



COUNCIL FOR  
**RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY**

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George F. McLean, Sec.-Treas.

October 5, 1992

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TO: Seminar Participants

FROM: George F. McLean, Secretary

SUBJECT:

Seminar, "Evangelization and Culture"  
Thursday, Oct. 8, 3:10-5:00 P.M.  
St. Bonaventure Hall, 300, Monroe and Michigan  
Avenues, N.E.

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The fourth session of the seminar will be held on  
Thursday, Oct. 8 as specified above.

In order to introduce the issue of faith in rela-  
tion to evangelization and culture papers will be pre-  
sented by:

William May, John Paul Institute: "Culture, Evan-  
gelization, and Moral Theology" (this in-  
cludes a summary of the attached document,  
"Faith and Inculturation" by the Internation-  
al Theological Commission, of which Dr. May  
is a member); and

Paul Peachey, Sociology Dept., CUA, on culture,  
faith and evangelization in the Free Church  
tradition (schema to follow).

Your ideas will be greatly appreciated.

CULTURE, EVANGELIZATION, AND MORAL THEOLOGY

William E. May

I will begin by summarizing a document published by the International Theological Commission in 1989, "Faith and Inculturation." I will then offer some comments from the perspective of moral theology. The document was prepared by a subcommission of the ITC under the leadership of Gilles Langevin, S.J. Langevin drafted a synthesis of position papers, as yet unpublished, by members of the subcommission.<sup>1</sup> The first draft of the document was discussed and debated by the entire ITC at its plenary meeting in December, 1987.<sup>2</sup> In June, 1988 a revised draft was prepared by Langevin in light of written modi submitted by the entire Commission and distributed to the members. This draft was in turn revised by Langevin, again in the light of written modi submitted by members of the Commission. This draft was broadly approved in its specifics (specifica forma) by the entire Commission at its plenary session in October, 1988, and was published with the approval (placet) of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, President of the Commission.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In addition to Langevin, a French Canadian, the other members of the subcommission were: Philippe Delhaye, Belgium; Andre-Jean Leonard, Belgium; Peter Miyakawa, Japan; James Okoye, Nigeria; Jose Miguel Langlois, Chile; Giuseppe Colombo, Italy; Hans Urs von Balthasar, Switzerland; Francis Moloney, Australia; Jean Corbon, Lebanon; Georges Cottier, O.P., Switzerland; Felix Wilfred, India; and Barthelemy Adoukonou, Benin.

<sup>2</sup>Other members of the full Commission taking part in the debates were: Jan Ambau, The Netherlands; Jean-Louis Bruges, O.P., France; Carlo Caffarra, Italy; Wilhelm Ernst, East Germany; John Finnis, England; Joachim Gnilka, West Germany; Walter Kasper, West Germany; Bonaventure Kloppenburg, O.F.M., Brazil; Michael Ledwith, Ireland; William E. May, USA; Jorge Medina Estevez, Chile; Stanislaw Nagy, Poland; Henrique Noronha Galvao, Portugal; Franc Perko, Yugoslavia; Carl Peter, USA; Candido Pozo, Spain; and Christophe von Schoenborn, O.P., Austria-Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup>The document, prepared in French, was published in various languages: E.g., it was published in English as "Faith and Inculturation" in the Irish Theological Quarterly 55 (1989) 142-161; in Italian as "Fede e Inculturazione" in La Civiltà Cattolica 3328 (1/21/1989) 158-177; in Dutch as "Geloof en inculturatie" in Internationaal Katholiek Tijdschrift Communio 13.5 (1989) 368-389; in Latin as "Fides et Inculturatio" in Gregorianum 70.4 (1989) 625-646.

## 1. An Overview of "Faith and Inculturation"

In my overview I will focus attention on the brief but important introduction and on the section dealing with "nature, culture, and grace." The document contains two other sections, on inculturation in the history of salvation and present problems of inculturation; however, I will pay somewhat less attention to them since I think that the weightier matters are taken up in the introduction and in the discussion of nature, culture, and grace.

The introduction briefly reviews material from Vatican Council II, various Synods of Bishops, and Pope John Paul II on the topic of faith and inculturation. The Council, in its Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes, had described culture as "an effort towards a deeper humanity and towards a better plan for the universe" and had noted some of the more urgent duties of Christians regarding culture: "defense of the right of all to a culture, promotion of an integral culture, and harmonization of the links between culture and Christianity."<sup>4</sup> The Synod of Bishops of 1985 described inculturation as "the inner transformation of authentic cultural values by their integration into Christianity and the rooting of Christianity in the various human cultures."<sup>5</sup> According to the document two essential themes can be found in the thought of Pope John Paul II regarding the inculturation of the Christian faith. The first is that God's revelation transcends the various cultures in which it finds expression: "The Word of God cannot...be identified or linked in an exclusive manner with the elements of culture which bear it. The Gospel quite often demands a conversion of attitudes and an amendment of customs where it establishes itself: cultures must also be purified and restored in Christ."<sup>6</sup> The second is the Pope's urgent appeal for the evangelization of cultures, an evangelization based on an "anthropological conception firmly rooted in Christian thought since the Fathers of the Church. Since culture, when pure, reveals and strengthens the nature of man, the Christian impregnation presupposes the surpassing of all historicism and relativism in the conception of what is human. The evangelization of cultures should therefore be inspired by the love of man in himself and for himself, especially in those aspects of his being and of his culture which are being attacked or under

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<sup>4</sup>"Faith and Inculturation," Int., n. 3, with references to Gaudium et spes, nn. 53-62.

<sup>5</sup>Extraordinary Synod for the 20th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, final report voted by the Fathers, 7 December 1985, in Documentation Catholique 83 (January 5, 1986), p. 41. Cited by "Faith and Inculturation," Int., n. 3.

<sup>6</sup>"Faith and Inculturation," Int., n. 6.

threat."<sup>7</sup>

In view of this teaching by Vatican Council II, the Synods of Bishops, and Pope John Paul II the authors of the document are concerned, first of all, to set forth a Christian anthropology "which situates, one in relation to the other, nature, culture, and grace." They will then examine how inculturation was at work in the history of salvation--in ancient Israel, in the life and work of Jesus, and in the early Church--and then address contemporary problems of inculturation raised by the encounter of Christian faith with popular piety, non-Christian religions, the cultural traditions of "young" churches, and various characteristics of the modern world.<sup>8</sup>

The section of the document dealing with nature, culture, and grace is intended to set forth a Christian anthropology and to show how nature, culture, and grace are interrelated. According to the document, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has a very precise understanding of nature. It is "what constitutes [a being] as such, with the dynamism of its tendencies towards its proper ends." Moreover, "it is from God that natures possess what they are, as well as their proposed ends. They are from that moment impregnated with a significance in which man, as the image of God, is capable of discerning the 'creative intention of God.'"<sup>9</sup> From this the document concludes that "the fundamental inclinations of human nature, expressed by natural law, appear therefore as an expression of the will of the Creator. This natural law declares the specific requirements of human nature, requirements which are significant of the design of God for his rational and free creature."<sup>10</sup>

But human persons are not only beings of a certain kind or nature, they are also beings gifted with free choice who exist in time, in history. It is thus necessary

to observe what man, endowed with a fallible liberty, and often subjected to his passions, has made of his humanity. This heritage transmitted to new generations includes simultaneously immense treasures of wisdom, art, and generosity, and a considerable share of deviations and perversions. Attention, therefore, as a whole, revolves around human nature and the human condition, an expression which integrates existential elements, of which certain ones--sin

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Int., n. 7, with reference to John Paul II, Discourse to the members of the Pontifical Council for Culture (January 18, 1983), in Documentation Catholique 80 (February 6, 1983) 147.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Int., n. 8.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., I.1. The internal citation is from Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter Humanae vitae, n. 8.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., I, 2.

and grace--affect the history of salvation.<sup>11</sup>

It is at this point that the document sets forth its understanding of culture. It uses the term primarily in a "positive sense--as a synonym of development," but it warns us not to forget that "cultures can perpetuate and favor the choice of pride and selfishness."<sup>12</sup> Seeking to describe culture more precisely, the document declares that "culture consists in the extension of the requirements of human nature, as the accomplishment of its ends....The word culture in its general sense indicates all those factors by which man refines and unfolds his manifold spiritual and bodily qualities."<sup>13</sup> In short, culture provides the milieu in which human persons develop themselves, and human persons are themselves the "primary constituents" of culture, in the sense that culture is the product brought about by human persons thinking and acting in solidarity with one another in the communities in which they live."<sup>14</sup>

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Moreover, culture, understood as the concrete and particular culture of a specific people, "is open to the higher values common to all," i.e., common to all human persons of whatever particular culture. Although there is a plurality of cultures, cultural pluralism cannot "be interpreted as the juxtaposition of a closed universe, but as a participation in a unison of realities all directed towards the universal values of humanity."<sup>15</sup> Since man is by reason of his nature a religious being, it follows that "religion is an integral constituent of culture, in which it takes root and blossoms."<sup>16</sup> In addition, the "transcendent movement of man is search of God" is at the root of all great religions, and the Christian faith "engrafts itself" on this movement of the human person. Thus, the Christian faith is "free adherence to the proposition of the gratuitous love of God that has been revealed to us, which has given us his only Son to free us from sin and has poured out his Spirit in our hearts."<sup>17</sup>

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The document asserts that the Christian faith "transcends the entire natural and cultural order" and that, therefore, this faith is (a) "compatible with all cultures insofar as they conform to



<sup>11</sup>Ibid., I,3.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., I,4, with a reference to Vatican Council II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church Gaudium et spes, n. 53.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. ibid., I,5,6.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., I,7.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., I,8.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., I,9.

What is? Who established it?

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right reason and goodwill" and (b) "is a dynamizing factor of culture." According to the authors of this document the "principle" explaining everything concerning the relationships between faith and culture is the following: "grace respects nature, healing in it the wounds of sin, comforting and elevating it. Elevation to the divine life is the specific finality of grace, but it cannot realize this unless nature is healed and unless elevation to the supernatural order brings nature, in the way proper to itself, to the plenitude of perfection."<sup>18</sup>

Inculturation is defined by the document as the "Church's efforts to make the message of Christ penetrate a given socio-cultural milieu, calling on the latter to grow according to all its particular values, as long as these are compatible with the Gospel....[It is] 'the incarnation of the Gospel in the hereditary cultures, and at the same time, the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church.'<sup>19</sup>

The second major part of the document, entitled "Inculturation in the History of Salvation," describes how, in the history of the covenant between God and humankind, faith in the God who saves was "inculturated" first in the culture of the Hebrew people and in the cultures of those peoples who were "grafted onto Israel," and then in the diverse cultures whose peoples came to believe in the "good news" revealed in Jesus Christ. The principal theme is this: by accepting in faith the God who saves and who has, in and through Jesus Christ, become one with the human beings he has made precisely so that he could share with them his own divine life, people of diverse cultures have been able to shape their lives and cultures in a new way. Their own native cultures have been "transformed" by faith in this saving God. Some elements within their cultures testify to resistance to God's revealed Word, whereas others express its acceptance. Thus "culture is eschatologically situated: it tends towards its completion in Christ, but it cannot be saved except by associating itself with the repudiation of evil."<sup>20</sup>

The third part of the document, called "Present Problems of Inculturation," is concerned with issues raised concerning the inculturation of the Christian faith by forms of popular piety, non-Christian religions, newly emerging young "churches," and "modernity." The guiding theme of the entire part is the following: the Christian faith, as proclaimed by the Catholic Church, (a) fully respects everything authentically true and good in the forms

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., I, 10.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., I,11. The internal citation is Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Slavorum Apostoli for the eleventh centenary of the work of evangelization of Saints Cyril and Methodius, June 2, 1985, n. 21.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., II,28.

of popular piety, the non-Christian religions, and the modernity which have shaped and are shaping the cultures in which the Gospel is preached; (b) is inwardly capable of integrating everything that is true and good into itself, and (c) radically questions and challenges those features of the cultures in which it is proclaimed that fail to respect fully the dignity of human persons as beings created in the image of God, called to be his children and to live lives of holiness:

However great the respect should be for what is true and holy in the cultural heritage of a people, this attitude does not demand that one should lend an absolute character to this cultural heritage. No one can forget that, from the beginning, the Gospel was a 'scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the pagans' (1 Cor. 1:23). Inculturation...cannot [become] syncretism."<sup>21</sup>

2. Reflections from the Perspective of Moral Theology

Our moral life, I believe, can be described as an endeavor, cognitively, to come to know who we are and what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be, and, conatively, to do what we ourselves come to know we are to do if we are to be fully the beings we are meant to be.

When we come into existence we do not know who we are or what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be. But we are equipped to find out, and in finding out we do come to know who we are--what kind of beings we are, what our nature is. For we human beings are animals radically different in kind from other animals.<sup>22</sup> We are endowed with the capacity (a) to come to know the truth and to distinguish between true and false propositions and (b) the capacity to determine our own lives by our own free choices. For human beings are moral beings. Human actions are utterly unlike physical events that come and go like the falling of leaves. Certainly, in human actions there is a physical component that is empirically observable. But at the heart of the actions we do is a free, self-determining choice whereby we give to ourselves our identity as moral beings. And choices last, enduring in those who make them as dispositions to make further choices of the same kind until contradictory choices are made. For instance, if I choose to commit adultery I make myself to be an adulterer, and I remain an adulterer, disposed to engage in adulterous behavior in the future, until I repent and, through a contradictory kind of choice, make myself to be a repentant adulterer, resolved not to commit adultery in the future. In short, we can say that our character is our integral existential identity as shaped by our free choices,

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., III, 14.

<sup>22</sup>On this matter it is worth reading Mortimer Adler, The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes (Cleveland/New York: Meridian Books, 1968).

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good and bad.<sup>23</sup> We might say that our actions are like "words" that we speak and through which we give to ourselves our moral character.

While we are free to do to what we choose, we are not free to make what we choose to do (and to be in and through our choices) right or wrong, good or bad. We can choose well or badly, and we know that we can. Thus it must be possible for us to discover, through our intelligence, which alternatives of choice are morally good and which are morally bad prior to choice. In other words, there are normative criteria for making choices that human persons can come to know.

# According to Catholic faith "the highest norm of human life is the divine law--eternal, objective, and universal--whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community in a plan conceived in wisdom and love." Moreover, "man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine providence, he can come to perceive ever increasingly the unchanging truth."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it is precisely through the mediation of conscience that men can come to participate in God's loving plan for human existence, for

deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. The voice of this law, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment, do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it he will be judged.<sup>25</sup>

Fidelity to conscience means "a search the truth" and for "true solutions" to the issues and problems that confront human beings. While conscience can "err through invincible ignorance without losing its dignity" (so long as there is sufficient "care for the search for the true and the good"), "to the extent that a correct conscience holds sway, persons and groups turn away from blind choice and seek to conform to the objective norms of morality."<sup>26</sup>

The participation by human persons in God's loving plan for human

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<sup>23</sup>On this see Germain Grisez, The Way of the Lord Jesus, Vol. 1, Christian Moral Principles (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), ch. 1. See also my An Introduction to Moral Theology (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1992), pp. 22-26.

<sup>24</sup>Vatican Council II, Declaration on Religious Liberty Dignitatis humanae, n. 3.

<sup>25</sup>Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes, n. 16.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., n. 16.



existence, a participation mediated through conscience, is precisely what is meant by "natural law."<sup>27</sup> Here I cannot enter into a discussion of natural law. I think that it can best be described as an ordered set of true propositions about what-is-to-be-done in and through human choices, beginning with the first and common principles of morality and proceeding to more and more specific norms or criteria which enable us to distinguish between morally good and morally bad alternatives of conscience.<sup>28</sup>

My interest now will center on culture and the Christian faith rooted in divine revelation and their impact on our search for the truth meant to guide our choices so that we will indeed choose in such a way that we will become fully the beings we are meant to be.

In our search for the truth we can be both crippled or disabled and helped or enabled, categories that can obviously include what theology calls sin and grace. Moreover, in our struggle to find out who we are and what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be and to do what we come to know we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be, we do so in company with others--with our families, our neighbors, our fellow citizens. In short, we enter a world mediated by meaning. Meanings are mediated to us by the persons with whom we live, by the cultures in which we live. Indeed, those cultures have been shaped by the free choices and actions of the persons living in them. For the actions of individuals, if accepted and endorsed by the societies in which they live, soon become embedded in the laws and mores--yes, the culture, of those communities, and people growing up in those communities are helped or harmed by the meanings mediated to them through their cultures--familial, ethnic, religious, and national. Some of those meanings are true--and these true meanings mediated to us by our culture(s) will help us in our cognitive endeavor to know who we are and what we are to do. But in every culture there are some false or distorted meanings (e.g., in current American culture the meanings mediated by popular culture to young people about sex and sexual activity are, I submit, quite erroneous). Yet it is possible for the human persons of any culture to move from meanings to the truth. For meaningful questions can be raised and the truth can be discovered.

Yes, in our struggle to come to know who we are and what we are to do and to do what we come to know we are to do if we are to be fully the beings we are meant to be we can be helped or crippled by the cultures in which we live. But God is our best and wisest

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, 1-2, 93, 2.

<sup>28</sup>Key texts in St. Thomas indicating the structure of natural law as such as ordered set of true practical propositions are the following: Summa theologiae, 1-2, 100, 1, 3, 11. On this see my An Introduction to Moral Theology, pp. 38-51.

friend.<sup>29</sup>He wills to help the people he has made. This is precisely why he has sent his only Son to redeem us, to be our Emmanuel--God with us--to share our human nature so that we in turn can share his divine nature. We know that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). He is with us today in his Church, and he pours his grace into our hearts, renewing them and renewing us so that we can judge rightly and choose well. The faith mediated to us through the Church, the lumen gentium, is indeed an enabling factor in our struggle to come to know who we are and what we are to do if we are to be the beings we are meant to be. The moral teachings of this Church are not arbitrary decrees intended to restrict our liberty but rather truths meant to help us choose well. They remind us of who we are: beings made in the image and likeness of God and called to perfection, to holiness. We are to walk worthy of the vocation to which we have been called and to love, even as we have been and are loved by God in Christ.

Christian faith, in other words, creates its own culture--a Christian culture--and this Christian culture can graft onto itself whatever is true and good in every human culture and in turn can lead to their transformation. But it can do so only if it becomes itself integrated into the cultures it is meant to transform. That, I believe, is what is meant by "evangelization."

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<sup>29</sup>One of my favorite texts in St. Thomas is from Summa theologiae, 1-2, 108, 4, sed contra, where he says: "Christus maxime est amicus et sapiens."

W. MAY

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International Theological Commission

Faith and Inculturation\*

Introduction

1. The International Theological Commission has had, on several occasions, the opportunity to reflect on the relationship between faith and culture.<sup>1</sup> In 1984 it spoke directly on the inculturation of faith in its study on the mystery of the Church which it produced with a view to the Extraordinary Synod of 1985.<sup>2</sup> For its part, the Pontifical Biblical Commission held its 1979 plenary session on the theme of the inculturation of faith in the light of Scripture.<sup>3</sup>

2. Today the International Theological Commission intends to continue this reflection in a more profound and systematic manner on account of the importance assumed by this theme of the inculturation of faith throughout the Christian world and on account of the insistence with which the Church's Magisterium has considered this theme since the Second Vatican Council.

3. The basis is furnished by the conciliar documents and by the Synod papers which have contained them. Thus, in the Constitution "Gaudium et Spes", the Council has shown what lessons and what tasks the Church has drawn from its first experiences of inculturation in the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>4</sup> It then devoted an entire chapter of this document to the promotion of culture (*culturae progressu rite promovendo*).<sup>5</sup> After describing culture as an effort towards a deeper humanity and towards a better plan for the universe, the Council considered at length the relationships between culture and the message of salvation. It then enunciated some of the more urgent duties of Christians regarding culture: defence of the right of all to a culture, promotion of an integral culture, and harmonisation of the links between culture and Christianity. The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity and the Declaration on non-Christian religions develop some of these positions. Two ordinary Synods expressly treated of the evangelisation of cultures, that of 1974, on the theme of evangelisation,<sup>6</sup> and that of 1976, on catechetical formation.<sup>7</sup> The 1985 Synod, which celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, spoke of inculturation as "the inner transformation of authentic cultural values by their integration into Christianity and the rooting of Christianity in the various human cultures".<sup>8</sup>

\* A document prepared by the I.T.C. during its plenary session of December 1987, broadly approved in *forma specifica* during its plenary session of October 1988, and published with the *placet* of His Eminence, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, President of the Commission.

4. Pope John Paul II himself has taken to heart in a special manner the evangelisation of cultures: in his view, the dialogue of the Church and of cultures assumes a vital importance for the future of the Church and of the world. To assist him in this great work, the Holy Father has created a specialised curial body: the Pontifical Council for Culture.<sup>9</sup> It is moreover with this Dicastery that the International Theological Commission is happily in a position to reflect today on the inculturation of faith.

5. Relying on the conviction that “the Incarnation of the Word was also a cultural Incarnation” the Pope affirms that cultures, analogically comparable to the humanity of Christ in whatever good they possess, may play a positive role of mediation in the expression and extension of the Christian faith.<sup>10</sup>

6. Two essential themes are bound up with this view. Firstly that of the transcendence of Revelation in relation to the cultures in which it finds expression. The Word of God cannot, in effect, be identified or linked in an exclusive manner with the elements of culture which bear it. The Gospel quite often demands a conversion of attitudes and an amendment of customs where it establishes itself: cultures must also be purified and restored in Christ.

7. The second major theme of the teaching of John Paul II revolves around the urgency of the evangelisation of cultures. This task presupposes that one would understand and penetrate with a critical sympathy particular cultural identities and that, in the interest of a universality corresponding to the truly human reality of all cultures, one would favour exchanges between them. The Holy Father thus bases the evangelisation of cultures on an anthropological conception firmly rooted in Christian thought since the Fathers of the Church. Since *culture*, when pure, reveals and strengthens the *nature* of man, the Christian impregnation presupposes the surpassing of all historicism and relativism in the conception of what is human. The evangelisation of cultures should therefore be inspired by the love of man in himself and for himself, especially in those aspects of his being and of his culture which are being attacked or are under threat.<sup>11</sup>

8. *In the light of this teaching, and also of the reflection which the theme of the inculturation of faith as aroused in the Church, we firstly propose a Christian anthropology which situates, one in relation to the other, nature, culture and grace. We shall then see the process of inculturation at work in the history of salvation: in ancient Israel, in the life and work of Jesus, and in the early Church. A final section will treat of problems at present posed to faith by its encounter with popular piety, with non-Christian religions, with the cultural traditions in the young Churches and finally with the various characteristics of modernity.*

## I. Nature, Culture and Grace

1. Anthropologists readily return to describe or define culture in terms of the distinction, sometimes even opposition, between nature and culture. The significance of this word *nature* varies moreover with the different conceptions of the natural sciences, of philosophy and of theology. The Magisterium understands this word in a very specific sense: the nature of a being is what constitutes it as such, with the dynamism of its tendencies towards its proper ends. It is from God that natures possess what they are, as well as their proper ends. They are from that moment, impregnated with a significance in which man, as *the image of God*, is capable of discerning the “creative intention of God”.<sup>12</sup>

2. The fundamental inclinations of human nature, expressed by natural law, appear therefore as an expression of the will of the Creator. This natural law declares the specific requirements of *human* nature, requirements which are significant of the design of God for his rational and free creature. Thus all that misunderstanding is avoided which, perceiving nature in a univocal sense, would reduce man to material nature.

3. It is appropriate, at the same time, to consider human nature according to its unfolding in historical time: that is to observe what man, endowed with a fallible liberty, and often subjected to his passions, has made of his humanity. This heritage transmitted to new generations includes simultaneously immense treasures of wisdom, art, and generosity, and a considerable share of deviations and perversions. Attention therefore, as a whole, revolves around human nature and the human condition, an expression which integrates existential elements, of which certain ones – sin and grace – affect the history of salvation. If therefore we use the word “culture” in a primary positive sense – as a synonym of development, for example – as have Vatican II and the recent popes, we will not forget that cultures can perpetuate and favour the choice of pride and selfishness.

4. Culture consists in the extension of the requirements of human nature, as the accomplishment of its ends, as is especially taught in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: It is a fact bearing on the very person of man that he can come to an authentic and full humanity only through culture, that is, through the cultivation of natural goods and values. The word *culture* in its general sense indicates all those factors by which man refines and unfolds his manifold spiritual and bodily qualities.<sup>13</sup> Thus the domain of culture is multiple: by knowledge and work, man applies himself to the taming of the universe; he humanises social life through the progress of customs and institutions, he expresses, communicates and in short conserves in his works, through the course of time, the great spiritual experiences and aspirations of man in order that they may be of advantage to the progress of many, even of all mankind.

5. The primary constituent of culture is the human person, considered in all aspects of his being. Man betters *himself* – this is the first end of all culture – but he does so thanks to the *works* of culture and thanks to a cultural memory. Culture also still designates the *milieu* in which and on account of which persons may grow.

6. The human person is a community being which blossoms in giving and in receiving. It is thus in solidarity with others and across living social relationships that the person progresses. Also those realities of nation, people, society with their cultural patrimony, constitute for the development of persons “a specific historical environment, from which they draw the values which permit them to promote human and civic culture”.<sup>14</sup>

7. Culture, which is always a concrete and particular culture, is open to the higher values common to all. Thus the originality of a culture does not signify withdrawal into itself but a contribution to the richness which is the good of all. Cultural pluralism cannot therefore be interpreted as the juxtaposition of a closed universe, but as participation in a unison of realities all directed towards the universal values of humanity. The phenomena of the reciprocal penetration of cultures, frequent in history, illustrates this fundamental openness of particular cultures to the values common to all, and through this their openness one to another.

8. Man is a naturally religious being. The turning towards the Absolute is inscribed in his deepest being. In a general sense, religion is an *integral constituent* of culture, in which it takes root and blossoms. Moreover, all the great cultures include, as the keystone of the edifice they constitute, the religious dimension, the inspiration of the great achievements which have marked the ancient history of civilisations.

9. At the root of the great religions is the transcendent movement of man in search of God. Purified of its deviations and disagreeable aspects, this movement should be the object of sincere respect. It is on this that the Christian faith comes to engraft itself. What distinguishes the Christian faith is that it is free adherence to the proposition of the gratuitous love of God which has been revealed to us, which has given us his only Son to free us from sin and has poured out his Spirit in our hearts. The radical reality of Christianity lies in the gift that God makes of himself to humanity, facing all the aspirations, requests, conquests and achievements of nature.

10. Therefore, because it transcends the entire natural and cultural order, the Christian faith is, on the one hand, compatible, with all cultures in so far as they conform to right reason and goodwill, and, on the other hand, to an eminent degree, is a dynamising factor of culture. A single principle explains the totality of relationships between faith and culture: grace respects nature, healing in it the wounds of sin, comforting and elevating it. Elevation to the divine life is the specific finality of grace, but it cannot realise this unless nature is healed and unless eleva-

tion to the supernatural order brings nature, in the way proper to itself, to the plenitude of perfection.

11. The process of inculturation may be defined as the Church's efforts to make the message of Christ penetrate a given socio-cultural *milieu*, calling on the latter to grow according to all its particular values, as long as these are compatible with the Gospel. The term “inculturation” includes the notion of growth, of the mutual enrichment of persons and groups, rendered possible by the encounter of the Gospel with a social milieu. “Inculturation is the incarnation of the Gospel in the hereditary cultures, and at the same time, the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church”.<sup>15</sup>

### **Inculturation in the History of Salvation**

1. The relationships between nature, culture and grace shall be considered in the concrete history of the Covenant between God and humanity, that began with a particular people, culminated in a son of this people, who is also Son of God, and extending from him to all the nations of the earth, this history demonstrates the “marvellous ‘graciousness’ of divine wisdom”.<sup>16</sup>

### **Israel, The People of the Covenant**

2. Israel understood itself as formed in an immediate manner by God. And the Old Testament, the Bible of ancient Israel, is the permanent witness of the revelation of the living God to the members of a chosen people. In its written form, this revelation also bears the traces of the cultural and social experiences of the era during which this people and neighbouring civilisations encountered each other. Ancient Israel was born in a world which had already given birth to great cultures and progressed together with them.

3. The most ancient institutions of Israel (for example, circumcision, the spring sacrifice, the Sabbath rest) are not particular to it. It borrowed them from the neighbouring peoples. A large part of the culture of Israel has a similar origin. However, the people of the Bible subjected these borrowings to profound changes when it incorporated them into its faith and religious practice. It passed them through the screen of a faith in the personal God of Abraham (the free creator and wise planner of the universe, in whom the source of sin and death is not to be found). It is the encounter with this God, experienced in the Covenant, which permits the understanding of man and woman as personal beings and in consequence the rejection of the inhuman practices inherent in the other cultures.

4. The Biblical authors used, while simultaneously transforming, the cultures of their time to recount, throughout the history of a people the salvific action which God would cause to culminate in Jesus Christ and

to unite the people of all cultures, called to form one body of which Jesus is the head.

5. In the Old Testament, cultures, fused and transformed, are placed at the service of the revelation of the God of Abraham, lived in the Covenant and recorded in Scripture. It was a unique preparation, on the social and religious plane, for the coming of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, revealed at a deeper level and manifested in the fullness of the Spirit, invites all cultures to allow themselves to be changed by the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

6. If the pagans were "grafted onto Israel",<sup>2</sup> it must be emphasised that the original plan of God concerns all creation.<sup>18</sup> In fact, a covenant is made through Noah with all the peoples of the earth who are prepared to live in accordance with justice.<sup>19</sup> This covenant is anterior to those made with Abraham and Moses. Beginning from Abraham, Israel is called to communicate the blessings it has received to all the families of the earth.<sup>20</sup>

7. Let us also draw attention to the fact that the various aspects of the culture of Israel do not all maintain the same relationship with divine revelation. Some testify to the resistance to God's Word while others express its acceptance. Among the latter, one must distinguish between the provisional (ritual and judicial prescriptions) and the permanent, universal in scope. Certain elements (in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms),<sup>21</sup> derive their signification from being the prehistory of Christ.

## **Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour of the World**

### *1. The Transcendence of Jesus Christ in relation to all Culture*

8. One conviction dominates the preaching of Jesus: in Jesus, in his word and in his person, God perfects the gifts he has already made to Israel and to all nations, by transcending them.<sup>22</sup> Jesus is the sovereign light and true wisdom for all nations and all cultures.<sup>23</sup> He shows, in his own activity, that the God of Abraham, already recognised by Israel as creator and Lord<sup>24</sup> is preparing himself to reign over all those who believe in the Gospel, and much more, through Jesus, God already reigns.<sup>25</sup>

9. The teaching of Jesus, notably in the parables, is not afraid to correct, or when the need arises, to challenge a good number of the ideas, which history, religion as practised, and culture, had inspired among his contemporaries concerning the nature and action of God.<sup>11</sup>

10. The completely filial intimacy of Jesus with God and the loving obedience, which caused him to offer his life and death to his Father,<sup>21</sup> show that in him the original plan of God for creation, tainted by sin,

has been restored.<sup>13</sup> We are faced with a new creation, a new Adam.<sup>14</sup> Also the relationship with God are profoundly changed in many respects.<sup>15</sup> The newness is such that the curse which strikes the crucified Messiah becomes a blessing for all peoples<sup>16</sup> and faith in Jesus as saviour replaces the regime of the Law.<sup>17</sup>

11. The death and resurrection of Jesus, on account of which the Spirit was poured out into our hearts, have shown the shortcomings of completely human wisdoms and moralities and even of the law (nonetheless given by God to Moses), all of which were institutions capable of giving knowledge of the good, but not the force to accomplish it; knowledge of sin, but not the power to extract oneself from it.<sup>12</sup>

## *II. The presence of Christ to Culture and Cultures*

### *A. The uniqueness of Christ, Universal Lord and Saviour*

12. Since it was fully and historically realised, the incarnation of the Son of God was a cultural incarnation: "Christ himself in virtue of his Incarnation, bound himself to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom he dwelt."<sup>34</sup>

13. The Son of God was happy to be a Jew of Nazareth in Galilee, speaking Aramaic, subject to pious parents of Israel, accompanying them to the Temple of Jerusalem where they found him "sitting among the doctors, listening to them and asking them questions".<sup>35</sup> Jesus grew up in a milieu of customs and institutions of first century Palestine, initiating himself into the trades of his time, observing the behaviour of the sinners, peasants and business people of his milieu. The scenes and countrysides on which the imagination of the future rabbi was nourished are of a very definite country and time.

14. Nourished by the piety of Israel, formed by the teaching of the Law and the prophets, to which a completely singular experience of God as Father added an unheard-of profundity, Jesus may be situated in a highly specific spiritual tradition, that of Jewish prophecy. Like the prophets of old, he is the mouthpiece of God and calls to conversion. The manner is also quite typical: the vocabulary, literary types, the manner of address, also recall the tradition of Elijah and Elisha: the biblical parallelism, the proverbs, paradoxes, admonitions, blessings, right up to the symbolic actions.

15. Jesus is so bound up with the life of Israel that the people and the religious tradition in which he shares, acquires in virtue of this liaison a unique place in the history of salvation; this chosen people and the religious tradition which they have left have a permanent significance for humanity.

16. There is nothing improvised about the Incarnation. The Word of God enters into a history which prepares him, announces him and

prefigures him. One could say that the Christ takes flesh in advance with the people God has expressly formed with a view to the gift he would make of his Son. All the words uttered by the prophets are a prelude to the subsistent Word which is the Son of God.

17. Also, the history of the covenant concluded with Abraham and through Moses, with the people of Israel, as also the books which recount and clarify this history, all together hold for the faithful of Jesus, the role of an indispensable and irreplaceable pedagogy. Moreover the election of this people from which Jesus emerges has never been revoked. "My brethren, my kinsmen by race", writes St Paul, "they are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises, to them belong the Patriarchs and of their race, according to the flesh is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen."<sup>36</sup> The cultivated olive has not lost its privileges to the wild olive, which has been grafted onto it.

#### B. The Catholicity of the Unique Event

18. However historically distinctive the condition of the Word made flesh may be – and consequently of the culture which receives, forms and continues him – it is not firstly this factor which the son of God united to himself. It is because he became man that God has also assumed, in a certain way, a race, a country and a time. "Because in him, human nature was assumed, not absorbed, by that very fact this nature has been raised up to an unequalled dignity in us too. For by his incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person".<sup>38</sup>

19. The transcendence of Christ does not therefore isolate him above the human family but renders him present to all, beyond all restriction. "He is a stranger nowhere, nor to anyone."<sup>39</sup> "There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slaves and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus."<sup>23</sup> Thus Christ is at one with us in the unity we form as in the multiplicity and diversity in which our common nature is realised.

20. However, Christ would not be one with us in the reality of our concrete humanity if he did not affect us as well in the diversity and the complementarity of our cultures. It is in fact cultures – language, history, general attitude to life, diverse institutions, which, for better or worse, receive us into life, from us, accompany us and survive our passing. If the cosmos as a whole is, in a mysterious sense, the scene of grace and sin, do not our culture have a similar role in as much as they are both fruits and seeds in the field of our human labours?

21. In the Body of Christ, the cultures, insofar as they are animated and renewed by grace and faith, are moreover complementary. They permit us to see the multiform richness of which the teachings and energies of the same Gospel are capable, the same principles of truth, justice, love

and library, when they are traversed by the Spirit of Christ.

22. Finally, is it necessary to recall that it is not in virtue of a self-interested strategy that the Church, bride of the Incarnated Word, preoccupies itself with the fate of the various cultures of humanity? She wishes to animate from the inside, protect free from the error and sin with which we have corrupted them these resources of truth and love which God has placed, as *semina Verbi*, in his creation. The Word of God does not come into a creation which is foreign to it. "All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together."<sup>41</sup>

#### The Holy Spirit and the Church of the Apostles

##### A. From Jerusalem to the Nations: The typical beginnings of the inculturation of the faith

23. On Pentecost day, the breaking-in of the Holy Spirit, inaugurates the relation of the Christian faith and culture as fulfillment in flower: the promise of salvation fulfilled by the risen Christ filled the hearts of believers by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit himself. "The marvels of God" will from now on be "preached" to all men of every language and culture.<sup>42</sup> While humanity was living under the sign of the division of Babel, the gift of the High Spirit was offered to it as the transcendent and now so human grace of the *symphony* of hearts. The divine unification (*koinonia*)<sup>43</sup> recreated a new humanity among people, penetrating, without destroying, the sign of their division: Languages.

24. The Holy Spirit does not establish a super-culture but is the personal and vital principle which will vivify the new Community in working in harness with its members. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not of the order of structures, but the Church of Jerusalem which he fashions in a *koinonia* of faith and of agape, communicating herself in many ways without loss of identity; she is the *Body of Christ* whose members are united but with many faces. The first test of *Catholicity* appears when differences of cultural origin (conflicts between Greeks and Hebrews) menace the Community.<sup>44</sup> The Apostles do not suppress the differences but are concerned with developing an essential function of the ecclesial Body: the *diakonia* at the service of the *koinonia*.

25. In order that the Good News might be announced to the Nations, the Holy Spirit awakens a new perception in Peter and the Jerusalem community, to wit,<sup>30</sup> faith in Christ does not require that new believers abandon their culture to adopt that of the Law of the Jewish people; all peoples are called to be beneficiaries of the Promise and to share the heritage entrusted for them in the People of the Covenant.<sup>46</sup> Therefore "nothing beyond the essentials" according to the decision of the apostolic assembly.<sup>47</sup>

26. Scandal for the Jews, the mystery of the Cross is foolishness to the pagans. Here the inculturation of the faith clashes with the radical sin of *idolatry* which keeps "captive"<sup>48</sup> the truth of a culture which is not assumed by Christ. As long as man is "deprived of the glory of God"<sup>49</sup> all that he "cultivates" is nothing more than the opaque image of himself. The Pauline kerygma begins therefore with creation and the call to the covenant, denounces the moral perversions of blinded humanity and announces salvation in the crucified and risen Christ.

27. After the testing of Catholicity among culturally different Christian Communities, after the resistances of Jewish legalism, and those of idolatry, the faith pledges itself to culture in gnosticism. *The phenomenon begins to appear at the time of the last letters of Paul and John, it will fuel the majority of the doctrinal crises of the succeeding centuries. Here, human reason, in its injured state refuses the folly of the Incarnation of the Son of God and seeks to recover the Mystery by accommodating it to the prevailing culture. Whereas, "faith depends not on human philosophy but on the power of God".*<sup>50</sup>

## B. The Apostolic Tradition

### *Inculturation of Faith and Salvation of Culture*

28. *In the "last times" inaugurated at Pentecost, the risen Christ, Alpha and Omega, enters into the history of peoples: from that moment, the sense of history and thus of culture is unsealed<sup>51</sup> and the Holy Spirit reveals it by actualising and communicating it to all. The Church is the sacrament of this Revelation and its communication. It recentres every culture into which Christ is received, placing it in the axis of the "world which is coming" and restores the union broken by the "prince of this world". Culture is thus *eschatologically* situated; it tends towards its completion in Christ but it cannot be saved except by associating itself with the repudiation of evil.*

29. Each local or particular Church is called in the Holy Spirit to be the sacrament which manifests Christ, crucified and risen, *enfleshed* in a particular culture.

a) The culture of a local Church – young or old – participates in the dynamism of cultures and in their vicissitudes. Even if the Church is in the last times it remains subject to trials and temptations.<sup>52</sup>

b) The Christian "newness" engenders in the local Churches particular expressions stamped by culture (modalities of doctrinal formulations, liturgical symbolisms, models of holiness, canonical directives, etc.). Nevertheless the Communion between the Churches demands constantly that the cultural "flesh" of each does not

act as a screen to mutual recognition in the apostolic faith and to solidarity in love.

c) Every Church sent to the nations witnesses to its Lord only if, having consideration for its cultural attachments, it conforms to him in the first kenosis of his Incarnation and in the final humiliation of his life-giving passion. The inculturation of the faith is one of the expressions of the Apostolic Tradition whose dramatic character is emphasised on several occasions by Paul.<sup>53</sup>

30. The apostolic writings and the patristic witness do not limit their vision of culture to the service of evangelisation but integrate it into *the totality of the Mystery of Christ*. For them, creation is the reflection of the Glory of God: man is its living icon and it is in Christ that the resemblance with God is seen. Culture is the scene in which man and the world are called to find themselves anew in the glory of God. The encounter is missed or obscured in so far as man is a sinner. Within captive creation is seen the gestation of the "new universe":<sup>54</sup> the Church is "in labour".<sup>55</sup> In her and through her, the creatures of this world are able to live their redemption and their transfiguration.

## III

### **Present Problems of Inculturation.**

1. The inculturation of the faith, which we have considered firstly from a philosophical viewpoint (nature, culture and grace), then from the point of view of history and dogma (inculturation of the history of salvation) still poses considerable problems for theological reflection and pastoral action. Thus the questions aroused in the sixteenth century by the discovery of new worlds, continue to preoccupy us. How may one harmonise the spontaneous expression of the religiosity of peoples with faith? What attitude should be adopted in the face of non-Christian religions, especially those "bound up with cultural advancement"?<sup>56</sup> New questions have arisen in our time. How should "young Churches", born in our century of the indigenisation of already-existing Christian communities, consider both their Christian past and the cultural history of their respective peoples? Finally how should the Gospel animate, purify and fortify the new world into which we have brought industrialization and urbanization? To us it seems that these four questions should be faced by anyone who reflects on the present conditions of the inculturation of faith.

#### *Popular piety*

2. In the countries which have been affected by the Gospel, we normally



understand by *popular piety*, on the one hand, the union of Christian faith and piety with the profound culture, and on the other with the previous forms of religion of populations. It involves those very numerous devotions in which Christians express their religious sentiment in the simple language, among other things, of festival, pilgrimage, dance and song. One could speak of *vital synthesis* with reference to this piety, since it unites "body and spirit, ecclesial communion and institution, individual and community, Christian faith and love of one's country, intelligence and affectivity".<sup>57</sup> The quality of the synthesis stems, as one might expect, from the antiquity and profundity of the evangelisation, as from the compatibility of its religious and cultural antecedents with the Christian faith.

3. In the Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" Paul VI confirmed and encouraged a new appreciation of popular piety. "For long seen as less pure, sometimes scorned, these particular expressions of the quest for God and the faith today have become practically everywhere the object of a rediscovery."<sup>58</sup>

4. "If well directed, especially by a pedagogy of evangelisation," continued Paul VI (popular piety), "is rich in value. It communicates a thirst of God which only the simple and the poor can understand. It renders capable generosity and sacrifice, even to the level of heroism, when it is a question of manifesting faith. It includes a sharp sense of the profound attributes of God: paternity, providence, loving and constant presence. It engenders internal attitudes, rarely observed elsewhere to a similar degree: patience, sense of the Cross in daily life, detachment, openness to others, devoted."<sup>59</sup>

5. Moreover the strength and depth of the roots of popular piety clearly manifested themselves in the long period of discredit mentioned by Paul VI. The expressions of popular piety have survived numerous predictions of disappearance of which modernity and the progress of secularity seemed to warn. They have preserved and even increased, in many regions of the globe, the attractions they exercised on the masses.

6. The limits of popular piety have often been condemned. They stem from a certain naivety, are a source of various deformations of religion, even of superstitions. One remains at the level of cultural manifestations without a true adhesion to faith at the level where this is expressed in service on one's neighbour. Badly directed, popular piety can even lead to the formation of sects and thus place true ecclesial unity in danger. It also risks being manipulated, be it by political powers or by religious forces foreign to the Christian faith.

7. The taking into account of these dangers invites us to practise an intelligent catechesis, won thanks to the merits of an authentic popular piety and at the same time duly shrewd. A living and adapted liturgy is equally called to play a major role in the integration of a very pure faith and the traditional forms of the religious life of peoples. Without any

doubt whatsoever, popular piety can bring an irreplaceable contribution to a Christian cultural anthropology which would permit the reduction of the often tragic division between the faith of Christians and certain socio-economic institutions, of quite different orientation, which regulate their daily life.

#### *Inculturation of Faith and Non-Christian religions*

8. From its origin, the Church has encountered on many levels, the question of the plurality of religions. Even today Christians constitute only about a third of the world's population. Moreover, they must live in a world which expresses a growing sympathy for pluralism in religious matters.

9. Given the great place of religion in culture, a local or particular Church, implanted in a non-Christian socio-cultural milieu must take seriously into account the religious elements of this milieu. Moreover, this preoccupation should be in accordance with the depth and vitality of these religious elements.

10. If we may consider one continent as an example, we shall speak of Asia, which witnessed the birth of several of the world's great religious movements. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism: each of these religious systems certainly located in distinct regions of the continent are deeply rooted in the people and show much vigour. One's personal life, as well as social and community activity, were marked in a decisive manner by these religious and spiritual traditions. In addition the Asian Churches consider the question of non-Christian religions as one of the most important and most urgent. They have even made it the object of that privileged form of relation: the dialogue.

#### *The Dialogue of Religions*

11. Dialogue with other religions forms an integral part of Christian life; by exchange, study and work in common, this dialogue contributes to a better understanding of the religion of the other and to a growth of piety.

12. For Christian faith, the unity of all in their origin and destiny, that is in creation and in communion with God in Jesus Christ is accompanied by the universal presence and action of the Holy Spirit. The Church in dialogue listens and learns. "The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflects a ray of that Truth which enlightens all man."<sup>60</sup>

13. This dialogue possesses something original, since, as the history of

religions testifies, the plurality of religions has often given rise to discrimination and jealously, fanaticism and despotism, all of which drew on religion the accusation of being a source of division in the human family. The Church "universal sacrament of salvation", that is "sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of all the human race",<sup>61</sup> is called by God to be minister and instrument of unity in Jesus Christ for all men and all peoples.

#### *The Transcendence of the Gospel in Relation to Culture*

14. We cannot however, forget the transcendence of the Gospel in relation to all human cultures in which the Christian faith has the vocation to enroot itself and come to fruition according to all its potentialities. However great the respect should be for what is true and holy in the cultural heritage of a people, this attitude does not demand that one should lend an absolute character to this cultural heritage. No-one can forget that, from the beginning, the Gospel was a "scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the pagans".<sup>62</sup> Inculturation which borrows the way of dialogue between religions cannot in any way pledge itself to syncretism.

#### *The Young Churches and their Christian Past*

15. The Church prolongs and actualises the mystery of the Servant of Yahweh who was promised to be "the light of the nations so that salvation might reach the ends of the earth"<sup>63</sup> and to be the "Covenant of the Peoples".<sup>64</sup> This prophecy is realised at the Last Supper, when, on the eve of his Passion, Christ surrounded by the Twelve, gives his body and blood to his followers as the food and drink of the New Covenant thus assimilating them into his own body. The Church, people of the New Covenant was being born. She would receive at Pentecost the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Lamb sacrificed from the beginning and who was already working to fulfil this desire so deeply rooted in human beings: a union the more intense with respect to the intense diversity.

16. In virtue of the Catholic Communion, which unites all the particular Churches in the one history, the young Churches consider the past of the Churches which gives birth of them, as part of their own history. However, the majority act of interpretation which is the hallmark of their spiritual maturity consists in recognising this precedence as originatory and not only as historical. This signifies that in receiving in faith the Gospel which their elders announced to them, the young Churches welcomed the "initiator of the faith"<sup>65</sup> and the entire Tradition in which the faith is attested, as also the capacity to give birth to new forms in which the unique and common faith would find expression. Equal in dignity, drawing life from the same mystery, authentic sister Churches, the young Churches manifest, in concert with their

elders, the fullness of the mystery of Christ.

17. People of the New Covenant; it is in so far as it commemorates the Paschal mystery and ceaselessly announces the return of the Lord that the Church may be called an eschatology that began with the cultural traditions of peoples, on condition, of course, that these traditions had been subjected to the purifying law of death and resurrection in Christ Jesus.

18. Like St Paul at the Areopagus in Athens, the young Church interprets its ancestral culture in a new and creative manner. When this culture passes through Christ, "the veil falls".<sup>66</sup> At the time of the "incubation" of faith, this Church has discovered Christ as "exegete and exegesis" of the Father in the Spirit:<sup>67</sup> moreover it does not cease to contemplate him as such. Now it is discovering him as "exegete and exegesis" of man, source and destination of culture. To the unknown God, revealed on the Cross, corresponds unknown man, announced by the young Church as the living Paschal mystery inaugurated by grace in the ancient culture.

19. In the salvation it makes present, the young Church endeavours to locate all the traces of the God's care for a particular human group, the *semina Verbi*. What the prologue of the letter to the Hebrews says of the Fathers and the prophets may in relation with Jesus Christ be repeated, in an analogical manner of course, for all human culture in so far as it is right and true and bears wisdom.

#### *Christian Faith and Modernity*

20. The technical changes which gave rise to the industrial revolution and subsequently the urban revolution, affected souls of people in depth. They were beneficiaries and also, quite often, the victims of these changes. Therefore believers have the duty, as an urgent and difficult task, to understand the characteristic traits of modern culture, as also its expectation and needs in relation to the salvation wrought by Christ.

21. The Industrial Revolution was also a cultural revolution. Values until then assured were brought into question, such as the sense of personal and community work; the direct relationship of man to nature, membership of a support family, in cohabitation as in work, implantation in local and religious communities of human dimension, participation in traditions, rites, ceremonies and celebrations which give a sense to the great moment of existence. Industrialisation, in provoking a disordered concentrating of populations, seriously affected these age-old values without giving rise to communities capable of integrating new cultures. At a time when the most deprived peoples are in search of a suitable development model, the advantages as also the risks and human costs of industrialisation are better perceived.

22. Great progress has been made in many areas of life: diet, health,

education, transport, access to all types of consumer goods. Deep misgivings, however, have arisen in the collective subconscious. In many countries, the notion of progress has given way, especially since the Second World War, to disillusion. Rationality as regards production and administration operates against reason, when it forgets the good persons. The emancipation of communities from a sense of belonging has isolated man in the crowd. The new means of communication destroy to as great an extent as they create. Science, by means of the technical creations which are its fruits, appears simultaneously to be creator and destroyer. In addition some despair of modernity and speak of a new barbarism. Despite many faults and failings, one must hope for a moral uplift of all nations, rich and poor. If the Gospel is preached and heard, a cultural and spiritual conversion is possible, it calls to solidarity, in the interest of the whole good of the person, to the promotion of peace and justice, to the adoration of the Father, from whom all good things come.

23. The inculturation of the Gospel in modern societies will demand a methodical effort of concerted research and action. This effort will assure on the part of those research and action. This effort will assure on the part of those responsible for evangelisation 1) an attitude of openness and a critical eye; 2) the capacity to perceive the spiritual expectations and human aspirations of the new cultures; 3) the aptitude for cultural analysis, having in mind an effective encounter with the modern world.

24. A receptive attitude is required among those who wish to understand and evangelise the world of our time. Modernity is accompanied by undeniable progress in many cultural and material domains; well-being, human mobility, science, research, education, a new sense of solidarity. In addition the Church of Vatican II has taken a lively account of the new conditions in which she must exercise her mission and it is in the cultures of modernity that the Church of tomorrow will be constructed. The traditional advance applicable to discernment is reiterated by Pius XXI. "It is necessary to deepen one's understanding of the civilisation and institutions of various peoples and to cultivate their best qualities and gifts . . . All in the customs of peoples which are not inextricably bound up with superstitions or errors should be examined with benevolence and if possible, preserved intact."<sup>67</sup>

25. The Gospel raises fundamental questions amongst those who reflect on the behaviour of modern man, how should one make this man understand the radical nature of the message of Christ: unconditional love, evangelical poverty, adoration of the Father and constant yielding to his will? How should one educate towards the Christian sense of suffering and death? How should one arouse faith and hope in the event of the resurrection accomplished by Jesus Christ?

26. We must develop a *capacity to analyse cultures* and to gauge their moral and spiritual indicators. A mobilisation of the whole Church is

called for so that the extremely complex task of the inculturation of the Gospel in today's world may be faced with success. We must wed to this topic the preoccupation of John Paul II, "From the beginning of my pontificate I considered that the dialogue of the Church with the cultures of our time was a vital area, whose stake is the fate of the world in this the end of the twentieth century".<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

1. Having said that the important thing was "to affect and to upset, as it were, by the strength of the Gospel, the criteria of judgment, dominant values, centres of interest, line of thought, the sources of inspiration and models of life which are in contrast with the word of God and the plan of salvation by the strength of the Gospel", Paul VI asked that one would "evangelise, not in an decorative way, by an superficial varnishing as it were, but in a vital manner, in depth and down through the roots - the culture and cultures of man, in the rich and broad sense which these terms possess in *Gaudium et Spes* . . . The reign announced by the gospel is lived by men deeply bound to a culture and the building up of the Kingdom cannot but borrow from the elements of human culture and cultures."<sup>70</sup>

2. "In this the end of the twentieth century," as John Paul II affirmed for his part, "the Church must make itself all things for all men, bringing today's cultures together with sympathy. There still are milieus and mentalities as there are entire countries and regions to evangelise, which supposes a long and courageous process of inculturation so that the Gospel may penetrate the soul of living cultures, respond to their highest expectations and make them grow in the demension of Christian faith, hope and charity. Sometimes cultures have only been touched superficially and in any case, to continuously transform themselves, they demand a renewed approach. In addition, new areas of culture appear, with diverse objectives, methods and languages."<sup>71</sup>

## APPENDIX

To guide readers in the eventual publication of the different preparatory papers, we list them here. It was actually beginning from these works (which remain the property of their Authors who wrote on their own responsibility) that Rev Fr Gilles Langevin, S.J., President of sub-commission and principal drafter, composed the synthesis approved by the International Theological Commission in three successive votes, the first two accompanied by important amendments.

This is the list of subjects treated:

I. Several Aspects of the Reflection and the Action of the Church on the Problem of Inculturation:

1. State of the question concerning the Magisterium.

- 1.1 The Second Vatican Council and the Synods (Prof. Philippe Delhaye).
- 1.2 Pontifical Allocutions (Prof. André-Jean Léonard).
2. Theology and pastoral action:
  - 2.1 In Asia (Prof. Peter Miyakawa).
  - 2.2 In Africa (Prof. James Okoye).
  - 2.3 In Latin America (Prof. José Miguel Langlois).
  - 2.4 In the Atlantic World (Prof. Giuseppe Colombo).

## II. Sacred Scripture and Theology:

1. The Father: Old Testament and Judaism (Dr Hans Urs von Balthasar).
2. Jesus Christ:
  - 2.1 The assumption of human nature (Prof. Gilles Langevin).
  - 2.2 Salvation and divinisation (Prof. Francis Moloney).
  3. The Holy Spirit and the Church (Prof. Jean Corbon).

## III. Anthropology:

Created, fallen and redeemed nature (Prof. Georges Cottier).

## IV. Ecclesiology in the Christian Community and Human Communities:

1. Non-Christian religious (Prof. Felix Wilfred).
2. The relation of young Churches with ancient ecclesiastical traditions (Prof. Barthelemy Adoukonou).

Document in the form of a pastoral conclusion: modernity (Prof. Hervé Carrier).

1. See the documents of the International Theological Commission on Theological Pluralism (1972) Human Promotion and Christian Salvation (1976), Catholic Doctrine on the Sacrament of Marriage (1977), Selected Questions on Christology (1979), in the collection of the International Theological Commission, "Texts and Documents" (1969-1985), Paris, Cerf, 1988.
2. "Themes chosen from ecclesiology on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the closure of the Second Vatican Council", International Theological Commission (1984), in the collection referred to in the previous note, pp. 336-340.
3. Pontifical Biblical Commission "Fede e cultura alla luce della Biggla, Foi et Culture à la lumière de la Bible", Torino, Editrice Elle di Ci, 1981.
4. Vatican II Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" on the Church in the Modern World n. 44.
5. Ibid., n. 53-62.
6. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" on evangelisation in the modern world, n. 18-10, in "Documentation Catholique", 73, 4 January 1976, pp. 4-5.
7. John Paul II Apostolic Exhortation "Catechesi Tradendae" on catechesis in our time, n. 53, in "Documentation Catholique", 76, 5 November 1979, p. 914.
8. Extraordinary Synod for the 20th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, final report voted by the Fathers, 7 December 1985, in "Documentation Catholique", 83, 5 January 1986, p. 41.
9. John Paul II, Letter of foundation of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May 1982, "Acta Apostolicae Sedis" 74 (1983), 683-688; "Documentation Catholique", 79, 20 June 1982, pp. 604-606.
10. John Paul II Speech to the University of Coimbra (15 May 1982) in "Documentation Catholique", A, 6 June 1982, p. 549. Speech to the bishops of Kenya (7 May 1980), in "Documentation Catholique", 77, 1 June 1980, p. 534.
11. John Paul II, Discourse to the members of the Pontifical Council for Culture (18 January 1983), in "Documentation Catholique", 80, 6 February 1983, p. 147.

12. Paul VI, Encyclical letter "Humanae Vitae" on birth control, in *Documentation Catholique* 65, 1 September 1968, p. 1447.
13. Vatican II Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" on the Church in the Modern World, n. 53.
14. Ibidem.
15. John Paul II, Encyclical letter "Slavorum Apostoli" for the eleventh centenary of the work of evangelisation of Saints Cyril and Methodius, 2 June 1985, n. 21, in *Documentation Catholique*, 2 June 1985, p. 724.
16. Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution "Dei Verbum" on divine revelation n. 13.
17. Cf. Rm 11:11-24.
18. Gn 1:1-2, 4a.
19. Cf. Gn 9:1-17; Si 44:17-18.
20. Gn 12:1-5; Jn 4:2; Si 44:21.
21. Lk 24:27-44.
22. Mk 13:10; Mk 12:21; Lk 2:32.
23. Mt 11:19; Lk 7:35.
24. Ps 93:1-4; Is 6:1.
25. Mk 1:15; Mt 12:28; Lk 11:20; 17:21.
26. Mt 20:1-16; Lk 15:11-32; 18:9-14.
27. Mk 14:36.
28. Mk 1:14-45; 10:2-9; Mt 5:21-48.
29. Rm 5:12-19; 1 Co 15:20-22.
30. Mk 8:27-33; 1 Co 1:18-25.
31. Ga 3:13; Dt 21:22-23.
32. Ga 3:12-14.
33. Rm 7:16 ff: 3:20; 7:7; 1 Tm 1:8.
34. Vatican II, Decree "Ad Gentes" on the Church's Missionary Activity n. 10.
35. Lk 2:46.
36. Rm 9:3-5.
37. Rm 11:24.
38. Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" on the Church in the Modern World n. 22.
39. Vatican II, Decree "Ad Gentes" on the Church's Missionary Activity n. 8.
40. Ga 3:28.
41. Col 1:16-17.
42. Acts 2:11.
43. Acts 2:42.
44. Acts 6:1 ff.
45. Acts 10 and 11.
46. Eph 2:14-15.
47. Acts 15-28.
48. Rm 1:18.
49. Rm 3:23.
50. 1 Co 2:4 ff.
51. Apoc 5:1-5.
52. Cf Apoc 2 and 3.
53. 1 and 2 Co passim
54. Apoc 21:5.
55. Cf Rm 8:18-25.
56. Vatican II, Declaration "Nostra Aetate" on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions n. 2.
57. Third general conference of the Bishops of Latin America, The Evangelisation of Latin America in the Present and in the Future. n. 448.
58. Paul VI, Apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" on evangelisation in the modern world, 8 December 1975 n. 48.
59. Ibidem.
60. Vatican II, Declaration "Nostra Aetate" on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions n. 2.
61. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium" on the Church n. 1.
62. 1 Co 1:23.

63. Is 49:6.
64. Is 49:8.
65. Heb 12:2.
66. 2 Co 3:16.
67. Cf Henri de Lubac "Exégèse médiévale", coll. Théologie n. 41, Paris, 1959, t. 1, p. 322-324.
68. Pius XII, Encyclical letter "Summi Pontificatus" on the feast of Christ the King, 20 October 1939, in "Documentation Catholique", 40, 5 December 1939, c. 1261.
69. John Paul II Letter of foudnation of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May 1982, in "Documentation Catholique", 79, 20 June 1982, p. 604.
70. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" on Evangelisation in the Modern World n. 19-20, in "Documentation Catholique", 73, 4 January 1976, p. 4.
71. John Paul II, Discourse to the members of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 18 January 1983, in "Documentation Catholique", 80, 6 February 1983, p. 147.