He began with the interview at 9.25 a.m. and finished at 10.00 a.m. The interviewee felt that he was hijacked even though I had made an appointment with him the night prior to the interview. It was for this reason that he was only prepared to spare five minutes for the interview, but because of the flow of the

interview and the interest which developed in the process the whole interview lasted for thirty-five minutes.

I encountered no problems with the electrical appliances and there was less noise from the outside surroundings except the noise and complaints of the cows in the neighbouring farm.

On two occasions we had to stop the interview because of the disruptions made by certain gentlemen who had come to Enile for a certain kind of business. It was after these disruptions that the interviewee asked : "by the way where did we end up" and : "what was I saying". Thanks God I was attentive and could remind him of the last sentence or words he had uttered.

After twenty minutes of the interview I felt as though sleep was catching up with me and I battled with me that fact and I managed to eradicate the appearance from my face of drowsiness.

The other important thing to mention is that there was nearly a hindrance to the interview when I indicated to the interviewee of the fact that I was going to record or tape the entire interview. At first the interviewee was not for the idea with fear of being misquoted in the future and the fact that the interview was going to be in the University of Natal library. But I managed to convince the interviewee of confidentiality and he was at home with that assurance.

The interviewee wanted to speak Sotho as a medium language so that any person outside this language would be unable to understand the content of the interview, but he later said few minutes before the interview that he would be comfortable with English, and when there is a need to express a certain word in Sotho he would do so; but to my surprise the whole interview was in Sotho and there was no mention of the Sesotho word.

NON-VERBAL SIGNS

The interviewee did use non-verbal signs such as the use of hands; pulling or the frowning of the face; and the crossing of his legs. Whenever he repeated or emphasised a particular point, he would change the tone of his voice.

Generally the interviewee stammered and I also did when asking certain questions pertaining to women clergy. I would think that I was the one who was nervous and tense because of the insurmountable knowledge and experience he shared with me.

ANY RESTRUCTURING OF DATA

I do not think that there was a restructuring of data but my suspicion would be, he wanted to please me and get done with the interview. E.g. when he responded to the question of women being ordained; he gave his side of the story which I would say was genuine, but when he attacked feminism he said little about it. He said: "this questioned has never consisted in his mind until he went to Europe and until he came to Gedara". For us the whole idea of women's ordination has been there for about two and a half decades and the issue has been inseparable with the one of married clergy in the catholic church. There issue has been in catholic magazines such as "the Tablet" which is popular. Anyway I would give him the benefit of doubt for his openness in this regard especially as been pro women's ordination in the church.

ANY SIGNIFICANT OMISSION

I do not suspect any significant omissions in the interview, except that in the interview that is on tape he never mentioned the number of children in his family and the death of his mother. I also do not know whether his father is alive or that he has passed on to the other world of the asleep. He also never mentioned that he worked for the Bishop's

Conference in the area of Justice and Peace. But I do not think that he omitted these areas deliberately.

CROSS-REFERENCES

This information that I think was a significant omission, was taken from the other interview which was compiled in Networking Cedara dated October 2-9, 1994, Vol.5, No.24, (by P. O'Leary: OP).

MY OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF THE INTERVIEW

For me the whole interview was a good experience, an enriching experience in that the two parties who were involved in the exercise were able to sit together and share the most profound experience of and in their lives. There was familiarity between the two of us but it was not an obstacle and a kind of hindrance to the interview. The interviewee is my lecturer and I am his student. But in the process of the interview there was no student-lecturer attitude (i.e. I am superior and you are my subject). We were equal partners and even though I was in charge of the game, we both treated each other as equals and curious listeners.

The fact that I interviewed a Catholic priest as a catholic was not a major difficulty and I wish that I could have interviewed an ordained woman minister or any indigenous woman cleric irrespective of colour.

This interview has made the two of us to be more close than ever. I found that the interviewee was trusting and I promised him that the trust between us will not be betrayed in any way. All in all I would say the interview and the process was not an easy thing to do because it was my first time, but the whole thing went smooth and excellent.

There other thing to mention is that I did not stick to the questionnaire as such but I made it a guide to the interview. The interviewee had a chance to glance at the questionnaire before and he was not intimidated by any question whatsoever, even though on certain occasions he spoke to me as if he was speaking to someone who shared the same origins as his, e-g. he would say to me : "you know very well that the place I come from, Rome, is..." , or "you know the history of Leothe is...".

All in all this was a superb interview!!

MY ASSESSMENT OF THE OVERALL VALUE OF THE INTERVIEW IN TERMS OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The entire research was good because it is a sign that history is not forgotten but is continually in the making. This historical research is of paramount importance because the subject matter discussed and talked about in regard to black women clergy is something that cannot be avoided, ignored and locked down upon because it has an impact socially and ecclesiastically and above all, it is a controversial subject.

I hope that our generation and the generations to come will make a contribution in this regard and will pursue this subject. This historical research is the beginning of the project of looking seriously into the whole issue of women clergy as a whole.

I will also conclude by saying we are the makers of history and people from all walks of life should be interviewed irrespective of their race, creed, educational background, and status.