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# **Culture Evangelization and Dialogue**

Edited by  
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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## Introduction

*George F. Mclean and Robert Magliola*

This work looks in two directions, both of which today are of momentous importance. On the one hand, it looks back to the intensive dispute, renewed yearly on October 14, over the commemoration—and hence reinterpretation—of the significance of the voyage of Columbus to the Americas. Was it a triumph of technology over the seas, or a spectacular failure of scientific geography up to that day; was it an exhausted victory of the Spanish crown, or was it a deadly incursion of microbes which literally would decimate the population of "the new world"; was it a generous and self-sacrificing effort to share a precious religious vision of salvation, or was it the destruction of a people's way of life and their subjection?

That debate on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America—and rehearsed annually since that time—manifested how deep the question of meaning had become. One the world's most advanced societies has not been able to decide on the significance either of its own founding action or of its longterm effects.

In this light we must experience fear, if not terror, as we look forward into the new millennium. For now this issue is not simply the meeting of two specific peoples in which there could be some hope of controlling the conflicts. Instead, and rather suddenly upon the end of the cold war, all has been thrown open to all and to everything. Economic decisions instantly enrich or impoverish whole peoples and continents on the opposite side of the world; political power is projected by military hardware that must fly half way around the world and back on each mission; above all, electronic media bring images of everything and everyone in "real time" to all peoples rich and poor, Eastern and Western. This sharing of images has achieved a power and penetration raised to a limitless degree. Issues of living together with our distinctive cultures and hence ultimate commitments, or even of sharing the "good news" (the etymology of evangelization), call insistently, pervasively, and even ominously for some response.

That these are questions which often cannot be answered makes them the more ominous. We may, however, be able to contribute to a response or at least avoid earlier disastrous paths by looking once again at the issue that used to be termed "evangelization" and doing so in relation specifically to the intersection or dialogue of the variety of cultures. Even imperfections in that experience which were not appreciated in the past can now be appreciated and instructive. Moreover, recent efforts to explore this relationship can be especially helpful inasmuch as they do not remain on the level of surface conflicts over economic resources or political orientations, but go more deeply to issues of the human spirit in terms of which cultures are formed and transformed.

Hence, this volume concerns a wide range of "Good News," and how it can transform culture. This ranges all the way from democratic empowerment and economic growth to strategies for an ongoing evaluation of Islamic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic histories. Much attention is given to missteps as well as to steps, to failures as well as to successes.

The work brings together scholars, often from technologically 'underdeveloped' areas, interacting with each other in order to design strategies for the social, political, and religious betterment of the global community. Yet the papers do not deal in abstract pieties, but are hard-nosed, realistic, and well-informed. This renders them all the more credible and useful, and for the same reasons all the more inspiring as well. In the light of the global effort, especially in religious circles from the time of Vatican Council II, to raising national/international standards of human

dignity, most of the papers address a changing conception of evangelization and of intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

This is made possible by the new sensibility to the person which has transformed the world during the last half century. From the heavy burdens of totalitarianism and exploitation the peoples of the world have struggled to free themselves—first from Fascism in the 2nd World War, then from colonialism during the '50s and '60s, and more recently from Communism in Eastern Europe and Asia.

This has been reflected in the series of 'movements' by race, ethnicity and gender which have dramatically and passionately affirmed the dignity of the person. This can be seen in the attention given to liberation and the development of basic communities. At its most humanizing, penetrating and far reaching, this emerging sense of the person was seen by Vatican II as the movement of the Spirit at work in the World.

The implications of this inspiration for evangelization and intercultural dialogue are now becoming evident. For attention to the person implies a new appreciation of the free and creative life of the community, especially as over time this comes to constitute a tradition and a culture. This makes it possible to gain new insight into a people's self-understanding, to be newly sensitive to their mode of learning and communication, and to join more suavely and intimately, more consciously and astutely, in their response to the work of Providence in their lives. These, in turn, provide keys to a new sense of pastoral presence and practice.

Today the long experience of evangelization in the Americas can be looked at afresh. If poorly understood, the new sense of the importance of culture can generate anger, frustration and alienation at the practice of evangelization in the past. In contrast, a richer hermeneutical and critical sense, with the resources of the human sciences and new advances in philosophy and theology, promises to open a more positive appreciation of the contribution of the various ethnic communities, and of modes of their cooperation in facing the challenges of life today.

What is needed in these circumstances is a renewed approach to evangelization, one that is both steeped in the riches of past cultures and concerned with their implications for the new and changing circumstances which peoples now face. The challenge is to uncover the power of the Spirit deep within the culture and traditions of a people. To find how this liberates them from 'ideologies' and enlivens their hearts. The effect is to enliven, reconcile, and transform neighborhoods in their various dimensions of family (mutual love and respect, education, health), economy (poverty, employment, housing), and politics (participatory democracy on the local level).

This work is carried out in three parts.

Part I, "The Debate: Paradigms of Evangelization," focuses upon the theoretical bases for the work of evangelization and intercultural dialogue.

Chapter I by George F. McLean, "Culture and Religion," divides the history of Western thought between the "classical" (including ancient and medieval) and the "modern" (the Renaissance and thereafter). The former is axised upon the Transcendent and the latter upon humankind. McLean urges that the new evangelism is an effort at creative synthesis: modern self-centered individualism being transformed by Transcendence, and hard "objective" religion (stressing the immutable) being transformed by an authentic sense of the human cultivated in real communities. Evangelism thus becomes mutual help among cultures, directed by Providence, so that humanity might reach its existential fullness as an expression of its creator.

Chapter II by Antonio Gallo, "Evangelization as a Cultural Commitment," builds an anthropology founded on both Husserlian and existential phenomenology. It demonstrates that real evangelization is transmitted via shared concrete experience, rather than via abstract universal ideas. To show how local language is the primary embodiment of cultural experience, Gallo analyzes examples from the Ki'chean Indian grammar of Guatemala.

Chapter III by Bevil Bramwell, "Dialogue Between the Church and Culture: A Catholic Perspective," presents a formal philosophical explanation of how ontologically the Church and diverse cultures can nest in each other, i.e., how evangelization as the inculturation of religion is formally possible. Deploying Karl Rahner's definition of symbol as "the representation which allows the other 'to be there'," Bramwell shows the Church as the "real Symbol" of Christ in the world, and culture as the "real Symbol" of a community. Thus, in ontological terms, the Church can enable a culture 'to be there' and a culture can enable the Church 'to be there'.

Chapter IV by John Farrelly, "Communication across Cultures: Natural Law and the Wisdom Tradition," tests the theoretical explorations by comparing two cultural traditions and examining the state of communication between them.

Chapter V by John Farrelly, "Trinity as Salvific Mystery and Historical Consciousness," carries this theoretical exploration yet more deeply by applying the interpretation of the Trinity in terms of salvation to its historical realization.

Part II, "Challenges for Evangelization from the Social Order," begins to relate the above theoretical developments to the challenges of human history as this history encounters modernity in many parts of the world.

Chapter VI by Vassil Prodanov, "Religion and Inculturation," provides diachronic and synchronic models which in their various ways interpret the relationships between modernization, secularization, and religious revival. Prodanov goes on to interpret the relationships between religions (Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Islam, Protestant Christianity) and the government, national/ethnic identities, and totalitarianism. (Here totalitarianism is classified as a form of religion). He concludes with a close account of Bulgarian history and society, past and present, in terms of all the above.

Chapter VII by Paul Peachey, "Christian Social Teaching: Some 'meta'," directs attention to the social engagement of the gospel message and thereby opens a path to the concrete issues of the multiple cultures and regions treated in the following chapters of this part.

Chapter VIII by David Blanchard, "An Ethnography of Evangelization: Notes from El Salvador," reports on the formation in El Salvador of "Christian Base Communities." These were designed to link Catholic religious practice and socio-political action so as to liberate the oppressed and further the coming of the Kingdom. Blanchard provides a direct account, in English translation, of Juanita Martinez, a villager who witnessed three generations of persecution by the right-wing *Guardia* and death squads which massacred tens of thousands of peasants and workers. The campaigns to raise political consciousness, the early efforts to establish cooperatives, and Juanita's own work with the Church's "Social Pastoral" are vividly described and accompanied by Blanchard's analyses.

Part III, "The Role of Religion in Local, Regional and Global Contexts," brings together the theory of Part I with the concrete social challenges of Part II in order to speak to the impact of culture on dialogue and evangelization in the contemporary world.

Chapter IX by Joseph Q. Komonchak, "The Local Church and the Church Catholic," opens this part with a penetrating study of Church and its implication both for locality and for catholicity.

Chapter X, by Joseph Donders, "Inculturation and Catholicity in Relation to the Worldwide Church," argues that Sarah and Abraham had the courage to heed God's call and leave their country and original religion. God's generous Providence recuperates their old reverence for the stars (astrology) in a new way ("Look up . . . count the stars!"). This "straying from the old" in order to find it restored in a more sublime way is paradigmatic for inculturation, on the side both of the evangelizer and of the one evangelized.

Chapter XI by Daniel Cowdin, "Limits on the Evangelization of Culture," argues that the documents of Vatican Council II, when read analytically, in fact mandate not only that missiology adopt new strategies, but that it be revised ("re-visioned"). The insistence on inculturation, for example, necessarily brings in tandem a degree of "uncontrollability": the Christian message is 'given away' to others. Likewise, the new respect for 'religious freedom' implies that the Church accept limitations on its practical mission. [Compare, for example, the Church's evangelical prerogatives/assumptions when and where it was the State Religion.]

Chapter XII by Fenggang Yang, "The Integration of Chinese Culture and Christianity: A Social and Cultural Understanding," proposes that a culture's "value-system" is composed of a "core" consisting of essential principles of the world and human beings, and the "peripherals" or what is 'carried around the core.' The latter includes "social norms" or rules of behavior and "symbolic identity" or ritual, language, etc. Yang compares the West's Christian value-system and the Chinese value-system, tracing in particular Christian misunderstandings and maltreatments of the Chinese, and vice versa. He analyzes three forms of interaction when contrasting cultures meet: (1) conflict, (2) mutual co-existence, and (3) integration. The last, in turn, assumes two forms: syncretist and organic.

Chapter XIII, by Richard Khuri, "Fragments for Fruitful Encounters with Otherness," shows how Islam brought its version of the Good News with such success to the Monophysites and Nestorians of the Near East. Their conversion to Islam, far from being 'forced', resulted rather from orthodox Christianity's dogmatism and its persecution of 'heretics'. Khuri also explains some teachings of "practical" and mystic Islam, such as Ibn' Arabi's "Perfect Man," proposing them as grounds for dialogue with Christianity.

Chapter XIV by William E. May, "Culture, Evangelization and Moral Theology," comments on the International Theological Commission's document, "Faith and Inculturation," focusing on its theology of nature, culture, and grace in relation to evangelization. The document itself follows as an appendix.

Together, the volume constitutes an in-depth study of the impact of the emerging recognition of culture upon the work of evangelization, which, in turn, is a focused test case for the more general dialogue of cultures.



# Chapter I

## Culture and Religion

*George F. Mclean*

### Introduction

At this turn of the millennia we stand at a decisive point in history: a juncture at which basic human decisions must be made which, for good or ill, promise to shape the history of human kind for long centuries to come.

To the Western mind this appears if one begins from the commonplace that its history of thought divides between the classical, that is, ancient and medieval, on the one hand, and the modern and the contemporary (20th century) on the other. The former is seen to have been axised upon the transcendent, the absolute or the divine. This was the One of Parmenides and Plato, the Prime Mover or Knowing of Knowing (*noesis noeseos*) of Aristotle, the "Heavenly City" of Augustine or the Creator and Redeemer of St. Thomas. The later period, from the time of the Renaissance, has been axised upon humankind: from its early exploration of the world to the recent concerns for the human environment and from Descartes' Archimedean principle, "I am" (*sum*), to the existential and postmodern rejection of principles and foundation so that man might be free.

Present events force us to ask whether our people or any people so conceived can long endure; and many signposts point to a negative answer. A short time ago the collapse of the totalitarian structures in Eastern Europe appeared to leave only that of the liberal, i.e., individualistic or even anarchistic, competition of the West. But the most recent signs suggest that we stand rather at the end of an era. First, the liberation of peoples in Eastern Europe, by enabling them to regain their sense of identity as peoples, suddenly has forced upon them all the unresolved issues of how they are to live together under the concrete overlapping of historical claims and counter-claims, triumphs and tragedies. Similarly, despite the narrow French vote, it is clear that any progress toward unity in Western Europe will have to give more attention to national and group identities. Second, the structures of the West seem now to have begun to crumble as well under the weight of individualistic self-centeredness. The weight of rebuilding East Germany may be the catalyst, but the disintegration seems to be rooted more deeply: wild over-consumption has generated the astronomic debts within and between nations which in the last decade have mortgaged all foreseeable successive generations; moral corruption and self-seeking have undermined confidence in social structures from family to nation; the emerging sense of rights has degenerated into adversarial relations which paralyse economies, set people against their neighbor, and turn ghettos into zones of warfare and terror.

At this turn of the century there is reason to think, then, that an entire era is passing; that we stand at a crossroads where we must choose either passively to slip further into the chaos which opens before us or creatively to open some new and deeper synthesis which assumes but transforms both the ancient thesis axised upon God and the modern antithesis axised upon man. If in the past one of these has supplanted the other, it is necessary now to think of ways to relate positively both horizons, enrich each with the strengths of the other, and open ways to make actual the sacredness of life and thereupon build the future.

There are some signs that this is now desired and sought. On the one hand, humanism no longer is taken in the closed and exclusive sense of the "scientific atheism" or reductive humanisms

of the first half of this century. Disillusioned with the naive boasts that man can save himself (now revealed as a thin mask for the ancient boast in Milton's *Paradise Lost*), people search for foundations for their freedom and dignity which transcend anything that mankind, whether as individual or as party, can create—and therefore take away.

On the other hand, the churches seem to be shifting also from opposition to transforming synthesis. The "Oath Against Modernism" has slipped into the past to be replaced by the Vatican II document, "The Church in the World"; the once feared Sacred Inquisition, having become simply the Holy Office, has now become the Congregation of the Faith; in turn, the Propaganda Fidei, once charged with simply passing on what had been handed down, has now become the Office for the Evangelization of Peoples, charged with finding the meaning of the Good News for the emerging sense of the unique identity of each people. This bespeaks a new sense of the foundational importance of the meeting of God and mankind in the Annunciation, the Incarnation and the Pascal and Pentecostal events which began this era.

In this light the present theme, "Evangelization and Culture," reflects the recent sense of the need and possibility for a new, deeper and more fruitful synthesis of the ancient and modern horizons of God and man. In our precarious situation this is a challenge to which, in our precarious situation, we dare not fail to respond. How can this be done?

To begin to discern the emergence of a new synthesis, we might distinguish four planes: In terms of the focus of human sensitivity and interests, the objective (A) and the subjective or existential (B); In terms of levels of reality, humankind (C) and God (D).

A C

Objectivity Humankind

B D

Subjectivity God

This will enable our analysis to proceed in four steps. First, the present crumbling of the older Western view will be related to its limitation to the human understood in objective terms—A to C (Part I). Second, the resulting problems are seen as having pointed beyond objectivity to human subjectivity and thereby to a focus upon the nature of human creativity and upon culture as its realization—A to B (Part II). Thirdly, such phenomenological analysis in turn enables us to look more deeply into the origin of our own subjectivity and thereby to expand the focus of our awareness from mankind to the divine as the objectively transcending source in relation to which our conscious life stands as gift manifesting the intimate divine life of love—C to D (Part III). In this light, evangelization becomes, not an alien imperial (or colonial) imposition, but the enlivening experience of being the expression of divine love, called in turn to respond creatively to present challenges—B to D (Part IV).

## **Human Life as Object of Analysis and Manipulation**

### *Rationalism*

In the history of philosophy brilliant new creative openings often degenerate into reductionist efforts to absorb all other meaning. This perverse dynamism is found in no less central a personage than Plato who changed Parmenides' relation of thought to being into a reduction of reality to what was clear to the human mind. Thus he invited the human mind to soar, but where it met its limits—

as in taking account of concrete realities and the exercise of human freedom—he generated a classic blueprint for a suppressive communal state.

Such temptations of all-controlling reason are characteristic as well of modern times, beginning from Descartes' requirements of clarity and distinctness for the work of reason. The effect in his own philosophy was to split the human person between the extended substance or body and the non-extended substance or spirit. Much as he tried for a unity of these in the human person, this could not be done in the clear and distinct terms he required. As a result philosophers and then whole cultures proceeded according to either body or spirit as modern thought polarized between the atomism of discrete sensations and the ever greater unities perceived by spirit.

What is particularly frightening is the way in which theoretical philosophical experiments in either of these isolates were carried out by a fairly mechanical pattern of reason and then translated into public policy. It is fine for a thinker to give free range to the constructive possibilities of his or her mind by saying, as did Hobbes, e.g.: "Let's suppose that all are isolated singles in search of survival" and then see what compromises and what rules will make survival possible. Over time we have become accustomed to that game and often forget Hobbes' identification of the wolflike basic instincts by which it is played, but we should listen to others when they perceive the resulting system as predatory, brutish and mean.

Similarly, it could be helpful for a thinker to hypothesize that all is matter and then see how its laws can shed light on the process of human history. But when this was done by Marx and Lenin, society began to repress the life of the spirit and term 'irrational' everything except scientific historicism. The freedom of individuals and of peoples was suppressed, and creativity died.

Both are parallel cases of theoretical axioms becoming metaphysical totalities. It is not surprising that the result for this century was a bipolar world armed to the hilt and subsisting by a reign of mutual terror between the liberal democratic republics of the self-styled "free world" and the people's democratic republics. What is surprising is that the internal collapse of one of the partners in this deadly game should give popularity to the notion that the parallel road taken by the other partner can be followed now without fear—that the wolf has been transformed into a lamb for lack of a mirror in which to observe the effects of its own root viciousness.

### *Rationalism and Concepts of Freedoms*

Our task, however, is not merely to identify the generic limitations of rationalism as background for the emergence of broad new sensibilities. It is also to relate this specifically to the new awareness of culture and its implications for the task of evangelization as that of the liberation of mankind in the deepest and fullest sense. Hence, we shall look specifically to the notions of freedom in order to see what the liberal rationalist perspectives do and do not make possible, and hence what precisely is the reason for the new attention to culture and the significance of this attention for evangelization.

We shall draw especially upon the work of Mortimer J. Adler and the team of The Institute for Philosophical Research which was published as *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom*.<sup>1</sup> Their corporate examination of main philosophical writings identified three correlated modes in which freedom has been understood, namely, circumstantial, acquired and natural; and the corresponding modes of self (i.e., "the ability or power of the self in virtue of which freedom is possessed"), namely, self-realization, self-perfection and self-determination.<sup>2</sup> This yields the following scheme:

*Mode of Possession Mode of Self*<sup>3</sup>

1. Circumstantial <————> 1. Self-realization
2. Acquired <————> 2. Self-perfection
3. Natural <————> 3. Self-determination

Thus it divided three theories of freedom among three categories, namely:<sup>4</sup>

(A) *Circumstantial freedom of self-realization*: "To be free is to be able, under favorable circumstances, to act as one wishes for one's own individual good as one sees it";

(B) *Acquired freedom of self-perfection*: "To be free is to be able, through acquired virtue or wisdom, to will or live as one ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature"; and

(C) *Natural freedom of self-determination*: "To be free is to be able, by a power inherent in human nature, to change one's own character creatively by deciding for oneself what one shall do or shall become."

When we look into the philosophical basis from which have arisen these various theories of freedom, what appears striking is that each of the three types of freedom delineated by the Institute of Philosophical Research corresponds to an epistemology and metaphysics. Circumstantial freedom of self-realization is the only type of freedom recognized by many empirically oriented philosophers; acquired freedom of self-perfection is characteristic of more rational, formalist and essentialist philosophers; natural freedom of self-determination is developed by philosophers open as well to the existential dimension of being. This suggests that the metaphysical underpinnings of a philosophy control its epistemology and that especially in modern times this in turn controls its philosophical anthropology, ethics and politics. With this in mind the following review of the types of freedom will begin from their respective metaphysical and epistemological contexts and in that light proceed to its notion of freedom.

In these terms Descartes division of the human person into a spirit or thinking substance and a body or extended substance opened two divergent paths: That of Locke based on the physical senses to which corresponds the circumstantial freedom of self-realization; and that typified by Spinoza and Kant based on the human intellect to which corresponds the acquired freedom of self-perfection. While both are important, their limitations point the way to a new level of meaning (Part II) concerned with the natural freedom of self-determination.

*Circumstantial Freedom of Self-realization and Liberalism*

At the beginning of the modern stirrings for democracy, John Locke perceived a crucial condition for a liberal democracy. If decisions were to be made not by the king but by the people, the basis for these decisions had to be equally available to all. To achieve this, Locke proposed that we suppose the mind to be a white paper void of characters and ideas, and then follow the way in which it comes to be furnished. To keep this public he insisted that it be done exclusively via experience, that is, either by sensation or by reflection upon the mind's work on the materials derived from the senses.<sup>5</sup> From this David Hume concluded that all objects of knowledge which are not formal tautologies must be matters of fact. Such "matters of fact" are neither the existence or actuality of a thing nor its essence, but simply the determination of one from a pair of sensible

contraries, e.g. white rather than black, sweet rather than sour.<sup>6</sup> The restrictions implicit in this appearly in Rudolf Carnap's "Vienna Manifesto," which shrinks the scope of meaningful knowledge and significant discourse to describing "some state of affairs" in terms of empirical "sets of facts." This excludes speech about wholes, God, the unconscious or *entelechies*; the grounds of meaning and all that transcends the immediate content of sense experience are excluded.

In such terms it is not possible to speak of appropriate or inappropriate goals or even to evaluate choices in relation to self-fulfillment. The only concern is which objects among the sets of contraries I will choose by brute, changeable and even arbitrary will power, and whether circumstances will allow me to carry out that choice. Such choices, of course, may not only differ from, but even contradict the immediate and long range objectives of other persons. This will require compromises in the sense of Hobbes; John Rawls will even work out a formal set of such compromises.<sup>7</sup> Throughout it all, however, the basic concern remains the ability to do as one pleases.

This includes two factors. The first is execution by which my will is translated into action. Thus, John Locke sees freedom as "being able to act or not act, according as we shall choose or will"<sup>8</sup>; Bertrand Russell sees it as "the absence of external obstacles to the realization of our desires."<sup>9</sup> The second factor is individual self-realization understood simply as the accomplishment of one's good as one sees it. This reflects one's personal idiosyncrasies and temperament, which in turn reflect each person's individual character.

In these terms one's goal can be only that which appeals to one, with no necessary relation to real goods or to duties which one ought to perform.<sup>10</sup> "Liberty consists in doing what one desires,"<sup>11</sup> and the freedom of a society is measured by the latitude it provides for the cultivation of individual patterns of life.<sup>12</sup> If there is any ethical theory in this it can be only utilitarian, hopefully with enough breadth to recognize other people and their good as well as one's own. In practice, over time this comes to constitute a black-hole of self-centered consumption of physical goods in which both nature and the person are consumed; it is the essence of consumerism.

This first level of freedom is reflected in the contemporary sense of "choice" in North America. As a theory this is underwritten by a pervasive series of legal precedents following Justice Brandeis' notion of privacy, which now has come to be recognized as a constitutional right. In the American legal system the meaning of freedom has been reduced to this. It should be noted that this derived from Locke's politically motivated decision (itself an exercise of freedom) not merely to focus upon empirical meaning, but to eliminate from public discourse any other knowledge. Its progressively rigorous implementation which we have but sampled in the references to Hume and Carnap, constitute an ideology in the sense of a selected and restrictive vision which controls minds and reduces freedom to wilfulness. In this perspective liberalism is grossly misnamed, and itself calls for a process of liberation and enrichment.

In sum, in the context of the Enlightenment and in order to make possible universal participation in social life, Locke limited the range of meaning to what was empirically available. This assured one sense of freedom limited to choices between contrary qualities. The effort was well-intentioned, but he would seem to have tried too hard and compromised too much in single-minded pursuit of freedom of choice. As a result, the very notion of freedom has been undermined.

### *Acquired Freedom of Self-Perfection*

Kant's sense of freedom emerges in the contrast of his Second to his First Critique. *The Critique of Pure Reason* studies the role of mind in the scientific constitution of the universe. Kant reasoned that because our sense experience was always limited and partial, the universality and necessity of the laws of science must come from the human mind. This was an essential turning point for it directed human attention to the role of the human spirit and especially to the reproductive imagination in constituting the universe in which we live and move.

But if the forms and categories with which we work are from our mind, how we construct with them is not arbitrary. The imagination must bring together the multiple elements of sense intuition in a unity or order capable of being informed by the concepts or categories of the intellect with a view to making the necessary and universal judgments of science. The subject's imagination here is active but not free, being ruled by the categories integral to the necessary and universal judgements of the sciences. In these terms the human mind remains merely an instrument of physical progress and a function of matter.

In his Second Critique, beyond that set of universal, necessary and ultimately material relations, Kant points to the reality of human responsibility in the realm of practical reason. If man is responsible, then there is about him a distinctive level of reality irreducible to the laws of physical nature. This is the reality of freedom and spirit which characterizes and distinguishes the person.

In terms of this he recasts the whole notion of law or moral rule. If freedom is not to be chaotic and randomly destructive, it must be ruled or under law; yet in order to be free the moral act must be autonomous. Hence, my maxim must be something which as a moral agent I—and no other—give to myself. I am free because I am the lawmaker. But my exercise of this power cannot be arbitrary. If the moral order must be universal, then my maxim which I dictate must be fit to be also universal law for all persons. On this basis freedom emerges in a clearer light. It is not merely self-centered whimsy in response to circumstantial stimuli; nor is it a despotic exercise of the power of the will or the clever self-serving eye of Plato's rogue. Rather, it is the highest reality in all creation; it is wise and caring power, open to all and bent upon the realization of "the glorious ideal of a universal realm of ends-in-themselves"; in sum, it is free men living together in righteous harmony. This is what we are really about; it is man's glory—and his burden.

Unfortunately, this glorious ideal remained in the formal order. It was a matter of essence rather than of existence. It was intended as a guiding principle, a critical norm to evaluate the success or failure of the human endeavor—but it was not the human endeavor itself. For failure to appreciate this, many who are deeply concerned about human rights work at a level of abstraction which keeps them from positive engagement in the real process of constructing the world in which we live. (In Yugoslavia, U.S. diplomacy was long inactive behind an initial insistence that borders remain unchanged, then that there be an assurance of minority rights, then "letting the blood lust run out." Finally, when it became clear that the entire fabric of central and eastern Europe was in danger of coming apart and being substituted by raw power, it began fatuously to say that cases should be prepared for subsequent international tribunals and that humanitarian aid should be protected.)

Thus the second sense of freedom, namely, acquired freedom of self-perfection, opens a new and much needed dimension of freedom based upon our nature or essence as free beings. This was founded in law precisely as I assert for myself (autonomous) a law which is fit for all men (universal). One is "able through acquired virtue or wisdom, to will or live as one ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature."

But one needs to go beyond issues of nature or essence. Freedom is not only the articulation of a law—however autonomous and universal this might be in the pattern of Kant’s Second Critique, or at whatever stage of universalization of the sense of justice in the pattern of Kohlberg’s stages of moral reasoning. Freedom is not merely a nature reflected in moral judgements; it is human life and action. Liberation means to be *humanly*, to live this *fully*; this is a matter not of essence, but of existence.

Progress in being human corresponds to man’s development of this sense of being. Its deepening from forms and structures, essences and laws in Plato, to that of act in Aristotle and especially of existence in Christian philosophy, definitively deepened the sense of human life with its triumphs and tragedies. This is the drama we are living in our days as we are called insistently to humanize the application of our technological abilities, and indeed is life itself. This can be done not simply in terms of essence, that is, of a moral law or ideal befitting human nature; rather it must be in terms of existence, that is, of deciding for oneself in virtue of the power inherent in human nature to change one’s own character creatively and to determine what one shall be or shall become. This is the most radical freedom, namely, our natural freedom of self-determination.

This takes us far beyond freedom as external choice between objects in our world and beyond internal selection of universal principles for the direction of our action. It is, rather, self-affirmation in terms of our orientation or teleology to perfection or full realization. It implies seeking when that is absent and enjoying or celebrating it as attained. In this sense, it is that stability in one’s orientation to the good which classically has been termed holiness. One might say that is life as practiced by the saints, but it would be more correct to say that it is because they lived in such a manner that they are called holy.

If the three senses or dimensions of freedom correspond to epistemologies and metaphysics, then in order to be able to achieve liberation fully by freedom of self-determination a new level of awareness would be required. When the contemporary mind proceeds beyond objective natures to really become conscious of human subjectivity or of existence precisely as emerging in and through human self-awareness, then the most profound changes would begin. The old order built on objective structures and norms would no longer be adequate; structures would crumble and a new era would dawn. This is indeed the juncture at which we stand; it can be tracked on two levels. It can be read by its external signs, namely, in the social upheavals and realignments of the student revolutions of 1968, the minority movements of the 1970s, or the crumbling of the ideologies in the 1980s and 1990s. But really to understand these in a way that makes it possible to respond creatively, it is important to use the tools of metaphysics and epistemology in order to understand their root dynamics and to be able not simply to react, but to respond pastorally.

Today the greatest peril would appear to be our blindness to the forces at work in the world today, and therefore our inability to provide the creativity needed to keep these from degenerating into the most base and crude forms of barbarism. Neither the liberal balance of egoistic pursuit of private interests nor the formal ideal principles of a Kantian order have proven capable of warding off colonial oppression in recent centuries, and even genocide in the present decade, or of channelling human forces into humane relations.

It is of the greatest urgency that we begin to chart the forces which opened the new consciousness of human existence and thereby enabled radical development at the third and basic level of human freedom at which it becomes authentic liberation. This new emergence of the sense of identity and relation on the part of individuals and peoples will be studied in Part II.

## **From Objectivity to Subjectivity**

## *The Emergence of the Subject*

At the beginning of this century it had appeared that the rationalist project of stating all in clear and distinct terms, whether the empirical terms of the empiricist and positivist tradition of sense knowledge or the formal and essentialist Kantian tradition of intellectual knowledge, was close to completion. Whitehead writes that at the turn of the century, when with Bertrand Russell he went to the first World Congress of Philosophy in Paris, it seemed that the work of physics was essentially completed except for some details of application. In fact, the very attempt to wrap up scientific rational knowledge with its most evolved tools was to manifest the radical insufficiency of the objectivist approach.

Wittgenstein would begin by writing his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*<sup>13</sup> on the Lockean supposition that significant knowledge consisted in constructing a mental map corresponding point by point to the external world as this was open to sense experience. In such a project the spiritual power to grasp the relations between the points on this mental map, i.e., to "understand," was relegated to the margin as being simply "unutterable." Wittgenstein's experience in teaching children led him to the conclusion that this empirical mental mapping was simply not what was going on in human knowledge. Consequently, in his *Blue and Brown Books*<sup>14</sup> and his subsequent *Philosophical Investigations*,<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein shifted conscious human intentionality which had previously been relegated to the periphery, to the very center of concern. Thus, the focus of his philosophy was no longer the positivist replication of the external world but the human construction of language and worlds of meaning.<sup>16</sup>

A similar process was underway in the Kantian camp. There, Husserl's attempt to bracket all elements in order to isolate pure essences for scientific knowledge, forced attention to the limitations of a pure essentialism and opened the way for Martin Heidegger, his collaborator and successor, to rediscover the existential and historical dimensions of reality in his *Being and Time*<sup>17</sup> (Note, incidentally, that this would be echoed in Rahner's *Spirit in the World*,<sup>18</sup> while the most exceptional document of Vatican II, called to draw out the religious implications of this new sensitivity, would be entitled *The Church in the World*).<sup>19</sup>

For Heidegger the meaning of being and of life was to be sought in the unveiling of conscious human life (*Dasein*) lived through time and therefore through history. If that be the case, then human consciousness would become the new focus of attention. The pursuit of this unfolding, patterning and interrelation of consciousness would open a new era of human liberation. Epistemology and metaphysics would develop in the very process of tracking the nature and direction of this process. Thus, for Heidegger's successor, Hans-Georg Gadamer, the task would become that of uncovering how human persons, as emerging in the community of family, neighborhood and people, exercise their freedom in consciously creating culture, not merely as a compilation of whatever mankind does or makes, but as the fabric of human symbols and interrelations within which a human group chooses to live in the process of unveiling being in time.

To engage in the liberation of the person in our day requires examining the grounds upon which a people develops its identity as a nation and the process by which, in concert with others, it advances into the future.

This calls for attention to three specific issues:

1. The nature of values, culture and tradition;



2. The moral authority of this cultural tradition and its values for guiding our life;
3. The active role of every generation in creatively shaping and developing tradition in response to the challenges of its times.

All of these are of major import in appreciating the process of evangelization.

### *Culture and Cultural Traditions as Cumulative Freedom*

*Values:* Living things survive by seeking the good or that which perfects and promotes their life. Thus a basic exercise of human freedom is to set an order of preferences among the many things that are possible. These are values in the sense that they "weigh more heavily" in making our decisions than do other possibilities. Cumulatively, they set the pattern of our actions.

*Culture:* Together the values, artifacts and modes of human interaction constitute an integrated pattern of human life in which the creative freedom of a people is expressed and implemented. This is called a culture.

Etymologically, the term "culture" derives from the Latin term for tilling or cultivating the land. Cicero and other Latin authors used it for the cultivation of the soul or mind (*cultura animi*), for just as even good land when left without cultivation will produce only disordered vegetation of little value, so the human spirit will not achieve its proper results unless trained. This sense corresponds most closely to the Greek term for education (*paideia*) as the development of character, taste and judgment, and to the German term "formation" (*Bildung*).

Here, the focus is upon the creative capacity of the human spirit: its ability to work as artist, not only in the restricted sense of producing purely aesthetic objects, but in the more involved sense of shaping all dimensions of life, material and spiritual, economic and political. The result is a whole person characterized by unity and truth, goodness and beauty, and encouraged to share fully in the meaning and value of life. The capacity to do so cannot be taught, although it may be enhanced by education. More recent phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiries suggest that, at its base, culture is a renewal, a reliving of one's own origination in an attitude of profound appreciation. This may lead us beyond self and other, beyond identity and diversity, in order to comprehend both; this will be taken up below.

By attending more to its object, culture can be traced to the terms *civis*, or citizen, and civilization. These reflect the need for a person to belong to a social group or community in order for the human spirit to produce its proper results. The community brings to the person the resources of the tradition, the *tradita* or past wisdom and productions of the human spirit, thereby facilitating comprehension. By enriching the mind with examples of values which have been identified in the past, it teaches and inspires one to produce something analogous. For G.F. Klemm this more objective sense of cultures is composite in character. For the social sciences Tyler defined this classically as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits required by man as a member of society."

Each particular complex or culture is specific to one people; a person who shares in this is a *civis* or citizen and belongs to a civilization. For the more restricted Greek world in which this term was developed, others (*aliens*) were those who did not speak the Greek tongue; they were "barbaroi" for their speech sounded like mere babble. Though at first this meant simply non-Greek, its negative manner of expression easily lent itself to, perhaps reflected, and certainly favored, a negative axiological connotation, which indeed soon became the primary meaning of the word

‘barbarian’. By reverse implication it attached to the term ‘civilization’ an exclusivist connotation, such that the cultural identity of peoples began to imply cultural alienation between peoples. Today, as communication increases and more widely differentiated peoples enter into ever greater interaction and mutual dependence, we reap an ever more bitter harvest of this connotation. A less exclusivist sense of culture must be a priority task.

*Tradition* is the cumulative process of transmitting, adjusting and applying the values of a culture through time. It is at once both heritage or what is inherited or received and new creation as we pass this on in new ways. Attending to tradition taken in this active sense allows us to uncover not only the permanent and universal truths sought by Socrates, but: (a) to perceive the importance of values we receive from the tradition, and (b) to mobilize our own life project actively toward the future. We shall look more closely at each of these.

### *The Moral Authority of Cultural Traditions*

As received, tradition is not against freedom but is rather the cumulative freedom of a people. Persons emerge from birth into a family and neighborhood from which they learn and in harmony with which they thrive. Horizontally, one learns from experience what promotes and what destroys life; accordingly one makes pragmatic adjustments. Vertically, and more importantly, one learns values, i.e., what is truly worth striving for and the pattern of social interaction in which this can be richly lived. This, rather than all that happens (history), is what is passed on (*tradita*, tradition). The importance of tradition derives from the cooperative character of both the learning by which wisdom is drawn from experience—even of failure—and of the cumulative free acts of commitment and sacrifice which have defined, defended and passed on through time the corporate life of the community.

This cultural tradition attains its authority not by the arbitrary imposition of the will of our forbears or by abstract laws, but on the basis of what has been learned from horizontal and vertical experience about life, and passed on. Through history there evolves a vision of actual life which transcends time and hence can provide guidance for our life, past, present and future. The content of that vision is a set of values which point the way to mature and perfect human formation and thereby orient the life of a person. Such a vision is historical because it arises in the life of a people in time and presents an appropriate way of preserving that life through time. It is also normative because it provides the harmony and fullness which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, uplifting and dynamizing, in a word, liberating. For this reason it provides a basis upon which past historical ages, present options and future possibilities are judged.

### *Cultural Creativity and Interchange*

As an active process tradition transforms what is received, lives it in a creative manner and passes it on as a leaven for the future. Taken diachronically the process of tradition as receiving and passing on does not stop with Plato’s search for eternal and unchangeable ideals, with the work of *techné* in repeating exactly and exclusively a formal model, or with rationalism’s search for clear and distinct knowledge of immutable natures by which all might be controlled. Rather, in the application of a tradition according to the radical distinctiveness of persons and their situations, tradition is continually perfected and enriched. It manifests the sense of what is just and good which we have from our past, by creating in original and distinctive ways more of what justice and

goodness mean. J. Pelican said it well: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead: traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."

Is the reading of the tradition a matter of appreciation and conservation or original, creative and free expression? It is impossible to read an ancient text with the eyes long closed of their author, not least because to the very degree in which that might succeed it would destroy the text which in itself was written as a vital expression of the process of life. In contrast, a hermeneutic approach would not seek to reiterate ancient times in reading ancient texts, but to recognize that we come to them from new times, with new horizons and new questions; that this enables them to speak new meaning to us; and that in so doing the texts and philosophies are living rather than dead—and therefore more true. Gospel texts read in this sense are part of living tradition in which is situated our struggle to face the problems of life and build a future worthy of those who follow.

Application of the tradition requires prudence (*phronesis*) or thoughtful reflection which enables one to discover the appropriate means for the circumstances. It must include also the virtue of sagacity (*sunesis*), that is, of understanding or concern for the other, for one can assess the situation adequately only inasmuch as one, in a sense, undergoes the situation with the affected parties. Charity or concern for others is not then alien to the progress of a culture.

Further, if we take time and culture seriously then we must recognize that we are situated in a particular culture and at a particular time; hence all that can be seen from this vantage point constitutes one's horizon. This would be lifeless and dead, determined rather than free, if our vantage point were to be fixed by its circumstances and closed. Hence, it is necessary to meet other minds and hearts not simply to add information incrementally, but to be challenging in our basic assumptions and enabled thereby to delve more deeply into our tradition and draw forth deeper and more pervasive truth.

A hermeneutic mode of openness does not consist in surveying gospel texts or other peoples objectively, obeying them in a slavish and unquestioning manner or even simply juxtaposing their ideas and traditions to our own. Rather, it is directed primarily to ourselves, for our ability to listen to others is correlatively our ability to assimilate the implications of their answers for delving more deeply into the meaning of our own traditions and drawing out new and even more rich insights. In other words, it is an acknowledgement that our cultural heritage has something new to say to us and that we are the ones who can enable it to speak. This would suggest that the process of evangelization is not merely one of communicating content regarding the nature of things, but being a leaven to a culture in order that it be brought more fully to life. In this it is more existential than essential, more life than form.

Hence the attitude is not methodological sureness which imposes its views, nor is it a mere readiness for new compromises or new techniques of social organization. Instead, it is readiness to draw out in open dialogue new meaning from our traditions. Seen in these terms our heritage of culture and values is not closed or dead, but through interchange becomes more inclusive and richer, thereby enabling life to remain ever new.

## **From Humankind to God**

The above phenomenological analysis points us deeply into human subjectivity and life lived in its terms. What is its ultimate meaning, however? Is this new focus upon human subjectivity but another chapter in *Paradise Lost* in which mankind attempts to seize his destiny by excluding all else? Is it a new reductionism leaving man to interact not only more consciously but to attack others more devastatingly by killing not only bodies but spirits as well? If we are newly aware of

cultures, is this to open new periods of persecution and cultural genocide? Very concretely, "Can we get along?"

To do so it is necessary to break out of our self-centeredness. We must see if the new phenomenological awareness of existence as emerging through human consciousness can help resolve the problems by carrying its analysis to the origin of our subjectivity in relation to which our love and our very selves stand as gift to giver.

The given can be approached in a phenomenological manner by reflecting carefully on the mode of operation of our conscious life. One place to begin is with the person as a polyvalent unity operative on both the physical and the non-physical levels. Though the various sciences analyze distinct dimensions, the person is not a construct of independent components but an identity: the physical and the psychic are dimensions of myself and of no other. Further, this identity is not the result of my personal development, but was had by me from my beginning; it is a given for each person. Hence, while I can grow indefinitely, act endlessly, and do and make innumerable things, the growth and acts will be always my own; it is the same given or person who perdures through all the stages of his or her growth.

This givenness appears also through reflection upon one's inter-personal relations. I do not properly create these, for they are possible only if I already have received my being. Further, to open to others is a dynamism which pertains to my very nature and which I can suppress only at the price of deep psychological disturbance. Relatedness is given with one's nature and is to be received as a promise and a task; it is one's destiny. What depends upon the person is only the degree of his or her presence to others.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, this givenness is often taken in the sense of closure associated with the terms 'datum' or 'data', as hypothetical or evidential. On the one hand, in the hypothetical sense a given is a stipulation agreed upon by the relevant parties as the basis for a process of argumentation: Granted X, then Y. The premises of an argument or the postulates in a mathematical demonstration are such. On the other hand, in the evidential sense, data are the direct and warranted observations of what actually is the case. In both these meanings the terms 'given' or 'data' direct the mind exclusively toward the future or consequent as one's only concern. The use of the past participle of the verb stem (*data*) closes off any search toward the past so that when one given is broken down by an analysis, new givens appear. One never gets behind some hypothetical or evidential given.

This closure is done for good reason, but it leaves a second—and for our purposes potentially important—sense of 'given' as open. This is expressed by the nominative form, *donum* or gift in contrast to the other meanings; this points back, as it were, behind itself to its source in ways similar to the historians' use of the term 'fact'. They note that a fact is not simply there; its meaning has been molded or made (*facta*) within the ongoing process of human life.<sup>21</sup> In this sense it points back to its origin and origination.

However, this potentially rich return to the source was blocked by the shift at the beginning of the 19th century to an anthropocentric view. In this horizon facts came to be seen especially as made by man, conceived either as an individual in the liberal tradition, or as a class in the socialist tradition—to which correspond the ideals of progress and praxis, respectively. Because what was made by man could always be remade by him,<sup>22</sup> however, this turned aside a radical search into the character of life as gift. Attention remained only upon the future understood simply in terms of man and of what man could do by either individual or social praxis.

There are reasons to suspect that this humanism is not enough for a dynamic sense of a cultural heritage and a creative sense of harmony as cooperation with others. Without underestimating how

much has been accomplished in the terms of progress and praxis, the world-wide contemporary phenomenon of alienation not only between cultures but from one's own culture and people suggests that something important has been forgotten. First, by including only what is abstractly clear these approaches begin by omitting that which can be had only in self-knowledge, namely, one's self-identity and all that is most distinctive and creative in each people's heritage. Focusing only upon what is analytically clear and distinct to the mind of any and every individual renders alien the notes of personal identity, freedom and creativity, as well as integrity, wholeness and harmony. These characterize the more synthetic philosophical and religious traditions and are realized in self-knowledge, deep interpersonal bonds,<sup>23</sup> and under the personal guidance of a teacher or guru.<sup>24</sup>

Second, there is the too broadly experienced danger that in concrete affairs the concern to build the future in terms only of what has been conceived clearly and by all will be transformed, wittingly and unwittingly, into oppression of self-identity and destruction of integrative cultures both as civilizations and as centers of personal cultivation. Indeed, the charges of cultural oppression and the calls for liberation from so many parts of the world raise a well-founded doubt that the humanist notion of the self-given and its accompanying ideals can transcend the dynamics of power and leave room for persons, especially for those of other cultures.

Finally, were the making which is implied in the derivation of the term 'fact' from *facere* to be wholly reduced to 'self-making', and were the given to become only the self-given, it might be suspected that we had stumbled finally upon what Parmenides termed "the all impossible way" of deriving what is from what is not.<sup>25</sup> His essential insight—shared by Hinduism, Islam and the Judeo-Christian traditions—that all is grounded in the Absolute should guard against such self-defeating, stagnating and destructive self-centeredness.

### *Person as Gift*

It is time then to look again to the second meaning of 'given' and to follow the opening this provides toward the source as implied in the notion of gift. Above, we had noted some indications that self-identity and interpersonal relatedness are gifts (*dona*). Let us now look further into this in order to see what it suggests regarding the dynamic openness required for cooperation between persons and cultures.

First, one notes that as gift the given has an essentially gratuitous character. It is true that at times the object or service given could be paid for in cash or in kind. As indicated by the root of the term 'commercial', however, such a transaction would be based on some merit (*merito*) on the part of the receiver. This would destroy its nature as gift precisely because the given would not be based primarily in the freedom of the giver.

The same appears from an analysis of an exchange of presents. Presents cease to be gifts to the degree that they are given only because of the requirements of the social situation or only because of a claim implicit in what the other might have given me. Indeed, the sole way in which such presents can be redeemed as gifts is to make clear that their presentation is not something to which I merely feel obliged, but which I personally and freely want to do. As such then, a gift is based precisely upon the freedom of the giver; it is gratuitous.

There is here striking symmetry with the 'given' in the above sense of hypothesis or evidence. There, in the line of hypothetical and evidential reasoning there was a first, namely, that which is not explained, but upon which explanation is founded. Here there is also a first upon which the reality of the gift is founded and which is not to be traced to another reality. This symmetry makes

what is distinctive of the gift stand out, namely, here the originating action is not traced back further precisely because it is free or gratuitous. Once again, our reflections lead us in the direction of that which is self-sufficient, absolute and transcendent as the sole adequate giver of the gift of being.

Further, as an absolute point of departure with its distinctive spontaneity and originality, the giving is non-reciprocal. To attempt to repay would be to destroy the gift as such. Indeed, there is no way in which this originating gratuity can be returned; we live in a graced condition. This appears in reflection upon one's culture. What we received from the authors of the *Vedas*, a Confucius or an Aristotle can in no way be returned. Nor is this simply a problem of distance in time, for neither is it possible to repay the life we have received from our parents, the health received from a doctor, the wisdom from a teacher, or simply the good example which can come from any quarter at any time. The non-reciprocal character of our life is not merely that of part to whole; it is that of a gift to its source.<sup>26</sup>

The great traditions have insisted rightly both upon the oneness of the absolute reality and upon the lesser reality of the multiple: the multiple is not The Reality, though neither is it totally non-reality. Anselm's elaboration of the notion of privation contains a complementary clarification of the gratuitous character of beings as given or gifted. The notion of privation was developed classically by Aristotle in his analysis of change, where privation appeared at the beginning of the process as the lack of the form to be realized. He saw this as more than non-being precisely in as much as it was a lack of a good which is due to that subject. Hence, in substantial change, because the basic potential principle is prime matter to which no specific form is due, privation plays no role.

Anselm extended this notion of privation to the situation of creation in which the whole being is gifted. In this case, there is no prior subject to which something is due; hence, there is no ground or even any acceptance. Anselm expressed this radically non-reciprocal nature of the gift—its lack of prior conditions—through the notion of absolute *privation*.

It is *privation* and not merely negation, for negation simply is not and leads nowhere, whereas the gift is to be, and once given can be seen to be uniquely appropriate. It is absolute privation, however, for the foundation is not at all on the part of the recipient; rather it is entirely on the part of the source.<sup>27</sup> This parallels a basic insight suggested in the *Upanishads* and perhaps the basic insight for metaphysics:

In the beginning, my dear, this world was just being (*Sat*), one only, without a second. . . . Being thought to itself: 'May I be many; may I procreate'. It produced fire. That fire thought to itself: 'May I be many; may I procreate'. It produced water. . . . That water thought to itself: 'May I be many; may I procreate'. It produced food. . . . That divinity (Being) thought to itself: 'Well, having entered into three divinities [fire, water, and food] by means of this living Self, let me develop names and forms. Let me make each one of them tripartite. (*Chandogya Up.*, 6.1-3, 12-14.)

To what does this correspond on the part of the source? In a certain parallel to the antinomies of Kant which show when reason has strayed beyond its bounds, many from Plotinus to Leibniz and beyond have sought knowledge, not only of the gift and its origin, but of why it had to be given. The more they succeeded the less room was left for freedom on the part of man as a given or gift. Others attempted to understand freedom as a fall, only to find that what was thus understood was bereft of value and meaning and hence was of no significance to human life and its cultures. Rather, the radical non-reciprocity of human freedom must be rooted in an equally radical

generosity on the part of its origin. No reason, either on the part of the given or on the part of its origin makes this gift necessary. The freedom of man is the reflection of his derivation from a giving that is pure generosity: man is the image of God.

In turn, on the part of the gift this implies a correspondingly radical openness or generosity. The gift is not something which is and then receives. It was an essential facet of Plato's response to the problems he had elaborated in the *Parmenides* that the multiple can exist only *as* participants of the good or one. Receiving is not something they *do*; it is what they *are*.<sup>28</sup> As such they reflect at the core of their being the reality of the generosity in which they originate.

The importance of this insight is attested from many directions. In Latin America some philosophers begin from the symbol earth as the fruitful source of all (reflected in the Quechuan language of the Incas as the *Pacha Mama*). This is their preferred context for their sense of human life, its relations to physical nature, and the meeting of the two in technology.<sup>29</sup> In this they are not without European counterparts. The classical project of Heidegger in its later phases shifted beyond the unconcealment of the being of things-in-time, to Being which makes the things manifest. The *Dasein*, structured in and as time, is able to provide Being a place of discovery among things,<sup>30</sup> but it is being which maintains the initiative; its coming-to-pass or emission depends upon its own spontaneity and is for its sake. "Its 'there' (the *Da-* of *Dasein*) only sustains the process and guards it," so that in the openness of concealed Being beings can appear unconcealed.<sup>31</sup>

The African spirit, especially in its great reverence of family, community, and culture—whence one derives one's life, one's ability to interpret one's world, and one's capacity to respond—seems uniquely positioned to grasp this more fully. In contrast to Aristotle's classical 'wonder', these philosophers do not situate the person over against the object of his or her concern, reducing both to objects for detached study and manipulation. They look rather to the source whence reality is derived and are especially sensitive to its implications for the mode and manner of one's life as being essentially open, communicative, generous and sharing.

### *Cultural Harmony and Creative Interchange*

In the light of this sense of gift, it may be possible to extend the sense of the notions of duty and harmony beyond concern for the well-being of those with whom I share and whose well-being is in a sense my own. The good is not only what contributes to my perfection: I am not the center of meaning. Rather, being is received and hence is essentially out-going.

Seen in terms of gift, person and community manifest two principles for social dynamism in the development of a cultural tradition of harmony: complementarity which makes the formation of culture and interchange possible, and generosity which passes it along in an active process of tradition. First, as participants in the one, self-sufficient and purely spontaneous source, the many are not in principle antithetic or antipathetic one to another. Rather, as limited images they stand in a complementary relation to all other participants or images. This is reflected in the enjoyment experienced in simple companionship in which, by sharing the other's experience of being, each lives more fully: the result is more than the sum of its parts. What is true here of individual persons is true as well both of groups of peoples and of the cultures they create through self-knowledge. It is this complementarity, derived from their common origin, which makes cooperation in work and decision-making, whether in commerce or in culture, fundamentally possible and ultimately desirable.

This has two important implications for our topic. Where the Greeks' focus upon their heritage had led to depreciating others as barbarians, the sense of oneself and of one's culture as radically gifted provides a basic corrective. Knowing and valuing oneself and one's culture as gifts implies more than merely reciprocating what the other does for me. It means, first, that others and their culture are to be respected simply because they too have been given or gifted by the one Transcendent source. This is an essential step which Gandhi, in calling outcasts by the name *harijans*, or "children of God," urged us to move beyond the sense of pride or isolation in which we would see others in pejorative terms.

But mere respect may not be enough. The fact that I and another, my people and another, originate from, share in and proclaim the same Self, especially as Good or Bliss, implies that to the degree that our cultural traditions share in the good, the relation between these integrating modes of human life is in principle one of complementarity. Hence, interchange as the effort to live this complementarity is far from being hopeless. In the pressing needs of our times only an intensification of cooperation between peoples can make available the essential and immense stores of human experience and creativity. A positive virtue of love is our real basis for hope.

A second principle for interchange is to be found in the participated—the radically given or gifted—character of one's being. As one does not first exist and then receive, but one's very existence is a received existence or gift, to attempt to give back this gift, as in an exchange of presents, would be at once hopelessly too much and too little. On the one hand, to attempt to return in strict equivalence would be too much for it is our very self that we have received as gift. On the other hand, to think merely in terms of reciprocity would be to fall essentially short of my nature as one that is given, for to make a merely equivalent return would be to remain centered upon myself where I would cleverly trap, and then entomb, the creative power of being.

Rather, looking back I can see the futility of giving back, and in this find the fundamental importance of passing on the gift in the spirit in which it has been given. One's nature as given calls for a creative generosity which reflects that of one's source. Truly appropriate generosity lies in continuing the giving through participating in one's tradition, shaping it creatively in response to the needs of the day and the discoveries of the era, and handing on this good to others. This requires a vast expansion or breaking out of oneself as the only center of one's concern. It means becoming effectively concerned with the good of others and of other groups, and for the promotion and vital growth of the next generation and those to follow.

### *Implications for Social Life*

The implications of such generosity are broad and at times surprisingly personal. First, true openness to others cannot be based upon a depreciation of oneself or of one's own culture. Without appreciating one's worth there would be nothing to share and no way to help, nor even the possibility of taking joy in the good of the other. Further, cultural interchange enables one to see that elements of one's life, which in isolation may have seemed to be merely local customs and purely repetitive in character, are more fundamentally modes in which one lives basic and essential human values. In meeting others and other cultures, one discovers the deeper meaning in one's own everyday life.

One does more than discover, however. One recognizes that in these transcendental values of life—of truth and freedom, of love and beauty—one participates in the dynamism of one's origin and hence must share these values in turn. More exactly, one can come to realize that real reception of these transcendental gifts lies in sharing them in loving concern in order that others may realize



them as well. This means passing on one's own heritage and protecting and promoting what the next generation would freely become.

Finally, that other cultures are quintessentially products of self-cultivation by other spirits as free and creative implies the need to open one's horizons beyond one's own self-concerns to the ambit of the freedom of others. This involves promoting the development of other free and creative centers and cultures which, precisely as such, are not in one's own possession or under one's own control. One lives then no longer in terms merely of oneself or of things that one can make or manage, but in terms of an interchange between free men and people's of different cultures. Personal responsibility is no longer merely individual decision-making or for individual good. Effectively realized, the resulting interaction and mutual fecundation reaches out beyond oneself and one's own culture to reflect ever more perfectly the glory of the one source and goal of all.<sup>32</sup>

This calls for a truly shared effort in which all respond fully, not only to common needs, but to the particular needs of each. This broad sense of tolerance and love in a time of tension has been described by Pope John Paul II as a state in which violence cedes to peaceful transformation, and conflict to pardon and reconciliation; where power is made reasonable by persuasion, and justice finally is implemented through love.<sup>33</sup>

## **Some Implications for Thinking about the Relation of Culture and Evangelization**

### *Divine Gift and Culture*

This sense of gift is of fundamental importance for the development of cultural awareness in our day. It provides the basis for understanding the dynamic basic instability of human life between limited realization and infinite openness which engages us in the search for liberation and fulfillment from which values, virtues and ultimately cultures emerge. It situates this striving as the very center of human life. Further, it provides for an open and inclusive search for liberation in which we are concerned to share with others and grow in the very process. Finally, it provides a goal and direction for the process of liberation which elevates and transforms.

### *Religious vs Reductive Humanism*

It is of fundamental importance to note the difference between a wisdom or overall outlook based upon man and one that is based upon God, that is, in the above diagram between founding one's outlook upon C or upon D.

The former, focused exclusively on man, is characteristically modern and has some epistemological roots in the modern rationalist project of Descartes to gain control over life by reducing all knowledge to only that which can be developed with clarity and distinctness. It is not that knowledge with such characteristics is not desirable, but rather that the exclusion of all other knowledge decimates the dimensions of meaning and obliterates the dimensions of freedom, creativity and love.

As seen in Part I, this begins by analyzing all into their minimum clear component natures and then to relate these externally. On the physical side these components are endowed by inertia; their mode of interrelation is then that of collision and displacement. When this is taken up by those who would achieve the goal of clarity and control in terms of sense knowledge alone as in the Hobbesian and positivist tradition, the mode of interrelation is that of power relations of self-centered atomic individuals in search of survival. The modality of such life is violence tempered

only by the compromise of one's own vicious freedom. The key to directing one's life and interpreting all others is Darwin's survival of the fittest or Freud's precarious management by the ego of an aggressive id through a tenuous super-ego. There is in this no goal or ideal toward which we strive, but only a series of steps to curb the degree of our crassness. Man not only has evolved from a brutish state; he does so reluctantly, regrets that he can no longer be simply such, and returns to it to the degree possible in order to be authentically himself.

The religious view is radically different. Its sense of reality is primarily that of the All-perfect plenitude of being. In the Greek tradition this is the One, Unchanging, Eternal of Parmenides, the Goodness itself of Plato, the All-wise One of Aristotle; in the Hindu tradition it is Brahma as the One Existence, Consciousness and Bliss; for Islam it is the One All-powerful, All-wise, All-loving; for Buddhism it is the ideal of Compassion, Harmony and Mercy. This is what it means to be, and to the degree that men are not the absolute, they are limited realizations of that perfection, wisdom and love.

In this context human life does have a goal and orientation. It is not an indifferent power asking only to be able to do whatever it happens to want and to gratify whatever instinct is the most clamorous at the moment. Rather its goal is to realize its being to the fullest and to share thereby to the maximum degree possible, and according to its own nature and context, in the unity and truth, love and bliss that being most truly is.

It is not then alien or compromising for a human person to want to be with others and to be concerned for their welfare—that is natural; rather, it is being self-centered and exploitive that is alien and self-destructive. Thus, the development of a cultural consensus in the good does not do violence to one's nature and identity, but allows it to emerge and to celebrate its deepest striving. If this be the case, then evangelization, the spreading of the good news, is truly needed and most deeply suited to human life, for it has the decisive power of the truth that responds to mankind's most fundamental striving.

Indeed, we should go further and in a way particularly related to the generation of cultures. We saw above that the development of values and virtues of which a culture is above all composed arises from the elemental instability of the human situation. As human, man like every being has all that pertains to it according to the level of his or her nature. The human person is a self-conscious participant in being, and in its primary realization being is One and All-perfect. Hence, man is ever open and searching in mind and heart. He can respond to all things because he can see the good in them; he needs to respond positively to things because he can appreciate his imperfect level in comparison to the divine. Nevertheless no limited reality can compel his assent because it is always deficient in comparison to the All-perfect.

This free penchant for the good is the key to the dynamism of human life. From it there emerges both the creativity and the selectivity in the life of each human group by which it makes consistent choices and shapes its culture. For this reason, the preaching of the good news in evangelization is not alien to cultures. As pointing out the divine origin and goal of all it gives sense to their deepest strivings, opening new levels of awareness of the implications of their choices. It opens new pathways as well for healing the human weaknesses and redeeming the human falls which stand in the way of their effort to reflect more fully and in their own way the fullness of Life from which they come and toward which they are oriented. From this follow two corollaries.

*Openness to cultures.* The first relates to the theme of jealousy on the part of the divine. Aristotle<sup>34</sup> hypothesized that if the gods were jealous they would not allow mankind to have the

power of wisdom by which to see all in the context of a highest source and goal. He concluded, however, that the gods were not thus, and that such awareness was the natural culmination of the universal human desire to know. St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews characteristically plunges this theme into the very process of the human struggle for liberation in terms of the exercise of its existential freedom of self realization. Paul notes that in view of the fall of mankind the Son was not jealous of his divinity but took upon himself our humanity in order that we might be redeemed by his sacrifice. God shares our nature; He is not alien to our cultures and he is willing to die that we might live. This is the central reality of Christian life.

The second corollary is a better appreciation of the character of the problem which the modern search for clear and distinct scientific knowledge raises for evangelization at the present time. It is not that it necessarily denies the existence of God. Indeed, Descartes was the first to say that to do so would but weaken our understanding of the power of the intellect<sup>35</sup> and that a recognition of God was needed for the development of confidence in Knowledge at all levels.<sup>36</sup> Rather the problem derives from turning the basic sensitivity of mankind from a rich sense of its reality as sharing in the divine life to instead focus upon a too simple and clear construction of all from minimal realities with no purpose other than that imposed upon it by the human will.<sup>37</sup> It is this clear but too simple human self-understanding which alienates man from his authentic dignity and hence from God as well.

This is intensified by, and may indeed reflect, a dualistic understanding of the Fall by which some Christians see nature as corrupted and hence as absent from the divine. In this perspective, human cultures as creations of a fallen mankind can only be corrupt and opposed to authentic human welfare and to the Gospel. Evangelization conceived in such a context could not but do violence to cultures seen as in need of being swept away in order to be substituted by a new creation. Catholic theology has never accepted this notion of corrupted human nature; its history of evangelization is not without its DeRiccis, DeNobilis and Foucaults. But there is much to do in working out the implications of the new sensitivity to cultures for living and preaching the faith and for integrating into the new sensibilities of our times both the Fall and Redemption. A review of alternate models for evangelization and culture may help to make this clearer.

### *Alternate Models for Evangelization and Culture*

Identification of the four dimensions in the initial schema makes it possible to identify a number of ways of looking at the relation of evangelization and culture.

1. If the attention to the relation of mankind (C) to God (D) is based most notably upon objectivity (A), which characterized modern thought but was also a characteristic of earlier scholasticisms (in some distinction from the Augustinian emphases), then the understanding of the evangelization tends to be that of passing down a body of doctrine as an unchanging content, unaffected by human experience, to all cultures. Here the emphasis is on essence, nature or content. The existential condition is at best indifferent and at worst a danger of corrupting the content of the faith.

A C  
Objectivity Mankind  
B D  
Subjectivity God

2. If the attention to the relation of man (C) to God (D) is based more notably upon attention to human subjectivity (B), which characterizes recent thought, then the understanding of evangelization shifts rather toward the existential character of human life in community. In that case the impact of the gospel is importantly a matter of transforming the culture of a people. This is less a matter of addition or substitution of alien content than of serving as leaven to the culture, favoring its fundamental realization as a search for the good, enabling it to overcome failings and falls, reinforcing once again its basic orientation to the Divine source and goal of life, and enabling it to respond in kind to the gift which it is that has been received.

A C  
Objectivity Mankind  
B D  
Subjectivity God

3. If the attention to the relation of man (C) and God (D) has both an objective (A) and a subjective (B) character, then it will be careful to keep the heritage of the faith in its fullness while seeing that this is not only expressed in contemporary modes but enriched<sup>38</sup> by the experience of the life of the Spirit in each people and each time. The emphasis then will be not merely upon the essential integrity of the truths of the faith, but further that these truths are lived existentially so that more of their meaning might be revealed and become part of the Christian heritage for future generations.

A C  
Objectivity Mankind  
B D  
Subjectivity God

### *Issues in Need of Study*

*Historicity and the Evangelization of Peoples.* Models 2 and 3 make it possible to take positive account of the historical reality of evangelization. In view of the attention to the subjectivity of those to whom the gospel is preached and their response in faith, the provenance of one's faith is of great import. This is not merely to speak of the Incarnation as a doctrine in Christianity, or of the need for intermediaries who might well be interchangeable in order that the unchanging essence of the objective content of the faith be transmitted. Instead it bespeaks the importance of Providence in the Incarnation of the Divine Word in the Jewish people at a particular juncture of their history and that of mankind. It bespeaks as well the importance of the pattern of the dissemination of the faith to Greece and Rome, to North and East Africa, and generally only thence to other regions of the world.

While this relates to the pattern of commercial and political interests, it is not reducible thereto. Thus model 2 is required in order to overcome political and power readings of the relation of evangelization and culture according to model 1, which could reduce evangelization to a merely human and non-religious enterprise. Instead it is important to search out the Providence of God in the history of evangelization in order to protect it from perversion for merely human ends and to

cooperate instead in the realization of its plan for the transformation of mankind after the image of God, Creator and Redeemer. Here lies much of the problem of inculturation.

*Evangelization and the Integration of Peoples.* The historical movement of evangelization has, in fact, two directions. There is and has been a process of Christian communities sharing the faith with distant peoples. Conversely, there is the pastoral responsibility for Christians and non-Christians of various cultures who immigrate into the context of a Christian community with its own culture. What mode of relation to these peoples is appropriate: is it one of communicating the content of the faith possessed (A); or is it one of drawing upon their distinctive cultural and possibly even their distinctive religious experience in order to develop the faith of the resident Christian community (B) as well? The latter is a much richer sense of the importance of culture for realizing the Good News.

*Evangelization and the Progress of Peoples.* If cultures are understood as concrete community modes of realizing human life, and if this desire for perfection is ultimately a reflection of the life of divine love in enjoyment of its own goodness, then the proclamation of the Good News should not be alien to the search of communities of peoples for fulfillment, or what can be called liberation. As reminding mankind of its source and hence of the extent of the dignity and rights of all, evangelization is thus a transforming force in the progress of peoples.

What is the appropriate mode of this work? In what sense must important distinctions be made between evangelization and the development of peoples and in what sense are they indeed dimensions of the same complex salvation history of mankind?

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## Chapter II

# Evangelization as a Cultural Commitment

*Antonio Gallo*

While working with Jews, I live like a Jew. In the same way, when with Gentiles, I live like a Gentile. This does not mean that I don't obey God's laws. – 1 Cor. 9: 20-21

Evangelization in this paper is considered an act communicating the faith from the culture of the missionary to the other culture. From the phenomenological point of view, this act is examined at different levels of abstraction in order to find a path generating inside the new culture the meaning of the traditional faith of the Gospel. The analysis steers evangelization towards a necessary concern for the culture of others in order to make contact with them at these deeper levels and enable—insofar as one can—a true conversion of the mind and of life.

### **Is the Inculturation of Faith a Necessary Issue?**

The presence of many different human groups with a multiplicity of cultures at the national and international level is a fact many of us experience daily, and about which we can be further informed by the communication media. Newspapers such as the *Miami Herald*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and such magazines as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Businessweek* reflect our contemporary environment in the second half of 1992, and in the midst of a tumultuous electoral campaign in the United States.

We reflect upon these on the occasion of the ethnic war in Yugoslavia, the recent independence of many nations such as Czechoslovakia, Georgia, Armenia, the Ukraine and others; or the struggles in the Near East,—in Lebanon, in Israel and the Occupied Territories, in Iraq, and so many other places. The Press also makes constant reference to the problems of Haitians, Cubans, Blacks, and Hispanics as current concerns in need of a solution.<sup>1</sup>

Amid this growing and amazing interaction of different ethnic groups in a sea of immigrants, there arise issues of economic need, political relations, jobs and marketing. These phenomena have a religious component we must not forget.

The reality of so many ethnic groups and cultures which are repelled by the risk of losing their identity poses anew the old challenge of the one revealed gospel assuming many different ways of life.

My question is not about the opportunity or fittingness of transmitting the traditional faith through such different cultures, but about the unavoidable necessity of doing so. This necessity refers to raising the question as a convenient way of discovering answers, but much more so it refers to revisioning evangelization as a communication of *faith*.

In this way, we restrict the "communication act" to a special situation of communication from one culture to another, or from one ethnic group to another; we are *not* referring to the people who give or receive the knowledge and customs of the faith within the same group or culture (e.g., as parents who want to communicate the faith to their children, or a Pastor to the members of his own community or culture). In the latter case, in a certain measure the problem does exist, but it is not so evident and complex as in the case of different cultures. To some extent, the task of introducing the faith to other persons, or better, of introducing the other person to the faith, entails the problem of a very special act of communication.

How can parents communicate faith to their children? How can one generation transmit this same faith to other ages? There always is a linguistic mediation and a problem of semantics; in this case, linguistic ground is involved as well. This will be more evident if we study the communication of faith in the situation of two different cultures, one of the preacher or missionary, and the other of the people who are to be evangelized.

### **Evangelization as a Special Type of Communication**

Primarily, "evangelization" is a contact with persons in an attempt to give them the content of the Christian faith, the faith traditionally founded on the Gospel. Almost universally, this contact is entrusted to language: through the language, the gift is offered to the other person and is intended to change their life, to orient their will to act as believers.

In the communication of faith, this double aspect or dimension has a specific and unique character. It is not like the transmission of some science which can be verified through experimentation, nor is it the simple communication of a doctrine as a whole system of knowledge theoretically coherent and convincing. The communication of faith brings with it a historical aspect, a speculative and systematically ordered body of truth, as well as a complex of values or a horizon of life in which the human person can express himself in individual and social behavior. The conjunction of the two—*knowledge and behavior*—makes the communication of faith a deeper and more intense act of communication than any other. Therefore, it requires more careful analyses to ensure the effective realization of this contact and secure the gist of the transmission. Consequently, I will focus my analysis upon the act of "the communication of something as a complex existential act" which includes the transmission of faith. But I will not consider any particular "content" of faith. That would require special study, for the content of evangelization belongs to another science.

My attention involves faith only as the "principle of moral and spiritual action" as described above. As a principle of human conduct, it is very similar to ethical or aesthetic principles more open to the metaphysical, transcendental, and divine as well.

We must consider this as a very special act of communication, for it is so profound that on behalf of faith men allow their minds and hearts to be opened to the weight of the spiritual meaning of the Gospel. Usually preachers say, "My job is simply to show you the Catholic faith. What you do with of it, after that, is out of my control." In my opinion, this utterance may really not be true. In my opinion, the true realization of the contact depends essentially upon the act of *facilitating* the gift of the gospel. In other words, generally speaking, God's grace cannot perform its role of conversion and sanctification if we do not contribute a suitable and adequate act of communication.

### **Communication of Faith as a Transcendental Act**

Let us now consider the act of communicating the faith in the context explained above, limiting our analysis to an interchange between two different cultures: the one, that of the emissary, the other, that of the receivers. We shall describe how this act is a necessary channel to effect transmission of the living gift of the faith, which will become a resource for the spiritual evolution of the receiver. Generally, we are tempted to reduce the communication of faith to the abstract structure of a linguistic performance:

the emissary→ (the message)→ the receiver.



culture A culture B

Of course, the communication of faith is certainly also a linguistic act and can be reduced to this abstract and general scheme. In our case, however, this scheme is not only abstract but inadequate: it does not fit the complex act of sharing with other men the very special matter we call faith.

From the side of the "emissary" there is the subject: I am speaking, acting, expressing myself. But I am not only speaking. I am remembering, enjoying, reasoning, and appreciating the value of the Gospel, and I am deeply concerned about sharing the same faith. I, who am involved in this act, am not only a subject, but a complex reality, with my own history, life and spiritual attitude. To define all these, it is not enough to appeal to the illocutionary act or a perlocutionary act as Searle and Austin explain at the linguistic level. I am a living subject but also an objective reality, a "subject-object" who shares his life experience with others. My experience is communicated through my own cultural media: images, words, reference, and customs, and this is done with a familiar form of significative elements.

From the side of the "receiver," reality is just as complex or even more so. In the linguistic scheme the receiver is only a term, an object I have to reach like some material to be printed. The receiver is passive. In reality, this subject is a person who must listen, pay attention, decipher words, find a meaning and be transformed by this. In experience, we encounter a true subject. The receiver is an object-subject, full of initiative and radiant power. Moreover, he/she moves in different horizons of thinking, sensations, traditions, stresses and interests. All these are more or less distant, and sometimes opposite to those of the emissary. I, the emissary, am at the same time impacted by the culture of the object, from his/her words and body language, from his/her references, logical structure, emotion, clothes, social organization and environment. I am an object for his/her questions and answer a subject-object, just as he/she is an object-subject. Most important of all, I am offering information and values which were not produced by a particular culture such as my own, because they were revealed from an independent source.

I will try to enlighten this very complex situation in which two subject-objects are dealing with a very strong "content"—not scientific, literary, nor verifiable, but metaphysical, transcendental, and spiritual as is the content of Revelation and hence of the faith. I will take a phenomenological approach to reach what George McLean in his introduction to this seminar says: "Such phenomenological analysis enables us to look more deeply into the origin of our own subjectivity and thereby to expand the focus of our awareness from mankind to the divine as the objectively transcendent source in relation to which our conscious life stands as a gift manifesting the intimate divine life of love." We wish to put this whole problem in the context of Edmund Husserl's fifth Cartesian Meditation.

The phenomenological point of view always begins from an act of experience in which it is set, namely, my particular life experience here and now. All our speculation, reflection, or reduction concern this immediate, lasting and changing act, which lives and perdures, is deep and unique. In the fifth Meditation, Husserl explores my experience as an Ego before another person (another Ego) and of other men as "others."

My experience reveals the presence and the action of the other upon me. Of the two Egos, mine is a subject and the other Ego, an object. The two terms are interchangeable because they begin from the experience itself. At the same time this "other Ego" as object is revealing itself as a subject, acting with me, knowing me, speaking to me. In speaking to the other Ego, as the following scheme shows, I am the subject (emissary) = the one acting; the other Ego (receiver) = the one passive, receiving, but a subject too (and hence, active too):

( my Ego ) ——> (other Ego)

But between the two (persons) the message which is communicated must be transferred through two cultures: the culture of the emissary and that of the receiver. My Ego has his own culture that I understand: the other Ego has his/her own culture that I do not understand. I must summarize the culture of the other to my own because he/she is asking and challenging me in my own experience.

How can the emissary Ego be acquainted with the truth he/she communicates if this is not received through the same medium? This is the general problem of all acts of communication with others which we must bring into focus from the point of view of the faith. For phenomenology, this simple act of communication is not without solution when we put it in the immediate frame of the living experience. No matter how complex, an experience can always be described and analyzed. But in this special case of the faith (as the content of the divine revelation) the message must be translated from the first culture to the second, from one subject to the other, as a whole that transcends both cultures and is not properly signified in either.

At this point, some would recall Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Derrida, or Richard Rorty. But the theory of the superman of Nietzsche, the 'private language' of Wittgenstein, or the 'particular language' of Rorty, do not really work as a good explanation of the possibility of sharing a truth, common to these different languages. Frederick Schick<sup>2</sup> attempts to overcome this apparent impossibility and the incommunicability between the subjective meaning of languages (Rorty) and to build a bridge between two strange spheres of meaning and incompatible horizons. From the phenomenological perspective, the two languages and the acts of communication are themselves objects of experience; they allow a progressive advance of mutual understanding in similar form as we progressively and coherently achieve true physical or psychological perception. The experience is ongoing and is present in our intellectual reflexive activity as in its permanent foundation. The process of understanding the other is always open and can be improved through new action and dialogue among the two, three or more, until some agreement and a common consciousness of sharing the truth is achieved. In the fifth Meditation of Husserl, the dialogue, interchange with others and new approaches are possibilities which human experience can explore, and carry out on the basis of the *Lebenswelt*.

This reduction of a speculative problem to experience is an essential aspect for our theme of communication of faith, which we must clarify. For it is truly the central point of the whole question: where do we find the means to establish a contact that allows for a living, conceptual, emotional and practical "appropriation" of the faith? This might be called the "transcendental" dimension of action of communicating faith. If we can attain a clear understanding of it, we will be able to pass beyond the limits of our own culture and that of the other subject. In this specific occasion we will be sharing the faith not only with our neighbor but with the universal and divine knowledge and with the faith as the power of divine life.

This situation can be represented in a more complex graphic scheme.

The same faith → interchange ← The same faith

The Ego and → among ← The Other and

my culture cultures his culture

The content of a message is transmitted (to me) through a medium (or a means) "given" to me, namely my own culture, which can serve also for sending a message (to the other). The medium for receiving a message from others (of the same or different culture) is also my culture. In the case of two different cultures there are then two different media or intellectual instruments for presenting significance or meaning. What is the most important in this act of communication is not the mean (or medium), but to reach a signification of the same meaning.

In the communication of faith, the goal is to make effective, through the interchange, a sign which in two different mediums produces the same meaning; or two different signs that have to produce the same meaning.

This, then, is the focal issue: is such a process possible? Are we able to fix it at all the levels of communication? Can two or more persons read the same meaning in different means?

In the abstract, there seems to be no theoretical or practical incompatibility. The problem arises in the real world, especially if we are conscious of the dynamic aspect of the faith. As we saw, the milieu or medium is first of all a linguistic one, but (usually) is not exclusively so. There are the sounds, moods, symbols and material objects produced by the culture—all the complex combinations we call "culture." We have to 'trans-pass' the basis of the culture which binds us, namely our Ego or most intimate essence (our personality, identity, spiritual conception, intellectual world), and transmit the message there to other Egos.

At this point it becomes clear that culture is not only a mean that allows us to communicate faith in some circumstances, but a necessary context which influences, modifies, and in some circumstances perhaps manipulates the content of the revelation we intend to translate to the other. At the same time it can become a hard obstacle which closes off any true, objective or faithful production of meaning. Karl Marx does see (in his *German Ideology*) that the individual subjects get lost inside the complex net of cultural relations (physical, intellectual, emotional). But he doesn't understand the human group of real persons as productive of the cultural medium. In contrast he ascribes it to the social class: "[The individuals] find their conditions of life formally established; they receive, already drawn, their position in life, and at the same time in their personal development they are subordinated to their class." This absolutizing of the concept of class nullifies the individual: "And this subordination of individuals to their class, becomes at the same time a subordination to every type of representation." Here Marx substitutes the abstract concept of class for the concrete reality of individuals and groups which produce culture.

This danger impels us to examine closely the epistemological aspect of the process of understanding which connects human persons in their continual interweaving with each other. In the introduction we referred to minority groups. The consciousness of their diversity, the right of pluralism and of small communities to their own cultural expression, is established almost officially. Besides, small recently formed communities have become an object of daily discussion and seem to characterize the "new age."<sup>3</sup> It is remarkable to find in the Husserl of the 1930s a vision of the strong substance of culture creating among members of a group a net of relations very similar to the new collective personality.

### **The Epistemological Problem of Culture in the Communication of Faith**

If we attempt to describe culture as the medium around ourselves, with 'myself' as subject in the communication of faith (a first step for a phenomenological reflexion), we find that this culture in itself (seen experimentally) is not at all homogeneous. It presents many levels, which from this epistemological point of view, have different definitions and inner consistency. In a culture we

find external objects, material or intellectual products, traditions, behaviors, routine pictorial representations, art fictions, myths, social relations, practical skills, words, rules, concepts and ideological systems. Many are very general and common to other cultures; others are general in a specific culture; others are exceptionally particularized. All are essential or non-essential aspects of the act of communicating faith. It is necessary to put some order in this heterogeneous material and to make clear how the understanding works with each sector.

To do so we can speak of "levels" of knowledge, establishing a scale of abstraction from the lowest to the highest. In the understanding, the lower is the closest to the physical experience of something: it is the most sensible, the most particular and the most limited by conditions of space and time. Above this we place psychological knowledge and its objects. And so on until we reach ideas and concepts as the most general and abstract, with pure logical structures—void of any concrete content—as the most abstract.

If we go up step by step, we can affirm that from a certain point of view the superior level is better than the inferior, whereas perhaps from another point of view the inferior levels are closer to real life, to the *Lebenswelt*. For the communication of the faith, this is an essential point. When experience reveals an opposition of cultures, words and symbols, it will be necessary to consider these oppositions in conjunction with the difference in levels. We are dealing then with two parameters similar to two Cartesian coordinates: the peculiarity of the levels, and the quality of the oppositions. The two may be able to provide a more complete horizon for the problem and a new vision of experience as a whole, giving us new dimensions of things and persons.

I will attempt to give an idea of these levels and oppositions only in order to build a general frame and open new ways to approach the "core" of effective communication of the very important extraneous content that is the faith. Opposition in cultural expressions is phenomenological. In the contact of two cultures my word is not yours, your emotional reaction is not mine; my cultural context of words, concepts, reasoning and relating are not yours. Consequently, our first question is about the nature of these oppositions: cultural, conceptual and sensible. We take the opposition at each level of knowledge first in the cultural experience, and then in the experience of communication.

Here we do not suggest a dialectical opposition in the sense of Fichte, Hegel or Marx, namely as a process of antithesis between two terms in the generation of a synthesis. This form of opposition is understandable only in the dialectical identification of the rationale with the real, of metaphysics with logic, as did Hegel. What is essential is rather to situate every opposition in its proper environment in order to strengthen sharply its particular value and significance. The following schema indicates some of the levels of opposition found in an act of communication between two cultures. The elements of the superior level are understood as more abstract and general, for example, the elements of a statement. The lower level is more deeply implicated in immediate physical experience as an ordinary act of life. The schema distinguishes five levels of possible oppositions in communication:

- 
1. LOGICAL = general structures of intellectual activity. Logic, mathematics, relations, etc.
  2. CONCEPTUAL = essences, mental representations, ideas, every content of intellectual knowledge.
  3. EMOTIONAL = values, praises, axiological dimension.
  4. PSYCHOLOGICAL = personal tendencies, interests, attitudes; selfishness.
  5. PRACTICAL = intuition of many forms, activity, works.

=====

We shall comment briefly on the three principal steps. This should suffice to clarify some of the big problems in the act of communicating faith.

### *Opposition at the Logical Level*

This opposition is the most universal and easy to affirm, if not so easy to understand. Its signification is very sharp and its sense definite. If we say  $2 = 2$ , apparently there is no opposition. They are the same. The sameness is a total identification and absolutely general. If we write  $\sim(2 = 3)$ , we consider only one aspect of the diversity. The opposition is as absolute as the sameness. In words we would say: "two is not three," or "God is not man." Logical opposition shows the universality and the oneness of the human mind. At this level are situated all the mathematical and logical structures. These are exact values. They lack any variation in time and space. They can be communicated to every man in every time. But not everyone understands them because they are abstract and at the highest level.

In general we admit them as the transcendental level and as absolutely human. They lead us to the universal mind, to the laws of earth and space. What is their effect on the communication of faith? Great mathematicians may be skeptical as Bertrand Russell or faithful as Leibnitz, but their faith or lack of it is not related to these structures.

Elemental mathematical or logical symbols can express relations such as more, less, equal, different, contrary, superior, inferior, bigger, etc. All manifest their logical opposition through the use of negative utterances. The consonant (K) can mean "constant," and we suppose that their negative opposition is a constant and unlimited.

This means that apparently there could not be opposition between cultures at the logical and transcendental level, and communication there would find no obstacles. All logical structures do exist in every man and facilitate understanding at this level. But human beings generally do not live at the logical level, or make love with multiplication tables. Why? Perhaps because these divine structures are void of any descriptive or conceptual content. The more universal, the less life/living.

But some difficulty exists even at this level if we analyze for example the "sameness" of  $(2 = 2)$ ,  $(100 = 100)$  and  $(5 + 3 = 8)$  or  $(-5 = -2 + -3)$ . Are all the "samenesses" truly the same? What of the following two:—"A table is not a chair" and "John is not a rock." Is there any common opposition in the two statements? Is there a "K"? If a logical negation is a sharp and pure negation (or a logical opposition), why should we feel angry if somebody says, "You are not a good citizen"? Is this opposition different from the former ones? This problem will become evident at the following level.

### *Opposition Between Concepts*

At the level of knowledge, the concept, ideas or other cognitive structures which carry meaning or informative content are not simply logical structures, able to be reduced to an unique analytical point of view. Their references depict some objects, things or situations of all types of reality: material, intellectual, social, personal or collective. We understand a concept in a general sense as a mental expression which corresponds to some notion of things which find linguistic formulation through statements. For example, to the question "Is John working there?" the answer

can be: "He is." The information is: "John is working there." In brief, we reduce concepts to nouns (for example, "the sea, book, mind, body, soul, spirit, God," or "politics, ethics, work, liberation theology, idea of salvation." Simple or complex, these concepts involve much information, which we are supposed to be able to communicate to the other.

Of course we can focus upon them only as logical entities and say: "John is working there" is a statement opposite to "John is not working there." This is logical opposition and in some form as general and absolute as are mathematical statements. Here we are taking the logical point of view and analyzing concepts. All men can understand them. I can say: "God is the creator," as logically opposed to "God is not the creator." The statement would have absolute and general value. The opposition is only a logical one, and the understanding is only a logical understanding. But this logical consideration is not very useful when we wish to give information about creation. Evidently, in our current mentality all oppositions are not logical oppositions. Their structures are not those of logic, but refer to a meaning or real fact. We do not consider it an illogical opposition; in some respect it is logical too, but it is not only so; it is more. Thus we must change from a logical point of view to a semantic, psychological or metaphysical one. All are involved in the acts of communication.

Changing the point of view changes the measure of information we get, and the nature of the opposition from logical or dialectical to that of meaning and of content. This new type of opposition we will call, not logical, but "polar" opposition. The opposition between "God exists" and "God does not exist" can be seen not only as a logical one, but as a polar opposition. Husserl sometimes uses the term "polar," as does Paul Ricoeur. But maybe they do not attend directly to the phenomenon of polar opposition, which for us is essential to differentiate the levels of meanings in the act of communication. If we take the statement, "John is working there," as opposite to "John is not working there," not as logical opposition but as polar opposition, we find that the two propositions are not contradictory at all. We have the following scheme:

*Contradiction* (between two propositions):

"John is working there." <—> "John is not working there."

(logical difference)

*Polarity*:

"God exists, he is good" <—> "God does not exist, he is not good." (difference between two realities)

We would not call them contraries or subcontraries, because all these terms are situated in the logical point of view. Let us step out of the logical point in order to penetrate more deeply into the signification of the terms.

The terms "polar" and "polarity" refer originally to real poles. The north is opposite to the south, but their opposition is correlative—one depends upon the other as a magnetic reality. One could not exist without the other. We can use them abstractly to indicate the direction on a map as if they were independent, but their true life is magnetic and the magnetism is not a point but a force spread throughout the earth to produce the poles.

In a polarity we must make a continued relation among the terms and *relata* in order to understand their meaning. One pole is supported by the other: there are many intermediate positions among them and many relations around them which constitute the context of their signification. Note that in the example, "John is working there," we can find that John was hired but he is not actually working; or that he generally is working, but not today; or that recently he

was fired but he is there to fix something. In these many different situations how would we understand the opposition with "John is not working there?" How is one to understand this?

With the propositions of faith, this kind of polar opposition would be more complex and difficult because the elements that compose the horizon are far from our physical experience. The logical point of view (which was used more or less consciously in evangelization for centuries) is not the most interesting in the communication of faith because in evangelization we try to reach the true essence of faith, and then to get in touch with the content of the information. When we compare a man with something that is not a man (a man with a woman, the good with the evil, the tame with the dangerous), all are polar oppositions if we set them in the context of true experience. True experience is alone capable of communicating faith. The complexity is more evident in comparing the human with the divine being, the earthly horizon with the eternal. In these cases, the influence of everyone's culture is more radical, and the opposition from one culture to the other is stronger.

For all such information and opposition, the one most suited to life is not the logical but the semantic perspective because the semantic view is closer to experience and refers to life. In two cultures:

my concept of man <-is opposed-> to your concept of man.  
my idea of holiness <-is opposed-> to your idea of holiness.  
my relation to the world <-is opposed-> to your relation to the world.

The statement: "God is a thing" against "God is not a thing" is only a polar opposition that admits some common understanding between two cultures if we establish the semantic context and the polar terms that generate its metaphysical understanding. For it will be necessary to deepen our point of view from the logical to the metaphysical level, or to the psychological or the experimental one which is the level of *life*. From the semantic point of view, the opposition is never absolute and complete because the polarity between these extremes allows for many related and overlapping meanings.

For example: "God is not a man." Whereas in logical opposition there is a simple contradiction, in polar opposition we can encounter more similarities than differences. To understand the polar opposition, we must relate the meaning of the words to the general background of the culture which must be comprehended deeply enough to reach the level of its significance and life (the *Lebenswelt*). If we take the example: "A man is not a woman," in logic this is only a negation. In the semiological view, however, we have two different images and nouns which in part are common and in part different. In the semantic perspective, the weight of the common substance can overcome the dissimilarities.

We can represent this fact in the following scheme:  
Man Woman  
is not-is-is not

In preaching to the Ki 'chean people in Guatemala, when we say, "This mountain is not God," we must consider the above scheme: "The mountain is not-is-is not God." Because in their culture, there is not a clear division between man, the world, and God. At the level of life, the communication among them involves their whole existence, personal and social.

This is not a dialectical synthesis, but a polar whole. The polarity is not simply linear or between two, it can be among three, four or more. We can speak of bi-polarity, tri-polarity, or multi-polarity. In this form, we can understand how this view opens our living experience to a culture and our own culture to those of others.

To generalize, it is easy to contemplate a line, a segment A–B.

A<——>B

If we point out that A is not B we see only the logical aspect of the opposition. If we consider A as a point in space with a reference, we find only that: A depends on B; A is a function of B. In the same form: B is a function of A. The polarity is evident if we want to set the value of this line A–B. We can add a series of points from A to B: a1, a2, a3, a4, ... and other series from B to A: b1, b2, b3, b4, ... We can always use the logical view and say: A is not a1, A is not b1, or b2, and so on. This could be a good exercise, but not a communication of content and therefore not practical for transmitting the faith.

This distinction leads us directly to the encounter of two cultures in evangelization. Two "idioms" are logically opposite (English = A, Spanish = B) but they have a semiological and semantic dimension and live with the life of the people. Two idioms are two different experiences of the world and are expressed in many languages. Experience is actual and the starting point of all the considerations which can follow. When they stretch a contact, it becomes part of the experience. I have the experience of my own idiom. I have the experience of the idiom of the other. I have the experience of the contact between the two. From the experimental and living consciousness, I must establish a process that draws us together until it leads from bi-polar or pluri-polar oppositions to a coincidence of meanings. In this experimental framework, we can begin the task of evangelization as the search for common meaning.

The approach of logical positivism whose first reality is language is very different. Richard Rorty's approach is a case in point.<sup>4</sup> For him, the idiomatic substance is a property of the subject and becomes a subjective reality that cannot be shared with neighbors. We can briefly summarize this as follows:

My Ego has my language, | Other Ego has his/her language,  
having my meaning. | having his/her meaning.

The individual as member of a particular culture shares the meaning with persons having the same idiom and language, and there can be no dialogue between cultures.

The intellectual mood of the "New Age" is very similar, and thus is in some aspects very dangerous. It leads to a lack of ability to communicate between different small communities. New Age theorists sometimes explore a more general and partially common horizon of the context of communication and discover a solution to real interchange between groups (as in the case of Rorty). But this escape only translates the problem from a more restricted field to a bigger one without producing a true solution. The social anthropologists likewise stress the splits separating meaning-systems. (See, for example, the work of Aracely Cantero.) These anthropologists aim to study cultures from within the perspective of the members of small communities, but the anthropologists found separate images of themselves-as-anthropologists according to the distinct perceptions of each small community (from one culture to another). The anthropologists found distinct understandings of the world.



Our foundation is always *experience* and through experience our human contacts, our dialogues, our spiritual interchanges, profoundly affect our lives.

### **Contact at the Emotional and Sensible Levels**

At the lower level, polar opposition is in the intimate perception of being as first and immediate experience: the emotional, axiological, aesthetic and practical. And we find contrasts generated from among these: good, bad, right, wrong, evil, beautiful, etc., or better, worse, best, etc. The polar opposition at this level is richer and more intense: it is not only an opposition between worlds as found among concepts, but opposition of sensibility and fantasy. The polar opposition marks history, emotion, and more. At this level, a speculative translation of terms is not enough; a living relation and emotional involvement are needed. At the emotional level, men are proud of their own cultures and feel the identity of their group and culture as the realization of human value and an expression of the true essence of the world. At this level, too, dialogue is deficient because the abstract concepts do not share the compact power of the cultural environment. The screen that separates the two cultures at this level is the strongest. But from the other side, there is a constant process of action and reaction among the cultures. The forms of acculturation and trans-culturation are particularly active phenomena. What could be lost in theoretical efficacy can be gained in acts of practical transference.

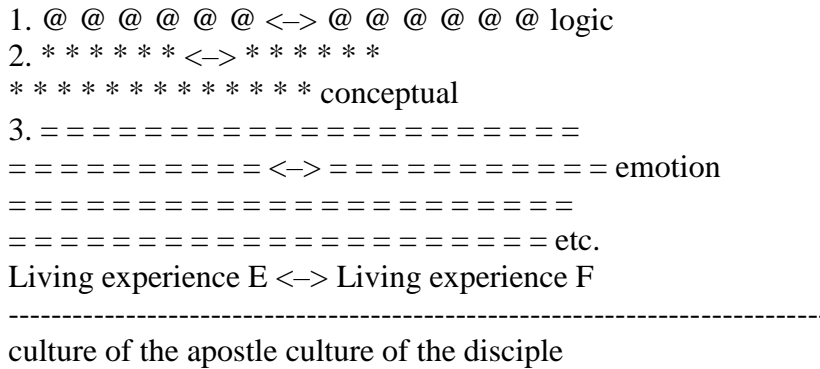
### **An Important Implication**

Unless my analysis is completely wrong, the communication of faith has to be planned at a different level of experimental knowledge, simplified by the three levels exposed here. There is some complementarity among them. The highest (logical and conceptual) level offers more credibility and security in terms of systematic knowledge of spiritual conceptions. As human structures and expressions, these are the most universal and have generally been employed through the history of the church. But they are less significant for other cultures in penetrating the mysteries of the faith and the real nature of the Holy Gospel. The more we descend to the deeper levels, the substance of the communication expands, understanding grows, and the power for spiritual change and the effects of the application of the principles become more evident.

The lowest level is also the most capable (and speculatively the poorest); it has the force of life that communicates through mysterious and less evident media. William C. Placker stresses this essential need in the contemporary delivery of the Gospel: "We reduced the faith to a set of concepts. Many Christians try to assimilate these [for them] boring and uninteresting concepts. They do not digest them, and [then] do not live as true Christians. If we want to persuade our fellows Christians to take the Gospel message seriously and to remind them that it does not concern only some private corners of our lives but every aspect of our existence, then we would dream that a Christian vision might in important ways shape our national life."

We can observe this problem from outside, from the enemies of the Christian life. If we reflect on the values advertised by television, the images of worldly success, the ideals of love and prestige that they offer, and we compare them with the "standard of the New Testament," this society does not look Christian. All these media-images militate against the values and content of Christian Revelation. Nobody openly attacks the Christian faith by name, but the faith is radically dismantled within the "practice of life."

We can summarize in the following graph the situation of evangelization undertaken between cultures. This scheme stresses the differences in order to bring out the perspective we developed in these pages. This allows us to observe that the polarity becomes more complex as the analysis focuses on progressively lower levels. Two cultures, in my graph, are represented as having approximately the same general structure:



The deeper zone is the life zone. The *Lebenswelt* not only alludes to the lowest level. It implicates all the levels where experience takes place. But here we focus on the zones of the immediate experiences that are more visible and far from abstract speculation. As we noted in the first point, the common ground of the faith is not the common ground of ordinary knowledge. This latter is natural and generally admits verification with some experiment. That is not possible in the faith. For this reason discussion about true general concepts is merely speculative and less highly flavored by content. Thus it will be necessary (at this level as well) to attend to the meaning given by the other culture to the terms of the faith we are transmitting.

Ruth Bunzel in her book about Chichicastenango, a famous town of the Ki'che's, collected a large number of pagan prayers. To our modern sensibility these prayers have the sense of God that the Christian faith has proclaimed for centuries in a different cultural context. Our conception of God not only is confirmed, but *improved* by such prayers. If at the first level we can use directly the structures in different cultures, in the second level we cannot use these structures, but must translate the content and in some measure change it. Finally at the lower levels, we have to share the life to achieve a common experience of the divine. The third level is an existential one which blends into life the limits of rationality. The evangelization of cultures is actually the evangelization of the people by living with them and by sharing with them our complete spiritual experience.

This has the greatest significance for the missionaries. They need to plunge into the host culture with all the modern means to decipher it, penetrate it and make possible the translation of faith to this culture at every level of opposition. Even more, he or she must establish a permanent dialogue with this culture in all its dimensions in order to allow it to assume and assimilate with its own means the essence of the Christian message. As Sister Jose Hobday, a Franciscan nun from the Iroquois tribe and the Seminole family, says: "Every spirituality must be embodied in one's cultural identity." There is an important book (the *Pop Vuj*) from the sixteenth century about the history, traditions and thinking of the Ki'che' people. But beyond this, there is also a living tradition that the Ki'che' people know and renew in their daily mode of family life.

Other Guatemalan cultures such as the Mam, Kakchikel, Ke'kchi', Tzutujil, Ixil, etc., do not have an old book, but their tradition has been collected by the studies of many anthropologists and other researchers in linguistics, sociology and social sciences. It would be frustrating for the true apostle to learn their language without its making possible an adequate communication of the essential content at the semantic and psychological levels. For this, a true work of hermeneutics, following the thread of Gadamer's or Ricoeur's suggestions, would be more useful. As many as two or three hundred printed works of scholars offer momentous material for an analysis of this area. Happily, similar basic material for the study of ethnic groups exists for many countries of the world, and this should give us much hope.

## Notes

1. Robert L. Steinback, *Miami Herald* (June 28, 1992).
2. Frederick Schick, "Liberty, Equality," *Social Research* (summer 1992), p. 297.
3. Michael Werner, "Humanism in the Postmodern Age," *Religious Humanism* (spring 1992).
4. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1979).

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- Hobday, Sister Jose. *La Voz Catolica*. January 1992. She also cites the well-known monk and writer Thomas Merton: "Who does not study native-american spirituality, will be, forever, an 'imported' one."



### Chapter III

## Dialogue Between the Church and Culture: A Catholic Perspective

*Bevil Bramwell*

The dialogue between the church and the various cultures of the world is a phenomenon which has been chronicled through the centuries. It presents an interesting challenge to theologians to analyze this dialogue in theological terms. Any such description has at least three requirements.

Firstly, the description should demonstrate the unity of a particular human community with its culture. It should detail some characteristics of this unity.

Secondly the description needs to be theologically 'open' so as to show the effect of the historical entry of the Christian message into the culture and the consequences of this entry for the culture as a whole.

Thirdly, the theological formulation should describe the historical experience of the individual in the culture and in the inculturation process.

This essay is an attempt to use Karl Rahner's work on symbols and his epistemology to describe the church/culture dialogue in a manner which fulfills the above requirements.

### **Some Principles of a Theology of Symbols**

In "The Theology of the Symbol," Karl Rahner<sup>1</sup> worked out an ontology of symbolic reality. His fundamental proposition states: Of necessity, all beings express themselves in the other to "attain their own nature."<sup>2</sup> Basically all beings realize themselves through action which brings them towards their fulfillment and this process "is ... the condition of the possibility of possession of self in knowledge and love."<sup>3</sup> And furthermore, "possession of self ... is ... *the* content of that which we call being (and hence self-realization)."<sup>4</sup> We can say that a being is ontologically symbolic since it represents itself in order to realize its own nature. And we come to Rahner's definition of the symbol, ". . . the representation which allows the other 'to be there'."<sup>5</sup> The consequence of the process of self-realization lies in the unity between the being and its expressions. This became his first symbolic axiom.<sup>6</sup> And the necessarily high degree of intrinsic harmony between the being and its representations led him to call such representations "real" symbols.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore the symbol of the being is the reality through which someone else can know a being (this is Karl Rahner's reading of the axiom "ens est cognitum et cognoscibile, in quantum ipsum est actu"). "The being is known in this symbol, without which it cannot be known at all. . . ."8 Hence, human beings are intelligible only when we encounter enough of their real symbolic expressions in their speech and actions. Conversely, they are intelligible to the degree that they speak from the heart and their expressions are the unveiling of their deeper selves. For example, the music an orchestra plays is its 'real symbol'. The orchestra is fully appreciated only when you have attended a few live performances—just meeting the orchestra members would not suffice to know them as an orchestra.

Knowing has a very complex structure. Firstly, not only does it manifest the object known but the same process of knowing is a moment of self-realization for the knower. Not only do we come to know a being through its expressions but we also come to a more profound understanding of

our own being: ". . . the knowing subject possesses in knowledge both itself and its knowledge."<sup>9</sup> And secondly according to Rahner, we also develop a kind of knowledge of God (really a pre-apprehension of being)<sup>10</sup> from each of our encounters with the world. "The infinite horizon of human questioning is experienced as an horizon which recedes further and further the more answers man can discover. . . . the infinity which he experiences himself exposed to . . . permeates his everyday activities."<sup>11</sup>

In contrast with real symbols there are also "representational symbols."<sup>12</sup> Here from two discrete realities which already are intelligible in themselves, the 'representation' comes about when someone suggests an extrinsic connection between the two. For example, advertising usually operates by posing such arbitrary extrinsic connections between two realities. When the performance of a new car is presented to the strains of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the juxtaposition is intended to cause a 'cross-over'—in our minds—of the characteristics of the grand music to the car.

The ontology of symbols together with Rahner's epistemology offers a theoretical tool for analyzing the two realities, church and culture, which are the focus of interest. So the project at this point is to answer the question: Can we describe Church and culture using this terminology?

## **A Description of Culture**

[Culture] . . . denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about the attitudes towards life.<sup>13</sup>

Through these different processes clearly it is within their culture that members have learned what it means to be human. The *Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* says, "It is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture, that is through the goods and values of nature" (#53). Richard Leakey has offered one way of describing this process. We came to more differentiated and contoured perceptions because we developed as our cultures developed: our ancestors invented culture, and as it grew stronger and richer it provided a unique environment which was to nurture the human mind to the point at which we know and experience it today.<sup>14</sup> Leakey saw a mutual interplay between the member of the culture and the culture in which the individual develops by interacting in and through the culture. This corresponds with Rahner's second axiom: "The symbol strictly speaking (symbolic reality) is the self-realization of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence."<sup>15</sup> Referring to a human being coming to self-realization through his or her interaction with the 'other', we need to note that this self-consciousness and self-actualization are mediated within space and time, they are not merely interior experiences.<sup>16</sup>

The conception of a human being as simultaneously symbol-maker and user in coming to self-realization coincides significantly with Leakey's statement when part of the 'other' is acknowledged to be the culture within which the individual is embedded. Each particular human cultural community has developed an extensive range of cultural expressions which individuals

draw upon and utilize in their acts of knowing and self-realization. Through them they understand themselves and construct interpretations of reality. They will shade and color each succeeding act of knowledge and corresponding self-actualization. It is in using these in culturally appropriate ways that the members of the culture communicate and hope and love. They fulfill their mundane tasks and dream their dreams.

Clearly, the culture is not the whole of the 'other' although the network of symbols which forms the culture will weave our bodies, nature, other human beings and God into some kind of *Gestalt* so that they are referenced to it and thus intelligible. But if individuals come to self-realization in a cultural community (and they must do so in order to be "viable"<sup>17</sup>), then this unity of culture and community is a significant part of the 'other' of the world of the individual.

Furthermore, while individuals and groups are experiencing the depths and contours of their human spirit within their culture, they are also encountering the world for which Christ died. Each person is unfolding her or his life in a world already gripped by the salvific work of God in Christ even if there are no explicit real symbols of Christ present in their community. Rahner saw the Christ event as grounding the "supernatural existential,"<sup>18</sup> which was his way of formulating the universal offer of grace to all in Christ through adding another existential to the catalog of existentials which determine the existence of a human. Here it is not necessary to go further than to say that somehow we have to acknowledge that everyone and everything is in a world already drawn into the history of salvation. Hence each culture, as a part of this world, really is the *first* locus of discovering truth and value (compare *Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*). This was acknowledged in the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (#2):

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all . . . .

In Rahner's terminology, the 'ray of truth' would be the 'supernatural existential' and the Council was thus acknowledging the positive orientation of cultures without necessarily affirming them to be absolute sources of meaning when viewed from the perspective of the history of salvation.

Two comments may now be made about culture using Rahner's terminology of symbols:

(i) Firstly, a culture is the symbolic expression of a particular community. The culture-community reality complies with the requirements of the first two symbolic axioms proposed by Rahner. If we accept his first axiom that beings are necessarily symbolic, then the second axiom—about realization in the other—is satisfied by what has been expressed above.

If culture is a real symbol of the community which lives it, then we truly come to know the people when we encounter the people 'embedded' by their ongoing cultural expression. If due to some historical circumstance, we encounter only their artifacts which are their expressions but removed from the living matrix which gives them context and meaning (for example the rongo-rongo boards of Easter Island), then we do not have the complete reality which we require to 'know' them. And we have to use commonalities between this vanished culture and other living communities to obtain even the vaguest notion of what the artifacts mean. But because there is no living community to present a complete symbol—a lived expression—to us, then we only have a limited knowledge of what this culture meant to its people.

(ii) Secondly, culture is made up of symbolic expressions ranging from real symbols which express the deepest ethos of the people all the way to the most extrinsic of symbols—those formed by arbitrary associations (Rahner's 'representative' symbols).

In other words there are two main levels of symbols which can be distinguished in a culture. These represent the different levels of the pre-apprehensions of being in the culture. There are real symbols which embody the truths to which the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (cited above) gave its support and affirmation. And there are less grounded values ranging all the way to the representational symbols which are limited to the truth value of their individual elements since they are each already intelligible in their own right.

Representational symbols seem to be more common in the modern mass cultures which play down real symbols. As an example of this reduction of a deep symbol in modern culture, Ratzinger treats the modern home, which used to be a very powerful real symbol for families:

[T]he family home frequently seems no more than a sleeping bag. In the daytime it effectively dematerializes. No more can it be that sheltering space which brings human beings together in birth, and living, in sickness and dying. Indeed sickness and death are becoming purely technological problems to be handled by the appropriate institution.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the home, vitiated in some modern cultures as a place of the deepest human meanings and expressions, ceases to be a real symbol, a place of profound expression and memory for its inhabitants.

This description of culture in symbolic terms answers the first requirement, namely it details the link between the culture and the community. And the experience of the individual has also been described. Now we can turn to the other pole of the dialogue—the Church.

## **A Description of the Church**

In the light of the theory of symbol being proposed here, Christ can be faithfully described as the ‘real symbol’ of God.<sup>20</sup> "He that sees me sees the Father"(Jn 14:9). Christ is all that God wished to express as presence in history. And it can also be said that the Church is the real symbol of Christ in the world. "When we say that the Church is the persisting presence of the incarnate Word in space and time, we imply at once that it continues the symbolic function of the Logos in the world."<sup>21</sup> This is the meaning of the statement that the Church is the fundamental sacrament of Christ. (*The Church*, # 48; *The Church in the Modern World*, #43).

The church is missionary in its essence—"Go . . . make disciples of all the nations . . . baptize . . . teach . . ." (Mt 28:19). It must speak its word to every culture because "The Church believes that the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of human history is to be found in its Lord and Master" (*The Church in the Modern World*, #10). This deepest symbol of all truth and goodness—Jesus Christ—is the horizon of all of history. If people come to self-knowledge and self-interpretation through the encounter with this symbol of the mystery of God, then they will have entered the history of salvation (bearing in mind that the ‘supernatural existential’ is due to grace!). This is an application to soteriology of Rahner’s third axiom: "[T]he concept of the symbol . . . is an essential key-concept in all theological treatises, without which it is impossible to have a correct understanding of the subject-matter of the various treatises in themselves and in relation to other treatises."<sup>22</sup>

At this point, both culture and the Church have been described albeit briefly in terms of symbolic theology. With this foundation, a description of the Church/culture dialogue can be attempted. Such a description would answer the second part of the project presented in the



introduction. The second part is to describe the entry of the Church into a culture and its consequences.

### **The Process of Inculturation as a Symbolic Process**

A people's culture serves as "a socially shared design for living."<sup>23</sup> However, cultures can and do have areas which are discordant and elements which are irrational. They can have certain aspects which are not conducive to developing the full quality of life.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, no culture is a complete integrated whole which offers all of the answers to every question of meaning that its people might face. Rather, a culture is a grouping of partial meanings. Some issues simply are not treated by the culture and the response to new challenges is one of the reasons why cultures are usually in flux.

In addition, although the cultural community is already living in a world graced by God, the Good News often is not present thematically. It is not explicitly expressed by the words and activities of the people but is present rather as a thrust towards the good, the beautiful and the true. However, when the culture encounters the Church in history, then the community encounters the real symbols of God in the Church. It experiences the challenge of explicitly living out and passing on the gospel message in an intra-historical manner.

This explicit 'living out' has a special quality not previously attained. Expressed in terms of the symbolic theology, this 'living out' brings the individual and the community in which she or he participates into a fuller self-realization. This process (because of Christ's transformation of history) "will necessarily show itself again and again to be a history which is taking place in an irreversible direction towards a highest and comprehensive self-interpretation of man."<sup>25</sup> And in addition, this process leads to more thematically religious interpretations of the self.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Rahner can use terms like "most successful" and "full realization"<sup>27</sup> to refer to the intra-historical realization of the supernatural existential in categorical encounters with the symbols of Christ. The encounter with the symbols of Christ (the categorical history of revelation) is the condition of the possibility of the supernatural existential reaching such a specific intensity of intra-historical realization.

In terms of the act of knowing, in these symbols which speak of the transcendent, the people of the society can discover two things. They can discover the One who is present in these symbols of water and bread and wine—the One who is the animator of the communities of faith. In the same act of knowing they can discover themselves in a profoundly new way. They can know themselves as being thematically called to join the public history of salvation. They can know themselves to be profoundly loved and called to conversion.

The process of self-realization which is so intensified by the encounter with the explicit concrete symbols of Christ means that the previous self-realizations in the culture, the previous pre-apprehensions of being were simply that—'pre-apprehensions'. These pre-apprehensions actually allow the inculturation process to occur by giving interpretive clues to aid in the apprehension of knowledge of the symbol of Christ. Von Balthasar wrote that "Everything temporally alive 'develops' in some way: it moves from implicit to explicit."<sup>28</sup> Thus the happenings in a culture in some way can contribute to understanding the significance of the Christ event. He listed the offers of substitution that predate the death of Christ in the Jewish culture: Abraham risks his life to save any of the just who might be in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 18:20 - 33); Moses offers his life in place of his idolatrous people (Ex 32:32). And then Von Balthasar

comes to the significant conclusion that they hint, in a certain manner, at meanings of Christ's substitution but do not do more. And he raises the question which is central to faith, namely:

Is the unique event on the cross interpreted by an already known category which is somehow understandable in general human terms and thus stripped of its incomparable character?<sup>29</sup>

And his answer is that the uniqueness of the cross and resurrection means that only participation in the history which this event makes offers a possibility of real intelligibility. Encounter with the right symbol makes for the right possibility of knowing.

### **The Transformation of the Culture**

The above hypothetical encounter between a cultural community and the Church community in history is a new version of an age-old process. Since the beginning of human culture, cultures have always been coming into contact with other cultures. They have always been in a process of encounter and conflict, assimilation or rejection, of the elements of the other culture. Ideally, this process has always been driven by a seeking for a 'better' culture—one which makes life more meaningful. When members of this culture join the Church community, it is as if they have encountered a new culture. For, although the church is supra-cultural, it does have some similarities with a culture, most notably it is a complex of symbolic expressions.

The key difference between the Church and a culture is that in the Church, all the symbols are part of the multiplicity of expressions of the single reality of Christ. That is to say, the symbols of the Church have a unique eschatological focus to which they point from within history: ultimately this focus is Christ and the inner life of the Trinity. In sharp contrast with this, a culture is a multiplicity of expressions which unifies the ideational world of a people. Its focus is the community which lives it out. A culture has its particular character through its specific pattern of meanings and values. It is sustained through the commitment of people to these patterns.

When the patterns of meanings and values of the Scriptures, the Tradition, and the community of the Church (i.e., the symbols of Christ) are engaged by some of the members of the culture in knowledge and love, then these members constitute a group 'in' the culture which no longer subscribes to all of the patterns to which as individuals they were committed before. The transformation continues even further, for as people go through the symbolic process of re-thinking and re-expression, they re-work and re-situate each of the symbols of their culture. From within the framework of the church community, and its ultimate source of meaning which is Christ, they come to view their cultural symbols differently.

### **The Degree of Transformation of the Culture**

The above has been written as if the transformation process is actively engaged in by all of the members of the Church. This is not so in practice, however, because this is a human process and the assimilation process is complex.<sup>30</sup> There will be different levels of exercise of human freedom despite the fundamental offer of grace. Obviously, then, there are differing degrees of entry into the transformation process.

Some people will engage in the assimilation and reflection required by inculturation to a limited degree. They may operate in a syncretic fashion, never integrating the symbols of their faith completely into their lives. In fact both their belief system and their culture can lose their integrity in this way.<sup>31</sup> Others will maintain separate compartments in their lives, one for religious

symbols and one for their public lives, and they will attempt to live two 'parallel' but disconnected lives.

Ultimately the degree of completion of inculturation depends on the degree of personal commitment of all the individuals concerned to the cooperation with grace in the historical process; it will be represented by the different degrees of commitment to faith which we see around us.

In the ideal situation, as this process advances, people who seriously respond to the real symbols of Christ come to new self-interpretation and consequently 'express' new meanings 'into' their culture. This could lead to martyrdom as it did in the case of Christ, and many of his followers since. It could lead to encountering bigotry and rejection in all its many forms since it does occasionally posit meanings differing from the prevailing cultural meanings. And it also gives rise to a critique of the culture in terms of Christ which in turn gives rise to a call for the transformation and purification of parts of the culture. Such a process could lead to the Christian message becoming a deep source of meaning in the culture. But regardless of the particular sequence of events, what has begun in this culture is an irreversible process of the 'new creation', for a Christ-centered community will be forming in the culture.

It will be 'new' since the community will have reworked their culture with reference to the ultimate symbol Jesus Christ—the symbol of God. Jesus Christ who had always been present ontologically as the redeeming norm of the history of this new culture, now becomes thematically present in a qualitatively new and effective manner. The re-evaluation of this culture in the perspective of the transcendent will lead to a culture which is much more capable of giving quality to the life to its people. The culture will be more integral in that it aids members more effectively in their growth in Christ—who is life (1 John 1:1). People will view the elements of their cultures in new ways. In turn they will come to a different self-interpretation due to knowing new symbols and seeing new values and new depths in old symbols, for their new self-interpretation will be grounded ultimately in Christ.

For example, by reworking their perception of marriage in terms of what they have come to believe, they will be deepening their sense of marriage. "Our Saviour . . . now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of marriage" (*The Church in the Modern World*, #48). By reviewing their conception of society they will move into a Christological understanding of society as a fellowship. Similarly, all the different cultural areas can be transformed by being brought into tension with the ultimate standard of history.

The universal Church is also changed by every process of inculturation in history. All faith communities are linked in the Catholic Church in relations of reference and exchange which underlie the deliberate learning of the commands of Christ (Mt 28:18-20). Each community is a symbolic expression of the turning to Christ in a particular part of the world, and thus others may see and know Christ through knowing that symbol. When priests and laity with one cultural expression of the Church encounter another culture they achieve a new way of perceiving the realities of their faith. They come to know themselves and their faith from a different perspective. Different theological and devotional areas will be highlighted and different nuances will be perceived even though they ultimately need to commit to the key theological areas.<sup>32</sup> The differently nuanced perceptions will be communicated and enrich the international theological and liturgical dialogue which is part of the constitution of the Church. Thereby, each culture will add to the making present of Christ in history and to a fuller interpretation of the Christ event for us.

These relations are not one-directional but they they do acknowledge a definite emphasis in the direction of the Pope. The "Petrine principle [is] a constitutive element of the *communio ecclesiarum* and ... a strong guarantee against the danger of provincialism."<sup>33</sup>

The 'Chinese Rites' issue demonstrated the ongoing nature of inculturation. Matteo Ricci and others attempted to accept the 'honoring of ancestors', with some qualifications, as an appropriate part of Catholic worship. The issue was decided in a number of opposing ways by Rome until most recently Pius XI decided in favor. In this the Church was not being fickle in reviewing its decisions. Rather, the debate kept on taking new turns as it interpreted new data and nuanced perceptions which influenced the successive papal decisions. Beckmann<sup>34</sup> has written that an historian cannot make a judgement on the handling of the issue since, due to the unrest in China, none of the options proposed had a real chance of being tried.

One significant conclusion, however, is that this Church/culture dialogue is not a once-and-for-all reality. Since the population and the content of the culture are always changing, the Church must respond continuously. Inculturation becomes this continuing process of the Church in faithfulness to its own nature as proclaimer of Christ to all.

## Conclusion

This paper has made an effort to describe the historical process of inculturation of the gospel. Inculturation is not a form of algebra whereby one can predict precisely how symbols will interact, and draw a conclusion, before undergoing the interaction. The locus of interaction is the hearts and minds and spirits of the people of the community in dialogue with the rest of the Church. It is only from the experience of interaction, dialogue, and reflection that judgement and decision can arise.

The inculturation process can be described through Rahner's theology of the symbol. In terms of the three areas of theological analysis mentioned in the introduction:

(i) Understanding the culture as the symbolic expression of the people cogently presents the intimate unity of people with their culture and it provides a basis for understanding how individuals come to self-realization in their own culture.

(ii) Regarding the inculturation of the faith, the community encounters the symbols of its culture and those of Jesus Christ (the Church community, etc.) in the same way within a world already graced through Christ. However, the symbols of Christ convey deeper meaning and draw the profounder symbols of a culture such as family, marriage, home and love into their most complete form within the horizon of Christ.

(iii) Symbolic theology offers some insight into the experience of the individual in his or her experience of inculturation. Just as they have come to find meaning in terms of the symbols of their culture, now they find meaning in terms of the explicit expressions of Christ in the Church. And because Christianity involves one in reflection upon and the re-working of cultural symbols, people are enabled to deepen some values of the culture and discard others as they move towards the integrity of meaning which only the Incarnate Christ can offer humanity.

## Notes

1. Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol" in *Theological Investigations IV: More recent Writings*, p. 221.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
9. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, p. 17.
10. *Ibid.*, p.33.
11. *Ibid.*, p.32.
12. Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," p. 230.
13. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 89.
14. Richard Leakey, *People of the Lake: Mankind and its Beginnings*, p. 167.
15. Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol", p. 234.
16. Compare Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 36.
17. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 79.
18. Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 140.
19. Josef Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, p. 70.
20. Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol", p. 236.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 240
22. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
23. Luis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, p. 156.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
25. Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 154.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
28. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Von Balthasar Reader*, p. 157.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
30. See Luzbetak, *Church and Cultures*, chapter 7.
31. Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 144ff.
32. Francis George, "The Process of Inculturation: Steps, Rules, Problems," p. 101.
33. Libero Gerosa, "Secular Institutes, Lay Associations, and Ecclesial Movements in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio* (Fall 1990), p. 354.
34. Johannes Beckmann, "The Propagation of the Faith in Asia," p. 312.

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Vatican Council II. *Vatican Council II - The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*. General Ed., Austin Flannery, O.P. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975. See *The Constitution on the Church*, pp. 350-426; *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, pp. 738-742; *The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, pp. 903-1001.

## Chapter IV

# Communication across Cultures: Natural Law and Wisdom Traditions

*John Farrelly*

One salient factor in our present experience of "Cultural Identity, Pluralism and Globalization" is the tension that exists between, on the one hand, many cultural, political and economic leaders in the countries of the North Atlantic and, on the other, many leaders and people in more traditional societies. The peace and human progress of our world during the twenty-first century depends largely on the capacity and willingness of such leaders to find bases for consensus on issues now addressed on a world level.

Examples of conflict between these diverse perspectives and of an emergence of a significant degree of consensus are found in the 1994 World Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.<sup>1</sup> The initial documents and proposals for decisions for both of these conferences were drawn up largely by political leaders in the North Atlantic countries and were marked by an excessively individualistic interpretation of human rights—for example, the acceptance of abortion as a method of family limitation, the rights of teenagers to sexual self-expression independent of family, and the view that women's progress depended on a subordination or avoidance of family responsibilities for personal advancement. In Cairo the worst of the initial proposals were defeated by a coalition among nations of the southern hemisphere, Moslem countries and the Vatican. And in Beijing, the worst of the proposals were defeated by parts of this coalition and by an appeal over the heads of governmental and non-governmental agency representatives in Beijing to the people of European countries, who did not know that their governments were proposing in Beijing commitments opposed to their own constitutions that favored the family.

In these Conferences countries that were very distinct in cultures were able to agree on much because of a significant consensus on what was morally right and wrong, based on grounds beyond the civil law or traditions of their own countries. In the West this basis of consensus has traditionally been called 'natural law'. In this paper I would like to look at the value of this tradition of natural law as a help in fostering or enabling communication across cultures and so forestalling a conflict of civilizations. We will first (1) take a twentieth-century example of its impact in transforming a society, then (2) show some stages of the tradition of natural law, with particular emphasis on Thomas Aquinas, and (3) suggest how this tradition can be updated in a way to answer some major objections to it in our time. This is a hermeneutical task, because we are interpreting past documents and practices from the perspective of present-day issues.

### **A Twentieth-Century Example of Natural Law Transforming a Society**

In the 1960's in the United States there was a massive movement that broke down discrimination against African Americans in many areas of public life like voting, housing, the use of public accommodations and employment. We may imagine a Southern white in the mid- 1960s who has the option to discriminate or not when he employs another or defines the practice of a hotel or restaurant. He may decide not to for economic reasons, or because he fears revenge if he does discriminate, or because the law is now against it, or because he may imaginatively put

himself in the position of a black person and recognize that he himself would not like the demeaning experience of being discriminated against. But even further he may think that the other, in spite of his racial difference, has a *right* to be treated with respect and not be subject to demeaning experiences that discrimination on the basis of color entailed. After all, he is a human being with his own dignity, his own goals and legitimate needs. And the person who comes to think this way may also recognize that it is part of his own duty as a human being to respect the rights of another; to live by this responsibility is part of his own dignity as a human being and it is essential for the building up of a human community. To live without accepting this responsibility is to act against something distinctive of himself as a full human being.

Martin Luther King, who was such a central figure in bringing about this massive social change in the United States at the time, appealed to Scripture, human dignity, and natural rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution in his efforts to bring justice to his people.<sup>2</sup> The resulting transformation of consciousness and the revolutionary change in laws and practice were due in part to a raising of people's minds and hearts beyond the immediate to a greater sense of what united the two races, namely their humanity. And this was, therefore, an appeal to natural law. We are not saying that this change resulted only from an appeal to natural law, because there were other factors involved in it. But we do see in this experience that people can be effectively appealed to on the basis of a common humanity; this can overcome the clash of civilizations. This is an instance of a task described by George McLean as follows:

[In regard to] relations between peoples and conflict resolution. . . we are faced with the imperative of finding how to proceed in terms of a capacity to grasp the whole . . . [T]he central questions are not merely epistemological, but ontological and ethical, namely, what is the global whole in which we exist, and how can we act in relation to other peoples and cultures in ways that promote a collaborative realization of global community in our times?<sup>3</sup>

The process of overcoming discrimination in the United States in the 1960's called on free acts that involved a new consciousness and a dramatic change in what was considered as acceptable behavior. 'Separate but equal' was no longer considered equality. So a good was involved, a good for those who had been discriminated against, a good for those who were discriminating against others, and a good that bound these people together in society, that is, the common good. This good contested the good and structure of the earlier culture, and so called for cultural change. This call depended on norms that were larger than that culture; they depended on what we may call a constitutive human good. This culture was not the ultimate norm; there was a criterion for the good other than tradition. In fact, Martin Luther King and others at the time called on a longer and deeper tradition than that of the southern culture, namely the Constitution of the United States that accepted natural rights that were God-given and that the government had a duty to defend, and Scripture with its teaching that all human beings are God's children and its stories of how God led the enslaved Israelites from Egypt to the freedom of the promised land. This call was not a denial of cultural differences between blacks and whites nor a plea for homogenization between these ethnic groups; it was rather a call to recognize a good beyond cultural differences that would itself respect these differences and integrate them into a larger social whole.

## **Some Stages in the Natural Law Tradition**

### *Graeco-Roman*



To consider the foregoing twentieth-century instances of calls for social justice and cohesion across cultural boundaries as examples of the effective tradition of natural law is to acknowledge that this tradition grows as it is interpreted from new perspectives and applied to new issues. We can see a bit of this growth by taking soundings in this tradition.

The Greeks had a sense that there was an order in the cosmos that was antecedent to human beings' judgments and that this order was reflected too in the nature of human beings and how they should act. There was consequently a justice and law distinct from those which a particular people enact. Aristotle depended on earlier Greek thought when he classified just and unjust actions by the two kinds of law that exist:

By the two kinds of law I mean particular law and universal law. Particular law is that which each community lays down and applies to its own members: this is partly written and partly unwritten. Universal law is the law of nature. For there really is, as every one to some extent divines, a natural justice and injustice that is binding on all men, even on those who have no association or covenant with each other.<sup>4</sup>

The Greeks saw an analogy between the order that is found in the cosmos and that which is incumbent upon human beings to acknowledge and live by. Laws of the political and social order can be evaluated and critiqued by this law of nature. Aristotle interpreted the development of human life within the context of the Greek city-state, to which individuals should contribute; and he accepted slavery as consistent with the law of nature.

Later, the Stoics had a sense that there was an order coursing through the universe that reflected the divine, and that human beings were more a part of this larger order than of a particular political society. A broader society than that of their particular political society unites human beings. This order can be discerned by human reason, and human beings are more human if they live by this. For example, Cicero writes:

True law is right reason in agreement with nature (Est quidem vera lex recta ratio naturae congruens); it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting. . . It is a sin to try to alter this law, nor is it allowable to attempt to repeal any part of it, and it is impossible to abolish it entirely. We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or people, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times, and there will be one master and ruler, that is, God, over us all, for he is the author of this law, its promulgator, and its enforcing judge. Whoever is disobedient is fleeing from himself and denying his human nature, and by reason of this very fact he will suffer the worst penalties, even if he escapes what is commonly considered punishment.<sup>5</sup>

The Roman tradition tended to see the natural law in relation to the juridical order, and as such was developed by Roman jurists as a speculative body of universal laws. They distinguished the *ius civile* under which Romans lived from that law which they developed from a common denominator of the varied peoples they governed in their empire, the *ius gentium*. They considered this latter as a codification of the natural law. "Thus Ulpian (d. A.D. 228), the great Roman jurist, stated that insofar as the *ius civile* is concerned, slaves are not regarded as persons; nevertheless, this is not true under natural law because under that law all men are equal (*Digest* 50.17.32)."<sup>6</sup>

St. Paul also had a sense of a law inscribed in the nature of human beings, and that they could have some significant knowledge of this. He writes:

For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature observe the prescriptions of the law, they are a law for themselves even though they do not have the law [i.e., the law of the Old Testament]. They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts. . . (Rom 2:14-15).

This view is not unique to Christianity. The Confucian classic, *The Unvarying Mean*, begins by stating:

What is ordained of Heaven is called the essential nature of man; the following of this essential nature is called the natural law; the cultivation and refinement of this natural law is called culture.<sup>7</sup>

And in recent reviews of books on Islamic law in studies of comparative ethics, reviewers approve of an author, A. Kevin Reinhart, who studied medieval Muslim writers on the issue of whether people could know the will of God before the coming of revelation through Muhammed. Among diverse views on this issue, there were those,

who held that most actions were innately good or bad (e.g. gratitude and lying, respectively), so that reason was a roughly adequate guide to action before revelation made final distinctions (e.g., the proscription of pork). . . . Reinhart finds confidence in the power of reason to assess actions to be more characteristic of the early period, when the Muslims were still an expanding community, therefore optimistic, but also a minority, therefore forced to reckon with the morality of non-Muslims. The Mu'tazilis are the famous rationalists of early Islamic theology, but a similar confidence showed up in Hanbali, Shafi'i, and other early theologians.<sup>8</sup>

### *Medieval*

In the medieval West interest in natural law surged in the twelfth century, partially because the social situation was changing with the emergence of cities. There was a need for some criteria other than feudal tradition to adjudicate ethical issues among contending Christian parties concerning economic, social and political divisions. Scripture and traditional Christian images such as the Body of Christ were appealed to by diverse sides of the same question. Also, there was a revival of Manicheanism in the Cathars of southern France who contemned the flesh. On the other hand there was a revival of interest in nature, as we see in Francis of Assisi. For all these reasons, there was a revival of interest in natural law among canonists and Scholastic philosophers and theologians. This was used to evaluate conventional practices, that were normally accepted as legitimate determinations of natural law even though they differed among themselves. Scripture too was a basis for the acceptance of natural law, because it taught that creation and human beings were created by God as good, and it was thought that the ten commandments were basic prescriptions of the natural law.<sup>9</sup>

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas developed an interpretation of natural law that has been very influential indeed among Catholics since then, and not only among Catholics. First of all, natural law is a kind of law. And Thomas concludes his study of what law is by writing, "Law is nothing else than a prescription of reason for the common good made by the authority who has care of the community and is promulgated."<sup>10</sup> Thus, a law is a direction for human action, and so

is in the order of practical reason, as distinct from speculative reason. There is an authority behind it from some one or institution that has responsibility for the community. It is for the common good; if it were inimical to the common good it should be changed or, in some cases, it is not morally binding at all. And the law also must be promulgated.

There is, of course, civil law and Church law. But there is also a law that God prescribes for us by the fact of constituting us as human beings. This law can, at least in part, be understood by way of understanding our human nature. Here too this law, natural law, is a prescription of our practical reason. There is a law inscribed in lower nature such as animals, but that is not followed freely. Practical reason is ordered to action, and so what falls first in its apprehension is the good, since everything seeks the good:

This is, therefore, the first precept of law: that good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided. And upon this are founded all other precepts of natural law; so that whatever practical reason naturally apprehends as a human good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of natural law as something to be done or avoided (ST I-II, 94, 2).

Though natural law is properly a prescription of practical reason, Thomas does not split reason off from the rest of the human person; it is our whole human nature that shows us the good proper to us. We share the nature of all material things, and so as part of our nature we have an inclination to conserve our being: "inasmuch as every substance seeks to conserve its own existence according to its nature . . . there pertains to natural law those acts through which human life is conserved and its contrary resisted" (ibid.). Along with animals we have a natural inclination to propagate our species: "And according to this, those things are said to be of natural law which nature teaches all animals: e.g., the conjunction of male and female, the education of the young, and like things" (ibid.).

Thirdly, there is in the human an inclination to good according to the rational nature which is proper to it: thus humans have a natural inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society; and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to natural law: for example, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination (ibid.).

All of this natural law is a participation in God's eternal law or providence, and has been promulgated by him who has care of the whole human race through the very act of creating human beings and giving them a capacity to know something of who they are as human beings (see ST I-II, 93).

Thomas recognized that there are individuals and indeed peoples who, whether from passion or lack of knowledge, did not know everything that the natural law prescribes; he was aware that Ceasar had reported that the Germanic tribes did not think that stealing was morally wrong. Thomas said that the basic principles of the natural law could be known by all (e.g., do good and avoid evil), but that secondary precepts, which are "like particular conclusions close to first principles" (ST I-II, 94, 5), would be known by some and not by others (ST I-II, 94, 4).

Also, there are times when there are exceptions to the natural law because of some larger consideration. For example, stealing is against the natural law, but if a family is starving and there is no other way to relieve their need they may take what another has, because the first purpose of the goods of the earth is to meet the needs of all (see ST II-II, 66, 7). And it is the natural law to obey the laws of legitimate civil authorities. But when such authorities enjoin the citizens not to open the city gates during a siege, the citizens may disobey this if people on whom the city's

defense depends are outside the city, fleeing attack and seek to enter the city (ST I-II, 96, 6). Similarly, it is natural law that one must return what has been deposited with one by another. But if someone has deposited a weapon, and now wants to use it against the fatherland, one need not return it (see ST II-II, 57, 2, ad 1). In reference to this last case, Thomas notes that "human nature is mutable" (*natura hominis est mutabilis*), and therefore the prescriptions of natural law do not always hold as such.

Thus Thomas does make provision for different interpretations of natural law, because of the influence of the passions, the deficiencies of human reason in practical as well as in speculative knowledge (see ST I-II, 99, 2, ad 2), and the diversity of circumstances. In his philosophy of history Jacques Maritain speaks of the "law of the progress of moral conscience" as an important principle:

He speaks, of course, of progress in the knowledge of the moral law, which does not mean that men necessarily behave better. He gives as examples of this progress the present-day awareness that slavery is contrary to the dignity of the human person, that prisoners of war have rights, that child-labour is intolerable, that labour itself has its dignity, that authority does not need to be ruthless: "The sense of duty and obligation was always present, but the explicit knowledge of the various norms of natural law grows with time. And certain of these norms, like the law of monogamy, were known rather late in the history of mankind, so far as it is accessible to our investigation. Also, we may think that the knowledge of the precepts of the natural law in all of their precise aspects and requirements will continue to grow until the end of human history."<sup>11</sup>

Thomas recognized that there was a need of an historical revelation of elements of the natural law, because the human mind is clouded over by sin and ignorance (see ST I-II, 99, 2, ad 2). And so we have the precepts of the ten commandments. Many of the injunctions of the ten commandments are found in other religions as well. And we can acknowledge that they too come from a kind of divine revelation. In the Old Testament there is not only the revelation mediated by the prophets but also that mediated by the Wisdom writers. These writers found lessons about how human beings should live in relation to God and to one another in creation and in the experience of human beings, and they ascribed this knowledge frequently to Wisdom or Lady Wisdom. Some exegetes speak of Lady Wisdom only as reflecting the order of creation. But the exegete Roland Murphy writes:

One may question whether the lyrical description of Lady Wisdom is adequately captured by the concept of order. She certainly cannot be viewed apart from the Lord from whom she originates. Her authority also suggests that she is the voice of the Lord, the revelation of God, not merely the self-revelation of creation. She is the divine summons issued in and through creation, who finds her delight among the humans God has created (8:31). Lady Wisdom, then, is a communication of God, through creation, to human beings.<sup>12</sup>

Many Catholic theologians have reduced what could be known through nature to a natural theology, but this does not seem an adequate interpretation of the Wisdom literature of the Bible. And to see Wisdom literature as reflecting a divine revelation can help us see much wisdom of other religions of the world as having the same source.<sup>13</sup>

### **Some Contemporary Objections to Natural Law, and a Growth of the Tradition**

The radical historical changes brought about in cultures recently by the industrial revolution, world-wide communication and exposure to other ways has called into question many traditional ethics. What a Western philosopher who has taught for many years in Taiwan writes is true of much of Asia and Africa:

Industrialization and the process of modernization have within decades changed the face of this country. The many rapid changes in the socio-economic field have become a challenge to the traditional value-system which has led to a rather widespread disorientation in matters of morals. A new value order is not yet in sight. This period of transition from a formerly well established order, which lasted unquestioned for hundreds of years, to a new order of which the contours are not yet clearly visible, affects all members of society in general and adult students in particular.<sup>14</sup>

For many Catholics in the North Atlantic countries it was Pope Paul VI's reaffirmation of the Church's condemnation of contraception in *Humanae Vitae* (1968) that evoked this crisis, and its consequences continue till today, and indeed have broadened. Contraception was condemned as objectively morally wrong because by this act one engaged in the marital act and at the same time acted directly against one essential meaning or purpose of this act, namely procreation. This judgment was in accord with the natural law tradition.

There have been efforts to find an alternate answer to this moral dilemma by many Catholic theologians and philosophers, some of which have led to a rejection or a rather radical reinterpretation of the natural law tradition.<sup>15</sup> And these efforts have had repercussions in other areas of moral philosophy and theology. I too have written in this field, and I offer the following as a summary of my understanding of the modification of the natural law tradition that this moral problem calls for.<sup>16</sup>

With this tradition and the Church's teaching I hold that the marital act does indeed have two essential meanings, the unitive and the procreative. It is true that the marital act is not always fertile, but for man and wife to engage freely as persons in such an expression of love is for them not only to express their love for one another but also for them to accept in principle their commitment to the child who may result from their love. It is an act proper specifically to marital love that is open to a larger community, namely the family. And contraception is directly against fertile marital acts. There is a meaning intrinsic to certain human acts that is not dependent simply on what an individual or culture may wish to say by the act; some things they may choose to say by these acts are intrinsically opposed to what the act symbolizes or says, and so are lies or distortions. Rape, for example, is not an act of love.

However, Catholics and many others have held that the meaning of the marital act also includes commitment to raise the child who may be born as a result and expression of the husband and wife's love for one another. The main traditional argument against intercourse outside marriage was that a child needs the environment of marriage for its appropriate growth toward adulthood. On the basis that the marital act is oriented by its nature toward the raising and not only the procreation of children, one can conclude that its full meaning includes the expression of mutual love and both the procreation and the raising of children. But there are at times circumstances when the *full* purpose of the marital act cannot be preserved from serious harm by the birth of another child at the time. In these circumstances there are reasons to say that one may act against the immediate purpose of the act, namely the procreative consequences of the individual marital act, when the full purpose cannot be preserved from serious harm by lesser means.

An analogy helps here. In certain circumstances one may allow an excision of one kidney when another person will die unless he or she has a kidney transplant. To allow an excision of a kidney is to act directly contrary to the intrinsic meaning of our use of our organs, since they are for the support of the life of the person to whom they belong. But there is a larger purpose of our use of our organs that includes the welfare of others as well. And the support of the life of the donor in this case can be preserved sufficiently by the other kidney. So to allow this excision is not to act against an essential goal of our use of our organs, since that can still be preserved by the other kidney.

Similarly, in some circumstances to engage in marital intercourse and to seek to prevent the procreative consequences of the individual marital act from taking place is not to act against the essential good of procreation since that does not depend on the individual marital act and can be preserved by other marital acts. Thus it is the full meaning of the marital act that is morally controlling, and not simply the immediate meaning. This view does not morally justify intercourse outside of marriage, because that would be to act against the full meaning of this act for the purpose of a partial meaning.

There is a certain similarity between this answer to the question of the morality of contraception and Thomas Aquinas' answer to questions about the return of a deposit to a person who will use it to harm one's country. Even though the natural law prescribes that one should return the deposit, larger circumstances justify one not to do so in this case. Implicitly, these larger circumstances are the greater good than simply justice between two individuals, namely the good of the country. Also, it is similar to the case of taking what belongs to another when one would starve otherwise, because the deeper meaning of the material goods of the world is for the needs of all rather than the property rights of an individual. Thus, acts within immediate structures or relationships cannot be judged wholly without reference to the good of larger structures or relationships that are affected by the act or the deeper meaning or purpose of the relationship. The Church has used this principle again and again in its social teaching, as historical circumstances change and call for new relationships between owners of property and workers, or among countries. In principle, the prescriptions of the natural law change as the meaning of individual human acts depends on enlarging social environments.

Another contemporary objection to natural law comes from the view that in our evolutionary world, it is naive to think that our humanity originated in some set design by God; it is rather the result of chance mutations and survival of the fittest in the course of evolution. Thus one cannot see in 'nature' some moral norm of what one should and should not do. In answer, we can say that the above objection raises the physical sciences into a metaphysics, since its proponents are saying that God is not operative at all in the evolutionary process, and that simple physical acts are wholly adequate as an explanation for what has occurred. Without going into the philosophical issues here, we can limit ourselves to saying that God could of set purpose bring about the existence of human beings through the structure of physical reality as he originally designed it and the resulting dynamic process that includes both necessity and chance under his providential care. Recent explorations of evidence for the 'anthropic universe' have supported this view in the minds of many.

Finally, the objection can be raised that 'nature' is no longer an adequate context to judge the morality of a human act; such judgment must be made in the context of the human being as person, as a subject who freely and autonomously seeks his fulfilment. In answer, this takes us back to the phenomenology we presented at the beginning of this article, namely that of a white adult in the southern United States in the mid 1960's who judges that he should not discriminate against blacks.

He comes to the point where he recognizes that the black man or woman is also a person who has an inherent dignity that the white man must respect because of this dignity both in the other and in himself. There is an absolute injunction, in the sense of not being hypothetical upon some consequence he may choose to achieve, in virtue of which he senses a responsibility to treat another as a human equal. The other is a person because he has a human nature, and so there is not a dichotomy between accepting 'person' as the context for moral judgment and 'nature'.

## Notes

1. See George Weigel, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999) 715-727, 766-771. Documentation is provided there.
2. See David L. Lewis, *King. A Critical Biography* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971); and Andrew Reck, "Natural Law and the Constitution," *Review of Metaphysics* 42 (1989) 483-511.
3. George McLean, "Culture, Pluralism and Globalization," 24.
4. *Rhetoric*, 1373b 4-9; see also *Eth. Nic.* 1134b 18-1136a 9.
5. Cicero, *De republica*, III, xxii (in the Loeb series translation).
6. B.F. Brown, "Natural Law," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. 10, 252.
7. Quoted by John C. H. Wu, "Natural Law. Thomistic Analysis," *NCE* 10, 256.
8. Christopher Melchert, "Discerning the Will of God: Four Recent Books on Islamic Law," *Religious Studies Review* 23 (1997) 14. His reference is to A. Kevin Reinhart, *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). Also see in the same issue of *RSR*, John Kelsay, "Islam and the Comparative Study of Religious Ethics: Review of Selected Materials, 1984-1995," 3-9.
9. See Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law. Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 1999) 34-41.
10. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, 90, 4. The translation I am using, with some adjustments, is that of the Blackfriar's edition (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1966) vol. 28. My adjustments usually follow those found in John Boler, "Aquinas on Exceptions in Natural Law," in Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (ed.), *Aquinas's Moral Theory. Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann* (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1999) 161-204.
11. Michael Crowe, *The Changing Profile of the Natural Law* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977) 187-188. His quotation is from J. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History* (London: 1959) 82-83.
12. Roland Murphy, "Introduction to Wisdom Literature," *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990) 450.
13. See, for example, David Carpenter, "Revelation in Comparative Perspective: Lessons for Interreligious Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 29 (1992) 175-188. He finds a similarity between revelation in Hindu tradition and that which comes through Wisdom in Scripture.
14. Arnold Sprenger, "Higher Moral Education in Taiwan," *Chinese Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development*, ed. Tran Van Doan, Vincent Shen, and George McLean (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991) 176.
15. See Charles Curran and Richard McCormick (ed.), *Natural Law and Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991); Michael Allsopp and John O'Keefe (ed.), *Veritatis Splendor. American Responses* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995).
16. See M.J. Farrelly, "The Principle of the Family Good," *Theological Studies* 31 (1970) 262-274; "The Person and the Human Good," *God's Work in a Changing World* (Lanham, Md:

University Press of America, 1985; now available through Washington D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy) 77-160; and "An Impasse in the Church," *America*, May 24, 1986.



## Chapter V

# Trinity as Salvific Mystery and Historical Consciousness

*John Farrelly*

The mystery of the Trinity is the central mystery of Christianity, and the way that Christianity is to be lived depends profoundly on the meaning of this mystery. It is the thesis of this present article that our modern historical consciousness calls us to an interpretation of the salvific meaning of this mystery that is somewhat different from that given by classical theology, because we have a different experience of the world, time, and human agency. This somewhat revised interpretation is, we claim, called for by Scripture itself. To present this thesis and some basis for it, we shall (1) present a classical interpretation of the meaning of the Trinity for our Christian lives, (2) recall some changes in our sensibility that modern historical consciousness carries with it and some initial implications drawn from this for our understanding of the Trinity, and (3) make a specific proposal concerning a revision of our understanding of the salvific meaning of the Trinity which is appropriate to these circumstances. We do all this in a simply introductory way.

### **A Classical Interpretation of the Trinity as Salvific Mystery**

Perhaps the person most influential figure in the spirituality of the West has been Augustine, and so we may present his way of relating the mystery of the Trinity to our experience of world and time as a classical interpretation of this mystery without, however, denying the great differences among spiritualities in the Western Church.

Augustine was a convert to Christianity through the mediation of the Platonists and, in particular, the Neo-Platonist Plotinus and his interpreter Porphyry.<sup>1</sup> Through these Platonists he was able to gain some understanding of the reality of the spiritual or non-material order. Through the preaching of Ambrose in Milan, he was able to see that there was some resolution of the tension between the Platonists' understanding of God as spiritual and the anthropomorphisms of Scripture. More than this, he claimed to find the Christian mystery of the Trinity in Plotinus. There he found the Ultimate Principle of reality to be the One which by a process of emanations gave rise to all lower beings. The first to emanate from the One was the Nous, or Understanding, and through this there emanated the World Soul. Lesser beings, even matter, emanate in order from these. Plotinus' philosophy was in service of a deeply religious spirit, for it not only showed how lesser reality derived from the One, but how human beings may be fulfilled through a return to the One by a process of turning from what was physical and outside to what is within us, from what is lower in us to what is higher and spiritual within us, and from this to rise toward the One, thus ultimately becoming alone with the Alone. More than once in his life, Plotinus had experienced ecstasy in this return, though the fulfillment of this passage was to be found in the immortal life of the soul after death.

Augustine's understanding of the return of the soul to God is influenced by this scheme to the extent that some scholars have interpreted his conversion as a conversion to Neo-Platonism rather than to Christianity. This is excessive, but it has had enough foundation to give it a semblance of truth for some scholars. We can see something of the way Augustine interpreted the ascent of the soul to God by his reflection on the mystical experience he and his mother had at Ostia shortly before her death. After recounting this experience, he reflected on it:

Rising as our love flamed upward toward that Self-same, we passed in review the various levels of bodily things, up to the heavens themselves, whence sun and moon and stars shine upon this earth. And higher still we soared, thinking in our minds and speaking and marveling at Your works. And so we came to our own souls, and went beyond them to come at last to that region of richness unending, where You feed Israel forever with the food of truth; and there life is that Wisdom by which all things are made. . . . And while we were thus talking of His Wisdom and panting for it, with all the effort of our heart we did for one instant attain to touch it.<sup>2</sup>

Here we have an account of a very personal experience, interpreted in terms of mysticism as basically a way of ascent, passing beyond material things to our own interiority, from our knowledge in the order of sense to our deeper knowledge in the depth of our soul, and hence to God. Though there are close parallels here with one of the books of Plotinus' *Enneads*.<sup>3</sup> This was an experience Augustine had with his mother, Monica. Thus friendship and communion with other human beings are more important in Augustine's spirituality than they were for Plotinus. This experience is a transitory experience of ecstasy or rapture which is for Augustine a foretaste of the joy of heaven.

We could show that something similar to the above scheme is found in Augustine's interpretation of memory and also his view of time as process by which we collect ourselves from multiplicity to an inner unity by relating to God, the realm of the immutable.<sup>4</sup> But we restrict ourselves to noting that when Augustine late in life wrote his work *De Trinitate*, he moved further from Plotinus while still showing his influence. He emphasized here that the human soul as an image of God as Triune has an inclination to return to God - a return that once more Augustine describes as a movement from exterior to interior, from lower to higher dimensions of the soul and hence to God. We must be purified to achieve this process, and this purification comes from the Incarnate Word through whom we receive and contemplate Wisdom. "The truths of faith, the truths concerning the Incarnate Word, are the means whereby we pass from the temporal to the eternal".<sup>5</sup>

This was the focus of Augustine's spirituality. We should add that the events of profane history were not of great intrinsic meaning for Augustine. It means little to a Christian what earthly rule he lives under, so long as it preserves a peace that allows the Gospel to be preached and spread. In *De Civitate Dei* Augustine recognized certain stages of history; but he also emphasized the transcendence of the Christian's destiny over that of an earthly state such as the Roman Empire, showing that it is not the ultimate evil for even such an earthly state to pass away.

We present this as a skeleton example of a classical trinitarian spirituality, while acknowledging that even in the West there were quite diverse spiritualities. Thomas Aquinas, for example, had a different view of human knowledge, ascribed more intrinsic meaning to the political community, and identified the individual more frankly with the body-soul composite than Augustine did at times. But in many ways he was an Augustinian - e.g., in his acceptance of an "exitus - reditus" model of theology (creatures proceeding from God in a gradation of levels of being and returning to him through Jesus Christ as Word Incarnate), and the immutability of God.<sup>6</sup>

### **Historical Consciousness and Some New Approaches to the Trinity**

We would now like to (a) recall very briefly some changes in sensibility and situation in our time that challenge classical Christian spirituality such as that of Augustine, and (b) show some few ways in which a response to this new situation has evoked renewed reflection on

the Trinity.

### *Changes in Situation*

An awareness of the world, time and human agency that we can call historical consciousness challenges in our time a classical Christian spirituality such as that of Augustine. Vatican II noted something of this change in our culture in its introduction to the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*):

Today, the human race is passing through a new stage of its history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and people. Hence we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well.<sup>7</sup>

Whereas in much of classical Christianity, what it meant to be human was tied in with the experience of nature in an agricultural society, a hierarchically formed social order and a geocentric universe, all of this has changed in our time. In the earlier age, the classical experience and understanding of the human greatly influenced the theological interpretation of the human person's return to God. But today men and women experience the context of their existence much more as history than nature, more as human community than as interaction with nature, as determined more by their decisions in life than by tradition and the need to accommodate to the cycle of nature, more as determining the future than being determined by the past or present. Men and women of our time consider history and its future very important and think that its shape will largely depend upon their own decisions and those of the political, economic and cultural institutions of which they are members, experience tensions among individuals and societies that threaten the realization of a future society more in accord with human dignity, and are torn between hope and fear about their future. This sensibility, which is described at times by the phrase 'modern historical consciousness',<sup>8</sup> gives a positive value to secular history and change that is not found in Augustine and other classical spiritualities that were developed in rather hierarchical and traditional societies. For many this is not an optimistic view. In fact, as Pope John Paul wrote in his first encyclical:

The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will. . . . It is or can be directed against him. This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadest and universal dimension. Man therefore lives increasingly in fear.<sup>9</sup>

The future seems menacing to many people in our time.

An unrestricted orientation in our technological world that sacrificed the present and human relations provoked its own antibodies that were particularly virulent in North America and Western Europe in the late 1960's and early 1970's, but still have their effects. This was widely called a 'counter-culture' and it took many forms. Many people lost confidence in institutions and dropped out of the overachieving societies of which they were a part. In a new romanticism, many of them

returned to nature and the natural, and sought their guidance from their own interiority or the wisdom of those who were close to nature, such as the lore of Indian tribes. Associated with this was an explosion of interest in the religions of the East, particularly Hinduism and forms of Buddhism. Many cults emerged in the United States, some of which were imports from the East or hybrids between western and Eastern religions. Many who remained in the mainstream accepted aspects of this counter-culture. For example, many adopted a more detached relationship to the Church, considering themselves spiritual but not religious. These tended to find their religion more in communing with nature or God on their own; they found an identification with a concrete religious institution and community to be more of a hindrance than a help. We can say that some of these found an interiority such as that of classical trinitarian spirituality appealing and indeed emphasized it more than did Augustine and others.<sup>10</sup>

Against such counter-cultural movements, we can say that the change in human self-understanding that our modern human experience has induced is basically valid, for these experiences show us something of what it means to be human. To be human is indeed to be involved in history in differing cultures, to shape one life through interaction with the culture and society that are one's environment, to restructure oneself progressively as one goes through stages of life and as one's environment changes. Many people, however, make a total dichotomy between a contemporary understandings of what it means to be human and a classical view. They have identified being human wholly with a pragmatic, utilitarian or consequentialist search for results in history, and have lost the sense of an intrinsic meaning to human life. Such a shift has in part contributed to the extreme reaction found in the new romanticism of part of our counter-culture. But this is not justified. Human persons engage in their environment and direct themselves to a future with a definite human potential in view of which certain ways of acting enhance their humanity while that of their societies, and others diminish it.<sup>11</sup> Amid the great pluralism of environments and individual potentials, there is also a communality of human potential that is intrinsically differentiated by sex, age, historical circumstances, etc. And the future to which one is oriented is not only one's own but that of others as well, of our individual human community and the larger human community including even a succession of generations connecting us to the past as well as to the future. We are, as ecological problems are forcing all to recognize now, part of nature as well as historical beings. Neither technocracy nor romanticism is sufficient for our present self-understanding and guidance.

### *Responses to Changed Situation*

There have been attempts to relate the Trinity as salvific mystery more positively to history in our time than those found in classical theology. For example, the Church at Vatican II acknowledged that there were a number of aspects of traditional Christian spirituality that needed modification in our time because of our changed situation and sensibilities. In fact, the purpose of Vatican II was pastoral and specifically a certain adaptation of the Church so that its message and life could be communicated in a manner more appropriate to our present culture – an *aggiornamento*.<sup>12</sup> In reference to the mystery of the Trinity, the Council stressed its salvific meaning, rather than the interior relations among the Three Persons of the Trinity. It showed that the origin of the Church is the Father's plan and the sending of his Son into the world to redeem it. The Son fulfilled his mission by his preaching of the kingdom, his suffering, death and resurrection. And having ascended to the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit to his community to interiorize what he had done for them, to evoke a missionary spirit in his disciples, and to dwell in

his people, leading them to communion with Father, Son and Holy Spirit as sons and daughters.<sup>13</sup> Thus the source and goal of the Church and its work is the Trinity. The Church is a sacrament of salvation because it is a sacrament of the Trinity, and it seeks to bring men and women into communion with the Trinity and to a communion with one another modeled on that of the Trinity. Also, the Council's emphasis on charisms of the Holy Spirit given to members of the Church has had a profound effect in the Church. The Church has turned to the mystery of the Trinity for renewal of its life and self-direction in the changing world of today.

There have also been new theological articulations of the Trinity that seek to integrate history more than previously. For example, Karl Rahner reacted against the common Catholic emphasis in theology of the Trinity on the problem of how there could be three persons in one God, and he emphasized that the mystery of the Trinity is a salvific mystery and should be considered from that perspective.<sup>14</sup>

Jürgen Moltmann approached the question of God in his *Theology of Hope* from the perspective of apocalyptic and later from that of the crucifixion. The question of God is an answer to the problem of evil that we experience, and the Christian answer to this is God's promise of the apocalyptic kingdom that will be given to us through the *parousia* or second coming of Jesus Christ. That evokes in Christians today an effort to change the world toward justice. Who God is tied up with the kingdom; he is the power of the future that comes to us from the future.<sup>15</sup> This book was criticized for downplaying the significance of the present and the past. In a later book, *The Crucified God*, Moltmann emphasized that on the cross of Jesus Christ God identified himself with human suffering. He articulated the mystery of the Trinity from the perspective of the cross. On the cross the Father in love suffered the deliverance of the Son to death, and the Son experienced abandonment by the Father. It is in virtue of this rupture that the distinction of Father and Son was eternally constituted. And the rupture was overcome by the unifying impact of love that is the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> Moltmann thus considers that God is Triune in virtue of what happens in history.

### **Historical Consciousness and the Salvific Meaning of the Trinity**

How can we articulate the salvific meaning of the Trinity in way that can give more positive importance to history and our responsibilities for it than Augustine seemed to do? In answering to this, Scripture is the key, for a theology of the Trinity in our time is wholly dependent upon and secondary to the basis on which the first Christians articulated its beginnings.

The evangelists wrote the gospels from the perspective of the fuller faith they had after the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Approaching the synoptics from this perspective, we recall that the center of Jesus' ministry was his proclamation of the kingdom of God and his making this present to the people. That is, he proclaimed and made present to the people God's offer of his definitive and never-to-be-surpassed intervention to save them and give them communion with himself. The beginnings of the revelation of the mystery of the Trinity are found in Jesus' mediation of the kingdom, for the kingdom could not be understood without his revealing something of the interrelationship among the Father, Jesus and the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> By Jesus' initiative to preach to the poor and heal the sick, he was showing God's own attitude of mercy and initiative to seek us and save us. By his words and deeds he was revealing that God was love in the sense of having the total initiative in offering salvation out of mercy. To express this he constantly called God 'Father' (e.g. in the parable of prodigal son, Lk 15:11-13). Jesus engaged in his ministry from the secret sustenance of his intimacy with the Father, an intimacy shown in his long periods of

prayer and which he expressed by calling God *Abba* (Lk 14:36) in a way unique to himself and unparalleled in Judaism. He showed that there was a mutuality and reciprocity between himself and his Father (Mt 11:25-27) that allowed him to speak so confidently of the Father.

While there is very little that Jesus said of the Spirit in his public life, there was a theme of a dynamis or power coming from Jesus in his exorcisms and healings that, under the influence of later Christian reflection, was ascribed to the Spirit of God (see Lk 11:20; Mt 12:28). He was understood to be a charismatic, one anointed by the Spirit and filled with the Spirit (Lk 2:15, 31, 67). We should add that while the saving intervention Jesus offered was primarily a liberation from the evil of sin and Satan, and a communion with God, it had implications in the political order in reference to the oppression that the Jews experienced under Roman rule. What Jesus offered was the way to peace even in the political order, and a rejection of Jesus' offer of the kingdom was foreseen by Jesus to be a rejection as well of that peace (Lk 19:41-44).<sup>18</sup> One cannot understand Jesus' mediation of the kingdom or salvation without understanding his relationship with the Father and the Spirit. In this sense the mystery of Trinity is a salvific mystery.

Reflections of the first Christians on the post-resurrection experience also show the same reality, though now in a new context. James Dunn, a highly respected New Testament scholar writes:

After Jesus' death the earliest Christian community sprang directly from a sequence of epochal experiences of two distinct sorts - experiences in which Jesus appeared to individuals and groups to be recognized as the one who has already experienced the eschatological resurrection from the dead, and experiences of religious ecstasy and enthusiasm recognized as the manifestation of the eschatological Spirit . . . 19

How is God's salvation mediated by Jesus and the Spirit seen in the perspective of the early Church?

It is through answering this that we understand something of the Trinity as salvific mystery for us today. What we present here are just a few fragments of this large theme in the New Testament, but fragments honest to its thrust.

"Salvation" in the New Testament is initially a future word, as in fact is "kingdom". In the Our Father, we pray "thy kingdom come" (Lk 11:2). Paul did not use the word "kingdom" much; in speaking to the Gentiles, it was more appropriate to use the word "salvation". This is what God's kingship offered through Jesus Christ. But this salvation is something for which we still hope. Paul writes: "Now that we have been justified by his blood, it is all the more certain that we shall be saved by him from God's wrath" (Rom 5:9). Salvation is an eschatological gift that Jesus gained for us through his death and resurrection and we receive through faith.

To understand this, it is important to recall that the early Christians interpreted the resurrection of Jesus in the context of apocalyptic literature. The apocalyptic understanding of salvation is above all given by the book of Daniel. The author of this book proclaimed God's salvation to people who were being persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes IV for their fidelity to their Jewish religious customs and who experienced their human incapacity to bring about their liberation. In a series of visions the author assured them that very soon, in the age to come as distinct from the present age dominated by evil, God would take the initiative to save them. In a passage that the New Testament authors found fulfilled in Jesus, Daniel spoke of a vision in which he saw:

One like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven. When he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, He received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed (Dan 7:12-14).

This dominion or kingship that the one like a son of man would receive and exercise in an everlasting manner was understood in the early Church to have been given to Jesus and would be exercised by him when he came again at the Parousia. The resurrection of the dead, as well as the kingdom of the son of man, was a part of the promise of apocalyptic literature (Dan 12:1-3). The first ascription to Jesus of a title of divinity was possibly in reference to this Lordship he would exercise when he came again. The early Christian prayer, *maranatha!*, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20; 1 Cor 16:22) may reflect this.<sup>20</sup> The first use of the word "salvation" in the early Church referred to this mysterious future event that Jesus would bring about.

It was soon realized, however, that Jesus was already exercising this Lordship, this saving kingship and power. He will not begin to exercise it only when he comes again. Jesus entered into this exercise of his saving power through being exalted to God's right hand, i.e., through being given a share in his dominion. It is from there that he has sent his Holy Spirit - the eschatological gift (Joel 3:1-5). It is the exalted Jesus who continues to be with his disciples (Mt 28:20). It is he who celebrates the anticipation of his messianic banquet with his followers in the Eucharist in which he also sacramentally symbolizes and recalls his suffering and death for us - that great sign of the Father's love for us (Rom 8:32).<sup>21</sup> It is he who sends his disciples on their mission, as the Father had sent him, and works through them; it is he who is the head of the Church and whose body his followers constitute. The point we are making is that the Christ or Son of God who is operating now to save us is Jesus Christ who has gone into the fullness of the future kingdom and from there already acts in this world to exercise the saving power of the age to come through his Spirit for his disciples and through them for others.

It is true that in the early Church the moment at which Jesus is declared divine is pushed back further and further - to the resurrection (anticipation of the mystery of the Parousia), to the baptism of Jesus, to his conception, to the first point of creation and to before creation, until we have the latest New Testament Christology in the prologue to John's Gospel. But Jesus Christ as he comes to us from the Father now is the one who has gone before us into the fullness of the kingdom and exercises his saving impact upon us from there. The Spirit he has given us is the power and life of the age to come already operative in this life. The exalted Jesus sent his Spirit to the community of his disciples (Acts 2) to give them saving power, to transform them interiorly, to move them to proclaim the good news throughout the world (Acts 1:8). This Spirit leads Christians to pray to God as Abba (Rom 8:15) as Jesus did, to live by the Spirit, to be the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16), to confess that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor 12:3), to have and exercise charisms for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, to pray and long for Christ's coming, etc. As St. Paul writes, "We ourselves, although we have the Spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies. In hope we were saved, but hope is no hope if its object is seen" (Rom 8:23-24).

This theme could be developed at much greater length, but the point that I wish to make through this recall of Scriptural teaching is that, counter to the way Augustine envisaged the Son and the Spirit coming to us and evoking our return to the Father, what is central in the New Testament is that the Son and the Spirit come to us from the kingdom or the age to come into which Christ entered and from which, as the fullness and liberation of history, he is already exercising that saving influence that will be apparent when he comes again. In this sense the Spirit

and Son come to us from the future. And they evoke our union with the Father not by disengaging us from history but by centering us on where the true liberation and fulfillment of history is found. It is true that the eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us to reveal God. And in this sense the Origin of all the world came to us and calls us to return to the Origin of all.<sup>22</sup> But the point at which Jesus became a "life giving spirit" (1 Cor 13:45; see also Jn 7:39) was his resurrection and exaltation - his entrance into the world to come. It is from the age to come that Jesus Christ and the Spirit now come to us with their saving influence and mediate our return to God. Thus we go to God not by returning to the beginning of history and the world, but by opening ourselves to the fullness of history and the world and to the tasks necessary to proclaim and mediate the kingdom here in history. And as in the case of Jesus himself, this mediation of the kingdom has an answer even to oppressions that people suffer from others on this present world. It has a political dimension.

This renewed biblical understanding that the saving presence of God is mediated to us from the age to come helps us to rearticulate aspects of the Christian message in a way that meets men and women in their self-understanding, without imposing on them dimensions of a classical anthropology that were excessively dependent upon the culture of that time. This helps us to place the challenge of the Christian message in a transcendence that embraces history and its tasks rather than disengages us from it. And it helps us to present the Christian message in its relation to what men and women find to be their greatest anxieties. This involves a shift from an earlier theology of the Trinity but not a dismissal of it. That theology has been primarily one that dwelt on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their eternal relations with one another within the Trinity. What the apocalyptic understanding of the kingdom directly affects is our interpretation of the missions of the Son and the Spirit in the present order of salvation. Even here, this new context for interpretation rather than contradicts of the missions incorporates much that earlier theologians said.

For example, we can agree with tradition that the visible mission of the Son or Word took place 2,000 years ago in Jesus of Nazareth, the Word Incarnate, and that he won salvation for us through his life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection. A visible mission of the Holy Spirit occurred at Pentecost at the beginning of the Church. But that visible mission of the Spirit and the invisible mission of both the Son or Jesus Christ and the Spirit that takes place in the Church and our lives now are seen to come to us from the age to come, the fullness of the future kingdom. Christ will save us and fully reveal the Father when he comes again, but he is doing so partially now. He speaks to us now in the Church through recalling what he said and did during his earthly ministry.

In our future-oriented world, it is appropriate that we recover the future dimensions of revelation and its present communication to us without losing our faith that God has spoken to us his definitive Word. The invisible mission of the Spirit within our hearts now in time is to lead us to the fullness of history, free us from fixations on the present that block this future from our care, and transform us even here in history so that we seek to instantiate the kingdom within history as we can, even at the cost of the cross.

We may conclude by briefly comparing this view with an aspect of Moltmann's position and of a classical position on the relation of the Trinity to time. While it agrees with Moltmann's position that God exercises his saving influence on us from the future and that God by this seeks to lead us not only to self-transformation but to transformation of the world, it differs from him in that it does not make the Trinity depend for its constitution on history. And while it agrees with classical theology that the Trinity is eternal and in no way dependent upon history for its existence,



it differs from its view of the way the Trinity has a saving influence upon us because it sees this at present as mediated by Jesus Christ exalted at God's right hand and thus coming to us from the age to come or the fullness of the future.

A classical theology might say that the Trinity is eternal and relates to all points of time by one divine act and the 'now of eternity' that can touch all points of time in one act. Thus there is no future for God, and he has the same immediacy to each point of time as to every other. But in answer to this, we can say that the Trinity's saving influence is mediated by the man Jesus Christ in his position as Lord of the kingdom to come, and so is mediated to us through the ultimate future of history. One cannot argue directly from characteristics of God's relation to human beings in virtue of creation to characteristics in virtue of redemption or the kingdom. Nor can one argue directly from the latter to the former.

## Notes

1. See Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York, Herder and Herder, 1970); and Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys* (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1981) chapter 7, "Augustine", 132-158. I wish to note that an earlier draft of the present article appeared in *Monastic Studies* 17 (1986) 81-100. I thank the editor for permission to use the substance of that article in the present one.

2. *Confessions*, IX, x, 24 (translated by Frank J. Sheed, New York, 1943).

3. See, for example, Louth, 139; and TeSelle, 43 ff. On Plotinus, see Louth, ch. 3, 36-51.

4. See Louth, 143.

5. Louth, 155.

6. See John H. Wright, S.J., *The Order of the Universe in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Rome, Gregorian University, 1957).

7. *Gaudium et Spes*, para. 4, as in Walter Abbott, (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York, American Press, 1966) 202.

8. See John O'Malley, S.J., "Reform, Historical Consciousness, and Vatican II's *Aggiornamento*", *Theological Studies* 32 (1971) 573-601; and O'Malley, "Developments, Reform, and Two Great Reformations: Toward a Historical Assessment of Vatican II", *Theological Studies* 44 (1983) 373-406.

9. Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), para. 15.

10. For an analysis of this emphasis on individualism and religious interiority in the United States, see Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985).

11. I have written on this in *God's Work in a Changing World* (Lanham, Md., University Press of America, 1985 [now available through Washington DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy]) chapter 6, "The Human Good and Moral Choice", 108-160.

12. For an evaluation of Vatican II and the course of *aggiornamento* in the years that followed the Council, see the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, "The Final Report," *Origins* 15 (1985-1986) 444-450.

13. See *Lumen Gentium*, para. 2-4; *Ad Gentes*, para. 2-4; and *Gaudium et Spes*, para. 24 and 40. Also see Bertrand de la Margerie, *La Trinité Chrétienne dans l'Histoire* (Paris, Beauchesne, 1975) 303-319; and Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1, *The Holy Spirit in the 'Economy'* (New York, Seabury, 1983) 77-102.

14. See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York, Herder and Herder, 1970).
15. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of Christian Eschatology* (New York, Harper and Row, 1967).
16. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York, Harper and Row, 1974).
17. See F. J. Schierse, "La Révélation de la Trinité dans le Nouveau Testament," in J. Feiner and M. Löhrer (ed.), *Mysterium Salutis*, vol. 5, *Dieu et la Révélation de la Trinité* (Paris, Cerf, 1970) 121-144.
18. See *God's Work*, chapter 1, "The Peace of Christ in the Earthly City," 1-33.
19. James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1975) 357.
20. See on early Christian apocalyptic, James Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament. An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1977) chapter 13, "Apocalyptic Christianity," 309-340.
21. Orthodoxy has kept the eschatological context for the sacraments better than the Western Church. See John Zizioulas, "The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition," *One in Christ* 24 (1988) 294-303; and the statement of the Roman Catholic Dialogue, Valamo, 1988, "The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church," *One in Christ* 24 (1988) 367-377.
22. The tendency in Augustine and other Fathers to concentrate on this aspect of the Trinity's presence to us and restoration of us to the Father, Son and Spirit in a way that lost some eschatological dimensions of the mystery may be due in part to the fact that classical non-Christian peoples considered people's union with the Sacred was through myths and rituals that restored them to the origins of things. Mircea Eliade speaks of the way that initiation rituals in traditional societies "abolish profane, chronological Time and recover the sacred Time of myth," and myths recount what the gods did at the origin of the world. See M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York, Harper Torchbook, 1968) 140 and *passim*. Plotinus' view did not emerge without the influence of religion, and Augustine's view was, as we recalled, influenced by Plotinus.
- Interested readers will find the theme of this chapter treated at much greater length in *Faith in God through Jesus Christ. Foundational Theology II* (Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1997), and my forthcoming *Trinity: Wonder and Life. A Theological Study*.

## Chapter VI

# Religion and Inculturation

*Vassil Prodanov*

Admittedly, the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is the most important event since the Second World War, and represents the beginning of a new stage in world history. We face now a unique predicament in history when in an inconceivably short time a universal ideology, the belief system of a population of about 400 million people, populating almost one fifth of the earth, broke down. This leaves a huge number of people in conditions of moral, spiritual, ideological, political, cultural and economic crisis. Millions of individuals find themselves in a blind alley of internal chaos without identity or meaning in their life. This vacuum is unknown in human history. Even the collapse of the old ideologies and religions in the Roman Empire and their replacement by Christianity took place over a much longer period, several centuries in duration.

The post-communist world is at a crossroads. What to do next? Where to go? In this situation three major sets of ideas and belief systems rush forward to serve the souls and govern the behavior of these millions of people—liberal democracy, nationalism, and religion. In some cases they are separated, but most frequently they are mixed in miscellaneous and sometimes odd combinations. Undoubtedly, religion is one of the most influential forces.

The Christian Church now confronts the unimaginable situation of a new world open for new evangelization. When, 500 years ago, the missionaries reached the New World and were trying to convert the indigenous peoples they collided with people who were closed in their own strong belief system, and the missionaries thought it necessary to use force to coerce them to be evangelized. The current "New World"—the ex-communist world—is much more open and eager for a new evangelization, because the old belief systems have been destroyed and the souls of these people are void, without meanings, without identities. This situation has never existed in history; scores of religions and sects are rushing to transmit their meanings to these empty souls.

### **Explanatory Models of Religious Revival**

The ground in Eastern Europe is ripe now for religious revival. This is a worldwide trend reversing the process of secularization which took place during the last several centuries. Questions arise concerning the prospects of this process: will it be durable or transient? The future of evangelisation and Islamization depends upon the answer to such questions. These questions raise the issues of the changing relationship between the sacred and the profane, between religious and lay life, between church and society. The modern age imposed the idea of an inevitable and growing secularization and of the withdrawal of religion and the Church from all important areas of the society and social life. Accordingly, the expectations were that with social advances the Church would shrink to a very narrow social and personal compass.

I argue that sociological theories of religion elaborating models of the social determinants of religion, secularization, and the revivification of religion could be subsumed into two groups—diachronic (developmental) and synchronic (functional). But these are more or less *ideal* models. The *real* process of existence and change in the role and place of religion is not amenable to mono-causal explanation.

### *Diachronic (Developmental) Models*

These models explain the inevitable link between modernization and secularization. According to theories of modernization, to speak about evangelization and the idea of inculturation for evangelization is to "swim against the stream" of the actual trends of *de-evangelization* in the modern world. According to this view, although in different ways and with different speeds, the result of the shift to modern society is an increase in the number of people not needing the help of religion. This process was begun in Europe by Protestantism divesting itself as much as possible of the three most ancient and powerful concomitants of the sacred—*mystery, miracle, and magic*. From the Reformation there developed a trend toward the "disenchantment of the world." Faith in science and medicine rather than faith in God, and belief in man's control over the environment rather than acceptance of fatalism, were the directions of this shift in worldview. It came to be thought even that one could be good without being religious. The last step of this direction of thought is the famous Nietzschean phrase: "God is dead."

There are different reasons for this inverse relationship between modernization and religion, or modernity and religiosity:

(1) The principal outcomes of the process of secularization are bourgeois market society and industrialization, which are inseparable from a calculating *rationalization* of life.

(2) The growing industrial economy requires an ever greater rationalization and structural differentiation of society. As a result, nonreligious beliefs, practices and institutions replace religious ones in varied areas of social life. The sphere of the sacred steadily dwindles. In this process, religion either has to constantly redefine what is sacred or religion has to undergo marginalization...exile to a very narrow sphere of the people's private existence.

(3) It is supposed that the growth of science, which creates rational models for everything, unavoidably means less place for religion. Irrationality is replaced by rational study, and the growth of knowledge and technology makes the individual freer.

During the '50s and the '60s when the theories of modernization were at their apogee they seemed to dictate the disengagement of religion from the public sphere and from political life—"the retreat to a private world where religion had authority only over its followers and not over any other section of polity or society." This situation currently remains dominant in various countries. It is connected with the de-culturization of religion, its separation from the different arts and cultures, the withdrawal of religion from culture, and the separation between faith and culture.

But in the '70s and '80s it became clear that theories of modernization are at odds with a range of facts showing a preservation and even an augmentation of the influence of religion in some countries. Theories of modernization were criticized also for seeing the process of social change in a one-sided manner,—as solely a process of Westernization, whereas the world was passing from modernity into postmodernity where the old regularities do not work.

The following are the criticisms levelled against the view of the progressive separation of religion from society:

(1) The idea that developed industrialization and market society bring about rationalization and modernization and displace religion is *not* well-grounded. That is, the former idea, derived from the theory of Max Weber, is challenged by the extremely different model of another famous representative of the modern age, Karl Marx. According to him, people need and make religion

because they are unfulfilled and alienated. He writes: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of an unspirited situation." Religion is a means of coping with alienation of the individual from society. The bourgeois market society, held Marx, leads to an enormous intensification in the process of alienation and irrationality because mighty forces created by man turn against him. But that means an enlargement of the space of the conditions necessitating religion, a growing social need of religion. Indeed Marx thought that the right way to overcome this alienation is to replace the market society of private owners by a nonmarket society without private ownership. This project turned out to be utopian and failed, which means that the conditions which provide the grounds for religion are insuperable and modernity will be in increasing need of religion.

(2) Underlying the 'modernization' theories is a more or less static vision of religion, its connection with tradition and the suspicion that it is not able to change, develop and accommodate to new processes and conditions. But this is *not* the case. History shows how social and cultural change deeply influences religious beliefs. If one kind of religion or church is unable to adjust to the changes, it is replaced by the growing influence of other churches, religions, and sects.

(3) Market and industrial society puts into effect not just bare rationality, but instrumental rationality, the calculation of means. But instrumental rationality is connected with *ultimate* or value rationality, for a means is a means only in relation to some values. The ultimate values, transcending all others, are not amenable to calculation. They are deeply submerged in the culture and this is the usual place of religion. Correspondingly, in contrast to expectations that the market society leads increasingly to an enhanced instrumental rationality and decline in ultimate rationality, it turns out that material prosperity can result in the development of the importance of *nonmaterial* values. This was the case, for example, in the most developed countries where all studies from the '60s show that with the growth of prosperity and education there was a greater search for nonmaterial values and that this is the role of religion. Furthermore, the experience of some societies shows that they could carry out successful and rapid industrialization while retaining their traditional values, cultural and religious. This is especially the case in various countries of South-eastern Asia.

(4) It turns out that the conflict between the church and modern science at the dawn of modernity—e.g., the well-known condemnations of Galileo Galilei—could be a transitional stage of adaptation by religion and a division of fields of influence. The modern view sees science as a purely objective study of "objective" and "hard" facts "unveiling the secrets" of the world and vindicating the delusions of religious failures. Since Kuhn's outstanding book on the "paradigms of science," it is generally acknowledged that positivist "value-free," "ideology-free" science is a myth. Any scientific theory develops in a world of values and ideologies upon which voluntarily or involuntarily it depends. But the world of values is also the world of religion.

(5) One of the most important modernist arguments in favor of secularization is the increasing 'division of labour' which leads to a structural differentiation in the society and to the emergence of new institutional forms specifically for the solution of new problems. These new profane institutions are seen as lessening the place of religion and intensifying the rationalization of life. This modernist argument, however, could be interpreted in just the opposite manner. The progressive division of functions leads to a deeper knowledge by separate individuals of a smaller area. The previous integral person divides into smaller parts, which leads to crises of identity. Accordingly, people need some means to "jump" from their "particularity" to a whole. Religion plays this role.

(6) Industrialization and modernization destroy more or less all old communities which provide for the identity of the person. Neither the market nor the extraordinary growth of bureaucracy with its depersonalization can substitute for identity and our need for deep affective ties with fellow human beings. If religion is one of the institutions which most implements this function, then industrialization/modernization makes more space for religion to play roles previously satisfied by many other now defunct institutions.

### *Synchronic (Functional) Models*

Different approaches and emphases reflect this account of the place of religion in the contemporary world. What is basic however, is the centrality and irreducibility of *nonrational* elements in human actions. These elements are connected with the problem of meaning—of evil, suffering, death, etc. Religion is the institution which supplies this meaning and has very important consequences for the function and integration of all social systems. It is concerned with something transcending empirical adaptive experience; it allows for the expression and shapes the realization of important expressive worlds. The most crucial of the aleatory elements deriving from the insufficiency of adaptive techniques and from the inherent consequences of the functioning of social systems—the elements which transcend tested empirical knowledge and practical control—are those associated with contexts of uncertainty and impossibility. Here one finds religion. That is why growing situations of stress, disturbance and uncertainty in society point to the need for religion. In order to exist and to be integrated, society needs religion. Here the underlying idea that society, in order to exist, always needs religion, implies as well that this need is greater in times when changes entail higher uncertainty. This is expressed in the crises or dis-equilibrating synchronic theories regarding the existence of religion.

Religious revivals or the emergence of ‘new religions’ occur as a result of social disintegration, cultural disorientation and/or moral crisis. Religions seem more plausible when alternative means for reconstituting social stability are (perceived to be) unavailable. Popular dissatisfaction with existing conditions may express absolute or relative deprivation. At times the relative deprivation can lead to greater distress than absolute deprivation. This means that the need for a new worldview, and in particular for religion, is higher among marginal, unorganized, atomized populations.

There are many critiques of this "crisis-response model." "There are cases of the growth of religious movements without salient crisis." "The crisis-response model does not tell us why certain symbols are adopted by a movement and not others." "There are non-religious responses to crisis situations." Nevertheless, crises are rich periods of religious revitalization in which people articulate their attitude to the entire world and cosmos.

The debate whether evangelization is possible today as it was 500 years ago depends upon major conclusions concerning the relationships between modernization, religion and secularization.

*First*, undoubtedly, any society needs some search for ultimate values which provide justification for human endeavors and goals. Religion plays an important role in this process.

*Second*, it is no less certain that growing insecurity and instability can be favorable for the dissemination of religion as an important means for restoration of the individual and society. Other substitutes may be used also, such as nationalism, communism, fascism, etc. At times these latter

can be interwoven with religion. At other times they might be in opposition, but nonetheless they can appropriate some important traits of the traditional religions.

*Third*, modernity stands in a contradictory relationship with religion. In some conditions a rapid process of secularization takes place and religion is relegated to a limited role in one's personal life. The market may become a much more important social regulator and thereby change the conditions, limits and means of evangelization. The Church, no longer able to deploy state power to coerce people, may be in retreat in broad areas of a secularized and de-evangelized society.

But this trend is neither constant nor universal. Much evidence from the last twenty years reveals three especially important tendencies:

(1) In some countries the success of the process of modernization does not bring about a diminution in the role of religion. This is the case in Saudi Arabia, in Kuwait and in South-eastern Asia.

(2) In other countries the failure of the process of modernization has brought about a restoration of the older forms of religion. Secularization is stopped and the role of religion is reinforced. This is the case in Eastern Europe and many Third World countries, especially in the Middle East.

(3) In highly developed countries there is also a revival of religion, first of all in the form of many new religions and religious movements. But here the reason is not the failure of modernization, but its exhaustion. The movement to a post-industrial society accents non-material values.

All these require rethinking the notions of secularization and evangelization. Two aspects of this process should be noted.

The first aspect is de-secularization in the form of a restoration of the old power of religion directly in all areas of social life. This is the case with re-Islamization in the Moslem world.

The second aspect is the change in social structures produced by the modern age: this change in turn leads to changes in the place and role of religion. One of the most important shifts is the substitution of the enormous hierarchic institutions governing economic and political life and the growing number of "flat" managerial structures competing among themselves. This leads to a change in the understanding of the notion of "power." Power is no longer reduced to the governmental or political field, but includes all social relations. Knowledge and values become more important resources of power and compete more successfully with other forms of power.

The most important change concerns the role of morality and ethics. In the classical theories of modernization, religion is pushed into the private world as a force underlying moral views and moral behavior. But the scope of morality is limited as well and its role in economic life and politics is minimized. As Russ Poole points out: "The modern world calls into existence certain conceptions of morality, but also destroys the grounds for taking them seriously. Modernity both needs morality, and makes it impossible."

The crisis of modernity brings with it a change in the place of morality in different areas of social life. This trend is especially manifest in the upsurge of 'applied ethics' in the last two decades. Cases in point are the rise of 'business ethics', 'political ethics', and 'bioethics'. From the time of one of the founders of the modern age, Adam Smith, the separation of morality from economy was accepted. This was reflected also in the distinction between 'instrumental rationality'

and ‘values rationality’. Now the gulf between economy and morality has begun to be filled in. From the time of another founder of the modern age, Machiavelli, a separation of morality from politics had been posited. But in recent years society has become increasingly sensitive to any violation of morality by politicians. This implies an attempt to build a bridge between morality and politics. It is remarkable that moral questions raised by the public hearing connected with the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas and the accusations against him by Anita Hill were considered by Americans to be so important—even more important than the Gulf War. The unprecedented growth of bioethics is also a sign of the new place of morality among the different social areas. It is a retrieval of morality from the narrow private area and its recognition in the most important fields of public life.

But this retrieval of morality from the private realm means also new opportunities for religion. Morality is the main bridge through which religion passes to society. In this sense the changing moral sensitivity could be viewed also as de-secularization and as opening new possibilities for re-evangelization.

At the same time, we also observe quite different forms of religious revival. Islamization is literally retrieval of the old role of religion in a more aggressive and intolerant way, and without the birth of ‘new religions’ as in the Western world. On the contrary, in the Christian world one finds religious revival, first of all, in the form of a growing diversity. The new religious movements without complex hierarchies are much more active and have much greater independence. The religious revival is pluralistic and competitiveness in this area is on the increase. Democratic and non-democratic, fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist versions of religious revitalization are ongoing. There is also a tension between the processes of re-evangelization and re-Islamization. In order to understand this contrast we must attend to the different modes of relationship between religion and society/culture.

### **Sacred and Profane, Religion and Culture**

In the ongoing processes of religious revival, evangelization, re-evangelization, re-islamization, and re-secularization, the different religions start from different positions regarding the interrelation between the sacred and the profane, religion and culture. Some of these positions are more advantageous, while others are not. In a situation of growing competition among diverse religions and sects, some may relate to the ambient culture more successfully than others. Such competition also triggers diverse kinds of secularization and de-secularization.

Keeping in mind the distinction between the state and civil society, I argue that six types of relationships between sacred and mundane power can be distinguished.

(1) Church and state more or less coincide. The main structures of state power are connected with the major structures of the church. On different levels clergymen fulfil both mundane and religious functions. It is difficult to distinguish between the spheres of the sacred and the profane. Everything is imbued with religious or spiritual meanings. Quite different cultures can be subsumed under this definition—from animistic cultures to contemporary theocratic states where we can find specific religious fundamentalism and totalitarianism. Morality, law, economics, politics, health care, etc., are run by religion. For this kind of church, to evangelize would mean to take part in everything that is going on in society.

(2) Church and state power are different structures, but the legitimization of the state authorities comes from the church. There is an official religion and all other religious beliefs are



ruled out or relegated to a marginal position. All state symbols include religious meanings. Religion is closely connected with the culture and cultural phenomena are overwhelmingly intertwined with religious symbols and under religious control. But there remains some division between sacred and profane activities. There are clergymen and laymen, a "time for God" and a "mundane time."

(3) The church is subordinated to the state power. This occurs in one form when the head of the state is also the head of the church or in another form when the election of the head of the church and ministry depends officially or unofficially on the state authorities. Usually this kind of church is more actively used by the state as a political weapon and as a means to support the state goals and the position of the authorities. These kinds of churches also are more closely connected with nationalism. The main slogan of the Russian monarchy is typical: "God, Tzar, and Fatherland." This is also a slogan of the monarchic parties now in Russia, Bulgaria and other Orthodox countries.

(4) The church is separated from the state and there is no connection between them, but it supports some party or parties declaring religious values in their platforms. This is the case of clerical parties which take part in political life and competition with other lay parties in some European countries.

(5) Not only the state, but also politics is secularized. The church is part of the civil society interacting and competing with other organizations having religious and moral influence—in education, health care, etc. The church has its own schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, and other institutions for the care of the homeless, old and poor. It implements important functions in support of public morality and social care. This is typical of the church in the United States of America. In the U.S.A., the enormous body of arts and of mass culture is profane. The church has a relatively small space in which to act and influence people. It has its media, but their activity must compete with many other religious and lay newspapers, magazines, TV and radio programs. This is the position of a "free church." Its area of evangelization is within civil society.

(6) The space of the church (and religion) is quite limited to the private world and private morality. It plays no role in social life, but communicates directly with its congregation, preaching high personal morality. The boundaries of evangelization and the means used are personal morality. This was the case in the past in the now ex-communist countries. In such a past context, the sacred and profane were strongly divided.

What ensues from all these distinctions is the possibility of a different understanding of evangelization and of its implementation. Evangelization can be limited to a role for church in the private life of individuals. Then we must scrutinize the relationship between inculturation and private life. Or evangelization can be limited to some areas of civil society and the arts. Then an inculturation will require an understanding of civil society and many more social vehicles will be available for the purpose of conversion. But in this case there will be also new difficulties because "the otherness" of the social vehicles belonging to profane culture shall have to be overcome. The Church shall participate in all the activities of the society, encompassing all aspects of human life, thus bringing about a "de-secularization."

The abilities of the different religions today to transmit their message depend to a great extent on the prominence of their place in their original culture. They might be connected with one relatively isolated kind of activity of people, leaving most of the culture to a profane, secularized world, or they might be deeply rooted in most of the activities of the culture. If the territory of the other which is to be inculturated is relatively small, it may be done more easily, but this result will

be quite limited. There is a strong possibility that the social spaces inculturated by religion will be secularized.

This raises the question of distinctions today among different religions from the point of view of the social space in which they situate the sacred and intend to play an active role. Different religions use differing approaches to the process of conversion. Let us take an example. Paintings have an important place in the Catholic tradition, but not in the Islamic tradition. This means that Christianity has available an additional area of symbolic meaning to influence the people. At the same time dance does not play any role in traditional Christian rituals and culture. The Church thus lacks one of the most important means of penetrating the mentality of today's young people.

This is but a concrete example. The limitations are much more general, as can be shown via comparative religious studies.

First, in the *Catholic tradition* we find a general realization of Jesus's phrase "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mk.17). This distinction is outlined further by St. Augustine. Accordingly, there is a division between ecclesiastic activity and lay activity, between clergy and laymen, between the sacred and the profane. The process of evangelization and church influence concerns first of all what is primary in these areas, that is, the ecclesial. The borderline between these two worlds, however, is historically mutable. The social space and human activity that is to be directly evangelized and subordinated to the church are also historically mutable.

In principle the state belongs to human culture and to the secular order; it is rooted in the social nature of man. This independence of the church from the state and the state from the church leads to the fact that Catholic Christianity has not developed a legal system as has the Moslem religion. The Church only legitimates the state. But the notion and the boundaries of the state are different in different stages of human development. This entails changes in the borders between church and state, sacred and profane. Being divided, however, from the profane world and power, the church is much less pliable and apt for changes. The Church becomes less historical and more universal. Mutability is considered a trait of the profane or secular world, not of the eternal ecclesiastical world. The changeable profane world should rise or soar to the unchangeable sacred world, not the contrary. Hence, the problem of the inculturation of the faith is not so important.

It should be pointed out, however, that these kinds of relations between church and state, sacred and profane, eternal and transient, are deeply rooted in the specificity of the Western European feudal system. This is a highly developed hierarchical system in which the different feudal lords are to a significant extent independent. Such a situation divided Western Europe into hundreds of semi-autonomous regions with no strongly developed economic ties between them. The political ties were likewise feeble. Only the universality and unchangeableness of the Christian faith kept them together.

Hence, if the church decided to change itself according to the diversity of the local cultures, if it accepted the notion of inculturation, it would be in danger of being divided into hundreds of different parts because there would be nothing common between the different feudal kingdoms to hold them together. This was an issue for the survival of the church and the prevention of schisms.

These peculiarities of the Western European feudalism generated a tendency for the ecclesial world to be not varied but unified. It bolstered the reluctance of the church to accommodate to local cultures. Accordingly, on the one hand there was the tendency of the profane world to be changeable, to develop independently from the church and sacred world, and to enlarge its borders; on the other hand, there was the tendency of the church to be universal. The latter entailed the danger of detachment from the real world and loss of influence over the people.

When feudalism passed away and the market economy developed, a new self-interested type of person appeared to suit this emergent economy. Classical and neo-classical political economy had separated morality from economic activity. When the Machiavellian tradition based morality on politics, the church lost the ability to influence this most important area through morality. Thus, it was forced by modernity into the private sphere, and its influence limited to private morality.

Second, the Orthodox Church developed a specific relation between church and inculturation, closely connected with the traits of Eastern feudalism where the feudal lords were not so independent and state power was much stronger. Accordingly, other types of relation between church and state, the ecclesiastical and the mundane, the sacred and the profane emerged. When the Emperor Constantine introduced Christianity into Byzantium, he regarded himself as the religious leader (Pontifex Maximus) in accordance with previous custom. In this way, church power was subordinated to that of the state. The state tended to use the Church for its political goals and to intervene in church affairs. Caesaro-papism became an important ideology, while in Western Europe the Church was much freer of direct control by the state.

As a result of Caesaro-papism, the Orthodox church has been forced to follow the divisions of the state. Each mighty state creates its own independent Orthodox church, and uses it politically. For this reason, these churches are more accommodated to the conditions of the various states. It is well known that in the struggle against the influence of the Western church, the Byzantine Emperor ordered Cyril and Methodius to create a special alphabet for the Slavs (who were pagans) in order to translate the Scripture into their languages. The evangelization of Bulgaria in the ninth century is the first case in which inculturation connected with language was used for the purposes of evangelization.

At the same time, however, being closely connected and subordinated to the state, the Orthodox church is forced to follow the fate of the state and is used to support the state. It is less able than the church in the Catholic tradition to criticize the state. The subordination of the Orthodox church to the state has two very important implications.

The first is that the people's alienation, frustration and reaction against the injustice of the state can easily become reaction against the Church. That is why in Western Europe, the struggle against the dissenters was led first of all by the Church, whereas in Bulgaria for instance it was carried out by the Tsar. The Bulgarian Bogomils were sent to the stake by the Bulgarian King Boril.

Another outcome of this subordination of the Church to the state is that the alienation of the state from private life or from the local cultures easily becomes alienation from the Church. Being statist, the Church is officially separated from works of benevolence and civil society. For example, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church does not have well-developed institutions of charity (hospitals, nuns, nurses, orphanages, etc.) as does the Catholic church. This diminishes its abilities to evangelize. At the same time it can be more nationalistic if that be connected with the defense of the national state.

Third, the relation between church and state, sacred and profane is notably different in the Moslem religion. Here, the connections between state and church are much stronger. This is deeply rooted in the specificity of an Asian type of pre-modern relation (of which the Ottoman Empire is an example). In the Ottoman Empire, property was not divided among different feudal lords, but all was owned by the Sultan, who gave to his close associates the different provinces for temporary direction and use. In this sense, there is in fact, one lord and owner; all others are subjects. As this

strong political unity requires in addition a religious power, a specific legal system becomes the ground for the entire life of the state and its subjects.

The fact that Muhammad in contrast to Jesus is not only Prophet, but also the leader of the community, implies that Islam has not had a sharp cleavage between the sacred and profane, between religion and society. The prophet received and transmitted a revelation, and at the same time was a political and military leader, judge and social reformer. Religion was integral to the leadership, life and fabric of society, providing norms for worship and social life.

If in Christianity, the kingdom of God and the profane kingdom are clearly divided, in Islam there is an integral relationship of religion and state. Muhammad exercised executive, legislative and judicial roles as head of state. He oversaw domestic and foreign affairs, the military, and the collection of taxes, and he settled disputes. The Islamic community was obliged not only to conform, but also to spread God's word and rule. Muhammad combined diplomacy and military action. He fashioned a new order and a new religious and political (or more accurately, a religio-political) community rooted in and united by a religious vision of bond.

If in Byzantium Caesaro-papism was imposed, the Islamic world is religio-political; in the first case the profane elements *lead*, and in the second case, the so-called 'profane' elements *are* the religious element. Islamic law provides the blueprint of the good society, the Islamic ideal. The Sharia is a comprehensive system regulating all areas of life; embodied in a set of regulations or norms that govern family, criminals, contractual and international law, marriage, divorce, inheritance, theft, adultery, drink, war and peace. So the Muftis become legal experts and the Muslim religion covers the entire normative culture of the population. In this way, all culture is Muslim culture, and not just either sacred or profane. The different places are accommodated or adjusted to the Muslim religion. The culture is not divided between 'profane' and 'sacred'. Rather, culture is *united*.

In contrast, the Christian can live in "two worlds" and have different identities; he easily escapes from his or her profane identity to a religious identity, or conversely from his religious identity to his profane identity. For this reason it is easier for a Christian to be secularized than for a Moslem, since a Moslem has only one identity. Accordingly, Catholic evangelization is connected with only one aspect of the culture, while Islamization refers to the whole culture.

Fourth, this relation is quite the opposite in the Protestant church. Protestantism polarizes reality between a radically transcendent divinity and a radically "fallen" humanity devoid of sacred qualities. Protestantism may be described in terms of an immense shrinkage in the scope of the sacred in reality, when compared with Catholicism. The immense network of intercession that unites Catholics in this world with the saints and, indeed, with all departed souls, disappears as well. The Protestant believer no longer lives in a world perpetually penetrated by sacred being and forces. In doing this it narrows man's relationship to the sacred to the one exceedingly narrow channel that it calls God's word—the *sola gratia* of the Lutheran confession. In other words, with nothing remaining "in between" a radically transcendent God and a radically immanent human world except this one channel, the sinking of the latter into implausibility left an empirical reality in which, indeed, "God is dead."

In this case, all our worldly reality has nothing in common with evangelization. The notion of inculturation loses any religious sense because there is no culture to be evangelized. The sacred is connected by a very thin thread to the soul of the person and Christianity becomes the deeply personal problem of the corrupt individual. From this point of view, Protestantism is the antipode of Islam. Accordingly, Protestant conversion is much easier, because—having put aside the religious meaning of cultural diversity—it is not interested in cultures at all. It preaches a 'faith

alone' which can be adjusted to any culture. On the contrary, because the Catholic and the Orthodox churches develop their own religious culture as a channel between God and man, the sacred and the profane, culture for them must be a partner in the process of inculturation and in the evangelization of other cultures.

Shrinking the sacred link with God to a very narrow frame, in some sense Protestantism can be much more flexible in preaching Christianity because for it all cultures are in the same way profane and simply should not be taken into account. The entire diversity of cultures can be 'bracketed out' as radical mundane diversity. But in this case, the Christian essence is a very small and indiscernible part of the individual. On the contrary, it is much more difficult to convert the Moslem because his entire culture and identity are inseparable from his religion.

These differences between religions imply differences in their ability to make converts today, to influence the people, to change their behaviour, to use the culture as a mediator of Christianization or Islamization. In a situation of competition between different religions in the contemporary democracies, these are advantages or disadvantages which can be decisive for the success of one or another religion or sect.

It could be said that Islam and Protestantism use the whole culture to convert the people. In Islam, the entire culture is used as religious culture; in Protestantism, the entire culture is used as profane culture. Catholicism is "between" these two attitudes, but where is this "between?" If by secularization we mean the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols, then evangelization can be understood as the reverse of this process, and there are no special constraints on this process. The only limitations are, in fact, the contemporary rules of the democratic "game," namely,—the distinction between civil society and the state must be retained. In the civil society all churches are equal participants in a democratic competition among religions. Foreign cultures or native mundane cultures can be used, and are used, almost totally for this goal.

### **Ethnic and Religious Revival: Religion as a Ground of Ethnic and National Identity**

In the last decade, we have observed a coincidence of two processes—religious and ethnic revivals. They are intertwined and feed upon one another. The endeavor of ethnic revival or nationalism may use religion as an additional force. At the same time, in its struggle for survival and the regaining of territory, religion uses ethnic and national identification. Accordingly, questions arise concerning the similarity and difference between these two processes. Since religion has once again become strong, neo-evangelization and neo-Islamization can use nationalism as a resource. In a number of countries, a stronger influence of religion and opposition to secularization are inseparable from nationalism. In the Catholic sphere, Poland and Ireland confirm this hypothesis.

Many similarities of national and religious identities allow close interaction and integration between them.

1) These are the two larger *Gemeinschaften* overstepping the direct relations characteristic of family and kinship. Both nationalism and religion require the overriding of all other obligations. They call for sacrifice, and they satisfy the need for affective relationship. Because the national and religious communities are not directly "visible," identification with them is realized by means of highly developed symbolic and ritual systems.

2) These two communities put strong emphasis on the role of the past, tradition, and history as factors for identification.

3) Their sets of symbols are included in the culture and interact with all other symbols in the cultures. If a religion is strongly rooted in a culture, it could play a larger role in ethnic and national identity. Religion and nation exchange their symbols and mutually support each other. But major religions go beyond nations. They are included in the cultures before the rise of nations and in this way the religions could be the ground for a development of national identity, but not conversely. Religious distinctions and conflicts precede national distinctions and could become boundaries for different nations.

4) The major causes bringing about today's religious revival—disruption of the other communities, social insecurity, the rise of non-material values, etc.—bring forth as well ethnic and nationalist revivals. Ethnic and national movements use religious identifications and symbols to strengthen their positions. Religions also use ethnic and national movements to strengthen their own positions. This is one of the best available opportunities for their inculturation. But in different periods, different types of relations between religion and nationalism can be found.

The first type is that of separation. In a secular society and a secular national movement, religion is separated from the state. But the main characteristic of the nation is that this is a community desiring, supporting, and identifying itself with its own state. That is why nationalism may divide from religion. The case of the father of the modern Turkish nationalism, Kemal Atatürk, is typical: he divided the state and Islam, thus giving birth to a secular nationalism.

The second type of relationship between religion and nation is one of relative independence and interaction. In some situations and within some limits, religious identity prompts national identity or national identity prompts religious identity. When, for instance, a Bulgarian compares his national identity and culture with Turkish national identity and culture, he commonly thinks of himself also as Christian and accepts the "otherness" of the Turks as including, above all, the fact that they are Muslims. In this case, religious identity becomes part of national identity. But when Bulgarians compare their national identity with that of the Serbs, with whom they share the same Orthodox Christian religion, then the religious identity does not share in the national identity, and other non-religious characteristics will be more important.

In the third type of inter-relationship between religion and culture the religious identity becomes the ground for nation (or ethnic) identity and is considered as the most important part of this identity.

(a) Religion and ethnic identity. In fact, in the most Ancient societies the religions were ethnic religions and were the most important factors supporting ethnic identity. This is the case, for instance, with Judaism which has guarded the Jewish identity for thousands of years without a common Jewish political unity.

Ethnic revival today in the developed countries also is inseparable from some religions. This is especially visible in the U.S.A. where churches and the parishes too often are the only force uniting an ethnic group: it is their place for contact, meeting, and support. Here the church is the nexus, or core of ethnicity. In fact, when the state's support of ethnicity is absent, the church commonly becomes the most important institution in conserving this ethnic identity. This is the case with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which supported the Bulgarian ethnic identity for five hundred years under the Ottoman yoke.

(b) Religion and national identity. As E. Gellner points out, when a proportionately smaller population has met with a larger culture and population, especially if the latter is literate, literacy is often mediated by a conversion to a variant of a world religion. This conversion allows the less 'developed' ethnic groups to acquire assets which may later help to turn them into nations and structure them as such.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, religion plays an important role in almost any national movement, especially in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa. The modern Bulgarian nation began in the eighteenth century with the activity of a monk, Father Paisii, who wrote a history of the medieval Bulgarian kingdom and brought together what was required for a common Bulgarian spoken language. The first fighters for "national awakening" in Bulgaria were monks and priests. In India, in his appeal to the Indian masses Gandhi also suggested a greater mobilization of the role of religion than has been usual in modern Europe.

My claim is that the opposition of "us and them" between two groups in a situation of conflict has been the most important factor in the process of "national awakening" and nation building for the last two centuries. When this opposition takes place between two different religious societies, religion plays the first role in the process of nation building and maintenance of national identity and a specific religio-ethnic identification is developed.

Accordingly, Poles maintained their Catholic Polish identity in the struggles with the Russian Orthodox Christian state. In Great Britain, Irish, English, and Scottish identities were formed on the basis of different religions—Catholic, Anglican and Calvinist. People in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia share a single language and culture, but feel themselves affiliated to three different nations because their religions are different—Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and Moslem. In principle, when national and religious identities and oppositions between two groups coincide, their tensions and strife tend to be much harsher and more severe. The reason is that we have here a unity of the two most important identities of the person, namely, the religious and the national. A people's commitment to their two identities becomes much stronger in times of uncertainty and external threat. A people will defend their identities ferociously. It is no accident that most ethnic conflicts and wars in the contemporary world are not "purely" ethnic, but religio-ethnic.

At the same time, the different religions have different abilities to interact with nationalism and support the latter in order to provide a basis for religio-ethnic identity. It could be a one-sided or a poly-sided religio-ethnic identity. A nation has a one sided religio-ethnic identity if this identity defines the nation only in opposition to one or several, but not to all other nations. For instance, Roman Catholicism is part of the national identity of Lithuanians when they compare themselves with Lutheran Germans or Orthodox Russians and Byelorussians, but not when they compare themselves with Catholic Poles.

A nation will have a multi-faceted religio-ethnic identity if its religion is not universal, but specifically ethnic. This religion will distinguish it from all other nations and make its identity stronger and more closed. Typical is the case of Japan where most of the Japanese people are connected with the old Japanese animist religion, Shinto, or in China where similarly the specifically Chinese semi-religious teaching of Confucianism is most widely spread.

Another distinction which can be drawn is between partial and complete religio-ethnic identity. Partial religio-ethnic identity is formed in cultures which are to some significant extent secularized so that the traditional religious cultures do not concur. There, the national and religious identities will coincide only partially. The more a religion is separated from the profane culture, the more partial and non-important will be its role in development and maintenance of national identity.

Complete identity in which the limits of the religious, cultural, and national identities almost coincide means a lack of clear-cut borders between the sacred and the profane, the religious and the mundane. From this point of view, we can say that Protestantism could be included in only a partial religio-ethnic identity, while the Moslem religion can be the ground for a complete identity. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches, as already explained, are somewhere "inbetween."

The above distinctions imply different roles for these various religions in the processes of development of ethnic self-consciousness and nation-building. Islamization or neo-Islamization almost definitely means a change of national identity. In the history of humanity Islam has been the most potent "melting pot" for the assimilation of different groups, much mightier than the "melting pot" of American civilization during the twentieth century. The potential of the other world religions to create and support national identity is weaker and secularization has weakened them additionally. Accordingly, it would be easier for Islam to use nationalism as a means of Islamization than for Christianity to 'Christianize' via nationalism.

### **Re-Evangelization and Re-Islamization**

In the developed countries, the process of religious revival is strongly connected with growing diversity and pluralization. This means that a variety of new religions and sects are quite active, and the old universal churches must search for ways to adjust to the new plurality and to face the issue of inculturation.

On the whole, in the Third World and the ex-communist world religious revival has first of all the form of re-evangelization and re-Islamization. Different versions of Christianity and Islam are the mainstreams in this shift to the de-secularization and de-atheistization of these societies, as people search for faith, meaning, solace and support in order to be able to cope with their broken lives and realities.

The revivification of Christianity and Islam in the ex-communist world, Asia and Africa is—as a matter of fact—a revivification of two old adversaries. During this millennium, Russia and the Balkans always have been front-line sites, areas of contact and conflict between these two great civilizations.

The revival of Christianity and Islam in these regions is linked first and foremost with the failure of the two major projects of modernity, both originating in the Enlightenment: Communist society and Westernization. The attempts at rapid industrialization without an accompanying market economy, and democracy, have failed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But in many countries of the Third World rapid industrialization has also failed. When a historian compares, on the one hand, the efforts to overcome backwardness/build modern secular society in these countries, and on the other hand, the efforts in these same countries to restore and re-vivify religion, the historian notes that it is religion which triumphs.

The most forceful manifestations of Islamic resurrection have occurred in the more advanced and "modernized" (seemingly secular) countries of the Moslem world, such as Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Tunisia. The secular "White Revolution" in Iran was replaced by the "Islamic Revolution." The sense that existing political, economic and social systems had failed, plus the overwhelming disenchantment with secular modernization, together brought forth a quest for identity and a greater authenticity. Nationalism and religion are answers to this quest. In the Christian states, they partially overlap. In the Moslem world the feeling is wide-spread that Islam



provides a self-sufficient ideology for both state and society, a valid alternative to secular nationalism, socialism, and capitalism. As John Esposito points out:

In the nineties, Islamic revivalism has ceased to be restricted to the usual marginal organizations on the periphery of society and instead has become part of mainstream Muslim society, producing a new modern-educated but Islamically oriented elite which work alongside, and at times in coalition with its secular counterparts. Revivalism continues to grow as a broad-based socio-religious movement, functioning today in virtually every Muslim country and transnationally. It is a vibrant, multi-faceted movement that will embody the major impact of Islamic revivalism for the foreseeable future. Its goal is the transformation of society through the Islamic formation of individuals at the grass-roots level. *Dawa* (call) societies work in social services (hospitals, clinics, legal-aid societies), in economic projects (Islamic banks, investment houses, insurance companies), in education (schools, child-care centers, youth camps), and in religious publishing and broadcasting. Their common programs are aimed at young and old alike.<sup>2</sup>

There is a revival of Christianity also in the ex-communist block, but the situation is quite different compared with most Islamic countries. On the one hand, there is a surge in the quest for religion as a refuge from the severe value crisis and as a foundation for the identity of the personal self. But the Orthodox Churches in most of these countries are not sufficiently mobile and versatile to react to this quest. They have not enough missionary spirit and missionary structures. Both within and in public a furious struggle for power in some of these churches is waged. They are not too well prepared to face the growing need for re-evangelization. For the last hundred years they have had almost no experience in inculturation and lack the ability to adapt themselves to the psychology of the contemporary person. Thus, many other denominations are trying to gain influence in this region.

On the other hand, by contrast to most Muslim countries where neo-Islamization is an expression of disillusionment with the process of Westernization (the Muslim countries understand their failure to be a result of Westernization), in the ex-Communist countries the attitudes are just the opposite. The mass impression is that a lack of Westernization is the main reason for the failure of their countries. They are ardent, zealous adherents of anything coming from the Western world. This world is looked to for support in distress. This leaves room for a great influx of different sects, religion and denominations from the West, and first of all, from the U.S.A. These sects bring with them not just their religious hope, but the lure and reputation of something from a country seen as an example to be followed. Some of them are Christian, some of them are not, but there is much room for neo-evangelization. What is different from the Muslim revival in the Middle East is that this is taking place in conditions of greater democracy, openness, and competition among different religions. Moreover, most of the sects and churches coming from the West bring with them some idea of the limits of the appropriate activity of the church in civil society and the division between civil society and state. They are accepted by people as part of their way to the new dream: the wealthy West.

Accordingly, we have conditions for a more monolithic and authoritarian re-Islamization and more open and pluralistic re-evangelization. If the former is connected with a tendency to full desecularization, the second is connected with an endeavor to overcome atheization. If Islamization is a strong political movement toward unity between state and church, re-evangelization is first of all a shift in civil society without so strong a tendency to unite church and state. For instance, the new, post-communist constitution of Bulgaria did not merely promulgate

once again the separation of church and state, but forbade the establishment of parties on religious grounds.

Across a huge territory from Asia and Africa to Europe, we observe the revival of two old rivals with different positions, advantages and disadvantages in the processes of evangelization and Islamization, re-evangelization, and re-Islamization. In this process Western and Eastern traditions encounter one another.

Their difference from the point of view of a strategy of inculturation is that in principle in most cases evangelization and re-evangelization have as their points of departure some distinctions dividing sacred and profane, secular national identity and religious identity. In contrast, Islam tends to deny these distinctions in principle and strives to include under its rule the whole person and culture. That is why Islamic conversion encloses the whole person in a specific world and is quite successful. For this reason, it is more difficult to convert a Muslim to another religion or to secularize him than to do so with a Christian. It is a well known fact in the history of the Muslim religion, that although Muslims were initially a minority in the conquered territories, in time they became a majority, due largely to mass conversions of local Christians. In addition, those who remained Christians were Arabized, adopting the Arabic language and culture.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, there is not a single case of mass conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith. That is why the communities of Muslim emigrants in the developed Western countries are more closed and more difficult to integrate into the whole society.

The major peculiarity is the near *inseparability of the religious from the national (or ethnic)*. Evangelization does not mean ethnic or national conversion. Islamization means a change of the entire way of life and practically always leads to a change of ethnic or national identity. When converted to Islam a Christian, Buddhist, etc., population either affiliates itself to the closed Muslim nation or claims its own specific Muslim national identity. This is true throughout the world. In Bulgaria, Christians who changed their faith to become Muslims under the Ottoman yoke are now inclined to identify themselves as Turks, because Turkey is the nearest nation which is Islamic in religion. At the same time in Bosnia Serbs identify themselves as a specific Muslim nation, although they speak the same language as Christian Serbs. Even if, as in the case of Bosnia, people are not very religious, religion left so deep a vestige that now, with their brother Christians, they wage the most bloody nationalistic civil war in recent European history. To be Bosnian means first of all to be Muslim, and to be Muslim means to be Bosnian. In the same way in Malaysia many consider it axiomatic that to be Malay is to be Muslim. In Bulgaria Muslim theology has never been developed nor has the Muslim literature been disseminated. The Koran is preached in the Arab language which almost no one understands. Nevertheless, Islam is retained as the way of life, and there remains the self-consciousness of "we" Muslims as different from "them" (Bulgarian Christians). Their Islamic identity and their appropriate ethnic or national identity are inseparable. According to J. Esposito,

The modern notion of religion as a system of personal belief makes an Islam that is comprehensive in scope, with religion integral to politics and society, 'abnormal' insofar as it departs from the accepted 'modern' norm, and nonsensical. Thus Islam becomes incomprehensible, irrational, extremist, threatening.<sup>4</sup>

The problem however is not just that which J. Esposito advances, viz., different perceptions of religion as a result of modernity. There are two more important distinctions which he disregards. The first distinction is the originally different notion of relations between the sacred and profane,

religion and the state, which are characteristic of Christianity and Islam respectively and are not just of modern and pre-modern visions of religion. The second distinction is that the inseparable unity between Islam and state leads to an integral unity of religious and national identity. The nation is a phenomenon of modernity, of the modern world, and now this modern phenomenon is linked with the pre-modern unity between religion and state.

Accordingly, nationalist and religious revivals, which could be quite separate in other cultures, tend to coincide. This multiplies their force, strengthening both religious and national identities. This is in some sense a new historical phenomenon. When the two parts of a uranium nuclear bomb unite they become qualitatively new and different, and are followed by an enormous explosion. Similarly, the fusion of nationalist and religious revival may be the greatest danger in the Post-Cold War world.

As a matter of fact most of the nationalistic and ethnic wars and conflicts during the last decades have been religio-ethnic wars. This makes conflict much more plausible in the case of ethnic (national) opposition and tension between "us" and "them". Accordingly, along the thousands of kilometers of the borderline between Islam and Christian civilizations we observe tensions, conflicts, terrorist acts and wars. It began with the military clashes with the Muslim minority in the Philippines, passed through Islamic terrorism and separatism in India, the civil wars between Muslims and Christians in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Lebanon, Cyprus, the relations between Jews and Arabs, the tensions between Greece and Turkey, Bulgarian Christians and Bulgarian Muslims, the war between Christian Serbs and Muslim Bosnians, the conflicts between Christians and Albanian Muslims in Kosovo, etc. Everywhere the war is between religio-ethnic identities.

Two additional factors prompt the confrontation between these two different religious-national identities and cultures. The first factor is the traditions and stereotypes of the confrontation between these two civilizations. The confrontations and conflicts have spanned the ages and reinforced images of a historic and globally militant Islam. To name some of them:—the early Muslim expansion and conquest; the crusades and the fall of Jerusalem; Ottoman hegemony over Eastern Europe and, with the siege of Vienna, its threat to overrun the West; the great *jihad* against European colonial rule; Arab-Israeli wars; the economic threat of oil embargoes; Iran's humiliating of an "America held hostage" and its threat to export its revolution; media images of despots (Qaddafi, Khomeini, Saddam Hussein) wielding an Islamic sword and calling upon the frenzied faithful to rise up against the West; and the spectre of radical revolutionary groups seizing Western hostages, hijacking planes and wantonly visiting upon the West a reign of terror. Death-threats against Salomon Rushdie and Muslim secular intellectuals like the Egyptian philosopher Foudad Zanaria, who had declared that "the tide of political Islam . . . constitutes a very real danger," reinforce images of an intolerant and dangerous Islam.

At the same time one finds analogous stereotypes generated from the other side. Muslim images of the West portray it as a very "real" threat to Islamic countries. Many in the Arab and Muslim world view the history of Islam and of the Muslim world's dealing with the West as one of victimization and oppression at the hands of an expansive imperial power. Thus many counter that it is "militant Christianity" and "militant Judaism" that are the root causes of failed Muslim societies and instability. Here is a list of grievances: the aggression and intolerance of Christian-initiated Crusades and the Inquisition; European colonialism; the break up of the Ottoman empire and the artificial creation, by the colonialists, of modern states in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan, and Palestine; the establishment of Israel; Israel's occupation of the West Bank and

Gaza and its invasion of Lebanon; and the extent to which oil interests have been the determining factor in western support of autocratic regimes.

The second factor prompting the confrontation between Christian-national identities and Islamic-national identities, between the processes of re-evangelization and re-Islamization, is the desperate destitution and marginalization of millions of peoples in the area of the main contacts between the two civilizations in ex-communist countries and a large part of Muslim Asia and Africa. In these conditions people become intolerant and look for scapegoats and enemies, which are the strongest factors reinforcing nationalistic identity.

In any case, the process of re-evangelization in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is inseparable from an encounter and tensions with the concurrent process of re-Islamization.

### **Totalitarian Ideologies as Religion**

One could understand the strength of the quest for a new faith in Eastern Europe if one takes as a starting point that a *religion* collapsed and that this triggers—among its disillusioned adherents—a search for a new religion. There is an old debate whether the Marxism-Leninism in the ex-communist world was a religion, a surrogate of religion, or had nothing to do with religion. First, Berdiaev in 1937 put forward the idea of Communism as a rival religion, explaining in this way its conflict with Christianity. The debate is not finished because it is inseparable from the other much debated problem: "What is religion?" I present here a short summary and then continue this debate.

If we take some of the most popular definitions of religion we find in them several recurrent characteristics: a supernatural (or transcendental) reality; the sacred; a set of coherent answers to the universal existential problems of mankind; some human behaviour expressing relation to the supernatural and the sacred, and institutions connected with this behaviour (Church).

(1) *A Supernatural (transcendent) reality.* This is a qualitatively different reality from that which is experienced as "nature." It is an explanation of the surrounding world, not according to its intrinsic properties, but by means of something added. The predominant personal link with this world is not rational and could be provided not by science, but by religion.

To oppose this position Marxism-Leninism calls its credo "scientific." But in fact, there is nothing from positive science in this understanding. The claim for the existence of objective laws governing the movement of human history toward communist society is a claim for the existence of a supernatural reality. The main proof for this "scientific" character is the ability of its ideas to influence people as "social historical practice." From this point of view the "objective laws" and the "objective necessity" of Marxism-Leninism play the role of a supernatural (transcendent) reality. (Of course, the ideas of the world religions have influenced people over thousands of years, and Christianity displayed a stronger ability to change the human world and to create a new civilization. Yet this does not provide a concrete "scientific" proof.)

(2) *The Sacred.* According to P. Berger, "empirically speaking, what is commonly called religion involves an aggregation of human attitudes, beliefs and actions in the face of two types of experience—the experience of the supernatural and the experience of the sacred."<sup>5</sup> He distinguishes the sacred as another kind of reality, one that overlaps with the supernatural and carries redemptive significance. The sacred affirms the individual at the center of his being and integrates him within the order of the cosmos.

We find many indications of this reality in the practice of the ex-communist societies. They have their prophets and saints—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, etc. The communist society is the future sacred reality placing the individual at its center. The working class is the redemptive force; the sufferings of present generations will be redeemed by the "bright future." The writings of the "classics" are like a scripture, revealing past and future events.

(3) *A set of coherent answers to the universal existential problems of mankind.* Marxism-leninism claims to give a comprehensive explanation of all core existential problems—from the physics of nuclear particles (Lenin's "Materialism and Empirical Criticism") to appropriate haircuts (in the Soviet Union a book published the quotations from the "classics" regarding this topic).

(4) *Organization mediating between the sacred and the profane, the natural and the supernatural.*

There are many comparisons between the role of the church and that of the party. I will quote one of the most famous from the *Christian Century*, in 1952:

Years ago observers of the growth of international communism began to see it as a secular religion, so closely approximating in its purposes the social concepts of Christianity that Archbishop Temple called it a "Christian heresy." The parallel between the development of the Christian institution and apparatus and the Communist institution and apparatus have often been pointed out. Think of almost any element supposedly distinctive in the Christian church—its inspired revelation, its inherent dogma, its heresy trials and excommunications, its saints, its martyrs, its hagiography, its demonology, its pope, its hierarchy, its consecrated priesthood, its missionaries, its initiatory vows, its sacred shrines and icons, its reliance on an apocalyptic future to compensate for a grim present—and communism, less than seventy years after the death of Karl Marx, already shows a counterpart.<sup>6</sup>

Some additional explanatory remarks can give a sociological account of these similarities.

*First.* Any revolution desperately needs some new religion to inspire the people. It could be against some old religion, but the disintegration of society during the revolution requires even more urgently a set of beliefs which acts as a religion. It is paradoxical that the victors in the strongest battles against religious forces most desperately need their own religion to replace the old one. The example of the French Revolution is classical: priests were being hanged and church property confiscated, but at the same time a surrogate was established, a new civil religion in which reason was worshipped as a high metaphysical entity.

*Second.* At first sight ex-communist societies are atheistic, anti-religious and lacking in any basis for religion. In fact, their need for religion is strong and the conditions created by them stimulate religious growth more than do the conditions of modern bourgeois society. On the one hand, the lack of developed market and profit motivation in the individual's behavior means much less instrumental rationality and materialistic value-orientations, both of which are the grounds of modern secularization. The market is replaced by the party and its decisions, relying on historical laws and necessity. Higher and transcendent laws and necessity replace the real market forces and are evoked by the party and its leaders. Because a real substitution is impossible, this evocation and all economic policy become irrational. This creates much more "false consciousness" than the

one analyzed by Marx in bourgeois society. The market forces are replaced by religious faith in the power of the nonmarket plan.

On the other hand, there is a desperate need for some religious substitute because forceful and very rapid industrialization and urbanization destroy all old communities and identities. The party and its ideology are advanced as the only possible identity.

Max Weber has argued that Protestantism and its ethics are the religion of the Capitalist society—the spirit promoting its birth, which in turn is the birth of modernity. It could be claimed that Marxism-Leninism in the ex-communist states was a specific religion necessary for the rapid modernization of backward Eastern authoritarian peasant societies. Lacking the conditions for an individualistic Protestant ethics, these societies gave birth to a collectivist totalitarian (fundamentalist) ethics and religion. They required asceticism and sacrifice now in the name of the "Bright Future." This asceticism was necessary for the initial accumulation of capital, for rapid industrialization, and for the predominance of heavy over light production. The satisfaction of personal needs was limited in the name of future generations. The distinction, however, was that the sacrosanct revelation was the result not of personal experience, but of party documents.

The proliferation of this kind of fundamentalist religion was connected with the marginalization of the traditional Christian religions. Now the collapse of communism as a religion has opened room for the restoration of Christianity and re-evangelization.

### **Religions and Religious Revival in Bulgaria**

I will take Bulgaria as an example of the conditions and the shifts in religions today. It combines a collapsed Marxist-Leninism, a religious revival in a region of ethnic clashes, and an encounter of Christianity and Islam.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church was founded by an ecumenical council in Constantinople in March 870. In 927 it became fully independent. The evangelization of the Bulgarian state took place in the context of the struggle between Eastern and Western Churches for influence and conversion of the 'pagan' Slavs.

Using, in fact, the tool of inculturation the church in Constantinople sent its two missionaries, Cyril and Methodius, to create a special Slavic alphabet and to preach the scriptures in the Slavic language. This was against the established discipline at that time, which maintained that scripture should be disseminated in only three sacred languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The Bulgarian Tzar, Boris I, needed Christianity as a common religion to unite the two parts of his population—the Slavs and the Bulgarian tribes. When some of them tried to keep their heathen religion, he did not scruple to kill-off 300 clans and to enforce Christianity.

This importation of the Orthodox religion by force and the subordination of religion to the state was the reason why the anti-feudal and anti-state movements were open to receive heretical teachings. The strongest of these was the dualistic teaching of the Bogomils, which spread from Bulgaria under other names and versions to Western Europe.

At the end of the fourteenth century, Bulgaria came under the Ottoman yoke, which was to last five-hundred years. Broad processes of Islamization of the Christian population were taking place throughout this time. In order to have stronger support and protection at the beginning of the fourteenth century, already some Bulgarians sought the help of the Catholic Church in Rome and were converted or accepted the authority of the Pope. During the Ottoman rule the church played the most important role in preserving the Bulgarian identity and in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries priests and monks began the struggle for church independence and for the resurgence of the Bulgarian national identity.

After the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule in 1879 the Bulgarian Church became again totally independent. According to the Law of Religions in Bulgaria enacted in 1977, and remaining valid today, the church is separated from the state but is dependent upon the government. It receives some governmental subsidies and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a special Department of Ecclesiastical Matters which in fact approves the most important promotions in the church.

Religious education in the state schools is forbidden and the propagation of religion is banned. The separation of church and state in a totalitarian context means more than merely the Western type of secularization. Because in a totalitarian society everything is the 'state', there is almost no other social space. All property, and all economic and political activities are state matters. This means that the church is pseudo-separated from the state, for the lack of civil society in the totalitarian system means that there are no independent organizations between the state and individual. So for almost five decades the church was closed in itself, unorganized and subordinated to the state; it was maintained by the state and seen as an appendix from the past. It had had some cultural significance in the past, but that would vanish in the future. Officially, its place and role are seen first of all from the point of view of foreign policy—the image of the country abroad, the struggle for peace and for humanism. That is why it is a department in the Foreign Ministry that is in charge of the church and the religions in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian population is about 9 millions. According to the most recent data, Christians in Bulgaria are 89.1 percent of the population—the prevailing part of them are Orthodox, 0.9 percent are Catholics, 0.5 percent are Protestants. The Moslems are 10.5 percent of the population (Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies). 16 Churches are registered with the Department of Ecclesiastical Matters. Catholic Christians number between 60,000 and 80,000 people. They are divided into two dioceses with bishops in Sofia and Plovdiv. One of these dioceses is Roman Catholic with a membership of about 50,000, with 40 priests and 30 churches. The other is Uniate and has between 10,000 and 20,000 believers, with 20 priests, 25 parishes and 17 churches. Muslims constitute about 14 percent of religious believers in Bulgaria. They have between 1000 and 1300 mosques and about 1000 ministries. The first sects in Bulgaria appeared before it fell under the Turkish yoke. These sects are many—Bogomils, Adamits, heretical Hesychast groups, etc.—most of which were Islamized and disappeared under the Ottoman rule.

During the last 100 years, and especially for the last three years, there has been an active penetration of different sects into Bulgaria. For many of them there are no sufficient data and for others the data are not sufficiently exact: Adventists (established in 1923, about 3700 members), Adventist-reformers, Pentecostal (established in 1921, about 10 thousand members), Baptists (established in 1880, about 2500 members), Methodists (about 1300 members), Bulgarian Church of God (about 15,000 members in 70 villages), Dunovists (about 10,000 members, founded after the First World War by the Bulgarian Petur Dunov), Hare Krishna, Biblical "Christian Charity and Education" center, Biblical Movement "Vasan", Satanism, Unification Church of Dr. Moon, Mormons, etc.

According to opinion polls there is an abrupt growth in the total number of believers, which soared from 23.6 percent in 1986 to 48.5 percent in 1992—11.2 percent are deeply religious and 37.3 percent of the respondents answer that they are "partially religious." The percentage of religious people increases with the age of the respondents and decreases with education. There is a great difference, however, between Christians and Muslims—47.1 percent of Bulgarians respond

that they are religious, but 79.1 percent are from the population traditionally connected with the Muslim religion; 44.9 percent of Bulgarians are not familiar with the Bible, but only 22.2 percent from the population with the traditional Moslem religion is not acquainted with the Koran; only 15 percent of the Christians mention the name of God often, but 50 percent of the Muslims mention the name of Allah every day. These distinctions are indicative. Partially they result from the fact that the Muslim population has less education, but the most important factor is the specific cultural and ethnic function of the Muslim religion. This function is even stronger when, as is Bulgaria's case, the group is a minority.

The process of democratization has significantly changed the position of the Orthodox Church and the other religions. Christmas and Easter were declared official holidays. The new Constitution of Bulgaria, adopted in 1991, includes in its text the assertion that "Bulgaria is traditionally an Orthodox Christian State." At different universities faculties of theology were established. It became fashionable that any important event, commemoration, holiday, establishment of new firms, institutions, etc., be opened with a religious service.

At the same time, both the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Muslim Church were, in 1992, internally divided in a struggle for power. There were two synods and Patriarchs and two General Muftis. In both religions, there were struggles between the two factions. Sometimes the struggles even became physical, each side trying to seize the buildings of the other. There were declarations and counter-declarations on television, the radio, and in the newspapers. In both religions, one of the sides claimed that the other was connected with the old regime, and conversely. The groups were supported by different political forces; there were no theological distinctions between them, but only a furious struggle for power. This was and is a repercussion of the traditional subordination of the Church to the state; hence, one result of the deep political division in the society is division as well between the main churches in the country. This impedes the growth of their influence and leaves enough room for an active intrusion and propagation by the different sects from abroad.

In a situation of strong politicization of the society religion too is politicized and different forces and people try to use it as a political weapon: several priests and bishops were elected to the parliament, and the evocation of religious values has become a means of political legitimization. In Bulgaria, never before had there been any parties claiming to have started from a foundation of religious values. Now there are dozens of such parties, e.g.: Christian Democrats, Christian-Republicans, Christian-Democrat ("Center"), Christian Union "Salvation," Christian Movement of Women, etc. Some of them are in the anti-communist "Union of Democratic Forces" now [1992] ruling Bulgaria, and others are in a coalition with the Socialist Party. Many are not in parliament.

But what is important is that almost any political force at any point on the political spectrum tries to take advantage of the revival of religion. This kind of politicization has a double effect. On the one hand, there is much ballyhoo and demonstrative use of religious symbols. On the other hand, this politicization has negative results because it turns the church and religion from being values in themselves into being merely instrumental values. This instrumentalization of the traditional Orthodox religion turns the sacred into a profane tool for power. In this way religion loses its own intrinsic traits and becomes the same as all other things in the profane world.

Here there arises a very important question regarding the role of religions, the church and Christianity in the process of the democratization of society. The problem is that, as in other periods in the history of humanity, the growing need for religion and of fruitful conditions for religion coincides with a growing disintegration, insecurity and division in society. This gives rise to growing intolerance, hatred, a search for "scapegoats" and punitive attitudes. This explains for



instance the furious persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire and of heretics at the end of the Middle Ages.

The problem is whether in this kind of situation the Church will play a democratic or anti-democratic fundamentalist role; whether it will contribute to an enhancement of hatred and confrontation or will prevent these. Up to now, being engaged in severe political struggles, the Bulgarian Orthodox and the Muslim churches reflect the intolerance and hatred of society itself. The physical attacks and occupation of church residences and buildings display a lack of the rule of law and appears as a resurrection of the Hobbesian "natural state of the people," This deepens hatred as well as authoritarian and neo-totalitarian social attitudes.

In this situation re-evangelization with the help of a church that is part of an already established democratic tradition in the developed Western countries could make an important contribution to the humanization of society, democratic development and the lowering of tensions and confrontations. There are two very important factors prompting a process of re-evangelization from the West.

*First*, evangelization coming from the West is accepted as a part of the process of Westernization of the country—which, in turn, is considered by the largest part of the population to be the only "true road" for the country today. Phrases describing the changes as a "way to Europe," a "way to America," are considered to be of quite high value. There is even talk between scholars and other intellectuals that the adoption of Christianity in Bulgaria by the Eastern Church in Constantinople, and not from the Church in Rome had been a terrible historical mistake which entailed the unfortunate history of Bulgaria, its separation from the Western World and five centuries under Ottoman rule. They argue that if Bulgaria had been a Catholic country, Western Europe would have defended it from the Ottoman Turks.

*Second*, the use of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in political life in a situation of intolerance repulses and disgusts many of its people. This strips the church of its nimbus of sacredness and makes room for other efforts at evangelization. In fact now the influx of different sects and religions introduces competition and puts all in the situation of 'marketing' religion. In this situation those have an advantage who are more active, with better advertising, more knowledge of the different social groups and their needs, and who can accommodate to the local conditions, culture, mentality, leisure, music, dances, dress, national identity, social problems, etc.

Creating a new political culture for the societies is now very important and will develop with the active help of the changing human religious values. For instance, the great experience of the Catholic Church in different charity organizations, health care organizations and institutions of social care will mitigate the shock of mass impoverishment of the population and will provide the basis for the development of a vital civil society.

There are several important dimensions of the process of inculturation which will promote the process of evangelization. *First*, there must be connections with, and support of, traditional culture. This will remove any accusation that the church from abroad destroys traditional Bulgarian values and identities. It is especially meaningful now when because of the crises all subsidies for the national arts and folk culture have been cut off abruptly. In the conditions of emerging "wild capitalism," the church will stand up for national values.

*Third*, there should be removal from political life and dis-engagement from political factions, but strong support of the person and the individual's rights. Standing up as well against any violation of human rights, religion could play a very important role for the defense of individuals

from political persecutions in conditions of growing authoritarianism. The church as a shelter in a collapsed world is in a good position to inculturate.

*Fourth*, there should be deployment of a *sociological* approach, attending to the different needs, ways of life and behaviors of the various social groups—scholars and undergraduates, the unemployed and homeless, men and women, the single and old people, the disappointed and those broken in spirit.

In this way we observe different modes of Westernization. The traditional type of Westernization of societies from the Third World is connected with an imposition of secular culture and the abandonment of many of the traditions and values of the societies. This kind of modernization failed and had many negative effects. Now we observe in the ex-Communist countries the quest for a new mode of Westernization in which, not secularization, but some form of de-secularization (evangelization, de-atheistization) is taking place. This is a new chance to unite this region with the Western World. Re-evangelization is part of this difficult and complicated process.

## Notes

1. E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).
2. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 23.
3. See R. Stephan Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), p. 250; John L. Esposito, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
4. See John L. Esposito, *op. cit.*, p. 198; also pp. 170, 171.
5. Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), p. 38.
6. *Christian Century*, Vol. 69 (Oct. 22, 1952), p. 121.

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## Chapter VII

# Christian Social Teachings: Some "Meta" Questions

*Paul Peachey*

That "the Christian social teaching" should be consulted in this era of European reconstruction is at once inevitable and problematic: inevitable, because of the historical impregnation of European culture by Christianity; problematic, because the dynamics of our era scarcely resonate to the liturgical legacies of "Christendom".

This paper addresses the *problematic* aspects of the invocation of Christian social teachings in the reconstruction of Europe: first, the disagreements among Christian groupings and traditions regarding the content and range of these teachings; second, the relationship of these traditions and corresponding teachings, as distillates of Christian experience and history, to what I call the Christian *primordium*, on the one hand, and the emerging lineaments of our era, on the other; finally, and fundamentally, the problems arising in the abstraction of social teachings from their primary spiritual-existential matrix for application in pluralist polities.

### Some Preliminary Comments

I raise these problems, not to disavow the relevance of the "Christian social teachings" in European reconstruction, but on the contrary, to affirm and reinforce their articulation. Though in keeping with my profession my approach is in part sociological, the issues reach deeply into the heart of the Christian quest, and engage a wide range of disciplines dealing with Christian thought and practice. Even so, resolution of these problems cannot be achieved by intellectual or academic discourse alone.

To some extent, the *problematic* aspects of an invocation of "Christian social teaching" may be regarded as *meta*-questions, questions pertaining to the concepts and principles presupposed in the inquiry. At another level, the problems here identified are *substantive*; that is, they are central to the stuff of the discourse itself, rather than merely prolegomenal. Thus they call for clarification at both levels.

The term, "Christian social teaching," though often applied to the Roman Catholic social encyclicals of the past century (beginning with *Rerum novarum*, 1891), is employed here in its inclusive generic sense as, for example, in the classic (1911) work of Ernst Troeltsch (*The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*). The former may stand in a preliminary way for the latter as the encyclicals are the most readily accessible compilation of the churches' "social teaching." Nonetheless, any particular formulation of the teachings is accountable to the larger inclusive perspective.

With the exercise of the "sociological imagination," the power of a Slavic pope's "dream of Compostela" of a Christian Europe restored at this historical juncture is readily understandable. Though unlikely to gain broad literal acceptance, that dream is not to be rejected out of hand. In any case, the papal conception can serve as an "ideal typical" construct in the dialogue which the Pope's summons has already precipitated. Whatever the intrinsic merit of the papal vision, it provides a summary concept, a short-hand reference, for an identifiable historical crystallization, namely "Christian Europe" or Christendom.

The theme of this symposium implies policy-begetting outcomes, policies proposed for possible collective action in modern pluralist societies. Adequate diagnosis, of course, is always prerequisite to adequate prescription. To disallow Christendom as a normative paradigm, as already implied, is not to disparage its enormous achievements and contributions, nor is it to presume a verdict on the medieval Christendom millennium in its own right. Judgment in any event is a divine prerogative. The task here is far more circumscribed. What, we ask, can Christians contribute in the collaborative enterprise of European reconstruction?

### **Which Social Teachings?**

As indicated, anyone invoking the "Christian social teaching" in the public arena immediately confronts the question: which of the diverse renditions of Christian "social teaching" is intended? First, we must reckon with the diverse, at times competing, versions of Christianity, the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant, and now, in modern times, a bewildering array of "free church" claims. Then, within, and often leaping across, these traditions are the movements and fads of piety, thought, and controversy among Christians, ever restless, like the surface of the sea. Finally, non-Christian religions knock increasingly at our doors. Given such diversity and confusion, "New Age" syncretisms should not surprise us.

This diversity can be described in part as a product of history. With the spread of Christian groups among diverse peoples and cultures in the early centuries of Christianity, the problem soon arose: how was the unity and the integrity of faith to be vouchsafed? Episcopal, conciliar, and eventually politically embodied and enforced, institutional uniformity emerged as the dominant vehicles and idioms of Christian unity and integrity. The claim of a monarchically-directed episcopacy, mandated by Jesus and historically transmitted, eventually carried the day. For centuries it seemed possible to unify Christians over wide territories, and presumably universally, by these means. Meanwhile controversies and schisms emerged repeatedly. Eventually, as we know, a breach between East and West, became definitive in the eleventh century, and another, in the Protestant Reformation in the West in the sixteenth century.

Diversity and disunity, however, arise not only from the varying constraints of geography and culture. Like other social formations, churches may ossify with age. Tides of decline and renewal, of renewal and decline, surge through Christian history, giving rise to endlessly varied, often competing, social formations: churches, orders, denominations, as well as practices, creeds, and rites. In the face of such diversity, monopoly of one religion or of one creed over others is a perennial temptation to movements winning great followings. Yet efforts to consolidate and unify frequently are self-defeating, leading instead to new schism.

Historians and social scientists have dealt variously with the diversity of Christian social manifestations. The threefold typology of *Kirche*, *Sekte*, and *Mystik*, developed seminally by Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber early in this century, has been the most widely used taxonomy. Historically, sects were regarded by the *Kirchen* as deformations. Troeltsch, however, argued that all three of the above forms are grounded in the original message. The reality of Christ appears richer than any particular ecclesial expression.

Meanwhile, with the modernization of societies and the pluralization of the social universe, social institutions become increasingly differentiated. Church and state, like other institutions, evolve into independent spheres, and religious monopolies are correspondingly broken. As a result, given the great diversity of Christian and non-Christians groups, all the churches, sociologically speaking, become "sects;" that is, they become independent, voluntary societies (not to say,

"interest groups"), unable any longer to claim either religious or political monopoly. Today there is little to suggest that institutional unity under a single jurisdiction is an achievable, or for that matter a reasonable goal. The "free" rather than the "established" church mode, for better or for worse, appears to be the paradigm of the future.

Undoubtedly "free church" diversification vastly complicates the enunciation of Christian social teaching and its articulation in the political process. Independent, autonomous congregations are vulnerable to perversions and dilutions of faith and practice. Ostensibly autonomous churches or other religious associations (denominations) may merely reflect or reinforce, rather than surmount, class or other particularized interests in society. Religious liberty and formal separation of churches from state institutions of themselves do not guarantee either religious vitality or appropriate individual or corporate Christian manifestations in public life. To the contrary, such "freedom" invites confusion and "false prophets."

In pluralist contexts, then, by what criteria are the diverse, sometimes competing, Christian doctrines or paradigms to be judged? Which Christian teaching should public decision-makers heed? This puzzle leads directly to the second issue to be addressed in this paper, namely the relation of the claim of any particular tradition (or paradigm) to the Christian *primordium*.

### **Reconstructing Europe: Christendom and the Christian *Primordium***

All Christian groups, it is safe to say, concede some degree of primacy to the originating events and claims of the faith. Yet we have no direct access to those events. Even the gospels that report them were written decades after the events occurred. These writings, in turn, rested, not only on oral traditions, but on the faith-based interpretations of the originating events by the first Christians. Furthermore, the deepest symbols of the faith point to growth, to unfolding, to denouement. Jesus likened the reign of God to a tiny grain, a mustard seed, that would grow into a mighty tree. Similarly he proposed that those coming after him would do works mightier than those that he performed. Accordingly one might argue that since the churches today possess maturity and fullness of life surpassing those of the first century of our era, *Christian insights today* supersede those of the first century.

But Jesus also clearly saw in "the law and the prophets" teachings with which no one may tamper. He came to fulfill these, not to abolish, them. Here there can be no addition or subtraction. Thus there is a *primordium* (see below) to which subsequent formulations are subordinate. In the great medieval traditions, however, both Western and Eastern, accretions in both doctrine and practice were assimilated, in effect, to the Christian *primordium*. Those who came after, the Luthers and Calvins, as well as the "free church" advocates in the modern era, protested against those accretions, only to proceed in similar fashion with their own accretions and definitions.

All this is familiar history, and in that sense, prosaic, I raise it, not to refight old battles, but rather to underscore our deep predicament: we persistently are unable, and hence fail, to distinguish adequately between the Christian *primordium* and the relative claims of our several historical traditions.

But today, in any case, the triumph of pluralism compels us to address the problem of the *primordium* anew.

I propose the term, "*primordium*," here as a "sensitizing concept," a concept to refer to clusters of related events, experiences, and formulations; that is, the entire Yahwist odyssey from Abraham to Jesus of Nazareth, his *kenosis* (self-emptying) and exaltation; thus the events and the revelatory experiences of the Biblical saga; the canonical accounts rendered of them; and the primal

emancipatory faith ever anon mediated thereby. The aim in this "sensitizing" formulation is not already to propose a full definition or an answer, but rather to raise a fundamental question that we can no longer escape.

Admittedly, failed efforts to find agreement as to the *primordium* of the faith in the first place has always been a major source of schism. The proliferation of new discoveries—archeological, documentary, and textual—in this century adds further complexity. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the unique power of the informing biblical vision stands out the more starkly.

In passing, it should be noted that the concept of the Christian "*primordium*" is not to be mistaken for the notion of "Christian primitivism"—an appeal to the putative purity of the early church. That concept has long been a stock in trade of religious dissenters and reformers, particular in the "free church" tradition. The "early church," in that formula, is seen as having been "pure," hence the blue-print that can be literally copied and reproduced today, if we but get rid of the perversions of history. On that assumption, "sects" begin "anew," claiming thus to have retrieved or restored the "true church." Ironically thereby, they repeat the error they set out to correct.

### **Abstracting the Social Teaching**

Viewed from within, the Christian faith has its own *raison d'être*, its own *telos*, to which its public role is secondary. The faith acknowledges, and is rooted in, the Unconditional. Thus, by definition, the church is not in the first instance a means to other ends. "God is not useful," Daniel Berrigan, the activist American Jesuit, observes. Thus to speak of a Christian contribution to the reconstruction of Europe implies that Christianity is a mere means to some larger end outside itself.

Have Christianity is viewed as one corporate actor among others, comprising Europe. The question is no longer, how can Christianity regain control of European society, but what can its social teachings contribute in a society constituted by multiple forces and interests. But to become available in this manner, these teachings, in effect, must be abstracted from their primary faith matrix. Not to do so is to inject a particular metaphysics of faith, without mediation, into the political arena, in violation of both domains, faith and politics. Yet to abstract the teachings from their faith matrix is, in a measure, to alter them. We thus confront an aporia, an insoluble quandary.

The problem appears in classic form in the debate about Christian pacifism. That there is in any case in the gospel a presumption in favor of peacemaking is generally recognized. A minority of Christians conclude that this entails an absolute renunciation of the sword. Christians as individuals, and even as groups, might thus be expected to "turn the other cheek," when attacked. But can they urge such conduct on a state in pluralist societies that cannot presuppose the faith on the basis of which Christians might be willing to risk their existence? If, on the other hand, Christians put forward a "social teaching," tailored to what is politically feasible, to what can be accepted even without the basic premises of Christian faith, cynics might well ask: why bother with the additional Christian rhetoric at all?

There is, on the other hand, a strain of thought in the Biblical tradition that subordinates the "chosen people, the "church," to the universal intent of the Divine purpose. "God so loved the world," and a special people is chosen for that larger purpose. Jesus clearly viewed the "little flock" of believers as the "salt of the earth," and "the light of the world." The kingdom of heaven He likened to a "leaven" that permeates an entire mixture of dough and to a tiny seed that grows into an enormous tree. Might not Christian contributions to the reconstruction of Europe be viewed as instance of "salt" and "light?"



As the seasoning impact in the salt metaphor illustrates, the accent falls on maintaining saltiness, not on the mechanism of diffusion. The church carries out its mission, not in the first instance as a corporate actor, presenting a set of policy proposals for political enactment. Rather the teachings are expressed primarily in the life, the existential commitments, and the community of the believers who are the church. Christians contribute, not by telling society or the state out there what they should do, but by the transforming ferment in their own life, individually and corporately. It is when the city is on the hill, when it rises above the plain, that it cannot be hid.

### **Excursus: Imperfect Example**

Perhaps the problem can be clarified by a brief digression to that European outpost on the North American continent, the United States. There, given its religious cacophony, one often hears the question, "Who speaks for the churches?"

The legacy of European Christendom, as we know, has been a formative energy in American history; positively, because European immigrants imported the Old World culture, including Christianity; negatively, because rejection of religious monopoly was often a factor in European emigration to the New World. Thus, whether in efforts to reproduce European patterns, or contrariwise, to supplant them, the paradigms of Christendom informed American culture. Further, once in the USA, "mainline churches," especially those of European origins, often served, in effect, as surrogates of the Christendom, to which "independent churches" and movements continuously reacted.

Since independence, separation of church and state, religious liberty, and freedom of conscience have been axiomatic in American culture. Paradoxically, however, sociological theories of religion have for the most part been dominated by European paradigms. European social thought has long assumed that, with advancing modernization, religion, as a primitive phenomenon, is bound to disappear. Though with understandable exceptions, much in modern European experience would seem to support that hypothesis. The monopolistic configurations of Christendom have indeed been overtaken by "secularization."

Meanwhile developments in American history have moved, albeit unevenly, in the opposite direction. Historians observe that church membership has grown from about 10 percent of the population in the early days of the republic to approximately 70 percent by the 1960s. Since then, "mainline" churches suffered declining membership, and declining religious practice is reported in various population segments. The long-term significance of this recent decline is not yet clear. Meanwhile that decline is countered by the continued growth of new and independent churches and movements, as well as by the activities of religions other than Christianity.

Why has religious activity and affiliation increased, when in most other Western societies there has been decline, at least in outer practices? The United States has been described as "the first new nation." In the creation of this new American nation, Christianity in some respects served as a mobilizing force, paralleling thus its role in the rise of the European peoples many centuries ago. Though America was settled at a much later stage of Western history, there, too, a nation had to be created. And there, too, religious awakenings and the spread of churches contributed to the nation-building process.

Noting the parallels to the earlier European experience, however, does not provide an explanation of American religiosity today. More suggestive is an hypothesis currently emerging among sociologists dissatisfied with the secularization paradigm. It has long been recognized that, given the constitutional separation of church and state in the United States, the "free church" is

effectively the operating paradigm. But now, taking a clue from rational choice theory, which is drawn in turn from the theory of the market in economics, these researchers analyze religion in the United States as a competitive (religious) market. Freed from monopoly, churches (and religions) compete with one another, and thus offer to the public a wide range of possible religious choices. The combination of the need of groups to compete for members, on the one hand, and of the possibility of individuals to choose from the many offerings, is thought to account for the vitality of religion in America.

Christianity and marketing are hardly commensurate categories. But the market simile draws attention to a salient dimension in the "free church" paradigm that often languished in Christendom: logically, the "free" or "believers'" church is constituted by active subjects, by persons who choose to become members. In today's jargon, Christianity in America is a "bottom up" affair. Given its monopoly position, the church of Christendom was constituted "top down." Each version, as paradigm, is one-sidedly deficient.

But more: some historians argue that Anglo Saxon democracy and parliamentary culture has roots in the "bottom up" experience of "free church" self-government. Half a century ago, A. D. Lindsay observed that "the inspiration of modern democracy came from men's experience of the entirely satisfactory democratic government in the Christian congregation—came therefore especially from the Anabaptists and the Quakers—from the men who . . . made the small independent congregation the unit of government." That is, the breakthrough came in the life of the churches internally. Lindsay's claim, I believe, can be sustained in some measure, notwithstanding the flaws of the "free church" tradition—fragmentation, reductionism, sectarianism, personality cult and the like.

## Conclusion

The issue of the contribution of the Christian social teaching to the political and cultural renewal or reconstruction of Europe is distinguishable from, yet related to, another current discussion, the possibility of a new European evangelization. The latter has evoked anxiety in some quarters. Does the proposal portend an effort to revive Christendom, that is, to restore Christianity to the public dominance and monopoly it once enjoyed?

Though in certain instances churches may indeed be tempted to seek state sponsorship once more, such a restoration generally is improbable. More to be feared are the vestiges of Christendom that linger in the ethos, the practices, and the consciousness of Christians and churches, and thus negatively as well, among non-Christians. C. J. Cadoux once described the world into which Christ came as "a world without love." Of Christians it was said during that era, "Behold how they love one another." The faith spread because it met the unmet needs among demoralized peoples. The faith was new, free, unfettered by tradition.

My task has been to sketch three problems that burden the Christian response today: diverse traditions and teachings, each claiming the true faith; the eclipse of the *primordium* which holds each tradition accountable and relativizes its claims; and the unacknowledged conundrum arising in the "secular" packaging of Christian teaching as political contribution.

The problem of the *primordium* appears pivotal. The likelihood, on the one hand, that Christians will be brought under a single institutional roof, on the one hand, or that they will embrace a single creed or liturgy, decreases continuously. Fragmentation continues at a rate much faster than denominational mergers. Meanwhile churches have made advances toward greater cooperation and toward the assimilation of the growing pluralism in all societies. Reinvigorating

engagement with the *primordium* of the faith can bring a rebirth of unity in diversity, not only among official bodies, but more importantly, at the grass roots.

Recovery of the *primordium*, on the other hand, will improve our ability to cope with the conundrum, the unconditional nature and claims of the faith versus the relativities of our contributions in our pluralist, "secular" societies. Not conformity, but transformation was the Pauline recipe.

These question, admittedly, are questions to be resolved among Christians, rather than in a dialogue between Christians and "secularists" (or formerly Marxists). In that sense they are meta-questions. Yet they have to be raised here, in part, because the necessary Christian "homework" remains to be done, but also because the non-Christian partner in the dialogue needs to understand us, "warts and all."

### Literature Notes

This paper is intended primarily as an exploratory essay. Identifying all the sources to which it is indebted would be impossible. In preparation I reread (after several decades) Christopher Dawson's, *The Making of Europe*, in a 1946 edition. On John Paul II's call for the restoration of Christian Europe, I used *Le reve de Compostelle: Vers la restauration d'une Europe chretienne?* (Paris: Centurion, 1989), aware of its critical stance. Particularly informative is the essay by Paul Ladriere documenting the Pope's appeal during his various travels. See also Ladriere's "La revolution francaise dans la doctrine politique des papes de la fin de XVIIIe a la moitie du XXe siecle," *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions* 66/1 (1988). On the criticism of subsidiarity see, e.g., Bernard Quelquejeu, "Acceptance of the rights of man, Disregard for the 'rights of Christians': The inconsistency of Rome," *Concilium* 221 (1989).

On the use of the market analogy in the sociology of religion in America see, e.g. the writings of Rodney Stark, Roger Finke, and James A. Beckford (Beckford's *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

The quotation of A. D. Lindsay is taken from his *The Modern Democratic State* (London, 1943), cited in my "The Radical Reformation, Political Pluralism, and the Corpus Christianum," in *The Origins and Characteristics of Anabaptism. (International Archives of the History of Ideas* 87). Ed. by Marc Lienhard (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976). See also especially Franklin H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).



**Chapter VIII**  
**An Ethnography of Evangelization:**  
**Notes from El Salvador**

*David Blanchard*

The data of cultural anthropology derive ultimately from the direct observation of customary behavior in particular societies. Making, reporting and evaluating such observations are the tasks of ethnography. –"Ethnography", *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1968)

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: "Now I am making the whole creation new." But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. –Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #18.

As is evident in many of this collection's papers, evangelization, indeed all social communication—be it through word or action—is articulated and interpreted in particular historical contexts. "Reality" may exist out there in the world as an objective phenomenon, but in matters of human discourse and understanding, it is entirely subjective. St. Paul was understood by the Greeks within Greek social and cultural categories. The Church that emerged reflected this world-view as much as the intentions of Paul or Jesus. The same is true in the "new evangelization" advocated by Pope John Paul II. The gospel that is preached, understood and translated into social action in El Salvador likewise requires understanding in context. The message that is heard and the Kingdom of God that is envisioned is partially a reflection of the Gospel; it is also a response to an interpreted social and historical reality.

I am an anthropologist interested in this process of how human communities engage in the activity of religious transformation (from gospel understood to gospel lived). In 1986 I went to El Salvador to study the relationship of the revolutionary struggle to the formation of Christian base communities and the transformation of the Church as a result of this convergence. In the ensuing seven years I witnessed the creation of a pastoral model of social evangelization in a parish in El Salvador that challenges the very structure of Salvadoran society. This social evangelization makes sense given the particular history of the persons in the community where the plan was developed. To help make sense out of this plan, I have organized this presentation in two parts.

Part One is a historical narrative interspersed with the personal testimony of a member of the pastoral team who helped to articulate the pastoral plan described in Part Two. This narrative is provided to form a context for Dona Juanita Martinez' testimony, which itself serves as a context for the pastoral plan. Each interprets the other.

**Narrative and Testimony**

*Narrative:* From early November until late January, in early mornings and late afternoons, the highways of El Salvador are choked with lines of peasants—men, women and children—trekking to the plantations to pick coffee and cotton and to cut sugar cane.

Each coffee worker carries a basket and tumpline. These are not happy peasants, like the Juan Valdez of commercial fame. The children are malnourished and exhausted. The adults appear haggard. Coffee picking is tiresome work with little economic reward.

During these months, bales of cotton line the sides of the coastal highways. One can see lean-tos set among the cotton fields, temporary homes for the seasonal workers toiling under the sun.

Sugar cane is cut by hand. Sugar cane also cuts, lacerating the hands and arms of the men and women who wield machetes. Children haul the cane to waiting trucks. Exhausted after a few hours work, they cannot pause to rest except at designated periods. The flow of profit cannot be disrupted. The coastal highways are very dangerous during harvest time. Trucks brimming with sugar cane race from field to crusher and from crusher to refinery. Profit rules in El Salvador. There is no concern for the safety of the workers. These trucks are piled so high they often fall over, killing people on the road. All spew toxic fumes. This is harvest-time in El Salvador.

*Testimony:* When she was twelve years old, Juanita Martinez was forced to watch as the Salvadoran National Guard rounded up the men in her village of Santa Lucia, bound them in groups of five or six, doused them with kerosene and set them on fire. "La matanza," or "the Great Killing" of 1932 was the Salvadoran military's response to the effort of the peasants to secure their rights, first through political organizing and when that failed, through armed rebellion. Since 1932 the Great Killing has been impressed on the consciousness of every Salvadoran.

"I can't say exactly when our recent troubles began. It seems that we've always lived with difficulties. I'll start my testimony in mid-November, 1978. That's when we went up to the large plantations to pick the coffee (November). The landowners had sent word throughout the countryside that the season would begin on November 14. The landowners were nervous. The rains had come late in May, delaying the maturing of the coffee beans. Tradition held that the harvest end by December 24. The landowners knew that it would be difficult to get us back onto their plantations after Christmas and they feared losing some of the crop.

We rose at 3:30 in the morning on November 14—old people, children, men and women—began the long trek up the volcano of Chinchontepec. We arrived at the plantation at around six o'clock in the morning and registered with the foremen. A man from the police checked our identification papers against a list. Those whose names appeared on that list were taken away by the National Guard. In 1978 three men from Santa Lucia were arrested at harvest time. We never learned what became of them.

You'll find some old fools in this country who'll tell you about the happy days of the coffee harvest. I think maybe age, pain or suffering has dulled their wits. There was nothing happy about the harvest except that we were guaranteed work for two months and on December 24 we had some money to buy a few gifts, maybe a toy for the little one in the family or some turkey for the Christmas tamales.

Who could be happy working under such conditions? If we accidently broke one branch of a coffee tree we were fined a day's wage. If we broke two branches in a single season, we were fired. The foremen even counted the beans under the trees where families worked. We were paid by the basket and for every bean lost the wage for one basket was deducted from our pay."

*Narrative:* The three main export crops—cotton, sugar and coffee—must be harvested in November, December and January. All are labor intensive and require very little labor during the rest of the year. A lack of available labor during these months would mean losing the crop and thus El Salvador's second-largest source of foreign capital after the United States' support for the Salvadoran military. If the majority of people were gainfully employed in a stable economy, there would be no workers for the harvest. The Salvadoran export economy, therefore, depends as much on seasonal unemployment and underemployment (from February until October) as on available labor from November until January.

The wages from the harvest are low and are used to purchase clothing or shoes for the children and possibly a few Christmas presents. The peasants are paid piece-meal and by the end of the harvest many workers spend more on the costs incurred to pick coffee than they earn. Why would they continue to work? For the coffee pickers, gleaning rights belong to those who stay for the whole harvest. Also, some plantations refuse to re-hire peasants who work only during the more-profitable early part of the season.

The export economy of El Salvador is weakened by competition from crops cultivated for local consumption. The staples of the Salvadoran diet are corn and beans. Corn is planted, usually on leased land, in early May. The corn ripens in August and some is harvested. The majority of the corn cobs, however, are snapped while on the stalk, allowed to dry in the field and picked throughout October and November. The bean crop is planted in September alongside the rows of corn. The beans are harvested in November and December. Thus, El Salvador's three main export crops—its source of foreign capital—and its two important domestic crops—the dietary staple of the poor—are all harvested in the same season. The corn and bean harvests are more important to the peasant than the coffee, cotton and sugar harvests. The motivation to pick coffee is undermined, not only by low wages, but by the relative lack of importance of the crop in the life of the poor.

Salvadoran peasants have long realized how easy it would be to demand higher wages if they were organized. If workers had the right to organize and to strike, the agricultural economy would favor workers over producers. Coffee beans, for example, ripen at different times throughout the harvest and the export-quality beans must be picked before they fall to the ground. A two-week strike would cost the landowners dearly. If there are no pickers, there is no harvest. If there is no harvest, there is no foreign exchange for the government and oligarchy.

*Testimony:* In the late 1970s, peasants who worked as seasonal laborers on El Salvador's large coffee plantations began to organize. The Chinchontepec volcano in the Province of La Paz was one of the first areas where workers went on strike for higher wages.

"My grandson, Juan Elias, was one of the organizers of the 1979 strike. One of the young men who worked alongside my grandson was Antonio Moran, a seminarian from San Salvador. Antonio was granted permission every year to work with his mother during the coffee harvest. Another of the key organizers in Santa Lucia was a young woman I had known since she was born, Corelia Casteñeda. Corelia was different. She had an education. Ten years earlier her mother's sister had left for the United States and had sent money to pay for Corelia's schooling. I think she may even have completed high school, although I'm not sure.

These young people frequently met in my kitchen so I heard most of what they said. At first I was glad to see Elias spending so much time with Antonio and Corelia. But after their first few meetings I knew we were in for trouble in Santa Lucia, and that Antonio, Corelia and my grandson were going to be in the middle of it.

Of all the young people who helped organize the workers, Antonio was the most insistent. This came as no surprise because this has been our experience with priests and future priests. He would preface his opinions with 'Monseñor says'. 'Monseñor' was a reference to the new archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero. I have to confess I, too, listened to his homilies on the radio every Sunday morning even though I had long ago stopped going to church. Having heard Monseñor's homilies, I was frightened to think what Antonio and the others were planning.

'It's our right', my own boy exclaimed on a number of occasions.

'It's not a question of rights or what Monseñor says', Corelia added. "The truth is that we learned something this year. They [the landowners] need us. For ten months of the year we are less than the dirt under their feet. But in November and December, they need us. Everything that this country produces for export—coffee, sugar, cotton—must be harvested in these months. It is during this time and only then that we have power. We have them by the balls and all we have to do is squeeze.'

At one of their meetings, Corelia said to me: 'Doña Juanita, Elias has told us how your family were once labor organizers and how you lived through the Great Killing of '32. You have some experience. What do you think we should do? How should we organize?'

I knew that I was being flattered into helping these young people. I hesitated but then answered: 'Back in 1932 we had no way to communicate with the city', I said. 'Today I can go down to the Pedro's store and use his phone to call the capital. One reason our struggle failed in '32 was because we peasants had no way to communicate with the workers in the city. Also we now have television. If we'd had television in '32 who can imagine the world standing by as 30,000 of our people were horribly killed . . . ?'

'So what you're telling us, Doña Juanita, is that we need to coordinate with the popular organizations in the capital and to have press coverage.' This was a statement and not a question. I didn't even know what 'press coverage' meant. I assumed the worst.

The following months were busy ones. My grandson returned to school and completed fifth grade. Monseñor Romero visited our little church and even I went to the Mass that he celebrated. I don't like priests and I like bishops even less. Still, even I loved this man. After mass, Monseñor's assistant kept whispering in his ear and pulling him toward the car. But Monseñor insisted that our young people show him Santa Lucia before he left us. We all walked with him. And when he came to the place where six weeks earlier the *Guardia* had killed four peasants, he stopped to pray. During this prayer I had a horrible feeling in my stomach. It wasn't because of what Monseñor said, but because what he said was true. 'This killing was wrong', Monseñor said. 'And we will suffer these wrongs no more.'

In October 1979, just before the coffee harvest was to begin, a group that called itself the Federation of Salvadoran Peasants-Union of Farmworkers demanded a raise in the rate of pay for every basket of coffee. The 1979 harvest was to begin early, on November 4. I was scared.

My grandson and his friends formed 'The November 4 Committee of Santa Lucia'. I became their 'advisor'. The 'November 4 Committee' met in my house the night before the harvest was to begin. Antonio was back from the capital. Other friends of my grandson had joined the committee as well as my niece, Ana Maria. There were also a few new faces that night. From the strange way they talked I assumed these newcomers were from the city. I didn't understand much of what they said. But I did realize when they talked about 'the masses' they meant us, the peasants. When they talked about the 'Oligarchy', they meant more than the fourteen families who own so much of the land in El Salvador. They meant all the rich. I remember when Jose Humberto asked who would



pay for the extra wages we were demanding, the answer was ‘the imperialists’. That meant you North Americans.

The ‘November 4 Committee’ talked well into the morning and I was quite sure that, if we did start work the next day, these young people would pick very little coffee. When the meeting ended I insisted everybody stay the night. In El Salvador it is dangerous to be out at night. The *Guardia* needs only the slightest pretext to kill.

Our first confrontation was quite short and peaceful. All of the peasants—those from Santa Lucia as well as those from the surrounding villages—refused to enter the plantation until the landowner met with us. At first the foreman refused to send our message to the hacienda. But when he did, the landowner replied that he would only meet with our leaders. We said we had no leaders; we only had spokesmen. Anything we had to say could be said in front of all the people, as we were united in our demands. The foreman left to inform the landowner of this development and returned with a promise: ‘The *patron* knows this strike was not your idea but that of communist agitators from the city. He promises to forget everything that has happened here if you begin registering for work.’

In response, we started chanting, ‘Forty cents a basket. Daily pay’. This was the wage we were demanding (at the time, about ten U.S. cents) and also that we be paid at the end of every day. We knew their tricks. If we waited until December 23rd to be paid the landowner would deduct our small gains from our pay.

The *Guardia* was present but they made no effort to stop us. How could they? There were two thousand of us and only a handful of them. We were united. Their tactic had always been to take away our leaders. That morning, if they had attacked, we would have stopped them.

We stayed throughout the morning chanting and singing. ‘The people united, will never be defeated’, was one chant. Another was ‘Enough now, enough now, land to the people’. And there were more.

Our spokesmen, my grandson and the other members of the ‘November 4 Committee’, stayed well-hidden in the midst of the crowd to protect their identities. I was toward the front. I must tell you that, although I was afraid and not at all sure we were doing the right thing, I was proud of my grandson.

Most of us left at mid-day. If we were not going to pick coffee, we had other work in the home. But every morning we returned to the plantation and presented our demands to the foreman. We shouted our chants and sang our songs.

On the last day of the week the landowner came down to talk with us. He was angry but I could also see that he was scared. Coffee must be harvested while ripe and on the tree. During these two months of the harvest the landowners are vulnerable. After one week of our strike, the over-ripe beans were already falling from the trees. A two-month strike would have ruined the harvest.

But, sadly, he had nothing to offer us. He refused to listen to us and simply repeated his earlier demand that we start work. The next day, we had our first trouble.

Other large plantations had been targeted and hundreds of thousands of peasants across El Salvador had been striking at the same time. We asked the students from the National University to help us keep other communities informed of our efforts and to keep us informed of what was occurring in other parts of the country. Three of these students drove to Chalatenango on Friday afternoon to learn what they could of the strike in that part of the country. On Saturday night we received news that they’d been stopped by the *Guardia*, pulled from their car and killed with machetes. They were buried in a common grave in Santa Lucia’s cemetery.

On Sunday evening the landowner left in a truck piled high with his family's personal belongings. He was accompanied by the *Guardia* and the gate to the plantation was left open. I have suffered much in my life, and especially in the past ten years. But the feeling of victory we shared on Monday morning when we entered the plantation gave meaning to all that suffering.

We began working at eleven in the morning and we worked until dark. We had been completely taken by surprise by the departure of the landowner and the *Guardia*. "Land to the people" had been a slogan for us, not a hope. So that night, after we finished eating, we sat down to talk and plan.

As was becoming the custom, the university students spoke first. 'The land belongs to the people and the factories to the workers. We should harvest the coffee and share its profits equally'. From what I had seen of the student who said this, I guessed that she had never picked a coffee bean in her life.

Other voices, less educated but perhaps more experienced, prevailed. Antonio spoke: 'Monseñor says workers deserve a just wage and the landowners have a right to their property'.

My grandson also spoke and it was his suggestion that we accepted. 'We should harvest the coffee, prepare it for sale and share equally in the just wage of 40 cents per basket. We should share this wage with those who stay behind to cook for us and to care for the small children. After deducting our wages and expenses we should return the profits to the landowner. We must prove that he can pay us a just wage and still make a profit—without the *Guardia* standing over us'.

So we worked. We worked harder than we'd ever worked before. Those of us from the outlying villages moved onto the plantation to start work earlier. In the evenings, after a meal of beans, rice and tortillas, we planned future projects. Even I began to hope. We discussed digging a six kilometer irrigation canal. We planned the fruit harvest and raising cattle.

I will die knowing what heaven is like. It is long days of hard work with the satisfaction of enjoying the fruits of your labor. We enjoyed heaven on Chinchontepec for ten days. We had our problems too, but we had the freedom to search for solutions. We had differences of opinion, especially with the young people from the university. But we knew that with time they would learn as much from us as we had from them.

It was only ten days but in that short time we started a school and dreamed of the day when our children would be able to read and write.

It was only ten days but we began work on that irrigation canal.

It was only ten days but we began a community health program and dreamed of the day when our children would not die at an early age from measles, malaria and dysentery.

Then, after ten days, the *Guardia* returned and with them our suffering."

*Narrative:* The list of massacres and attacks against defenseless civilians during El Salvador's twelve year war is a long one: Mogotes—31 killed; Guazapa—34 killed; Armenia—23 killed; Mozote—800 killed; San Antonio Abad—35 killed; San Jose Las Flores—57 killed; Sumpul River—600 killed; Los Cerros de San Pedro—300 killed.

The special, U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion has its own list of massacres: Tenango and Guadalupe—150 killed; Tenancingo—50 killed; Copapayo—118 killed; Las Piletas, Gualsinga River—34 killed. At times the Atlacatl has joined forces with the Belloso Battalion: San Carlos Lempa—25 killed; Los Llanitos—68 killed. The Atlacatl also participated in Operation Phoenix on Guazapa volcano where 245 civilians, mostly women and children, were killed. On November 16, 1989 soldiers of the Atlacatl Battalion entered the Jesuit University of Central America and brutally killed six priests and two housekeepers.

How can we understand such acts? Since 1932 the Salvadoran military and their wealthy patrons have justified warring on the poor as a defense against Communism. It is true that the Salvadoran insurgency has included elements of the Salvadoran Communist Party and has received material assistance from Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet Union. But as El Salvador's President Alfredo Cristiani himself recently admitted, the causes of the war are inherent in El Salvador's economy and social structure. These conditions were exacerbated by the East-West conflict, not created by it.

Why kill Jesuit priests, an Archbishop, American nuns, tens of thousands of civilians?

The attacks by death squads and the Salvadoran military have principally been waged against union members, cooperatives and those who support organized labor and cooperativism. A cooperative is a self-sufficient, agro-economic model of development. Individual cooperatives do not threaten the Salvadoran oligarchy. They do subvert the economy, however, in presenting a model for economic self-sufficiency. A self-sufficient cooperative, even one that is very poor, does not provide labor for the annual harvest.

This helps account for the massacre of the Jesuits. Many in the Christian base communities, cooperatives and unions saw the Jesuits' deaths as an attack on economic and social self-sufficiency among the poor. The Jesuits still work openly and alongside the poor to undermine class dependency and institutionalized poverty. In this they are subversive of the economic status quo.

*Testimony:* During the late 1970s and early 1980s the Salvadoran Armed Forces were completely indiscriminate in their bombardment and invasions of areas they deemed under guerrilla control. When the army arrived, the people fled, taking nothing but the clothes on their backs. Their flight was haphazard. Some people fled to the Honduran border. Others sought the protection of the Church in San Salvador. The flights often lasted several days during which time many people died, either from attacks by the military, starvation, thirst, exposure or disease.

"The plantation was on the northern side of Chinchontepec. Many small villages were located on the skirt of the volcano. Those of us who had moved onto Chinchontepec heard the first shots fired from the helicopters as the *Guardia* circled the villages of San Pablo and Flores de Mayo below us. We could plainly see how, when the people tried to flee these villages, they were shot down by the helicopters. But at first, the *Guardia* stayed outside of the towns.

They were waiting for the tanks. When the tanks started firing, those of us on Chinchontepec could hear them. Soon the sky over San Pablo and Flores de Mayo was covered by a blanket of smoke. Then—it was minutes after the slaughter had begun—someone screamed, 'The *Guardia!*' and we rose like a huge wave. Two thousand of us from seven towns began this *guinda*. Eighty survived.

We fled toward the village of Santa Rosa that straddled the northern border of the plantation on the volcano's peak. Perhaps we expected to find protection among its adobe walls. We pushed our way up the volcano through terrain we knew well, calling out the names of our friends and family.

As the helicopters finished their work below us, the sky began to clear and we could see the destruction of San Pablo and Flores de Mayo. The soldiers were now passing through these villages and setting fire to the roofs of the standing houses. We saw mothers trying to flee with their babies bundled in her arms. We saw them shot down from the circling helicopters.

Our path went up the side of the volcano and soon joined another that crossed its summit. Santa Rosa was to the right. The path to the left led to another plantation on the other side of

Chinchontepec. The *Guardia* had set up two machine guns at this crossing. They opened fire as the first of our people came within their sights. I had stopped to search for my grandson and because of this delay I was spared. I was not, however, spared the sight of my friends and neighbors cut down like corn stalks under a machete. Others, particularly the children, seemed to explode when the bullets hit them.

Behind us the helicopters had finished their work and were now advancing toward the plantation. We knew that if we stopped we'd surely be killed, either by these helicopters or by the machine guns in front of us. So we fled around the machine guns as they continued to fire into us. How many died there, I do not know. I ran and fell, ran and fell in the slippery, thick blood mixed with the dust of the volcano. I climbed over the bodies of friends and found myself stepping on their faces in my flight to safety.

We left Santa Rosa by five separate routes. We felt that this would ensure that some of us reached safety to tell what had happened. My grandson and I gathered about us as many people from Santa Lucia as we could find—about sixty in all—and began the trek down the southern side of Chinchontepec.

I took charge of a young mother and her four children. The mother—Isabel was her name—was completely dazed and incapable of providing her small family with any leadership. Isabel took her nursing infant and I herded the three oldest in front of me. In the afternoon we heard the thunder of approaching helicopters. We moved closer to the mountainside and hid under a ledge covered with vines and bushes.

The air became still. We huddled close together, waiting for death.

Isabel started to whimper. I scolded her, 'Shhh.... Be strong. Be strong for your little ones'.

Then the *Guardia* came. At first we only heard their voices. When the sun moved higher in the sky, we could see them on the path below us. The first group passed without showing much interest in searching.

Then Isabel's baby started to cry.

'Feed her', I whispered.

'I've tried', she said, 'but I have no milk'.

'Put your little finger in her mouth'.

'I did. She only cries more'.

'Shhhh', I said. 'The *Guardia* is returning'.

There was not much light under the brush but there was enough to see as Isabel placed her hand over her baby's mouth to smother its cries. I saw the baby turn red and then purple. I saw the tears form in Isabel's eyes as she glanced desperately down the mountainside waiting for the soldiers to leave. But they didn't leave, they lingered.

Isabel's face turned into a horrible mask of self-loathing as she suffocated her baby. She sacrificed this young one so that the rest of us could live. I've thought of Isabel and her baby often in the years since that *guinda*. The memory of her sacrifice has helped me to continue to hope and to struggle.

My grandson is in the mountains now, fighting with the guerrillas. I live here in Calle Real and I work with the Church in the Social Pastoral. I take every chance I can to tell people what happened on our *guinda* and to remind my people of what could have been if we'd had more than just ten days.

## **Evangelization in Calle Real**

Calle Real, where Juanita Martinez settled after her flight from Chinchontepec, is a canton of the municipality of Ciudad Delgado in the Department of San Salvador. Calle Real is located on the Troncal del Norte, the major highway leading north from the capital of San Salvador to the Department of Chalatenango and the Honduran border. Calle Real is bordered on its western and eastern sides by two rivers that carry the effluent and sewage from the capital to the Lempa River. The majority of the homes in Calle Real lack potable water. Parts of the canton do not have electricity. Only one road connects the rural part of Calle Real with the major highway. Access to the agricultural production zones is principally by foot. Most land is owned by absentee landlords who rent it to indigent families and displaced people.

Calle Real has five "sectors" and a total of twenty-six communities. Fourteen of these communities became "organized" after Juanita Martinez and the other refugees settled there. That is to say, they developed either community councils, youth or prayer-reflection groups. Now, sixty percent of the parish has been settled by families displaced by the war, ex-combatants or returned refugees. Some of these, like Juanita Martinez, live in their own homes on land owned by their communities. Many others are squatters living along the rail tracks, highway or riverbeds. The population of Calle Real is close to 20,000.

By settling in Calle Real, Juanita and the other refugees and displaced people did not escape the war. Calle Real is situated between the volcanoes of Guazapa and San Salvador, strongholds of the Armed Forces of El Salvador and the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) during the twelve year insurgency. The canton was occupied for most of the war by the National Guard and the First Brigade of the Armed Forces of El Salvador. The rural areas of Calle Real suffered terrible oppression at the hands of the Armed Forces throughout the 1980s.

#### *Planning for Evangelization: First Stage, 1986*

In 1985 the pastoral team in Calle Real sponsored a four month analysis of El Salvador's social-economic reality, with particular attention paid to the problems of the communities of Calle Real. Juanita Martinez helped to organize this analysis, using methods she had learned in her community-organizing on Chinchontepec. The process began with reading the daily scripture, asking how those texts helped illuminate social reality, and then asking how social reality helped to illuminate scripture. This method, the *Lectio Divina* described by scripture scholar Carlos Mesters, has as its purpose to identify major social problems and develop strategies for change that could best address these problems. After the time of preparation (four months), representatives of the communities of Calle Real gathered for five days to share experiences, to interpret social life and investigate how the Bible challenged them to change.

On the fourth day of this gathering, the community assembly agreed that the five major problems in Calle were: (1) poverty created by lack of employment opportunities, (2) caused by lack of education, and (3) violation of human and civil rights by the Armed Forces and government security forces, resulting in (4) poor health (physical and psychological) and (5) dependence. The war was not identified as a problem but as a response to all of these problems.

On the last day of this analysis the people defined a four-fold strategy for change:

1. Educate the people of Calle Real to become active in the political process and with social organizations working for change. The people expressed belief that the social changes needed in El Salvador could only come about if they became active in the social forces shaping peaceful

change. Empowering people to do so became a guiding principle to the pastoral project that emerged as a result of this meeting.

2. The lack of child-care facilities was seen as preventing women from entering the work force. This in turn contributed to poverty and dependence. A commitment was made to develop a child-care facility.

3. The health problems of the community gravely affected all—men, women and children. The pastoral team committed to founding a people's clinic.

4. The pastoral team realized in 1986 that providing the social services of a clinic and day care would increase dependency on outside sources of funding. The people decided to improve the quality of life in the community through job-training. The hope was that by increasing the community's standard of living, the community would eventually be able to sustain the social services of the Church.

Community-organizing was undertaken in seven additional communities. The day care was established as was the clinic. Finally, throughout 1986 the pastoral team started three training workshops: a carpentry shop, a seamstress shop and a bakery. Each of these training projects eventually failed.

#### *Planning for Evangelization: Second Stage, 1989*

Ordinarily the failure of a carpentry shop is not a concern for great worry. When the failed carpentry project has been proposed by the Church as a challenge to the status quo, however, the project takes on a larger significance. Why did the training workshops in Calle Real fail? To maintain a training workshop requires continual income for teachers' salaries and raw material for the students. Calle Real lacked these resources. The products initially made by the students were not marketable. Furniture fell apart. Clothing was poorly designed, cut and sewn. Worst of all, the bakery developed a reputation for making *pan piedra* "stone-bread".

It was Juanita Martinez who identified the larger problem in the task to change the social conditions of work in El Salvador. She asked, "What advantages are we gaining for the majority by educating a few to incorporate into a work force that is itself oppressive?"

The oppression of the Salvadoran worker is legend. They are underpaid. They are seldom paid social security and when social security is paid it is as a reward for loyalty to the *patron* and not for work well-done. Workers are divided. Their unions are constantly attacked by the government and union leaders killed by death squads. Some unions are controlled by political forces more loyal to Marxism than to their workers. Preparing laborers to enter such a work-force is hardly a sign of integral development.

Juanita also helped to articulate a solution to the problem of social evangelization. She did so with her fellow pastoral workers and in the context of a pastoral planning congress called by the Archdiocese of San Salvador in April, 1989. This congress was highly participatory. Parishes like Calle Real shared their experiences and, drawing from the collective wisdom of the Church, re-directed the focus of pastoral work in the Archdiocese. Chief among the Calle Real delegates to the planning congress was Juanita Martinez. The new Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan bears the mark of her analysis and experiences. It addresses the need to evangelize through prophetic word and action. It addresses the need to educate and empower the laity to assume leadership roles in the Church. The most striking feature of the pastoral plan, however, and that part of the plan to inspire the greatest change in Calle Real, was the call to "evangelize the structures of Salvadoran society."

The Calle Real pastoral team interpreted this as a challenge to envision new forms and relations of work, not to simply train workers to enter a repressed work force. According to Juanita, "We asked ourselves, if the gospel calls us to challenge the structure of Salvadoran society, we must first ask, 'what is the nature of our society?'" In response, the pastoral team observed that Salvadoran society is dependent upon the economies of the Northern Hemisphere. Evangelizing Salvadoran society, they reasoned, means reducing dependency. Reducing dependency in Calle Real requires looking for ways to support the health and child-care projects using local resources.

The social pastoral of Calle Real was subsequently re-organized into two arms: projects of assistance and projects of production. The team looked for economic assistance for five years to provide training and help to build an economic infrastructure. The goal was that at the end of that five-year period, the cooperatives of Calle Real would sustain the social services in their community through a tax placed on the profits of the cooperatives.

The pastoral team also observed that Salvadoran society is highly individualistic. Evangelizing the economy means challenging workers to cooperate for the benefit of the community. This goal is best achieved through cooperative arrangements for work. Cooperativism means giving the workers control over production, not simply training them to work for others. The first project to become re-organized in Calle Real under this new structure was the carpentry shop. The Loyola Carpentry Cooperative began operations (as a cooperative) on February 11, 1990. The first two years were devoted to learning technical skills and producing furniture appropriate to the technical levels achieved by the carpenters. After a year, the carpenters were able to pay their teacher's salary from their earnings. In 1992 three of the young carpenters from the Loyola Cooperative became teachers.

At first the carpenters earned very little and made no profit. They gradually opened markets, and by time of this writing, November 1992, have twenty-two young people producing in three areas: housing-construction, furniture-making and folk arts. Salaries are increasing monthly and some profits beyond salaries are beginning to show.

In 1991 the pastoral team received funds to build a new clinic. The carpentry cooperative produced all the furniture for the center. Iron work was sub-contracted to another church-based cooperative. The cement blocks were likewise purchased from another cooperative. Finally, the greatest cost—labor—was performed by a construction workers' cooperative formed for that purpose.

The construction workers and carpenters built the clinic in Calle Real in four months. It was blessed by Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas on August 16, 1991 during the parish corn festival. The construction workers had little time to rest. They went on to build a school in Paisnal and another in Aguilares, both poor communities, at a considerable savings to these communities.

The clinic moved into its new locale. Other spaces in the pastoral center were occupied by the construction workers, a new bakery (the Resurrection Bakery) and a revitalized seamstress cooperative. Each of these projects, along with a credit union started in 1992, are helping to sustain social services in Calle Real.

## **The Church and the New Popular Economy**

The "new popular economy" is the structure that the Church has proposed as an alternative to Salvadoran capitalism and Marxism. It is an effort to evangelize Salvadoran society and economy to transform it into a more just structure. This implies changing economic relations within and between Salvadoran communities in a way that gives the poor access to raw materials, control over

the means of production and direct access to markets. It further allows them, through their own labor, to support social services in their communities. The Calle Real project has emerged as an exemplary model of the new popular economy.

The criterion that the pastoral team used in 1989 to evaluate their success (and the criterion that led them to conclude that as of that date they had failed to achieve their stated goals) was that of independency. The team asked, "Can we maintain the level of service to the poor of our communities if all outside support for these projects were to be taken away. This is a serious question, considering the extent of the services that developed after the 1986 plan was adopted.

For example, the health project in Calle Real served 16,500 people in 1991. The range of medical needs addressed by the health team was varied. About one third of the patients who visited the clinic were suffering from common colds, gripe and fevers that required little more than a sympathetic ear and a dose of aspirin. Other patients were treated for intestinal diseases, bronchitis, skin infections and more serious illnesses. The diagnoses were made by promoters of health—lay persons trained by the Archdiocesan Commission on Pastoral Health. More complicated cases were seen by a doctor or a medical student.

From 1987 until 1992 the Archdiocese of San Salvador provided the clinic in Calle Real with an annual subsidy of 27,000 colones for the purchase of medicines. The promoters of health "sold" this medicine to their patients for 9,000 colones and used this income to maintain the clinic facility. In 1992 the Archdiocese announced that after January, 1993 the clinic in Calle Real would no longer receive this subsidy.

The nursery school-kindergarten in Calle Real is another example of the assistance given to the poor by the social pastoral team in Calle Real. It cares for fifty children. Each family contributes one colon per day to the nursery school. This covers one third of the costs of materials, salaries, and food for the children. The other two-thirds costs have been provided by a one-time, non-renewable gift from Catholic Charities in Spain. In 1993 these funds will expire.

The Mothers and Infants Program is another example of service to the poor in Calle Real. It provides a dietary supplement to one hundred and fifty families, mostly single-parent homes living as squatters along the rail tracks in Calle Real. The Mothers and Infants Program has been administered for thirty years by Catholic Charities with surplus foods donated by the U. S. Agency for International Development (A.I.D.). In December, 1992 Archbishop Rivera Damas requested that a portion of administrative funds for this project be allocated for job-training in squatter communities. A.I.D. refused the Archbishop's request. Consequently, in late 1992 the Mothers and Infants Program will be eliminated, the victim of A.I.D. intransigence.

In short, in 1993 the three, major assistance programs in Calle Real will be without funding. Literally thousands of men, women and children will be affected. The consequences in El Salvador, which does not provide social services to the poor, can be catastrophic. How well the social pastoral team weathers this crisis is an indication of how well they have planned an alternative model for social development to challenge the status quo.

### *Integral Human Development*

The criterion of self-sufficiency for the social pastoral of Calle Real is taken from the social teachings of the Church, particularly the pastoral letters of San Salvador's Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas. Archbishop Rivera Damas has spoken clearly and forcefully on the right of all sectors of society for "integral development." For Rivera Damas, "integral development" is the most basic human right, one that provides a foundation for all other rights—civil and religious.



Integral development does not prioritize food and shelter over psychological health and spiritual well-being. It does not regard work as more important than cultural-artistic expression. It sees all of these as essential for human development and stresses them all.

For Rivera Damas, a pastoral approach that feeds the hungry but robs the poor of their dignity does not contribute to human development. A program that provides work but does so by sacrificing the right of workers to organize does not advance human integrity. A development program that replaces God with the false god of history is counter-development. Every activity proposed by or supported with funds of the Social Secretariat of the Archdiocese attends to the integral development of the program's beneficiaries: their physical well-being, psychological health, spiritual growth and cultural advancement.

Given El Salvador's repressive social structure and the internalization of repression by the culture-at-large, the Archdiocesan pastoral plan is a revolutionary manifesto. It calls for profound changes in Salvadoran society, the evangelization of structures and the personal conversion of the faithful. Changing governmental and economic structures without changing the persons who create and maintain these systems is a waste of time, or so says the Catholic Church in El Salvador.

Attention to "integral development" prompted the pastoral team in Calle Real to review and revise the social service projects described above. An example:

The goal of the clinic in Calle Real is to provide the best quality service to the poor by reducing costs, especially profit, from health care. It is not a professional, full-service hospital. Costs are reduced by the presence of volunteer health promoters. They are reduced by the not-for-profit distribution of medicines. Medicinal costs have been further reduced by developing natural medicines for the pharmacy. Patients who are able also help reduce costs by cleaning the clinic facility and watering the plants. Some patients provide plants to the medicinal garden.

The most difficult attitude to convey to the clinic's patients is that the facility is their responsibility to maintain. These are not seen as typical or professional approaches to health care. But a popular clinic does not reflect popular values simply because the work of filing, laboratory analysis, consulting and preventative work are done by peasants. It is a popular clinic when it is maintained financially and through contributed labor by the people who use it. To pay for maintenance, support services and commercial medicines with subsidies received from outside the parish would increase dependence and so be contrary to integral development.

Integral development means more than providing health care. It includes giving the sick the opportunity to become healers. Clients of the clinic in Calle Real are instructed in preventative health, about the use of herbs as curatives, the nature of their illness and how to become well. Just as importantly, they are asked to contribute to the health of others by becoming involved as health promoters. This may involve cleaning the clinic or a more serious commitment such as becoming involved in the works of diagnoses, education, laboratory analysis or pharmacology. This is integral development for health: becoming cured and curing others.

### **A Few Weeds in the Wheat**

The story of the growth of cooperativism in Calle Real is encouraging. These advances, however, have been won with just as many setbacks. The Calle Real experience suggests that bringing about a new, popular economy requires overcoming three major hurdles. These are: creating new structures of social relations within work, developing an appropriate methodology for administration and accountability, and securing funding for training and infrastructure.

## *Creating New Structures of Work*

The need to develop new structures of work can be illustrated with an example from the construction industry. In El Salvador, a client who wants to build contracts a construction firm. They agree on a plan and price and the client makes a thirty percent down-payment. The construction firm provides technical oversight and places a master of works over the project. The master of works' first task is to hire the laborers. That done, he oversees the construction until the owner takes possession of the building.

There are four classes of laborers on a Salvadoran construction site. First, the master of works hires laborers to work directly under himself. These are paid twenty eight colones (\$3.50) daily. Some are paid social security. Second, the master also hires qualified laborers, for example, bricklayers, to execute the skilled work on a pay-as-you-build basis. Bricklayers are paid one colon per cement block. A bricklayer may lay one hundred cement blocks in a single day, but from the one hundred colones, he must pay his helpers who mix mortar and deliver blocks to the bricklayer's designated portion of the construction site. These assistants are the third type of laborer on a job site. They are paid less than the general laborers. They are not paid social security. Finally, at times the master of works hires day laborers through a "coyote." In this scheme he earns a kick-back by cheating the laborers. Instead of hiring ten laborers for ten positions at twenty-eight colones per day, he sells these ten positions to the "coyote." The coyote looks for day laborers to fill these positions and pays them one half the minimum wage, fourteen colones daily. He and the master of works then split the difference, gaining seven colones each, for each laborer, solely because they control who works and who does not work.

As a result, laborers on a Salvadoran construction site are constantly competing with one another. The laborers compete for access to building materials. The bricklayers compete to lay more bricks in a limited space of time. There is competition between "qualified" and "unqualified" laborers. Day laborers earning fourteen colones per day resent the contract laborers who earn twenty eight colones. Such competition is contrary to the interests of the workers who never have a unified forum to negotiate with the owners of the company. They are structurally divided before the work ever begins. This structure is also contrary to the interests of the client who wants the building well-constructed. If the bricklayers are paid for the number of bricks laid, and not according to their time, they hurry and the quality of construction lags. In earthquake-prone El Salvador this has dire consequences. Walls that are not exactly plumb will cave in after the first few earthquake tremblers.

When the construction workers' cooperative started in Calle Real, the workers immediately organized themselves according to the norms described above. Members of the pastoral team were astounded by this. The laborers of the coop were the owners of the means of production, not simply workers. As owners, their interests should have been toward making a greater profit for the cooperative. This required showing an interest in all aspects of production and not simply performing a limited role. Yet, despite a high degree of political consciousness and an intellectual commitment to cooperativism, these workers had never experienced work other than in the mode of the dominant society. Making the transition to a cooperative structure was extremely difficult. It required more than a critique of the existing structures of work. What was needed was an internal conversion on the part of each laborer toward working in a cooperative.

Such a conversion also requires a different style of social communication. In a typical Salvadoran work site, all laborers work under the master, who in turn works under the owner of the contracting firm. In the construction cooperative of Calle Real, the workers are the owners.

The master of works—also a member of the cooperative—works for the laborers. The workers needed to learn how to follow the directions of the master without surrendering authority over cooperative governance to him. Issues of governance—participation in administrative decisions, planning and training—ultimately belong to the associates of the cooperative, not to the master of works.

### *Administration of a Popular Economy*

Competent administration delineates areas of expertise and authority so as to decrease costs, improve production and open markets. The first problem in creating competent administration for the new popular economy is that the typical Salvadoran worker lacks a wide perspective on a functioning economy. In most circumstances the Salvadoran worker never sees administration taking place. The Salvadoran worker simply follows orders without understanding the whole process of supply, production and marketing. The Salvadoran laborer regards the boss as the culmination of all power in a social system where power is arbitrary.

Another cultural characteristic of the Salvadoran worker that discourages efficient administration is the tendency to emphasize personal relations over work roles. Indeed, lacking an understanding of administration and the differentiation of work roles, they collapse work roles into personal roles, which they do understand. In the traditional Salvadoran system, the boss is also the *patron* who takes care of the worker and the worker's family. A typical attitude toward worker-welfare is that the government need not supply social security to the worker because this is the responsibility of the *patron*. It is a great irony to see how, in many rural communities, poor families seek out the most abusive (yet powerful) *patrons* and landowners to be godparents for their children. This is an attempt to personalize work roles and to transform the boss into a member of the family.

The need to develop administrative roles and the difficulty in doing so is evident in the brief history of the seamstress shop in Calle Real. This cooperative started as one of the parish training workshops. The sewing teacher, Narci, was initially paid by the parish. When funds ended she offered to "help" the cooperative by bringing their embroidery work to market. Narci evolved into the *patron* for the seamstresses. The women did not know where Narci sold their work or for what price. They remained ignorant of costs and market demand. They simply worked and received a pittance every month from Narci, whose revolutionary rhetoric was never matched by her deeds.

The social pastoral team eventually insisted that at least one other seamstress become familiar with Narci's marketing outlets and sources of raw materials. Narci then resigned. Another woman, Demetia, was elected to take Narci's place. Just as Narci had duplicated the traditional role of *patron*, so Demetia duplicated Narci's roles as well.

There was one exception. Demetia is an honest woman and she did not steal from her colleagues. She located new markets and profits increased as did salaries. Orders for work streamed into the shop. The women designed new products and located new sources for raw materials. Profits increased and additional women joined the cooperative. After six months it became clear that the administration of the shop needed to diversify outside of Demetia's control. The pastoral team mandated that the cooperative elect a president, secretary, treasurer and disciplinarian.

The elections were duly held and according to most observers, the newly-elected officials were exactly the worst for each position. Demetia returned as work coordinator. The president-elect, a hard worker and honest woman, was painfully shy and had no ability to preside over a

meeting. The secretary could not write. The treasurer could not add or subtract. The disciplinarian was the youngest member of the cooperative and the person most needing disciplining.

What had happened? Confronted with a mandate to elect administrators to complement Demetia's role as work coordinator, the members of the cooperative chose to accede in a way that would not threaten Demetia. Ironically, all agreed on the need for a new style of administration. But until Demetia herself was ready for that change, the decision was not to force it and hurt her feelings. The personal relationship was more important than the role-relationship.

The problem facing the creation of a new, popular economy is to respect the accent on the personal while developing roles that will see tasks accomplished.

### *Funding for Training and Infrastructure*

All reconstruction funds for El Salvador channelled through the Salvadoran government are designated for the support of the existing economic infrastructure. For example, the government has received funds for re-training ex-combatants and returned refugees. But agencies collaborating with the government will only train men and women to enter the private sector. It will not train men and women who wish to work in cooperatives. Cooperativism challenges the alliance of large industry and the Salvadoran government. The United States government regards cooperativism as a soft form of socialism. The Department of State of the United States, which has made training funds available through A.I.D., supports the Salvadoran government's lack of support for cooperatives.

Popular organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in El Salvador have also raised money for reconstruction and training. These funds are small, in comparison to those received by the government from A.I.D. More problematically, many NGOs have a top-down approach to development. Although espousing revolutionary rhetoric that calls for the empowerment of the "masses", they manage funds and projects for the poor, assuming the role left vacant by the former *patrons*. Top-down development does not work. It is particularly ineffective when the rhetoric raises the workers' expectations for greater participation in economic decision-making, but the reality reduces the worker to passive cogs in the machinery of a neo-socialist economy.

With such small amounts of funds reaching Salvadoran communities and cooperatives, there is little prospect for building a strong base for a new popular economy in El Salvador.

This situation leaves the churches as the main source of channelling funds to the communities. The Lutheran Church of El Salvador was once a major participant in the new popular economy. But the Lutheran Church's close alignment with the Communist Party has weakened the integrity of that Church and lost its support in the international community. Some Baptist churches and the Episcopal Church of El Salvador have maintained their integrity and promoted a new economic reality in El Salvador, but with extremely limited material and human resources.

The Catholic Church shows the greatest potential to contribute toward the creation of a new economic structure for El Salvador. The Social Secretariat of the Archdiocese of San Salvador has supported placing economic production in the hands of Salvadoran workers. The Church has a clearly articulated social program, one based on a long tradition of social doctrine. It has maintained fidelity to this doctrine and not sacrificed its integrity for political expediency with the FMLN nor compromised its social vision for an opportunity to become co-administrator with the United States Agency for International Development of reconstruction funds.

The Catholic Church's difficulties in assuming a major role in reconstruction stem from its lack of personnel and its inability to interact with international funding agencies and potential corporate donors. The Church's lack of support-personnel is most evident in the communities where there are not resources to teach the poor simple accounting and management practices. The list is long of communities robbed by hired professionals or "popular organizations" interested more in the resources the communities attract than in the works they set out to accomplish. Qualified personnel are also lacking to improve social communication skills within projects. Without such skills, peasants and laborers fail to develop active roles in their communities and cooperatives. They then become prone to political manipulation.

The inability of the Church to interact with international funding agencies and corporate donors is partly a consequence of the lack of personnel. It is also the result of the Church's xenophobia and inability to delegate authority. Here again, the Social Secretariat has reason to maintain a healthy suspicion of foreigners and political manipulation within its ranks by the FMLN. The Church's reaction to this possibility, however, has limited its ability to secure funding for poor communities

### **Conclusion: Work as Sacrament**

Evangelization requires articulating one's lesson in response to the felt interests and concerns of the hearer. When done as preaching, much of Catholic evangelization is not so much insipid as irrelevant. Evangelization in a poor society requires articulating the gospel message in a way that addresses the concerns of the poor. This does not mean betraying the message of the gospel to class interests. It does require thinking about what that gospel has to say to those who lack work, dignity, the ability to raise their families, in short, those who die before their time.

Evangelizing also requires challenging society to change in such a way as to become more responsive to the needs of all members of the society, particularly the poor. Evangelization through social development has the same goal as evangelization through preaching and teaching: to convert through the power of the message proclaimed (albeit in action) human persons and societies, human activities and the concrete milieu of human culture. Granted, the Church's role in the process of social development is limited. The Church should not be in the business of running carpentry cooperatives. Its role ends with providing models for a new society, as is emerging in Calle Real, and helping communities develop the infrastructure needed to become self-sufficient. The greater task of creating a more just national economy properly belongs to secular agencies, albeit with the moral counsel of the Church. The Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador is playing its role as teacher and prophet. The final transformation will come about in El Salvador, however, when the Salvadoran masses call all of the social institutions in that country, including the FMLN, to greater accountability.

The pastoral plan for social evangelization that has emerged in Calle Real in El Salvador is a response to particular historical conditions. The society it proposes to create is one that challenges the very structure of Salvadoran society. It claims that certain behaviors and cultural attitudes—individualism, personalism—and certain social conditions—lack of education and material resources—combine to offend God and the human person. It says that change is necessary if all Salvadorans want to live a full life. It does not only call upon the society at large to change, while providing a model for the change. It first and foremost challenges those individuals who comprise Salvadoran society to change.

In December of 1991, during a tense phase of the negotiations between the guerrillas of the FMLN and the government of El Salvador, the *Diario de Hoy* newspaper in San Salvador falsely identified Calle Real's cooperatives as arms manufactories for the FMLN and the clinic as a guerrilla hospital. Shortly after the peace was signed a cooperativist from the Loyola Carpentry Cooperative was murdered by former military men (in front of a witness) and the police refused to arrest the killers. Later, the pastoral center in Calle Real was vandalized and a note left accusing the Church of supporting the insurrection. The efforts described here are small in comparison to other development projects in El Salvador. Some communities expressly align themselves with the FMLN. Why this disproportionate attention to a small Catholic parish?

While contributing to the economic stability of Calle Real, the projects described here are quite small. Calle Real has twenty thousand people. This population includes five thousand women who are unemployed or underemployed. The efforts to help these women secure work with dignity as part of the parish cooperatives, for example, are miniscule in relation to the overall problem of poverty in the parish. They receive attention disproportionate to their economic impact because they are sacramental.

The associates speak as much about Communion as about unions. They are as attentive to the Sacrament of Reconciliation as to conflict resolution. They balance their need for religious formation with their need for technical training. They are a public sign of God's grace and presence in the world. The legal title for the cooperatives of Calle Real, registered under the laws of El Salvador, is *Cooperativa Epifania: Dios Presente*, or "The Epiphany Cooperative: God Present." God present to the world in public sign and symbol is sacrament. The Epiphany Cooperative is not content to exist and to make a profit for its members. It calls all Salvadorans to transform all the social strata, and as Paul VI wrote in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, to overturn "mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life," when they "contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (#19).

**Chapter IX**  
**The Local Church and the Church Catholic:  
The Contemporary Theological Problematic**

*Joseph A. Komonchak*

A survey of contemporary theological writings on the theme of this essay quickly encounters the problem of the terminology in which the questions are posed. The fluidity of Vatican II's language is notorious,<sup>1</sup> and the two new Codes of Canon Law have not succeeded in imposing a universally acceptable vocabulary.<sup>2</sup> Further investigations reveal, however, that underlying and often determining the terminological disagreements lie options taken with regard to certain substantive questions: what are the elements constitutive of a Church and what are the relations among them? Where is the Church realized? Does the local or the universal Church have "priority"?, and what is the ecclesial significance of particularity or locality? This essay will focus on these issues in contemporary theology.<sup>3</sup>

**The Elements Constitutive of a Church**

The literature reveals a general consensus that the relation between the local Church and the whole Church is unique. Authors commonly exclude two misunderstandings of it: first, that the universal Church results simply from the federation of already existing local Churches, and, second, that the local Church is simply an administrative subdivision or "part" of the universal Church. Authors usually appeal to the statements in LG 23 that while the particular Churches "are formed in the image of the universal Church," it is only "in and out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists." This and other Conciliar statements are invoked in support of a common agreement that the local Church is a full realization of the distinctive spiritual reality of the one Church, its representation in various spaces and times.

This view builds upon the identification of the constitutive principles of the Church. With variations in emphasis, some of them significant, the following are usually invoked: the call of God, the Word of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, the Eucharist, the apostolic ministry, all of them grounding and generating the communion that is the distinctive mystery of the Church. Where all of these principles generate a community, there is the Church, not simply a "part" of the Church but the full reality of the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Spirit. For this reason, the whole Church cannot be said to result from the addition or sum of all the local Churches. The principles that generate a local Church as the Catholic Church at the same time generate also all the other local Churches and the communion among them that is the one Catholic Church. On the one hand, then, in terms of the spiritual reality nothing more is realized on any wider or higher level of the Church's life than is realized in the local Church.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, what occurs in the local Churches is an event universal, catholic, in its innermost dimensions. A number of authors propose seeing this mutual inclusion as the ecclesial reflection of the circuminsession of the three divine persons in the one nature of God.<sup>5</sup>

Some authors illumine the relations between local Church and universal Church chiefly by reference to the relations between episcopacy and primacy. On this view, the "universal Church" is the Church over which the pope presides and the "particular Church" the one over which a bishop presides, the relation between the two then being deduced from the relation between the powers of

the pope and those of the bishop. This relation is often determined by the supreme and universal authority of the pope and/or the whole episcopal college, which serves as the criterion for assertions about the individual bishop and, therefore, also of his particular Church.

Other authors vigorously criticize this approach and insist that a consideration of the nature of the Church take methodological priority.<sup>6</sup> They stress that the one Church over which the pope and college exercise supreme and universal authority is a communion of *Churches* and that the bearers of this authority, including the pope himself, are heads of local Churches. Important and necessary as they are, the authority and powers of the visible principles of unity in the local Churches and within the communion of Churches derive from the generative spiritual and sacramental principles of the Church. The apostolic ministers of the Church exist for the service of a local and universal communion which they do not generate but which is the presupposition and the basis of their own authority.

### **Where Is the Church Realized?**

At this point the question arises as to where, that is, in which individual communities of the faithful, the Church is realized. The obvious way to answer this question is to determine where the generative principles are all operative; but it also turns on judgements of the relations among the constitutive principles themselves. Leonardo Boff, for example, takes faith to be "the minimal constitutive reality of the particular Church" and thus concludes that a basic Christian community is already a realization of the universal Church.<sup>7</sup> From a rather different standpoint, Severino Dianich focuses on the intersubjective process by which the faith is communicated and subjectively received and appropriated. This is the primary and always indispensable event through which the Church is generated. All the features of the Church, including its universal or catholic dimensions, are then derived from within this necessarily particular or local event, occurring, it may be, even among "two or three persons united in the name of Jesus, who believe or communicate in faith."<sup>8</sup>

For other authors, the minimal ecclesial reality is the "altar-community," that is, a community of believers able to celebrate the eucharist under the leadership of an ordained minister. Although many take as the archetypical form of such a celebration a eucharist presided over by a bishop, others argue that it can also be realized in a parish or other small community. In support of this view they invoke the co-mediation of eucharist and Church ("The Church makes the Eucharist; the Eucharist makes the Church."), confirmed by the passage which was added to LG 26 precisely in order to provide a theological validation of eucharistic communities, whether parochial or others, within diocesan Churches.<sup>9</sup> This position would seem to follow, even if contrary to the intention of some authors, from their strong insistence on the eucharistic assembly as the primary realization of the Church in which the mutual inclusion of the local Church and the entire Church is most clearly realized and demonstrated.<sup>10</sup>

Most authors, however, including those just cited, reserve the status of a full local Church for the diocese, presided over by a bishop.<sup>11</sup> The patristic vision of the local Church with its close association of Eucharist, Church, and Bishop here dominates. The original situation in which there was a single eucharist celebrated under the bishop is the archetype, and the later multiplication of eucharistic assemblies within one episcopal Church is dealt with by considering the local diocesan Church as itself a communion of eucharistic communions.<sup>12</sup> The eucharist remains at the center and serves as the basis for the theology not only of the episcopal office but also of the mutual



inclusion of the local Church and the universal Church, of which the bishop is the visible ministerial principle.<sup>13</sup>

Other authors emphasize other elements in the articulation of the one Church in the many particular Churches (dioceses). Bertrams sees the multiplicity of the Churches as the way in which the Church witnesses to and realizes the fullness of Christ into which all authentic human values are to be taken up.<sup>14</sup> Legrand sees theological significance in the territorial delimitation of dioceses in that this geographical locality ensures that socio-cultural particularity will not become the sole or even the primary reason why people gather in local ecclesial assemblies. Territorial division and the traditional insistence that there be only one bishop in a diocese thus assure that catholicity, the integration of plurality into unity, is not simply a matter of external bonds with other Churches or with the universal Church, but an inner and constitutive dimension of the local Church itself.<sup>15</sup>

What is meant by a diocese, however, has shifted considerably over the centuries, the eucharistic role of the bishop often losing importance in favor of jurisdictional powers or of administrative tasks. Karl Rahner argued that the diocese is theologically legitimated by its capacity for ecclesial functions *other than* the eucharist and defined a bishop, no longer by reference to his presidency in Word, eucharist, and governance over a local assembly, but by participation in the powers of a "supreme governing board of the universal Church."<sup>16</sup> This position is in some tension with Rahner's theology of the local Church, for which the eucharistic assembly is the most intense realization of the Church as event; it amounts to a theological legitimation of the sociological transformation of the diocese into a large administrative unit. Rahner did have the insight, however, to raise the problem of what he calls "the relationship and the tension between the *theoretical* and the *real* structures of the Church," that is between the concentration of pastoral ministry in the bishop as described in *Lumen gentium* and the fact that most bishops are mainly administrators while most concrete pastoral ministries are carried out by priests in parishes.<sup>17</sup> This is a serious question which needs to be taken into account before one can simply assert that what was true of an Ignatius of Antioch or a Cyprian and of their Churches is also true of the heads of huge dioceses and of their Churches today.<sup>18</sup>

The question also arises as to whether ecclesial groups larger than the diocese may be called Churches. There is impressive tradition in favor of this view, and Vatican II certainly had no hesitation in employing both "local Church" and "particular Church" for various groupings of diocesan Churches. But some authors still regard such groupings as Churches in only an analogous sense.<sup>19</sup> This issue is settled in advance if the presence of the fullness of apostolic ministry is considered both necessary and sufficient to define a Church; a different answer is suggested if locality or particularity is included among its constitutive elements.

### **The Question of Priority**

Common agreement about the mutual inclusion of local and universal Church has not prevented the question of priority between them from continuing to arise. The persistence of this question is due in part to the ambiguity or transitional character of the Council's doctrine on the Church,<sup>20</sup> which the new Latin Code continues to reflect.<sup>21</sup> The Council began its work within the perspectives of the universalist ecclesiology long dominant in the West, and its recovery of an ecclesiology of communion that underlies a theology of the local Church was at best hesitant and unsystematic.

Moreover, the neat formulation of the problem in LG 23, quoted earlier, itself suggests the problem. It is not simply a matter of keeping the two prepositions in the phrase "*in quibus et ex quibus*" in dialectical tension with one another,<sup>22</sup> but also of taking into account the often neglected statement that the particular Churches are "formed in the image of the universal Church."<sup>23</sup> For this claim appears to give a certain priority to the universal Church, while the "*in quibus et ex quibus*" formula appears to assign it to the particular Churches. This problem is also reflected in the parallel questions about the relations between the whole college and the individual bishop, about whether ordination first introduces a bishop into the episcopal college or constitutes him the head of a local Church, and about whether baptism introduces one first into the universal Church or into a local Church.<sup>24</sup>

It will be helpful to give some illustrations of the reasons given for asserting the priority of either term in our relation. Ascribed to the universal Church,<sup>25</sup> it means: that only this is comprehensive, including the Church in heaven, that the local Church depends on the universal Church, that the universal Church has pre-eminence and absolute ontological priority (Mondin); that as the Church-from-above, the mystery of salvation, it exists in all the local Churches (Boff); that Christ founded only the universal Church and not the particular Churches (Bertrams, C. Colombo, Bandera, d'Ors); that the universal Church is the exemplary, efficient, and final cause of the local Church (Bertrams); that only the universal Church can be the universal sacrament of salvation (Bertrams, Bandera) and is assured of being indefectible and infallible (C. Colombo, Bandera), and holy (C. Colombo); that the universal Church precedes the local Churches temporally (Ratzinger).<sup>26</sup>

Explicit assertions of a priority of the local Church are rarer. Bruno Forte defends its "*primato*" because the Church that is born in the Eucharist is "by priority" (*prioritariamente*) the local Church and in the sense that "there is no truly ecclesial act which is not by origin (*originariamente*) an act of a local Church."<sup>27</sup> Severino Dianich argues that the necessarily particular event of the communication and reception of the faith is the "first principle" of the Church from which all other elements are derived as developments of its universal virtualities.<sup>28</sup>

Recent Roman concern about one-sided claims for the local Church may also be directed against various movements in favor of the basic Christian communities<sup>29</sup> and the communities which claim to be constructing "the Church from below."<sup>30</sup> This would seem to be the case, for example, in Ratzinger's vigorous reply to the claim that a local community may be said to have a "right" to the Eucharist.<sup>31</sup> The recent working-paper on episcopal conferences expressed the fear that a one-sided emphasis on the local churches was threatening "the ontological and also historical priority of the universal Church over the particular church." "The Petrine Primacy itself, understood as '*plenitudo potestatis*,'" it argued, "has no meaning and theological coherence except within the primacy of the one and universal Church over the particular and local Churches."<sup>32</sup>

To support this claim the text cited three recent speeches of Pope John Paul II in which he warned that emphasis on the local Churches should not lead one to neglect that they "find their authentic meaning and their ecclesial consistency only as expressions and realizations of the '*Catholica*,' of the one, universal, and original [*primigenia*] Church." In the last of the three talks cited, the Pope said that "while probing the concept of the local Church or, better, the particular Church, theologians will thus avoid the one-sided and untenable emphases which maintain that the Church is in origin and by priority (*originariamente e prioritariamente*) the local Church."<sup>33</sup>

On both sides the question of priority has arisen out of concern about contemporary needs and challenges. The option for the priority of the local Church often expresses a desire to present a

more accessible and immediate image of the Church, to defend the Council's call for the responsibility of all members of the Church, or to claim for the Churches room to exercise their own self-responsibility in the face of quite specific challenges. The priority assigned to the whole Church often expresses a concern that the unity of the Church not be compromised by various types of particularism and that the universal authority of the Pope not be weakened.

As legitimate as both sets of concerns are, to try to solve problems by asserting a priority on either side is surely a mistake. It is mistaken historically, because the Church which first emerged at Pentecost was at once local and catholic, gathered in Jerusalem but already speaking the one message in all languages, and because the Churches generated from that mother-church are the same Church, becoming catholic now concretely, in various other places.<sup>34</sup> "Ontologically," the mistake lies in imagining that the constitutive principles of the Church can ever realize the universal Church except in a local Church or a local Church except as the universal Church.<sup>35</sup>

The arguments advanced for either position do reveal the disorienting effect of the "Copernican revolution" in ecclesiology,<sup>36</sup> represented by the shift from a universalistic ecclesiology to an ecclesiology of communion. As the quotations above indicate, the issue is whether certain attributes may be referred to the universal Church that are not referred to the local Church and vice-versa. If the question is asked of a single local Church, the answer appears at first sight to be clear: no local Church is promised indefectibility, infallibility, holiness, etc., and in this sense the universal Church transcends any single local Church. But there is an exception to this rule: the case, once realized in the mother-church of Jerusalem but not impossible again, in which only one local Church realizes the universal Church; in this case, all that is true of the universal Church is true also of this local Church.<sup>37</sup>

This example itself suggests that the real comparison is not between the universal Church and an individual local Church, but between the universal Church and the communion of all the local Churches. In this perspective, the universal Church does not transcend the communion of local Churches: it *is* that communion. For that reason, the universal Church is not a distinct subject of existence, attributes, or activities; it does not exist "before" the local Churches and no more "imparts" its characteristics to the local Churches than the latter "participate" in it. Statements about the universal Church are true only *insofar as* they are verified in the local Churches. Not only does it not exist except in and out of the local Churches, only in and through them is it also one, holy, catholic, apostolic, indefectible, engaged in its mission, etc. To deny this would appear to make the universal Church into what scholastics call a *universale ante rem*.

Take as an example the claim that the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation. Only the Catholic Church could fulfill this role, but it would still fulfill it if it were realized only in "the little flock" of one local Church (see LG 9) and can only fulfill this role now in and through the local Churches by which all the peoples and cultures of the world are restored to Christ (LG 13). The universal Church is not the "historical subject" through which Christ redeems the world except in and through the historical subjects of the local Churches' self-realization and mission in the world.<sup>38</sup>

But it is just as confusing to claim that there are ecclesial acts which are by priority acts of the local Church, for this suggests that these are not acts of the universal Church. At first glance this also might seem to be true, since the whole communion of the Churches is not doing what the Church in, say, Bangkok is doing and what that Church is doing is not what the Church in Bogota is doing. And yet the Church in Bangkok or in Bogota is the one Catholic Church present and active in those cities. As particular as the self-realization and the activities of these Churches are, it is the same *Catholic* Church that in the one place is marked by its commitment to the poor and

in the other by its inter-religious dialogue. Were no local Churches making such particular commitments, it would not be true that the Catholic Church is opting for the poor and undertaking the dialogue among the religions. Local and particular options may distinguish one local Church from another, but they do not distinguish the local Church from the universal Church which only exists and acts in the local Churches. That is why a discussion of the relation between the local Church and the universal Church must treat the ecclesial significance of locality or particularity.

### **The Meaning and Relevance of Locality and Catholicity**

The issues may be illustrated by Henri de Lubac's influential little book. De Lubac uses the term "particular Church" of the diocese, "the assembly of the baptized around a bishop teaching the faith and celebrating the Eucharist." Of this he says that "although it always exists in a given place and gathers people who care about all sorts of human concerns, the particular Church as such is not determined by either topography or by any other factor of a natural or human order, but by 'the mystery of faith.' In a word we would say that its criterion is of an essentially *theological* order." On the other hand, the local Churches, by which de Lubac means larger groupings of particular Churches, have a "contingent" structure and are formed because of "simply human" factors. "We would say then...that to an appreciable degree their criterion is of a *socio-cultural* order."<sup>39</sup> While the particular church is said to belong to "the fundamental structure of the universal Church," the local Church is "something useful, indeed indispensable *ad bonum Ecclesiae*" because including the great cultural areas that constitute "the human geography of the Church."<sup>40</sup> The local Churches contribute to the catholicity of the Church because in them "to the element of *divine* unity...is joined a rich element of *human* variety. Thus is effected that union of the supernatural and of nature (that is, here, the human, the cultural) in which is recognized all that is authentically catholic."<sup>41</sup>

De Lubac's position is nuanced and cannot be said to neglect the importance of concrete local realizations of catholicity; but one may surely question some of its assumptions and the way in which it is expressed. What is striking about his view is not so much that the groupings of particular Churches into local Churches are not given the same theological status as the diocesan Church (although one can certainly question how de Lubac addresses this issue), but that particularity and locality are distinguished so sharply from one another. The result is that the particular Church appears to float in mid-air, constituted solely by theological, divine, supernatural elements,<sup>42</sup> while socio-cultural locality represents at best the natural and human variety within catholicity, indispensable *ad bonum Ecclesiae*, and at worst centrifugal tendencies. Dimensions of concrete locality do not enter into the definition of the particular Church, and tension with catholicity almost defines the nature of the local Church.

The basic question is asked by Giuseppe Colombo: whether the local, socially, culturally, and historically specific elements can be constitutive characteristics of the local Churches.<sup>43</sup> For Colombo the generative elements of the Church common to all the Churches—Word, eucharist, and charisms—are also the vital principles of the diversities found among them. They themselves thus provide a richer, more ontological plurality than the more superficial sociological differences. To characterize the local Churches by the latter is to use an extrinsic designation and to run the risk of underestimating the new life which the Church brings with it and which requires it always to confront any historical culture. "Thus cultures cannot be the constitutive element that characterizes local Churches: a cultural characterization of them can only be conventional and therefore superficial, basically misleading."

For Colombo, "no culture can make the Church; only the Word of God, the eucharist, and charisms can make the Church." Ecclesial diversity arises from the varying interplay of these constitutive elements. The different cultures "have only the value of an introduction or of a 'pre-understanding,'" which, while necessary and inevitable, is secondary, determined rather than determining. "It is somewhat like matter in relation to form, but in a concept of matter as continually predetermined and modified by the form." "Only the diversity of *Christian* (my emphasis) experience can explain the multiplicity and differences among the particular Churches, the diversity of Christian experience produced by the infinite ways in which the Word of God can be assimilated, the life of Jesus Christ can be shared and reproduced, and one can be open and docile to the charisms."

Colombo is correct that the constitutive principles of the Church themselves generate not only the Church's unity but its diversity also: it is differences in *Christian* experience itself which characterize the local Churches. But one may question whether it does not oversimplify the nature of Christian experience itself if the cultural pre-understanding is presented simply as unformed "matter" that receives its determination by the "form" of the distinctive elements generative of the Church. As Donato Valentini has pointed out, this runs the danger of regarding the human element in the construction of the Church as merely passive and receptive and thus of "interpreting the Word of God, the eucharist, and the Spirit's charisms as realities which somehow pass over man's head."<sup>44</sup>

In part under Colombo's influence, the same analogy appears in more nuanced form in the International Theological Commission discussion of the relation between "The Church as 'Mystery' and as 'Historical Subject.'"<sup>45</sup> The Commission located the distinctiveness of the Church in its Spirit-inspired memory and expectation of Jesus Christ and in its mission to proclaim them to all people. But "with this memory, this hope, and this mission it is not a matter of a reality which is placed upon or added to an existence or activities already being lived." The Church's activity is "the confrontation of a human activity in all its forms with Christian hope, or, to keep to our vocabulary, with the demands of the memory and hope of Jesus Christ." The Commission then used the Scholastic analogy:

The new People of God is not, then, characterized by a way of existence or a mission which substitute for an existence and for human projects already present. The memory and hope of Jesus Christ must rather convert or transform from within the way of existence and the human projects already being lived in a group of people. One might say that the memory and hope of Jesus Christ by which the new People of God lives are like the "*formal*" element (in the scholastic sense of the term) which must structure the concrete existence of people. The latter, which is like the "*matter*" (again in the scholastic sense), free and responsible, of course, receives one or another of a variety of determinations in order to constitute a way of life "according to the Spirit." These ways of life do not exist *a priori* and cannot be determined in advance; they display a great diversity and are thus always unforeseeable even if they can be related to the constant action of the one Holy Spirit. On the other hand, what these different ways of life have in common and as a constant is that they express the demands and joys of the Gospel of Christ "in the ordinary conditions of family and social life in which human existence is interwoven" (see LG 31).<sup>46</sup>

This states more clearly the freedom and responsibility of the "material element," the existence and projects within which and to which the Gospel is preached. These are not abolished nor even replaced by the announcement of the memory and hope of Christ, but rather transformed from within in ways that cannot be anticipated in advance but which will represent ever new and

different ways in which the Spirit realizes the power of the Gospel to guide and inspire human existence.<sup>47</sup>

This discussion shows the importance for ecclesiology of prior theological options, and in particular of the question of what Ratzinger calls "the value and necessity of the anthropological in theology."<sup>48</sup> The place within an ontology of the Church of what has been called its "humanly subjective pole"<sup>49</sup> is the question not only of the relationship between God's freedom and human freedom in the genesis of the Church, but also of the relations between human freedom, sin, and grace in the self-construction of cultures themselves. If the encounter between Gospel and culture were simply the *contestazione* between grace and sin, then Colombo's view might stand. But if the Gospel finds in the various cultures not only what needs to be "purified" and "elevated," but also what can be "promoted" and "taken up" (see LG 13), then the encounter is far more complex.<sup>50</sup>

It must also be asked whether it is even possible to speak of diverse *Christian* experiences without taking account of the total human experience in which the constitutive genetic principles are received. As history amply demonstrates, social, cultural, and even geographical factors have been crucial determinations of the various legitimate diversities among the local Churches. These factors, then, are not simply receptive "matter;" they have also served as the "formal principle" of local Churches. It is, of course, true that the Gospel does effect a *discretio spirituum* within particular cultures, and it is the Gospel and not the cultural particularities which primarily generate a Church. But a *local* Church arises out of the encounter between the Gospel and a particular culture, a set of specific social and historical experiences, and this encounter, as it differs from other encounters of Gospel and culture, must also generate a constitutively different local Church.<sup>51</sup>

A few years ago, Pope John Paul II, commenting on LG 13, described the relationship between particular Christian experiences and the whole Church.<sup>52</sup> The Pope began with the "gifts" of various peoples which the Church must harmonize "in a higher unity," to the mutual enrichment of the parts and of the whole. He went on to talk about "the particular Churches with their own traditions" of which that conciliar text spoke, leading one to see the universal Church "as a communion of (particular) Churches and, indirectly, as a communion of nations, languages, and cultures." He noted contemporary emphasis on "the 'special' Christian experiences which the particular Churches are having in the socio-cultural context in which each is called to live":

Such special experiences concern, it is stressed, the Word of God, which must be read and understood in the light of the givens that emerge from their own existential journeys; liturgical prayer, which must draw from the cultures in which they are inserted the signs, gestures, and words which serve adoration, worship, and celebration; theological reflection, which must appeal to the categories of thought typical of each culture; ecclesial communion itself, which sinks its roots in the Eucharist, but which depends for its concrete unfolding on historical and temporal conditions that derive from insertion in the milieu of a particular country or of a particular part of the world.<sup>53</sup>

It is customary, of course, after such an affirmation of particularity to stress the need for unity, and the Pope himself issues such a warning. But his immediate reference is *not* to the universal Church, but to other particular Churches:

But to be fruitful, these perspectives presuppose respect for an unavoidable condition: such experiences must not be lived in isolation or independently of, not to say in contradiction to, the

lives of the Churches in other parts of the world. To constitute authentic experiences of the Church, they must in themselves be synthesized with the experiences which other Christians, in touch with different cultural contexts, feel called to live in order to be faithful to the demands that flow from the single and identical mystery of Christ.

His subsequent invocation of the phrase "mutual inclusion", has the same reference:

In fact among the individual particular Churches there is an ontological relationship of mutual inclusion: every particular Church, as a realization of the one Church of Christ, is in some way present in all the particular Churches "in which and out of which the one and unique catholic Church has its existence." This ontological relation must be translated on the dynamic level of concrete life, if the Christian community does not wish to be in contradiction with itself: the basic ecclesial choices of believers in one community must be able to be harmonized with those of the faithful in the other communities, in order to allow that communion of minds and hearts for which Christ prayed at the Last Supper.

In other words, the comparison is not between "special" Christian experiences and some unitary "universal" Christian experience, but between the special experiences of one Church and those of the others, all of them attempts to be faithful, locally, to "the demands that flow from the single and universal mystery of Christ."

Finally, the Pope presents the special role of the Apostolic See as the service of this catholic unity: "to see to it that the 'gifts' to which the conciliar text alludes flow towards the center of the Church and that these same gifts, enriched by the mutual encounter, flow out to the various members of the Mystical Body of Christ, bringing them new impulses of fervor and of life."

These papal reflections suggest the usefulness of introducing into our discussion, besides the relation between the universal Church and the local Churches, the relations of mutual inclusion that exist among the latter. It may even be possible to say that the communion of the many local Churches is in fact the mutual inclusion that exists among all the local Churches, and that the role of the Bishop of Rome is not best conceived as one of mediating between a local Church and the universal Church, imagined as something above all the local Churches, but between one local Church and the other local Churches, to assure, that is, that the "special Christian experiences" possible because of their socio-cultural particularities do not contradict one another but that, harmonized with and enriched by one another, they may constitute a genuine communion. In other words the communion that constitutes the universal Church is precisely the mutual inclusion of all the local Churches.

The mutual inclusion that defines the communion among the Churches, then, is richer than often appears in the literature. Most authors discuss this inclusion solely in terms of the divine principles of the Church, Word and Sacrament, leaving out of consideration their reception in the believing community. But the local Church arises only out of the encounter of divine and human freedom that generates its distinctive Christian experience. It is the integration of these concrete experiences into a catholic synthesis that constitutes the real challenge of catholicity. The various Churches bring to one another not only their natural cultural gifts, but their special Christian experiences generated by the encounter between Gospel and culture. The achievement of catholicity requires the symphonic harmony of all the special, local ecclesial experiences.<sup>54</sup>

As Tillard has noted, this makes "inculturation" and "reception" central notions in ecclesiology,<sup>55</sup> a position paralleled in Dianich's discussion of the role of subjectivity in that

communication and reception of the faith that constitutes the primordial and protean event of the Church. This process cannot be analyzed without taking into account the subjectivity—the concrete historicity—both of those who in earlier generations received and appropriated the faith and handed it on and of those to whom it is now proclaimed and in whose historical projects it must be received.<sup>56</sup>

In two recent works Dianich has developed his thought into a discussion of the relation between the nature and the mission of the Church. The necessarily particular, that is local and historical, character of the founding event of the Church's genesis means that the Church's mission may not be left for a late chapter in an ecclesiology but represents in fact the concrete realization of the Church's nature itself. "In fact, not only does the Church carry out the mission; the mission realizes the Church."<sup>57</sup>

But this directs attention to the missions in which the local Churches realize themselves. It is indeed possible to discuss the Church's genesis in general or (as I am tempted to call them, "heuristic") terms and even to speak of a single mission of the Church, defined by its christological, pneumatological, and eschatological dimensions. But the one mission is undertaken only within the specific missions of the particular Churches where the founding event takes place everyday. This event, the realization of the specific mission in and to different historical circumstances, always involves a new, original, and unrepeatable experience precisely because the event is the encounter, not between Gospel or charism and mankind in general, but between Gospel or charism and the concrete, particular, pre-existing subjectivity of *these* men and women, here and now. Each individual Church is a new and distinct "encounter between the liberating freedom of the Spirit and the liberated freedom of man."<sup>58</sup>

In the local Church, the particular mission generates a distinct self-awareness, irreducible to others or to a single pattern because grounded in and related to "its concrete life-situation, its concrete network of relationships, the concrete persons it addresses, and the concrete particular situation in which its mission unfolds." Thus a Church confronting the challenge of the world religions will have a different self-awareness than one facing the challenges of post-colonialism, or of poverty, or of post-Christian secularization. The one Church cannot realize itself except in these and similar historical engagements. Nor is this a denial of catholicity, but its realization: "The church's self-incarnation in situations and, therefore, its awareness of itself as a historically determined subject so far from negating its universality, constitutes its real transcendence, since this is the way in which it enters into relation with each and with all without ever exhausting the totality of its possibilities."<sup>59</sup>

Dianich's essays reveal the key substantive issue to be the way in which unity, catholicity, and locality are related to one another. When unity and catholicity are practically identified, locality can only be considered as the ecclesiological equivalent of individuating matter in scholastic philosophy, that is, it is left without intelligible content. When catholicity is understood to add to unity dimensions of plurality and integration, locality (that is cultural and historical particularity) is seen to be an inner dimension and requirement of catholicity, which is now understood as "fullness in unity" and, so far from a denial of the unity of the Church, as the most splendid illustration of its concretely universal character (see LG 26). The local elements, of course, are not the principles of the Church's unity and, in that sense, of the Church-character of the local communities; but they are what makes such communities *local* Churches, and, since the one catholic Church only exists in and out of such local Churches, they are also, precisely in their cultural and historical particularity, what makes the whole Church catholic.<sup>60</sup> Paradoxical as it may seem, then, locality, so far from being the antithesis of catholicity is its very realization.



The catholicity of the Church, then, also is only realized in and out of the local Churches. It characterizes the essential redemptive work of the local Church as this gathers up into unity the diversities that characterize its members, and this, as noted above, provides a theological basis for territorial units such as the parish and the diocese. This redemptive catholicity is concretely realized and experienced in the historical missions that distinguish local Churches from another. Because the divine principles of this local catholicity are the same everywhere, however, there is an inner exigent that all these particular experiences be open to one another, challenge one another, be inclusive of one another, and thus be integrated into that catholicity that makes the whole Church throughout the world the same redemptive principle of unity that the local Church is in its particular situation.

All this makes it clear that the Church's catholicity is always something that must be achieved. It *must be* realized because the essence of the Church is the assembling into diversified unity made possible because of the Word of Christ and the grace of the Spirit. But it must be *achieved* ever anew because these divine principles do not effect catholic unity, either locally or universally, on some abstract or merely formal level but only by generating among the members of the Church and among the local Churches the liberated freedom by which these become the subjects at once of the Church's self-realization and of its mission in the world.<sup>61</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

Let me conclude by short remarks on a key methodological issue.<sup>62</sup> Much ecclesiology is often content to describe the objective and formal elements that constitute and distinguish the Christian Church from all other human communities. These are usually identified in the unique divine initiatives—Word, grace, Sacrament, apostolic ministry—which lie at the historical origin of the Church and generate the *Ecclesia de Trinitate* everyday. The articulation of these divine principles and of the relations among them grounds in ecclesiology an image of the Church that focuses on what is universal in all realizations of the Church and therefore generate the communion that makes the many Churches one Church. The methodological bias of such ecclesiologies is, therefore, in favor of the one universal Church, with the question of the local Church arising only secondarily if indeed at all.

But if this is where an ecclesiology not only begins but ends, it tells only half the story. For the objective principles of the Church's realization do not constitute the Church except insofar as they are received and appropriated in the acts of faith, hope, and love of the human members of the Church. Under the Word and by the power of the Spirit men and women are also the subjects of the Church's self-realization. Thus the formal principle of the Church's genesis includes not only the gifts of God but also the freedom of men and women with which they receive them.

When the human subjects of the Church's realization are introduced into ecclesiology, the focus shifts to include also the local communities in which alone the Church is realized, since human freedom is never realized except in particular individuals and communities and as a moment in their historical self-projects. This does *not* mean an option for the local in place of the universal; in fact, it represents the basic methodological shift required in order to understand why it is a fatal mistake to counterpose the two adjectives. But it does mean that a general ecclesiology of the formal elements of the Church has to include as a necessary and intrinsic dimension a consideration of the co-constituting freedom of the human subjects of the Church's realization. A treatise *De Ecclesia* would then become a heuristic discipline, identifying and articulating the divine and human principles of the one Church's genesis in and out of local Churches. Ecclesiology

would thus become the general theory of the self-realization of the Church in the Churches, setting out the normative and thus universal elements by which local communities realize the one Church, and provoking, as an immediate necessity, the construction of local ecclesiologies exploring not simply what it means to be the Church in general, but what it means to be the *one* Church *locally*, here and now, in response to specific challenges and opportunities.

## Notes

1. See Winfried Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum als Gestalt-gesetz der einen Kirche," *AKKR*, 39 (1970), 70-75. Since some authors think that the Council favored the identification of the "particular" Church with the diocese, it is worth noting the bishops deliberately retained other uses of it (see the vigorous defence of the phrase in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum in Acta Synodalia*, III/VIII [Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1976], pp. 563-64, and the exploration of its implications by N. Edelby, "Les Eglises particulières ou rites," in *Les Eglises orientales catholiques: Décret "Orientalium Ecclesiarum"* [*Unam Sanctam*, 76; Paris: du Cerf, 1970], pp. 127-72) and that, since a major development of the theme of the local Church took place during the Council (see Wolfgang Beinert, "Die Una Catholica und die Partikularkirchen," *Theologie und Philosophie*, 42 [1967], 8-10), the terminology used in later texts should not be disregarded.

2. The history of the terminological options made by the writers of the new Code deserves study. Two pieces of the dossier may be found in George Nedungatt, "Ecclesia universalis, particularis, singularis," *Nuntia*, 2 (1976), 75-87, and in W. Onclin, "Ordinatio Ecclesiae universae in specie ad Ecclesias rituales sui iuris quod attinet," *Revue de Droit Canonique*, 30 (1980), 304-17; see also Roch Pagé, "Note sur la terminologie employée par le Code de Droit Canonique de 1983 pour parler de l'Eglise," *The New Code of Canon Law: Proceedings of the 5th International Congress of Canon Law*, Ottawa, August 19-25, 1986 (Ottawa: Faculty of Canon Law, St. Paul University, 1986), vol. I, pp. 271-74.

3. Valuable annotated bibliographies on the local Church can be found in Mario Mariotti, "Appunti bibliografici," *Vita e pensiero*, 54 (1971), 347-75, and in Antonio Contri, "La teologia della Chiesa locale e i suoi orientamenti fondamentali," *Euntes Docete*, 25 (1972), 333-401; see also Jose R. Villar, *Teologia de la Iglesia particular: El tema en la literatura de lengua francesa hasta el Concilio Vaticano II* (Pamplona: Ed. Universidad de Navarra, 1989).

4. See Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum," pp. 81-82; see also Antonio M. Rouco Varela, "Iglesia Universal - Iglesia Particular," *Ius Canonicum*, 22 (1982), 231-32.

5. For examples, see Wolfgang Beinert, "Die Una Catholica und die Partikularkirchen," *Theologie und Philosophie*, 42 (1967), 3-4; Yves Congar, "La Tri-unité de Dieu et l'Eglise," in *Essais oecuméniques: Le mouvement, les hommes, les problèmes* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1984), pp. 297-312.

6. Giuseppe Colombo, "La teologia della Chiesa locale," in *La teologia della Chiesa locale* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1969), pp. 29-30. See also Hervé Legrand, "Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'évêque dans l'Eglise," in *La charge pastorale des évêques: Décret "Christus Dominus"* (*Unam Sanctam*, 71; Paris: du Cerf, 1969), pp. 115-21; "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," in *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie*, III (Paris: du Cerf, 1983), pp. 169-71.

7. Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesio genesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), p. 19; note, however, that Boff immediately distinguishes the degrees in which communities of Christians "express" the universal Church, with the basic communities at the lowest level, and later, pp. 61-62, insists on the crucial ecclesial importance of the Eucharist.

8. Dianich, "Soggettività e chiesa," in Associazione Teologica Italiana, *Teologia e progetto-uomo in Italia* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1980), p. 116.

9. It is often overlooked that this passage refers to worshipping communities *within* the diocese, as the *Relatio* of the Doctrinal Commission made clear: "Consideratur... Ecclesia particularis praesertim infra dioecesim, sive sit paroecialis, sive alia ratione convocetur, semper tamen sub dependentia ab Episcopo;" *AS*, III/I, p. 253.

10. When, for example, Joseph Ratzinger says that "the worshipping assembly provides the starting-point for the idea of the Church," (see "Demokratisierung in der Kirche?" in Ratzinger-Maier, *Demokratie in der Kirche: Möglichkeiten, Grenzen, Gefahren* [Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1970], p. 39) it is not surprising that readers should think first of the parish or other small eucharistic gathering. For other examples, see Karl Rahner, "Theology of the Parish," in *The Parish: from Theology to Practice*, ed. H. Rahner (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1958), pp. 23-35; Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu: Corps du Christ et Temple de l'Esprit* (Paris: du Cerf, 1970), pp. 333-43, 365-71; Tillard, *L'Eglise d'Eglises: L'ecclésiologie de communion* (Paris: du Cerf, 1987), p. 47.

11. E. Lanne, for example, says that "only the episcopal Church is a true and complete Church," the parishes being only its "integrating parts." Parishes are of divine right "insofar as the communities gathered in them are of divine right and are a figure of the one Catholic Church," but not "in virtue of their own structure and nature, which depend on the local episcopal Church;" "Chiesa locale," *Dizionario del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano Secondo*, ed. S. Garofalo (Rome: UNEDI, 1969), c. 804. For Aymans, parishes cannot materially realize all the functions of the Church; *art. cit.*, p. 75.

12. See, for example, Tillard, *L'Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 47.

13. See Legrand, "Nature de l'Eglise particulière," pp. 113-19; "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie*, pp. 169-70.

14. Bertrams, "L'ufficio dell'unità della Chiesa e la moltitudine delle Chiese," *Vita e pensiero*, 54 (1971), 271-72.

15. Legrand, "La délimitation des diocèses," in *La charge pastorale des évêques*, pp. 177-219; "Inverser Babel, mission de l'Eglise: La vocation des églises particulières au sein de la mission universelle," *Spiritus*, 11 (1970), 335-39; "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," pp. 171-76. See also Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, pp. 365-71, and John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985). A similar argument has been made on behalf of the territorial parish, in response either to a call for smaller, "intentional" communities or to an effort to relate contemporary "movements" primarily to the universal Church. For the first question, see Karl Lehmann, "Was ist eine christliche Gemeinde? Theologische Grundstrukturen," *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift "Communio"*, 1 (1972), 481-97; "Chancen und Grenzen der neuen Gemeindeftheologie," *ibid.*, 6 (1977), 111-27; Karl Neumann, "Diasporakirche als sacramentum mundi: Karl Rahner und die Diskussion um Volkskirche - Gemeindefkirche," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, 91 (1982), 52-71; J. Wohlmuth, "'Kirche von unten,' als Anfrage an eine heutige Ekklesiologie," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, 93 (1984), 51-64; for the second question, see Giulio Brambilla, "La parrocchia nella Chiesa," *Teologia*, 13 (1988), 18-44; Severino Dianich, "Le nuove comunità e la 'grande Chiesa': un problema ecclesiologico," *Scuola cattolica*, 116 (1988), 512-29.

16. See Karl Rahner, "The Episcopal Office," *Theological Investigations*, vol. VI (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), pp. 313-60. In this essay Rahner argues that a local community can really be the realization of the whole Church only if "the *whole* of the Church's realization of her life can be

representatively brought about, and not only the celebration of the Eucharist (Sacrament) and the proclamation of the Word." There are other functions that necessarily belong to the universal Church and must therefore be realized in any community that can rightly be called a Church. In today's world this means a diocese of sufficient size and self-sufficiency. "For only such a member-part [*Teilglied*] of the Church can meaningfully claim that its leader should be a member of the supreme governing board of the Church" (pp. 335-36).

17. See Karl Rahner, "Pastoral-theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II," *Theological Investigations*, VI, p. 366.

18. See Tillard's remark, *L'Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 149, that if "it is fundamentally at the level of the local Church that what we have presented can and must take form," dioceses may have to "return to a more human size." This problem is surely an important factor in the degeneration of episcopal pastoral service into *dominium* that Bouyer so vividly criticizes, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, pp. 618-26. For a different view of this question, see Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle," *Irénikon*, 43 (1970), 490-92.

19. Thus for Wolfgang Beinert, "Dogmenhistorische Anmerkungen zum Begriff 'Partikularkirche,'" *Theologie und Philosophie*, 50 (1975), 66, the primary meaning of *Teilkirchen* would be the diocese, with infra- or supra-diocesan groups supplying respectively the secondary and tertiary meanings.

20. See H.-J. Pottmeyer, "Kirche auf dem Weg—20 Jahre nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil," *Universitas*, 37 (1982), 1251-58; "Die zwiespältige Ekklesiologie des Zweiten Vaticanums—Ursache nackkonziliaren Konflikte," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, 92 (1983), 272-83; "Der pneumatologische Dimension der Kirche," *Diakonia*, 21 (1990), 170-74.

21. See Eugenio Corecco, "Aspects of the Reception of Vatican II in the Code of Canon Law," in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo, J.-P. Jossua, J.A. Komonchak (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), pp. 249-96; Hubert Müller, "Communio als kirchenrechtliche Prinzip im Codex Iuris Canonici von 1983?" in *Im Gespräch mit dem dreieinen Gott: Elemente einer trinitarischen Theologie*, Festschrift W. Breuning (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1985), pp. 481-98; Ilona Riedel-Spangenberger, "Die Communio als Strukturprinzip der Kirche und ihre Rezeption im CIC/1983," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, 97 (1988), 217-38.

22. See Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum," pp. 80-85; more briefly in *Handbuch des katholischen Kirchenrechts*, ed. J. Listl, H. Müller, H. Schmitz (Regensburg: Pustet, 1983), pp. 239-41; Klaus Mörsdorf, "Die Autonomie der Ortskirche," in *Schriften zum Kanonischen Rechts*, ed. W. Aymans, K.-Th. Geringer, H. Schmitz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), pp. 287-89.

23. Aymans appears to take this term to refer particularly to the presence in both Churches of "the head-body relation;" see also Klaus Mörsdorf, "Ueber die Zuordnung des Kollegialitätsprinzips zu dem Prinzip der Einheit von Haupt und Leib in der hierarchischen Struktur der Kirchenverfassung," in *Schriften zum Kanonischen Recht*, ed. W. Aymans, K.-Th. Geringer, H. Schmitz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), p. 280. Legrand, "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," p. 152, warns against taking the phrase in the sense of a sort of subsistent Platonic form, and proposes to see it as referring to the identity between what is realized "out of" the local Churches (which results from their communion) and what is realized "in" the local Churches. "The local Churches must be in the image of the universal Church, not as reproductions of an 'ideal' Church, but by agreement with and reception of what constitutes the communion of Churches." I would myself argue that "the image of the universal Church" refers to the generative principles of the Church, *tout court*, which may be described formally or heuristically, but are only concretely universal as actually generating local Churches.

24. See E. Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle: Actualité et portée du thème," *Irénikon*, 43 (1970), 497-506.

25. References are to: Armando Bandera, "Iglesia particular y Iglesia universal," *Ciencia Tomista*, 105 (1978), 80-87; Wilhelm Bertrams, "L'ufficio dell'unità della Chiesa e la moltitudine delle Chiese," *Vita e pensiero*, 54 (1971), 83; Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*; Carlo Colombo, "La teologia della chiesa locale," *Vita e pensiero*, 54 (1971), 261-65; Alvaro d'Ors, "Iglesia universal e iglesia particular," *Ius Canonicum*, 28 (1988), 295-303; Battista Mondin, *La chiesa primizia del Regno* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1986), pp. 405-18; Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), pp. 74-77.

26. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, p. 75: "the priority [*Vorgängigkeit*] of the universal Church over the particular Church;" Ratzinger argued the historical point at the meeting of the College of Cardinals in 1985: "As in a body the unity of the organism precedes and sustains the individual organs, because the organs could not exist if the body did not, so also the unity of the Catholic Church precedes the plurality of particular churches which are born from this unity and receive their ecclesial character from it. This temporal order is stated in many ways in the New Testament writings. According to St. Luke's narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, the Church began on the day of Pentecost in the community of Christ's disciples speaking in all languages. Here St. Luke, indeed the Holy Spirit, is intimating that the catholic, universal Church, our mother, existed before the individual churches were born, which arise from this one mother and are always related to her;" "De Romano Pontifice deque collegio episcoporum" (typescript), p. 3. During the redaction of *Christus Dominus*, Msgr. Veuillot excluded the priority of the bishop's relation to his own Church on the grounds that "certum sit Christum condidisse Ecclesiam suam, i.e. universalem, in qua postea tantum constitutae sunt particulares Ecclesiae seu dioeceses;" *Acta Synodalia*, III/VI (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1975), pp. 117-18. For this discussion see H. Legrand, "Nature de l'Eglise particulière," pp. 113-15; Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum," pp. 76-79.

27. The second statement quoted above is followed by the claim: "The negative side of this principle is that any structure or initiative, directed towards communion or mission, is not authentically ecclesial if it is not rooted in and related to the local Church or the local Churches. In short, the alternative is not between the local Church and the universal Church, but simply between the local Church and no Church at all;" Bruno Forte, *La chiesa icona della Trinità: Breve ecclesiologia* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1984), pp. 48-54.

28. Severino Dianich, "Soggettività e Chiesa," p. 116; see also his *La Chiesa mistero di comunione* (Torino: Marietti, 1977), p. 132-35. To some degree Dianich is defending the *methodological* priority of the local event of the Church in the construction of an ecclesiology, although this rests in the end on the genetic priority of that local event in the actual self-realization of the Church.

29. Boff's genesis of a new Church from below, from the poor, could be understood in this way, although in *Ecclesiogenesis* and in *Church: Charism and Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1985) he refuses to counterpose the basic community and the great Church, and in his article, "Mission et universalité concrète de l'Eglise," *Lumière et vie*, #137 (1978), 33-52, he argues that the Church from below, so far from denying the Church's universality, concretely realizes it. Rouco Varela, "Iglesia Universal - Iglesia Particular," p. 227, sees in the effort to ascribe primary emphasis to the basic communities "a desire to introduce 'congregationalism' into the living ecclesiology of the Catholic Church."

30. Although I have not found the word "priority" in the discussion, the great emphasis on the "*Gemeindeprinzip*" in certain German circles could lead one to suspect that it is meant; but Josef

Wohlmuth, "Kirche von unten," maintains that the dichotomy between "Church from above" and "Church from below" should and can be overcome. Much of this controversy, of course, will depend on what is meant by "community" and the relationship between it and the central ecclesial reality of *communio*.

31. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 285-98; see also pp. 298-311, in connection with "local ecumenism," where he warns against "a new one-sidedness" in recent emphasis on the local Church. Ratzinger's reply to the claimed "right" is in some tension with the remarks he once made about the *Gemeinde* as "Rechtssubject in der Kirche" and his attempt to overcome the dichotomy between "von oben" and "von unten" by appeal to the "Ineinander von Ortskirche und Gesamtkirche;" see "Demokratisierung der Kirche?" pp. 38-41.

32 "Draft Statement on Episcopal Conferences," *Origins*, 17 (1987-88), 735.

33. The texts cited may be found in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII/I (1985), 997-98; IX/I (1986), 1133-34; IX/II (1986), 1921. Placed in context, they are far more balanced than might be concluded from the use to which the Roman Working-Paper puts them.

34. "The Church of all times and places was founded in a first local Church, the Church of Jerusalem, from which it has been propagated into other quite similar local Churches, as if by cuttings and replantings;" Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, pp. 337; see de Lubac, *Les églises particulières*, pp. 53-54; Legrand, "Inverser Babel," pp. 328-31; Tillard, *L'Eglise d'Eglises*, pp. 15-36.

35. The "ontological" priority ascribed to the universal Church appears at times to mean that God's intention falls on the unity of the messianic people redeemed by Christ, on the one Body of Christ transcending all time and place, the one Mystery which reaches from Abel to the last of the just. But, as Congar notes, "The universal Church does not pre-exist the particular Churches as a concrete reality might pre-exist other concrete realities; it pre-exists them in God's plan as their definite ideal, their rule, or their absolute essence" (Yves Congar, *Ministères et communion* [Paris: du Cerf, 1971], p. 131. But since it is only in particular Churches that this salvific plan is realized, it is surely mistaken to say that Christ founded only the universal Church and not the particular Churches or that he prayed only for it and not for them!

36. See H. Legrand, "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," p. 152; E. Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle," p. 490.

37. Were the whole Church one day reduced to what it was in the beginning, namely a single local Church, then, as Tillard notes, "the Church of God would exist there in all its integrity, all the Church being then in the Church of Corinth, of Ephesus, of Rome, of Kinshasa, or of Lyon;" "L'Universel et le Local: Réflexion sur Eglise universelle et Eglises locales," *Irénikon*, 60 (1988), 30. See similar remarks in Karl Rahner, "The Episcopate and the Primacy," in Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), p. 27, and in Louis Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, p. 608, 610.

38. Hermann J. Pottmeyer, "Continuité et innovation dans l'ecclésiologie de Vatican II," in *Les Eglises après Vatican II: Dynamisme et prospective*, ed. G. Alberigo (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), pp. 91-116, discusses Vatican I as "the discovery that the Church as a totality, as communion, is the sacrament of salvation in the form of a subject," while at Vatican II this is shown to be realized as "a communion of subjects," involving not only the clergy but all Christians and not only the pope but the communion of the Churches also.

39. De Lubac, *Les églises particulières*, pp. 43-45; see similar distinctions between "theological" and "geographical" or "anthropological" factors in the construction of the local

Church in Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, pp. 290, 297, 308. De Lubac's distinction was taken over, nearly *ad verbum*, in the International Theological Commission's text "Select Themes in Ecclesiology," V.1; see ITC, *Texts and Documents, 1969-1985* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), p. 282.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 60, my emphasis.

42. De Lubac does admit that "each Church, *local or particular*, always has more or less its own physiognomy," but this happens because it is "composed of traits in which *the profane and the religious* mingle" (p. 47, my emphasis), surely an inadequate description of the factors involved in the genesis of an individual Church.

43. Giuseppe Colombo, "La teologia della Chiesa locale," in *La Chiesa locale* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1969), pp. 17-38, esp. 32-38.

44. Donato Valentini, *Il nuovo Popoli di Dio in cammino: Punti nodali per una ecclesiologia attuale* (Rome: LAS, 1984), p. 56. This seems to me to be a crucial point: the freedom of the human subjects of the Church's self-realization, which cannot be separated from their concrete historical situation, is not related to the divine freedom as matter to form; in fact, it is an intrinsic element of the formal principle itself.

45. See ITC, *Texts and Documents*, pp. 274-78; see G. Colombo, "Il 'Popolo di Dio' e il 'mistero' della Chiesa nell'ecclesiologia post-conciliare," *Teologia*, 10 (1985), 97-169.

46. ITC, "Select Themes in Ecclesiology," III.4, *Texts and Documents*, pp. 277-78.

47. For this co-mediation of culture and Gospel in the realization of the Church, Walter Kasper uses the notion of an *Aufhebung*, meaning that local characteristics are "abolished in the sense of being gathered up and preserved in something higher;" see "The Church as Communion," in *Theology and Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 159. "Abolish" is perhaps too strong here.

48. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, p. 312, where he distinguishes between "Gemeinde," as "an immediately theological concept" and "as an anthropological reality." Note a parallel dichotomy: "Faith is not born from experience but from the Word of God; it is then enfolded and verified in experience" ("Theological Notes," in *Directory for the "Ad Limina" Visits* [Vatican City, 1988], p. 21.)

49. Claude Welch, *The Reality of the Church* (New York: Scribners, 1958), p. 48.

50. See Beinert, "Die Una Catholica," p. 5, 12-13.

51. Angel Anton, "Iglesia universal - Iglesias particulares," *Estudios Ecclesiasticos*, 47 (1972), 409-35, makes the pertinent point: "Since its reality is a *mysterious unity* of human and divine, historical and metahistorical elements, the local and temporal dimension is an essential element of its earthly existence. The Church exercises its mission in the world tied in many respects to a particular place. A person does not encounter the Church except in a concrete place, with space-time coordinates. This is an exigence imposed by the nature of man composed of spirit and body and by the reality of the Church as an eschatological community incarnate in the world and in history" (p. 416).

52. Pope John Paul II, Address to the Roman Curia, December 21, 1984, AAS, 77 (1985), 503-14. Note that in these remarks the Pope is using "particular Church" in the sense of LG 13 and not, therefore, to refer to a diocese.

53. In his speech to Australian aborigines, the Pope strikingly reaffirmed this point: "The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ speaks all languages. It esteems and embraces all cultures. It supports them in everything human and, when necessary, it purifies them. Always and everywhere

the Gospel uplifts and enriches cultures with the revealed message of a loving and merciful God. That Gospel now invites you to become, through and through, aboriginal Christians. It meets your deepest desires. You do not have to be people divided into two parts, as though an aboriginal had to borrow the faith and life of Christianity, like a hat or pair of shoes, from someone else who owns them. Jesus calls you to accept his words and his values into your own culture. To develop in this way will make you ever truly aboriginal;" *Origins*, 16 (1986), 476. Tillard, "L'Universel et le Local," has rightly drawn attention to this talk.

54. Pope John Paul II's 1985 Encyclical, *Slavorum apostoli*, esp. #16-20, contains a powerful illustration of the encounter of Gospel and a single culture.

55. See Tillard, *L'Eglise d'Eglises*, pp. 30, 164, 175.

56. Dianich, "Soggettività e chiesa," pp. 120-27.

57. Dianich, *Chiesa in missione*, p. 65; see especially pp. 172-73.

58. Dianich, *Chiesa in missione*, p. 77. Dianich has extended his consideration of the role of human subjectivity in the genesis of the Church to include the question of the sense in which charity may be said to be constitutive of the Church; see "'De caritate Ecclesiae': Introduzione ad un tema inconsueto," in Associazione Teologica Italiana, *De Caritate Ecclesiae: Il principio "amore" e la chiesa* (Padua: Messaggero, 1987), pp. 27-107.

59. Dianich, *Chiesa estroversa: Una ricerca sulla svolta dell'ecclesiologia contemporanea* (Milano: Paoline, 1987), pp. 110-112.

60. "The essential component of ecclesial catholicity is the particular Church insofar as it is only in it and through it that concrete human beings encounter the fullness of the grace which the Church is to mediate;" Beinert, "Die Una Catholica," p. 15.

61. See Hervé Legrand, "Le développement d'Eglises-sujets une requête de Vatican II: Fondements théologiques et réflexions théologiques," in *Les églises après Vatican II: Dynamisme et prospective*, ed. G. Alberigo (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), pp. 149-84. Legrand has also pointed out that "the theology of the particular Church is a chapter in the theology of the relations between the Church and the world;" see "Inverser Babel," p. 334, "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," pp. 162-64; and also E. Lanne's comment in connection with various typologies within the one Church: "What is the relation of the local Church to the world, to creation? The Word is proclaimed in a particular place; it is incarnated in a culture, conjoining the divine and the human. Similarly, the sacraments, the life of *koinonia* are expressed in a given place and time and thus manifest, express, and activate the universal Church of all times and of all places, insofar as it is the Church of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The Church-world relation seems to me to be basic in our search for a better understanding of the possibility of different typologies within the same ecclesial commitment, of a legitimate pluralism within the unity willed by the Lord for his Church in the image of the divine unity which expresses and reveals to us the Trinity of Persons;" "Pluralisme et Unité: possibilité d'une diversité de typologies dans une même adhésion ecclésiale," *Istina*, 14 (1969), 190.

62. See Dianich, "Soggettività e chiesa," and "Ecclesiologia e ecclesiogenesi," *Rassegna di Teologia*, 21 (1980), 415-18. I have addressed the question in "Ecclesiology and Social Theory: A Methodological Essay," *The Thomist*, 45 (1981), 262-83; "Towards a Theology of the Local Church," *FABC Papers*, 42 (Honk Kong, 1986); and in "The Church: God's Gift and Our Task," *Origins*, 16 (1987), 735-41.



## Chapter X

# Inculturation and Catholicity in Relation to the Worldwide Church

*Joseph Donders*

"Look up at the sky and count the stars. . . ." (Gen. 15:5)

Let us begin where I would suggest that our issue arose first. Let us start with a story, or better with an image. The image of a couple standing at the origin of the process that led us to the possibility and the need to study inculturation and catholicity.

### **Abraham and Sarah**

I would like to begin with the father of all believers, Abraham. Abraham could not have been alone in his experience. A man cannot be a father on his own. Abraham would have been nowhere without Sarah. The promise given to him was not given to him, but to him and her. It was a promise of life. A man alone does not manage that. In fact the author of the letter to the Hebrews (11:11) enables Sarah, too, to become the progenitor of the child, in a text which according to some exegetes is "a cross [*crux* can mean 'scholarly problem'—see OED] which is frankly too heavy for expositors to bear."<sup>1</sup> And in the Genesis text we read: "Yahweh dealt kindly with Sarah, as Yahweh had said, and did what Yahweh had promised her."<sup>2</sup> In the end you begin to wonder who really was the father of Isaac.

Sarah and Abram are not only the parents of all believers. They are the ancestors of all unbelievers.<sup>3</sup> God told them to leave their country, their kindred, their culture, their all, in view of a new life. An initiative by which all human clans would be blessed.

We know the religion Abram left. In Ur the moon and the stars determined human fate. All was fixed, there was no way out, the human lot had been sealed once and for all. All was written in the stars. It is what Abram and Sarah could not believe anymore. They left, giving up a culture that threatened to fix them and humanity for all ages to come. They gave up on those stars. They were going to move in another way. A new future was offered to them. They took up the challenge and 'strayed away' from the old. They did not know how the new ever would be able to be fruitful, not only because Sarah was barren, but also because the new was so new.

Then, one cool starry night, God takes Abram out again, and tells him to do, what he and Sarah had decided not to do any more: "Look up at the sky and count the stars."<sup>4</sup>

No, not again. They had passed that stage. Yet, it was what they were asked to do, but in a new way. Rooted in the old, trying to count the stars, the future opened to them. In between the old stars they saw the brilliant new "city with foundations whose architect and builder is God."<sup>5</sup> It was looking at those stars that later the Astrologers from the East would be led to Bethlehem from within their old belief. Is it not remarkable that we, too, still surround the happening at Christmas with the stars, old human monuments like the structures at Stonehenge point to? The old religion becomes a sign of the new faith in a future God promises to all. The sign even John still uses, when he writes: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven."<sup>6</sup>

It was there, that night, that old and new met as never before. It was there that the developments we are speaking about in this paper began once and for all.<sup>7</sup> Abramic humanity was asked to integrate a new vision, a new approach, a new reality, a new life, a new promise, a new presence, a new awareness, a new culture and consequently a new mission. That is what acculturation is about, and Sarah and Abram left the old. Then Yahweh invited them to look again up at the stars they had strayed away from, and invited them to integrate the new from within the reality and life they had been accustomed to. That is what we normally mean by inculturation.

## **Incultruration**

Allow me to refresh our minds and hearts on certain notions and sensitivities we all know and intuit, and therefore often take for granted and forget in the practice of our lives. Let us not look for a definition. Let us ask ourselves what a culture does. Everybody knows something about that, because the fact that you survived is an indication that you grew up in a context, where human beings had organized themselves—physically and symbolically, prosaically and poetically—in a way that made your life possible and ‘celebrate-able’. You came into life as a stranger, a newcomer. You could have entered this world in a multitude of cultures. You were born in one. Your parents or/and others fed and clothed you, and initiated you into the way in which they organized human life. You introduced yourself to their language, their food, their songs, their dances, their social customs, and—if they prayed—to their prayers.

Culture is a life condition. We would not be able to live without being part of one. Culture roots us, and anchors us in our environment. It roots us in a setting that changes all the time, not only because of the development and progress from within our own culture, but increasingly as people coming from all kinds of environments and cultures get mixed into each other. Sometimes this mixing is caused by natural disasters like floods or droughts; at other times it is the result of human disastrous interactions like war, conquest, and colonialism; then again it is due to religious (and cultural) zeal. Missionaries often were, (and are), the first ones to make the latter type of contact.

Different kinds of interactions may develop at those contacts. Specialists in different branches of learning are using different names nowadays for these interactions. I was asked to use one of those terms—a theological one—inculturation.

As indicated already in the image I used to introduce this paper, I think and feel that this term calls for another one: acculturation. Experts again differ on the exact meanings of these words. So it becomes almost impossible for me to be faithful to my intent to avoid definitions. Let me give again operational ones. To what circumstances do these terms apply? Acculturation takes place when an alien culture profoundly influences and changes an indigenous one, and inculturation takes place when an indigenous culture profoundly influences a culture of foreign origin. It is, obviously, impossible to draw sharp lines between these two processes—in the practical order—while they are taking place. That is, they always will accompany each other in one or another way, but it is the final outcome that will determine which interaction prevails.

Practically all the theologians who study the issue from a theological point of view, and especially of course from a missiological, spiritual or pastoral point of view, regret that the Western Church in general has been more inclined towards acculturation than inculturation.<sup>8</sup> The reports to this effect from the Americas, Asia, and Africa abound.<sup>9</sup>

Not only theologians blame the Western Church for this one-sided approach. Anthropologists, sociologists and even economists blame what is rather vaguely called the ‘West’ or the ‘North’ for

this over-emphasis on acculturation. What are called ‘development and growth’, ‘technical progress and success’, are all too often imposed by western culture.<sup>10</sup>

The common complaint is that indigenous cultures were not respected, that they were often unnerved, emasculated or repressed. The Western approach tended to destroy the ways in which people had been able to live and celebrate their lives in environments different from the West, while the Western ways—originating from a different context—sometimes did not and even could not assure the survival of the indigenous people.

And again may I recall some simple facts. Any culture develops in a certain geographic, economic and social environment. It makes quite a difference whether you live in a semi-arid area or under the thick and green umbrella formed by the foliage of a tropical forest. It will make a difference from all points of view, including relationships to the Transcendent. Reading certain parts of the Bible, describing some of the formative periods of the Judaic people, you can almost taste and smell the desert sand in their symbolic and moral codes.

It would be absurd to impose a nomadic value and symbol system and culture on a settled population, but it is as problematic to impose a settled culture and lifestyle on a group of nomads.

Does this mean that all indigenous cultures should be preserved and maintained as they developed over the ages? In a way, this question ‘begs the question’. Cultures do not exist as fixed assets. They do not exist on their own either. Changes are taking place. The whole world is changing. No one human group can isolate itself from the changes. These contacts, however, should not lead to an acculturation by which the Western world swamps, exploits and intimidates the non-Western world. The indigenous knowledge, intuitions, symbols and values should be the starting point for an alternative path of cultural development.

There is another good reason to argue this approach. While developing their cultures in their own environments, the different ethnic groups often worked with insights, symbols and models the West did not use. The insights, symbols, models, are new to the West. They are alternatives to the Western way of feeling and thinking. That they are alternatives does not mean that they are useless. On the contrary, they can introduce us to ways of experiencing, thinking, modelling and organizing, that may supplement the ways we approach our world. All of us have begun to realize that alternatives to our way of life are what we need to be able to survive. We all know that if all six billion of the world’s people would succeed in achieving the kind of ‘development’ we have achieved from within our cultural context, the planet would become inhabitable within a day or so.

Missionaries—and I am one of them—will tell you how much they learned from the people they went out to teach. This is not only true in the spiritual or religious realm. Our Western technologies and skills are in many ways already factually complemented by those developed from within other cultures and world visions. It would have been unlikely for us in the West to develop a medical technique like Chinese acupuncture on the basis of our Western chemical/physical approach to the human body. Or to give an example of a maybe less important, but nevertheless quite interesting skill or art: who does not enjoy the taste of a foreign, an ‘exotic’, cuisine?

The world around us is still so richly gifted by her Creator, that we can organize her smells and tastes, her colors and sounds, in an almost endless variety of different artistic, political, social and religious ways. Cultural variety is obviously not a scandal, it is a blessing.

It is in this world that we meet Jesus, and it is the Church which has always called him Christ, the anointed one. Calling him this seems to imply that he is the person by whom the Church should be measured.

In the belief of the Church, Jesus appeared among us as one with a message. The message he himself called the Kingdom of God. The culture into which he was born was the first to encounter his 'Kingdom' message. A struggle ensued. The struggle turned against him. Though it can only be said with some reservations, it is still true that in Jesus' case *the medium was and is* really the message. It remains the message because, though killed, he did not die.

In every culture two questions should regularly be asked: (1) "What irritates you in your own culture?" and (2) "What do you enjoy in your own culture?" There is not a single culture in which both questions should not be asked. Every existing culture has its 'pro's' and its 'con's', its privileged and underprivileged ones, its exploiters and exploited, its rich and its poor, its authentic worship and its idolatry. Jesus presented his yardstick to interpret the answers to these questions in the first place in his own environment.

In most of his correspondence—and probably all of his life—Paul struggled with the same issues as regards his own tradition, and the cultures and religions he met on his apostolic journeys. In his letter to the Ephesians he comes to the conclusion that the message—he called it the "mystery hidden up to now"—is that it was shown in Jesus Christ that we are all equal before God. It is that equality—expressed in the reality of the sharing of the One Body and the One Blood during the Eucharist—that has to be realized in all human cultures by the members of these cultures.

It is at the end of Matthew's gospel that this same principle or theorem is best expressed, when it concludes with a saying attributed to the risen Jesus. In the last but one verse Jesus asks his followers to introduce the nations to the reality that all human beings are originating from God, are created together as God's offspring, and are carried by the same life spirit.

The Trinitarian formula used,—"Father, Son and Spirit," is not only meant—and maybe even not mainly meant—as revealing the nature of God's life, but also as a revelation of who we are, and how we should consequently treat each other, and all that was given to us to realize our personal and communal dignity. This belief is the foundation of the catholicity in our human and creational holiness and unity. It is the guarantee for the reality of the "city with foundations whose architect and builder is God"<sup>11</sup>

It is because of our faith in this trinitarian definition of the human being that we all are—so to speak—'hanging in' together. Coming out of the same womb, forming the same fruit, sharing the same life holiness,—catholicity and holiness are our human birthday gift. It is because of this common-ness that we belong together, and we will not be fully ourselves, we will not be 'holy, catholic and one' until this belonging finds its expression in reality. Working at that expression, at that final birth into the reality of ourselves, is what we call mission.

We could add to this creational commonness the salvific one, as John Paul II did when he stated:

Humanity—every person without exception—has been redeemed by Christ, because Christ in a way is united with humanity—with each person without exception whatever. . . .<sup>12</sup>

All this might sound too abstract. It is not. In the *Acts of the Apostles* we can read how this belief led at once to a new organizational life pattern in a practical way. In the first communities — described twice in their success and failure—Christians organized a consequence of their belief, one that John Paul II does not stop to stress,—Namely, that the goods and services provided for in creation are intended for *all*. The first communities went so far as to try to own their goods in a new way.

The organization of the divinely willed equality—the establishment of the Kingdom of God—cuts straight through our actual world set-up. Its achievement would make the division into the first, second, third, and fourth worlds an impossibility. The equality established by the Kingdom of God is the basic Catholic Social teaching. It is the foundation of a catholic morality.

This does not mean that the ‘Reign of God’ message is only a social, or a justice-and-peace one. Matthew’s text closes with Jesus’ remark, that he will be with us in this work of salvation, proceeding from the Father’s love, until it reaches its eschatological, final completion. Living this trinitarian equality in the concreteness of our human life, is living the divine life and love.

We touch here at the same time at the core of the human element in any valid development program, and in whatever cultural or cross-cultural context. All actual cultures and their political, social, economic, and aesthetic expressions—whether Western, Eastern, Northern or Southern—stand judged by it. So does the Church and the Western (and Eastern) type of Christianity it helped to form. Any discrimination or inequality, any predilection or favoritism, any tolerance of injustice and violence should have become intolerable. A development that leads to real human and creational liberation. Our Trinitarian theology cannot but be liberational.

The question remains how we would be able to reach others with this ‘*Kingdom of God*’ gospel in a way which does not destroy the receiving cultures, which—in fact—enables them to remain faithful to their own roots. Or,—to use the image we invoked at the beginning when speaking about Abram—that they look at their own stars to find their new direction. Thus, the question that arises for us next is—How should this interaction be organized?

In a Church that has been blamed for its over-emphasis on acculturation, John Paul II was the first pope to use the term inculturation. He did this in 1979 in a statement to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*:

The term acculturation or inculturation may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>13</sup>

The use of the term alone does not bring us much further. In fact one of the difficulties seems to me that the Western Church is handicapped by the way in which she herself has inculturated the Kingdom message. As her members, we can ask, about her, the same two questions I mentioned above: (1) "What irritates you in her?" and (2) "What do you enjoy in her?" I am afraid that the answers to those questions would indicate that the Church herself has not managed as of yet to integrate fully the principles of the ‘Kingdom of God’, neither in her own hieratic, hierarchical and patriarchal structures, nor in the Western society of which she is so much a part and parcel. A world in which everyday an average of 40,000 people die of starvation—though the food to feed them is available but either directly or indirectly controlled by the West—can hardly believe that a formally ‘Christian’ West inherited the divine solution to the problems in this world.

The Church—and we who currently form the Church—should consequently be rather modest in our approach. Having not fully integrated the Kingdom of God among ourselves (and having not even realized the catholicity demanded in our own constituent communities), we can hardly present our version of inculturated Christianity as a model to others. To insist that other cultures conform to our very unsatisfactory inculturation would be an ambiguous venture indeed!

The *Kingdom Principles* and the ecclesial living of Christ’s risen life remain. They remain the treasure and the pearl of the Church. At the same time they remain, it seems, a ‘*tertium quid*’, something that as such remains an issue to all, though in different degrees. John XXIII spoke in

this context about "the substance of the deposit of the faith" in his opening address of the Second Vatican Council.

## **Dialogue**

It seems to me that it is in this point that we might find an answer to our question about how to undertake 'inculturation' in a catholic spirit. I wonder whether we are not overlooking, to our own disadvantage, an earlier step foreseen by the Second Vatican Council and in its follow-up. That step is dialogue. The word is not even found in the index to Shorter's book *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. In the context of what we said earlier, I would like to suggest that in our dialogue with non-Christians and in our contacts with non-Christian cultures, we do not dialogue on the ways we have inculturated the Kingdom Principles ourselves, but that we dialogue on the Kingdom principles themselves. What would it mean if we try to organize a world were we treat each other as coming from God, as being created together as God's Offspring, and as living from the same divine Breath. In other words I would like to suggest that we take the Kingdom of God as such, or—in other words—the message of Jesus and its practical realization as the topic for our dialogue. If that would happen the words of a document of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christian from 1984, entitled *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections on Dialogue and Mission*, might prove to be prophetic:

As the human sciences have emphasized, in interpersonal dialogue, one experiences one's own limitations as well as the possibility of overcoming them. A person discovers that he does not possess the truth in a perfect and total way but can walk together with others towards that goal. Mutual affirmation, reciprocal correction, and fraternal exchange lead the partners in dialogue to an ever greater maturity which in turn generates interpersonal communion. Religious experiences and outlooks can themselves be purified and enriched in this process of encounter.<sup>14</sup>

It is the type of dialogue we ourselves need even for our own inculturation of the gospel. *Ecclesia semper reformanda!* It is in that kind of dialogue that our actual inconsequentialities will be revealed and hopefully remedied. It is an encounter in which the gospel will come back to us in the idiom of other cultures with the power to question what we made of it.

It is in that kind of dialogue that others may taste the catholicity of the *Kingdom Principles*, inculturating them in their own cultural and religious context to their and our enrichment. The dialogue on the implications of Jesus' insights and feelings on human dignity and value is needed not only with representatives of other religiously influenced cultures, but also with the more secularized expressions of human organizational and cultural life styles. It involves all. It is the dialogue on *what* Jesus stood for, and consequently at the same time on *who* he is. Too many of our discussions and creeds have been centering on Jesus the Christ, without paying as great an attention to his message of the Kingdom.

## **The Encounter of Cultures**

This dialogue will be difficult. It will be difficult for all of us. It will be difficult for the Roman Catholic Church. It will be hard because it will ask for many changes, religious and spiritual, but also practical, social, political, economic, financial—think of the crippling debt crisis in the Third World.

It will be difficult at a cross-cultural level. This statement is in the future tense, not in the present. It is the kind of dialogue that is hardly taking place at a cross-cultural level in our day. Notwithstanding the Vatican II insistence on dialogue suggested in documents like *Nostra Aetate*, little has been done, except that the institutional instances to do so often have been put into place. The only dialogue that really developed, and could not but develop because of the Holocaust, was the dialogue with the faithful of the Judaic religious expression. In that dialogue a remark made by Msgr. Jorge Mejia, Secretary of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, introducing the statement "*Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church*" during a press conference in Rome, June 24 1985, show us how far we can come in this way:

[T]here is the affirmation about Christ and his saving event as central to the economy of an affirmation which is essential to the Catholic Faith (section 17). This does not mean that the Jews as a people cannot and should not draw salvific gifts from their own traditions. Of course they can and should do so.<sup>15</sup>

This approach to others remains an exception. Maybe not in theory but definitely in practice. In 1959 John XXIII noted several times, among others in his encyclical *Princeps Pastorum*:

As you know she (the Church) does not identify herself with any one culture to the exclusion of the rest—not even with European and Western culture, with which her history is so clearly linked.<sup>16</sup>

A statement echoed in Vatican Council II's document *Gaudium et Spes*:

Nevertheless, the Church has been sent to all ages and nations and, therefore, is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern. The Church is faithful to its traditions and is at the same time conscious of its universal mission; it can, then, enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves.<sup>17</sup>

We must do everything possible to make all persons aware of their right to culture and their duty to develop themselves culturally and help their fellows.<sup>18</sup>

Hoping that these words would be realized, the African Cardinal Paul Zoungrana of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) stated just before Paul VI visited Uganda in 1969:

Our very being must not be conferred from the outside; the gospel is a germ of life and the Church of Africa must develop itself and build itself up thanks to its own apostolic priorities.<sup>19</sup>

Paul VI in Kampala seemed to respond positively: "Must the Church be European, Latin, Oriental . . . or must she be African?" But when later the African Episcopacy began to insist on an African Council in view of an inculturated African Church, there was at first a refusal, then a delay, and at the moment there are still many unsolved organizational problems, whereas the Bishops from Europe will have their Council on the Churches in Eastern Europe within a year after the latter's liberation!

‘Ideas, policies and purpose’ are much more important in moving the world forward—or bringing it to a halt—than are institutional structures and material power.<sup>20</sup> Since 1973 the African Church began to support officially the Small Christian Communities that had formed themselves or were forming themselves, parallel to suchlike developments in Latin America. A process that is also taking place in Asia and even in Europe and Northern America. It is within those contexts that the needed dialogue and the consequent inculturation is really developing.<sup>21</sup>

In 1982 John Paul II founded *The Pontifical Council for Culture*,

. . . giving the whole Church a common impulse in the continuously renewed encounter between the salvific message of the gospel and the multiplicity of cultures to which she must carry her fruits of grace.<sup>22</sup>

But the impression prevails that John Paul II is afraid of the consequences of these principles. Aylward Shorter quotes Johann Baptist Metz who suggests that it might be "because of the pope's travels" that the interests of the local churches are "increasingly removed from the agenda of the Universal Church."<sup>23</sup> The actual centrally organized ‘unity’ prevails over concern for the local discomforts caused by this practically monocultural imposition.

We can speak about the Church in an abstract, speculative way. We can speak about her ideally as about the Bride who integrated and inculturated the life of her Divine Groom. We can speak about how the Church should be considering the data in Holy Scripture. Yet we cannot pass over the fact of her empirical, and historic concretization in the world. She and her members often have been a blessing all through the ages of her long existence. But when we are ‘honest to God’ we have to admit, that she and her members often have not been faithful to the gospel she carries.<sup>24</sup> For all kinds of ideological, political and other reasons, she and her members often neither believe nor put into practice the teaching that all human beings—and this is what catholicity is all about—are created equal; and that all human beings, as God’s offspring, are brought into life by sheer godly love and a divine eagerness to share joy.

We did not allow ourselves to be fully acculturated by the Jesus message on humanity and creation: we did not as yet inculturate the gospel. We did not draw all the consequences of the reality of humanity’s trinitarian relationship to God, though we accepted them in our baptism and celebrate them in our sacramentally signified life. It is in our dialogue with others on how to inculturate Jesus’ message that we ourselves might become aware of how our religious energy is disconnected, and consequently how our religious energy is un-inculturated from our public and individual life.

I am afraid that we have to distantiate ourselves from what an ideologically oriented Church, and the world it helped to form, has done and is still doing to humanity. The American Catholic Episcopacy is sometimes giving a lead. They began the kind of dialogue we are speaking about within the context of their own culture and church on important issues like war and peace, the economic ‘order’, the role of minorities, and the issue of the place of women in society.

Coming back to the image with which I began this paper: like Abram and Sarah we have to stray away. We have to lose a faith in a heaven and earth that had fixed our destiny along too narrow a path, caught in too small a circle. And like he did to the Abrams, and later the Abrahams, God will lead us out and tell us: "Look at the stars", look at what you left behind and discover in it—in a new way—the city you have to build. It is from the old earth and the old heaven that new will arise. Astronauts and all who looked at the photographs they took saw the dawn of that city



already. Abram imagined and believed it; we ourselves saw it already from afar in the midst of the stars:

The only thing that could end war forever is changing the human psyche. Those who fly up above the earth and see her in all her beauty and fragility will undergo a psychological change. At first only individuals, but then hundreds, then millions. This will cause a different civilization, a different humanity. They will reevaluate the earth's beauty, the taste of each of her berries.<sup>25</sup>

Together with him, whom so many called *Christ*, the earthly creation will start to shine with the glory we—anoointed together—had from the beginning: *Lumen Gentium*.

We are asked to integrate a new vision, a new approach, a new reality, a new life, a new promise, a new presence, a new awareness, a new togetherness, a new multicolored seamless robe, a new pluralistic culture and consequently a new mission. That is what acculturation is about, and like Sarah and Abram we have to 'stray away from the old'.

And then we will have again to look up at the stars we strayed away from, to be invited to integrate a new holiness, catholicity and unity within the reality and life we were accustomed to. That is what is meant by *inculturation*.

## Notes

1. "The difficulty is that on the face of it the verse ascribes to Sarah an activity possible only to males: *dunamin eis katabolēn spermatos*," Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol 12, Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, 119.

2. Genesis 21:1.

3. Okke Sager, *Oude beelden spreken een nieuwe taal* (Baarn, Ten Have, 1990) 23-33.

4. Genesis 15:5.

5. Hebrews 11:10.

6. Revelation 21:1-2.

7. Donald Senior, C.P. and Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., *The Biblical Foundations of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983) 36-55.

8. Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988) 164-17.

9. For a recent study of these issues, see "Local Church: Practices and Theologies," Sedos Seminar, March 20-24, *Sedos Bulletin*, 22, 4 (April 1990) 84-126. For Africa, see Eugene Human, *The Roman Catholic Apostolate to Nomadic Peoples in Kenya: An Examination and Evaluation* (Brussels. Pro Mundi Vita, 1980).

10. Thierry O. Verhelst, *No Life Without Roots* (London; and Atlantic Heights, NJ: Zed Books, 1990) 39-108.

11. Ephesians 3:5.

12. *Redemptor Hominis*, 14.

13. *Ibid.*, #53.

14. *Ibid.*, #22.

15. Eugene J. Fisher, "Interpreting *Nostra Aetate* through Postconciliar Teaching," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 9.4 (October 1985), 159.

16. Shorter, *Toward*, 187.

17. *Ibid.*, #58

18. *Ibid.*, #60
19. Shorter, *Toward*, 208.
20. Paul Kennedy, "Fin-de Siècle America," *The New York Review of Books*, 37, 11 (June 28 1990) 33.
21. See Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers* (London: Geoffrey Chapman 1990).
22. *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 28 1982, 1-8: see Shorter, *Toward*, 230.
23. Shorter, *Toward*, 70.
24. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mensen als verhaal van God* (Baarn: Uitgeverij H. Nelissen, 1989) 206.
25. Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *Wild Berries*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984) 296.

## Chapter XI Limits on the Evangelization of Culture

*Daniel Cowdin*

In *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Paul VI asserted that "evangelization means the carrying forth of the good news to every sector of the human race" (#18). Evangelization "seeks to convert both the individual consciences of men and their collective conscience, all the activities in which they are engaged and, finally, their lives and the whole environment which surrounds them" (#20). The goal of evangelization, in sum, is all-pervasive: "The gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man. . . . [A]ccordingly we must devote all our resources and all our efforts to the sedulous evangelization of human culture, or rather of the various human cultures" (#20).

Although totalistic, the Church's mission is not imperialistic or totalitarian, for two reasons. First, this process is undertaken in and through freedom, not coercion; second, it seeks to work within the "idiom" (#63) of the various cultures it impregnates rather than simply replace them, preserving yet transforming the "genius"<sup>1</sup> of the local culture.

Paul VI emphatically, almost shrilly, rejects "all excuses which might deflect us from evangelization," particularly those based on alternative interpretations of *Gaudium et Spes*, *Nostra Aetate* and *Dignitatis Humanae*. The recognition of salvation amidst non-Christian cultures and respect for religious liberty in no way reduce the need, and thus ought not to reduce the fervor, for evangelization. Any interpretations to the contrary are "insidious" and "superficial" (#80). Regardless of how God ultimately achieves his salvific will toward all, it is nevertheless our duty as Christians to evangelize--that is our charge as members of the Church; moreover, in doing so we must fully respect the freedom of those we address.

Be that as it may, it is nevertheless undeniable that the constellation of new insights at the Council, including the awareness of the cultural grounding of the human person, if not deflecting evangelization from its final goal, reshapes our approach to it. It places limits on the means we use toward conversion, and further transforms our very understanding of what evangelization is. The issue here is not reducible to merely a revision of strategy, but includes a revision of the vision, as it were.

What follows is an exploration of some of the limits on and revisions of evangelization implied by an awareness of cultural anthropology and respect for religious freedom. There is not space here to deal with issues of salvation for non-Christians, so that issue is simply bracketed.<sup>2</sup> Three issues in particular will be discussed: 1) the inherent uncontrollability of any evangelization of culture, 2) the necessary ideological limitations on the State if pluralism is to be respected, and 3) the potentially Providential aspect of a limited mission.

### **Limits on Control: From Transformation to Dialectic**

The upshot, roughly, of our current understanding of human beings as inherently cultural seems to be this: We live in and through particular social groups and their histories, practices, symbols, locales, ideas, and ways of life. In dialectical relation to these our identities are formed (or fractured). Human beings are not "rational" first, spinning out all these histories, practices, symbols, etc., as so much after-effect; rather, we are cultural first, and our "rationality" (and freedom and conscience, etc.) is developed in and through these elements from the start. We are,

in short, culturally *constituted* as persons-- the very medium for our personhood is culture. But culture is a local, albeit dynamic, process, and thus the universally shared elements of our personhood become difficult to pinpoint.

Three attempts are commonly made to do so. First, and formally, we might say that all human beings share the trait of being cultural. Although the content of culture, and thus personality, will differ, we can meaningfully discuss a similar process that we all go through as socialized persons.<sup>3</sup> Second, it seems that nobody is finally reduced to his or her cultural constitution. We are all more than cultural products, at least potentially. We have, then, a free or transcendent element that is never fully or adequately expressed by cultural tools. Thirdly, a small list of rather general but very basic goods (and/or rights) seem to be shared across cultures, such as the need for a property system, family organization, a distinction between killing and murder, fellowship of some sort, decision-making authority, etc.<sup>4</sup>

Now even if all three of these attempts at cross-cultural universals can be successfully defended and explicated, the important point to notice is the shift in the burden of argument from centuries past: instead of assuming universal human nature, we now assume local cultural construction and move out from there to discern what universality we can find. The basic vision of human life has now become that of a collection of very distinct, though not insulate, ways of life, in and through which people develop their moral and religious identities. Moreover, the above universals are inevitably "thin": they do not go too far in illuminating the concrete meanings on which real people make concrete decisions in their lives.

If this is so, then there seems to be an equally inevitable epistemological humility that accompanies this view. It is simply difficult to know much about other persons without doing the hard and messy work of engaging their particular cultural medium. The implication for evangelization is obvious: if the "Good News" is going to be meaningful as Good News, it must somehow be inculturated, i.e., inserted meaningfully into the culture to which it is addressed. But this is a long and demanding process, replete with complications both for the receiving culture and the integrity of the Good News.

It is somewhat baffling, therefore, to find such totalistic evangelical objectives for our current mission. As the announcement for this seminar summarizes it, we are "to uncover the power of the Spirit deep within the culture and traditions of a people, to liberate them from ideologies and enliven their hearts, in order to reconcile, transform and resurrect their [ways of life]" (McLean). Not only are we going to translate the Good News into something understandable to other cultures (which would be hard enough), but we are going to discern within those foreign cultures the heart of their own self-understanding, then transform and elevate and purify it as well.

That seems a large task for one religious culture to accomplish for another, made all the harder by our current sense of cultural rootedness. Indeed, our current cultural perspective would seem to make this task exponentially more difficult than we could have ever imagined before. One wonders why a decrease in confidence has been accompanied by an increase in the scope of the mission based on it. As an ethicist who is keenly aware of the agony of trying to establish even the most basic of cross-cultural values, I find the current evangelical goal of authentically penetrating, transforming, and elevating other cultures grandly out of kilter.

Moreover, the underlying dynamic still seems residually subject-object, something *we* do to *them*. Only now we don't just replace their lifestyle with ours, but instead we presume to bring forth the deepest truths of their lifestyle for them. We plunge deeply into their culture to decipher it, fix it, and elevate it to new heights. Whether the gospel, as a cross-cultural interpretive key in human hands, is capable of this, is a legitimate question.

A culturally informed vision, I would argue, must at minimum include another dimension. Inculturation, by definition (the insertion of the gospel into a new cultural framework), involves a giving away of the message to forces out of the Church's control. It is not simply a matter of bringing another culture into the Church, which can be controlled to some extent through catechism, homiletics, etc. It is also a process whereby the Christian message is made available to people and forces that are independent of the Church. To evangelize a culture is, in part and unavoidably, to set the Good News free for a people to do with it what they wish. It is to hand a message over to someone else. This is the risk of evangelization, but also, its opportunity.

It is telling that H.R. Niebuhr, during his discussion in *Christ and Culture*, speaks of culture as an independent *authority* over us "which lays its claim on every Christian" at the same time s/he lives under the authority of Christ as well (39). For Niebuhr, culture is the social, pluralistic, "artificial, secondary environment" through which we forge and realize human values. The models of Christ-culture interaction he has least sympathy for are those that collapse the tension of the dual authority entirely--Christ *against* culture and Christ *of* culture.

Similarly, *Gaudium et Spes* affirms the "legitimate authority" of culture, as well as the legitimate autonomy of cultures: "Because it flows immediately from man's spiritual and social nature, culture has constant need of a just freedom if it is to develop. It also needs the legitimate possibility of exercising its independence according to its own principles. Rightly, therefore, it demands respect and enjoys a certain inviolability" (#59). David Hollenbach notes the importance of the term "legitimate," which replaces the Vatican I term "relative." For Hollenbach, this represents the underlying shift in understanding from a faith-reason framework to a Christ-culture framework. Rather than seeing the world beyond the church as the "relatively autonomous" sphere of reason, the church instead characterizes it as the "properly autonomous" sphere of culture.

Given that, evangelizing culture means the Church enters a process which intrinsically involves the loss of control of the message. To insert the good news into culture, an "authority" legitimately distinct from the Church, is to put it out like driftwood onto the seas of human history. There is a genuine (and proper) lack of control over the shaping-process it will undergo. The Church hands the message over to another authority. The process does not end here, to be sure; but it must begin here. Importantly, this is not necessarily a "fall" or dilution of message, but rather a human, historical adventure which may result in failure and perversion *or* improvement and creativity.

Now it is a full appreciation of this process that seems lacking in our current magisterial assumptions about evangelization of culture(s). The problem is not so much a lack of recognition that the faith can be enriched through inculturation; there is that. The problem, rather, is that the independence by which such enrichment takes place is ignored, or even rejected. For example, after John Paul II accurately describes inculturation as a process both of inserting a culture into Christianity and Christianity into a wider culture, he exhorts: this process "must in no way compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith (*Redemptoris Mater*, #52). But how is that possible? He continues: "Properly applied, inculturation must be guided by two principles: compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church" (#54). The image here seems to be the centralized Church as the sieve through which the inculturation process must pass. Clearly, the Church has a duty to play a critically authoritative role; but one senses an underlying quest for control that simply cannot, nor ought to, be. By our own vision, the Church is no more entitled to control culture than the State is. We are charged, at most, to participate. Even as soft a word as "guide," if applied to the inculturation process *as a whole*, seems to hearken back to a relative rather than a proper or legitimate autonomy for Culture.

The thoroughness of the transformationist approach taken by Paul VI, coupled with the intensified quest for control of the process advocated by John Paul II, fail to do justice to the realities of inculturation, much less the theological legitimation we have given culture(s) as independent. As the Anabaptists have perceived, it is illusory to attempt to secure the faith concretely in any complete way; aiming at culture generally rather than the State does not alter this fact. The most persuasive argument for the authenticity of a Christian culture is to succeed in achieving one. What we realize is that at best we have persons working in a broadly Christian cultural milieu, but not necessarily using that milieu in a Christian way. A Christian culture invites apathy and perversion as much as it invites discipleship. Culture enables, it does not determine.

On the other hand, it seems equally illusory and insecure to think one can escape culture altogether, as well as irresponsible not to use our new cultural understandings as constructively as possible. Why not, then, conceive our present historical relationship to the Christ-culture issue more in dialectical than straightforward transformationist terms?

A key part of that dialectic will be a moment of letting go, perhaps theologized as a *kenosis* of sorts, an outpouring of the Good News into the wider culture. What happens to the News is not determinable in any *a priori* way. The message may be perverted, ignored, or elevated. Certainly examples are readily available from Western history. One thinks immediately of the perversion of Christianity by Nazism, but just as quickly of the elevation of human dignity, particularly socially embodied freedom and equality, by liberalism.

Seeing the process as dialectic frees Christianity from being caught in an endlessly tragic cycle of spawning children who eventually return to slay it. Rather, the Christian message is set free for a humanity come of age, and returns to a Church come of age. Galileo, or Kant, or Locke, or Marx, or Freud, or Darwin destroy us only if we receive them as disobedient children; they critically enrich us only if we understand (not grant) the proper authority that is theirs.

And similarly with other cultures. Genuine inculturation will only take place if we recognize in their systems a legitimate and proper authority to interpret and concretize the Good News. This does not mean their authority is limitless; but neither is it just an extension of the Church's authority. By evangelizing culture, we set Christianity free to be lived, rejected, resented, reinterpreted, abused, or heightened.

### **Limits on the State: Evangelizing a Pluralist Society**

Vatican II has poised the Catholic Church at a unique and dramatic juncture in Christian social history. With the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, the Church affirmed religious liberty as a human and civil right, rooting it in the dignity of the human person as such. At the same time, it also promulgated the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which has been called "perhaps the strongest public document ever made expressing faith in Christ, the transformer of culture."<sup>5</sup> The Council thus insists on the pervasive transformation of the wider society on the basis of the Gospel while simultaneously demanding respect for other religions.

Christian history has tended to couple a transformationist approach to culture with lack of respect for religious freedom, and respect for religious freedom with a lack of concern for transforming the wider culture. The modern forerunners of religious freedom, the heirs of the radical reformation, have generally been categorized as "sect" types rather than "church" types (the distinction being, in part, precisely their lack of concern for the wider cultural environment). According to another schema, they have been placed under the rubric of "Christ *against* culture," again implying a rejection of rather than engagement with the wider society.

Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, has been treated as the paradigmatic "church" type, as well as having elements of Christ *above*, Christ *of*, and Christ *transforming* culture. The themes of synthesis with and conversion of culture, however, have been coupled with (at least since the later Augustine) a lack of respect for religious freedom of the sort defended by the Council. The Christianization of culture has implied, historically, the containment, repression, and even extinction of religious movements that threatened its religious ethos.

The joining, then, of a radically transformist social mission with an equally radical commitment to respect religious and cultural pluralism seems to be a new thing under the sun. We reject coercion, in particular the use of the state as an agent of Catholic cultural power, and instead shift evangelization to the level of dialogue and persuasion. Others are not to be suppressed, but rather engaged in freedom. Yet the end-point is transformation, not as a mere eschatological hope but as a working policy goal. And the transformation, as we have seen from Paul VI above, is all-pervasive. Indeed, it is more cross-culturally thorough and penetrating than anything expected even of Christendom. As mentioned above, the advent of our fuller understanding of culture seems, curiously, to have expanded our evangelical goals at the same time it has limited our means for achieving them. This makes the linkage of transformation with liberty all the more dramatic.

How, and even whether, these poles can be held together is an open question. For if we concede that coercive institutions such as the State, and perhaps even semi-coercive institutions (such as large companies, unions, etc.), are outside the realm of evangelistic activity, we save freedom at the expense of removing large sectors of human culture from Paul VI's totalistic vision. Yet if we include such institutions as vehicles for and objects of explicitly Christian transformation, how do we not jeopardize the religious freedom and the equal citizenship of non-Christians in the process?

David Hollenbach articulates the question pointedly. We respect pluralism, yet our evangelical social mission as a Church is forthrightly Christian in character: "[I]t is not only the motivation of this activity that is Christian; the basic goals and objectives of social action are religiously based as well. . . . How, then, is the Catholic community to seek to influence the public life of a local community, a nation, or the global economic and political order without imposing its theological vision through brute power?" How are we "to distinguish social mission from religious imperialism?"<sup>6</sup>

One possible answer could be that transformation accomplished democratically is legitimate, whereas transformation accomplished coercively is not. One thinks of the various Protestant evangelical strategies throughout the history of the United States, such as Ezra Styles Ely's call, in 1827, for a Christian party in politics. Smarting from disestablishment, he sought to Christianize the society by packing the offices of the State with democratically elected Christians, who would in turn vote and legislate according to their consciences. The theological rationale behind this strategy was strikingly similar to the Catholic Church's current one: "If we may not disown our God and Saviour in *any* situation, it will follow that we are to own him in *every* situation," including that of politics.<sup>7</sup>

The problem here, though, is that it risks making religious freedom a matter of tolerance at best and prudence at worst. If we respect religious liberty as a *right*, it means that not even democratic means should violate it. The type of cultural plurality we endorse can neither be tyrannized nor bestowed by a majority, but must rest on deeper foundations. As John Paul II reasserted in *Redemptoris Missio*: "It is not a question of the religion of the majority or the minority, but of an inalienable human right of each and every human person" (#39).

If we really want to allow for pluralism, a variety of sub-cultures each legitimately autonomous by human and civil right, each not merely having private freedom but freedom to express itself as well individually and communally, then we ought not to seek, even through democratic means, to impose our world view on them. There is a difference between long-term conversion amidst a free society and religio-cultural 'power plays' that simply manipulate the free society until it is no longer needed for the project. The former is transformation through liberty; the latter is, in MacIntyre's prophetic critique, "civil war by other means," and frankly returns us to a pre-Vatican II understanding of religious freedom.

So we are back to the beginning: how can we have a transformist agenda amidst in-principled respect for pluralism? How can we have a transformist agenda if we sever ourselves from trying to influence, from our theological viewpoint, the public institutions and structure of society?

One answer is simply to concede that Paul VI spoke in hyperbole when he insisted on integrally evangelizing *every* sector of human life, not just superficially but *in-depth*. Instead, we limit our transformationist agenda to the realm of cultural persuasion compatible with the ethos of a limited, pluralist state (which we guard vigilantly). We thereby save both transformation and liberty, but we pare back the totality of the vision. Now the lynch-pin of the entire, dual-sided project is the limited State. And this means that the State can neither be the vehicle for nor the object of conversion.

Since, it seems fair to say, the Good News in history has not been transparently persuasive, both for reasons of human failure and cultural anthropology, evangelization will be a long and not necessarily linear process. God seems to have made cultural perspective a very entrenched, context-bound thing. So the upshot here is that our transformationism would seem to be less a formative policy than an eschatological hope. In all realism we would seek impact, not conversion; influence, not pervasion; contribution, not the domination of public institutions by our values and symbols.

There are a number of vulnerabilities to this rendition, however. On one side, there are critics, basing their views squarely on an appreciation of the cultural constitution of human persons, that find the whole idea of a limited state untenable. On the other side, there are critics, basing their views squarely on an appreciation of *Gaudium et Spes*, that find the whole idea of the limited State, as well as its accompanying rights and responsibilities, theologically necessary. Each view will be examined in turn.

For some, the modern insights of cultural anthropology reveal the limited state not only to be a fiction, but a dangerous fiction.<sup>8</sup> The state will inevitably express in its legislation some degree of cultural particularity; the only question is, whose? The state is part, albeit only one part, of culture. The vigilant separation of the function of the state from wider cultural symbols and goals is argued to be artificial, a vestige of unrealistic enlightenment confidence in the clarity and universal efficacy of reason. There is no trans-cultural, neutral point from which varying cultural claims can be adjudicated. This is a fiction, used by those in power to push forward their own rather particular cultural agenda under the guise of "neutrality." In the meantime, the "liberal" culture that is promoted drastically saps the life out of richer, unapologetically particular cultures, much truer sources for integrity and wisdom than the "neutral" individualism of the Enlightenment. So let us just be honest about our inevitable cultural locations, 'show our cards', and go on from there (with a greater or lesser degree of public civility, depending on the circumstances).

If this view is correct, how we solve the problem of mutual freedom for multiple sub-cultures in one overarching society needs to be completely rethought. Indeed, if I understand the announcement for this seminar properly, the limited State (or some version of it) poses a "threat .



. . . to religious identity itself more radical than at the times of [schism] or [reformation]. . . . Whereas . . . some seek to build community by turning to broad generally shared formal values, simply prescind[ing] from distinctive identities and religious roots . . . experience shows that the abandonment of such roots, far from contributing constructively to modernization, deadens the commitment to the values upon which free creativity is based" (McLean).

Others argue, however, that it is precisely these broad, formal values that free up modern persons to fill out their dignity as humans. The panoply of human rights, when genuinely guaranteed by a society, prevent one subculture from dominating another. Catholics and others have gained socially in the United States not because these rights have been dismantled, but precisely because they have been enforced. Had we been completely at the mercy of the Protestant American mythology, we may never have survived in the early days of nationhood. Beyond the U.S. context, one can argue that the fighting in Lebanon or what was once Yugoslavia is hardly testimony to the virtues of cultural particularity, but rather a testimony to its vices with a vengeance. What is needed is a situation in which equal citizenship and equal freedoms could be established, rather than having political power channeled through particular subcultures. The limited State and its accompanying human rights protect subcultures in a situation of pluralism; the non-existence of these institutions jeopardizes them. The price, of course, is that formerly domineering religions can no longer use the state to their advantage but neither is the State systematically biased against them. Thus promoting the freedom and equality of all, *Gaudium et Spes* can affirm: "By virtue of the Gospel committed to her, the Church proclaims the rights of man" (# 41).

Now the point here is not to resolve this debate, but to notice what various approaches do to the background project of evangelical transformation amidst liberty. And the first thing to notice is that for those who reject the limited State and its associated formal rights, the liberty side of the equation seems to become jeopardized. I think it fair to say that for all the sweeping philosophical criticism of the liberal State, there have been no constructive political alternatives proposed that would simultaneously protect our cultural existence and our mutual freedom. That is to say, rarely (if ever?) are there any *institutional mechanisms* proposed to achieve this dual goal.

For some, the implication seems to be that at a certain point such general freedoms are sacrificed to more culturally-specific goals; for others a vision of civic amity or public civility or republican virtue is meant to take over where these culture-threatening institutions left off. The latter seems to be the assumption of this seminar, which envisions "richly religious cultures . . . com[ing] together to make their needed contribution to the common fund of civic inspiration" (McLean). How this is achieved or socially guaranteed is not stated. In any case, the overall point here is that if this track is taken, we end up with the recognition of cultural plurality with neither *ethical justifications* nor *social tools* to protect it in pluralistic situations. The freedom side of the transformative evangelism seems, at least for the moment, radically jeopardized.

On the other side, besides the problems of credibly justifying, epistemologically, universal human rights and a neutral, even if limited, State, there is the problem of what becomes of evangelization to the *nations*. Is the religious mission strangled, privatized? But here there is an answer. As James Rausch argues, "The concept of the limited or constitutional state espoused in *Dignitatis Humanae* is complemented in *Gaudium et Spes* by a style of ministry in society that is based upon the dignity of the person and works through the agency of the Church as the People of God. The vision of social ministry espoused in *Gaudium et Spes* is based upon the safeguarding of human dignity, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of the unity of the human family."<sup>9</sup> It is through the limited state, and the freedoms individuals and groups have with regard

to it, that the transcendence of the person is safeguarded and the wider cultural activity of the Church is set free. *Dignitatis Humanae* lays the groundwork out of which the Church and its members can be socially active in a modern, pluralist society.

Moreover, the promotion of human dignity through the full panoply of human rights (civil, participatory, and economic) is not only supported by the Gospel, but is itself a form of evangelization. Although this latter idea was developed only after *Gaudium et Spes*, in particular at the 1971 Synod of Bishops, it is certainly a legitimate extrapolation from the pastoral constitution and has been consistently integrated into later papal encyclicals.<sup>10</sup> From a theological perspective, then, we have a way of holding liberty-based, evangelical transformation together. It is not, admittedly, the totalistic vision of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* but it does put forward an understanding of how to evangelize, at least partially, public institutions. Supporting their effectiveness in protecting and enabling the civil and economic freedoms of its citizenry is a constitutive (though not exhaustive) dimension of preaching the Good News. Such generic human flourishing is given a particular theological basis by the Council and the later Synod.

The problem here, however, is that this resolution of the tension between *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes* seems to leave the recent insights of cultural anthropology out of the picture. Human dignity, human unity, and human rights are the operative categories, to which we have adjusted our particular theology. We now have a language for rooting them in our religious culture, but what of the larger insights concerning the culturally-constituted aspects of the human person? We uncover a second tension between the two documents: that of method. Whereas the pastoral constitution primarily operated out of a Christ-culture approach, the primary section of the *Declaration* operated instead out of a modernized, dynamic natural law approach. Human dignity, rationality, freedom, conscience, the social nature of man--these are the categories appealed to by the *Declaration* to support religious freedom as a human and civil right. It is first a generic ethical defense of religious freedom, and only second a specifically Christian defense of it (if fully that).

Rausch's resolution of the tension between the two documents, then, seems to give a methodological victory to the *Declaration*. To the extent that this is true, this seems problematic, for the *Declaration* too blithely in my opinion uses Jeffersonian and Thomistic language in its articulation of the right. But insofar as we want to maintain the social guarantee of religious freedom, the question becomes: Is there a way of underpinning religious freedom and the limited state by using the modern insights of cultural anthropology rather than ignoring them? Can we, in effect, unite the two documents substantively around human dignity but methodologically around respect for cultural rootedness?

Although it far exceeds the scope of this paper to discuss in detail, I think the answer is yes, and I think a defense of religious liberty that is rooted in historically situated cultural anthropology is the key to it. What might this look like?

Roughly, one might argue as follows. The source of the limited state is not necessarily rationalistic Enlightenment philosophy so much as the historical conflicts spawned by the Reformation, modern industrial development, etc. Out of these problems developed pragmatic political solutions for pluralistic society. Furthermore, the pluralistic interaction pushed us toward equal recognition as citizens and towards mutual respect, and a sense that these values were more than just temporarily useful political tools. In short, our ethical endorsement of the limited state and its rights grew out of a particular historical context. It was often justified in overly grandiose and abstract terms, but we can shed those now and see these institutions as reflections on praxis rather than *a priori* impositions.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, with regard to religious liberty in particular, we need to hazard some account of its relationship to human dignity. Here we face a problem, for how can we speak so radically across cultures? We need some sort of tentative but real articulation of high-level or generic concern for religio-cultural particularity. And here I suggest someone like Clifford Geertz, who develops a generic, cultural understanding of religion *out of* his experience with a variety of concrete religious traditions.<sup>12</sup> What can be further developed out of this is a general understanding of the harm of religious oppression, rather thin and formal, but having grown out of particular encounters. (This is quite different from a simple imposition—from a European library desk—upon the question-at-hand.) Geertz's purpose is not to sum up each and every religious particularity but rather to give a general articulation of what happens between persons and their religions (and thus what breaks down when this relationship is damaged). On the basis of this we can articulate some sense of the human harm done by religious oppression. And this sense can underpin our concern to secure religious freedom so it is socially effective. (We here flirt with Kromkowski's flirtation with culturality as an anthropological, ontological universal of human beings, though I don't think we need to actually go that far.)

Now the value of an approach like this (whether one actually uses Geertz or not) is to retain the crucial element in *Dignitatis Humanae*, namely, the appeal to trans- or cross-cultural right, yet to do so in terms sensitive to the constitutive cultural medium of human life. We keep the state limited not because cultural particularity is unimportant but because it is so important. The value of, the animating purpose of, a limited state could be conceived as the protection of various subcultures rather than an attempt to form a nationalized, homogeneous culture based on universal human reason. It aims at a just pluralism (with each word qualifying the other).

A genuinely pluralist society does not have a culture. It has a mix of subcultures, loosely federated together along the lines of humanist justice and economic necessity. This loose federation is, admittedly, a poor tool for building human community. But at the national level of a diverse society, thick human community is the last thing human dignity needs: the idea is to free up the various subcultures to create full human community at their own levels, and to impose justice limits on the exploitation of weaker groups by more powerful ones. The key to the limited state is to understand (and separate) the function of these more generic values (and institutions) from other levels.

## **A Final Reflection on the Person in Relation to the Kingdom of God**

What might a unification of liberty and expansive evangelization look like now? The Kingdom is never established at the expense of persons, but rather in and through their well-being. Persons are constituted (though not exhaustively) by culture, and often by particular religious cultures. For this reason, to damage a religious culture is to threaten the well-being, even the identity, of persons. It threatens internal fracture and, at the extreme, anomy. We thus limit ourselves from using the state as a coercive instrument for particular religio-cultural pursuits, and morally demand this limitation of others as well. A cultural understanding of human dignity demands it.

But to be cultural is also to be dynamic, expressive, exploratory, and alive. Cultures are not straight-jackets, but enablers and empowerers. We are cultural beings and we are free beings. We are transcendent: our cultural systems do not exhaust our nature, though they are organic to its constitution. To be enculturated is to be given positive freedom, freedom to do something, and to be Christianly enculturated is to be given *libertas*. Thus we are not proposing here such an extreme

form of religio-cultural sensitivity that any form of dynamic interaction between cultures is eliminated. This would simply be a form of mutual 'cultural isolationism', a form of negative 'liberal atomism' jacked up to the sub-cultural level. Cultures have a right to be free, but not to be insulate. They are, as Jorge Echavarría asserts, "heteroglossic."

Sharing the same freedom as all, and thus the same limits, the Church projects itself outward amidst the shared realm of societal freedom in which subcultures intermingle. One prong of the Church's mission is the social pursuit of human dignity. There are some things that are generically enabling of human dignity: freedom, economic access, and political self-determination come to mind. Insofar as the state is the necessary vehicle for these goods, the Church's social mission targets it. Making the state more generically just, in an empowering and not merely smiting sense, is part of making the Kingdom present. It is evangelization. However, it must be pursued in light of cultural sensitivities, not in neglect of them.

The other prong is the more complete proclamation of the Christian message. Here the Church participates in acculturation, through dialogue and persuasion. This is a risky, even threatening business. It exposes its members and its message to history, to other perspectives, to the advances in science and technology. As Hollenbach argues: "Faith and theology are seen as participants in a drama that involves numerous other actors. The Church is not the producer or director of this drama. God is--the God who created the worlds of politics, law, science, economics, and culture just as surely as God created the Church and gave it a mission" (13). Our task is to participate in the drama, rather than hide from it or control it.

To pursue a totalistic, religious permeation of every sector of society runs contrary to the social and moral basis of modern pluralism. We thus concede any pretensions to a Christianization of the culture. We let go of this as a social goal, as the concrete ideal of our evangelical strategy. Such hopes, though real, are eschatological only. Its accomplishment is out of our control in fact, as well as morally and theologically questionable in our current concrete circumstances.

All of this may still seem thin gruel for those who feel the necessity to bring the various religious "gifts" to the public square. I sense many in the Church feel that in spite of social justice being a "constitutive" aspect of the gospel, it just does not scratch the evangelical itch. Perhaps because its entry into the substance of evangelism is so new, it just does not "seem" like real evangelization to many of us. Still, short of the Kingdom, I fear this optimistic vision of spontaneous cultural cooperation masks the inevitable group-egotism that can seek public power under such a rubric.

John Paul II spends a good deal of time making clear the "priority" of the spiritual and the transcendent over the material, as well as the "priority" of proclamation over other aspects of evangelization (RM, #20, 44). While granting the plurality of approaches in the New Testament, he roots his priorities in the Gospel of John. Perhaps this is the proper prophetic approach to our secularizing, homogenizing, reductive direction.

We seem to be caught, then, between risking the pitfalls associated with humanism and those associated with religious imperialism. I am a post-Vatican II American Catholic, born after the Council was called. I tend not to share the feeling of insufficiency regarding social justice and evangelization, having been socialized into it from the start rather than having to adopt it later. I also tend to think that the Christian mission toward humanism is at its inception, whereas the totalizing, transformist mission has had ample historical experimentation. It leads me to an alternative view of the priorities of evangelization. At the risk of polemicizing, let me conclude with that view.

Perhaps the secularizing, humanizing elements of our modern world call us to a different approach. Perhaps we are being called to, and challenged by, the simplicity of the Kingdom? There is general agreement between Catholic theologians and recent encyclicals that evangelization is the proclamation of the Kingdom. But what if the kingdom is simple? At what price, the Kingdom? Will we enter it if we have to set aside the creeds, the liturgies, the offices, the institutions? The 'glorious Church', and all our security in it? How we persecuted the Jews for not being able to recognize the Good News in the simple carpenter from Nazareth, the suffering servant on the cross! Yet now, when we are pressed toward a vision of the Kingdom that is equally simple and equally self-giving, a vision of mutual human love and justice based on the equality of all to God (see Donders), we balk.

My own sense is not that a social justice mission is somehow a grudging concession; my sense is rather that an overly transformationist vision still retains vestiges of a "who will be first" quality to it. It seems to emphasize the verbal "yes"--the "Lord! Lord!"--over the simple doing of God's will. It glorifies John's exclusive Christocentrism over Matthew's unadorned concern for the neighbor. If the Kingdom turns out to be, essentially, a society of unadorned concern for the neighbor, is that a disappointment? Why? Do we worry if "that's all"? Along this line, perhaps even more can be done with the self-limiting aspects of Jesus's ministry portrayed in Scripture--the Messianic secret, the rejection of the temptations, the refusal to invoke legions of God's army, the ambiguities of his interaction with the masses during his journey to Jerusalem and on Palm Sunday.

Perhaps, then, we should see the humanistic limitations on our evangelization as Providential rather than constraining. What if the Kingdom is simple? Seek first the Kingdom . . . then all the rest shall be added.

## Notes

1. The "genius" of different cultures is a description used by Paul VI in--for example--*Populorum Progressio*, #41.

2. For an argument combining respect for other religions with the forthright claim of salvation exclusively through Jesus Christ, see J.A. DiNoia, O.P., *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective*.

3. Peter Berger, for example, does so in works such as *The Social Construction of Reality* and *Sacred Canopy*.

4. The variety of attempts to do this is wide. See, for example, Alan Gewirth's *Reason and Morality*; Joseph Raz's *The Morality of Freedom*, John Finnis's *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, etc.

5. Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation*, p. 181.

6. David Hollenbach, *Justice, Peace, and Human Rights*, p. 9.

7. Ezra Stiles Ely, "A Christian Party in Politics," in *Church and State in American History*, eds. Wilson and Drakeman, pp. 96-100.

8. What follows is similar to the type of arguments made by Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Stanley Hauerwas.

9. James Rausch, "Dignitatis Humanae: The Unfinished Agent," in *Religious Freedom: 1965 and 1975*, p. 41.

10. See *Justice in the World*, in which it is claimed that "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel . . . ."

11. Jeff Stout argues along these lines in *Ethics After Babel*.

12. See, for example, *The Interpretation of Cultures and Local Knowledge*.

## Chapter XII

# The Integration of Chinese Culture and Christianity: A Social and Cultural Understanding

*Fenggang Yang*

The relationship between traditional Chinese culture and Western culture has been a focus of many scholars in China and the West for several centuries. We may trace the history of this scholarship back to Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit missionary to China in the early seventeenth century. He brought Catholicism to the Chinese, and introduced the classical Chinese scriptures into Europe. However, the Christian religion was either ignored as an unimportant part of western culture, or sometimes particularly interpreted by the Chinese intelligentsia as incompatible with traditional Chinese culture. The relative success of missionary work to the Chinese since the middle of the nineteenth century is found mostly in rural and border areas where philosophical inquiry is not very strong, or among overseas Chinese who live in a society with Christians as the majority. To understand this historical phenomenon we have to search for a new approach. This paper is a preliminary trial at constructing a heuristic approach dependent on a scrutiny of 'value system'. The historical experiences of the Chinese with Christian religion both in China and in the United States are to be examined.

### **Value Systems**

Although I cannot give an elaborate and refined definition here, a heuristic description of the concept of 'value system' is a necessity for our discussion. By *value system* I mean a set of beliefs which are used consciously or unconsciously by a group of people to direct their thinking and behavior. The *core* of a value system is its answers to the questions of cosmology and ontology, in the form of philosophy, theology, mythology, or literature. The core-questions concern what are the origin, essence, and principles of the world and the human being. These are the ground on which values located in superjacent levels rest or depend. The superjacent levels we may call '*peripherals*' (in the root etymological sense of 'to carry around') of a value system. The most important of the peripherals are social norms or social/behavioral rules, and symbolic identities such as ritual, language, and so on. Core concepts determine a value system: they define the character of a particular value system. Interestingly, peripherals are 'subjective' in how they relate to the core, and thus exhibit a relative independence. In other words, it is possible that a fixed set of core concepts can find differing sets of social norms and rituals affiliating to them. However, the differences are not unlimited. A change of social norms or rituals implies the potential or the danger of shifting or reshaping the core of a value system.

When I try to describe the concept of value system, two major value systems are in my mind—the traditional Chinese value system and Christianity. It is well-recognized that Confucianism has been the dominant force in traditional Chinese culture, but many scholars would not call it 'only a religion' or 'only a philosophy'. Christianity for its part as a 'religion' has many dimensions. By employing the concept of value system we can undertake a comparison of Confucianism and Christianity.

### *The Christian Value System*

When taken as a value system, the core of Christianity is composed of the concepts of creation, sin and salvation. The world or the cosmos is created out of nothing by an all-powerful God. Human beings are created by this very God. The nature of human being is sinful so that a salvation is necessary. On this cosmology and ontology the Christian social norms are based, including love, forgiveness, etc. The symbolic identity of Christians is characteristically expressed in sacraments or Christian rituals centering on Jesus Christ. Although there are and have been various churches and denominations, the core concepts of Christian religion are common to all these. The variety appears for the most part on the level of social norms, especially rituals.

### *The Traditional Chinese Value System*

The value system of the traditional Chinese culture has as its core the concepts of Tao, Yin and Yang. The world forever exists, and the existence and movement of all beings follow the Tao and the harmonious interaction of Yin and Yang. Human being is a part, although an intelligent part, of the world (nature). Following 'inner nature' and 'outer nature' should be the way of human life: human life should conform to the Tao by balancing Yin and Yang. Based on this cosmology and ontology there are the social norms of the 'three cardinal guides and five constant virtues', regarded as the essential societal norms in traditional China. The three cardinal guides are 'ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife'. The five constant virtues are 'benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity'. The symbolic identity of this value system is carried by *li* (ritual), which confirms and enforces the harmony and social order of the ruler, the subject, the father and the son (*Jun Chen Fu Zi*).

Although there have been three "religions" in traditional Chinese society—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism—the core concepts of cosmology and ontology for these three are not much different. First of all, both Confucianism and Taoism developed their philosophizing from the *Yi Jing* (the 'Scripture of Change'), so they have a common cosmology and ontology sharing the concepts of Tao, Yin and Yang. Actually in Confucius and Menzi cosmological or ontological questions did not receive much attention. The early Confucianism before the Han dynasty focuses exclusively on social and ethical orders. Buddhism was introduced to China around the time of the birth of Jesus. It became a great challenge to the dominant Confucianism at that time, because Buddhism has a systematic answer to cosmological and ontological questions. Facing this challenge Confucianism made a great effort to reconstruct or strengthen its own theory of cosmology and ontology by extrapolating from the concepts of the *Yi Jing*. At the same time, Taoism as a philosophical school evolved into a competitive religion. The relative weakness of Confucianism in terms of its lack of attention to cosmology and ontology, and the underdevelopment of Taoism before the introduction of Buddhism, may be one of the reasons which may explain the success of the spread of Buddhism in China. In addition, the Buddhist cosmology and ontology, especially the reshaped Buddhism which was accepted by the Chinese, are quite compatible with the Confucian and Taoist cosmology and ontology. Although Buddhism appeals to human subjectivity to interpret the existence and the principles of the world and the nature of human being, it also regards the world not as created: in Buddhism, the principle of existence and the movement of things are the chain of causation. There is no place in any of these Chinese traditions for a creator or creation. The basic belief about human being is that human nature is good. Therefore, it may be acceptable to say that the core concepts of the traditional



Chinese value system, in which Confucianism is dominant and Taoism and Buddhism complimentary, are Tao, Yin and Yang.

### *The "Modern" Value System or "Secularism"*

Before discussing the relationship of the traditional Chinese value system and the Christian value system, a few words need to be said about the "modern value system" or secularism. Strictly speaking, it is difficult to claim that there is already a system of values identifiable with "modernism". But with the development of the scientific theory of evolution, a trend of rationalism and materialism has been forming over the past century. The theory of evolution of the cosmos and human beings is strikingly different from the traditional Christian cosmology, and very different from the traditional Chinese cosmology. Progressivism, science, rationalism, and so on, became the characteristics (the norms) of this trend. There are various theories and schools, of course, belonging to this overall trend. Among them Marxism gained a great influence. It has a comprehensive answer to cosmological and ontological questions, and it has a whole set of social norms and even rituals. It became a competitive value system in Chinese society and in many other societies.

### **Factors Affecting the Interaction of Two Cultures**

When two cultures meet, what happens? The factors which may affect the interaction of the two cultures are many. Obviously any value system must have people as its carrier. And the persons as carriers of a culture are biological, social and historical beings. Therefore, such factors as the physical, linguistic, social, economic, etc., will all have some effect. Among them, here I would like to discuss physical difference and social economic factors.

#### *Physical Difference*

Physical difference as a factor should *not* be ignored. It is important especially in the early contact of the peoples of two value systems. During the American 'Gold Rush' the Chinese started to come to the west coast of America to search for gold and good fortune. At the same period many European immigrants came for the same purpose. Competition was very tense. Although there were many immigrants from different countries, it is certainly because of physical difference, among others, that the Chinese were targeted for exclusion from America. Following some local exclusionary acts of the west coast territories, the United States Congress passed an Exclusion Act in 1882 forbidding any immigrants from China. In many places the Chinese were violently driven out. Although socio-economic conditions were the most important factor for the anti-Chinese movement late 19th century and early 20th century America, the physical difference obviously contributed to the selection of the Chinese, rather than other people, as the target of exclusion. Conversely, westerners in China had quite similar experiences. They were regarded as devils by the Chinese. As a Chinese scholar from Shandong Province recalled in his biography, two missionaries lived in their town. "They resided in strange looking buildings. . . . The two men were from beyond the west ocean. They were tall, had red hair and green eyes, and walked with long straight legs—the very personification of devils." (Chih Meng, p. 42). They were killed during the Boxers' rebellion in about 1900.

## *Social and Economic Factors*

Social and economic factors are even more important, persistent factors affecting interaction. For the Chinese in America, when the economy was good and more workers were needed, such as in gold mines or railroad construction, the Chinese were recruited and praised for their moral goodness and hard work. When the economic situation became bad, then the Chinese became the target of exclusion. As a member of a committee in charge of expelling the Chinese from Takoma, Washington, Judge James Wickersham said, "If given an equal chance with our people, [the Chinese] would outdo [us] in the struggle for life and gain possession of the Pacific Coast of America.... We cannot compete with them, not because of their baser qualities, but because of their better" (McCunn, p. 49)

During the years of exclusion and expulsion, many Chinese left North America. For those who stayed, they were driven into the 'Chinatown'—a ghetto for a relatively safe life. In the ghetto Chinatown, the Chinese clung to their own traditional values and feared exposure to the outside world, including Christianity. Christian evangelizing work among the Chinese in the Chinatowns cannot be viewed as successful. The converts were few and the few converts became marginal persons. They lost their full membership in their own community, and yet could not gain full membership in the white Christian community. In other words, the Chinese Christians in the United States lost the trust of their fellow Chinese. At the same time the white teachers in the churches refused to socialize with them. Here is a typical incident. During the exclusion period, some churches had Sunday Schools for the Chinese in order "to teach the Chinese enough English so they could understand the gospel, convert, and then return to China as missionaries. Students often showed their gratitude to their teachers with gifts and banquets, and the Chinese students at the Baptist and Presbyterian churches in New York City organized the picnic illustrated here [my source exhibits a photograph]. Held at Iona Island, the event included swimming, kite-flying, boating, football, music, fireworks, and plenty of food. Of the 300 persons invited, however, fewer than half attended, as many of the teachers did not want to socialize with the Chinese, [but] only 'save their souls'" (McCunn, p. 42).

Did the missionaries do a better job in China during this period? No, the imperialism and colonialism of the Western powers could only inspire antagonism and hatred toward the westerners by the Chinese people, especially intellectuals. Missionaries were regarded as partners of the imperialists who wanted to make China their colony and make the Chinese their subjects. Missionaries worked as interpreters or secretaries for the merchants and representatives of the western governments. Missionaries enjoyed the same privileges as their fellow countrymen, enforced by military power and unequal treaties. While the merchants and diplomats used their guns and power to conquer the country, the missionaries, to many Chinese, were trying to make us "stop believing in our gods and ancestors, and to believe in theirs" (Meng, p. 43). The merchants were seen as killing our bodies by use of armed force, and stealing our material wealth: the missionaries were seen as killing our souls.

## **Possible Interactions of Two Value Systems**

Although physical, social and economic factors are important, in this paper I want to focus on a higher-level factor—the value system. Logically speaking, when two value systems meet, there are only three ways for the interaction: conflict, peaceful coexistence, and integration.

### *Conflict or Collision*

When the two value systems meet, if both of the value systems are solid in all their levels or dimensions—the core, the social norms and the symbolic identity—it is possible that there will be collision or conflict. The one must try hard to defeat and displace the other by all possible means—philosophical, political, even military. This might be the situation which eventuated in the victory of Christianity over Roman imperial culture, for example, and of Islam over ancient Egyptian culture. If one cannot defeat the other completely, then the two must fight for dominance. The early history of Buddhism in China is a good example of this. The Buddhists suffered nationwide violent exclusion and suppression five times, from the Han Dynasty up to the Sui Dynasty. It turned out that Buddhism could not be driven out completely, but the dominant position of Confucianism became firmly established. The early missionary work of Christianity was repeatedly wiped out from Chinese society two or three times. The first Christian religion which came to China was the Gnostic sect; the second was Catholicism in the Yuan Dynasty, coming via the road conquered by the Mongolians; the third was the Catholicism represented by Matteo Ricci, in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. All of these Christian missions failed.

### *Peaceful Coexistence*

Once the dominance of one value system over the others is built, there can be some form of peaceful coexistence among the different value systems in a society, although small-scale conflicts are often unavoidable. This may be the situation of Islam in China, and of later Buddhism in China.

### *Integration*

When both value systems are solidly believed by their people, and strongly regarded as sufficient by their people, the attempt of integration is impossible. Integration becomes possible only when believers feel at least one of the two systems is not sufficient or efficient to face the new social situation. During the conflict and then peaceful coexistence periods, the interaction of the two value systems may also result in some kind of adoption of certain values from one value system into another. Actually integration is more interesting to us, as we live in a world which is becoming a global village, and the advanced technologies of communication and transportation now make so many value systems of different traditions available to people at the same time. Various levels of integration of value systems have become a common reality. However, what kind of integration do we want?

We have to distinguish several kinds of integrations:

*a. Syncretism.* When the cores of the two value systems are firmly accepted, the efforts at integration of some people are likely to result in syncretism. That is, values from both systems are broken into pieces and a new set of values is assembled from these pieces. Since it differs from either of the original two systems, the mixture is usually regarded as unreasonable or illogical by both the original systems. The people who accept this kind of integration often become marginal persons who lose full membership in any of the communities of the original two value systems. A case in point is the Taiping Tianguo movement in the China of the 1850s through 1870s, which integrated Christianity and the traditional Chinese value system.

The leader of the Taipin (Grand Peace) Tianguo (Heavenly Kingdom) movement, Hong Xiuquan, was educated completely within the traditional Chinese value system. He studied many years in order to take the government examinations and enter the state officialdom. However, he repeatedly failed the state examinations and this frustrated him. The failure of the Qing government to defend against the western powers further shook his belief in the traditional values. Therefore he began to search for a new way to reconstruct his value system. The presence of westerners in his home-region drove him to learn about Christianity. During this period of inquiry, he went to Guangzhou and found a missionary from the United States. He lived there and tried hard to learn the true teachings of Christianity. He asked for baptism but was rejected by this missionary. The missionary even suspected Hong was a "rice Christian," that is, someone who becomes a convert in order to be better fed or gain some other material benefit.

By teaching himself through reading missionary booklets, Hong came up with a new vision and innovated an integrated set of values. This new set of values is a mixture of Christian concepts and traditional Chinese values. For example, Hong believed in Jesus as the Son of God. However, to interpret the relationship of God the Father and God the Son, he had no choice but to use the traditional Chinese values of the familial order of the father and the son. So he regarded God the Son as subject to God the Father, and he believed that he, Hong Xiuquan, was the younger brother (Tian Di) of Jesus the elder brother (as Tian Xong). Just as God the Father sent Jesus to save Israel, God the Father sent him to save the Chinese. In a dream vision Hong saw God the Father appear just like the Chinese traditional deity of the Heavenly King. Later on the followers of Hong even added a God the Mother, for a traditional Chinese mind considers it impossible for there to be a father without also a mother. The followers (originally called God Worshipers) of Taiping Tianguo adopted and modified Christian rituals, such as Sunday worship and Baptism. They sincerely invited Christian missionaries to come among them to further preach and teach. However, the innovation of Hong was so alien to both Christians and the Chinese that the Taipin Tianguo movement was suppressed by a coalition of the Chinese authorities and westerners (both merchants and missionaries). The socio-historical conditions as well as the core value systems led to the eventual failure of the Taipin Tianguo—an attempt at integrating Christianity with traditional Chinese culture.

*b. Organic integration.* A really organic integration of two value systems is the case when the core of one value system adopts the peripherals of the other. Let us look at two historical examples of this kind of integration. One is an integration initiated by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci. Matteo Ricci clearly insisted on and retained the core concepts of Christianity. But he showed a sincere respect for the Chinese classics and Chinese rituals. He himself adopted the Chinese way of clothing (which has strong symbolic meaning), speaking, and even behavior. He allowed ancestral worship for the Chinese converts to Christianity. He flexibly translated the word God into Shangdi (the Heavenly Empire), as it appears in the most ancient Chinese literature (in *Shi Jing*, the Scripture of Poetry). This integration may be regarded as an example of "inculturation". It was a successful integration, for Ricci converted quite a number of Chinese, including some intellectuals. However, the Catholic missionaries after Matteo Ricci insisted on what they regarded as "pure Christian belief" to such an extent that they forbade the ancestral worship and the usage of Shangdi as the translation of the word God. These new proscriptions eventually caused the exclusion of all Catholic missionaries from the continent of China by a Qing emperor.

Another example of organic integration is from the Chinese side with an insistence on and retention of the traditional Chinese value core. In the late Qing Dynasty some intellectuals tried a reconstruction of the value system with "Chinese substance and Western utilities" (*zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong*). This framework was authorized by some high ranking officials of the Qing government, who started to send Chinese youth overseas to train in engineering, science, and humanities. However, the officials made it clear that conversion to Christianity was forbidden. The first group of Chinese students went to the United States in the 1870s, after a successful intervention by the first Chinese graduate from Yale University in the United States, Yong Wing. Yong Wing's goal was to let the Chinese youth "come and try great possibilities and Western Literature, Science and Religion" (McCunn, p. 17). But the Chinese authorities had no interest in western religion at all. Before leaving China the students were clearly instructed that they should stay away from churches and Christianity. And a Commissioner in charge of the students' Chinese education accompanied the students in order to oversee this. There is one incident which is very illustrative. The boys lived in American families which volunteered as host families. The English comprehension of the boys was very limited. "In one family, the boys, when told to get ready for Sunday school, only caught the word 'school' and were shocked to find themselves marched into a church. Since they had been warned to withstand attempts to Christianize them, the boys raced out of the church, to the consternation of their hosts" (McCunn, p. 19). The theory of 'Chinese substance and Western utility' was popular with many Chinese at that time. It was to fail later, because the western powers finally broke the door of the Central Kingdom and the Qing Dynasty collapsed.

The integration of traditional Chinese value and Christian value was challenged even further by the May Fourth Movement (1919-). Realizing the seeming impotence of Chinese tradition in the face of western culture, the Chinese intellectuals turned to destroy the Chinese tradition. The means they used to criticize the Chinese tradition were science and democracy. The slogan of the May Fourth Movement was to overthrow the "Temples of Confucius." The core of the traditional value system was destroyed. In the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement, fewer and fewer Chinese intellectuals still believed in the traditional Chinese cosmology and ontology. However, Chinese intellectuals did not substitute the traditional core with the core concepts of the Christian value system, but rather, they adopted the "modern value system" or "secularism." The Chinese mentality found it too hard to adopt Christian cores. For example, Hu Shih once asked, "If the world was created by God, then God was created by whom?" This question may seem extremely illogical and unreasonable to westerners educated in a Judeo-Christian context, but it is a very logical question according to Chinese mentality. The concept of creation and creator, the concept of sin and salvation, are just not compatible with the way of Chinese thinking. Contrary to this, evolutionism and materialism provide an interpretation of the cosmos and human being which are highly compatible with the traditional Chinese cores. There is no creator; everything is in a chain of causation; all things conform to the Tao, or the Laws of Nature. Therefore, after several decades of criticism, debates, and competition, Marxism-Leninism eventually gained dominance in China. At first this "modern" cosmology lacked a full system of social norms and rituals. However, Mao's successful integration of traditional Chinese values and ideas with the secularist Marxism-Leninism produced the Chinese style of Marxism.

On the other hand, there are increasing numbers of Christian converts among the Chinese, both in China and overseas. However, in the case of these new Chinese Christians, they either integrate Christian cores and Chinese social norms, or integrate Christian rituals with Chinese cores. There are even many who suspend inquiry into core questions and adopt socially recognized

behavioral rules only. There is an emptiness or vacuity in the matter of searching for the principles of the world and the meaning of life.

### **Conclusion: What Kind of Pluralism?**

Pluralism has become a favorite word for many people today. Even Christian evangelists like to use this word. However, we have to distinguish among the different types of pluralism here. Pluralism can mean plural social norms and rituals with one core. This kind of pluralism is not hard to achieve. Actually it is the reality of the Christian world since the Reformation. However, pluralism can also mean plural value systems with distinctive cores, so several value systems peacefully coexist in a society. In this case, what is the point of evangelization? Does evangelization mean only to recruit those who have no systematic beliefs? How about the personal level? Can an individual person have 'plural belief', that is, affirm several value systems, several cores? These are the questions, some new and some old. But their answers are elusive, and beg for further inquiry.

## Chapter XIII Fragments for Fruitful Encounters with Otherness

*Richard Khuri*

### Return to Origins

John Farrelly's phrase "[T]he Origin of all the world came to us and calls us to return to the Origin of all"<sup>1</sup> can be a turning point in the long and apparently endemically crisis-ridden Christian-Muslim encounter. While it is by no means necessary, and certainly not desirable, that meaningful dialogue between Christians and Muslims rest on emphasizing similarities and ignoring differences, there is much to be gained from exploring the possibilities that issue from a crucial commonality between the two: It is not only fundamental to both religions that they are monotheistic, but that they are centered around an encounter between man and God in which man has been given a path back to God. The Origin of all came both to Christians and Muslims (and not only them) and they have both been called to return to It. The specifics of the encounter are of course profoundly different in each case (how adverse it would be for dialogical creatures such as we are to recognize but one encounter with the Origin, let alone a single account of a single encounter). Much has been said about the intractable differences: that the Christians' trinitarian conception of the Origin appears to compromise the uncompromisingly monotheistic stance of Muslims, and that the purity of Muslim monotheism would so distance Christians from God that they would scarcely recognize Him; or that Christ, according to Muslims, never died on the Cross (nor *could* he, especially if he is what Christians have taken him to be), and that, from a Christian point of view, God is too preoccupied with legislation in Islam, sometimes concerning surprisingly mundane matters.

The Incarnation has blasphemous implications for Muslims. For them, God is God and man is man. Or does it? John Farrelly's attempt to recover the original meaning of the Trinity, which includes his reference to the evolution of the ascription of divinity to Christ to the point where it was attributed to him even before the Creation in John's Gospel,<sup>2</sup> has the potential, from the Christian side, to at least ensure that Muslims are not indelibly marked with a (to them) dramatic and alarming understanding of the Trinity. But if we were to look at the problem from the other side, how "pure" is Muslim monotheism, and how far removed is it from that in which God and man appear much more intimately linked to Christians? Is God really so far removed from His Creation in Islam, always and forever?

Certainly not. In the first place, Muslims believe their Qur'an to be an Incarnation, the quite literal incarnation of God's words, which together constitute His Word. God has quite literally spoken to man in the Muslim view, and His words have been remembered and recorded *verbatim et literatim*. This much is well known. But what about certain later developments that highlight the proximity of man to God, developments that have retained a special place in the hearts of Muslims ranging from rural folk in places like Anatolia and Kashmir to urban crafts guilds, scholars and mystics?

*Ibn 'Arabi*

This is the great Andalusian-born mystic, poet and metaphysician, Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240), of whom Chittick correctly says: "In the Islamic world itself, probably no one has exercised deeper and more pervasive influence over the intellectual life of the community during the past seven hundred years."<sup>3</sup>

It is not just in intellectual life that Ibn 'Arabi's influence has been deep and pervasive, but also in folk Islam.<sup>4</sup> We may take 'folk Islam' to mean the modalities of Islamic life in rural areas whose heterodoxy could not (or would not) be controlled from the great urban centers of administration and learning such as Istanbul, Baghdad, Cairo and Fez. The pull towards folk spirituality was so strong among Muslims that even important towns like Konya, Bukhara, Basra and Isfahan became centers of learning under the influence of Sufi masters or mystically inclined scholars, philosophers and theologians, a learning whose lore spread to the furthest villages, where "men of practical wisdom" would relate the lessons of the masters each according to his own ability and that of his audience.

Among the many things that have endeared Ibn 'Arabi to Muslims from all walks of life is his equal emphasis on God's incomparability (to anything whatsoever) *and His similarity* (to His creation, and to man above all). Orthodox Muslim scholars have been wont to emphasize God's remove from man, often to a terrible degree. But Ibn 'Arabi argued that while God as Essence is indeed that far removed, as Divinity, He assumes similarity to His creation. God, as described by His "Ninety Nine Most Beautiful Names", has established a relationship with the whole cosmos, ourselves included, and "is closer to us than the jugular vein."<sup>5</sup> We see His closeness manifest itself, for instance, to the extent that the virtues to which we are called are given in His names. We know God as Divinity, because He revealed Himself to us and thereby told us what we must do as beings created in His image.<sup>6</sup>

According to Ibn 'Arabi, orthodox scholars and theologians place too much emphasis on God's incomparability because they rely only on their reason in their account of God's nature and attributes. Their reason tells them that any similarity between God and His creation must be excluded if He really is utterly unlike His creation. But the Qur'an and the collected sayings and reports of actions of the prophet Muhammad (known as the *hadith*, which Muslims also hold to be sacred) present God as both incomparable with and similar to His creation. If the rational faculty grasps God's incomparability (and transcendence), then it is through faith and the imagination that one becomes aware of God's similarity (and immanence).<sup>7</sup> Ibn 'Arabi tries to restore God's nearness to the faithful by reminding them that if similar traits to theirs could not be ascribed to God, then He would not have ascribed them to Himself (as He did in the revelations). God is what He says He is. The Law, derived from the scriptures, contradicted everything given in the rational faculties by mentioning God's coming, descent, rejoicing, laughter, and so on. How this is so must be accepted without rational foundation, through faith and submission (and the imagination, which Ibn 'Arabi has the highest regard for as both human faculty *and* the imaginal world that corresponds to what is given in the imagination and acts as a bridge or "isthmus" [*barzakh*] between man's and God's imaginations). Those who follow the mystical way are also in a position to recognize God's similarity, after having first accepted it. Yet the Law affirmed that there is nothing like Him. Nevertheless, that God is utterly different from everything else does not entail that He is no way similar to us.<sup>8</sup>

Another way that Ibn 'Arabi was able to highlight God's nearness to man was through the doctrine of the Perfect Man. This doctrine is a highly complex pillar of Islamic mystical theology and cannot be expounded upon in detail here. Suffice it to say that in that theology, the macrocosm and the microcosm are held to mirror one another. The macrocosmic levels are spiritual, imaginal



and corporeal. The world of image-exemplars<sup>9</sup> acts as a bridge between the spiritual and the corporeal, which would otherwise stare at one another across the abyss. The microcosm also reflects those three levels. For man is spirit, soul and body (the interesting link is thereby established between the soul and the imagination). God gave man spirit, which possesses all the angelic attributes and knows only God, but the soul can only become aware of it after a long process of growth (the goal of Islamic mysticism can thus be put in terms of harmony between soul and spirit). Man not only has the three macrocosmic levels within him, but, since God created Adam in His own form, all the divine names (or attributes) are gathered within him. The goal of spiritual growth can thus also be put in terms of the actualization in man of the divine attributes.<sup>10</sup> The Perfect Man then becomes an archetypal being, *still* man, in whom the divine attributes have become actualized. He dwells with God from the beginning, and in some accounts is the direct agency of Creation and the goal of cosmic movement. The Perfect Man, the three macrocosmic levels and God (sometimes "God's Knowledge") compose the five-fold reality, known as the "Five Divine Presences", characteristic of Islamic mystical ontology.

### **Perfect Man**

The doctrine of the Perfect Man is as close as Muslims ever get to the bridge<sup>11</sup> between man and God. The primordial presence of the Perfect Man combines with that of all the archetypes (essences, ideas, images) to produce an outlook remarkably similar to what one finds when one begins to read the Gospel of St. John. Without stretching the notions too much, one finds an implicit Islamic trinity, with the incomparable aspect of God as Father, the Perfect Man (who embodies the perfection of the attributes through which the similar aspect of God is revealed) as Son, and the agency through which God became and continues to be present to His Creation, with the possibility of occasional mystical union and prophetic vision, as Holy Spirit. Small wonder, then, that these convergences have allowed the word to be far more effective than the sword in converting, say, some Christians in Anatolia to Islam.<sup>12</sup>

### **Conversion**

This brings us to the general subject of the conversion of the (once) predominantly Christian population of the Near East to Islam. The crass notion of conquest followed by brutal pressures to convert has long been discredited. In some instances, it took six hundred years for a Christian majority to metamorphose into a Muslim majority. This metamorphosis was complex and multifarious. But one particular dimension of it deserves mention in light of the paper by R. J. Gonzalez-Casnovas.<sup>13</sup> A lasting impression left by Gonzalez-Casnovas' reading is that resurgent Western Christendom, spearheaded by the Reconquista, was significantly shaped by the encounter with 'Islamdom', to the extent that in certain respects, it can almost be seen more as an anti-Islam than a proper Christian movement. Despite my suspicions about the ability of critical thinkers like Foucault and Sa'id to discuss Christianity with clarity and fairness, there seems to be a strong historical basis for the impression we have been given by Gonzalez-Casnovas, which we find in the work of historian Judith Herrin.<sup>14</sup> Let us suppose this to be the case. We may then have the opportunity for a series of speculations that shed new light on the enduring legacy of the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon.

The Christians who lost out at those two Councils were primarily the Christians of the Near East, above all the Monophysites and the Nestorians (we know hardly anything about other

"heretical" groups, such having been the extent of their suppression). They were not all killed, although there were occasional moves in that direction. Even the local Orthodox groups, by the early seventh century, had become so disaffected with Byzantine rule that they were pining for an alternative. When the Arab-Muslim armies poured out of the Arabian peninsula, they thus found a largely welcoming population. Some Christians who first encountered the Muslims were not even sure that Islam was an entirely new religion rather than just another Christian sect to add to the various possibilities that survived among them. In short, they were only too happy to be ruled by Muslims, in the long aftermath of Nicea, Chalcedon and rule from Christian Byzantium more Byzantine than Christian. This, together with analogous developments in the adjacent territories previously ruled by the Persian Sassanids, immeasurably helped to accelerate the expansion of the Islamic dominion. This further empowerment of Islam, in turn, gradually brought about the conditions that have, to return to Gonzalez-Casnovas, significantly shaped resurgent Western Christendom. And this same resurgent Western Christendom has left its shameful legacy throughout the Americas. So far had it forsaken Jesus Christ that it could systematically treat native American populations as sub-human or even sub-bestial. As if this were not enough, one may venture a further speculation that the unprecedented rise of materialism to the forefront of modern human life did not originate in the lands of Western Christendom by chance. One can only wonder to what extent this has been the legacy of Nicea and Chalcedon, a wonder that immediately bears on our problematic. For do we wish to evangelize a creed that has snuffed out the rich possibilities that reside in the encounter between Christianity and Hellenism (themselves both derived from encounters, the one between man and God, the other between Ancient Greece and the Orient) and may have planted the seeds of a long tragic cycle?

## **Hellenism**

Among the possibilities which have been frozen in their tracks by the insistence on a single version of the encounter between Christianity and Hellenism is the development within Christendom of Hellenism itself (which is why Western attempts to renew the encounter with, at any rate, the Greek dimension of Hellenism usually ran against Christianity<sup>15</sup>). How this becomes relevant to our discussions is again by way of John Farrelly's thought-provoking presentation.

In the first place, we may consider the various understandings of time which have been in circulation. Openness to other cultures means openness to the various experiences of temporality. John Farrelly speaks of time as if the choice were between primordial time and historical linear time. It seems, as he poses the question, that there are two different outlooks, the one viewing time as primarily outside of history which is also indifferent to history, and the other viewing time as primarily embedded within history within an overall state of heightened historical self-consciousness. But there are other possibilities. Those who have dealt with peoples not fundamentally shaped by one of the three great monotheistic religions will cite the cyclical view of time. There is another possibility that is not entirely foreign to readers of Bergson or Heidegger, but is much more interwoven with a general cultural pattern than the thought of those two exceptional thinkers.

There is the development of the concept of time that was the outcome of the long encounter between Hellenism and Islam. Time, according to this concept, is defined by the continuous and dynamic interaction between the eternal and the temporal, so that the temporal aspect of the encounter with the eternal is constantly and necessarily renewed. Time is neither divorced from eternity, nor does it unfold in linear fashion towards eternity or otherwise. The movement of time,

at every level, reflects the movement of the eternal, and is a function of the things with which it moves.<sup>16</sup> This concept of time partly mirrors the Islamic experience, which is centered around a paradigm that comprises both communal life and the individual ascent to God.<sup>17</sup> The paradigm has inspired people across the ages as well as various cultural divides, so that a cluster of possibilities retain their character and distinctiveness while converging around their center. This unique Islamic situation, one of constant interaction between a paradigm held to be eternal and its temporal reflections, perhaps freed Muslim intellectuals to embrace the Hellenistic philosophy that migrated towards its eastern wing with some from among the Christians who had lost out at Nicea and Chalcedon.

It is from the survivors of Hellenistic pluralism that the Muslims inherited a view of the cosmos that regards it as a hierarchy of being or existence. This hierarchical ontology is not static, nor does it reflect agrarian hierarchism, but is one in which all beings exist in continuity with the One without losing their identity and uniqueness. It is therefore not a pantheistic view. Continuing a train of thought that can be traced to Pythagoras or Empedocles, if we may regard these as the first to give a sense of the movement of the cosmos, it regards universal movement as sustained, on the one hand, by the aspiration for perfection or Being pure and simple, and, on the other, by the inexhaustible possibilities that are opened when pure Being becomes reflected in an ontological or existential scale that covers the entire continuum from matter to pure Being. Thus, besides the absence of static hierarchism, we find no dichotomy between the physical and the metaphysical, the corporeal and the spiritual or the natural and the supernatural. Everything that exists is open to the Origin of all, each to the extent of its capacity.

The tradition that joins the pre-Socratic endeavor, in both its "religious" and "scientific" aspects, with Islamic thought and spiritual life, passing through the meeting of East with West that constitutes Hellenism, might well have taken on a decidedly Christian character had Christians at the time been free to explore the full implications of their interaction with a teeming world of thought that called forth a multiplicity of reflections and ideas on much that is present in the Gospels. The tracks along which Christian thought and (possibly) spiritual life have been driven since the fourth century have cut (Western and Orthodox) Christianity off from fecund sources and caused other Christians to find their fate integrally woven with that of Islam, so that keeping certain aspects of their traditions alive in several cases meant their conversion to the new faith. In the West, the ensuing impoverishment may have been pivotal in the eventual rise of a humanism that, with hindsight, all along had the seeds of materialism and alienation within it. It is all the more fortuitous that we are witnesses to the manner in which the positive sciences, so triumphantly divorced from the eschatological to begin with and for so long, have now been forced to contemplate it anew by what their self-styled method has wrought—a vision of the cosmos so open to what lies beyond or behind it, at both the macroscopic and microscopic levels, that leading physicists can no longer ignore metaphysical questions.

And so we can also derive a third view of history. This would see it neither in terms of linearity, nor as much ado about nothing from the standpoint of eternity, but as history fashioned through temporal human experience in continuous interaction with the eternal and the Origin of all. It is possible to believe that such a history reflects the love, presence and creative power of the Origin of all without becoming identical with the Origin.

## **Conclusion**

Islamic-Hellenistic thought and spirituality, to which the Christians who lost out at Nicea and Chalcedon (and God knows how many of the descendants of these Christians) have given their intellectual and spiritual energies, can return to the Western tradition what the latter has lost by narrowing the possibilities of its creed. Specifically, the overall bent of that Islamic (and eastern Christian) Hellenism enhances the possibilities for historical renewal and vigor without walking the tightrope between ignoring history (which leads to ignoring the temporal plight of man, perhaps another source for the overpowering materialistic streak that has been running through modernity) and historicism. The latter is a danger in the views propounded by John Farrelly. It is an example of the general tendency to push historical consciousness towards historicism instead of historicity.

The possibilities are also enhanced for a richer conception of time, one that encompasses the meeting of the temporal with the eternal, and for a more open idea of the meeting ground between immanence and transcendence, the physical and the metaphysical, and the corporeal and the spiritual. All these may in turn serve to expand the meaningful interactive domain between ourselves and those, as Joseph Donders tirelessly reminds us, who really see things very, very differently.

## Notes

1. John Farrelly, "Trinity as Salvific Mystery, and Historical Consciousness," paper presented in seminar on October 22nd, 1992, p. 17.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

3. William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge (Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination)*, S.U.N.Y. Press, 1989, p. x.

4. See for instance Serit Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, S.U.N.Y. Press, 1989, pp. 176-7, 185-6, and 208-9; and Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 328, 341, 378-381, 403, and 420-421.

5. This phrase occurs in the Qur'an, sura 50, verse 16 (usually indicated as Qur'an 50: 16).

6. These reflections derive from the discussion in Chittick, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-76.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-76.

9. Image-exemplars are quasi-corporealized spiritual entities, so that they become perceptible to those human beings whose perceptiveness is sufficiently well-attuned to imaginal presences. Prophets are endowed with such perceptiveness, but ordinary mortals also have an inkling of its workings through the imagination, and particularly in dreams.

10. Chittick, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-19 and 21-22.

11. 'Isthmus' is a far more phenomenologically potent term in this context. This is clearly a case where our expressive ability stands to benefit from another tradition.

12. See Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge U. P., 1988, p. 305.

13. R.J. Gonzalez-Casanovas, "Cultural Discourse in Hispanic Historiography on the Reconquest and Conquest: Historicist Hermeneutics from Alfonso X to las Casas," in *Hermeneutics and Inculturation* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003).

14. See her *The Formation of Christendom*, Princeton U. P., 1988.

15. This of course was a sad and unfair development, but 'Christendom' had passed for Christianity for so long in the West that it was almost inevitable for those who finally rebelled against the former to confound the two and thus dissociate themselves from the latter.

16. See Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadr*, S.U.N.Y. Press, 1975, pp. 108-113.

17. The Islamic understanding of time also involves much that is linear, to be sure. For Islam clearly narrates the lineage of prophecy from Adam to Muhammad, whom it holds to be the last prophet, and to this extent describes itself in linear-historical terms. There are also repeated references to the End of Time, since the Last Judgment is one of the most frequently mentioned terms in the Qur'an. So in this regard, time moves relentlessly towards its conclusion. The understanding of time which I have emphasized is more characteristic of Islamic practice, especially in thought and spiritual life, and its spread into the popular culture, than of scriptural, dogmatic Islam. What is interesting is that Islam has largely tolerated and often legitimized such heterodoxy.



## Chapter XIV Culture, Evangelization and Moral Theology

*William E. May*

I will begin by summarizing a document published by the International Theological Commission in 1989, "Faith and Inculturation" (see appendix). I will then offer some comments from the perspective of moral theology. The document was prepared by a subcommission of the ITC under the leadership of Gilles Langevin, S.J. Langevin drafted a synthesis of position papers, as yet unpublished, by members of the subcommission.<sup>1</sup> The first draft of the document was discussed and debated by the entire ITC at its plenary meeting in December, 1987.<sup>2</sup> In June, 1988 a revised draft was prepared by Langevin in light of written *modi* submitted by the entire Commission and distributed to the members. This draft was in turn revised by Langevin, again in the light of written *modi* submitted by members of the Commission. This draft was broadly approved in its specifics (*specifica forma*) by the entire Commission at its plenary session in October, 1988, and was published with the approval (*placet*) of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, president of the Commission.<sup>3</sup>

### **An Overview of "Faith and Inculturation"**

In my overview I will focus attention on the brief but important introduction and on the section dealing with "nature, culture, and grace." The document contains two other sections, on inculturation in the history of salvation and present problems of inculturation. However, I will pay somewhat less attention to them since I think that the weightier matters are taken up in the introduction and in the discussion of nature, culture, and grace.

The introduction briefly reviews material from Vatican Council II, various Synods of Bishops, and Pope John Paul II on the topic of faith and inculturation. The council, in its pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, had described culture as "an effort towards a deeper humanity and towards a better plan for the universe" and had noted some of the more urgent duties of Christians regarding culture: "defense of the right of all to a culture, promotion of an integral culture, and harmonization of the links between culture and Christianity."<sup>4</sup> The Synod of Bishops of 1985 described inculturation as "the inner transformation of authentic cultural values by their integration into Christianity and the rooting of Christianity in the various human cultures."<sup>5</sup> According to the document two essential themes can be found in the thought of Pope John Paul II regarding the inculturation of the Christian faith. The first is that God's revelation transcends the various cultures in which it finds expression: "The Word of God cannot . . . be identified or linked in an exclusive manner with the elements of culture which bear it. The Gospel quite often demands a conversion of attitudes and an amendment of customs where it establishes itself: cultures must also be purified and restored in Christ."<sup>6</sup> The second is the Pope's urgent appeal for the evangelization of cultures, an evangelization based on an "anthropological conception firmly rooted in Christian thought since the Fathers of the Church. Since culture, when pure, reveals and strengthens the nature of man, the Christian impregnation presupposes the surpassing of all historicism and relativism in the conception of what is human. The evangelization of cultures should therefore be inspired by the love of man in himself and for himself, especially in those aspects of his being and of his culture which are being attacked or under threat."<sup>7</sup>

In view of this teaching by Vatican Council II, the Synods of Bishops, and Pope John Paul II, the authors of the document are concerned, first of all, to set forth a Christian anthropology "which situates, one in relation to the other, nature, culture, and grace." They will then examine how inculturation was at work in the history of salvation—in ancient Israel, in the life and work of Jesus, and in the early Church—and then address contemporary problems of inculturation raised by the encounter of Christian faith with popular piety, non-Christian religions, the cultural traditions of "young" churches, and various characteristics of the modern world.<sup>8</sup>

The section of the document dealing with nature, culture, and grace is intended to set forth a Christian anthropology and to show how nature, culture, and grace are interrelated. According to the document, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has a very precise understanding of nature. It is "what constitutes [a being] as such, with the dynamism of its tendencies towards its proper ends." Moreover, "it is from God that natures possess what they are, as well as their proposed ends. They are from that moment impregnated with a significance in which man, as the image of God, is capable of discerning the 'creative intention of God'."<sup>9</sup> From this the document concludes that "the fundamental inclinations of human nature, expressed by natural law, appear therefore as an expression of the will of the Creator. This natural law declares the specific requirements of human nature, requirements which are significant of the design of God for his rational and free creature."<sup>10</sup>

But human persons are not only beings of a certain kind or nature, they are also beings gifted with free choice who exist in time, in history. It is thus necessary "to observe what man, endowed with a fallible liberty, and often subjected to his passions, has made of his humanity. This heritage transmitted to new generations includes simultaneously immense treasures of wisdom, art, and generosity, and a considerable share of deviations and perversions. Attention, therefore, as a whole, revolves around human nature and the human condition, an expression which integrates existential elements, of which certain ones—sin and grace—affect the history of salvation."<sup>11</sup>

It is at this point that the document sets forth its understanding of *culture*. It uses the term primarily in a "positive sense—as a synonym of development," but it warns us not to forget that "cultures can perpetuate and favor the choice of pride and selfishness."<sup>12</sup> Seeking to describe culture more precisely, the document declares that "culture consists in the extension of the requirements of human nature, as the accomplishment of its ends... The word culture in its general sense indicates all those factors by which man refines and unfolds his manifold spiritual and bodily qualities."<sup>13</sup> In short, culture provides the milieu in which human persons develop themselves, and human persons are themselves the "primary constituents" of culture, in the sense that culture is the product brought about by human persons thinking and acting in solidarity with one another in the communities in which they live.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, culture, understood as the concrete and particular culture of a specific people, "is open to the higher values common to all," i.e., common to all human persons of whatever particular culture. Although there is a plurality of cultures, cultural pluralism cannot "be interpreted as the juxtaposition of a closed universe, but as a participation in a unison of realities all directed towards the universal values of humanity."<sup>15</sup> Since man is by reason of his nature a religious being, it follows that "religion is an integral constituent of culture, in which it takes root and blossoms."<sup>16</sup> In addition, the "transcendent movement of man in search of God" is at the root of all great religions, and the Christian faith "engrafts itself" on this movement of the human person. Thus, the Christian faith is "free adherence to the proposition of the gratuitous love of God that has been revealed to us, which has given us his only Son to free us from sin and has poured out his Spirit in our hearts."<sup>17</sup>



The document asserts that the Christian faith "transcends the entire natural and cultural order" and that, therefore, this faith is (a) "compatible with all cultures insofar as they conform to right reason and goodwill" and (b) "is a dynamizing factor of culture." According to the authors of this document the "principle" explaining everything concerning the relationships between faith and culture is the following: "grace respects nature, healing in it the wounds of sin, comforting and elevating it. Elevation to the divine life is the specific finality of grace, but it cannot realize this unless nature is healed and unless elevation to the supernatural order brings nature, in the way proper to itself, to the plenitude of perfection."18

Inculturation is defined by the document as the "Church's efforts to make the message of Christ penetrate a given socio-cultural milieu, calling on the latter to grow according to all its particular values, as long as these are compatible with the Gospel.... [It is] 'the incarnation of the Gospel in the hereditary cultures, and at the same time, the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church'."19

The second major part of the document, entitled "Inculturation in the History of Salvation," describes how, in the history of the covenant between God and humankind, faith in the God who saves was "inculturated" first in the culture of the Hebrew people and in the cultures of those peoples who were "grafted onto Israel," and then in the diverse cultures whose peoples came to believe in the "good news" revealed in Jesus Christ. The principal theme is this: by accepting in faith the God who saves and who has, in and through Jesus Christ, become one with the human beings he has made precisely so that he could share with them his own divine life, people of diverse cultures have been able to shape their lives and cultures in a new way. Their own native cultures have been "transformed" by faith in this saving God. Some elements within their cultures testify to resistance to God's revealed Word, whereas others express its acceptance. Thus "culture is eschatologically situated: it tends towards its completion in Christ, but it cannot be saved except by associating itself with the repudiation of evil."20

The third part of the document, called "Present Problems of Inculturation," is concerned with issues raised concerning the inculturation of the Christian faith by forms of popular piety, non-Christian religions, newly emerging young "churches," and "modernity." The guiding theme of the entire part is the following: the Christian faith, as proclaimed by the Catholic Church, (a) fully respects everything authentically true and good in the forms of popular piety, the non-Christian religions, and the modernity which have shaped and are shaping the cultures in which the Gospel is preached; (b) is inwardly capable of integrating everything that is true and good into itself, and (c) radically questions and challenges those features of the cultures in which it is proclaimed that fail to respect fully the dignity of human persons as beings created in the image of God, called to be his children and to live lives of holiness:

"However great the respect should be for what is true and holy in the cultural heritage of a people, this attitude does not demand that one should lend an absolute character to this cultural heritage. No one can forget that, from the beginning, the Gospel was a 'scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the pagans' (1 Cor. 1:23). Inculturation . . . cannot become syncretism."21

### **Reflections from the Perspective of Moral Theology**

Our moral life, I believe, can be described as an endeavor, cognitively, to come to know who we are and what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be, and, conatively, to do what we ourselves come to know we are to do if we are to be fully the beings we are meant to be.

When we come into existence we do not know who we are or what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be. But we are equipped to find out, and in finding out we do come to know who we are—what kind, of beings we are, what our nature is. For we human beings are animals radically different in kind from other animals.<sup>22</sup> We are endowed with the capacity (a) to come to know the truth and to distinguish between true and false propositions and (b) the capacity to determine our own lives by our own free choices. For human beings are moral beings. Human actions are utterly unlike physical events that come and go like the falling of leaves. Certainly, in human actions there is a physical component that is empirically observable. But at the heart of the actions we do is a free, self-determining choice whereby we give to ourselves our identity as moral beings. And choices last, enduring in those who make them as dispositions to make further choices of the same kind until contradictory choices are made. For instance, if I choose to commit adultery I make myself to be an adulterer, and I remain an adulterer, disposed to engage in adulterous behavior in the future, until I repent and, through a contradictory kind of choice, make myself to be a repentant adulterer, resolved not to commit adultery in the future. In short, we can say that our character is our integral existential identity as shaped by our free choices, good and bad.<sup>23</sup> We might say that our actions are like "words" that we speak and through which we give to ourselves our moral character.

While we are free to do what we choose, we are not free to make what we choose to do (and to be in and through our choices) right or wrong, good or bad. We can choose well or badly, and we know that we can. Thus it must be possible for us to discover, through our intelligence, which alternatives of choice are morally good and which are morally bad prior to choice. In other words, there are normative criteria for making choices that human persons can come to know.

According to Catholic faith "the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective, and universal—whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community in a plan conceived in wisdom and love." Moreover, man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine providence, he can come to perceive ever increasingly the unchanging truth."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it is precisely through the mediation of conscience that men can come to participate in God's loving plan for human existence, for deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. The voice of this law, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment, do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it he will be judged.<sup>25</sup>

Fidelity to conscience means "a search for the truth" and for "true solutions" to the issues and problems that confront human beings. While conscience can "err through invincible ignorance without losing its dignity" (so long as there is sufficient "care for the search for the true and the good"), "to the extent that a correct conscience holds sway, persons and groups turn away from blind choice and seek to conform to the objective norms of morality."<sup>26</sup>

The participation by human persons in God's loving plan for human existence, a participation mediated through conscience, is precisely what is meant by "natural law."<sup>27</sup> Here I cannot enter into a discussion of natural law. I think that it can best be described as an ordered set of true propositions about what-is-to-be-done in and through human choices, beginning with the first and common principles of morality and proceeding to more and more specific norms or criteria which enable us to distinguish between morally good and morally bad alternatives of conscience.<sup>28</sup>

My interest now will center on culture and the Christian faith rooted in divine revelation and their impact on our search for the truth meant to guide our choices so that we will indeed choose in such a way that we will become fully the beings we are meant to be.

In our search for the truth we can be both crippled or disabled and helped or enabled, categories that can obviously include what theology calls sin and grace. Moreover, in our struggle to find out who we are and what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be, and to do what we come to know we are to do, if we are to be the beings we are meant to be, we do so in company with others—with our families, our neighbors, our fellow citizens. In short, we enter a world mediated by meaning. Meanings are mediated to us by the persons with whom we live, by the cultures in which we live. Indeed, those cultures have been shaped by the free choices and actions of the persons living in them. For the actions of individuals, if accepted and endorsed by the societies in which they live, soon become embedded in the laws and mores—yes, the culture, of those communities, and people growing up in those communities are helped or harmed by the meanings mediated to them through their cultures—familial, ethnic, religious, and national. Some of these meanings are true, and these true meanings mediated to us by our culture(s) will help us in our cognitive endeavor to know who we are and what we are to do. But in every culture there are some false or distorted meanings (e.g., in current American culture the meanings mediated by popular culture to young people about sex and sexual activity are, I submit, quite erroneous). Yet it is possible for the human persons of any culture to move from meanings to the truth. For meaningful questions can be raised and the truth can be discovered.

Yes, in our struggle to come to know who we are and what we are to do, and to do what we come to know we are to do if we are to be fully the beings we are meant to be, we can be helped or crippled by the cultures in which we live. But God is our best and wisest friend.<sup>29</sup> He wills to help the people he has made. This is precisely why he has sent his only Son to redeem us, to be our Emmanuel—God with us—to share our human nature so that we in turn can share his divine nature. We know that "neither death, nor life, nor, angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). He is with us today in his Church, and he pours his grace into our hearts, renewing them and renewing us so that we can judge rightly and choose well. The faith mediated to us through the Church, the *lumen gentium*, is indeed an enabling factor in our struggle to come to know who we are and what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be. The moral teachings of this Church are not arbitrary decrees intended to restrict our liberty but rather truths meant to help us choose well. They remind us of who we are: beings made in the image and likeness of God and called to perfection, to holiness. We are to walk worthy of the vocation to which we have been called and to love, even as we have been and are loved by God in Christ.

Christian faith, in other words, creates its own culture—a Christian culture—and this Christian culture can graft onto itself whatever is true and good in every human culture and in turn can lead to their transformation. But it can do so only if it becomes itself integrated into the cultures it is meant to transform. This, I believe, is what is meant by "evangelization."

## Notes

1. In addition to Langevin, a French Canadian, the other members of the subcommission were: Philippe Delhay, Belgium; Andre-Jean Leonard, Belgium; Peter Miyakawa, Japan; James Okoye, Nigeria; Jose Miguel Langlois, Chile; Giuseppe Colombo, Italy; Hans Urs von Balthasar,

Switzerland; Francis Maloney, Australia; Jean Corbon, Lebanon; Georges Cottier, O.P., Switzerland; Felix Wilfred, India; and Barthelemy Adoukonou, Benin.

2. Other members of the full Commission taking part in the debates were: Jan Ambau, The Netherlands; Jean-Louis Bruges, O.P, France; Carlo Caffarra, Italy; Wilhelm Ernst, East Germany; John Pinnis, England; Joachim Gnilka, West Germany; Walter Kasper, West Germany; Bonaventure Kloppenburg, O.F.M., Brazil; Michael Ledwith, Ireland; William E. May, USA; Jorge Medina Estevez, Chile; Stanislaw Nagy, Poland; Henrique Noronha Galvao, Portugal; Franc Perko, Yugoslavia; Carl Peter, USA; Candido Pozo, Spain; and Christophe von Schoenborn, O.P., Austria-Switzerland.

3. The document, prepared in French, was published in various languages: E.g., it was published in English as "Faith and Inculturation" in the *Irish Theological quarterly* 55 (1969) 142-161; in Italian as "Fede e Inculturazione" in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3328 (1/21/1989) 158-177; in Dutch as "Geloof en inculturatie" in *Internationaal Katholiek Tijdschrift Communio* 13.5 (1989) 368-389; in Latin as "Fides et Inculturatio" in *Gregorianum* 70.4 (1989) 625-646.

4. "Faith and Inculturation," Int., n. 3, with references to *Gaudium et spes*, nn. 53-62.

5. Extraordinary Synod for the 20th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, final report voted by the Fathers, 7 December 1985, in *Documentation Catholique* 83 (January 5, 1986), p. 41. Cited by "Faith and Inculturation," Int., n. 3.

6. "Faith and Inculturation," Int., n. 6.

7. *Ibid.*, Int., n. 7, with reference to John Paul II, "Discourse to the members of the pontifical Council for Culture" (January 18, 1983), in *Documentation Catholique* 80 (February 6, 1982) 147.

8. *Ibid.*, Int., n. 8.

9. *Ibid.*, I.1. The internal citation is from Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae vitae*, n. 8.

10. *Ibid.*, I, 2.

11. *Ibid.*, I, 3.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, I, 4, with a reference to Vatican Council II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church* [*Gaudium et spes*], n. 53.

14. Cf. *ibid.*, I, 5, 6.

15. *Ibid.*, I, 7.

16. *Ibid.*, I, 8.

17. *Ibid.*, I, 9.

18. *Ibid.*, I, 10.

19. *Ibid.*, I, 11. The internal citation is to Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Slavorum Apostoli* for the eleventh centenary of the work of evangelization of Saints Cyril and Methodius, June 2, 1985, n. 21.

20. *Ibid.*, II, 28.

21. *Ibid.*, III, 14.

22. On this matter it is worth reading Mortimer Adler, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes* (Cleveland/New York: Meridian Books, 1968).

23. On this, see Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 1, Christian Moral Principles (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), ch. 1. See also my *An Introduction to Moral Theology* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday visitor, 1992), pp. 22-26.

24. Vatican Council II, *Declaration on Religious Liberty* [*Dignitatis humanae*], n. 3.

25. Vatican Council II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church* [*Gaudium et spes*], n. 16.

26. *Ibid.*, n. 16.

27. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, 93, 2.

28. Key texts in St. Thomas indicating the structure of natural law as an ordered set of true practical propositions are the following: *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, 100, 1, 3, 11. On this see my *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, pp. 38-51.

29. One of my favorite texts in St. Thomas is from *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, 108, 4, *sed contra*, where he says: "Christus maxime est amicus et sapiens."