In the history of twentieth-century Christianity, Vatican Council II stands out as a landmark that is radically affecting the course of the Christian world mission—for all Christians. It is now twenty years since the close of the council and the promulgation of the “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity” (Ad Gentes, Dec. 7, 1965), and ten years since Paul VI issued his apostolic exhortation on evangelization in the modern world, Evangelii Nuntiandi (Dec. 8, 1975). In this period since the council there has been more change in Roman Catholic mission theology and practice than in the hundred years prior to the council, and there will be more ferment in the remaining years of this century.

The articles in this issue seek to assess the council event and its continuing influence on world mission outlook and strategy. W. Richey Hogg takes a retrospective view of Ad Gentes, the basic mission document of the council, along with its sequel, Evangelii Nuntiandi. Equally important was Nostra Aetate, the council’s “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.” Thomas F. Stransky, who was involved in drafting Nostra Aetate, discusses some of the concerns that went into shaping it, and Eugene J. Fisher traces its influence since the council, especially regarding Jewish-Christian relations. From an evangelical Protestant perspective, Paul E. Pierson expresses appreciation for the missiological thrust of the council, along with reservations about recent trends and developments in Catholic missions.

An illustration or case study of how Vatican II has resulted in a crisis for Catholic missions is seen in the study prepared by William B. Frazier for Maryknoll, which is the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America. Responses to Frazier’s analysis are given by Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and evangelical Protestant mission leaders.

For convenience of reference and research, we include the text of Nostra Aetate from Vatican II, and the very important 1984 statement on dialogue and mission from the Vatican’s Secretariat for Non-Christians, “The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions.”

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Vatican II’s Ad Gentes: A Twenty-Year Retrospective

W. Richey Hogg

Pope Paul VI and Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras in a joint declaration, issued simultaneously on December 7, 1965, in Rome and in Istanbul, annulled the fateful mutual excommunications between Rome and Constantinople of 1054. This historic event in St. Peter’s highlighted the final working day for 2,400 bishops of Vatican II’s four autumnal sessions, and is remembered on this twentieth anniversary of the council’s completion.

Yet also on that notable day the “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity” (henceforth Ad Gentes, in notes, AG) was voted and promulgated. It symbolizes the council’s deep concern for world wide evangelization and is so presented in this retrospective reflection.

The council and its foundational “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (henceforth Lumen Gentium, LG), provide the indispensable context for considering Ad Gentes.

Three other council documents relate closely to it: the “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (Nostra Aetate, NA), the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” (Gaudium et Spes, GS), and the “Decree on Ecumenism” (Unitatis Redintegratio, UR).

The context for understanding Vatican II includes the post-Christendom age, the ecumenical movement, worldwide pluralism, the epochal decline in the West’s global hegemony, and the rapid, powerful emergence on the universal stage of Asia, the Pacific, Africa, and Latin America. Today those regions hold 78 percent of the world’s people, with 82 percent projected for A.D. 2000. The context is global.

Vatican II embraced all human history as viewed within the purpose of God. Thus the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 (1985 is its 75th anniversary) and all that flowed ecumenically from it must be weighed. Indeed, Vatican II cannot be understood adequately until the meaning for it of the ecumenical movement is researched. Moreover, at Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955 (1985 marks its 30th anniversary), the newly independent and developing nations sought a common forum. From it emerged the designation “third world” and the movement for “non-alignment.” These and other notable events form the council’s dynamic matrix.

In Vatican II, one sees—after a century of “besieged fortress” mentality—that the aggiornamento of John XXIII proceeded in two basic but interrelated directions. Internally for the church, the council urged renewal, worship, reform, and ecumenism. Externally for the new encounter in global engagement, the council promoted dialogue with, mission to, and service for the world.

Ad Gentes claimed the council’s larger context and conjoined the council’s two thrusts. Here the writer will explore its emergence, its notable emphasis, and its postconciliar course.

Ad Gentes

In sixteenth century European Christendom, Protestant churches defined themselves by that which differentiated them from others. In the twentieth century, Protestant and Anglican churches “outside Christendom” became autonomous and often united ecclesiastically or cooperatively regionally. Emphasizing the laity as the people of God, they defined themselves chiefly by their calling to the vast common task of evangelization.

In its first post-Christendom and representative worldwide council, the Roman Catholic Church reflected much of that same process. In Lumen Gentium it set forth its first full-orbed doctrine of the church emphasizing its mystery, the eschatological mission of the pilgrim people of God, and its role as the “universal sacrament of salvation” (LG, no. 48). In Ad Gentes it specified how that integral mission is fulfilled in part through specific missions to and among those who remain unevangelized.

Background

Between 1919 and 1959 four successive popes produced five papal encyclicals on missions. These incorporate and hold together the views of two missiologists. Joseph Schmidlin of Münster, borrowing from the Protestant Gustav Warneck, affirmed the aim of missions to be Christianization through evangelization and individual conversions. The Belgian Pierre Charles insisted that the missions’ primary goal is to plant the church where it is not yet established. These complementary aims, evangelization and church planting, through the missionary encyclicals explain the nature and structure of Ad Gentes. Yet the latter, with full-gestation, was enhanced through the conciliar process.

Another theological factor relates to Ad Gentes. Yves Congar already had been writing of laity and mission as decisive themes in ecclesiology when in 1943 Abbé H. Godin’s France, Pays de Mission? (“France, Pagan?”) proved to be a bombshell. After World War II the phrase “post-Christian era” gained currency. Theologians and church leaders referred to the end of “the missions.” Karl Rahner’s Sendung und Gnade (“Mission and Grace,” 1964 Eng. trans. The Christian Commitment) depicted the worldwide church as a diaspora community among non-Christians everywhere. The church’s mission, theologically, had become one. Thus mission arose as a major ecclesiological theme, and Lumen Gentium in broader context would mirror that reality.

Passage through the Council

Cardinal G. P. Agagianian, prefect of the Propaganda Fide, chaired the preparatory commission, which settled upon seven themes. Reflecting concerns in the encyclicals, they related to “the missions” in Asia, Oceania, and Africa. Pedestrian and inadequate, the schema depressed many. Prior to the council’s first session, the group modestly reedited its original draft. In the autumn of 1962 this second edition never reached the floor but was circulated among the bishops, who responded with comments. Enlarged accordingly, it did not reach the floor in the crowded 1963 session. Then all remaining undebated drafts were ordered to be cut sharply to principles and basic proposals.

In a unique, brief presiding appearance before the council on November 6, 1964, Pope Paul VI urged the adoption of the third
and shortened version. Yet in three days of ensuing debate, most speakers berated or sought change in the schema. For three years the drafting body had been divided "between a theological and a juridical view" of mission. The bishops divided the same way, but decisively rejected the draft and, to enhance its stature, requested a theological statement.

Early in 1965 Johannes Schütte became the commission's sole vice president and chief drafter, and Congar, A. Seumois, D. Grasso, J. Neuner, and J. Glazik became its periti. The cooperative efforts of Congar and J. Ratzinger ensured that the new theological section would accord with Lumen Gentium. Schütte put it all together. Then, after debate and modest revision of the fourth draft, in the council's final working session 2,394 bishops, among 2,399 present, voted Yes for Ad Gentes!

Theological Section

Turning to the text, one notes that its preface affirms Ad Gentes's essential link with Lumen Gentium. The latter begins, "Christ is the light of all nations." Ad Gentes begins, "The church has been divinely sent to all nations . . . ." That New Testament image (Lk. 2:32; Jn. 8:12) derives from Isaiah (42:9; 49:6). The sentence concludes . . . that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation'" (AG, no. 1; LG, no. 48). Reading Ad Gentes in the light of Lumen Gentium provides a proper hermeneutical tool.

Drafted after the council's third session and Lumen Gentium's acceptance as the council's great achievement and foundation, the "Doctrinal Principles" of Ad Gentes fit somewhat awkwardly into what had been an already formed and developed text. In short, the "Doctrinal Principles" were not a theologically controlling base on which the decree was built. Instead, they relate mission to the destiny of humankind and the ultimate issue of history.

The bulk of the decree evidences its origins as a set of guidelines for the missions as juridically understood within the Propaganda Fide. Yet happily so much of the then already accomplished work of Vatican II was reflected in the practical directives of Ad Gentes that the decree moved appropriately beyond the papal mission encyclicals that originally had shaped it.

Notable Emphases

Several matters of special interest in the decree deserve noting here.

1. Ad Gentes, like Lumen Gentium, roots church and mission theologically in the triune Godhead, in the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to achieve the destiny for which humankind was created (AG nos. 2–5) and adds, "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature" (AG, no. 2). The papal encyclicals had offered the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15) as the base for missions, but Ad Gentes pushes beyond to the ultimate source. This parallels a comparable Protestant development, the conciliar beginnings of which appear in the meeting of the International Missionary Council (IMC) at Willingen, Fed. Rep. of Germany, in 1922.

2. Lumen Gentium presents the church as "the universal sacrament of salvation" (LG, no. 48) and Ad Gentes presents it similarly (AG, nos. 1, 5; cf. no. 15). "Sacrament" here derives from the Greek mysterion (translated in Latin as sacramentum), as in certain patristic usage it conveyed a sign and presence incorporating the whole divine economy of salvation. After its third use of this rich image, Ad Gentes adds, "But it is not enough for [Christians to provide a presence and a good example. Their task is evangelization and aiding non-Christians] toward the full reception of Christ" (AG, no. 15).

3. In its theological perspectives on other religions and on
salvation beyond the visible boundaries of the church, Vatican II claimed quite new ground for an ecumenical council. With the unprecedented worldwide engagement of the religions among one another providing background and foreground, *Lumen Gentium* established the basic principles (nos. 13, 16, 17). *Nostra Aetate* affirmed that other religions often "reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all" (Jn. 1:9) and that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions" (NA, no. 2; cf. LG no. 17). To this *Ad Gentes*, no. 9, added that what is latent and good in them (something of a "secret presence of God") is by the church "perfected for the glory of God."17

*Lumen Gentium* stated that to the "catholic unity of the 'People of God' . . . belong . . . or are related" to it in various ways" Catholics, other Christians, "and indeed the whole body of mankind" (no. 13). The next two sections (14–15) deal with "the followers of other religions . . . , and in witness to the Christian faith and life' discern and promote what is good in their faith and cultures (NA, no. 2; cf. GS, no. 21).

*Ad Gentes* develops this further within the context of Christian witness. Missionaries through "sincere and patient dialogue" can learn what "treasures" God has bestowed throughout the human family, all the while seeking "to illumine" them "with the light of the Gospel" (AG, no. 13). Priests in training in their homelands should be "duly prepared for fraternal dialogue with non-Christians" and should do so with reference to *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 4 (AG, no. 16).

Thus *Nostra Aetate* and *Ad Gentes* in a few brief comments mark another decisive turning point. Although its processes and guidelines are not spelled out, except as those in *Unitatis Redintegratio* may have some bearing, dialogue becomes a means for being open to and learning to know other faiths and discovering that which may reflect God's activity in them. All this, one infers, belongs to that witness that serves the church's sacramental presence. Yet the church is also and always present for the work of evangelization.

5. *Ad Gentes* advocates that local Christians and their leaders should prudently offer aid in efforts for the common good whether sponsored by governments or "by non-Christian religions." Cooperation and collaboration in work toward development and justice are part of the Christian witness in society (AG, no. 12).

6. The papal missions encyclicals and *Lumen Gentium* (nos. 23–24) had made clear that as successors to the apostles, bishops bear primary responsibility for fulfilling the mission of the church. *Ad Gentes*, reemphasizing this, notes that their consecration is not just for "one diocese, but for the salvation of the entire world" (AG, no. 38) and links this especially to the new Synod of Bishops (AG, no. 29). The instructions for implementing the decree (*Ecclesiae Sanctae*) give each bishop responsibility for making *Ad Gentes* known to the whole church so that it may "become missionary in fact" and so that "the entire people of God may be made aware of its missionary obligation."22

7. *Lumen Gentium* (nos. 17, 33–35) develops the role of all the laity in the mission of the church. Pursuing this, *Ad Gentes* (nos. 15, 35) affirms the role of each layperson everywhere for "the evangelization of the world" (no. 39).

8. Founded in 1622, the Roman Curia's famed Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide) has overseen the work of Catholic missions. To update and strengthen the congregation's structure and to facilitate its policymaking and functioning capability, the bishops in Vatican Council II, applying episcopal collegiality, provided the congregation with a governing body of twenty-four, half of them bishops from Asia, Oceania, and Africa, and also others holding major responsibilities for the missions (see *Ecclesiae Sanctae*). They also authorized a permanent secretariat of missiologists, ethnologists, and other scientifically trained experts to provide research and counsel (AG, no. 29).23

One notes also the influence of the decree in the new name given soon after Vatican II to Propaganda Fide: the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (gentes). Usually now referred to by its new name, that body has retained its old name as an alternate designation.

**Evangelii Nuntiandi**, the Episcopal Synods, and the Latin American Episcopal Council

The postconciliar impact of *Ad Gentes* appears in part in the episcopal synods and the regional episcopal conferences. They early reflected the worldwide Christian as well as secular concern for just social structures that had been emerging.
Protestants, Anglicans, and Orthodox had shared in growing ecumenical endeavor since the 1920s, and in 1948 these three groups constituted the World Council of Churches (WCC). From 1925 onward a major segment of their work had centered on the responsible witness of the churches in society, and in 1966 in Geneva the WCC's World Conference on Church and Society provided full voice for third-world churches. This witness came ecumenical endeavor since the 1920s, and in 1948 these three groups constituted the World Council of Churches (WCC). From 1925 onward a major segment of their work had centered on the responsible witness of the churches in society, and in 1966 in Geneva the WCC's World Conference on Church and Society provided full voice for third-world churches. This witness came to be affirmed as part of the Christian world mission. The same process was occurring within the Roman Catholic Church.

The encyclicals "Christianity and Social Progress" (Mater et Magistra, 1961) and "Peace on Earth" (Pacem in Terris, 1963), reflect the concern of Pope John XXIII for the role of the Catholic Church in promoting justice, social advancement, and conditions that facilitate peace. They help to explain Vatican II's Gaudium et Spes. Just as Lumen Gentium looks to the church, Gaudium et Spes looks to the world and to pastoral dialogue with it. Rooted in Lumen Gentium and also voted on December 7, 1965, Gaudium et Spes is today one of the most quoted of the council's documents. Its message: the church's mission includes active engagement to enhance human dignity and to achieve just societies.

John XXIII died on June 3, 1963, and eighteen days later Cardinal Giovanni Montini of Milan became Paul VI. Through that name he linked himself in mission with the apostle. As "Pilgrim Pope" he made pastoral visits to each continent and always promoted human development, especially for those newly freed of the colonial yoke and with impoverished majorities trying to build new nations. His "On the Development of Peoples" (Populorum Progressio, 1967), mirrors his concern for just and responsible societies. In January 1967 he had established the pontifical commission known as Justice and Peace. In 1968 at Uppsala the WCC's Fourth Assembly dealt with the same issues, which also influenced its statement on mission.

The Synod of Bishops

Paul VI sought to provide the Roman Catholic Church with a strong center. He enhanced it with the new collegiality mandated by Vatican II (LG, nos. 22-25), launched the Synod of Bishops, and presided over its first four triennial assemblies. Justice and evangelization marked the two great themes of his pontificate. The first gained its place in the Second Assembly (October 1971), in "Justice in the World." Its introduction conveys its purpose: "the mission of the People of God [is] to further justice in the world" (no. 1) and states its controlling conviction: "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, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation" (no. 6).

The Third Assembly, held in October 1974, devoted itself to evangelization—and specifically "of the modern world." Preparation had been thorough. From the suggestions made by episcopal conferences, Paul VI chose the theme. In 1973 questions and issues went out in booklet form to the conferences for response. The synod's General Secretariat in June 1974 sent to the conferences a working draft for use at the synod. The bishops were involved. To Dermot Ryan, then archbishop of Dublin, in Rome for his first synod assembly with 200 bishops representing a worldwide church, this was a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Philip Potter, general secretary of the WCC, addressed the synod. Cardinal Willebrands responded, saying that the problems of evangelization exercising the WCC were in large measure those confronting the Catholic Church and being considered by the synod.

Yet with an abundance of materials and only a month in which to discuss them, the bishops could not reach a common mind on the vexing issues of evangelization. With integrity they voted down the prepared draft and approved a brief statement, "The Evangelization of the Modern World." The bishops gave their questions and incomplete statements to the pope, elected several of their number to assist him, and asked that he produce a clarifying document. The resulting papal statement thus reflects a fruit of working episcopal collegiality.

Evangelii Nuntiandi

On December 8, 1975, the tenth anniversary of the closing of Vatican II, Paul VI issued "Evangelization in the Modern World," the apostolic exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN). It completed the important unfinished work—much of it based on Ad Gentes—of the Third Synod of Bishops from a harmonizing, papal, pastoral perspective. Not an encyclical but a "meditation," and leaving some thorny issues undeveloped, it offers a brief summation of the nature and task of evangelization today.

Within its focus on evangelization, one may view it as an enlarging continuation of Ad Gentes. "... the holy spirit is the principal agent of evangelization," it declares, impelling those who proclaim and strengthening those who respond (EN, no. 75). From Vatican II and the brief Third Synod statement (no. 4) it reaffirms that "the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the church" (EN, no. 14). Repeating Ad Gentes's strong urging of unity for effective mission (AG, no. 6) it designates "the sign of unity among all Christians as the way and instrument of evangelization" (EN, no. 77).

On several points, Evangelii Nuntiandi claims new ground. First, Paul VI center's evangelization theologically in the mission of the whole church. Its complexities, he repeats, defy adequate definition. It includes proclamation, but that is only one part (no. 22). It penetrates all strata of society and seeks converts (no. 18). It permeates cultures (no. 20). For the laity, it means evangelization and witness in society, politics, education, art, and the like. It must suffice all life with the gospel—in short, it becomes Christianization (no. 70).

Second, Evangelii Nuntiandi relates the church's mission of evangelization to everyone: to the de-Christianized, to those of other religions, nonbelievers, nonpracticing Christians, and to all Christians (reevangelization). For the latter it facilitates that renewal without which a larger evangelization is impossible (nos. 51-57). Here it transcends Ad Gentes and, without referring to "missions," points to the church's universal mission.

Third, responding to the growing volume of liberation theology, Evangelii Nuntiandi links evangelization to the struggle for a just society and presents a papal theology of Christian liberation. If evangelization "did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social," it would be incomplete (no. 29). Amid the vast struggle to overcome all that makes life marginal, and as the Third Synod declared, the church has "the duty to proclaim [this] liberation," to aid its birth, to give "witness to it," and to ensure "that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization" (no. 30).

Between "evangelization and human advancement [there exist] profound links." Yet evangelical (gospel) liberation is that "proclaimed and achieved by Jesus of Nazareth and... preached by the Church" (EN, no. 31). Should the church "reduce her mission... to a man-centered goal, the salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material well-being. Her activity... would become initiatives of the political or social order." Again, referring to the pope's address at the Third Synod of Bishops, "evangelization... would lose its reason for existence if it were to diverge from the religious axis that guides it: the Kingdom of God, before anything else, is its fully theological...
Moreover, evangelical liberation “cannot be contained in the . . . restricted dimension of economics, politics, social or cultural life; it must envisage the whole man, in all his aspects, including . . . openness to . . . the divine Absolute” (EN, no. 33).

Thus, “The Church links human liberation and salvation in Jesus Christ, but she never identifies them, because she knows . . . that all temporal liberation . . . carriers within itself the germ of its own negation . . . whenever its final goal is not salvation . . . in God” (no. 35).

Not only does evangelical liberation require conversion (EN, no. 36), but also within it “the Church cannot accept violence, . . . uncontrollable once it is let loose, . . . as the path to liberation, . . .” (no. 37). The church provides Christian “liberators” with a “social teaching which the true Christian cannot ignore” and “. . . strives always to insert the Christian struggle for liberation into the universal plan of salvation which she herself proclaims” (no. 38). Additionally, “ensuring fundamental human rights cannot be separated from this just liberation which is bound up with evangelization and which endeavors to secure structures safeguarding human freedom” (no. 39).

Fourth, Evangelii Nuntiandi speaks to the “small communities” or communidades eclesiasticas de base. In some areas they arise “within the Church,” providing a deepened koinonia, growth in the faith, and centers of evangelization. They enhance the church, but must obey certain cautions. In other areas they appear as bitter anti-institutional critics of the church. “. . . their main inspiration very quickly becomes ideological, and [usually they] fall victim to some political option . . . even a party.” These cannot “be called ecclesial” (no. 58).

Finally, to the many and varied questions on the affirmations in Lumen Gentium and Ad Gentes for the possibility of salvation beyond the visible boundaries of the church and the impact of this on evangelization and missions, Paul VI offers an unelaborated, brief direct response:

... why proclaim the Gospel when the whole world is saved by uprightness of heart? . . . God can accomplish this salvation in whomever he wishes by ways which he alone knows . . . yet . . . his Son came . . . precisely in order to reveal to us . . . the ordinary paths of salvation. And he has commanded us to transmit this revelation to others with his own authority . . . pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God’s mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if . . . we fail to preach it? For that would be to betray the call of God . . . [EN, no. 80].

The most authoritative theological statements for Catholic mission in twenty years—Ad Gentes and Evangelii Nuntiandi, the latter an outgrowth of the former—together provide a base from which Catholic missionary theology should proceed or toward which critiques may be made.

Additionally, Archbishop Dermot Ryan held, and rightly so, that Evangelii Nuntiandi had considerable influence in shaping the Synod of Bishops of 1977 (Catechesis); of 1980 (the Family); of 1983 (Reconciliation and Penance); and that it will shape that of 1986 (the Laity and the Church). Ryan also made plain that missionaries around the world have found Evangelii Nuntiandi meaningful for their work.

In its response to liberation theology, Evangelii Nuntiandi clearly provides a primary source for the “Instruction on Certain Aspects of the ‘Theology of Liberation’” released by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on September 3, 1984, with the approval of Pope John Paul II.

Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM)

Dom Helder Camara conceived and (with Montini’s permission

in Rome) in 1952 organized the Brazilian Episcopal Conference. In 1955 at Rio de Janeiro, he launched CELAM (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, the Latin American Episcopal Council) and worked closely with the older Archbishop Manuel Larrain of Chile in developing it. At Vatican II Larrain and Camara led the Latin American bishops who voted as progressives.

CELAM’s 1968 Medellin, Colombia, meeting, as its theme attests, sought to apply the insights and purposes of Vatican II to Latin America. The Medellin Conference made a profound impact. The bishops there made two massive determinations for the Catholic Church in Latin America: first, to identify church and hierarchy with the poor and the aspirations of the masses, and second, to seek a “re-evangelization” and “re-conversion” of the masses and the several elites.

The Third General Conference of CELAM met at Puebla, Mexico, early in 1979. Diversely interpreted in relation to liberation theology, the preferential option for the poor, and hierarchical politics, the conference amplified Medellin’s second major point and focused on evangelization in Latin America. Building upon Evangelii Nuntiandi, it explored virtually the total mission of the Catholic Church in that region.

Addressing the conference, Pope John Paul II repeatedly referred to or quoted from Evangelii Nuntiandi, especially in relation to liberation theology. In the “Final Document, Part II, God’s Saving Plan for Latin America,” one sees a structure based upon Evangelii Nuntiandi. In short, the Puebla Conference represents an important extension of Ad Gentes through Evangelii Nuntiandi.

The Wider Scene Today

Within the world Christian community, the great new fact of our era is the emergence of the churches of Asia, Oceania, Africa, and Latin America. In 1985 they hold 52 percent of the world’s Christians; 48 percent are in the West. In fourteen years the balance is projected to become 60 percent and 40 percent, respectively. Since 1900 the ratio of Christians in the third world to its total population has risen from 8.51 percent to 21.35 percent today and is projected to be 23.82 percent in A.D. 2000. Even in Asia the Christian growth rate has outstripped population growth. The center of gravity for the faith has shifted and moves increasingly into what so recently were called “mission lands,” and this is not to deny the presence of the “unreached 2.7 billion.” The church has become visibly and tangibly universal. Walbert Bühlmann’s “Third Church” has come and is growing.

Against that background, several representative realities must suffice.

Manila Congress on Mission

A major Asian Catholic event took place in December, 1979 in Manila, the Philippines where the International Congress on Mission drew eighty-nine of its 200 delegates from thirty-five Asian countries. Lumen Gentium, Ad Gentes, and Evangelii Nuntiandi provided the theological wellsprings, but so too did the papers of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences. Amid oppression and major disabilities for some new Asian Christians, should the church “urge” baptism for all? That painful issue relates to inculturation, the embodiment of the Word within the peoples culture. Other issues included dialogue, liberation, development, and basic Christian communities.

Finally, with the pope’s representative Cardinal Agnelo Rossi participating, seventy Filipino men and women were sent as missionaries to all parts of the world. Here were “local” or “young” churches wrestling with their mission and responding to the challenge.
AN ALTERNATIVE VISION: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology, Roger Haight, S.J. Presents liberationist materials under some of the most basic Christian doctrines—including God, Christology, Church, and sacraments—to show that this vision of truth has wide applications. Paper $9.95

THE BIBLE IN THE CHURCHES, How Different Christians Interpret the Scriptures, Kenneth Hagen, Daniel Harrington, Grant Osborne, and Joseph Burgess. An ecumenical collaboration that explores similarities and differences among Lutheran, Catholic, and Evangelical interpretations of scripture. Paper $8.95


THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE, Theories of Inspiration, Revelation, and the Canon of Scripture, Robert Gnuse. A basic introduction to the issues surrounding biblical authority, including a classification of theories into five models. Paper $6.95

THIS GROUND IS HOLY, Church, Sanctuary and the United States Government, Ignatius Bau. Examines the legal, historical, and religious underpinnings of the sanctuary movement in the United States for Central American refugees. Paper $9.95


SEDOS

Founded at the close of Vatican II, SEDOS, a study and documentation center in Rome, serves the needs of some forty-five congregations or societies whose common concern is outreach ad gentes. It convenes occasional major research seminars, an early one of which met in 1969 in Rome. Amid the post-Vatican II euphoria, crisis assailed the missions. “Why have distinctive ‘mission work overseas’ when the church’s mission exists everywhere and when it projects a new view of other religions?” Facing that question, the seminar focused on two matters: first, salvation and other religions and, second, the role of missions in development.

Meanwhile, Evangelii Nuntiandi in 1975 had seemed to answer the “why.” The 1981 SEDOS Seminar in Rome, with 102 present from thirty nations, contrasted with that of 1969. It had moved on to the “how” of mission, utilized the Vatican II documents and Evangelii Nuntiandi, and centered on “directions in mission today”: proclamation, dialogue, inculturation, and liberation. It gave the central role to the “local church” (that of the region, not a parish). With a larger number of missionaries coming from these churches, the international but Western-based missionary institutes or sending agencies see a need to incorporate these folk. For the whole church that probably may be a long-term development. The resulting SEDOS “Agenda for Future Planning, Study, and Research” may well become the basic operational policy statement for most Catholic missions through the next decade.

Common Witness

Ad Gentes, no. 36, and especially Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 77, address the need for unity as a necessary authentication for evangelization, but neither mentions proselytism. Under the auspices of the World Council of Churches/Roman Catholic Church Joint Working Group (1965 ff.), the study document “Common Witness and Proselytism” emerged in 1970. With problems such as drugs, prostitution, race, armaments, and the power of the media, common witness provides churches a responsible way to grapple with them. The new “Common Witness” updates and enlarges the first. Thus far, little has been achieved.

Yet another side of the story can be told. In a 1968 meeting in Mexico the Vatican Secretariat for Common Bible Work and the United Bible Societies agreed that all intended projects worldwide of either agency would be examined by both to ascertain how and when it projects a new view of other religions? Facing that question, the seminar focused on two matters: first, salvation and other religions and, second, the role of missions in development.

Mission from Third World Churches

In his unique and exciting Going Forth, Omer Degrijse has outlined the burgeoning strength of the Catholic Church in the third world and the new drive there toward mission. He ascribes this new missionary consciousness to the Vatican II documents discussed above, to Evangelii Nuntiandi, and to statements from regional bishops conferences.

To illustrate this new thrust, several examples must suffice. Consider priests. In Africa about one-third are African, in Latin America about half are Latin American, and in Asia about two-thirds are Asian. Yet note the significant trend in ordinations. In 1975 in the West there were 2,801 and in 1980 only 2,330. In the third world in 1975 there were 1,338, and in 1980 there were 1,530. In 1980 virtually 40 percent of all new Catholic priests came from the “Third Church!”. These contrasting trends are important. Is it possible that by 1990 those figures may be in balance?

India’s Catholic Church already has more than 2,000 missionaries overseas. And from a 1981 Lima, Peru, conference that projected future responsibilities comes this statement: “The Latin American contribution will not be tied to colonialism and imperialism. It will be a mission of poor countries to poor countries and with poor means.” As the numbers of Catholic priests in and missionaries from the West decline, those from the third-world churches may match and exceed the balance. Some day they may be in substantial mission to the West.

A Concluding Reflection

To what may this Protestant’s retrospective on Ad Gentes point? First, in the corpus of Vatican II, that decree holds a permanent place, and in many documents on mission it is still cited for magisterial sanction. It will long provide a buttress-rock for all those missions directed specifically and necessarily ad gentes. Many of its directives will remain useful. Yet it embodies an outdated perspective on mission that runs from the church in the West to Asia, Oceania, and Africa. The church in those regions with compelling vigor has come into its own.

Second, Evangelii Nuntiandi, benefiting from the perspective of an additional decade and from representative episcopal reflection and collegial input, presents an enlarged and more unified approach to the theology of evangelization and provides a frank and fuller statement on the difficult question of salvation among those “outside.” For needed evangelization and reevangelization around the world it offers more relevance. Its inadequacies stand open to searching, constructive criticism, but it seems to have become the operative successor to Ad Gentes. In the ecclesiology represented by Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, Nostra Aetate, and Ad Gentes, the newer Evangelii Nuntiandi is supplanting the older decree.

Finally, within Vatican II’s ecclesiology, particularly as it relates to those of other faiths or of nonreligious faith, and as it is set forth in the four Vatican II documents mentioned above, is there not a major unresolved problem? Is the church “the universal sacrament of salvation,” a sign and presence, or is it the agent of evangelization and reconciliation for Jesus Christ the Lord? If indeed it is both, how does each relate to the other?

May not the basic issue be the relation between God’s created oikoumene (the world, the gentes) and God’s covenanted oikoumene (the church, the people of the covenant) — in short, the relation between world history and salvation history? Is this not the fundamental theological issue of the age in which we live? Is not clearer understanding of this theological mystery as essential and timely for this age as it was for that mystery in the monophysite/dyophysite controversy prior to 451? Perhaps the painful and uncertain conciliar process has already begun. To this Lumen Gentium and its cluster — including Ad Gentes — point.


11. Ibid., pp. 102-11.


16. See also Brechter, in Vorgrimler, Commentary, vol. 4, pp. 159-65.


18. Ibid., p. 387-415. Of its documentation, 20 percent is from GS.

19. Apostolica Sollicitudin, Sept. 15, 1965, is the motu proprio by which Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops; in Abbott, Documents, pp. 720-24. See also “Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church” (Christus Dominus, CD), no. 5, Oct. 28, 1965 (Abbott, pp. 399-400).


28. Ibid., 2, 117-56, esp. p. 124. Note references to LG, AG, and through-
The Church and Other Religions

Thomas F. Stransky, C.S.P.

Unlike the short time-span of other recent world church assemblies, Vatican Council II was a seven-year event in the Roman Catholic Church, from 1959 to 1965. First, during 1959–60, the Vatican consulted for their agenda wishes the more than 2,500 bishops of local churches, 156 superiors general of religious communities, and sixty-two theological and canonical faculties of the Roman Catholic Church, from 1959 to 1965. First, during 1959–1962, the conciliar process was revealing a threefold (although not exclusive) consciousness or awareness:

1. The Roman Catholic Church is no longer a Mediterranean church, as it was in the first eight centuries; nor more a West European church, as it appeared in the councils of the Middle Ages; nor a South European church, as it seemed at the Council of Trent (1545–63); and no more a worldwide church governed mostly by European bishops, as it was at Vatican I (1869–70). Vatican II became the first council in which Europe—if we think of Europe as reaching into the Levant—had not the all-controlling voice. With one-fifth of the episcopate from Latin America, and over one-third from the local churches of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, and with a surprisingly articulate consensus among these bishops, the first<formatted_text>

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1. The Roman Catholic Church is no longer a Mediterranean church, as it was in the first eight centuries; nor more a West European church, as it appeared in the councils of the Middle Ages; nor a South European church, as it seemed at the Council of Trent (1545–63); and no more a worldwide church governed mostly by European bishops, as it was at Vatican I (1869–70). Vatican II became the first council in which Europe—if we think of Europe as reaching into the Levant—had not the all-controlling voice. With one-fifth of the episcopate from Latin America, and over one-third from the local churches of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, and with a surprisingly articulate consensus among these bishops, the first
two sessions marked the transition of the Roman Catholic Church from a European to a worldwide basis.

2. The Roman Catholic Church is facing a new historical situation in which committed Catholics, indeed all Christians, are becoming a minority religious community; the majority of the religiously committed do not live from the Judeo-Christian tradition but are adherents of various non-Christian religions.

3. The Roman Catholic Church is developing an existential concern for people as people, whether within or without this church, whether Christian or not. Dialogue with the others is becoming more than a cliché.

Here in the 1960s began the breakdown of previous stances toward other Christians and peoples of other faiths or of "no faith." Previously, firm convictions about the Roman Catholic Church's faith under God's Word easily led to an equally firm conviction of this church's ability to interpret, at a distance, other Christian or non-Christian self-understandings, even the others' motives for thinking and acting. Vatican II expressed more than a minor shift from that position: first understand the others as they understand themselves to be, and only then evaluate the convictions and actions of others with criteria from the Roman Catholic tradition. Furthermore, in that very dialogue, the Roman Catholic Church begins to understand itself more authentically. Through Vatican II the church began to appreciate that dialogue helps also to foster its own integrity. Dialogue with other Christians, with those of other world religions, indeed with all others, helps the Roman Catholic Church to be church.

This new threefold consciousness in Vatican II sought expression in various ways through several major themes, for example, the Trinity and the kingdom, the kingdom and the church, Christ's one church and many churches, the salvation of others, mission to others, dialogue with others, cooperation with "all people of good will" in shaping a more humane world in justice and peace, et cetera.

Thus the same impetus that asked the question "Who are these Protestants and Orthodox now living everywhere as neighbors who also are committed to Christ, and what is the Catholic Church's relation with them and their communions?" also asked, "Who are these people of other world faiths, and what is the Catholic Church's relation with them and their religious communities?"

II

History of Nostra Aetate.

In Vatican II's unfolding history, the question of non-Christians was first posed in a very restricted and special way: "Who are the Jews, and what is the relation between church and synagogue?"

After Pope John XXIII had announced his intention to convoke Vatican II (Jan. 25, 1959), several Jewish leaders vocally hoped that the council would try directly to face Catholic understandings, attitudes, and relations with the Jewish people in the post-Holocaust common era. Other Jews, less quietly, were worried that the council could very easily increase Jewish fears by its reinforcement of traditional theological and biblical supports for anti-Jewish thinking and behavior. A French Jewish scholar, Jules Isaac, outlined these hopes and fears to Pope John in a private conversation (June 13, 1960). "Could not a voice from the summit show the good path?" asked Isaac. The pope mandated Cardinal Augustin Bea, the biblical scholar and president of the newly created Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU), to prepare a conciliar declaration that would deal with the Jewish people.

At the second session (1963), the SPCU's first draft, "On Ecumenism," reached the floor for discussion. Its fourth chapter was entitled, "The Relation of Catholics and Non-Christians, and especially to the Jews." But that chapter gave only polite introductory reference, in two lines, to "conversing and cooperating with Non-Christians who nevertheless worship God, or at least with good will, try to follow their conscience in carrying out the moral law situated in human nature." This brief reference gave leverage to harsh complaints from the bishops, especially those from Asia and Africa: "Two lines for two-thirds of the world!" An enlarged draft, now detached from "On Ecumenism" and standing on its own, returned for discussion at the third session (1964). The draft was so refined by the end of the fourth session that it received 2,221 approvals, and only 88 negative votes (Oct. 28, 1965).

III

Commentary

Here I offer four preliminary but in hindsight necessary remarks.

1. NA, as with all Vatican II documents, is addressed to Roman Catholics. Because of its conciliar authority, NA expects obediential responses from Roman Catholics, not agreement in all its points from the others, including other Christians.

2. As with all other Vatican II texts, NA stands by itself, yet it presumes that one integrates its content with other major documents: Lumen Gentium (LG), on the church; Dei Verbum (DV), on divine revelation; Gaudium et Spes (GS), on the church in the modern world; Ad Gentes (AG), on the missionary activity of the church; and Dignitas Humanae (DH), on religious freedom. I find much of the misinterpretation of NA in a lack of such integration. Or worse,

Recommended

person is explicitly Christian or not;

b. Christologies that claim that Jesus is not the fundamental, indispensable, sole mediator of salvation, redemption, justification, sanctification, and final reconciliation;

c. Soteriologies that restrict God’s free initiatives of salvation through grace, either by placing those initiatives only within the explicitly Christian arena or by binding them to human efforts.

d. Ecclesiologies that sever the relationship between Christ and the visible structured community of disciples that gathers around him—the whole body of Christ, head and members, the church.

e. Missioologies that so restrict the church’s purposes and activities that the church need not try to offer all men and women a valid opportunity to hear the good news and to participate fully in the mystery of Christ in his church.

I stress the foregoing “exclusions” because too often both Catholic and Protestant comments on Vatican II, and its Nostra Aetate, are at least tinged with reading into conciliar texts the writings of some post-Vatican II biblicists and theologians who are going beyond this common teaching, or even against it, whether in theology or Christology, in soteriology, ecclesiology, or missiology.

4. Vatican II was trying in fidelity to establish the Roman Catholic basis for dialogue with non-Christians, including the Jews, without the church’s yet having the experience and the fruit of dialogue. If authentic dialogue presumes that we understand the others as they understand themselves to be, then one should not expect NA of 1965 to be more than an initial basis for future dialogue. One of the present naivetês is to criticize NA’s incompleteness or lament its unanswered questions, as if it NA had already been a finished product of two decades of dialogue.

IV

With these four points in mind, I now outline Vatican II’s treatment of the non-Christians.3

NA observes that the human family today is “being drawn ever closer together and the ties between different peoples are being strengthened, . . . .” This process of unification is not the result of mere human activity, but unfolds God’s saving plan for humankind. This objective unity of origin, pilgrimage, and ultimate destiny is reflected in the universal religious quest for “answers to the profound riddles (enigmatibus) of the human condition.” Most individuals do not undergo this existential search by themselves, isolated in their options, but as members of communities whose collective, historical life has taken and is developing options of thought and action before the mystery of human existence.

The church reverences the God who “carefully is planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race” (DV, no. 14), and reverences also God’s workings among all men and women, everywhere, at all times. The church not only tolerates but respects those outside its borders who are seeking the ultimate reality, and raise their hearts to the living God even though they do not always know his name. “The Roman Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions,” for there are “treasures that a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth” (AG, no. 11). Roman Catholics should converse with the followers of the others religions in order to “recognize, preserve and foster the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the sociocultural values found among the followers of other religions.” Finally, NA offers a positive method of dialogue, based upon “what human beings have in common and what draws them toward fellowship.”

This positive methodological approach is an extraordinary step, and not just a single paragraph but the all-embracing character of the entire NA has since marked its commanding import in Roman Catholic history.

Nevertheless, NA, understood with other Vatican II texts, has not completely answered old theological questions, or the council’s incomplete answers have raised new questions.

1. The salvation of the individual non-Christian. The Spirit acts in the depths of every person, and “offers to all the possibility to be made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” [i.e., passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ], whether they are within or without the visible borders of the church (GS, no. 22; cf. LG, no. 16; AG, no. 15; DH, no. 6). All grace is of Christ. Without him there is no salvation (cf. GS, no. 22).

The sincere faith-experience of an individual non-Christian is salvific. Grace is the saving presence of God, close to those who seek him even in shadows and images (LG, no. 16). “Those also can attain to eternal salvation who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ and His church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by His grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience” (LG, no. 16).

The grace of Christ, which in his spirit is present to all human beings, is not individualistic but communitarian and social. Grace fosters a saving faith that orients people, even if unwary, to full incorporation into the body of Christ, the church. “At all times and among every people, God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right (cf. Acts 10:35). It pleased God, however, to make men and women holy and save them not merely as individuals without mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness” (LG, no. 9).

To conclude. Everyone can be saved. For one to be saved, “good faith,” “sincere heart,” and “conscience-directed deeds” are present. God’s free, initiating grace is always necessary, as somehow necessary is Christ and somehow his church.

Here the old theological question of “the salvation of the non-believer” finds the more recent yet pre-Vatican II answer: the “unbeliever” or “non-Christian” is saved insofar as he or she is already a believer by a salvific faith that somehow is already “Christian,” that is, of Christ, and already somehow involves the church. The “somehow” and these “ways of God” are left to theologians who, as did their predecessors, are developing “the faith which seeks understanding.”

2. Other religions as such. NA is the only Vatican II document that treats the non-Christian religions as such, and the “true and holy,” the “ways of conduct and of life,” the “precepts and teachings,” “the good things, spiritual and moral, . . . of other religions.” In these religions are “seeds of the Word” (AG, nos. 11, 15) and “seeds of contemplation” (AG, no. 18), “elements of truth and of grace, present as a sort of secret presence of God” (AG, no. 9), “a ray of that truth which enlightens all” (NA, no. 2).

The previous dominant Roman Catholic common teaching was this: if God saves an individual non-Christian, one is saved despite one’s religious community as such. There is only one religion. The supernatural revelation that is the person of Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, gives an absolute and exclusive character to the body of Christ, of which he is the head. Only the church of Christ embodies this religion. Other “religions” are human constructs, although in God’s providential pedagogy they may provide a “preparation for the Gospel.”

NA proposes that religions as such are not outside but within
the history of salvation. In some way an individual can be saved not despite but in one’s community of faith, because in some way these religions incnate sufficient “religious beginnings (incepta religiosa)” of a supernatural response to the revelation in Christ.

As critical bishops during Vatican II observed, NA shows “a little too much optimism,” “a blindness to the negative in other religions.” Other conciliar texts are seen as a corrective balance, or for some commentators, juxtaposed texts reveal at least overtures to the history of salvation.

Religions. Other conciliar texts are seen as a corrective balance, stresses. The religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples is not only saved from destruction but is also healed, enoble and perfected unto the glory of God, the confusion of the devil, and the happiness of man” (LG, no. 17). That need demands a response of the church in its missionary activity.

In some way these religions, by whatever truth and grace are found among them, tend upward toward their fulfillment in the church of Christ, even though they are burdened, in various degrees, through “malignant contagions” (AG, no. 9) with the downward trend toward corruption.

NA intentionally does not enumerate and describe all religions, for example, more recent “cults.” Some council fathers wanted to expose the errors of those that are briefly described: “primitive” religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and with a somewhat different intention, the Jewish religion. In the final session (1965) Cardinal Bea answered these critics: “The purpose of the Declaration is not a complete exposition of these religions, nor of their discrepancies among themselves and from the Catholic religion. This council rather intends through this Declaration to show that there is a bond between man and religions which is meant to be the basis of dialogue and of collaboration. Therefore, greater attention is paid to those things which unite us, and are helpful in a mutual approach.”

Nowhere does Vatican II state explicitly that other religions are “means of salvation,” although NA does imply that. Even so, other religions are not wholly or completely from God, as is the church, but neither are they merely human constructs. Only the church is eschatologically definitive and normative. The church is “the initial budding forth of the reign of God” (LG, no. 5), the visible vanguard, the social expression in history of the reign of God that is also present in less visible, even hidden ways outside the visible borders of the church. As “the messianic people” with Christ as their head, this people does not include all men and women, but stands as a representative of all, “a most sure communion of all humankind as brothers and sisters in God.

Indeed, Vatican II raised new questions and did not answer them about the role of other religions in salvation history, and within that same history, the relation of non-Christian religions to the church, and of both to the reign of God. As Paul VI reflected, “Only the Reign of God is absolute, and it makes everything else relative,” including the church. And that reign participates in the very mystery of God, at whom we obscurely glimpse through the dark mirror of faith.

V

The Jewish People
A primary motive for the introduction of the Jewish people as such into the council arena was to correct the anti-Jewish tone of much past Christian catechesis and preaching, which derived from false theological presuppositions, and these, in turn, were misinterpretations of biblical facts. Thus NA addresses Roman Catholics:

1) granted that some Jews rejected the gospel, which was preached by many who “sprang from the Jewish people,” nevertheless “God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their fathers”; (2) granted that Jewish authorities “pressed for the death of Christ,” nevertheless “what happened in his passion cannot be charged against all the Jews without distinction,” then alive, nor against the Jews of today”; (3) granted that the church believes herself to be the new people of God, nevertheless the Jews should not be “represented as rejected by God or accursed.”

Yet as the drafting proceeded to absorb the council’s developing intentions and thought, the primary purpose of the last two drafts was to instruct Roman Catholics on why they should, and how they can, understand, respect, and love Jews, and collaborate with them in dialogue.

1) The interest of the Roman Catholic Church in the Jewish people is not due simply to today’s de facto condition of religious pluralism. The church’s concern is based on its search into its own mystery; “it remembers the spiritual bonds which tie the people of the New Covenant to the offspring of Abraham.”

2) The church is not a totally new beginning in God’s plan of salvation. The beginnings of its faith and its election are found already in the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. The divine promises are fulfilled, not abrogated, with the coming of Jesus. The Jews are God-bearers, our special brothers and sisters. The Gentiles are but wild shoots grafted onto the well-cultivated olive tree, which is the Jewish people (cf. Rom. 11:17–24).

3) Judaism is not just another “world religion.” The Jews remain then, today, and always most dear to God. Their election stands. God neither repents of the gifts he makes nor reneges on the call he issues. No human decision can break this bond (cf. Rom. 11:28–29).

4) The sins of all men and women are responsible for Jesus’ free acceptance of his passion and death. The cross is a sign of God’s all-embracing love, not a whipping post for any class of people.

New Questions Not Answered

1. The salvation of the church is “symbolically prefigured (mystice praesignari) in the exodus of the chosen people from the land of bondage.” From the paschal event, mysteriously prefigured, can one derive principles for the salvation not only of the Jews of the Old Testament but also of those Jews who today continue to live within the framework of the Mosaic law? Furthermore, in this typological theology is the Jewish people not only representative of humanity but also of the church in a common spiritual
2. The Church "received the revelation of the Old Testament through the (Israelite) people." But the revelation of the Old Testament continues to be salvific in the Church in the measure that the Church of the fact continues to draw sustenance from the root of that good olive tree" (Rom. 11:17-24). And with its subtle Marcionisms, in the measure that the Church of the fact does not draw sustenance, is it Church?

3. Christ "reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making the two one in himself (cf. Eph 2:14-16)." But this reconciliation, which is already realized at its source, is not yet accomplished in history. The theology of history in Romans (9-11) is a dialectical relationship of Jews and Gentiles, both bound to a common destiny. What is the eschatological destiny, "the fulfillment" of the Jewish people in relation to the nature of their permanent election (the nature of that permanency, the value of the irreproachable gifts of God, and thus the divine value of the Jews in themselves), and in relation to the incomplete, wounded universality of the Church (cf. Ephesians 2) as long as the "proto-schism" is not healed? What is the nature of the common messianic and eschatological hope between Jews and Christians—"serve the Lord with one accord" (Zeph. 3:9), though there are profoundly different understandings about the forms of the realization of the event?

4. NA's "the Church is the new People of God" in no way closes discussion on the Jews' being in some way of this new people. Nor does the text—as was clearly brought out in the drafting meetings—rule out the opinion of those theologians who hold that a radical schism has divided the people of God on earth into the church and Israel. Is the schism within the church or, rather, within Israel?

5. Nothing is to be taught or preached that is out of harmony with the truth of the gospel ("cum veritate evangelica non congruat"). What is the difference between ideological anti-Semitism and the polemic of the evangelists? The texts of Matthew and John tend to excuse the disciples and to accuse more and more Jews by excluding more and more Romans. Who are "the Jews" whom the evangelists accuse, and whom do they represent? In other words, what is the typology of "the Jews" in Matthew and John?

6. Christians in their witness should always avoid proselytism (in the pejorative sense); they should shun all conversionary attitudes and practices that do not conform to the ways in which a free God draws free persons to himself in response to his calls to serve him in spirit and in truth (DH, nos. 2-4). In the case of the Jewish people, also forever the Elect, what is Christian proselytism in practice? And what is "evangelization"—the Church's never-ceasing proclamation of Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6), in whom men and women may find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19)? Furthermore, what is the continuing mission of the synagogue to the Church? And what is the common mission or witness of the Church and the synagogue because both are "elected," to humanity, including those of other world religions?

### Questions Not Raised

1. Even though the council fathers had already been or became quite conscious of Europe's Holocaust of European Jews, Vatican II did not consider how the Holocaust enters into the very self-definition of the Jewish people. Nor did the Roman Catholic Church ask how the Holocaust enters into the very self-understanding of the Church. Not only what was, but what is this horrendous event in salvation history?

2. Vatican II did not consider how the post-World War II emergence of the State of Israel—the recovery of a promised, found, then lost "land"—also enters into the Jewish people's self-understanding.

These two questions have now risen as the fruit of the Catholic/Jewish dialogue that has taken place because of Nostra Aetate.

### Notes

1. For extensive details of this complex history, see references listed in Eugene Fisher's article in this issue.

2. Austin Flannery, O.P., has edited the English translations of all Vatican II and most postconciliar Vatican documents in Vaticanum (Bologna: Edizione Dehoniane, 1971). [Nostra Aetate quotations are from the version appearing in this journal issue.—Eds.]


### Interpreting Nostra Aetate through Postconciliar Teaching

Eugene J. Fisher

Nostra Aetate ("In Our Time"), promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, was the shortest and most heatedly contested document issued by Vatican Council II. Yet its impact has been profound. Institutionally there emerged out of its brief paragraphs two secretariats of the Holy See (for non-Christians and for non-Believers) and the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.  

Controversial at the time, the very ambiguities of certain of its key phrases, both with respect to its stance concerning the theological status of non-Christian religions in general and of the Jewish-Christian dynamic in particular, have ensured a "post-history" of the document as lively as its prehistory. It is the postconciliar history of the document that is the subject of this brief anniversary report. For from the point of view of tradition as Catholics understand it, such a document can be properly understood only in the light of the teachings and statements of the magisterium that interpret and implement it. This point was made strongly by Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and also of the commission, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the declaration, October 25, 1980: 

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While Cardinal Willebrands's hermeneutic is specific to article no. 4 of the document, the point is also valid regarding the other sections of the text. This paper will attempt an overview assessment of how postconciliar teaching has clarified much that may have been vague in the original text, and how other major areas remain open pending further discernment through dialogue and internal church reflection on the insights gained in dialogue.

Attitudes toward non-Christian Religions as Salvific Realities

It has often been noted that Vatican Council II presented more than one face to the world in general and toward world religions in particular, depending on which document of the council one focused upon. Such loose ends have precipitated various attempts, both theological and magisterial, to resolve the apparently contradictory thrusts of the conciliar texts.

The fact that Christians enter dialogue to learn religiously as well as to share their own faith is commonly understood. And respect for the conscience of individuals and the mystery of faith as a free relationship between the person and God has resolved on a practical level much that may have been considered "triumphalist" in older forms of missionary work. The church, in short, now clearly takes a more humble stance toward the workings of God within the human community, extra ecclesiam, than before the council. The actions of the Spirit are no longer perceived as bounded exclusively by the church's own activity or proclamation, but can be discerned as already at work in other religious traditions.

Thomas F. Stransky, in his 1966 commentary on Nostra Aetate, noted that the notion of the church as "universal sacrament of salvation" opened the way for what I would call a possible "nonconversionist" approach to mission by shifting the issue from ecclesial efficacy as the "sign" of salvation, to the universal salvific efficacy of the Christ-event itself. Pope John Paul II confirmed this relatively open tendency of the council when he stated:

"The church, in short, now clearly takes a more humble stance toward the workings of God within the human community, extra ecclesiam, than before the council."

"a ray of that truth which enlightens all" (Nostra Aetate, no. 2); such facts, combined with the assertion by Redemptor Hominis of the universality of the Christ-event, render the distinction between "natural" and "supernatural" religions very difficult to maintain with any strictness. As I have asked before: "If Judaism and the world religions are valid dispensations of grace in any real sense, how can they be seen as provisional (i.e. awaiting fulfillment in Christianity)? Is religious pluralism something to be merely tolerated or is it, in itself, a sign of God's manifold and inexhaustible richness?" The central issue, as expressed by Thomas F. Stransky in 1966, has yet to be resolved: In what way are other religions "salvific in and through themselves"?

Also, unresolved, but working toward resolution, is the question of the relationship between dialogue and mission. Here, the most critical document is a very recent one, issued in 1984 on the twentieth anniversary of the creation of the Secretariat for non-Christians. This long-awaited text on dialogue and mission, "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions," can be said to do for the general theory of interreligious dialogue underlying the first three sections of Nostra Aetate what the 1975 "Guidelines and Suggestions" (to be discussed below) did for no. 4 on the Jews. That is, in the light of the practice of dialogue since the council and, as it says, "the subsequent magisterium," it attempts a significant step of clarification as well as a consolidation of more recent trends in Christian self-under-
Standing.

As with Evangelii Nuntiandi, which sought to unify service and proclamation within the larger framework of mission, so “The Attitude of the Church” relates evangelization and dialogue as “found together in the mission of the church” (no. 7). It goes one careful step beyond Evangelii Nuntiandi in stating that “for every Christian, the missionary duty is the normal expression of this lived faith” (no. 10), but then, following that document as well as Ad Gentes, nos. 5-6, concluding that “the task is one but comes to be exercised in different ways . . .” (no. 11).

The “single but complex and articulated reality” that is the church’s mission, then, can be fulfilled “by the simple presence and living witness of the Christian life (cf. EN, no. 21),” by service, human effort, so the goal of mission, I would conclude, need not be conversion to the church, but rather, openness to the Spirit in whatever form that takes in a given person or faith community (no. 39).

Such a formulation of the church’s mission resolves a number of difficulties noted above, while leaving others open. The gap between the natural and supernatural orders evinced in earlier teachings is bridged with the awareness that God’s grace is “present . . . in every human encounter” (no. 23), so a way is opened up for seeing other religions as salvific in their own right (though not necessarily extra Christum). “God’s reign” has not yet reached “fulfillment” (no. 25) either for the church or for the world, so the proclamation itself is preserved from triumphalist formulations to which it may have been prey in the past. Left open, finally (and, I think, consciously), is the question of what form the unification of “all humanity” at the end of time will take (no. 43). The church bears witness to this longing but does not encompass its fullness within its institutional boundaries.

Announcing

The American Society of Missiology will hold its 1986 annual meeting at North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, June 20-22. The Association of Professors of Mission will meet June 19-20 at North Park in conjunction with the ASM. Dr. Charles R. Taber of Emmanuel School of Religion is President of the ASM, and Dr. Samuel Moffett of Princeton Theological Seminary is President of the APM for 1985-86. Further information may be obtained from Dr. Wilbert R. Shenk, Secretary-Treasurer of the ASM, Box 1092, Elkhart, IN 46515.

The Eastern Fellowship of the ASM/APM will hold its annual meeting November 1-2, 1985 at the Maryknoll Sisters Center, Maryknoll, N.Y. The theme will be “Cutting Edge Questions in Mission from Two-Thirds World Perspectives,” and the major speakers will be Dr. M. M. Thomas of India, Dr. Tite Tienou of Africa, and Sr. Theresa Chu of China. For further details, write the Secretary-Treasurer of the Eastern Fellowship: Dr. James M. Phillips, P.O. Box 2057, Ventnor, NJ 08406.

by liturgy and the spiritual life of contemplation, or by proclamation and catechesis (“The Attitude of the Church” no. 13). Respect for the religious freedom of others, both as individuals and as religious communities, must characterize every form of mission, so understood. A sense of doctrinal humility, that we as Christians do not “possess the truth in a perfect and total way but can walk together with others toward that goal” and can “profit from the gifts which God bestows so generously” on non-Christians and Christians alike likewise permeates all forms of Christian mission, evangelization as well as dialogue (“The Attitude of the Church,” no. 21).

“The Attitude of the Church,” no. 22, suggests (for the first time on this level, I believe) a positive theoretical foundation for religious pluralism in the world and for interreligious dialogue, seeing it as an action to which Christians are called by reason of the faith itself, and in some sense a reflection of God’s inner “life of communion and interchange” within the mystery of the Trinity. The church is called, in this vision, not only to proclaim the sufficiency and universality of the Christ-event (no. 23), but to the discovery through dialogue of “the richness which the Father has hidden in creation and history” (no. 22), and is oriented “towards God’s reign,” which is described as the “perfect communion” of all humanity. Christ is the “guarantee” of this “progressive fulfillment,” for which we still long (no. 25). The agent of conversion, the document reminds us, is the Spirit, not

Nostra Aetate, No. 4: On the Church and the Jewish People

If the story of postconciliar development of Nostra Aetate, nos. 1-3 can be said to be an attempt to reconcile various competing views of God’s activity among the nations within one overarching “worldview,” the history of the interpretation of Nostra Aetate, no. 4, since its promulgation is one of more and more precise articulations of particular points often only implicit in the text itself. Likewise, if the advances made in developing a more positive attitude toward world religions in general can be seen as pertinent to a discussion of relations between the church and the Jewish people as a minimum of what can be said regarding the nature of the Jewish-Christian dialogue, it is by no means all that can or must be said from the church’s point of view.13

Nostra Aetate opened many windows in the church’s traditionally negative assessment of Jews and Judaism, stressing the positive aspects of the biblical testimony, especially Romans 9-11 (cited some seven times in the text), without totally defining what the positive appreciation it called for would look like. Given all the ecclesiastical infighting that surrounded it and the necessary compromises from the earlier drafts of the statement to the final product,14 it is not surprising that many commentators at the time tended to stress its ambiguities and weaknesses compared with the earlier drafts: it did not mention the rebirth of the State of Israel or the Holocaust, the chief events of contemporary Jewish self-understanding; it did not “condemn” the deicide charge, but simply eschewed the notion of collective guilt; it did not “condemn” the deicide charge, but simply eschewed the notion of collective guilt; it did not address the question of proselytism; it did not make clear in what sense God’s covenant with the Jewish people perdures post Chris­ tum (on its own or as “fulfilled” in the church as the “new people of God”); it did not advert to the continuing role of the Jewish people as a people after New Testament times (so that it could be read as “supercessionist” though not abrogationist); it expressed no explicit sorrow or regret for the persecution of Jews by Christians over the centuries; it was silent on whether the Jewish people today have a “mission” or a role of witness to the world and in what way that might relate to the church’s own mission in and for the world; it mentioned only glancingly the issue of the treatment of Jews and Judaism in the liturgy, and while mandating clearly a renewal of catechesis and preaching regarding Jews and Judaism, it gave few explicit examples.

A decade later, and based upon dialogues on the local and international levels that were remarkably fruitful given the shortness of the period when compared to the millennia in which the
"teaching of contempt" held sway, the Holy See issued its implementing document for Nostra Aetate, no. 4. One can trace in these 1975 "Guidelines" various phrases and insights that had earlier appeared in local or national church documents, such as the "Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations" put out in the U.S. by the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1967, and the statements of the bishops of Austria (1968), of Holland (1970), of Belgium (1973), of France (1973), and of Switzerland (1974).

As with the conciliar declaration itself, an earlier draft of the Vatican "Guidelines" was made public some years before the adoption of the official text, with the result that many commentators judged the final version "weakened" and therefore unsatisfactory. On the other hand, one can discern in the cautiousness of each step taken on an official level not only the seriousness with which the topic is approached by the magisterium, but above all an indication of the "irreversibility" of the process itself. Each step, indeed each half-step, is measured and secured before the next step is attempted. Each step takes into account and builds upon previous statements. While such a process may appear painfully slow to many of us in the dialogue, the result is increasing security in understanding. From the perspective of the history preceding Vatican II, of course, such progress as has occurred appears breathtakingly rapid.

The following chart lists several areas in which the wording of the 1975 Vatican "Guidelines" specifically clarified wording left "creatively vague" by the council, thus determining how Nostra Aetate is today to be read. Many of these, it will be noted, are directly responsive to critiques made of Nostra Aetate in the dialogue between Catholics and Jews sparked by the council:

<table>
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<td>affirms that &quot;the church decries hatreds, persecutions and manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone&quot; (no. 4).</td>
<td>condemns, &quot;as opposed to the very spirit of Christianity, all forms of anti-Semitism and discrimination.&quot;</td>
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<td>makes no mention of the postbiblical religious tradition of Judaism.</td>
<td>affirms that &quot;the history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem, but rather went on to develop a religious tradition&quot; (no. 3); associates &quot;Jewish and Christian tradition&quot; (no. 4).</td>
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<tr>
<td>remembers &quot;the spiritual bonds which tie the people of the New Covenant to the offspring of Abraham&quot; (no. 4).</td>
<td>affirms &quot;the spiritual bonds and historical links binding the Church to Judaism&quot; and &quot;these links and relationships&quot; (Intro.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>makes no reference to traditional false stereotyping of the Pharisees or to misunderstandings that can arise from reading the New Testament or in the liturgy.</td>
<td>mandates an &quot;overriding preoccupation&quot; in liturgies and education to provide adequate background for scriptural readings, &quot;which Christians, if not well informed, might misunder-</td>
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presents "the church as the new People of God" (no. 4).

limits itself to the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews (no. 4).

defines the Jews solely in biblical terms, i.e., in reference to their past: "the Jewish religion," "the chosen people," "the wild olive shoots," "the Jews" (eight times, always in the context of the New Testament).

speaks of the Jews of today as well as biblically, and in modern terms: "Judaism," "Jewish brothers," "the Jewish soul," "the Jews" (eight times), "the Jewish people" (twice, and in specifically religious context, being followed immediately by "the Christian people").

stands because of prejudice," and specifies John's Gospel and the treatment of the Pharisees (no. 2). avoids supercessionist implications and states instead: "The Old Testament and the Jewish tradition founded upon it must not be set against the New Testament in such a way that the former seems to constitute a religion of only justice, fear and legalism, with no appeal to the love of God and neighbor (cf. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18)" (no. 3).

encourages Christians to learn "by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience" (Intro.).

deals also with other areas, encouraging research on Judaism in the fields of exegesis, theology, history, and sociology.

refers to the Holocaust as the "historical setting" of Nostra Aetate and the present Jewish/Christian dialogue.

Evolution based on (and therefore a constant reinterpretation of) Nostra Aetate, no. 4, of course has continued after the "Guidelines," in an internal church conversation, as it were, reflecting better understandings gained through dialogue. Regarding the point of honestly confronting the centuries of Christian persecution of Jews and Christian involvement in the Holocaust itself, for example, one can recall the frankness of the 1976 statement of the German bishops:
Apart from some admirable efforts by individuals and groups, most of us during the time of National Socialism formed a church community preoccupied with the threat to our own institutions. We turned our backs to this persecuted Jewish people and were silent about crimes perpetrated on Jews and Judaism. . . . Christians even took active part in these persecutions.18

There is also on the record today the moving words of Pope John Paul II in his homily at Auschwitz: “In particular I pause with you before the inscription in Hebrew. This inscription awakens the memory of the people whose sons and daughters were in-

"We cannot presume any longer the comfortable answers of centuries past."

tended for total extermination. . . . It is not permissible for anyone to pass by this inscription with indifference."19 And in Rome in 1982: “The terrible persecutions suffered by the Jews in various periods of history have finally opened many eyes and disturbed many hearts: If there have been misunderstandings, errors and even insults since the day of separation, it is now a question of overcoming them with understanding, peace and mutual esteem.”20

Regarding the State of Israel, Pope John Paul II has gone further than any other in acknowledging and supporting its existence, both de facto and de jure.21 In his 1984 Good Friday apostolic letter, Redemptionis Anno, for example, John Paul II declared: “For the Jewish people who live in the State of Israel, and who preserve in that land such precious testimonies of their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquility that is the prerogative of every nation.”22 This statement, of course, builds upon earlier statements of local hierarchies between the Vatican secretary of state and Israel.

One can also find a gradual increase of awareness of Jewish peoplehood in the documents. Whereas Vatican Council II speaks in categories such as “Abraham’s stock,” which could be read as the old “carnal Israel” (versus the “true” or “spiritual” Israel equated with the church), official terminology today, as above, does not hesitate to speak of “the Jewish people,” with all the freight that carries regarding the continuity of Jews and Judaism today with biblical Israel. Thus Pope John Paul II, in his 1980 address in Mainz, speaks of the dialogue as “the meeting between the people of God of the old covenant never retracted by God, on the one hand, and the people of the new covenant,” likening the relationship to that between the Testaments themselves.23

Referring to the April 1980 “Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Judaism,” by the German bishops, John Paul II sought to dispel any lingering notion that the religious relevancy of the Jewish people for the church may have been exhausted in New Testament times. The German bishops had used the phrase “the spiritual legacy of Israel for the church.” Affirming this, the pope escalated the content significantly, referring to it as “a living legacy that must be understood and treasured in its profundity and in its richness.” In his address in Rome on March 6, 1982, John Paul II made the point even more strongly:

Our common spiritual heritage is considerable. Help in better understanding certain aspects of the church’s life can be gained by taking an inventory of that heritage, but also by taking into account the faith and religious life of the Jewish people as professed and lived now as well [italics added].

In this sense, the pope, drawing on the most positive possible interpretation of Nostra Aetate and subsequent tradition, can evoke very precisely a sense of common witness, indeed of joint mission properly so called, of Jews and Christians in the world.

Jews and Christians are called, as children of Abraham, to be a blessing for the world (Gen 12:2). They engage themselves jointly to work for peace and justice among all persons and peoples in the fullness and profundity that God himself has disposed for us . . . In the light of this promise and this Abraham-like call I look with you toward the destiny and the role of your people among the peoples.

Such a vision does not resolve all the questions we may have regarding the relationship today.24 This radical new framing of the traditional questions, supplied perhaps only implicitly by Nostra Aetate but now made increasingly explicit in official Roman Catholic teaching, means that we cannot presume any longer the comfortable answers of centuries past. As Tommaso Federici concluded in his now classic study of proselytism and the conversion question (which, while not official teaching as such, had the approval of all the relevant bodies of the Holy See before being presented):

The central institutions of other religious faiths may in their turn enrich the Christian, offering fresh possibilities of expression, arousing valencies and potentialities that were formerly latent. But this can come about still more in contact with the Jewish tradition and its exegetical, liturgical and mystical treasures, its religious and philosophical thought. If this is true of other religions in relationship with Christians, how much more is it with the Jewish religion, to which Christians are and remain united by so many unbreakable ties.25

Vatican Commission “Notes” on Catechesis and Preaching

On June 24, 1985, the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews took yet another step on the journey toward reconciliation with the issuance of “Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church.”26 As was the case with both Nostra Aetate and the 1975 Guidelines, there were expressions of disappointment from the Jewish community. The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, (IJCIC), which had received the document three weeks in advance, issued its own statement also on the 24th. IJCIC cited several sections (in fact, the bulk of the document) as positive contributions to understanding, such as its sections on the Jewish roots of Christianity, the Jews and the Pharisees in the New Testament, Judaism and Christianity in history, and the document’s “commitment to religious liberty and the continuing concern about anti-Semitism.” These areas, IJCIC said, were “handled in scholarly fashion and with delicacy.”27

IJCIC, however, concluded that the “Notes” represented a “retreat from earlier Catholic statements,” citing in particular concerns over the tone and meaning of its sections on the relationship between the covenants, typology, the State of Israel and the Holocaust. The concerns, of course, are legitimate ones, especially since the “Notes” themselves emphasize at the outset the necessity for learning “by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience,”
yet direct their attention mainly at the traditional categories of Christian teaching.

While the “Notes” are still too fresh at the time of this writing to attempt a full commentary to assess their impact on the dialogue, my own view is that they represent, certainly in Catholic terms, a significant step forward though not yet the goal for which they themselves call. (The title, “Notes,” indicates the authors’ own feeling to this effect, I believe).

The “Notes” establish the “wholly unique” nature of the Church/Jewish people relationship “founded on the design of the God of the covenant” and that the irreversable nature of God’s covenant with the Jewish people provides the basic reality upon which to build a catechetical understanding of Jews and Judaism. Thus, the “Notes” seek to integrate a positive understanding of Jews and Judaism, post Christum as well as biblically, into the essence of Christian teaching (nos. 2 and 3).

The problematic paragraphs of the document referred to in the various Jewish reactions need to be understood within this solid context of the acknowledgment of the religious and, indeed, salvific validity of Judaism. In introducing the text at a press conference in Rome on June 24, Msgr. Jorge Mejía, Secretary of the Commission and one of the three signers of the document (with Cardinal Johannes Willebrands and Fr. Pierre Duprey, the President and Vice President of the Commission), made very clear the intent of the “Notes” on this point, stating that while in these paragraphs “there is the affirmation about Christ and his saving event as central to the economy of salvation—an affirmation which is essential to the Catholic faith (Section 1, no. 7)—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” (italics added). This is a remarkable, and remarkably unambiguous statement. Since it was published in L’Osservatore Romano together with the “Notes” themselves, it should be seen as clarifying any doubts the wording of the text itself may have left in the minds of readers.

The text terms typology, which has been distinctive of Christian liturgical usage of the Scriptures from earlier times, “perhaps the sign of a problem unresolved.” Neither the church nor Judaism, Exodus nor Calvary are “complete” in themselves. Both await the “final consummation... the coming or return of the Messiah—even if they start from two different points of view... thus it can be said that Jews and Christians meet in comparable hope, founded on the same promise made to Abraham.” (II, 10-11).

This sense of the intimacy of the “spiritual bonds” linking the church to the Jewish people and of the common goal of God’s reign leads the “Notes” to doubt the adequacy of a formulation of the relationship as simply “two parallel ways of salvation,” which never touch or meet (1,7). Such a model, from a Catholic point of view, does not articulate well enough “the unity of the divine plan” (II, 3). This section, while yielding certain hints for a renewed (i.e. non-triumphalist) interpretation of typology, does not offer its own model for the relationship. As with previous documents, there is much that remains unresolved for the dialogue.

Section III sketches the most positive and detailed portrait of Jesus’ relationship to the Law (“there is no doubt that he wished to submit himself to the law, ... extolled respect for it and invited obedience to it”) and to the Pharisees (“he is closer to them than to other contemporary Jewish groups”) that has ever been attempted in an official statement of the church. Section IV centers on the controversies and polemics of the New Testament text, which it states often “reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus” and are thus not normative for Christian attitudes today.

These sections respond directly to the areas of greatest difficulty in the current treatment of Jews and Judaism in Catholic textbooks. If implemented, they have the potential of revolutionizing Catholic teaching. While the 1975 Vatican Guidelines mentioned the “pejorative meaning” often attributed to the word “pharisee,” this section vividly opposes that connotation with a more positive description.

Likewise, Section VI expands on a brief statement in the 1975 Guidelines that “the history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem, but rather went on to develop a religious tradition.” Here, it makes reference to “the permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without a trace)” as “a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God’s design.” Emphasizing that the Jewish people “remains a chosen people... accompanied by a continuous spiritual fecundity in the rabbinic period, in the Middle Ages and in modern times,” the text offers the basis for an entirely new approach to Jewish peoplehood within the context of catechesis. Again, the results may well be revolutionary in the long run for Catholic teaching.

The “Notes” also speak, in this context, of the religious attachment of the Jewish people to the Land. Jewish history, it states, “continued, especially in the numerous Diaspora which allowed Israel to carry to the whole world a witness—often heroic—of its fidelity to the one God and to ‘exalt Him in the presence of all the living’ (Tobit 13:14), while preserving the memory of the Land of their forebears at the heart of their hope.”

This statement I believe to be truly remarkable in more than one way. On the one hand, it acknowledges without reservation that the very Jews who were persecuted and even killed by Christians over the centuries are to be seen by the church properly as martyrs (“heroic witness”) and presented as such in the classroom. On the other hand, it affirms the relationship with the Land in the context of that eschatological hope which it sees as essential to the spiritual bonds linking our two peoples (II, 10-11) in the perspective of God’s reign. This Jewish hope, “which finds its roots in biblical tradition,” directly addresses Christian hope and the Christian understanding of Eretz Yisroel. While the “Notes” are not ready to make their own “any particular religious interpretation” of this relationship of people to Land (e.g. biblical fundamentalism), catechesis, the central teaching of the church, needs to provide students with an understanding and positive appreciation of it.

Likewise, the existence of the State of Israel is to be taught as secure and valid under international law though, again, one cannot take a simple biblical fundamentalist approach to “political options” such as the boundaries of the State, but must deal with them primarily (though not necessarily exclusively) in reference to those same “common principles of international law.”

Finally, while renewing once again the condemnation of antisemitism of the Second Vatican Council, the “Notes” mandate the development of Holocaust curricula in Catholic catechetical materials, as Msgr. Mejía commented on introducing the text: “Catechesis should help Catholics to understand the dimensions of the tragedy (the Shoah) and its significance for the Jews, but also for us, whom it also obviously concerns. Many teaching aids have already been prepared by Catholic offices to awaken such awareness or to deepen it. Our Commission is pleased with such developments and intends to point out in them a way to be followed.” So while, as on other crucial issues, the “Notes” point to work to be done, the text does not provide itself a model catechesis on the Holocaust.

The dialogue between Catholics and Jews is in its infancy. The reactions to the text reveal something of its fragility and the difficulty we still experience in making ourselves understood.
Notes

1. The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews is officially described as “attached to but independent from” the Secretariat for Christian Unity. The reason for the link with Christian Unity rather than Non-Christians is both historical and theological. Historically this placement reflects the notion that the first rupture (“schism”) experienced by the church came with its break with Judaism, so that if unity within the church is to be achieved, some form of reconciliation with Jews is a logical necessity. Theologically the Vatican structure reflects awareness of the uniqueness of the Jewish-Christian relationship, one more intimate, so to say, than the church’s relationship with any other “non-Christian” group. Yet the commission is independent from the Secretariat for Christian Unity (though sharing the same president and vice president, the two have different sets of consultants) so that its task would not be misperceived as bringing Jews into “union” with the church but, rather, would be seen as that of dialogue and reconciliation. Indeed, many at the time of the council wanted the declaration on the Jews (Nostra Aetate, no. 4) promulgated either with the Decree on Ecumenism or independently.


7. See the conciliar “Declaration on Religious Liberty” (Dignitatis Humanae).

8. See especially the essay of Bishop Pietro Rossano in Anderson and Stransky, eds., Christ’s Lordship, pp. 96–110.

9. Whether “the nations” includes the Jewish people, however, remains very much an open question. See Daniel Harrington and Douglas Hare’s interpretation of ethné as geým in Mt. 28:19, “Make Disciples of all Gentiles,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 37 (1975): 359–69.


13. Cornelius Rijk, then director of the Vatican Office for Jewish-Catholic Relations of the Secretariat for Christian Unity took just this approach in his article “Some Observations on a Christian Theology of Judaism,” which tells us much about the understanding of Nostra Aetate within the secretariat in the immediate wake of the council. Originally given as a lecture at Seton Hall University on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the declaration in October 1970, it was published in SIDIC 5, no. 1 (1972): 3–17. In it Rijk notes that while the document “was certainly not the best possible declaration,” already at that time certain “documents and guidelines, issued by bishops conferences or other church bodies, show an evolution in thinking.” Much of this evolution taking place as a result of dialogues between Catholic and Jewish communities throughout the world was incorporated into and therefore officially affirmed by the 1975 Vatican Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, Nostra Aetate, No. 4 (Rome: Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, 1975). [Nostra Aetate is reprinted in this issue of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research.—Eds.]

14. See no. 2 above, for references analyzing and interpreting these modifications of the text.

15. Some saw in the wording here an “exonerating” of the Jewish people from guilt for Jesus’ death. But this was a mistaken reading even at the time, as the 1975 statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops made clear: “the truth is that the Council acknowledged that the Jewish people never were, nor are they now, guilty of the death of Christ” (Croner, eds., Stepping Stones, p. 32).

16. See no. 13 above.


22. John Paul II, Redemptionis Anno, cited in Fisher, “The Pope and Israel,” p. 16. Those who have doubts as to whether or not the Holy See recognizes the State of Israel should, with this statement and the meeting between the pope and the prime minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, have had them resolved.

23. So also the phrase used by John Paul II in the same address: “the encounter between today’s Christian churches and today’s people of the covenant concluded with Moses.”

24. E.g., what is one to do with “typology” and “fulfillment” theology? Here one can see a clear progression, though not yet a definitive finish.
Roman Catholic Missions since Vatican II: An Evangelical Assessment

Paul E. Pierson

With its central focus on the proclamation of the gospel and the planting of the church, Ad Gentes (AG), Vatican II’s “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity,” apparently laid down clear guidelines for Roman Catholic missions in subsequent decades. The introduction states, “The apostles . . . following the footsteps of Christ, ‘preached the word of truth and begot churches.’ It is the duty of their successors to carry on this work ‘so that the Word of God may run’ and . . . the Kingdom of God [be] proclaimed and renewed throughout the whole world.” The purpose of this missionary activity is “the evangelization and the implanting of the Church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet taken root.” The principal instrument in this work of implanting the Church is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . Missionary work among the nations differs from the pastoral care of the faithful . . .” (AG, no. 6). “The reason for missionary activity lies in the will of God, ‘who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.’ . . . Everyone, therefore ought to be converted to Christ, . . . and incorporated into him, and into the Church.” (AG, no. 7). “We all have need of Christ who is the model, master, liberator, saviour, and giver of life.” (AG, no. 8).

The document recognizes that to carry out the mission, the Holy Spirit implants a special missionary vocation in the hearts of certain individuals and raises up to take on the duty of cross-cultural evangelization. Those who are called to be missionaries “must be prepared to remain faithful to [their] vocation for life . . .” (AG, no. 24). Still it is clearly the task of the whole church, and “All bishops . . . are consecrated not for one diocese alone, but for the salvation of the whole world. The command of Christ to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15) applies primarily and immediately to them . . .” (AG, no. 38). Thus bishops are to promote missions, as are local priests and university and seminary professors.

There is a minor emphasis on contextualization. In the process of evangelization, the faith should be “explained in terms of the philosophy and wisdom of the people, and . . . their customs, concept of life and social structures . . .” (AG, no. 22).

Nostra Aetate (NA) the “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” states that while the church recognizes that other religions “often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all,” yet it proclaims “Christ as ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life,’. . . . in whom men and women may find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to himself.” (NA, no. 2).

Most evangelical missiologists would agree with Ad Gentes at several key points: first, in its emphasis on reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ as the greatest need of every person; second, in its focus on evangelization and church planting among non-Christian peoples as the primary thrust of mission today; third, that cross-cultural mission to the two-thirds of humanity that has not yet heard the gospel in any meaningful way must always be the priority of the church, which necessitates recognition and encouragement of the special missionary vocation that has played a primary role in Christian expansion throughout history; fourth, (although it is a minor note in Ad Gentes), that Western missionaries must exhibit a much more positive attitude toward non-Western cultures and incorporate their values and concerns into indigenous expressions of the Christian life.

The Decrease in Vocations

What has been the effect of Vatican II on Catholic missions during the last two decades? It is clear that the apparent goal of increasing church planting missionary activity among non-Christian peoples has not been achieved. Instead there has been a sharp decline. If we assume that the statistics on United States overseas Catholic missionaries are representative of the whole, we discover an alarming situation. Their number rose from 5,126 in 1956 to 7,146 in 1962, to a post-Vatican II high of 9,665 in 1968. This included diocesan and religious priests, religious brothers and sisters, seminarians, and lay persons. However, by 1984 the total had dropped over 36 percent, to 6,134. There was a marked decrease in all categories. Diocesan priests involved in overseas mission had dropped from a high of 373 in 1970 to 187 in 1984, while religious priests had decreased in number from 3,731 in 1966 to 2,603 in 1984. The most marked drop was among seminarians involved in mission, from 208 in 1968 to 40 in 1984. Furthermore, 2,753 of the total, nearly 45 percent, were working in nominally Roman Catholic countries, primarily in Latin America. This indicates that after an initial spurt of missionary interest and new vocations following Vatican II, there has been a significant and continuing decrease.

27. Ibid., p. 103.
28. Ibid., para. 2, citing Pope John Paul II’s address in Rome of March 6, 1982.

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The Theological Debate

One major reason for this drop has been the debate over the theology and practice of Catholic missions during the last two decades. Daniel Bloomquist has suggested that Catholic mission thought during this period has been set not so much by Ad Gentes, but "much more by what has been perceived to be the spirit of Vatican II." No sooner was the ink dry on the documents than the growing divergence between official statements, on one hand, and the thought and activity of many theologians and missionaries, on the other, became evident.

The openness of Vatican II to the spirit of the times rightly called into question the older view of an aggressive, triumphalist church. But for many this created doubt about the traditional thrust of mission, which sought conversion to Christ and the church. Some went even further. Edward Shorter expressed a common view when he wrote that "the words missions and missionary have become almost synonymous for bigotry, detachment, and self-interest." That perception, however unfair it might be, could hardly be a motivation to missionary vocations.

Along with such a portrayal of missions in the past, two related shifts in mission theology, both departing sharply from Ad Gentes, contributed to the decline. The first brought a change in focus from church planting to development and then liberation. Theologians at a conference as early as 1967 advocated a position sharply different from that of Ad Gentes. Avery Dulles spoke of two groups, which he called "spiritualists" and "secularists." The former "maintained that mission is primarily witness which calls for faith ... a consciously affirmed response to the gracious initiatives of God," while secularists argued that the radical new situation prohibited the separation from the world implied in such spiritualization of the church's role. Dulles, advocating the latter view, stressed the church as servant, "helping to build up a stronger human community in this world." At the same conference, Ronan Hoffman reacted to a statement advocating "a missionary duty of converting all men," calling it a misdiagnosis of the past. Instead, he spoke of "religionless Christianity," and "service in the development of the world." The following year, 1968, saw the meeting of the Latin American bishops in Medellin, which lifted up the concept of liberation. The result was an even stronger shift away from church planting to the focus on justice and freedom from oppression. (This was understandable in Latin America, where although the church had long since been planted in the traditional sense, little positive impact on social, political, and economic structures could be seen. Unquestionably a new understanding of the church and the Christian life was needed!)

Continuing divergence from Ad Gentes can be seen in a recent article by the executive secretary of Jesuit missions. It told of a 1981 meeting designed to create a contemporary Catholic missionology. Participants agreed that the basic and comprehensive goal of mission was "to promote and serve the unification and healing of our divided, wounded humanity ... with full respect for humanity's invincible cultural pluralism"; a corollary was that "missionaries will go out to discover the seeds of the kingdom (not to bring Christ) in another place of people or culture and will themselves participate in the growth toward the kingdom that is already underway there." Implied in the foregoing was a second major shift: the changing view of other religions and the necessity of belief in Christ and incorporation into the church. Here contemporary Catholic writers have moved far beyond Nostra Aetate. Karl Rahner's concept of anonymous Christians has become a point of departure. Some have suggested that "perhaps it is not God's will that all peoples enter the Christian fold; perhaps 'religious pluralism is the will of God for humanity.' This implies that other religions and Christianity may be parallel paths to salvation . . . this recognition of the independent validity of other religions, together with the continued affirmation of Christ/Christianity's normativeness, makes up . . . a growing common opinion among Catholic theologians."

The fact that many theologians espousing such views came from the orders that have contributed the greatest number of Catholic missionaries in the past, makes the shift even more critical. At the same time, official church documents have continued to insist on the centrality of evangelization. The Synod of Bishops in 1974 confirmed anew that "the mandate to evangelize all men constitutes the essential mission of the church." Pope Paul VI stated (1975) that "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 Puebla Conference's Final Document (1979) agreed that "to evangelize is the mission of the whole People of God. It is their primordial vocation."

The question is, which voices will be heard most loudly in the church, especially in those circles from which missionary vocations historically have come?

Contextualization

Although it was a minor note in Ad Gentes, to what extent have Catholic missions taken seriously the need to relate the faith to the customs, concepts of life, and social structures of peoples? The continued insistence on celibacy of the clergy, for instance, seems to be an obstacle to genuinely indigenous church leadership.

The question of Emmanuel Milingo, former archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, indicates the need for Western missionaries (Catholic and Protestant) to look much more positively on receptor cultures. Milingo, in his attempt to take African spirituality seriously, was led, almost against his will, into a ministry of healing apparently consistent both with the New Testament and with African culture. He knew that because the Western church had rejected so much of deeper concerns of the people, most African Christians departed from the church in times of personal difficulty. He wrote that "most of our baptized Christians had two religions." Even though he remained loyal to Catholicism and refused to form an independent church, Milingo's healing ministry led to conflict with more rationalistic European priests and to his eventual removal from office. The problem symbolized by this case and the lessons to be learned may yet prove to be more crucial than any other issue for the growth and health of the church in many cultures.

Concluding Questions

It is not surprising that the ferment in mission theology since Vatican II has led to a retreat in Catholic missionary activity. Samuel Rayan's statement, made in 1970, is even more true today. The new thinking about missions, he wrote, "has caused scandal, upset missionaries, unsettled bishops, and brought about a crisis in missionary vocations, motivation, and action . . . the problem now is whether the mission should exist at all, and if it should, why?"

We must ask if this is only a temporary setback while Catholic missions regroup, or the beginning of a long decline. In my judgment the answer will depend on two primary factors.

First, will the church call forth and stimulate those within its ranks to whom God has given the missionary vocation, those who
will adopt as their own the Pauline agenda that the "panta ta' ethe' might come to faith and obedience" (Rom. 16:26)? History teaches us that new mission breakthroughs have normally come from movements led by small committed communities. Will the church encourage the new ventures in spirituality and lifestyle that can give birth to renewed mission?

Second, when the dust settles in its theological debate, will the church come to a theological consensus that can serve as the basis for mission? While recognizing the need to dialogue with those of other religions and to hear their concerns, will the church recognize as an essential element in mission theology the apostles' statement, "for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the one by which we can be saved" (Acts. 4:12)?

An equally important element, where this writer perceives exciting and challenging movement, is a clear theology of the relationship between evangelism and social concern, but which does not substitute one for the other. As an evangelical who has lived in Latin America, I can only rejoice in (and learn from) the increasing identification of the Catholic Church with the poor. The base ecclesial communities are perhaps the most viable model in expressing such concerns. It may be that the growth of these communities in Latin America and elsewhere, if encouraged, will lead to new church structures more related to poor, more lay-oriented, and more evangelical. We know the study of Scripture in context to be a powerful instrument of the Holy Spirit. Such a new style of church life might include much more lay leadership along with a strong balance between the good news of reconciliation with God and reconciliation between persons; personal liberation from sin and death, and liberation from the manifestations of sin and death in human societies. If so, both traditional Protestantism and Catholicism may be challenged to renewal by such groups. There is some evidence that Brazil, where the shortage of priests has been acute for centuries, is experiencing a resurgence of vocations as the church is perceived to be closer to the social and political concerns of the majority of people. However, if theological balance and apostolic passion are not restored, it appears that Roman Catholic missions will follow the declining path of conciliar Protestants. Such a development would leave the growing edge of the Christian movement primarily to Pentecostals and other evangelical Protestants who are going out increasingly from North America and Europe, but still more, from the rapidly growing third-world missionary movement.

Notes


Noteworthy

Simon Barrington-Ward, General Secretary of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, will be consecrated in Westminster Abbey on November 1st as Bishop of Coventry, and will be enthroned in Coventry Cathedral on January 4, 1986.

Martin Conway, formerly on the staff of the World Council of Churches and the British Council of Churches, will succeed John Ferguson when he retires as President of Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, England, in the summer of 1986.

W. A. Visser 't Hooft, who led the World Council of Churches as its General Secretary from its formation in 1948 until 1966, died in Geneva on July 4. He was 84 years old.

Eugene Carson Blake, the second General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, 1966-72, died July 31, at age 78 in Stamford, Conn. His call in 1960 for a church that is "truly reformed, truly catholic, and truly evangelical" led to the establishment of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) in the United States.
Mission Theology Revisited: Keeping Up with the Crises

William B. Frazier, M.M.

Prefatory Note

Maryknoll, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, holds its General Chapter, or assembly, every six years. This is a gathering of leaders and delegates, representing Maryknoll Missioners from around the world, to reflect on the affairs and concerns of the society. The General Chapter provides a prime occasion for reflecting on missional principles and reassessing priorities. In preparation for the most recent chapter, held in late 1984, Father William B. Frazier, M.M., Professor of Systematic Theology at Maryknoll School of Theology, Maryknoll, New York, prepared a painstaking and comprehensive study entitled "Mission Theology Revisited." Although this was prepared as an "in-house" document to help fellow Maryknollers clarify their thinking about fundamental issues, Maryknoll has been confronting in recent years, the society and Father Frazier have kindly agreed to share the study with the readers of the International Bulletin.

Two decades ago Frazier captured the attention of missiologists when, in the aftermath of Vatican Council II, he published "Guidelines for a New Theology of Mission" (Worldmission 18, No. 4, Winter 1967–68; reprinted in Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Strasny, eds., Mission Trends No. 1 [1974]). In the current study, he analyzes the tension—and the implications for mission theory and practice—between those missioners who retain a more or less traditional focus on the evangelization of persons and those who wish to emphasize the "evangelization" of societal institutions and systemic structures. Although lengthy and at times occupied with developments particular to Maryknoll, Frazier's study, we believe, makes a major contribution toward explicating the current missiological debate and ferment. Few, if any, of today's mission agencies—Protestant or Catholic—can hope to remain aloof from the dynamics of the issues he discusses. Testimony to the seriousness of the situation and the debate is found in the reflections of three mission leaders invited by the editors to respond to Father Frazier's study. Their responses appear following Frazier's article below.

Introduction

Missionaries today have another crisis of identity on their hands. For a second time in less than two decades a controversy of major proportions is troubling the waters of missiological reflection.

The earlier debate, which I shall call Crisis I, developed in the wake of Vatican Council II. It emerged from a difference of opinion on the locus of God's saving presence. Missionary personnel took sides on whether that presence was to be conceived more or less exclusively in terms of the Christian community, or whether the saving God is available, in the first instance, in and through the human mystery as such. This translated into a corresponding disagreement on the tasks and priorities of mission. Although the debate is still very much alive, it is accompanied today by the new controversy mentioned above, which can now be named Crisis II. Here the contending parties are the so-called progressives of Crisis I. Those who affirmed together the primacy of human mediation in the mystery of salvation are now disputing among themselves, not about the centrality of human mediation as such, but about what is to be included and emphasized under this heading. It is one thing to agree that God saves us in and through our humanness, and that the mission of the church serves this unfolding process. It is quite another to sort out the pressure points in and around the human mystery where the struggle between sin and salvation is underway. Disagreement in this area is the nucleus of Crisis II.

Although these crises are developing simultaneously at the present time, they are not equally well anchored in missionary consciousness. Today it would be difficult to imagine a Christian missionary who is not conversant with the fundamental alternatives of Crisis I. The same cannot be said for Crisis II. There is a general sense that a new source of controversy is at large in the missionary world, but little effort has gone into isolating and naming its components. Opposing camps can be identified, but the battle lines are fluid. Attempts at dialogue break down because the only differences we are sure of rarely touch the underlying issues. The progressives of Crisis II feel they have made an advance in their approach to mission, but have yet to identify clearly what they have left behind. Their conservative counterparts, on the other hand, have confusions of their own. They have trouble giving anything but superficial expression to the novelty they wish to oppose. In a word, people know they have taken sides while hardly knowing the sides they have taken. What makes this a serious situation is that the day-to-day setting of missionary policies and priorities proceeds as usual. Alternatives are being embraced, excluded, or compromised with little more than a surface reading of what the alternatives are. These circumstances make it imperative to set forth as clearly as possible the components of Crisis II. The point is not to do away with the crisis itself, but to alleviate the main source of its destructive potential, its anonymity. There is something normal and healthy about debating clearly defined points of conflict. The only crises we should fear are those whose competing alternatives have never reached the full light of day.

Near the end of the 1960s I had occasion to develop some guidelines for a theology of mission consistent with the theological trajectories of Vatican II.1 Behind the scenes of that presentation is what I have referred to here as Crisis I. After a brief review of this controversy in the wider Catholic community and Maryknoll, I shall attempt a similar description of Crisis II. This will bring us to the heart of our study: the identification and comparison of the opposing concerns that account for the very existence of this new missiological challenge.

Crisis I

Because mission is in service of salvation, missiology reacts sympathetically to soteriological tremors. This occurred notably during Vatican Council II. Along with the overall tone of the council, which did not apologize for spending what seemed to some an inordinate amount of time probing the human mystery, what did most to stimulate a new approach to mission was its almost casual affirmation of the availability of salvation not only beyond the borders of Christianity, but even beyond the sphere of explicitly religious consciousness.2 This can mean only that in the first instance the saving presence of God in Jesus is mediated to non-
Christian and nonreligious people through the raw components of humanity itself. Simply to be a man or a woman is to have all that is necessary to qualify for the gift of saving grace. Whatever role religion in general and Christianity in particular have to play in the unfolding of God’s saving plan, it is not to provide such people with a primordial opportunity for deliverance. That opportunity is available within the human mystery itself. Here too the council was both consistent and helpful. It provided us with a working model of church that took full account of a deliverance mediated by ordinary human existence.

The church of Vatican II is a community whose task is not to dispense the grace of salvation to an otherwise impoverished world, but to give concrete expression to the divine riches already operative in those who have been faithful to their humanity. The council never refers to the church as an entity confining salvation within itself, delivering sinners from the graceless chaos of the wider world. It prefers the positive, respectful imagery of sign and sacrament. The church can be its proper self only by lending historical flesh to the subtle, sometimes misunderstood, incursions of the Savior-God into the deep levels of our humanness. Although the council did not make the point explicitly, there is no reason to assume that its view of salvation mediated humanly applies only to those who have not as yet embraced a religious or Christian way of life. There is, in fact, every reason to assume that the human avenue through which God first approaches those without faith continues to be the privileged locus of his dealing with them once they have made a conscious commitment to Christianity or to some other religious community. The role of religion, and of Christianity in particular, is not to supplant our human quest, but to correct and deepen it.

There seems to be no way around the conclusion that the theological trajectories of Vatican II lead from a church-centered to a human-centered view of salvation. Because the God of Jesus has offered himself to us primarily in the context of our human condition, human beings, including those who call themselves Christians, can achieve God-centeredness only in a human-centered way. This amounts to a major shift in the way Christians understand the locus of salvation, a shift of such magnitude that the term "Copernican" is sometimes used to describe it. It amounts to a revolution in soteriological consciousness comparable in style and importance to that which radically revised human thinking about the relative positioning of earth and sun. After centuries of assuming that the world revolved around the church, we are led by Vatican II to the awareness that the church itself is, and always has been, in orbit around the soteriological riches of the human sphere. The God of Jesus calls us to himself by calling us to human fullness.

Needless to say, this way of conceiving salvation has everything to do with how we think about mission. The world to which the Christian community is sent is not, in principle, devoid of the saving presence of God. It is not, by definition, deprived of the opportunity for deliverance. On the contrary, it is a world embraced and challenged by the same saving grace on which Christians were once thought to have a monopoly. What the non-Christian does lack, and what a Christian presence is meant to supply, is a kind of blueprint for making sense of and appropriately celebrating the graced existence in which all who are faithful to their humanity find themselves. All religious traditions may contribute to this process of articulation in some fashion or other, but only in Jesus has the final word been spoken. Such is the genius of Christianity: to monitor with the gospel message the ongoing attempt of human beings to come to terms with the massive involvement of God in human life and history.

As Christians, then, we have only the gospel itself at our disposal, not the realities to which the gospel points. For a world already graced with the melody of salvation, Christianity and other religious traditions supply the lyrics. This is not to do away with the need and urgency of mission, but to think of them in a different way. As long as missionaries looked upon those to whom they preached as a multitude deprived of any previous contact with the saving God, the focus of their concern had to be the absence of grace and the measures necessary to supply it. What was wrong was that the God of Jesus was not present to these people, inviting them to respond to his saving love, except in a rather nebulous and marginal sense unworthy of comparison with the saving gift available in the church. Now the situation is different. Missionaries imbued with the soteriological trajectories of Vatican II do not find preaching the gospel necessary and urgent for lack of God’s saving presence in the non-Christian world. The newly conceived predicament is not the absence but the presence of the saving gift of God. Without the witness of Christianity, God’s saving gift to all human beings could occasion greater harm than good. The reason is that the grace of salvation is offered to us on the deepest level of our being. In itself, and in the massive excavation of the human spirit required to receive it, the saving invitation of God, for all its riches, can severely aggravate the restlessness and anxiety that seem to be the price we pay for the privilege of conscious selfhood.

Unfamiliar as this may sound, it harkens back to a venerable Scholastic axiom: the worst corruption is the corruption of what is best. If people are unable to make genuinely religious and Christian sense of the endless longings that stir within them, some form of idolatry is likely to fill the breach. The destructive potential of such behavior needs little commentary.

**Crisis I in Maryknoll**

If Vatican Council II can be called the ecclesial event responsible for the emergence of Crisis I, the corresponding event in the Maryknoll Society was its Fifth General Chapter. The year was 1966. A large majority of chapter delegates responded positively to the broadly human mediation of salvation described above, including its implications for missionary theory and practice. Once this response had been expressed in the chapter documents and disseminated to the membership of the society, it became evident that all did not agree with the theological direction taken by the chapter. Some Maryknollers found it impossible to abandon more familiar soteriological and missiological principles:

1. While God has his own ways of saving those who have never heard the gospel message, these are extraordinary arrangements, not to be seen as normative for situations where the acceptance of Christianity is a viable option.
2. Ordinarily, the grace of salvation is available only within the Christian community. The so-called human mystery partakes of this grace only as it becomes explicitly Christianized.
3. The role of mission in the church is to provide not only a message about salvation, but salvation itself through belief in Jesus and the acceptance of baptism.

When this way of thinking collided with that of the chapter doc-
documents, Crisis I, already germinating in the postconciliar church, took root in the Maryknoll Society.

Painful as this tension was, and continues to be, some genuine benefits can be seen. Honest differences between Maryknollers were brought to the surface. Those on either side of the debate were challenged to refine and sometimes adjust their thinking in response to reactions from the other side. In spite of some continuing evidence of hard feelings and divisiveness, my own estimate of Crisis I, as a Maryknoll phenomenon, is more in terms of growth than decline. One of the main reasons for this is that from its very inception, the crisis itself was an open book.

The Maryknoll version of Crisis I, whatever its complications in terms of solution, has always been accessible in terms of the issues at stake. Society members have been taking sides on alternatives that are reasonably clear. Either humanity as such or the community of Christians is the foundational instrument through which the God of Jesus has determined to share his life with us. Our soteriological universe is either church-centered or human-centered. The primordial mediation of our deliverance is either ecclesiological or anthropological. Alternatives for the theory and practice of mission are equally well defined. The church in which salvation is centered will fulfill its missionary task as a sanctuary, gathering into its confines those whose salvational status would otherwise have been precarious at best. The church that ministers to salvation centered in the human mystery, on the other hand, will see its mission as a sign and sacrament, body forth the gift of grace already at work in the world, serving thereby the building up of the kingdom among all peoples, including those who may never appropriate the Christian name.

“Ministry in third-world countries is an ongoing lesson on the impact of social institutions on human possibilities.”

Crisis I will likely remain with the church and Maryknoll for some time to come. Interested parties will know which side they are on and precisely what is wrong with the position they reject. They will continue to have at their disposal the key words and categories needed to sustain serious dialogue on the issues involved. This should keep competing alternatives honest and lead in time to a genuine and lasting development of missiological science. The situation is quite different with Crisis II, which we are now ready to examine in greater detail.

Crisis II

Not long after the development of Crisis I, the seeds of a second missiological emergency were sown in the Roman Catholic community. It happened in the city of Medellin in Colombia in 1968, when the Latin American Episcopal Council gave its blessing to the main lines of what is widely known today as liberation theology. What had been regarded in professional circles as a highly creative experiment in theological reflection now became the quasi-official theology of the Latin American hierarchy. The prestige and influence of liberation theology increased accordingly, not only in Latin America itself, but throughout the Catholic world. While lending support to a human-centered view of salvation, with its corresponding implications for mission, liberation theologians make it clear that the human center they have in mind is, in the first instance, a concrete reality arrived at through the praxis of the poor. The grace of salvation is mediated through human beings living together in history, relentlessly conditioned by economic, social, and political institutions of their own making. The quality of these institutions is directly related to the quality of human life in general, both here and hereafter. This analysis of the human mystery made sense to many Catholic missionaries who had already moved to the human-centered alternative of Crisis I. Ministry in third-world countries is an ongoing lesson on the impact of social institutions on human possibilities.

At the same time, some of these missionaries, especially those outside Latin America, began to wonder if the truth about the massive influence of human environment is the whole truth. It is my understanding that liberation theologians themselves would say it is not. There are important dimensions to our humanness that are not adequately accounted for by what we have come to call structural analysis. If, at times, liberation theology seems to ignore them, the urgent need of addressing social ills in Latin America today may explain why. There is also the fact that theological developments can lose a certain breadth of vision in the process of popularization. Disciples are not always as discriminating as their masters. Whatever the reasons, liberation theology comes through to some heavily weighted in the direction of what I shall call environmental anthropology. If some missionary personnel find themselves uneasy with this development, others have already proceeded to reinterpret their soteriological and missiological worlds in its light.

Crisis II, therefore, is a crisis within a crisis. Missionaries who embraced the human-centered alternative of Crisis I are parting company as they probe more concretely what human mediation entails. The issue is clearly anthropological, in the broad sense of the term, with direct implications for soteriology and missiology. In a word, the theological tensions of Crisis II have anthropological roots.

Crisis II in Maryknoll

As in Crisis I, there is a Maryknoll counterpart to the event that ushered Crisis II into the wider missionary world. I refer to the society’s Seventh General Chapter in 1978. Here, for the first time, ministry to social structures or environments as such enters substantially into Maryknoll’s missionary identity and apostolate. A brief glance at the process and statements of the chapter should make this clear.

The main lines of the theology of mission of the Seventh General Chapter were gathered in a short document entitled: “Statements of the Mission Vision of Maryknoll, 1978, and the Society Objectives.” While appropriating the human-centered soteriology of the two previous chapters, this document stresses the impact of environment on what it means to be human. The history of this new direction is easy enough to trace.

Long before the Seventh General Chapter convened, environment had become a working category for self-scrutiny within the Maryknoll Society. For instance, an analysis of the several environments within which Maryknoll worked was the first order of business in the four Inter-Chapter Society assemblies held between 1972 and 1978. In each case, an environmental study provided the basis for refining the society’s mission vision. That is, a particular way of reading the human condition, an environmentally focused way, was placing its stamp on a developing theology of mission. The same procedure was followed in the
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pre-chapter area meetings held in Hong Kong and Lima in the spring of 1978, and in the final prechapter meeting at Hingham later that same year. By the time formal chapter deliberations began on October 4 the importance of environmental analysis had been well established. It is no surprise, therefore, to find this methodology carried over into the chapter itself. This is clearly stated in the introduction to the *Chronicle of the Seventh General Chapter*: “The Chapter Process began with a look at the world and at the people among whom we do mission today. This was our *Environment*. We then drew upon our common faith experience and the challenges presented by the world environment to elaborate for ourselves a vision or ideal of mission for the Society at this time in our history.”

In correlation with “our common faith experience,” the analysis of “world environment” led organically to the chapter’s mission vision. While not the sole contributor to this vision, therefore, human environment does seem to dominate the vision’s working anthropology. This is borne out by the content of the “Mission Vision” itself.

The environmental or structural focus of this document is unmistakable. From a view of church “as the full people of God rather than primarily as structures,” the text moves to the need of inviting laypeople and ethnic minorities to become part of Maryknoll’s response to mission “by calling into question any structures of church or society which impede the active participation of these groups in mission.” Out of solidarity with the poor, Maryknollers are to go away with elements of their own societal structure that foster dominance and privilege. As for the missionary apostolate of Maryknoll, it must give “special emphasis to the evangelization of the poor, of cultures, and of structures,” for the kingdom of God is mysteriously at work “in cultures, religions, the structures and organizations of societies.” As Maryknollers, we are to “make known the presence of God in these situations through a process of systematically studying them, using the tools of social sciences to help us to understand, dialogue and, wherever possible, collaborate with them.”

Such, we are reminded, was the focus of the Synod of Bishops in 1971, affirming the bond between “action on behalf of justice” and “liberation from every oppressive situation.” These principles call Maryknollers to the service of the poor, the perennial victims of structural or environmental oppression. In practice, this requires a careful analysis of the oppression itself. “In its response to the poor and oppressed, therefore, each region, area, or unit must determine for itself, by a study of its own environment, the greatest need, and should carry out a systematic analysis of the causes and perpetuating factors involved in the poverty that does exist.”

The missionary labors of the Maryknoll Society are directed, not to abstractions, but “to peoples in concrete historical situations”.

We have seen that the lives of men and women today are controlled by the socio-economic and political structures of society, some of which are hostile even to the work of evangelization. As part of our task of mission, we would consider it particularly important today to devote ourselves, together with the people we serve and with other [persons] of good will to identifying, critiquing and, wherever possible, transforming these forces for the benefit of authentic human development.

As for the future, Maryknoll’s mission vision will continue to unfold out of the principles from which it came: Maryknoll’s vision of its mission is always in process: a process which involves a continual clarifying, reshaping and evaluation of the concrete expressions of our apostolate in the light of the mission of Jesus, whose challenging and life-giving presence we discern constantly in the signs of the times. This process is directed by our on-going analysis of the environment in which we live and work.

Although everything intended by the term “environment” cannot be determined from the “Mission Vision” itself, it is clear from other chapter materials that the specific environments considered were social, political, economic, cultural, religious, and ideological.

Demonstrating the environmental or structural orientation of Maryknoll’s Seventh General Chapter is one thing. Showing where it came from is another. While several sources can be distinguished, the main channel through which they came together and made their impact seems to have been the current planning procedure of the society. Reaching back as far as the Fifth General Chapter in 1966, and the establishment of the Maryknoll Overseas Extension Service that same year, Maryknoll’s interest in planning gave rise to the Mission Department in 1968. Four years later, with the recommendations of the Sixth General Chapter, the process went into high gear. The Mission Department now became the Mission Research and Planning Department (MRPD), and the consulting firm of Rohrer, Hibler and Replogle was retained to lend professional assistance to initiatives already underway. As for the planning process itself, the focus was clearly on environmental analysis, a careful scrutiny of the contexts or settings within which Maryknoll carries out its mandate to preach the gospel. All of this was in place by 1977, when the MRPD began to conduct intensive planning workshops in the Maryknoll Regions in preparation for the Seventh General Chapter scheduled to convene the following year.

With these data as background, we can now trace the strong environmental concerns of the Seventh General Chapter back to several distinct though related sources:

1. There is, of course, an obvious bond between planning and environmental analysis based on the fact that environment can work either for or against the realization of human goals. This bit of pragmatism may explain as well as anything why the steps proposed by the consulting firm began with environmental analysis. While this procedure was formally incorporated into Maryknoll’s own planning system in 1973, experience demonstrated that it was easier to accept in principle than to carry out. Environment needed to be analyzed, but the kind of analysis best suited to the task had not yet been determined, even in the offices of the MRPD. What eventually became a solution to this problem brings us a step closer to the roots of the environmental focus of the Seventh General Chapter.

2. In ample time to accommodate the regional planning workshops of 1977, the leadership of the MRPD proposed that the most effective way for the Maryknoll Regions to study their environments would be through the already well-established procedures of social or structural analysis. This approach would help to concretize and systemize regional initiatives already directed at the manifold problems of human environment. But it would have to be more than a mere sociological exercise. To make social analysis acceptable and effective as a Maryknoll enterprise, it would have to be built upon the solid foundation of gospel values. Since the director of the MRPD, Father Clarence Engler, had discovered a good example of such an approach already at work in the Philippines, he contacted Father Edward Gerlock and arranged for him to present the Philippine pattern of social analysis at the regional planning workshops in 1977. The material of these presentations became the framework of the MRPD’s policy on envi-
3. A third source of influence can be called “magisterial.” Well before the Seventh General Chapter convened, papal and episcopal teaching had alerted Roman Catholics to the special ways in which social, political, and economic structures either facilitate or complicate the lives and destinies of those whom Christians are called to serve. As early as 1961, John XXIII insisted so strongly on the bond between the dignity of the worker and his environment that “if the whole structure and organization of an economic system is such as to compromise human dignity, to lessen a man’s sense of responsibility or rob him of opportunity for exercising personal initiative, then such a system, we maintain, is altogether unjust—no matter how much wealth it produces, or how justly and equitably such wealth is distributed.” 19

Ten years later, in its statement on “Justice in the World,” the Second Synod of Bishops expressed its own concern for those whose lives have been violated by environmental oppression.

Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its Creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church’s vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the good news to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted. 20

Finally, we have the words spoken by John Paul II during his visit to the United States in 1979. Although the Seventh General Chapter had long since adjourned, its attention to environmental concerns undoubtedly germinated in soil similar to that which inspired the Holy Father:

Social thinking and social practice inspired by the Gospel must always be marked by a special sensitivity towards those who are most in distress, those who are extremely poor, those suffering from all the physical, mental and moral ills that afflict humanity, including hunger, neglect, unemployment and despair. . . . you will also want to seek out the structural reasons which foster or cause the different forms of poverty in the world . . . so that you can apply the proper remedies. 21

Whatever may still need to be said about Maryknoll’s current stress on human environment, the magisterial credentials of the theme itself can hardly be questioned.

4. Latin American liberation theology may be the most influential source of all. Although the evidence is mainly circumstantial, there can be little doubt that Gustavo Gutiérrez and his associates played an important role in the society’s environmental turn in 1978. The quasi-official approbation of liberation theology at the Medellín Conference had all of ten years to work its way into the chapter delegates who gathered at Maryknoll in 1978, especially those from Latin America. The latter came with firsthand experience of unjust social conditions, and of creative Christian efforts to challenge and replace them. Since liberation theology, for its own reasons, is as thoroughly committed to environmental analysis as are the planning principles that Maryknoll had embraced prior to the chapter, it is safe to assume that these lines of thought worked together to give the resulting “Mission Vision” its characteristic shape.

5. The fifth and final source of the environmental anthropology of the Seventh General Chapter lies implicit in two sources already mentioned. The structural analysis of Edward Gerlock and of the Latin American liberation theologians can never be entirely divorced from the influence of Karl Marx. Nor should it be. Without his pioneering efforts, contemporary social consciousness and critique, even that which calls itself Christian and Catholic, could never be fully explained. This dependence is openly expressed by the two writers who had most to do with the versions of structural analysis operative in the chapter: François Houtart in the case of Edward Gerlock, and Gustavo Gutiérrez in the case of liberation theology. In his apostolic letter celebrating the eightieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum, Paul VI, after noting certain dangers associated with Marxist analysis, recognizes its potential value for discriminating Christians. The principle at work here is as old as the “spoils of Egypt” idea elaborated by the fathers of the church: whatever enhances the truth, no matter where it comes from, belongs by right to Christians.

However close these sources may come to explaining Maryknoll’s current emphasis on environment, the emphasis itself is beyond dispute. As of 1978, the society officially recognized the massive import of social structures in the human centering of salvation, and the difference this should make for the setting of missionary priorities. While this development was enthusiastically welcomed in some quarters of the community, in others we find a spectrum of resistance, ranging from vague feelings that something is out of balance, to outright criticism of the Office of Justice and Peace, the Department of Social Communications, and its subsidiary, Orbis Books. This disagreement is the general locale of Maryknoll’s Crisis II. Here, as in the earlier controversy, voices are being raised against the alteration of familiar missiological terrain. If I read the mood correctly, it is a fear of reducing missionaries to the status of social workers or political agitators, albeit in the name of Christ. Although the Seventh General Chapter’s preoccupation with environment could be carried in this direction, there is nothing to indicate that the chapter itself had anything like this in mind. On the other hand, those who misinterpret the intention of the chapter are sometimes misinterpreted themselves. For the most part their reaction is not against the evangelization of cultures and structures as such, but only against extreme and exclusive expressions of this concern.

My own reading of this controversy is that there are legitimate concerns on both sides. The environmental or structural factors that surfaced at the chapter have a valid claim to inclusion within Maryknoll’s missionary agenda. But so does the caution that the work of evangelization not be reduced to the transformation of sociopolitical institutions. I believe that the protagonists of Maryknoll’s Crisis II would have little difficulty reaching agreement on general principles of this kind. Why then the continuing crisis? As already indicated, I think it is because the ground floor of the problem is still vague enough seriously to complicate constructive exchange. More specifically, I am not so sure that those who protest the onesidedness of the current environmental turn of the society really know what a more balanced approach would look like. They know something is wrong but not with the kind of detail needed to specify what is right.

Those on the other side of the debate suffer from the same ambiguity. In their attempts to avoid reductionism, they too seem unsure as to what it is beyond the transformation of social structures that must be included in the task of mission. The result is a frustrating series of encounters with the “other side” with little hope of identifying the real issues, much less resolving them. Indeed, the really distressing thing about the present controversy is not the new surge of missiological unrest in the Maryknoll Society, but the context of confusion in which it is taking place. This is why the most urgent need at the moment is less that of taking sides than of taking stock of what the sides really are. Until we can gain a better understanding of the alternatives that compete in its depths, Crisis II, both in Maryknoll and in the wider missionary world, will function more as an obstacle than an aid to what missionaries are supposed to be doing in behalf of the gospel.
Naming the Alternatives

We have already taken two steps toward resolving the anonymity of Crisis II. I have suggested that, at bottom, the debate is a matter of *anthropology* and that within this framework some missionaries have taken sides on the relative importance of *environment* in mediating God’s deliverance. But this leaves us one term short in our attempt to grasp the alternatives of Crisis II. We still don’t have a name for the other sector of the human mystery that, all will agree, cannot be reduced to environment. The problem can be easily diagrammed:

![Diagram of the Alternatives]

A good illustration of this predicament is to be found in the following paragraph of Maryknoll’s “Mission Vision” of 1978:

> We have seen that the lives of men and women today are controlled by the socio-economic and political structures of society, some of which are hostile even to the work of evangelization. As part of our task of mission, we would consider it particularly important today to devote ourselves, together with the people we serve and with other [persons] of good will to identifying, critiquing and, whenever possible, transforming these forces for the benefit of authentic human development. 24

The words I have italicized show the document’s awareness that the missionary enterprise is not to be reduced to the evangelization of the social order. As important as this activity may be, it is only part of the comprehensive task of mission. But this is as far as “Mission Vision” goes. It clearly recognizes that something other than our humanly created environment needs the ministry of the gospel, but we are never told directly what it is. In order to discover it we have to rely on an earlier paragraph of the same document dealing with what it means to be poor and powerless. In the third example of this condition we are referred to: “those who are enslaved by sin of either a personal or structural nature.” 25

In this juxtaposing of the structural with the personal, we are as close as “Mission Vision” ever brings us to what missionary activity addresses in addition to social and political concerns. The sphere of the personal poses its own pathological problems clearly distinct from though not unrelated to the societal structures within which they emerge. Ministry to the human person, therefore, is what must be added to the transformation of human systems and societies if we are to think of mission in comprehensive terms. This advance can now be included in our diagram:

![Updated Diagram]

Data have already been gathered in its name. With these considerations in mind, we can add the finishing touches to our diagram:

![Updated Diagram with Additional Information]

Deprived of their anonymity, the competing alternatives of Crisis II are one step closer to the possibility of constructive debate. The remaining step is to determine with greater clarity and detail the content of the terminology we have assembled and thereby the realities they represent.

The Distinction in General

What is it about human existence that gives rise to the distinction between nature and nurture and the other terms in our diagram? The surest, if not the most scientifically nuanced, answer I have found is attributed to T. S. Eliot. He spoke of the two types of problems we face in life and of our ways of dealing with them.

“In one case, the appropriate question is, what are we going to do about it? In the other case, the only fitting question is, how do we behave toward it?” 26 This distinction between the aspects of human existence that control us and those that, for better or worse, are controlled by us is behind the scenes of almost everything else that can be said about the borderline between nature and nurture.

Human Nature

Human nature, then, is what we experience, both individually and collectively, as the given or built-in aspects of our lives, the biologically and ontologically inherited things that apply universally to humankind, things we never had a chance to vote on before they became part of what it means to be human. At the center of this endowment, which we can accept or resist but never be rid of, is a relentless collision of opposites. Which is to say, we are at one and the same time paradoxical combinations of freedom and limitation, power and weakness, vitality and mortality. Human nature, in this sense, has received classic expression in the words of Shakespeare:

> What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite a piece of dust? 27

In our own day similar expressions can be found. According to Aelred Squire, “it is of the essence of the human situation that man exists between the naturally limited and limiting world of the body at the physical end of the human scale and the naturally unlimited world of the spirit at the opposite pole,” 28 or, in a phrase attributed to Abraham Maslow, “we are simultaneously worms and gods.” 29

Human nature means all of this and more, for we have yet to explain what gives rise to the opposite that collides within us. To do this we must return to the question of personhood. It is only insofar as human nature is at once within and beyond its borders that the borders themselves can be distinguished from what is beyond them, and that human nature itself can take account of the fact. In other words, the paradoxical shape of human
existence and our awareness of it is the product of inner energies that ceaselessly transcend their own being to the point of folding back upon themselves in reflective consciousness. This, however, is the work we normally attribute to the dynamics of the human self, which is the very stuff of personhood.

The final thing that must be said about human nature is implicit in what we have already considered. My use of words like "collision" and "paradox" has already pointed to the turbulence that inevitably accompanies our day-to-day striving between freedom and limitation. The reach that continually exceeds our grasp is no formula for tranquillity. Herodotus knew this in the fifth century before Christ, when he commented that nothing in human life is more to be lamented, that a wise man should have so little influence. Simply to live is to know agitation, as we are told by a philosopher of our own day, Ernst Cassirer:

Wherever we encounter man, we find him not as a complete and harmonious being but as a being divided against himself and burdened with the most profound contradictions. These contradictions are the stigma of human nature. As soon as he attempts to understand his position in the cosmos, man finds himself caught between the infinite and nothingness; in the presence of both, he is incapable of belonging to either one of them alone. Elevated above all other beings, he is also degraded below all; man is sublime and abject, great and wretched, strong and powerless, all in one. His consciousness always places before him a goal he can never reach, and his existence is torn between his incessant striving beyond himself and his constant relapses beneath himself. We cannot escape this conflict which we find in every single phenomenon of human nature. . . .

The best designation I have found for the experience these writers have in mind is "anxiety." A nervous, nagging disruption of consciousness that is perhaps the most demanding price we have to pay for the privilege of being human. It is exacted at every moment of every day despite some ingenious efforts to convince ourselves of the contrary. One such effort is the illusion that this anxiety is like a case of measles which one may never contract in the first place, and, even if one does, can be overcome with proper care. Although some fears and anxieties may come and go in this fashion, what we are talking about here is neither occasional nor abnormal. The anxiousness we feel at the simultaneous freedom and limitation of our existence is as native to the human spirit as blood pressure and breathing are to the body. Indeed, the more normal we are, the more likely we are to experience the depths of this malaise. To avoid it altogether, on the other hand, would be to abandon life itself.

In sum, human nature has to do with those dimensions of our existence that are necessary and irreversible. But this is a volatile endowment. It combines at its very center what would seem to be irreconcilable elements: an endless hunger for the infinite shackled by an ever present burden of finitude. The resulting anxiety is deep and pervasive, but it is also the badge of our humanness. What remains to be said about human nature is that it does not exist in a vacuum. And this brings us to our next concern.

**Human Nurture**

In contrast with human nature, the nurture dimension of our existence refers not to the contours of our being as such, but to the whole range of humanly created systems and structures that condition everything we are and do from the very beginning. Be it noted that the reference is not to nurture as such, but to human nurture. We are dealing with the several environments that derive from human initiative, not with the manifold physical environ-

ments of the world. Human nurture has to do with the institutions of so-called civilized society and not with the other nurturing entities of the cosmos.

The brevity of this description simply indicates that human nurture is the easier category to understand. How it is to be evaluated in comparison with human nature brings us to the next section of our study.

**Weighing the Alternatives**

Discovering the names and meanings of the alternatives of Crisis II gives us new access to the missiological turmoil of our day. We are no longer condemned to debating in the dark. Dealing with our differences in terms of nature and nurture makes it clear from the beginning that we are struggling with different views of what it means for the human mystery to mediate salvation. The task still ahead is to refine and compare the views themselves in light of the truth that has taken flesh in Jesus.

The wider controversy about nature and nurture centers mainly around the analysis of human behavior. It asks whether the borderline between our creativity and our destructiveness passes, in the first instance, through the human heart, or through its humanly created habitat. Some of the responses given to this question since the Enlightenment are related to those dividing the protagonists of Crisis II. In the seventeenth century, for instance, Thomas Hobbes asserted that it is in the very nature of all human beings to be at war with each other. A century or so later, Rousseau went to the opposite extreme. For him, the root of our mutual inhumanity is not anything built into human nature as such, for which the Creator alone would be responsible, but the inequality that human beings themselves have built into civilized society. This debate reappeared in the nineteenth century when socialist principles challenged the assumed role of human nature in destructive behavior. Dostoyevsky gives a lively account of the issue:

Only fancy, Rodya, what we got on to yesterday. Whether there is such a thing as crime. . . . It began with the socialist doctrine. You know their doctrine; crime is a protest against the abnormality of the social organization and nothing more, and nothing more; no other causes admitted! . . . Everything with them is "the influence of environment," and nothing else. Their favorite phrase! From which it follows that, if society is normally organized, all crime will cease at once, since there will be nothing to protest against and all men will become righteous in one instant. Human nature is not taken into account, it is excluded, it's not supposed to exist!

Indeed, one is reminded of the clash between Kierkegaard and Marx on the role of anxiety in human destructiveness. What the father of existentialism saw as the immediate precondition of such behavior is reduced in Marxist doctrine to an unfortunate but curable residue of oppressive social conditions. In our own century the contending positions are confronted with a new datum, the unprecedented violence of modern warfare. According to Erich Fromm, this experience has handed human nurture an explanatory burden larger than it can bear.

Thinkers of the Renaissance and later of the Enlightenment . . . claimed that all evil in man was nothing but the result of circumstances, hence that man did not really have to choose. Change the circumstances that produce evil, so they thought, and man's original goodness will come forth almost automatically. This view also colored the thinking of Marx and his successors. The belief in man's goodness was the result of man's new self-confidence, gained as a result of the tremendous economic and political progress which started with the Renaissance. Conversely, the moral bankruptcy of the West which began with the First World War and led beyond
This trend, favoring the role of nature in human behavior, has by no means carried the day. Witness the continuing popularity of B. F. Skinner's behaviorism, which addresses pathological conduct exclusively in terms of the context in which it occurs. Lastly, there is the current debate between sociobiology and cultural anthropology over the respective import of genetic inheritance and cultural conditioning in the shaping of human conduct. According to Edward D. Wilson, everything we think and do is anchored solidly in human nature, simply because the genes that program our every move are gathered there. If the genes are bad, so will be the behavior. Not so for the anthropologists. For them the culprit is culture. "It is not human nurture but human nature that is the cause of human aggression." 

Christians engaged in the missiological dispute I have been calling Crisis II know something of the tension I have just attempted to survey. For we also are divided, at a level that sometimes evades consciousness, on the relative importance of nature and nurture as anthropological categories, and the difference this makes for the way we think about and go about mission. Some are caught up in a groundswell of enthusiasm about how many of our real problems proper sociopolitical management can solve. Others, without denying the environmental factor, sense that the mystery of iniquity will yield only superficially to whatever genuine benefits can be derived from substantial change in the social order. As Christians and missionaries, however, we are probably not at odds in the way Rousseau seems to have been with Hobbes, or in the way Montagu seems to be with Wilson. Our differences on the nature-nurture question are real, but they may not be as radical as might have appeared prior to our use of these categories to specify the alternatives of Crisis II. The only way to test exactly where and how deeply our divisions run, however, is to compare contemporary Christian claims on the relative importance of human nature and human nurture in the mediation of sin and salvation. How do Christians today tend to weigh the alternatives we have so recently named?

Christian commentary on the foundational role of human nature in pathological behavior is available in abundance. To introduce the theme, let me return to my earlier reference to T. S. Eliot. Having distinguished two types of human problems, the solvable ones (which I associated with human nurture) and the unsolvable ones (which I linked with human nature), the distinguished poet is said to have drawn the following conclusion: "The deeper problems in life are of the latter kind." In other words, problems that throw us directly up against our limits and reduce us to utter helplessness before them, these are the foundational occasions of the ills that plague our world. For when the human self experiences its own limitations, it always does so in conjunction with its endless longings. The inevitable result is the anxiety already referred to as the ongoing precondition of selfishness and sin. Uneasy with its own precariousness, the human self will resort to any means to maintain its security and significance. As Otto Rank put it, "the fundamental problem is individual difference, which the ego is inclined to interpret as inferiority unless it can be proved by achievement to be superiority." In essence, this is what the pathological universe gets back to when human nature in the form of selfishness or personhood is taken as its center.

The insight is a commonplace of Christian wisdom. Solzhenitsyn had it in mind when he observed that "the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart. . . ." With slightly more tact, Charles Davis expresses a similar view: "The core of the disorder lies in the self. The self has to be healed; its attempt to control the universe is the sickness to be cured, not a source of remedy." On the same point, Sebastian Moore has given us as good a summary as we shall find: "Evil is operative in us as the denial of our contingency through fear and as the cognate fascination with ourselves. It is the inescapable narcissism of consciousness." The theme is repeated in William Thompson's study of Jesus:

For we must finally ask what it is that impedes the possibility of authentic community and solidarity in history. I am aware that some would want to stress the priority of the transformation of social structures as the principal means through which an authentic human solidarity can be achieved. But probing of the New Testament symbol of "Satan" has led me to believe that the deepest source of alienation transcends even humanity's social structures, and is rooted in the threat of meaninglessness and lovelessness, the anxiety caused by death, and by man's own finite nature as a finitude which can lead to isolation and anxiety rather than to trust in the Infinite. Thinking of salvation primarily in terms of the reform of the social structures does not seem to penetrate deeply enough the full depth of Christian thinking about salvation.

Thompson's reference to the "anxiety caused by death" is an important refinement. Such is the anxiety that gives birth to destructiveness. It would be difficult to improve on Joseph Haroutunian's account of the matter:

It appears that ever since the emergence of the self-conscious individual upon this earth, there has also been a diseased spirit which has, by its anxiety about death, filled the world with unreason and evil. When we consider the superstitions and idolatries and inhumanities which anxiety about death has produced in the world, we must go further than to call this anxiety infantile and immature. It is an imbecility, a deadly corruption, murdering madness, for which religions and philosophies have failed, by and large, to produce a proper and effective antidote.

The idea that destructive anxiety is basically anxiety about death resonates not only in Christian minds, but in some of the best of those dedicated to modern behavioral science.

The foundational status of human nature in Christian pathological reflection can be seen also in statements on the way evils that germinate in the heart relate to those resident in the structures of society. One of the most striking of these occurs in "The Heart," a poem by Francis Thompson:

Our towns are copied fragments From our breast; And all man's Babylons Strive but to impart The grandeurs of his Babylonian heart.

On a more technical level, Paul Tillich harbored similar thoughts. In the following passage, Joseph Haroutunian attempts to describe them:

In finitude and anxiety Tillich thought he had found the quality of humanity which transcends both clime and culture. He insisted, in his own way and with his vast resources, that there is a human nature which is the presupposition of culture and not the product of it. The anxious animal, according to him, with his depth of reason, is the creator of cultural forms, and not the creature of certain cultural patterns. He has existed under all cultures, and will exist under any culture to come. No culture, no society produced by "tech-
rical reason," by science and technology, will make of man a non-anxious animal, because no culture will prevent his thinking as a finite being without destroying him. The anxiety that goes with the "depth of reason" is humanity. Remove the anxiety, and you remove the humanity. . . . Tillich's whole philosophical and theological enterprise is built upon the thesis that culture is produced by human beings, and human beings as thinking beings are necessarily anxious and religious. Without denying that human life is formed differently in different cultures, Tillich insisted that humanity, man who asks the question of being, is the creator of culture and that any human culture draws its substance from the asking of the question of being, and therefore from anxiety and religion. . . . Man thinks as an anxious being and creates his culture as an anxious being.46

In substance, this is also the mind of Reinhold Niebuhr, whose long years of social ministry convinced him that oppressive social systems bear the imprint of malignity at work on a deeper level. Every form of human culture, whether religious, rational or scientific, is subject to the same corruption, because all are products of the same human heart, which tries to deny its finite limitations.48

Therefore all human life is involved in the sin of seeking security at the expense of other life. The perils of nature are thereby transmuted into the more grievous perils of human history.49

Other indications of Christian insight on the foundational impact of nature on nurture are to be found in Vatican Council II. They occur in Gaudium et Spes ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World"): In human beings themselves many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as creatures they experience their limitations in a multitude of ways. On the other, they feel themselves to be boundless in their desires and summoned to higher life. . . . Hence they suffer from internal divisions and from these flow so many and such great disorders in society.50

To be sure, the disturbances which so frequently occur in the social order result in part from the natural tensions of economic, political, and social forms. But at a deeper level they flow from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere.51

The principals elaborated in Vatican Council II are clearly at work in the advice Karl Rahner once gave to his fellow Jesuits on the reconciliation of religious life and social activism. It is simply not true, but basically a very old-fashioned and peripheral illusion, if we should think that the people of tomorrow will expect nothing more from us than social involvement, secular humanism and brotherliness. Talk with the people behind the iron curtain, the people with a socialism, which—with all our reservations—is something of an ideal for many of us. There you will notice that those people expect from us a living answer to those ultimate problems which cannot be answered by any socialism or by any earthly paradise of capitalist or socialist kind. . . . Will we never make a job of foreseeing the really coming thing, and introducing it? . . . The coming thing is sober peace in the face of all the absurdity of existence, the absurdity which no social development will spirit away. . . .52

The several statements we have just examined are intended neither to deny nor to minimize the reverse impact of nurture on nature. The point is simply to take note of a strong Christian tendency to radicalize the kind of pressure exerted in the other direction. Since the quality of a consultation rightly depends on the spectrum of people consulted, and since the several I have called upon so far, excepting Reinhold Niebuhr, are not conspicuously associated with reflection on and ministry to political and social environments, I would like to turn now to two Christian thinkers who are, and who nevertheless confirm, directly or indirectly, that the pathological universe in its most radical proportions is occasioned by the tensions inherent in human nature. One of these, Jürgen Moltmann, is a leading European authority in the field of political theology and a major influence on the thought of Latin American liberation theologian Jon Sobrino. In the following reflection, Moltmann does his own weighing of the nature and nurture dimensions of human malice:

It follows for the Christian churches that they must fulfill further their old task of employing the Word of the cross to destroy religious idolatry and personal fetishism and to spread the freedom of faith into the very hovels of the obscure. Its new task then will lie in struggling against not only religious superstition but also political idolatry, not only the religious alienation of man but also his political, social, and radical alienation in order to serve the liberation of man to his likeness to God in all areas where he suffers from inhumanity. In this sense, I think, it would also be the task of the churches today to develop "social critical freedom" in institutions. I say "also" because man is basically enslaved by anxiety, and liberation from anxiety happens in the first place through faith—not through social improvement.53

One of Moltmann's main counterparts in Roman Catholic Europe is Edward Schillebeeckx. Few contemporary Catholic theologians have attended to the social and political ramifications of the Christian vision with greater competence and detail than he does in his two massive volumes Jesus and Christ. Yet, near the end of the second volume, Schillebeeckx makes clear that the pathological principles he had been working with all along are solidly rooted in human nature. Therefore for us the central problem is: how and what salvation do we claim to find in Jesus of Nazareth? There are many possibilities which restore man to himself, so that he can be who he is for others and in so doing find liberation, redemption, joy and ultimately peace. We have seen that there is certainly a possibility of doing away with some human alienation with the help of science, technology and new structures. At the same time, however, we have seen that this real possibility only affects such alienations as are the result of physical, spiritual and social conditions—limitations of human freedom which can in fact for the most part be removed by opposition, coupled with knowledgeable and active effort. Moreover, in these liberations we can see shreds of God's redemption: through man and the world. The question, however, is whether man does not experience deeper alienations, an alienation which is essentially bound up with our finitude, with our involvement in a nature which is alien to us, with solitude, with suffering because of and in love, with suffering because of our mortality, suffering also because of the invisibility of the hidden God, suffering finally because of our personal and collective guilt and sin: the dirty hands of our human history with so much innocent suffering, injustice and injury, the tears of human and divine indignation.54

Here, as in the previous comments, Christians consistently discover the foundational occasion of sin within the confines of what we have called human nature. This, however, is only part of the story. Christian attention to human nature is not confined to its pathological potential. The interest extends also to its role in constructive and creative activity. Indeed, before it can be anything else, human nature is the privileged locale of God's presence to us as grace. If grace did not invite us beyond ourselves in the first place, we would never experience the reflective consciousness that makes our nature what it is. While such consciousness may oc-
occasion monumental devastation, it also lends itself to the noblest accomplishments of the human spirit. "The glory and tragedy of the human condition," says Arthur Koestler, "both derive from our powers of self-transcendence. It is a power which can be harnessed to creative or destructive purpose; it is equally capable of turning us into artists or killers. . . ."59 Reinhold Niebuhr treats the same theme under the heading of "imagination," the power "which surveys the heavens, aspires to the stars and breaks all the little systems of prudence which the mind constructs. It is this imagination which is the root of all human creativity, but also the source of all human evil. . . ."56

At work here is the principle mentioned earlier in this study, whereby the power of evil is most destructive at the very point where we are gifted with the greatest potential for good. The demonic finds its way into our hearts by distorting the hunger for transcendence that inclines us to our proper destiny. Take, for example, the gift of love:

Love is . . . a quest for the infinite. This is in a way the beauty but also the tragedy of man. We always want to go further and wider, higher and deeper. This is at the heart of mysticism in all civilizations and religions. We seek union with the infinite: it is this which is the source of many experiments with drugs or alcohol: it is this which is at the source of all human activity. This quest for the non-finite is the deep motivation in domination—to possess more and more power. So it is also in love.57

The grandeur, therefore, as well as the misery of our existence is rooted deeply in the complexities of human nature.

But Christians, especially today, are also aware of and concerned about the role of human nurture in the drama of sin and salvation. Accordingly, the original plan of this study was to examine at this time a thesis diametrically opposed to the one we have just considered. It would have maintained that the environmental concerns of human nurture are really the deepest level of the pathological universe and its soteriological counterpart. I had intended to gather testimony showing that some Christians look to humanly created systems and structures rather than to the anxiety of the human heart as the true foundation of the human predicament and its Christian solution. This would have opened both positions to the view of all and prepared the way for a constructive exchange between the protagonists of Crisis II.

However, as I began to search for Christian testimony attributing to human nurture the kind of foundational status already accorded human nature, it became more and more clear to me that there really isn’t any. As far as I can tell, there is no serious theological attempt to make nurture rather than nature the deepest occasion of sin and deliverance. This applies even to liberation theology, with its consistent effort to underscore the contribution of social systems and structures to human well-being. Even here, where we might expect to find it, environmental concerns are never granted foundational status. On the contrary, Gutiérrez himself seems to presume that what we have been calling human nature exercises genuine priority in the explanation of behavioral patterns. In a short reflection written in 1973, the Peruvian theologian distinguishes three levels of liberation. The first of these, which he labels economic, social, political, and cultural, is "what we see first, not necessarily the most profound. Normally one goes from what is visible to what is deeper."58 Later in the same article, Gutiérrez shows the urgency of this first stratum of liberation without compromising a deeper reading of the problem, which he attributes to his Christian vision: "I work with university people who are political extremists. They find that the first level is the most fundamental. But I believe that if a Christian does not get up and out of this level of political liberation, he mutilates himself as a Christian. He even forgets one aspect of reality: the conflict between grace and sin."59

The sociopolitical liberation that is "most fundamental" for his colleagues is not so for Gutiérrez because the deliverance he has in mind must happen on two other levels in order to happen in depth. It is not enough simply to change the oppressive structures within which many people live. People themselves must be delivered from false consciousness and from sin if liberation is to deal radically with human bondage.60 Even for Gutiérrez, then, environmental factors relate to those of human nature more as superstructure to substructure, more as adjective to noun.

What does all this mean with regard to the opposing views that constitute Crisis II? Simply that the opposition itself may not be so much a matter of theory as of practice and application. Things widely agreed upon in principle are not always given consistent expression, and this now seems to be the bottom line of the misiological tension we have been dealing with in this study. Accordingly, the best service that can be rendered in the remaining pages of this study would seem to be a few reminders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of our two perspectives.

Those more inclined to underscore human nature can easily fall into the ideological trap that promotes passivity in the face of oppressive environments that are, in fact, susceptible to change. There is a subtle attractiveness in deciding, often prematurely, that certain obstacles to human growth and development are inoperable. We are thereby delivered of responsibility and have the best of excuses for putting aside a heavy expenditure of time and effort. Behind this mentality, with greater influence than we are likely to imagine, is the notion that we can do away with institutional oppression simply by changing the hearts and minds of those who staff the systems themselves and make them work. Our common experience, however, should make us wary of this all too facile approach. We know that some ways of organizing social and political life can maintain a constant level of injustice in spite of the many good people who function within them. Personal virtue simply does not rub off on the ills of the social order if accompanied by direct challenges to the structural shape of those ills. No more than Isaac could recall the blessing he mistakenly gave to Jacob can human hearts, merely through the process of conversion, do away with the systems to which they have given birth. Once the umbilical cord has been severed, these systems may assume a life and power of their own, impervious to any corrective short of radical revision or replacement.

If these temptations can be properly managed, there is much to be said for any Christian and missionary vision alert to the intrinsigence of human nature. There is, indeed, no better cure for the discouragement that feeds on naive expectation. For all the frustration, there will be no surprise and, one hopes, no abandonment of effort, when we discover new forms of bondage emerging from the very ashes of the inhumanities we worked so hard to destroy. Having done our best to overturn and supplant

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the manifold violence of the social order, we shall ready ourselves for the next wave of iniquities, which the human heart will never stop desiring until its native anxiety is swallowed up in glory. With Jesus, we shall learn to expect a human future laced with stake our future too rigidly on lasting results, we have already in behalf of justice and peace will seem entirely futile, a goal hardly good way of ensuring that we never shall be. For whenever we stop devising until its native anxiety is swallowed up in glory.

Contrast with the sphere of nature, we are in the realm of things to continue caring when deprived of the satisfaction of curing, to the towel in the face of overwhelming opposition, but with the staying power needed to carry the conflict to its eschatological term, to continue caring when deprived of the satisfaction of curing, to become, as Richard J. Neuhaus once proposed, long-term, rather than short-term radicals.

Under the heading of human environment, or nurture, a corresponding list of banes and benefits can be gathered. Here, in contrast with the sphere of nature, we are in the realm of things we can do something about. Social systems of our own making can be remade or unmade as the case may require. Here too, however, a subtle illusion can distort our vision. How tempting to reduce the most important things in life to elements over which we exercise full control. How satisfying to our sense of industry and accomplishment to get the roots of human pathology out of the deep recesses of the heart and into the more accessible province of social and political institutions. “There’s men all over for you,” says Samuel Beckett, “blaming on his boots the faults of his feet.”61 Or, in a paraphrase of Reinhold Niebuhr, “Modern man will... go to any extreme to locate the source of evil outside himself.”62 This is nothing but the brisk air of the Enlightenment, which we in the West have been breathing for upwards of two centuries, an irrepressible moral optimism based on the assumption that the prime occasion of human destructiveness is entirely containable by appropriate human effort. Despite the blood-drenched decades of recent history, this way of thinking is the going premise of the world in which we live. The fact that Christians themselves are not immune to such extravagances is evident in the liberal Protestant assault on original sin in the last century, and in later Social-Gospel attempts to explain this embarrassing doctrine almost exclusively in terms of defective social engineering. When it comes to the question of salvation, this mentality is equally allergic to the terrible immobilization rightly associated with the event of Calvary. “If I had a symbol for Christianity,” says Alec McCowan, “it would be a man rolling up his sleeves, not the cross.”63 This is an extreme case, and McCowan is not a theologian, but he does illustrate one of the dangers to which unqualified acceptance of the nurture perspective can give rise.

If we can escape the pitfalls just described, including the more subtle ones, then the emphasis we placed on human nurture can foster initiatives of the highest Christian and missionary significance. We shall be convinced that economic, social, and political barriers to the work of God need not and should not be tolerated, and that moderate optimism about a future delivered from many of the institutional burdens of the present is a consistent Christian hope worthy of the effort needed to bring it about.

How, then, do our Christian scales react when we place human nature on one side and human nurture on the other? Based on the materials we have just considered, several conclusions can be drawn: (1) both perspectives are solidly Christian concerns; (2) while intimately related, each has its own integrity requiring direct ministerial attention; (3) nature is the foundational reality in relation to both sin and salvation, but nurture is its ever present conditioner; (4) lack of foundational status does not imply lack of importance; (5) what is foundational is not necessarily in most urgent need of attention at any particular time.

Unlike Crisis I, whose alternatives exclude each other, those of Crisis II are complementary. Whether the church or the human mystery is at the center of the soteriological universe is, like the original Copernican debate, a question of either-or. As for the nature and nurture perspectives of the human center itself, however, the only adequate formula is both-and.

"Simply baptizing a one-dimensional anthropology with Christian doctrine will not necessarily make it whole."

show little or no awareness of the anthropological analysis of the crisis that forms the basis of this study. Let me now distinguish the two solutions I have in mind.

For some, the best way of stressing environmental and structural factors in a responsible way is simply to keep them in touch with the gospel. Sociopolitical extremism can be avoided by persistent reference to the Christian tradition. An important example of this approach can be found in a document that seems to have had considerable influence on Maryknoll’s Seventh General Chapter. It is a proposal about chapter methodology, the initial phase of which is to analyze the “world reality” within which Maryknoll works. This reality “...is composed of two aspects: the sociological and doctrinal.”64 While not deemed exhaustive of the reality they describe, these aspects are the ones “...that influence Maryknoll’s mission.”65 Whatever the intention of the author, the legitimate and necessary coupling of human science and Christian teaching in the theological project is in this case compromised by the suggestion that the data of sociology can give adequate expression to what is truly important for missionary consciousness, as long as these data are conjoined with Christian doctrine. What is overlooked here is that a narrowed down or truncated approach to the human mystery will not necessarily be broadened by reliance on the doctrinal tradition, unless, of course, that tradition itself is pressed to the point of revealing its own more comprehensive anthropological premises, which is at best a roundabout solution to a needless complication. Reducing our approach to the “world reality” to sociology and doctrine is just as unacceptable as reducing it to psychology and doctrine. In each case something vital to what our humanness entails has been excluded. Simply baptizing a one-dimensional anthropology with Christine doctrine will not necessarily make it whole. For the real tension of Crisis
II is not between sociology and doctrine but between sociology and the other sciences needed to do comprehensive justice to what it means to be human. If the elements of human nurture are not complemented from the very beginning with those of human nature, it is far less likely that the resulting reductionism will be cured by the gospel than the gospel itself will be reduced in the process.

A second, equally inadequate way of preventing an overemphasis on human nurture is to intensify one’s practice of the spiritual life. As long as there is careful attention to prayer and fasting, and to the service of one’s neighbor, this will somehow compensate for a more or less exclusive emphasis on social systems and structures. Although I cannot document this procedure in the way I did its predecessor, I believe a kind of wedding between social activism and spiritual renewal has been underway roughly since the beginning of the 1970s. During this period there was growing pressure on liberation theologians to produce a spirituality of liberation, a project that seems to be developing well at the present time. My concern is not to play down the growing spiritual sensitivity of social activists or the gradual coming to expression of the spiritual depths of liberation theology, developments which I can only applaud, but simply to suggest that in the long run the only way of correcting a restricted anthropological vision is to expand it.

Those who miss the anthropological point of Crisis II may do so to some extent under the influence of Marxism, especially if they work within the ambit of liberation theology. This is because the critical stance Christians naturally take toward the atheism of the Marxist tradition does not always extend to the far more dangerous so to some extent under the influence of Marxism, especially if they focus on what it takes to achieve human deliverance is just as anthropological premises clear. Those inclined to reduce the humanity of the Marxist anthropology. A one-sided, environmentalist way of illustration, let me turn again to the recent history of the Maryknoll Society.

The first item is a proposal submitted to the Seventh General Chapter in 1978. The signers asked that the following statement be included in the preamble to the assembly’s formal statement to the membership:

1. Maryknoll, as a community of Christians trying to be honest to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, chooses to take the side of and participate in the struggles of the poor, the oppressed and the exploited of the world.

2. This requires a growing awareness and critical analysis of systems, structures, and social structures, and classists that are the root causes of poverty, oppression, and exploitation.

From one point of view this is a straightforward diagnosis of human injustice. The corruption is anchored deeply within certain humanly devised arrangements for living in community, or in what we have been calling human nurture. There is no indication that anything but the sinful shape of social institutions occupies the ground level of such malice. If any of the pressure we have discussed under the rubric of human nature has a place here it is not given expression. One can only conclude, therefore, that the category or what it stands for is unknown, or that it is known but consciously excluded, or that it is both known and included, but with the kind of minimal importance that makes it unworthy of mention. Whichever of these alternatives applies, making it explicit would greatly facilitate the creative unfolding of Crisis II.

If, on the other hand, such a reading of this statement is too severe, if the phrasing does not mean to exclude the constitutional turmoil of human nature as the soil in which the “root causes” are themselves rooted, then only a substantial revision of the text would make this clear. As it stands, the statement can be seen only as an exclusively environmentalist reading of institutional violence. As far as Maryknoll is concerned, the point is academic, for the chapter never accepted the proposal as written. I refer to it here because it is a reasonably good example of statements about missionary practice whose anthropological premises might be forced to greater specification by the kind of analysis we have been doing in this study.

Among other recent statements of this kind in the Maryknoll Society, perhaps the most important is the formal “Mission Vision” of the Seventh General Chapter. Since I have already gone into some detail describing the predominant environmentalist, or nurture, orientation of this document, I shall now ask, as I did of our previous sample, what this means in terms of the discussion generated by Crisis II. My own ability to live with, and indeed benefit from, the vision statement of 1978 is due in great part to my assumption that its all but exclusive focus on systems and structures is simply a way of alerting the membership to a relatively new and thoroughly vital dimension of the missionary enterprise. I have never read the “Mission Vision” as an attempt to reduce the missionary activity of the society to the evangelization of nurturing institutions or as an affirmation that such ministry is more important or functions on a deeper level than its sister ministry to the perilous tensions at work in human nature. Indeed, I have taken for granted that the “Mission Vision” assumes the foundational stature of the human heart in matters concerning both sin and salvation, and that it moves beyond this assumption to the several environmental factors that condition for good or ill what the heart itself devises. One of the reasons why I feel the “Mission Vision” is open to the interpretation I have just given is its own admission that it deals with only “part of our task of mission.” Given the special sense of urgency about environmental matters today, the fact that the “Mission Vision” does not give human nature its due does not necessarily preclude recognition of its primacy among the various human needs that call for missionary activity.

But I may be wrong. Maybe this is not what the “Mission Vision” intends to convey. Perhaps the environmental concerns of the document are thought to be so superior in importance to those of human nature that they are the only ones that need to be dealt with. Although this interpretation would complicate my own acceptance of the “Mission Vision,” I would welcome it as another way of surfacing Crisis II as a Maryknoll phenomenon. More than anything else at this time, missionaries need to bring their differences about nature and nurture into the clear light of day. If this study can contribute something to this end it will have been well worth the effort.
Conclusion

Whether or not Crisis II exists anywhere but in my own head will be decided in the long run by missionaries patient enough to stay with a lengthy manuscript and discriminating enough to weigh its thesis against their own recent experience. If they find the proposal wanting, one can hope that the very process of reaching this decision will provide benefits of its own. On the other hand, if these pages speak to missionaries of something real, of a new and potentially dangerous breach of missionary consciousness, and if they are ready to confront this crisis on its deepest level, there is every reason to expect that a solution consistent with the essentials of Christian wisdom will be forthcoming.

Notes


2. Lumen Gentium (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”), no. 16.


4. A convenient summary of these developments can be found in the “Preliminary General Council Report for the Seventh General Chapter,” dated April 7, 1978. The document is available in the Society Archives.


7. Ibid., no. 9.

8. Ibid., no. 11.

9. Ibid., no. 13.

10. Ibid., no. 14.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., no. 15.

13. Ibid., nos. 10-12.

14. Ibid., no. 20.

15. Ibid., no. 22.

16. Ibid., no. 25.

17. Ibid., no. 33.

18. The best detailed description of the planning process that influenced the Seventh General Chapter is to be found in the Mission Research and Planning Department’s Social Analysis according to Gospel Values (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, 1979). Page 4 of this document gives a short history of its production and of planning procedures in Maryknoll.


23. Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens (1971), nos. 32-34.


25. Ibid., no. 19.


39. May, “The Sacral Power of Death,” p. 120.


51. Ibid., no. 25; in Abbott, Documents, p. 224.


59. Ibid., p. 472.

60. Ibid., pp. 467-70; cf. the author’s A Theology of Liberation, pp. 175-77.


62. James Livingston, Modern Christian Thought—from the Enlightenment to
Responses to the Article by William B. Frazier, M.M.

Carlos Pape, S.V.D.

When speaking of "Crisis I," we need not understand the polarity marked by the two alternatives in the sense of mutual exclusion; it, rather, calls for integration. It is not a question of opposing "humanity" to "Christian community," or the church as "sanctuary" to the church as "sacrament." The mediation of the church, on the other hand, is indissolubly linked with the "primordial sacrament," which is the humanity of the Word. Hence it is not an autonomous mediation but, rather, always related to Jesus Christ. Being ecclesial it will be at the same time Christological, although Christ exercises a mediation that goes beyond the church. It is in this context of communication of life, gratuitous and mediated by Christ and his church, that we have to understand the demand that presents the church as necessaria ad salutem (Lumen Gentium, no. 14).

Two mediations: that of the church, which is simultaneously mediation of Christ, and that of the human condition. Mediations of the same quality? Or are we dealing here again with one grace that "can" assure salvation and with another that wells up abundantly from the mystery of a Christ who is recognized as the supreme gift of God to the world? (cf. the cautious wording of Gaudium et Spes, no. 22 and the parallel in Lumen Gentium, no. 16). These two are mediations that have to be integrated. The fanaticism or sectarianism that has often dominated the mentality of Christians ought to give way to the universal love of God who "wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4–5). Contrariwise, the Promethean tendency of humankind has to open up to a salvation that comes from beyond its own resources.

In this process mission will be experienced not as a humiliation that forces a person to strip the self of one's condition as human being but, rather, as a possibility of possessing this condition more deeply; not as a title granting an egoistic distinction over those "in the shadow of death" but, rather, as a call to solidarity in sharing the goods that are meant for all.

Within the scope of "Crisis II," the theology of liberation appears to support the "human-centered view of salvation," according to which "the grace of salvation is mediated through human beings living together in history, relentlessly conditioned by economic, social, and political institutions of their own making." What counts in this mediation are the favorable or unfavorable structures of human life. The grace of salvation finds its way through the structures that foster life and is hindered by structures that militate against the same. Salvation thus acquires an essentially socio-structural connotation, a socio-cultural conditioning. The key word is "structural analysis." When salvation is viewed in this light, Frazier explains, "missionaries who embraced together the human-centered alternative of Crisis I are parting company as they prove more concretely what human mediation entails."

With regard to a theme at once so topical and complex, I would like to propose only a few considerations. In this radical turn toward the anthropological "center," the search is basically for the efficacy of a mission that could transform a reality which, as
amply documented in the media, appears frightfully unjust, violent, and dehumanized, a caricature of the world created by God, the Father of all people, who are all brothers and sisters. The search is for the continuous interaction that ought to exist between that world and God, between the secular and the religious, between history and faith, between culture and the gospel.

Ever since Gaudium et Spes proclaimed the autonomy of these various spheres (nos. 39, 59), there has been a progressive search for their reciprocal relationship. Populorum Progressio, Octogesima Adveniens, Evangelii Nuntiandi, Redemptor Hominis, and the Medellin and Puebla conferences have been milestones on this way. From an attitude that emphasized autonomy, theology has advanced to an understanding of mission that aims at “integral” person. It takes account of “the unceasing interplay of the gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 29) and steers clear of both a temporal-political and a religious reductionism (ibid. no. 34). “The Church links human liberation and salvation in Jesus Christ, but she never identifies them” (ibid., no. 35).

Interaction but how? This is one of the basic questions of today, as pointed out by Bishop Franz Kamphaus, chairman of the Justitia et Pax Commission of the German Bishops Conference:

The formula of the Council of Chalcedon, “without confusion—without division,” which constitutes a basic model of any reflection on the faith and which is fundamental for distinguishing and cor-

James A. Scherer

Are the two crises cited by Father Frazier confined to an American, Roman Catholic mission community after Vatican II, or can one see similarities and differences in one’s own mission constituency? A candid answer requires me to say that the relationship of welfare and salvation, taking full account of the present historical hour, is one of the most urgent tasks of theology in need of solution today, also in this country.

Because the question is not resolved, both theologians and missionaries who are active in this field find themselves in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Thus, as Frazier rightly points out, “the most urgent need at the moment is less that of taking sides, than that of taking stock of what the sides really are.”

“From an attitude that emphasized autonomy, theology has advanced to an understanding of mission that aims at ‘integral’ person.”

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evangelical Protestants, the crisis stems from an erosion of confidence in the distinctive sola elements of the Reformation—Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone—all pointing with unwavering fidelity to the central affirmation, Christ alone.

There are, of course, unresolved issues growing out of both Catholic and Protestant versions of the crisis. What is the biblical and theological basis for the statement that simply to be human is to qualify for God's saving grace? What is meant by "saving grace"? Is all grace as mediated by nature and creation defined as "saving"? What is the distinction between creation and redemption? Is redemption seen as continuous with creation, that is, as an enhancement of nature? What is then the meaning of a "new creation" in Christ Jesus? Where are the reality of sin, evil, and demonic power taken seriously? Are they dismissed as simply aberrations of nature and creation? What is the distinctive role of Jesus Christ? Is it interchangeable with that of other savior figures? These are fundamental issues of mission theology, both Catholic and Protestant, responses to which will determine whether there is continuing validity and justification for Christian mission today.

Crisis II would appear to be much less of a crisis for Protestants than for Catholics. In some Protestant quarters, liberation theology receives an enthusiastic response. Elsewhere it is greeted with cool, mixed, or critical reactions. Nowhere, as far as I can determine, has it received the official approval or censure of a Protestant denomination or mission agency, and thus its church-dividing and crisis-provoking potential is much less.

It is virtually certain that some mission groups make use of "structural analysis" or something akin to "environmental anthropology" in their long-range planning. Liberationist rhetoric is frequently invoked in connection with the challenge to battle against oppression and to identify with the poor. Most Protestants who hold these views would see them as fresh insights derived from Scripture, made suddenly and vividly relevant by the deteriorating social and political context of today's mission. A greater number of Protestants, however, would probably be scandalized by such notions, holding that such views represented a capitulation to Marxist ideology or to Leninist tactics. Puritanism and evangelical revivalism, after all, have in the past produced their own agendas of societal transformation and doing battle with the structures of evil.

If the issue is posed in terms of the alternatives of evangelizing persons or Christianizing the environment—saving individuals or saving the social order—people in my circle would stress the urgency of doing both. Personal evangelism, obviously, should not be neglected. But the older individualistic, pietist notion (really a caricature!) of rescuing souls from a doomed world has now been effectively replaced, in both conciliar and evangelical circles, by the view that individuals and groups should be both evangelized and nurtured in their social and cultural contexts. This implies, and certainly Lutherans increasingly support this view, that Christians in their mission have responsibility to advocate justice as they proclaim the gospel, and to work for the liberation of human beings from all forms of oppression. The older tendency to bifurcate mission into either evangelism or social action seems happily to be a thing of the past. It is striking that the Lausanne Covenant could pick up on a dominant theme of the World Council of Churches when it stated that "world evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world." This growing concern for wholeness in mission, far from pointing to a new crisis, is more a kind of preliminary sign of reconciliation among the fragmented forces of mission. What a tragedy it would be for Protestants and Catholics alike if growing consensus on these issues were now drawn into the destructive orbit of ideological polarization.

Some crucial issues remain unanswered. What is the relative priority assigned to evangelism and social concern? How do the two emphases relate in practice? What is the ultimate theological basis for Christian involvement in advocacy for justice as an expression of Christian mission? How does one's view of the world and of history—above all one's eschatological hope and vision of the kingdom—shape one's personal involvement in the struggle against demonic forces? Protestants and Catholics need to engage each other in a missionary dialogue on these issues.

Tom Houston

There are fashions in theology just as in clothes and furniture. There is a sense of such peer pressure in the title and content of William Frazier's article, which marks twenty years on from Vatican II.

There can be little doubt that Vatican II brought crisis to Roman Catholic missiology. Frazier's lucid exposition of the church as sanctuary vs. the church as sign sets out graphically one important fact of that crisis as it affected the Roman Catholic Church.

If this assessment is at all accurate, then there is one more point to be made. It is that the critical factor in both crises is an underlying one that is as old as the church. It is the tension, often embittered, between the emphasis on grace or law, or their counterparts, faith or works. That tension would appear to be endemic in the life of the people of God from the New Testament until now. The language, the practical issues, and the rhetoric may change, but the essential paradox between Mount Sinai and the heavenly Jerusalem keeps recurring.

Maybe there is a message in this that goes back to the image of two poles. In the physical universe, the poles are always there. You cannot remove one or the other. The force from each creates one magnetic field in which we have to operate. I believe it is so in the recurring areas of paradox and tension in theology. We have as givens certain apparent opposites, neither of which can be exclusive of the other. Grace is paramount, but law is not inconsequential. Faith is essential but can be known only by works. The church is both sanctuary and sign, and human nature and
nurture will both continue to constitute the missiological agenda. There was a similar, though not identical, shift in the main-line Protestant churches. Here it was the movement from the church as the "gathered" community, to the church as the "scattered" people of God. It is likely that both expressions of the trend were fed from increasing secularization in the societies in which churches are set.

This was slower in reaching the evangelical wings of the church. This may have been for a reason that is a commentary on William Frazier's method. With considerable skill, he articulates the difficulty of naming the polarities in his second crisis. Then he seems convincingly to tap the data with his silver hammer, and it very neatly separates into the human nature/human nurture tension. Many will be grateful for the literary pearls that he drops in the course of his argument, although evangelicals would have preferred stronger biblical content.

The trouble is, however, that in matters theological there are never only two poles matching the magnetic north and south. There is a hemisphere of poles with many points in its compass matching the other hemisphere of opposites.

In the evangelical world, the idea that there was no salvation outside the institutional church had been firmly resisted for 400 years since Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. In some ways the proliferation of parachurch agencies, with no ties to any church structure, was possible because this Roman tenet was abandoned. It is not surprising then that evangelicals were not so hung up on the sanctuary vs. sign tension. Because of our view of the church universal, we did not have too much of an exclusive sanctuary approach to begin with. We did, however, have our own problems with the secularizing process in society and tended to fight against it longer before rethinking our position in the light of it.

It took the influence of young evangelicals from the third world to get a reformulation of their position in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974. There it was admitted at last that we have a responsibility towards both the individuals and the structures of society as well as to the church, however "church" is defined. But this resolution did not address the same polarities that had pulled at the Roman Catholic Church in Vatican II.

The question arises now as to whether or not human nature vs. human nurture is a real crisis today, and whether or not it is to be seen as such in the evangelical wing of missiology. There is no doubt that a similar tension exists. It has revolved around the debate as to whether or not evangelism is primary and takes precedence over social action. That is still quite a hot debate when it comes to emphases and methodology in particular programs of churches and mission agencies. It would seem, however, that the resolution proposed in the 1982 Grand Rapids Consultation on the Relationship of Evangelism and Social Responsibility is helping the proponents of each emphasis to argue less and to get on with the tasks of mission. The needs of refugees and famine victims had already drawn evangelicals to do earlier what they would resolve only later theologically.

That resolution had three parts. Social activity can be a consequence of evangelism, or a bridge to it, or a partner in it. It is important, however, to note the reasoning behind that restatement. It was agreed there that there is a logical priority for evangelism because one cannot get Christian social action until one has Christians. More important still was the admission that there is an essential priority for evangelism because it relates to the eternal destiny of people, whereas social action relates to their temporal and material well-being. This has a bearing on William Frazier's thesis about Crisis II. When the emphasis in Roman Catholic churches moved from sacrament to sign, it would seem that for some it became implicit that salvation could be present for people with no connection to the church, even if their loyalty was to another religion or to no religion at all. That was an idea that evangelicals were not ready to accept on face value. While admitting that there are no ends to the mystery and sovereignty of God, and that only "the Lord knows them that are his,"

"In matters theological there are never only two poles matching the magnetic north and south."

there has never been a willingness to entertain the idea that everyone will be saved in the end, willy-nilly, or that salvation is possible outside Jesus Christ.

Similarly, in the human nature/human nurture tension, it is the solid rejection of universalism that keeps evangelicals on the same side that William Frazier seems to come down on, that the nature factor has to take precedence over nurture. This solidarity, therefore, reduces the crisis proportions of this debate. Unless human nature is redeemed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, any human nurture is fleeting and insubstantial, although still required out of love of the neighbor. So long as evangelicals believe this and act in this way, the second crisis will not be a crisis for them. There may be those who will shift ground and move to another camp on the issue, but there is little sign that such defections will be many.
Introduction

In our time, when day by day humankind is being drawn ever closer together and the ties between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church is giving closer attention to her relationships to non-Christian religions. In her task of fostering unity and love among individuals, indeed among peoples, she considers above all in this Declaration what human beings have in common and what draws them toward fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live on all the face of the earth (cf. Acts 17:26). One also is their final goal, God. His providence, his manifestations of goodness, his saving design extend to all (cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4), until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in its light (cf. Apoc. 21:23f.).

One expects from the various religions answers to the profound riddles of the human condition, which today, even as of old, deeply stir human hearts: What is man? What is the meaning, the purpose of our life? What is moral good? What is sin? Whence suffering, and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to genuine happiness? What are our origins, and where are we going?

Variety of Non-Christian Religions

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that mysterious power abiding in the course of nature and in the happenings of human life; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrate their lives with a profound religious sense.

However, religions that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus, in Hindouism men and women contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which persons, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or to attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all. Indeed, the Church proclaims, and ever must proclaim, Christ as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6), in whom men and women may find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

The Church therefore exhorts her children to recognize, preserve, and foster the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the sociocultural values found among the followers of other religions. This is done through dialogue and collaboration with them, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life.

The Islamic Religion

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in himself, merciful and all-powerful, the creator of heaven and earth (cf. St. Gregory VII, Letter XXI to Anzir [Nacir], king of Mauritania [PL 148, cols. 450ff.]), who has spoken to humans; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly even to his inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam is gladly linked, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, his virgin mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. Moreover, they look forward to the day of judgment when God will render what is deserved to all those raised up from the dead. For this reason, they value the moral life and worship God, especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting.

In the course of centuries there have indeed arisen many quarrels and hostilities between Christians and Muslims. But now the Council pleads with all to forget the past, to make sincere efforts for mutual understanding, and so to work together for the preservation and fostering of social justice, moral welfare, and peace and freedom for all humankind.

The Jewish Religion

4. As the Council searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the spiritual bonds which tie the people of the New Covenant to the offsprings of Abraham.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already in the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ—Abraham's children according to the faith (cf. Gal. 3:7)—are included in this patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is symbolically prefigured in the exodus of the chosen people from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy made the ancient covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-
The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission

Secretariat for Non-Christians

Introduction

1. The Second Vatican Council has marked a new landmark in the relations of the church with the followers of other religions. Many Conciliar documents made explicit reference to them, and one in particular, the declaration Nostra Aetate, is entirely dedicated to “the relations between the Catholic church and non-Christian religions.”

2. The rapid changes in the world and the deeper consideration of the mystery of the church as “the universal sacrament of salvation” (LG 48) have fostered this attitude towards non-Christian religions. “Thanks to the opening made by the Council, the church and all Christians have been able to come to a more complete awareness of the mystery of Christ” (RH II).

3. This new attitude has taken the name of dialogue. This term, which is both the norm and ideal, was made known to the church by Paul VI in the encyclical Ecclesiam Suam (6 August 1964). Since that time, it has been frequently used by the Council as well as in other church teachings. It means not only discussion, but also includes all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment.

4. As an institutional sign of this desire to meet and relate to the followers of other religious traditions of the world, the same Pope Paul VI instituted, on Pentecost, 1964, in the climate of the Second Vatican Council, the Secretariat for non-Christians as an organism distinct from the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Its competence was defined in the constitution Regimini Ecclesiae:

Universal Brotherhood, Excluding Every Discrimination

5. We cannot truly call upon God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any class of people created as all are in the image of God. Humankind’s relation to God, the Father, and his relation to us, his brothers and sisters, are so linked together that Scripture says: “He who does not love does not know God” (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between person and person or people and people insofar as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against persons or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition in life, or religion. On the contrary, following the footsteps of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, the Council ardently implores the Christian faithful to “maintain good fellowship among the nations” (1 Pet. 2:12) and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all (cf. Rom. 12:18), so that they may truly be sons and daughters of the Father who is in heaven (cf. Matt. 5:45).

* * *

Each and every point stated in this Declaration has satisfied the Fathers of the sacred Council. And we, by the authority bestowed on us by Christ, together with the venerable Fathers, approve it in the Holy Spirit, we decree it and we enact it; and we order the promulgation, to God’s glory, of what has been enacted synodically.

Rome, in St. Peter’s Basilica, October 28, 1965

Paul, Bishop of the Catholic Church

(The Fathers’ signatures follow)
To search for methods and ways of opening a suitable dialogue with non-Christians. It should strive, therefore, in order that non-Christians come to be known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians, and that in their turn non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life (AAS 59, 1967, pp. 919-920).

5. Today, 20 years after the publication of *Ecclesium Suam* and its own foundation, the Secretariat, gathered in plenary assembly, has evaluated the experiences of dialogue which are occurring everywhere in the church. It has reflected on the church’s attitudes towards other believers, and especially on the relationship which exists between dialogue and mission.

6. The theological vision of this document is inspired by the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent magisterium. A further study in depth by theologians remains, however, both desirable and necessary.

**“The life of Jesus contains all the elements of mission.”**

Drawn from and enriched by experience, this reflection is mainly pastoral in character. It intends to encourage behavior formed by the Gospel in its encounters with believers of other faiths with whom Christians live in the city, at work, and in the family.

7. This document, therefore, is proposed in order to help Christian communities and especially their leaders to live according to the directives of the Council. It offers elements of a solution to the difficulties which can arise from the duties of evangelization and dialogue which are found together in the mission of the church. Through this document, the members of other religions might also come to understand better how the church views them and how it intends to behave towards them.

8. Many Christian churches have had similar experiences in their encounters with other believers. Within the ambit of its Unit I on “Faith and Witness,” the World Council of Churches has a sub-unit for “Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.” With this latter body, the Secretariat for non-Christians has stable and fraternal contacts of consultation and collaboration.

## Mission

9. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). This saving love of God has been revealed and communicated to mankind in Christ and is present and active throughout the world by means of the Holy Spirit. The church is the living sign of that love in such a way as to render it the norm of life for all. This mission, Christ’s own, is one of love because in him it finds its source, goal, and way of proceeding (cf. AG 2, 5, 12; EN 26). Each aspect and activity of the church’s mission must therefore be imbued with the spirit of love if it is to be faithful to Christ who commanded the mission and continues to make it possible throughout history.

10. The church, as the Council has stressed, is a messianic people, a visible assembly and spiritual community, and a pilgrim people who go forward together with all of mankind with whom they share the human experience. They ought to be the leaven and a “soul” for society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into the family of God (cf. LG 9; GS 9, 40). This messianic people has as its law “the new commandment to love as Christ has loved us and as its goal the kingdom of God which was already begun by Him” (LG 9). The pilgrim church is therefore “missionary by its very nature” (AG 2; cf. also 6, 35, 36). For every Christian, the missionary duty is the normal expression of his lived faith.

11. “The mission of the church is carried out by means of that activity through which, in obedience to Christ’s command and moved by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, the church makes itself fully present to all persons and peoples . . .” (AG 5). The task is one but comes to be exercised in different ways according to the conditions in which mission unfolds. “These circumstances depend sometimes on the church itself, sometimes on the peoples or groups or individuals to whom the mission is directed. . . . The appropriate actions or tools must be brought to bear on any given circumstances or situations. . . . The special end of this missionary activity is the evangelization and the foundation of the church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet taken root” (AG 6). Other passages of the same Council have stressed that the mission of the church is also to work for the extension of the Kingdom and its values among all men and women. (cf. LG 5, 9, 35; GS 39, 40-45, 91, 92; UR 2; DH 14; AA 5).

12. The different aspects and manners of mission have been broadly delineated by the Second Vatican Council. The acts and documents of subsequent ecclesiastical teaching, such as the Bishops’ Synod on Social Justice (1971) and those dedicated to evangelization (1974) and catechetics (1977), numerous addresses of Pope Paul VI and John Paul II, and statements of the episcopal conferences of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have developed various aspects of conciliar teaching, adding, for example, “as an essential element of the mission of the church and indissolubly connected to it” (RH 15) the commitment to mankind, to social justice, to liberty and the rights of man, and the reform of unjust social structures.

13. Mission is thus presented in the consciousness of the church as a single but complex and articulated reality. Its principal elements can be mentioned. Mission is already constituted by the simple presence and living witness of the Christian life (cf. EN 21), although it must be recognized that “we bear this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). Thus the difference between the way the Christian appears existentially and that which he declares himself to be is never fully overcome. There is also the concrete commitment to the service of mankind and all forms of activity which have their own specific sources and the struggle against poverty and the structures which produce it. Also, there is liturgical life and that of prayer and contemplation, eloquent testimonies to a living and liberating relationship with the active and true God who calls us to His kingdom and to His glory. (cf. Acts 2:42). There is, as well, the dialogue in which Christians meet the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together towards truth and to work together in projects of common concern. Finally, there is announcement and catechism in which the good news of the Gospel is proclaimed and its consequences for life and culture are analyzed. The totality of Christian mission embraces all these elements.

14. Every local church is responsible for the totality of mission. Moreover, every Christian, by virtue of his faith and baptism, is called to carry out to some degree the whole mission of the church. The needs of the situation, the particular position of the people of God, and an individual’s personal charisma dispose the Christian to direct his efforts principally to one or another aspect of that mission.

15. The life of Jesus contains all the elements of mission. In the Gospels, Jesus is shown in silence, in action, in prayer, in dialogue, and in teaching. His message is inseparable from his deeds; he announces God and His reign not only by word but by his deeds and works which complete his preaching. Accepting contradiction, failure, and death, his victory passes through the gift of life. Everything in him is the means and way of revelation and salvation (cf. EN 6-12); everything is the expression of his love (cf. John 3:16; 13:1; 1 John 4:7-19). Christians ought to act in the same way: “By this will they know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

16. Moreover, the New Testament gives a composite yet differentiated picture of mission. There is a plurality of services and functions which
21. The church opens itself to dialogue through fidelity to man. In every person and in every human group there is the aspiration and the need to be considered responsible subjects and to be able to act as such. This moment, but arises from reasons which experience and reflection, and even the difficulties themselves, have deepened.

II

Dialogue

A. Foundations

20. Dialogue does not grow out of the opportunism of the tactics of the case whether one regards the need to receive or, even more, when one is conscious of possessing something which is to be communicated. 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. The dynamic of human encounter should lead us Christians to listen to and strive to understand that which other believers communicate to others is proof for Christians of the place of dialogue within that mission.

The abbreviations in this article refer to the following church documents, the Latin designation for each document being the first two words of the document and hence its official title.—Éos.

| AA | Apostolicam Actuositatem. “Decree on the Apostle of the Laity” (1965) |
| AAS | Acta Apostolicae Sedis. (Vatican publication of papal documents) |
| AG | Ad Gentes. “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity” (1965) |
| CIC | Codex Iuris Canonici. (Code of Canon Law) |
| DH | Dignitatis Humanae. “Declaration on Religious Liberty” (1965) |
| ES | Ecclesiam Suam. “Encyclical on Vatican Council II Themes” (1964) |
| GS | Gaudium et Spes. “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” (1965) |
| LG | Lumen Gentium. “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (1964) |
| NA | Nostra Aetate. “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (1965) |
| OT | Optatam Totius. “Decree on Priestly Formation” (1965) |
| RH | Redemptor Hominis. “Encyclical on Redeeming Humanity” (1979) |
| UR | Unitatis Redintegratio. “Decree on Ecumenism” (1964) |
In God, the Father, we contemplate a pervasive love unlimited by space and time. The universe and history are filled with His gifts. Every reality and every event are surrounded by His love. In spite of the sometimes violent manifestation of evil, in the vicissitudes of the life of each individual and every people there is present the power of grace with elevates and redeems.

The church has the duty of discovering and bringing to light and fullness all the richness which the Father has hidden in creation and history, not only to celebrate the glory of God in its liturgy but also to promote among all mankind the movement of the gifts of the Father.

23. In God the Son we are given the World and Wisdom in whom everything was already contained and subsisting even from the beginning of time. Christ is the Word who enlightens every person because in Him is manifested at the same time the mystery of God and the mystery of mankind (cf. RH 8, 10, 11, 13). He is the redeemer present with grace in every human encounter, to liberate us from our selfishness and to make us love one another as he has loved us. As Pope John Paul II has said:

Man—every man without any exception whatever—has been redeemed by Christ, and because with man— with each man without any exception whatever—Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it: “Christ, who died and was raised up for all, provides man”— each man and every man—“with the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme calling” (RH 14).

24. In God, the Holy Spirit, our faith allows us to perceive the force of life and movement and continuous regeneration (cf. LG 4) who acts in the depth of people’s consciences and accompanies them on the secret path of hearts towards the truth (cf. GS 22). The Spirit also works “outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body” (RH 6; cf. LG 16; GS 22; AG 15). The Spirit both anticipates and accompanies the path of the church which, nevertheless, feels itself impelled to discern the signs of Her presence, to follow Her wherever She leads and to serve Her as a humble and discreet collaborator.

25. The reign of God is the final end of all persons. The church, which is to be “its seed and beginning” (LG 5, 9), is called from the first to start out on this path towards the kingdom and, along with the rest of humanity, to advance towards that goal.

This duty includes the struggle against, and the victory over evil and sin, beginning always with oneself and embracing the mystery of the cross. The church is thus oriented towards God’s reign until its fulfillment in the perfect communion of all mankind as brothers in God.

Christ is the guarantee for the church and the world that the “last days” have already begun, that the final age of history is already fixed (LG 48), and that, therefore, the church is equipped and commissioned to work so that there come about the progressive fulfillment of all things in Christ.

26. This vision induced the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to affirm that in the religious traditions of non-Christians there exist “elements which are true and good” (OT 16), “precious things, both religious and human” (GS 92), “seeds of contemplation” (AG 18), “elements of truth and grace” (AG 9), “seeds of the Word” (AG 11, 15), and “rays of the truth which illumines all mankind” (NA 2). According to explicit conciliar indications, these values are found preserved in the great religious traditions of humanity. Therefore, they merit the attention and the esteem of Christians, and their spiritual patrimony is a genuine invitation to dialogue (cf. NA 2, 3; AG 11), not only in those things which unite us, but also in our differences.

27. The Second Vatican Council has thus been able to draw consequences of a concrete obligation, which it expresses in the following terms:

That they may be able to give this witness to Christ fruitfully, [Christians] ought to be joined to the people of their time by esteem and love, and acknowledge themselves to be members of the group of people among whom they live. Let them share in cultural and social life by the various exchanges and enterprises of human living. Thus, they ought to know well the religious and cultural traditions of others, happy to discover and ready to respect seeds of the Word which are hidden in them. . . . As Christ himself, . . . so also His disciples should know the people among whom they live and should establish contact with them, to learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth. At the same time, let them try to illuminate these treasures with the light of the gospel, to set them free, and to bring them under the dominion of God their Savior (AG 11; cf. AG 41; AA 14, 29).

B. Forms of Dialogue

28. The experience of recent years gives evidence of the many ways in which dialogue is expressed. The most important and typical forms which are listed below are seen as distinct from one another yet at the same time connected.

29. Before all else, dialogue is a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit which guides one’s conduct. It implies concern, respect, and hospitality towards the other. It leaves room for the other person’s identity, his modes of expression, and his values. Dialogue is thus the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission, as well as of every aspect of it, whether one speaks of simple presence and witness, service, or direct proclamation (CIC 787, no. 1). Any sense of mission not permeated by such a dialogical spirit would go against the demands of true humanity and against the teachings of the Gospel.

30. Every follower of Christ, by reason of his human and Christian vocation, is called to live dialogue in his daily life, whether he finds himself in a majority situation or in that of a minority. He ought to bring the spirit of the Gospel into any environment in which he lives and works, that of family, social, educational, artistic, economic, or political life. Dialogue thus finds its place in the great dynamism of the church’s mission.

31. A further level of dialogue is that of deeds and collaboration with others for goals of a humanitarian, social, economic, or political nature which are directed towards the liberation and advancement of mankind. This kind of dialogue often occurs today in the context of international organizations, where Christians and the followers of other religions confront together the problems of the world.

32. The field of collaboration can be extremely wide. Referring in particular to Muslims, the Second Vatican Council exhorts both parties to “forget the past” and to “defend and promote together social justice, moral values, peace and liberty” (NA 3; cf. AG 11, 12, 15, 21). In the same sense there are the statements of Pope Paul VI, especially in Ecclesiam Suam (ASS 56, 1964, p. 655), and of John Paul II in numerous meetings with the heads and representatives of various religions. The great problems with which humanity is struggling call on Christians to work together with other believers by virtue of their respective faiths.

33. Of particular interest is dialogue at the level of specialists, whether it be to confront, deepen, and enrich their respective religious heritage or to apply something of their expertise to the problems which must be faced by mankind in the course of its history. Such a dialogue normally occurs where one’s partner already has his own vision of the world and adheres to a religion which inspires him to action. This is more easily accomplished in pluralistic societies where diverse traditions and ideologies coexist and sometimes come in contact.

34. In this type of encounter, the partners come to mutual understanding and appreciation of each other’s spiritual values and cultural categories and promote communion and fellowship among people (cf. NA 1). The Christian in this manner can also work together for the evangelical transformation of cultures (cf. EN 18–20, 63).

35. At a deeper level, persons rooted in their own religious traditions can share their experiences of prayer, contemplation, faith, and duty, as well as their expressions and ways of searching for the Absolute. This
type of dialogue can be a mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals of man. It leads naturally to each partner communicating to the other reasons for his own faith. The sometimes profound differences between the faiths do not prevent this dialogue. Those differences, rather, must be referred back in humility and confidence to God who “is greater than our heart” (1 John 3:20). In this way also, the Christian has the opportunity of offering to the other the possibility of experimenting in an existential way with the values of the Gospel.

III
Dialogue and Mission

36. The relationships between dialogue and mission are multiple. We dwell here on several aspects which at the present time have greater relevance because of the challenges and problems they pose and the attitude which they demand.

A. Mission and Conversion

37. According to the Second Vatican Council, missionary proclamation has conversion as its goal: “that non-Christians be freely converted to the Lord under the action of the Holy Spirit who opens their hearts so that they may adhere to Him” (AG 13; CIC 787, no. 2). In the context of dialogue between believers of various faiths, one cannot avoid reflecting on the spiritual process of conversion.

In biblical language and that of the Christian tradition, conversion is the humble and penitent return of the heart to God in the desire to submit one’s life more generously to Him. All persons are constantly called to this conversion. In the course of this process, the decision may be made to leave one’s previous spiritual or religious situation in order to direct oneself towards another. Thus, for example, from a particular love the heart can open itself to one that is more universal.

Every authentic call from God always carries with it an overcoming of oneself. There is no new life without death, as the dynamic of the Paschal mystery shows (cf. GS 22). Moreover, every conversion “is the work of grace, in which a person ought to fully find himself again” (RH 12).

38. In this process of conversion, the law of conscience is sovereign, because “no one must be constrained to act against his conscience, nor ought he to be impeded in acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters” (DH 3).

39. In the Christian view, the principal agent of conversion is not man, but the Holy Spirit. “It is He who drives one to announce the Gospel and in the depths of one’s conscience makes one welcome and understand the word of salvation” (EN 75). It is He who determines the movement of hearts and gives rise to the act of faith in Jesus the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4). The Christian is but a simple instrument and co-worker of God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9).

40. In dialogue also, the Christian normally nourishes in his heart the desire of sharing his experience of Christ with his brother of another religion (cf. Acts 26:29; ES 46). On the other hand, it is natural that another believer would similarly desire to share his faith.

B. Dialogue for the Building of God’s Reign

41. God never ceases to reconcile persons to Himself by the work of His Spirit. The church relies on the promise made by Christ that the Spirit will guide it in history towards the fullness of truth (John 16:13). For this reason it goes out to meet individuals, peoples, and their cultures, aware that in every human community are found the seeds of goodness and truth, and conscious that God has a loving plan for every nation (Acts 17: 26–27). The church therefore wants to work together with all in order to fulfill this plan and by doing so recognize the value of the infinite and varied wisdom of God and contribute to the evangelization of cultures (cf. ES 18–20).

42. “We also turn our thoughts to all who acknowledge God and who preserve in their traditions precious elements of religion and humanity. We want open dialogue to compel us all to receive the inspirations of the Spirit faithfully and to measure up to them energetically. The desire for such dialogue, conducted with appropriate discretion and leading to truth by way of love alone, excludes nobody. We include in this those who respect high-minded human values without recognizing who the author of those values is, as well as those who oppose the church and persecute it in various ways. Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all mankind, we are all called to be brothers and sisters. Therefore, if we have been summoned to the same destiny, which is both human and divine, we can and should work together without violence and deceit in order to build up genuine peace in the world” (GS 92; cf. also, the messages of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II for the World Day of Peace).

43. Dialogue thus becomes a source of hope and a factor of communion in mutual transformation. It is the Holy Spirit who directs the carrying out of God’s design in the history of individuals and all humanity until the time when God’s children who are dispersed by sin will be reunited as one (cf. John 11:52).

44. God alone knows those days, He to whom nothing is impossible, He whose mysterious and silent Spirit opens the paths of dialogue to individuals and peoples in order to overcome racial, social, and religious differences and to bring mutual enrichment. We live therefore in the age of the patience of God for the church and every Christian community, for no one can oblige God to act more quickly than He has chosen to do.

However, before the new humanity of the 21st Century, the church should radiate a Christianity open to awaiting in patience the maturation of the seeds sown in tears and in trust (cf. James 5:7–8; Mark 4:26–30).
Church: Charism and Power.
Liberation Theology and the
Institutional Church.

By Leonardo Boff. Translated by John W.

The original subtitle of this book, when published in Portuguese in 1981, was "Essays in Militant Ecclesiology." This English translation carries a subtitle that suggests that here liberation theology "takes on" the institutional Roman church. The author, the Brazilian Franciscan theologian Leonardo Boff, is already well known for the "conversations" he was asked to hold with the prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Doctrine in September 1984.

Boff's basic endeavor is to argue with passion for the coming-to-be of a "popular church"—a church "from below," made up of the base communities whose main features he sketches in his eighth chapter, "Characteristics of the Church in a Class Society." Advocacy for such a church, running through these thirteen chapters (almost all previously published between 1974 and 1981) has been described by Cardinal Ratzinger as "a merciless and radical aggression against the institutional model of the Catholic Church" and as "an effort to reduce its structures to unacceptable caricatures."

With vigor and remarkable pedagogical (and polemical) gifts, Boff deals eloquently with a panorama of ecclesial models, with human rights violations within the Roman Catholic Church, with its pathologies and its abuses of power. He describes Christianity as "one huge syncretism," recasts long-held notions on "the teaching church and the learning church," and so forth, finally to hail the emergence of the communities "at the grassroots" among the poor and oppressed as the authentic form of the church of the future, alone truly capable of renewing the saving presence of the gospel in Latin America.

Cardinal Ratzinger has charged that the book is immoderate and pamphleteering in its language, offensive and unjust vis-à-vis both people and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church, that its critical stance would seem to borrow its perspectives from neo-Marxist inspiration rather than from gospel faith; that its theological con-ceptuality is often imprecise and ambiguous; that its views on church dogma and revelation, and on hierarchical authority depart considerably from normative Roman Catholic teaching. Boff's reply to this severe criticism has insisted that his positions were validly taken within an acceptable theological pluralism, and that his militancy derives from his passionate attachment to both the gospel and the church.

Church: Charism and Power will probably continue to fuel controversy, although those well acquainted with liberation theology will not find in it much that is significantly new. Surely the imperative for profound and ongoing reform in the church needs to be constantly reaffirmed. Surely too the promise of basic ecclesial communities should be proclaimed, serious problems notwithstanding. Undeniable forces of Word and Spirit are at work within them. But here both reaffirmation and proclamation have, not infrequently, a stridency and rhetoric bordering on harangue. One might ask, echoing some of the wise things Yves Congar has said of other books, if a more measured and more sober argument, with a greater sense of historical development and a more evident regard for fairness toward "the adversary" Boff has chosen to do battle with, might be not only more evangelical in spirit, but in the end more effective and more constructive for the very purposes these essays intend.

—C. G. Arevalo, S.J.

Salvation and Liberation.


In his critical analysis Leonardo Boff shows us how theological reflection on poverty and misery can lead to action. Faith as a motivating force for liberation and for salvation helps Christians to realize how they are being oppressed. Afterwards, it is only a matter of time before a process of liberation is initiated.

For Leonardo Boff liberation is an integral process and not a partial one. Its projection is not regional but global. Because poverty and misery are worldwide, and are one issue, it would fol-
low that the theology of liberation is also one global endeavor.

According to Boff, liberation in Jesus Christ is not identified with political, economic, and social liberation, but is historically identified in political and social liberation (p. 32). The kingdom of God is not identified with a just society, but it can exist in a just society; "the kingdom takes flesh in justice" (p. 58). These are examples of the fine points of the theological enterprise that, I believe, make Boff's contribution a necessary one for us today.

I did not find any difficulty with the book other than its apologetical form, such as John Paul II's liberation thematic. I feel that we in the North have to go out to meet and know who the poor are. Once that experience happens, theology and faith will not take so much for granted, and we shall begin to understand how liberation theology is challenging us with its "option for the poor."

Clodovis Boff points out that the dominant dimension of theology today is the political one. In the past it has been faith, spirituality, penance, asceticism, mysticism, alms and works, and so forth. These still are dimensions of theology but not the dimension that can presently help to bridge the gap between rich and poor. A good example is the "Magnificat" in Luke. The "Magnificat" is an example of a theology of liberation with strong political overtones that is helping the rich to become less rich and the poor to becoming less poor. The gap is beginning to close because of a healthy bridge called justice.

—Andres G. Guerrero

Andres G. Guerrero is Director of the Hispanic Ministries Program at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Illinois.

The Same Fate as the Poor.


The fate of the women who died in El Salvador in 1980 was that of the poor among whom they lived. Three of the five American missionaries who died were Maryknoll Sisters, members of a United States Catholic religious community. In addition to their common commitment in faith, these companions in service shared deep personal friendships with one another. In August 1980 Carla Piette was killed when the jeep she and Ita Ford were driving was overturned by a flash flood. In December 1980 Maura Clark, who replaced Carla in Chalatenango, and Ita Ford were murdered on their return from the San Salvador airport.

The Same Fate as the Poor traces the personal stories of these three women. Their lives are the windows through which the author, Maryknoll Missioner Judith Noone, points to the suffering of thousands of people in Central and South America. The text weaves biographical material with the broader political history of Chile, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. By referencing the personal writings and the letters of the three Sisters, Judith Noone offers an analysis of the social and political realities of Central America, particularly El Salvador.

As a case study of United States missioners in service to the people of the troubled lands of Central and South America, The Same Fate as the Poor provides a believable glimpse of this ded-


Dussel, an Argentinean exponent of liberation theology, has written extensively in the area of philosophy and ethics, but in recent years he has majored in historical research as the head of CEHILA, the vast project for writing a new history of the church in Latin America. In this very accurate translation from Spanish by Alan Neely, we have a good example of the solid scholarship and difficult style that characterizes Dussel. In its original form the book was entitled “Hypothesis for a History of the Church in Latin America” and published in Barcelona, in 1967. That original hypothesis developed from 219 pages into the 1974 third edition of 459 pages that has served as the basis for this English translation.

The process explains the uneven character of the book both in structure and in content, and makes it difficult to recommend it as a textbook in spite of the creativity of the method and the wealth of information and bibliography.

In Part One and appendices I and II Dussel offers a careful explanation of the hermeneutical approach he has used. Biblical and theological terminology combined with Hegelian and existential philosophy give us a dense text, not always easy to grasp. The approach to Latin America history is based on the Marxist-oriented theory of dependence as it is evidenced, for instance, in the periodization chosen (Appendix II). The period between 1492 and 1808 is covered in thirty-four pages, in Part Two. The period between 1808 and 1962 is covered in forty-eight pages in Part Three. Part Four, the period described as a time of “liberation” (1962–1979), is given a total of 128 pages. Such an unbalanced treatment of the material reflects enthusiasm for liberation theology and attributes unique significance to these seventeen years that Dussel sees as “pregnant with meaning and significant events” (p. 125). The problem is that unless the period 1492–1962 is better understood we do not have enough elements to decide if the “liberation” period really is what Dussel claims it to be. It is understandable that, with the vast amount of material covered, some factual mistakes have slipped by. Dussel says, “In Peru the movement for independence began in 1809, and the first rebellion or uprising occurred in Pumacahua” (p. 88). Actually, Pumacahua is not a place but the name of a revolutionary leader in the uprising of August 1814 in Cuzco. The maps and charts at the end of the book are very helpful.

—Samuel Escobar

Changing the World: An Agenda for the Churches.


Cosmao, the director of the Lebret Faith and Development Center in Paris, presents his formulae for “changing the world” in thirty-three theses, beginning with the assertion that “before the end of this millennium, humanity will have to make a collective commitment to shaping a habitable earth” (p.1). However desirable such a proposal may be in itself, its style is indicative of the author’s tendency to deliver presumptive judgments from a theoretical perspective rather than to examine data in detail and to argue his position in dialogue with other positions.

Depending on a reader’s own sympathies, the author’s explanations may seem analytically perceptive or theologically idealistic or excessively judgmental. For example, the claim that “the underdevelopment of some is the result of the development of others” (p.15) has an appealing simplicity, but does such a thesis take seriously the ambiguities of actual historical development? Similarly, the thesis that
Paths of Liberation: A Third World Spirituality.


Bakole wa Ilunga, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Kananga, in Zaire, starts with a radical analysis of his community. "The old framework that guaranteed a certain balance has collapsed and no new one has yet been found to replace it" (p. 12).

The Old Testament "search for God who sets us free" ends in a way during the exile when "groups of believers rediscover God in their lives: the poor of Yahweh" (p. 67). Jesus, one of those poor, lives the fullness of this liberating life, leaving communities that do the same.

The conclusions drawn by the author do not get stuck in mere piety. He develops a robust, liberating praxis. Zaire should be liberated from "the interests of worldwide capitalism," whose "chief weapon is not their military might but the fact that we depend on them even for our food!" (p. 144). "Increased agricultural production is therefore a prime necessity" (p. 144). "The liberation of society from corruption is the absolutely necessary condition for our progress" (p. 154). To realize those elementary objectives, Christian communities should form "chains of honesty" with "a renewed consciousness" (p. 156). In very many ways this is an amazing book. Here is an African bishop opting for a radical liberation theology. The book explains very clearly the role of conscientiation. That is what should happen to the Zairean Christian communities in order for them to regain "their authenticity." Whether those communities are going to be helped very much by this intelligent, but rather lengthy book remains a question.

The book is written for those who have the courage to let people come to the churches’? Or must one be content with a series of provisional agenda as the churches continuously search for divine guidance in the irreducible uncertainties of history?

Readers’ reactions to this book will likely depend on their own sociopolitical-theological viewpoints. Those who basically sympathize with the author’s perspective will presumably find their convictions reinforced. And even those who do not agree will be challenged to examine their own premises about the church’s role in a changing world.

—John T. Ford

J. G. Donders, a member of the Missionaries of Africa, was for fifteen years professor of philosophy and religious studies at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. He is now the Executive Director of the Africa Faith and Justice Network, in Washington, D.C.
themselves, a courage that is rarely found among leaders in Africa, the ecclisial ones included. That is why this book is such a mighty surprise, such a fresh breath, and so recommendable.
—J. G. Donders

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Salvador Witness: The Life and
Calling of Jean Donovan.

By Ana Carrigan. New York: Simon &

This fast-paced, gripping story opens
with Jean Donovan's disappearance
and death. Together with Jean, three
other American women were mur-
dered: Ursuline Sister Dorothy KazeI
and Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke
and Ida Ford. By beginning with the
eading of their lives, Carrigan has
chosen well: when silenced, these four
women came to be heard across the
United States.

Like the other three, Jean went to
El Salvador to serve its harassed and
uprooted common people. Her short
there, from summer 1979 to De-
ember 2, 1980, coincided with an up-
surge of violence, increasing raids on
homes and hamlets, disappearances,
detentions, and killings. In this turmoil
Jean and her co-workers moved about,
distributing food, clothing, and medic-
ion, sharing the comforts of their faith,
providing transportation and shelter for
refugees. Fair and foreign, they were noticeable, especially
blonde and bouncy Jean. Their activi-
ties were watched and, by the far right,
judged subversive. They received
some threats, experienced a growing
sense of menace—but kept on.

Common sense urged, while
friends pleaded, that Jean leave. She
stayed, explaining: "Several times I
have decided to leave. . . . I almost
could except for the children. . . .
Whose heart could be so staunch as
to favor the reasonable thing . . . ? Not
mine, dear friend, not mine" (p. 218).

Although Carrigan focuses on
Jean, she introduces a galaxy of other
memorable people. Her vivid account
of scenes and events, her summaries 
and analyses profit from her firsthand
knowledge of Latin America, where,
as the daughter of Irish and Colombian
parents, she has lived. She well may
spark readers to scrutinize the United
States government's ventures in
Central America.

Not footnoted, the book lists its
resource persons and source materials
in three and one-half pages of ac-
knowledgments. A map or two and an
index would have enhanced its value.
—Jeanne Marie Lyons, M.M.

Jeanne Marie Lyons, M.M., author of Mary-
knoll's First Lady, and a former college teacher
and administratolr, is at present engaged full
time in literary work, writing, editing, translating.
She has been in most of the countries where
Maryknoll Sisters are located, but her longtime
assignment has been at the Maryknoll Sisters
Center, Maryknoll, N.Y.
Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions.


Harold Coward, professor of religious studies at the University of Calgary, Canada, in his book Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions, deals with one of the major problems of human and religious coexistence and Christian presence in the world.

In the first five chapters he examines the ways in which Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism have reacted and are reacting to the challenge of pluralism. His synthesis of diverse positions within their historical perspective is outstanding. The author offers a global perspective that appears to be in agreement with his own preferences and conclusions: "The dialogical approach, perhaps the most promising of all, emphasizes both the universality of God and the human need for complete commitment to the particular truth of the worshipper’s religion" (p. 45).

We can agree with the author’s analysis of the presuppositions upon which the religious dialogue of the future should be grounded. The six key propositions are these: (1) that in all religions there is experience of a reality that transcends human conception; (2) that that reality is conceived in a plurality of ways both within each religion and among all religions and that the recognition of plurality is necessary both to safeguard religious freedom and to respect human limitations; (3) that the pluralistic forms of religion are instrumental in function; (4) that due to our finite limitations and our simultaneous need for commitment to a particular experience of transcendent reality, our particular experience, though limited, will function in an absolute sense as the validating criterion for our own personal religious experience; (5) that the Buddha’s teaching of critical tolerance and moral compassion always must be observed; and (6) that through self-critical dialogue we must penetrate ever further into our own particular experience of transcendent reality (and possibly into the transcendent reality of others) [pp. 105-6].

The contact and openness to other cultures have been considered both as challenges and, at various times, as dangers by Christians. According to the dominant Catholic view today, such challenges have been overcome in a positive way, at least insofar as truth is concerned. In this study certain aspects of Christianity have been somewhat forgotten and the various religions are viewed primarily through their written records. The real situation seems to me at once richer and more complicated. In this line I would like to call attention to several points of weakness in this treatment. Two that stand out are the oversimplified treatment of the Greek influence on Christianity in the relationship between the duality of matter and spirit (p. 18) and the omission of the great efforts at inculturation in post-Renaissance missionary activities in Asia, particularly the work of early Jesuits like Ricci and Di Nobili (pp. 22, 72). The unilateral application to the Orthodox churches of the view that all authority in both church and the world is referred directly to God (p. 27) was commonly held also in Western Christianity. The theocentric approaches of modern theologians like Paul Tillich, John Hick, and Wilfred Cantwell Smith (p. 45) are in line with the Orthodox churches, for which nevertheless the Christological councils, on whom the author lays the blame (p. 14), were of paramount importance.

Some of the principles upon which this work is based seem questionable to me. Here I mention three points.

1. A valid theology for all believers in the different religions is proposed (pp. 101f.). To me this would seem impossible. While admitting that Christian theology must be contextualized, also in the realm of existing religious pluralism (p. 94) the ultimate criterion of theology, its objectum quo, always remains faith and comprehensibility, which is valid only for someone who has that faith.

2. The reexamination and reinterpretation of the uniqueness of Jesus (pp. 14, 44) are proposed as a condition for an adequate theology of dialogue. In my view an authentic theology of...
dialogue can be made, at the same time confessing the uniqueness of Christ, which remains central in the experience of the Christian message.

3. The New Testament Christologies are treated disjunctively (pp. 17f.). To me it would seem, rather, that one must consider them in an integrative and complementary sense, as the mainstream of the Christian tradition has done.

—Marcello Zago, O.M.I.

The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname.


Missionaries learn to reread and to re-contemplate the Gospels through the eyes and hearts of the people with whom they live and work. The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname provides a taste of that experience for Christians who do not have the privilege of pilgrimhood through unknown lands and language. A new depth of faith is expressed in the words and pictures of the people of Nicaragua, a simple people formed by suffering and repression, and transformed by struggle toward liberation. They dare to risk resurrection by taking on the blessings of the Beatitudes in spite of the clearly stated consequences.

The paintings are a classic example of folk art, with a directness and simplicity reminiscent of Henri Rousseau. The artists are self-taught, and use a rich sense of color and a keen eye for detail to tell the Gospel story.

The words of the peasants as they reflect together on the gospel flesh out the Good News in the context of their own historical experience. Just as the poverty and oppression of his people called Jesus to challenge the structures of his society, so too, these elements in their lives call the people of Nicaragua into the arena of political/economic activity.

Rebecca: “From the moment of his birth, God chose conditions like the poorest person’s, didn’t he? I don’t think God wants great banquets or a lot of money or for business to make profits off the celebration of his birth” [p. 10].

Olivia: “The Father has given that token to the Son, the token of love. Because he wants liberation, and liberation could come only through his death. Society couldn’t be changed, the world couldn’t be changed, made different without that death. Death horrifies everyone; he felt that horror; he wanted another way out, but there was no other way out” [p. 54].

Olivia: “The news is not only about this resurrection but about ours” [p. 66].

This book is not only about the life and faith of peasant people in a foreign place. It is about the life and faith of every pilgrim person on earth struggling to understand the life of Jesus.

—Julie Miller, M.M.


This is a doctoral dissertation done under the guidance of Professor Peter Beyerhaus at Tübingen, Germany. Sumithra has confined himself to the writings of Thomas from 1954 to 1976. From this period 380 books and articles are listed; sadly, _Joyful & Triumphant_ is omitted, the writing that gives perhaps the clearest insight into Thomas's personal faith. Sumithra's conclusion is that "Thomas's theology, being an..."
attempt to reconcile a philosophy of continuous dynamic evolution, Marxist-Leninist ideology and Hindu spirituality on the one hand, with the biblical revelation on the other, tends ultimately to deprive God of his holiness, Jesus Christ of his lordship and man of his faith, primarily because Thomas neglects the unique character of the Bible” (p. 317).

Readers of Thomas’s work who find this conclusion surprising will also be surprised to know that Thomas accepts the impersonal brahman of the Vedanta (pp. 132, 301, 334) and denies the lordship of Christ (p. 337), that “his theology makes Christ marginal, almost as an appendage” (p. 322), and that “biblical categories are irrelevant to his system” (p. 323). These conclusions are reached by a method sustained throughout the book: short extracts of Thomas’s writings are quoted and then “interpreted.” A few examples will indicate the method. Thus Thomas writes: “When the Christian Church speaks of ‘original sin’ it means that this self-centricty is a fact for all men in all conditions of society, so that self-interest and self-righteousness are perennially present in man’s life.” Sumithra comments: “Thus, for Thomas, Original Sin means universally
Fire Beneath the Frost: The Struggles of the Korean People and Church.


Prepared as the basic study on Korea for 1984-85, the centennial of Protestant work in Korea, this book presents the history, religions, and socio-economic conditions of Korea, together with illustrative stories, myths, and poems, and a detailed Study Action Guide. The author, a missionary in Korea from 1952 to 1963 and now chief executive, World Division, United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, and her colleagues, another American human rights activist and three expatriate Korean exponents of "Minjung (People's) Theology," make clear in the "Purpose" (p. 84) and elsewhere their "view that the churches of Korea have been most truly the church when standing with the poor and oppressed" (p. 2). This view has determined not only the contents but also the study questions, lists of resources, and action suggestions. The issues raised are valid and need to be faced by the Korean churches and Christians everywhere. The plight of the exploited, the dangers in development, and the pervasive influences of the major powers are serious questions for Korea and the whole world.

In their concentration on this particular theological view, however, the authors have forgotten that this is supposed to be a "comprehensive look" (flyleaf) at Korea and have ignored all other considerations and interpretations of events. They tend to denigrate the vitality of the Korean churches, their enthusiasm for sharing their faith, and their involvement in a multitude of social-action programs. The criticism, much of it justified, of the military-industrial-multinational power structure ignores the important advances in health and standards of living and the reality of ideological conflict. Their view of the church is not shared by the vast majority of Korean Christians and it is extremely regrettable that the publishers have not made available a wider spectrum of materials. Nevertheless, Christians of Korea, and of America, ignore these issues at their peril.

—Horace G. Underwood

Non-Bourgeois Theology: An African Experience of Jesus.


This is a gem of a book. Once starting, there is no way to put it down. It reads like a novel, or better still a series of short stories.

Actually what we have before us is a cascade of vignettes, giving us the author's view on a wide variety of topics relevant to present-day Africa. Donders, a White Father, is a keen observer and fearless in his willingness to slay sacred cows. Rome and the Catholic hierarchy will feel the heat first, but the "fundamentalist" side—es-

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especially the Baptists—will find no solace here.

The mode of writing, with an emphasis on storytelling, is well adapted to a "non-bourgeois," peasant theo-
tological context. Donders is a philo-
osopher-theologian, but this is no ordinary
Western-style philosophy or theology.
It is impressionistic, not systematic.
Experience oriented, the book is short
on unity but long on insight.

Donders obviously has an enor-
mos appreciation for African life and
Culture. He is willing to offer some crit-
icism of modern Africa, especially con-
temporary politicians, but there is no
complaint whatsoever concerning tra-
ditional Africa. That is probably not too
bad, since this comes from a Western
pen, but as a final word it may be no
more balanced than early missionary
assessments that were mostly or en-
tirely negative. Such an approach,
however, raises questions as to whether
or not Christianity has made any con-
tribution at all.

At a few points Donders' interpreta-
tion may be disputed, as, for exam-
ple, his suggestion that in the biblical
account "God seems to have left
humanity alone" following creation,
whereas in traditional thought "God
continues, so to speak, to blow life into
human beings all the time" (p. 11). One
could even make a case for turning that
around. Moreover, he is not correct
when he indicates that "Mbiti did
not ask whether the idea of time among
the Akamba was different from the New
Testament idea of time" (p. 55). Mbiti
most certainly did! In fact Mbiti's po-
sition is that New Testament concep-
tions of time are different from both
Akamba and missionary ideas.

In short Non-Bourgeois Theology
has weaknesses, but its strengths predom-
ninate. Catholics have the most to gain
from it, but there is challenge enough
to enrich everyone.

—Malcolm J. McVeigh

Faces of Jesus: Latin American
Christologies.

Edited by José Míguez Bonino. Maryknoll,
erback $10.95.

Some of the most representative Latin
American theologians, identified with the
"theology of liberation," both
Catholic and Protestant, have contrib-
uted to this symposium: José Míguez
Bonino and J. Severino Croatto from
Argentina, Leonardo Boff and Hugo
Assmann from Brazil, Saul Trinidad
and Juan Stum from Costa Rica, Se-
gundo Galilea from Chile, Raúl Vidas-
le from Mexico, and Ignacio Ellacuria
from El Salvador.

Part One describes the Catholic
images of "popular culture" (the Dis-
tant, the Dead, the Powerless, and the
Disincarnate Christs), and the Christ of
Protestant Preaching (including the
personal, forgiving, and transforming
Christ, and the "defective models" of
the Santa Claus, the Beggar, the Pass-
port, the Asocial, the Cosmic, the Cal-
vary, the Guerrilla, and the Middle
Class Christs). Boff contributes a re-
vealing review of recent liberal Catho-
lic Christology in Brazil.

Part Two concentrates on the
Christology of the Conquest and Col-
onization (a Christology of resigna-
tion, subjugation, domination, and
marginalization) related to the first
process of the evangelization of Latin
America. Here we find Christ of two
faces: the Heavenly Monarch and the
Abject Lord.

Part Three brings into focus a cru-
cial Christological theme in Latin
America, "Christ and Politics," explor-
ing the gospel evidence on the histori-
cal Jesus, his prophetic mission, and

Mortimer Arias, former bishop of the Evangelical
Methodist Church in Bolivia, is Visiting Profes-
sor of Mission and Evangelism at the School of
Theology, Claremont, California.
his liberating ministry. The three authors, Ellacuria, Galilea, and Croatto, try to avoid both the "naive," "apolitical" image of Christ and the easy identification of a "revolutionary Christ," while underscoring the relevance of the Christ of the gospel to the situation of poverty and oppression in Latin America.

Finally, in Part Four, we have a more critical approach, pointing to the sociopolitical options behind traditional Christologies and to the importance of a Christology of liberation for the present task of evangelization in Latin America.

After reading this sample it cannot be said anymore that there is a "Christological vacuum" in Latin American theology. But, as the editor reminds us in his introductory chapter, this is just a beginning and it represents an invitation to an unfinished task. The direction is: "First, the Christ of the gospels must be rescued . . . by means of a critical and topical rereading"; and "Secondly, this cannot be a mere exercise in intellectuality and erudition . . . . it is active commitment itself, the historical praxis of the oppressed . . . ." (p. 5).

This is a volume to work through. Unfortunately, it does not incorporate some of the more recent and systematic contributions from Latin American Christologies, like Jon Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads (Orbis Books, 1978; published in Spanish in 1976), Hugo Echeagaray's The Practice of Jesus (Orbis Books, 1984; published in Spanish in 1980), and Juan Luis Segundo's Jesús de Nazaret y el hombre común (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1982).

—Mortimer Arias

African Theologies Now: A Profile.


African Theologies Now is a very small book about a very big theme. It is intended for "the ordinary reader who is not a theologian." As far as that intention goes, the book is a useful introduction to contemporary discussion of African theology.

Father Justin Ukpong is lecturer at the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. His book confines itself to three areas, which he names as "African inculturation theology," "South African black theology," and "African liberation theology." He sees the main issues as being, respectively, "culture, colour and poverty" (p. 5), and gives more weight to the first than to the other two. Obviously there are other concerns of African theology, which cannot be allocated to these categories.

The book is written in a clear and simple style, which should make it valuable as an introduction to the subject. Father Ukpong is familiar with writings of African theologians who have contributed something to the three concerns. However, in the more biblical and historical works, he says little or nothing. While he cites many of the works by African theologians, it would have been of further value if the book had included a short select bibliography, to help the reader who might wish to read further.

—John Mbiti

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