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McGee, Philip (2012) *An analysis of the major tensions inherent in the Catholic Church's response to the religious other: From Vatican II and Nostra Aetate to Dominus Iesus*. MTh(R) thesis.

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**Research Masters written in partial fulfilment of the MTh (R)**

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**An Analysis of the Major Tensions Inherent in the Catholic Church's Response to the Religious Other: From Vatican II and *Nostra Aetate* to *Dominus Iesus***

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**Dedicated to** Julie, Isabel, Richard, Jon, Sue, Anne, Charlie, Stephen, Colin, Brendan and all  
my Brothers and Sisters in Christ at Marist House

## **An Analysis of the Major Tensions Inherent in the Catholic Church's Response to the Religious Other: From Vatican II and *Nostra Aetate* to *Dominus Iesus***

**Advisor Ms: Julie Clague**

Philip McGee 0502118M

### **Introduction and Outline**

*Ein begriffener Gott ist kein Gott*

('A God comprehended is no God')<sup>1</sup>

*"I am human and nothing that is human is alien to me"*<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

It should be noted from the very beginning that the following dissertation will be a Catholic Christian's attempt to view the religious other through the specific hermeneutical lens of Catholic tradition whilst remaining fully aware of the inevitable influence of modernism as perceived through the prism of the enlightenment.

After offering an initial short overview of the Catholic Church's historical stance toward followers of other religions, with particular focus on Buddhism, I hope to highlight the ongoing tensions that exist within the Catholic Church in its relationship toward these other religions; tensions which have arisen in a variety of different forms despite the immense strides achieved by the Second Vatican Council and in particular the Church's watershed document *Nostra Aetate*. Chapter two therefore will be an outline of this change in attitude within the Catholic Church toward other religious traditions, particularly Buddhism, as well as an acknowledgement of areas of tension. In chapter three I will briefly outline the history of various secretariats set up at an official level within the Church to deal with her response to the key documents of Vatican II and to offer guidelines and support for dialogue. In chapters four and five I will look more closely at documents produced post-Vatican II relevant to the Church's attitude toward the religious other, documents which were innovatory and which fleshed out the abstract and generalised content in the statements contained in *Nostra Aetate*. I will also highlight and analyse the rising tensions in the Church's response to interreligious dialogue specifically in relation to issues of evangelisation and the reaction against pluralist and relativistic theologies of religion at an official level. In my final chapter I will analyse the various theological stances which the

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<sup>1</sup> Tersteegen quoted in Otto, 1959: 39

<sup>2</sup> Terence quoted in Ruether, 1989: 21

Church views as incompatible with the Catholic faith and once more highlight the tensions implicit in views related to uniqueness and unicity for those engaged in dialogue, arguing in favour of the legitimacy and need for a multiplicity of theological perspectives within the umbrella of the Catholic Church. Ultimately it is to an investigation in the tensions manifesting in these areas of dialogical and theological exchange as perceived by the Secretariat for non Christians, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, in the form of Papal statements and encyclicals issued in the fields of either interreligious dialogue or guidelines for evangelisation, that this dissertation naturally gravitates.

## Chapter 1

### The Catholic Church's Attitude to the Religious Other: A Short Historical perspective

Although Christianity is often perceived in the popular imagination as from its inception adopting a wholly negative attitude toward other religious traditions, this was manifestly not the case. Not least with the relatively open positions adopted by among others Justin Martyr (c.100 – c.165),<sup>3</sup> and Clement of Alexandria (c.150 – c. 215)<sup>4</sup> both of whom adopted a concept known as the *Logos Spermatikos* (seed of the word), a position in which earlier traditions were viewed as legitimate if nevertheless inferior manifestations of the *Logos*. That is to say that although they were inferior models they were nevertheless bathed in Christian light, since Christ as the *Logos* was functionally present in their philosophy, myth, scripture and ritual. *Logos Spermatikos* therefore essentially functioned as an early form of what would later come to be known as fulfilment theology. Indeed Justin Martyr has written:

We are taught that Christ is the first born of God, and we have explained above that he is the word (reason) of whom all mankind have a share, and those who lived according to reason are Christians even though they were classed as atheists, for example; among Greeks, *Socrates*, and *Heraclitus*; among non-Greeks, Abraham, *Ananias*, *Azarias*, and *Misael*, and *Elias* and many others.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromateis*, VI. VI (47) writes:

one righteous man does not differ from another in respect of his righteousness, whether he is under the Law or a Greek. For God is the Lord not of the Jews only but of all men.... thus, I fancy, the goodness of God is proved, and the power of the Lord, to save with justice and equity displayed to those who turn to him, whether here or elsewhere. For the energising power does not come only on men here; it is operative in all places and at all times.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Livingstone, 1977: 319

<sup>4</sup> Livingstone, 1977: pp 125-126

<sup>5</sup> Justin Martyr in Bettenson, 1956: 60

<sup>6</sup> Clement of Alexandria in Bettenson, 1956: 176



Essentially Clement or to give him his full name *Titus Flavius Clemens Alexandrinus* viewed philosophy (notably Greek philosophy), as a sort of *praeparatio evangelica* (preparation for the Gospel). Indeed Clement speculated that such Hellenistic philosophy may have been given to the Greeks directly as a sort of schoolmaster which might bring Hellenism to Christ. Clement essentially compared this view as being functionally analogous as was the Law for the Hebrews. Philosophy therefore was a preparation paving the way for the man brought to perfection in Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Origen (c. 185 – c. 254)<sup>8</sup> meanwhile adopted a universalist approach positing an *apokatastasis* as the final outcome of the world process (the restoration of the created order to its source namely God as creator; Origen linked the belief to a view that all will eventually be saved.)<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately such open views were quickly negated and by the middle of the third century the default position of Christianity was one of rejection and negativity toward other religious traditions a position, and attitude summed up neatly by Cyprian (d. 258)<sup>10</sup> in his use of the term *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*<sup>11</sup> (outside the church no salvation). Cyprian too governed as he was by what today would effectively be viewed as an overriding ecclesiastical vision based on the necessity of unity (*unitas*) highlighted in his own theology the overriding importance of the church<sup>12</sup> hence his belief that: “No one can have God for a Father who has not the Church for a Mother”.<sup>13</sup>

This change in attitude was not only accelerated by the number of perceived heresies sweeping through Christian communities, in particular *Arianism*, *Apollinarianism*, *Docetism* and *Gnosticism* but also by Christianity’s new position (c. 325) as the official religion of the Roman Empire. But we should also be careful to note that Cyprian only applied this dictum toward other Christians.<sup>14</sup> That is to say it was used in the middle of the third century to defend Christian

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<sup>7</sup> Clement of Alexandria in Bettenson, 1956: PPS 168-169

<sup>8</sup> Livingstone, 1977: pp 417-418

<sup>9</sup> Bowker, 1997: 80

<sup>10</sup> Bowker, 1997: 249

<sup>11</sup> Gort, 2006: 110

<sup>12</sup> Bowker, 1997: 249

<sup>13</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, 4-6 (CSEL, III. 1. 212-215) in Stevenson, 1957: 230

<sup>14</sup> Schmidt-Leukel in Masters Interfaith seminar 29/09/08

identity against the very real danger of schism at a time when Christianity was still a persecuted minority.<sup>15</sup> This was the period of the *Decian* persecution (249-251)<sup>16</sup> when many Christians had apostatized. Cyprian as Bishop of Carthage after his return from exile pursued a policy of reconciling Christian apostates after an appropriate period of penance. The subsequent schism of *Novatian* brought to the fore the vexed question as to whether or not schismatics returning to the church needed re-baptism. Cyprian with his focus on the unity of the church insisted unequivocally that such schismatics did indeed require re-baptism.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless despite Cyprian's original use of the term *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* being aimed primarily at internal Christian schismatics such negative attitudes not only became deeply entrenched within Christianity but also broadened to include non-Christian religions which subsequently came to be viewed as at best enclaves of superstition and at worst active manifestations of the devil and therefore homogenous instantiations of evil.<sup>18</sup>

Consequently for roughly fifteen hundred years the church held a narrowly exclusivistic view in its perception of other faith traditions a view bolstered by among others the fourth Lateran Council (1215), and the ex-cathedra statement made by the Council of Florence (1435-1445),<sup>19</sup> the latter effectively adopting the strong words of Augustine's disciple, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*:

the holy Roman church firmly believes, professes and proclaims that none of those who are outside the catholic-church not only pagans, but Jews also, heretics and schismatics can have part in eternal life, but will go into eternal fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are gathered into that church before the end of life.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Barnes in Hinnels, 2005: 414

<sup>16</sup> Bowker, 1997: 249

<sup>17</sup> Bowker, 1997: 249

<sup>18</sup> Gort, 2006: 110

<sup>19</sup> Gort, 2006: 111

<sup>20</sup> *Fulgentes of Ruspe* quoted in Kung, 1974: 97

That is to say: that all those outside are effectively a ‘*massa damnata*’, an abandoned heap.<sup>21</sup>

In relation to Christianity’s specific response to Buddhism and the other religions of the East, such religions were by and large deemed inferior and primitive in comparison to Christianity. Of course there were a few notable exceptions, in particular *Nicholas Cusanus* (1400-64),<sup>22</sup> the Dominican *Bartholomew de la Casas* (1484-1566),<sup>23</sup> and the Jesuit missionaries *Roberto de Nobili* (1577-1656),<sup>24</sup> and *Matteo Ricci* (1552-1610)<sup>25</sup> who all in one way or another saw in the religious practices and beliefs of the other a *praeparatio evangelica*, that is to say “a limited or imperfect version of what was fully revealed in the gospel”.<sup>26</sup> And as we have already seen Clement of Alexandria was as Barnes notes:

quite ready to recognise signs of the spirit as a sort of divine pedagogy, leading pagan philosophers – even Indian thinkers – to a fullness in Christ.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed according to Barnes “Aquinas himself had written that God grants the means for saving faith to all persons unless they deliberately put obstacles in the way of grace”.<sup>28</sup> *De Nobili* and *Ricci* therefore following the examples of the early Apologists engaged in a radical form of adaptation or if one prefers inculturation that involved not only a profound dialogue with the religious other but also a translation of language, culture, lifestyle, dress and religious practise. As Barnes so succinctly puts it:

the fundamental theological principle at work here is a retrieval of the Apologist’s sense of the continuity between God’s presence within the created order and God’s self-revelation in Christ.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kung, 1974: 97

<sup>22</sup> Bowker, 1997: 697

<sup>23</sup> Livingstone, 1977: 332

<sup>24</sup> Bowker, 1997: PPS 268-269

<sup>25</sup> Bowker, 1997: 816

<sup>26</sup> Barnes in Hinnels, 2005: 415

<sup>27</sup> Barnes in Hinnels, 2005: 413

<sup>28</sup> Barnes in Hinnels, 2005: 415

<sup>29</sup> Barnes in Hinnels, 2005: 415

But such men were exceptions to the rule. The response to Buddhists and other religions of the East remained predominantly negative. Buddhists if they were considered at all were viewed variously as pantheists, idolaters or life denying atheists whose tradition and practise were permeated by the malevolent influence of the devil. Buddhists it was supposed were not interested in this present world, viewing it as a source of *dukkha* (suffering) and impermanence. All Buddhists it was presumed believed in reincarnation and no distinction seems to have been made between reincarnation and re-birth, much less the various schools of Buddhism and the subtle differences for instance between *Rinzai*, *Soto* and Pure Land Zen or perhaps more shockingly *Mahayana* and *Theravada* Buddhism. One of the earliest documented Christian recognitions of Buddhism was by Clement of Alexandria (c. 150- c. 215)<sup>30</sup> who around 200 CE wrote:

Among the Indians there are followers of the Buddha, whom they worship like a god because of his outstanding holiness (*Stromata* I.XV. 71.6).<sup>31</sup>

Whether or not this statement was based on a concrete encounter with Indian Buddhists in Alexandria we will probably never definitively know, but it is certainly a possibility and by no means out of the question.<sup>32</sup>

Also from what we have already considered Clement would have viewed such Indian Buddhists as possessing in their religious tradition and practice the seed of the word. Their religion would at that time have been viewed as in one sense a preparation for the Gospel.

After the church's widespread adoption of *Fulgentius of Ruspe's* extreme interpretation of *Cyprian's* concept of *extra eclessium nulla salus* the religions and cultures of other people also came to be viewed as non – Christian and perceived as manifestations of pagan unbelief and evil superstition.<sup>33</sup> It goes without saying that included among the

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<sup>30</sup> Harris, 2008: 236

<sup>31</sup> Clement quoted in Gotz, 2007: 14

<sup>32</sup> Harris, 2008: 236

<sup>33</sup> Gort, 2006: 110

kingdoms of darkness and therefore part of pagan unbelief and evil superstition there existed not only Jews, Muslims and Hindus but Buddhists too.<sup>34</sup> Consequently for Western Christianity at least “Buddhism was a largely unknown religion and remained a stranger for almost 1500 years”.<sup>35</sup>

There were however a few noble exceptions and one or two individuals who it seems did indeed come into at least some contact with Buddhism. *Mani* (216-276)<sup>36</sup> the founder of *Manichaeism* (a sect of which Augustine was once a follower) is according to Harris “believed to have preached in India in about 242 and eventually to have brought the Buddha into his creed”.<sup>37</sup> *Nestorian* Christians too began spreading eastwards quite early, settling in South India, along the Silk Road and in China. Such encounters and dynamic exchanges between *Nestorians*, Buddhists, and Taoists in the region of central Asia undoubtedly impacted on the *Nestorian* Christians’ theology.<sup>38</sup> But rather than merely engage in what would later come to be termed inculturation the *Nestorians* attempted to reconcile the teachings of East and West in a sophisticated fusion of *Tao*, Christ and Buddha.<sup>39</sup> The *Nestorian* church imbibed liberally from the available spiritual wells affecting a deep traditional religious synthesis that was not only ground breaking but profound. Indeed further light was thrown on the nature of the Nestorian Christians’ spirituality when scrolls including references to Jesus as Messiah were discovered at the end of the nineteenth century amidst a cache of predominantly Buddhist and *Taoist* religious manuscripts found in a cave in *Dunhuang*, on the Silk Road.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore as *Schmidt-Leukel* highlights:

A *Nestorian* scripture ascribed to the *Nestorian* monk *Alopen* (635 CE) draws an analogy between Christian negative theology and the *Mahayana* teachings on the perfection of wisdom (*prajna paramita*) and emptiness (*sunyata*), an analogy so far

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<sup>34</sup> Gort, 2006: 110

<sup>35</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 2

<sup>36</sup> Bowker, 1997: pp 612-613

<sup>37</sup> Harris, 2008: 236

<sup>38</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 3

<sup>39</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2003: 3

<sup>40</sup> Harris, 2008: 237

reaching as to equate emptiness with God. Accordingly the relation between God and the world is defined in *Taoist* –Buddhist terms as a dynamic non –dualism, such that God is the beingless ground of the world’s being.<sup>41</sup>

Evidence of synthesis and fusion can be found in depictions of the Christian Cross resting serenely on a Lotus flower, the latter image a Buddhist symbol of purity, while specifically Christian figures have been found in Buddhist caves in Eastern *Turkestan*,<sup>42</sup> currently in the *Xinjiang* autonomous region of China.<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately nothing of the *Nestorian* knowledge and understanding of Buddhism was ever transmitted to the West. Western Christianity being effectively cut off from the East by the growth of the Muslim Empire, which it seems formed a near impassable barrier between East and West.<sup>44</sup> A few scattered missionaries nevertheless got through notably the Flemish Franciscan<sup>45</sup> William of *Rubruck* (1215-70?)<sup>46</sup> and adventurers like Marco Polo whose exaggerated and distorted reports unfortunately created the basis of the West’s knowledge of Buddhism for centuries to come. Basically Buddhism was grossly caricatured as atheist (no creator God),<sup>47</sup> pantheist (everything was supposedly viewed as divine),<sup>48</sup> idolatrous (Buddhism seemed to focus on the veneration of idols, Buddha’s *Bodhisattvas* or statues of ancestors etc),<sup>49</sup> finally the Buddhist founder was viewed as a saintly figure but he could not be a saint for he was a Buddhist and therefore a Pagan.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 4

<sup>42</sup> Harris, 2008: 237

<sup>43</sup> Harris, 2008: 237

<sup>44</sup> Schmidt Leukel, 2005: 4

<sup>45</sup> Harris, 2008: 237

<sup>46</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2008: 4

<sup>47</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2008: 4

<sup>48</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2008: 5

<sup>49</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2008: 5

<sup>50</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2008: 5

In the sixteenth century “the Portuguese conquistadors accompanied by missionaries arrived in Sri Lanka, China and Japan”<sup>51</sup> and as *Schmidt Leukel* perceptively notes “the result was by and large a catastrophe”.<sup>52</sup> For *Pieris* “the aggressiveness of the church had been gathering momentum from medieval times with the mixing up of the things of Caesar with the things of God”.<sup>53</sup> This Christian power consciousness for *Pieris*:

became a reality in Asia only during the great missionary era of the sixteenth century when the conquest of nations for Christ went hand in hand with the military and mercantile subjugation of lands for Europe.<sup>54</sup>

By the seventeenth century “the Jesuits *De Nobili* (1577-1656)<sup>55</sup> and *Ricci* (1552-1610)<sup>56</sup> would be battling within the Catholic Church for a more dialogical approach”.<sup>57</sup> That is to say they wished to replace the conquest theory with adaptation theory, the latter position adapting Christian principles theories and practise to the contingencies of the already existing religion and culture a position which *Pieris* argues was in retrospect not as innovative as it first seemed, Christians effectively using Eastern cultures against Eastern religions much in the same way as the early church Fathers used Hellenistic philosophy against the Greeks.<sup>58</sup> One should remember though that in the social and historical milieu of that particular time and place, the policies being pursued by both *De Nobili* and *Ricci* were radical and cutting edge; indeed so cutting edge that their radical experiments in inculturation were summarily curtailed.<sup>59</sup> Europe’s first in depth encounter with Buddhism therefore was based on a wave of imperial arrogance and power which manifested itself in a polemical and evangelical Christian missionary zeal.<sup>60</sup> During this period

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<sup>51</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 7

<sup>52</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 7

<sup>53</sup> Pieris, 1988: 28

<sup>54</sup> Pieris, 1988: 28

<sup>55</sup> Bowker, 1997: pp268-269

<sup>56</sup> Bowker, 1997: 816

<sup>57</sup> Pieris, 1988: 28

<sup>58</sup> Pieris, 1988: pp28-29

<sup>59</sup> Pieris, 1988: 29

<sup>60</sup> Harris in Race & Hedges, 2008: 239

the original *preparatio evangelica* of the early Christian apologists disappears from the official church's theology of religions.<sup>61</sup>

*De Queyroz* for example, a Portuguese Jesuit viewed Buddhism as not only a false religion but also one, which effectively deceived non-Christians because of certain superficial similarities between the two religions, *De Queyroz* construed such similarities as being the work of the devil and therefore a satanic illusion preventing non Christian's from apprehending the truth of Christianity.<sup>62</sup> Indeed *Sri Lanka* as *Schmidt Leukel* points out "variously came under the dominion of Portuguese (1505 – 1658),<sup>63</sup> Dutch (1658 – 1795),<sup>64</sup> and finally British (1795 – 1948)".<sup>65</sup>

We find (at least in the period of Catholic domination) the concentration on and reappropriation of the 1302 pronouncement of Pope Boniface VIII,<sup>66</sup> as well as the ex – cathedra statement of the Council of Florence which took place between 1438-45,<sup>67</sup> under the auspices of Pope Eugene IV,<sup>68</sup> both are statements essentially condemning anyone outside the sacramental orb of the church to a fate of eternal fire and damnation.

Such exclusivistic viewpoints of the religious other as incapable of being graced by God and therefore of receiving salvation were eventually superseded particularly with the explosion of knowledge in relation to the religious other that took place in the twentieth century, a knowledge which resulted in and inevitably led to a more sophisticated and generous response to the content and context of rituals and beliefs within other religious traditions. This broadening of attitude was institutionally defined by the Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council particularly its relationship to other religious traditions outlined in the council document entitled '*Declaration on the Relations of the Church to non-Christian Religions*', namely *Nostra Aetate*. It is therefore

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<sup>61</sup> Pieris, 1988: 22

<sup>62</sup> Harris in Race & Hedges, 2008: 238

<sup>63</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 8

<sup>64</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 8

<sup>65</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 2005: 8

<sup>66</sup> Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum* in Hick, 1995: 83

<sup>67</sup> Denzinger, no 714 in Hick, 1995: 83

<sup>68</sup> ER13: *Catholic Encyclopedia* <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06111a.htm> 14.01/2011



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to the history and background of *Nostra Aetate* and in particular Christianity's response to the religious other, specifically Buddhism that I will now turn.

## Chapter 2

### Vatican II & Nostra Aetate

From 1962-65 the Roman Catholic Church convened a Church Council in which Pope Paul VI on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1965 proclaimed a document entitled *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non – Christian Religions* or *Nostra Aetate*; this document proved pivotal in relations between the Catholic Church and other religious traditions. It was part of the *aggiornamento* which Pope John XXIII had advocated in the context of the Catholic Church’s relationship to modernity, the media age and his call for those within the church to recognise the signs of the times.

Before examining Vatican II and *Nostra Aetate* more closely let us first look at what defines a church council and why such a Church Council is deemed to be so important.

In Christianity a council is as Bowker duly notes “primarily a formal assembly of bishops and representatives of churches for determining doctrine or discipline,”<sup>69</sup> for instance the meeting in Acts 15 traditionally being viewed as the first ever-church council.<sup>70</sup> General or ecumenical councils as Bowker also notes “were those made up of Bishops and other representatives from the whole world”.<sup>71</sup> Though the term refers specifically to “the seven councils whose decisions have been taken to represent a true consensus and to be authoritative,”<sup>72</sup> namely *Nicaea* (325), *Constantinople* (381), *Ephesus* (431), *Chalcedon* (451), *Constantinople II* (553), *Constantinople III* (680-1), and *Nicaea II* (787).<sup>73</sup> According to Roman Catholic teaching and Canon Law there have been “fourteen other councils with the same ecumenical authority, the last three of which were the Council of Trent (1545-63), Vatican I (1869-70) and Vatican II (1962-65),”<sup>74</sup> the first two councils namely Trent and Vatican I acting as traditional role models for the specific structures that would be required for the smooth running of Vatican II.

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<sup>69</sup> Bowker, 1997: 241

<sup>70</sup> Bowker, 1997: 241

<sup>71</sup> Bowker, 1997: 241

<sup>72</sup> Bowker, 1997: 241

<sup>73</sup> Bowker, 1997: 241

<sup>74</sup> Bowker, 1997: 241

Vatican II which was announced by Pope John XXIII on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1959 has been described as the greatest in history. Indeed John XXIII wanted the council to be a new Pentecost, “but a Pentecost involving not now the little flock of the primitive Church but a multitude”.<sup>75</sup>

According to Latourelle and Fisichella:

Pius XI had long ago thought of resuming Vatican I, which had been interrupted by war in 1870. He had even consulted some of the curial Cardinals and Bishops and had received the outline of a programme, but in the end nothing happened. The plan was taken up again by Pius XII in 1948 but was immediately hindered by many differences of opinion. In the face of the accelerated rate of social change and the need of re-establishing unity among Christians, John XXIII made an irreversible decision to hold a great ecumenical council.<sup>76</sup>

Vatican II lasted for four sessions the first one opened by Pope John XXIII on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1962, the last ended on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1965 under Paul VI.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed as Latourelle and Fisichella clearly state:

Vatican II was a uniquely original event and undoubtedly the most extensive effort at reform ever undertaken in the church, not only because of the number of council fathers (1,549 at the outset, as compared with 750 at Vatican I and 258 at the Council of Trent) and the near – unanimity in voting, which often beat all records....but also because earlier councils had been for the most part responses to heresies or specific, even regional deviations....Vatican II was the

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<sup>75</sup> Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 1156

<sup>76</sup> Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 1154

<sup>77</sup> Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 1154

first truly worldwide council with 33 percent of the participants coming from Europe, 13 percent from the United States and Canada, 22 percent from Latin America, 10 percent from Asia, 10 percent from Africa, 6 percent from the Arab world and Oceania and the rest from others... for the first time experts whose numbers climbed from 201 to 480 under the influence of Paul VI, collaborated in the composition of the conciliar texts.<sup>78</sup>

The Council began its work on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1962 and by the end of the first session the proposed schemas had been reduced in number from 70 to 20.<sup>79</sup>

The *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions* was originally intended as a chapter to be included in the *Decree on Ecumenism* and was principally concerned with the church's relationship to the Jewish people.<sup>80</sup> In the final document though both the Decree on Ecumenism and the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non – Christian Religions were ratified as separate council documents, the latter document expanding in scope to include not only the Church's response specifically to the Jewish people, but also Islam and the great religious traditions of the East, namely Hinduism and Buddhism.

One of the catalysts for such a change was the death of Pope John XXIII on June 3, 1963.<sup>81</sup> This was a dangerous moment for the Council and for the modernising agenda which Pope John XXIII had initiated, for by Church law:

an ecumenical Council ceases immediately upon the death of the Pope who convoked it, and its continuation resumes solely upon the wishes and judgement of his successor.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 1155

<sup>79</sup> Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 1155

<sup>80</sup> McBrien, 1980: 678

<sup>81</sup> Hebblethwaite, 1993: 318

<sup>82</sup> ER 2, *Pope Paul VI: Biography from Answers.com Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*; p2 <http://www.answers.com/topic/pope-paul-vi> website accessed on 04/06/2010

The new man chosen was Cardinal Montini who was elected Pope on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1963 and who took the name Pope Paul VI; the world held its breath to see whether the new Pope would continue the reforms first initiated by Pope John XXIII. There was a very real concern that the new Pope would either revoke the Council altogether or backtrack on some of the initiatives being discussed by the Council, consequently there was a great deal of background lobbying, particularly on the part of more conservative Bishops and Cardinals. Among such Bishops a study group sprung up called the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* (International Group of Fathers) and included prelates such as “Cardinals Francis Spellman, Alfredo Ottaviani, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and Bishops Casimiro Morcillo of Madrid, Antonio de Castro Mayer of Campos, de proenca-Sigaud of Diamantina and 250 more prelates. Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre had effectively created a commando unit within the council composed of traditional Fathers who complained of the presence of Protestants and some other observers as well as the presence of liberal theologians such as Karl Rahner, Hans Kung, Yves Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Joseph Ratzinger”.<sup>83</sup> The group’s continued complaints about Protestants observing at the Council and the use of the liberal theologians named above caused a great deal of soul searching on the part of Pope Paul VI who did not wish to alienate the traditionalists, this therefore as one might imagine, created a great deal of tension within the Council and as already intimated, no little concern for Paul VI, who felt it necessary to ask Cardinal Bea “if perhaps the separated brethren and their mentality were excessively dominating the council, thus diminishing its psychological freedom”.<sup>84</sup> The Pope emphasised that “protecting the coherence of the teaching of the Catholic Church was more important than pleasing the observers”.<sup>85</sup> After consulting Cardinal Bea the Pope opted against dismissing either the present periti or indeed the various ecumenical observers.

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<sup>83</sup> ER11: *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*: Academic dictionaries and encyclopedias, source accessed at <http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/3333435> website accessed on 31/08/2010

<sup>84</sup> ER12: John L Allen Jr, January 31 2003, *Word from Rome, National Catholic Reporter* [Priest who was present at the start reviews bold ecumenical vision of Vatican II], source accessed at <http://nationalcatholicreporter.org/word/word0131.htm31/08/2010>

<sup>85</sup> ER12: John L Allen Jr, January 31 2003, *Word from Rome, National Catholic Reporter* [Priest who was present at the start reviews bold ecumenical vision of Vatican II], source accessed at <http://nationalcatholicreporter.org/word/word0131.htm31/08/2010>

Soon after his election on 21<sup>st</sup> June Pope Paul VI announced that the Council would continue and he convoked the second session for September 29<sup>th</sup> 1963.<sup>86</sup> Indeed it was through Pope Paul VI determination that not only Islam and Judaism but also all the religions that, each in its own way, are in search of salvation should be included in the declaration on the non – Christian religions.<sup>87</sup> On August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964 he published his first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (Pathways of the Church), a document which not only highlighted the importance of internal renewal within the Church but the need for the Church to “engage in dialogue with **all** men, including those whose views and beliefs are opposed to its own.”<sup>88</sup> Indeed in many quarters this document came to be known as the Pope’s charter for dialogue. In it the Pope emphasized a way of relating to the world, wherein the:

Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make.<sup>89</sup>

Equally the Church must also learn to listen to others:

Before speaking, we must take great care to listen not only to what men say but more especially to what they have in their hearts to say. Only then will we understand them and respect them and even as far as possible agree with them. Dialogue thrives on friendship and most especially on service.<sup>90</sup>

In relation to the need for dialogue *Ecclesiam Suam* states:

Speaking generally of the dialogue which the Church of today must take up with a great renewal of fervour, We would say that it must be readily conducted

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<sup>86</sup> Hebblethwaite, 1993: 333

<sup>87</sup> Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 1157

<sup>88</sup> ER. 2, *Pope Paul VI: Biography from Answers.com Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* pp 2-3  
<http://www.answers.com/topic/pope-paul-vi> website accessed on 06/06/2010

<sup>89</sup> Pope Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964: Para 64 (Pauline Books & Media), Boston: p 31

<sup>90</sup> Pope Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964: Para 87 (Pauline Books & Media), Boston: pp 37-38

with all men of good will both inside and outside the Church...<sup>91</sup> the Church can regard no one as excluded from its motherly embrace, no one as outside the scope of its motherly care.<sup>92</sup>

For the Church does

not wish to turn a blind eye to the spiritual and moral values of the various non-Christian religions, for we desire to join with them in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare, and civic order. Dialogue is possible in all these great projects, which are our concern as much as theirs and we will not fail to offer opportunities for discussion in the event of such an offer being favourably received in genuine, mutual respect.<sup>93</sup>

Thanks in no small part to Pope Paul VI and the impetus for dialogue generated by his 1964 encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Non – Christian Religions was indeed a document in tune with its time. A response in large part to the anti modernist stance once adopted by the Catholic Church, *Nostra Aetate* was a welcome renewal, one influenced not only by recent historical perspectives but also by a hunger for change among wider elements within the Catholic community, it was indeed to paraphrase what Pope John XXIII had said in relation to the second Vatican council a new Pentecost. This therefore was by any standards a radical document.

We must however acknowledge that not all the documents issued by Vatican II possessed the same juridical standing. Indeed those documents known as Dogmatic Constitutions were viewed as more authoritative than any of the decrees and declarations, which were inferior in the sense

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<sup>91</sup> Pope Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964: Para 93 (Pauline Books & Media), Boston: p39

<sup>92</sup> Pope Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964: Para 94 (Pauline Books & Media), Boston: p39

<sup>93</sup> Pope Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964: Para 108 (Pauline Books & Media), Boston: p 45

that Dogmatic Constitutions related to doctrinal matters while decrees and declarations were primarily directed at practical and pastoral concerns which presupposed the doctrine and theology of the aforementioned constitutions.<sup>94</sup> In the context described we must acknowledge that *Nostra Aetate* is ostensibly inferior to certain other Second Vatican Council documents, for instance The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. This though is not the whole story. Not only do such documents vary in their effect upon the church<sup>95</sup> but theologians also judge the substance and degree of any official pronouncement's authority by a variety of standards. Indeed McBrien outlines five key criteria:

1 What is the nature of the document?

2 What is the source of the pronouncement?

3 How representative was the process by which the document was written?

4 Do the concepts and language of the final formulation reflect the current state of the discussion on the topic?

5 How is the pronouncement received by those with competence on the topic, either by reason of their academic and scientific qualifications or by reason of their experiential knowledge of the subject? Does the pronouncement, in other words, have any significant impact on the life of the church?<sup>96</sup>

It is this fifth criterion that is most relevant to the evaluation of a document's status. As McBrien highlights:

According to this norm of reception the following seven documents of Vatican II have emerged in the Post – Conciliar period as the most important: *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et spes*, the *Decree on Ecumenism*, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, the

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<sup>94</sup> McBrien, 1980: 668

<sup>95</sup> McBrien, 1980: 668

<sup>96</sup> McBrien, 1980: 669



*Declaration on Religious Freedom, and the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions.*<sup>97</sup>

Most of the significant changes in Catholic thought and practise since Vatican II can according to McBrien “be traced to the teachings and orientations of these seven key council documents”.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore all of the documents described are concerned in one way or another with the mystery of the church. In this context the Church and the world beyond the Church in relation to other religions necessarily includes the *Declaration on non-Christian Religions*.<sup>99</sup>

The original core of the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions* concerned the Jews and was included at the express wish of Pope John XXIII.<sup>100</sup> In it as *Oesterreicher* makes plain:

a council for the first time in history acknowledges the search for the absolute by other men and by whole races and peoples, and honours the truth and holiness in other religions as the work of the one living God.<sup>101</sup>

It was also the first time that the church had: “publicly made her own the Pauline view of the mystery of Israel.”<sup>102</sup>

In this sense although the document is indeed an acknowledgement of the universal grace of God in all the religions of mankind, it is also especially concerned with Christianity’s relationship to God’s chosen people, that is to say the Jews.

After the explicit horror of the *Shoah* many Catholics felt compelled to reflect on whether the views expressed within their liturgy might have led some (already perhaps so pre-disposed) to

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<sup>97</sup> McBrien, 1980: 669

<sup>98</sup> McBrien, 1980: 670

<sup>99</sup> McBrien, 1980: 670

<sup>100</sup> Oesterreicher in Vorgrimler, 1968: 1

<sup>101</sup> Oesterreicher in Vorgrimler, 1968: 1

<sup>102</sup> Oesterreicher in Vorgrimler, 1968: 1

embrace anti-Semitic views. This one horrific event led many to not only face up to their sense of guilt head on but to also re-appropriate what Yves Congar once famously described as ‘the disfigured face of Christianity’.<sup>103</sup> Surely the impact and magnitude of such a horror had a large part to play in Christian self-reflection? Such reflection bore fruit when on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1960 Pope John XXIII personally commissioned Cardinal Bea, in his capacity as president of the secretariat for promoting Christian unity, to prepare a draft declaration on the inner relations between the Church and the people of Israel<sup>104</sup> This commission from Pope John’s perspective was no doubt (as we have previously noted), in part a Catholic response to the horrors of the *Shoah*, an event of seismic proportions, which shocked and horrified all right - thinking citizens. But such a declaration also provided profound challenges, both political and theological. The Arabs for instance were opposed to the document viewing it as implicit support for the state of Israel. The oriental patriarchs too were against the document perceiving its support of the Jewish people as antagonistic toward the Arab nations and fearing any possible backlash against the Christian minorities scattered throughout the Arab countries. There was too a degree of internal disapproval on specifically theological grounds especially on the part of certain conservative bishops and cardinals who were probably opposed to the council on principle. How much this grumbling on the part of a minority of dissenting bishops was due to a deeply rooted sense of anti – Semitism on the part of backward looking Christians, is indeed a moot point, certainly the pre- conciliar Church held the view that the Old Covenant had been abrogated, a view which it now abjures, due it must be said, in no small part to the efforts of the Second Vatican Council.

The majority of the council however were in favour of the document and there was great support of it in particular on the part of German cardinals and theologians. Equally one should not underestimate the role played by the media in reporting events from the council. Although conservative elements within the media railed against and disparaged the document they nevertheless proved a minority faction. The majority of the media supported the document and for the first time in history it might be argued that the gentlemen of the media had an implicit and subtle influence on the views of the Council Fathers. With all these forces and different factions

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<sup>103</sup> Conger, Source lost

<sup>104</sup> Oesterreicher in Vorgrimler, 1968: 1

at play it will come as no surprise to learn that the document underwent at least four major drafts, not to mention behind the scenes machinations and a number of somewhat *Machiavellian* interventions.

But why one might ask were religious traditions other than Judaism included in the context of this document? These other philosophies and religions were accepted as ways to the truth, albeit lesser models of the truth, but valid and holy responses by other people in other places and at other times including indeed our own time that contained the seed of the word. Christ was effectively hidden in their scriptures and in their ceremonies and rituals but nevertheless present by means of the *Logos Spermatikos* and if present in such a manner in Judaism he was equally present in other religious traditions too, a position equitable as we have already seen with early Christian Apologists such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria. Under such circumstances it was quite logical to include members of the other major world religions within the context of this document particularly as the Council Fathers were specifically re-appropriating the *Preparatio Evangelica* of these early Apologists.

The three key documents from Vatican II in relation to the present work are *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate*. *Lumen Gentium* reads:

those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ, or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – these too may attain eternal salvation.<sup>105</sup>

This was viable because (we must hold that)

the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal mystery.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 21st 1964: Para 16 in Flannery, 1992: pp 367-368

<sup>106</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, Promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7th 1965: Para 22 in Flannery, 1992: pp 922-924

Such positions as those stated above are positive in both content and tone and clearly nullify the view that outside the church there is no salvation. What has now replaced the concept of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is in Linden's words "a carefully modulated acceptance of the action of Grace in other religions".<sup>107</sup>

## **A Reflection on Content**

### **Christianity's response to Buddhism in *Nostra Aetate***

But what of the document itself, what in fact did it really say? What was the nature of the conclusions reached and what impact did it make on the wider world? In reference to *Nostra Aetate* we should remember the social cultural and historical context of the time in which the document came into being. The Catholic Church was only beginning to emerge from the self imposed constraints of a Neo Thomistic theology in which syllogisms were presented as setting up questions which could only be answered in a fashion predetermined by the question already asked. Certain younger Catholic theologians, many of them influenced by the likes of *Marechal*, *Heidegger* etc., had started to question the mechanical and dry understanding of theology as presented by the Seminary instruction manuals. Among these theologians some of whom would later become *Peritus* at the Second Vatican Council were *Karl Rahner*, *Yves Congar*, *Joseph Ratzinger*, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, *Hans Kung* and others. In the context of the theology which the institutional church had always valued and prized such change was truly radical. As *Oesterreicher* shrewdly notes "the Declaration demanded a mental change and mental change is never easy,"<sup>108</sup> it is a far reaching document and is one which explodes many myths, and is in this sense as *Vorgrimler* writes "a revolutionary document".<sup>109</sup>

With this in mind I will now attempt to outline in fairly broad brushstrokes the Catholic Church's response in *Nostra Aetate* to the religious traditions of the East, particularly Buddhism, and in the process show why *Nostra Aetate* proved a pivotal document for Catholic engagement in both interreligious and intermonastic dialogue specifically in relation to Buddhists and Christians.

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<sup>107</sup> Linden, 2009: 74

<sup>108</sup> Oesterreicher in Vorgrimler, 1968: 136

<sup>109</sup> Vorgrimler quoted by Oesterreicher in Vorgrimler, 1968: 136

*Nostra Aetate* states:

Buddhism, in its various forms, testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which men can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help. So, too, other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men by outlining a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.<sup>110</sup>

Although admittedly open to various forms of interpretation these are radical words on the part of the Catholic Church, especially if one relates them to the historical and social contingencies of time and place. If we look over our shoulder with a purely post modern theological perspective and find certain aspects of the document's content, either too superficial or too wide then that is surely achieved only with the benefit of hindsight. We must instead put ourselves in the position of the Council Fathers who wrote the document with the entire political and historical contextual complexities contingent to that place and that time and applaud the bravery they showed in reappropriating the best elements of the Catholic tradition in preparation for interreligious dialogue.

For instance *Gaudium et Spes* states:

Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact the more

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<sup>110</sup> *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non – Christian Religions*, Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1965: Para 2 in Flannery, 1979: pp 738-739

deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them.<sup>111</sup>

Therefore

Since Christ died for all men and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.<sup>112</sup>

Although difficult to present Buddhism as one great-undifferentiated homogenous entity this is effectively what the declaration does. But this is neither naiveté nor crass irresponsibility; rather it is a shrewd and sophisticated attempt on the part of the church to open up areas of dialogue with Buddhism through concentrating on similarities rather than differences. It is however we must acknowledge, difficult to give a satisfactory and succinct description of Buddhism because it is effectively an amalgam of different schools and traditions.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless one of the common characteristics the council highlights between the religions is the presence within Buddhism as a whole of “the radical insufficiency of this shifting world,”<sup>114</sup> a perspective stressed as Dumoulin notes “in the sermon of *Benares*, one of Buddhism’s oldest and most sacred texts and attributed to the religions founder *Shakyamuni*”.<sup>115</sup>

There are of course as we have already intimated radical differences between particular schools of Buddhism, for instance, the differences existing between *Theravadin* and *Mahayana* Buddhism. There are also radical differences between existing cultural forms of Buddhism, even

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<sup>111</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* Promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1965 Para 28 in Flannery, 1992: pp 928-929

<sup>112</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* Promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1965 Para 22 in Flannery, 1992: pp 922-924

<sup>113</sup> Dumoulin in Vorgrimler, 1968: 145

<sup>114</sup> *Declaration on the Church’s Relationship to Non – Christian Religions* proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1965 Para 2 in Flannery, 1992: pp 738-739

<sup>115</sup> Dumoulin in Vorgrimler, 1968: 145

within the same school, for instance *Mahayana Zen* Buddhism in Japan and *Mahayana* Buddhism in Tibet. Both forms of Buddhism have inherited and incorporated crucial elements of the indigenous culture from which they came. Tibetan Buddhism has inherited aspects of the traditional Bon culture of the area and Japanese Zen Buddhism which originally emanated from Chinese *Ch'an* Zen and Taoist models, has incorporated elements of both these as well as ancient Japanese culture and tradition into its *modus operandi*. The tea ceremony for instance, the concept of *kensho* based on a sudden enlightenment experience, use of the *keisaku* stick in *Rinzai* Zen (a long stick used to hit a dreaming monk on the shoulder and jerk him back to awareness). Indeed within the *Mahayana* tradition alone there are three major schools of Zen. These are *Rinzai* Zen, *Soto* Zen and Pure Land.

When translated or transmuted into the various different types of Buddhist schools and traditions which also came into being in a variety of historical time-frames and different social contexts and structures we can perhaps begin to see not only the uniqueness of each school and the cultural form it subsequently accrues but also the dangers inherent in dissolving such difference into one indigenous and homogenous whole. Nevertheless to engage in open and serious dialogue with the religious other as the Catholic Church is doing here requires an intrinsically religious meeting point or common ground that can only emerge if one has a belief in a unified conception of ultimate reality. This of course is effectively an act of faith that imbues one's perception of reality as not being absurd and that therefore what is truly ultimate is unified so that all quests for communion with the ultimate are in the process of converging, albeit one's belief in a unified reality can only be defined from within a particular religion. What Kung describes as *Grund Vertrauen* (basic act of trust).

Even although the Catholic Church remains the repository of the full and unadulterated truth she can nevertheless still learn from others and perhaps through learning from others rediscover neglected potential within her own tradition and gain new emphasis and new meaning. One must therefore accept that there is indeed potential to discover in the other religion neglected or forgotten truths that are implicit in the symbolic, ritual or doctrinal system of one's own

tradition. Here in embryo is a truth, which I think the Church is attempting to express (however inadequately) in *Nostra Aetate*.

After the publication of *Nostra Aetate* Cardinal *Bea* described the declaration on non Christian religions as a beginning and not an end, for *Bea* the principles and spirit of the declaration ought to lead to effective action in the lives of the church and the faithful so that the dialogue explained by the Pope in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* may take place. As *Oesterreicher* notes “the *Declaration on non Christian Religions* is indeed an important and promising beginning”.<sup>116</sup>

There are however certainly deficiencies inherent within *Nostra Aetate*; for instance Barnes detects a certain blandness<sup>117</sup> but despite both this and the brevity of the document itself it was as Barnes cogently states:

more than an exercise in updating Catholic thinking.<sup>118</sup> It was a response to and an acknowledgement of the phenomenon of religious pluralism in which the church’s stance was irrevocably changed. If as *Alberigo* states ‘the most important novelty of Vatican II lies in the very fact that it was convoked and held’<sup>119</sup> then surely the council can confidently be claimed as the single most important ecclesial ‘event’ of the twentieth century, not because of the depth of its theological insight into the nature of the church, its ‘updating’ of the liturgy or its directives on missionary and pastoral practice. More profoundly through the council the church was made conscious of the radical contingency of all human living and therefore of its own historicity.<sup>120</sup>

Indeed defining what is true and holy in another tradition can only be achieved through a rigorous process of dialogue and discernment, effectively a work of the spirit in which the church

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<sup>116</sup> Oesterreicher in Vorgrimler, 1968: 130

<sup>117</sup> Barnes, 2002: 25

<sup>118</sup> Barnes, 2002: 53

<sup>119</sup> Alberigo quoted in Barnes, 2002: 31

<sup>120</sup> Barnes, 2002: 31



herself is also called to co-operate.<sup>121</sup> One might therefore describe such dialogue purely as an end in itself.

This as Barnes notes:

shifts attention from a theology for dialogue (principles which prepare for dialogue and encounter) to a theology which arises from the complex dialogical experience itself, what might be called a theology of dialogue.<sup>122</sup>

So what exactly is the Catholic Churches view of dialogue? Has it progressed, or conversely, has it incrementally regressed since the publication of the Declaration on non-Christian religions? It is with the purpose of answering such questions as well as to outlining a history of Catholic interreligious dialogue post Vatican II that I would now like to focus my attention.

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<sup>121</sup> Barnes, 2002: 53

<sup>122</sup> Barnes, 2002: 53

### Chapter 3

#### Structures and Documents offering Guidelines for Interreligious/Intermonastic Dialogue Post Vatican II

I shall now offer a history of the official structures which the Catholic Church subsequently set up to deal with the implementation of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Non – Christian Religions. The structures described show us how the Catholic Church has attempted to respond to the challenges laid down by the Second Vatican Council, and how in certain respects the Church's views have perceptively broadened and in other respects how she has narrowed her focus and tightened up the criteria for interreligious dialogue. Coff, for instance, informs us that even as the Second Vatican Council was still in progress “a special secretariat was called into being (May 17<sup>th</sup> 1964) to promote the church's relationship with other religions”.<sup>123</sup> This secretariat set up by Pope Paul VI and known as the Secretariat for Non Christians was an attempt to create a departmental structure within the Curia of the church capable of taking special responsibility for interreligious relations and to provide as Thomas C Fox notes “the form and substance for the Church to go forward”.<sup>124</sup> The secretariat, as with other offices of the Roman curia, consisted of members who were Bishops residing in different parts of the world. It also consisted of a number of advisors representing different regions and various complementary fields of expertise.<sup>125</sup> The first president was Cardinal Paul Marella (1964-75) and it was his duty as President of this new body to help convey, in whatever fashion might be deemed appropriate, the new attitude being fostered within the Catholic Church toward other religions. Experts were called upon and guidelines produced to help in the dialogue with Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and indigenous African religions.<sup>126</sup> There was also theological and pastoral reflections published and made available to the public through a journal founded specifically for that purpose, the journal in question being: *Bulletin. Secretariatus pro Non-Christianis* (later, under Cardinal Arinze, to be renamed *pro Dialogo*).<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Coff in Mitchell & Wisemen, 2003: 5

<sup>124</sup> Fox, 2002: 96

<sup>125</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 239

<sup>126</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 239

<sup>127</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 239

The presidency under Cardinal Pignedoli (1973-80)<sup>128</sup> was to prove crucial, particularly in the sphere of intermonastic dialogue. Pignedoli expanded as Borelli and Fitzgerald duly note:

contacts with other religious leaders in various corners of the globe, travelled to meet them, and encouraged said leaders to make visits to Rome. Formal meetings were organised for Catholic authorities in order to encourage them in the way of dialogue.<sup>129</sup>

During the presidency of Archbishop Jean Jadot (1980-84)<sup>130</sup> the secretariat underwent a period of reflection and consolidation in which it produced its first document *The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission* which was issued in 1984. The document was published as a twentieth anniversary celebration and summary of the Second Vatican Council's teachings on interreligious dialogue and in it the secretariat urged local churches to participate in and set up adequate structures which would enable dialogue.<sup>131</sup>

In 1984 Pope John Paul II appointed Archbishop Francis Arinze of *Ontisha* Nigeria to be pro president of the secretariat for non-Christians.<sup>132</sup> On his subsequent 1985 promotion to the position of Cardinal he assumed sole presidency of the Secretariat.<sup>133</sup> Then in 1988 in the Constitution - *Pastor Bonus*, the then most recent reform of the Roman Curia, metamorphosed the Secretariat for non - Christians into the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.<sup>134</sup> The document stipulated as Borelli and Fitzgerald highlight:

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<sup>128</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 239

<sup>129</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 239

<sup>130</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 239

<sup>131</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 240

<sup>132</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 240

<sup>133</sup> Arinze & Ruppert, 2004: 16

<sup>134</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 240

That the council promotes and regulates relations with the members and groups of those religions that are not included under the name of Christian and also with those who in any way are endowed with a sense of religion.<sup>135</sup>

Equally the council works so that the dialogue with followers of other religions takes place in a suitable manner, and it promotes various forms of relationships between them; it promotes opportune studies and conventions so that these may produce reciprocal knowledge and esteem and so that, through common work, the dignity of man and his spiritual and moral values are favoured; it also provides for the formation of those who devote themselves to this kind of dialogue.<sup>136</sup>

As can be deduced from the quotations already provided the purpose of the mission of the council was:

- 1 to *give advice* on the way dialogue is to be practised;
- 2 to *establish relations* with persons belonging to other religions;
- 3 to *engage in studies*, above all with a view to human promotion;
- 4 to *ensure the formation* of persons engaged in dialogue.<sup>137</sup>

Around this time an opinion was fostered within certain quarters of the Church that the impetus toward dialogue with the religious other somehow contradicted the Great Commission (Matt 28: 16 – 20). This narrow perspective and quasi literal reading of the biblical passage engendered a great deal of unease and resulted in the preparation of a new document intended to study and hopefully clarify the relationship between dialogue and proclamation,<sup>138</sup> the first draft of the

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<sup>135</sup> *Pastor Bonus* (article 159) quoted in Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 240

<sup>136</sup> *Pastor Bonus* (article 160) quoted in Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 240

<sup>137</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 240

<sup>138</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: pp 240-241

document was presented to the Plenary Assembly of 1987<sup>139</sup> where it became evident that the matter also concerned the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples which led to further work and the establishment of a joint commission to help draft the document in question. Quite clearly the necessity of collaboration between the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue alongside the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples created a degree of tension, the remit and values underlying both organizations inevitably leading to subtle shifts of emphasis and divergences of opinion.<sup>140</sup>

At approximately the same time as *Dialogue and Proclamation* was in preparation a mission encyclical of Pope John Paul II was also in preparation, that is to say *Redemptoris Missio* and as Borelli cogently notes:

the decision was taken not to alter *Dialogue and Proclamation*, but to delay its publication and include in it a statement that it should be read in the light of the encyclical. *Dialogue and Proclamation* therefore was eventually published at Pentecost, 19 May 1991.<sup>141</sup>

In the passages above I have briefly alluded to documents such as *Redemptoris Missio* and *Dialogue and Proclamation*. These and a few more documents besides were crucial in the formation of the Catholic Church's attitude toward interreligious dialogue post Vatican II and it is to these documents I now wish to focus my attention.

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<sup>139</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 241

<sup>140</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 241

<sup>141</sup> Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006: 241

**Chapter 4**  
**Landmark Documents in Interreligious Dialogue: *Dialogue and Mission – Dialogue and Proclamation***

**Dialogue and Mission**

*Dialogue and Mission* was published on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1984<sup>142</sup> by the Secretariat for non-Christians and was entitled ‘*The Attitude of the Church toward the followers of other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*’, or simply ‘Dialogue and Mission’.<sup>143</sup> This document was produced to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, and as we shall soon see it expanded the Catholic Church’s concept of what dialogue might mean particularly in relationship to mission and evangelization.

*Dialogue and Mission* (hereafter DM) is structured in three parts, each part containing short epigrammatic paragraphs relating to various aspects of dialogue and mission. After an initial introductory section the document deals first with mission and then with dialogue detailing for the first time in a Catholic document the four different types of dialogue that people of faith engage in, that is to say the dialogue of daily life, the dialogue of works, the dialogue of experts and the dialogue of religious experience. Finally in the third section the document deals with dialogue, mission and the complex multifaceted relationship that exists between the two.

In the first few introductory paragraphs DM outlines the influence of the Second Vatican Council in relation to the Church’s encounter with followers of other religions and in paragraph three we learn that:

the norm and ideal of dialogue was made known to the Church by Paul VI in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (August 6, 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

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<sup>142</sup> E.R.3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission* (May 10, 1984) Title Page (Hereafter I will refer to this document as Dialogue and Mission)

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>143</sup> E.R.3: Secretariat for Non – Christians; *Dialogue and Mission*, (May 10, 1984) Title Page

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment.<sup>144</sup>

In paragraph four of DM we learn that on Pentecost 1964 Pope Paul VI set up a dicastery distinct from the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples called the Secretariat for Non – Christians whose remit was essentially to discover suitable methods of opening up dialogue with non – Christian religions.<sup>145</sup>

In a similar vein the *Secretarius pro non-Christianis* 1984, XIX/1 (55) as quoted in the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin 21, Oct 1984, outlines how Pope John Paul II in conversation with members of the Secretariat for non-Christians also highlighted the importance which interreligious dialogue assumes for all religions and all believers:

today more than ever we are required to collaborate so that every person can reach their transcendent goal and realize their authentic growth and consequently help cultures preserve their own religious and spiritual values in the presence of rapid social change. Dialogue, the Pope insisted, is fundamental for the church which is called to collaborate in God's plan with its methods of presence, respect and love towards all persons.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians; *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 3  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 29/06/2010

<sup>145</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians; *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 4  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 29/06/2010

<sup>146</sup> E.R. 4: *Secretarius pro non – Christianis* 1984, XIX/1 (55) quoted in MID Bulletin 21, Oct 1984 :  
<http://www.monasticdialog.com/a.php?id=48> MID **Bulletin 21, October 1984** website accessed on 28/05/2010

Dialogue therefore 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.<sup>147</sup>

In this sense *Dialogue and Mission* builds not only on *Nostra Aetate* but the norm and ideal of dialogue made known in the Church by Pope Paul VI in his first encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (August 6, 1964).<sup>148</sup>

Essentially therefore DM focuses on the relationship between dialogue and mission and attempts to delineate the different aspects and manners of mission,<sup>149</sup> explaining for instance how the Catholic Church views dialogue as an essential element of evangelisation alongside both witness and proselytization.

The Mission of the Church according to DM quoting from *Ad Gentes*:

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 sometimes depend on the Church itself, sometimes on the peoples, groups or individuals to whom the mission is directed.... The appropriate actions or tools must be brought to bear on any given circumstance or situation.... The special end of this missionary activity is 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

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<sup>147</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians; *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 3

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 29/06/2010

<sup>148</sup> Pope Paul VI Encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964 Pauline Books & Media, Boston

<sup>149</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 12

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010



among all men and women (cf. LG 5, 9, 35; GS 39-45, 91, 92; UR 2; DH 14; AA 5).<sup>150</sup>

The Church therefore is, it would seem, a Pilgrim Church and as such is deemed to be missionary by its very nature.<sup>151</sup> This task of mission can be carried out in many ways and the goal of this mission is evangelisation.

Let us now investigate what evangelisation entails in the context of this document. Obviously there is proselytization, but another legitimate form of evangelisation according to *Dialogue and Mission* is simple Christian witness, as is “the concrete commitment to the service of mankind,”<sup>152</sup> Another form of evangelisation involves liturgical life, prayer and contemplation which are described as “testimonies to a living and liberating relationship with the active and true God”.<sup>153</sup> Finally there is also dialogue, in which as the document states “Christians meet the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together toward truth and to work together in projects of common concern”.<sup>154</sup>

DM at least implicitly links the mission of the Church and her members with the various forms of evangelisation manifested in the life of Jesus Christ, and stresses the need for all, both individuals, and Church, to follow his example; Paragraph fifteen for instance, states:

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

<sup>150</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 11  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>151</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para10  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>152</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para13  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>153</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 13  
<http://www.msceurope.co.dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcid.pdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>154</sup> E.R 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para13  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

works which complete his preaching. Accepting contradiction, failure, and death, his victory passes through the gift of life. Everything in him is a means and way of revelation and salvation (cf. EN 6-12); everything is the expression of his love (cf. Jn 3:16; 13:1; 1 Jn 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" (Jn 13:35).<sup>155</sup>

As well as outlining the various forms of mission/evangelisation undertaken by Jesus in his own lifetime e.g., dialogue, witness, proselytization and so on. DM also investigates the differences of mission manifested in the Early Church, looking first at the New Testament where we receive a "composite, yet differentiated picture of mission. There is a plurality of services and functions which arise from a variety of charisms (cf. 1 Co 12:28-30; Ep 4:11-12; Rm 12:6-8)".<sup>156</sup> For example as DM also states:

St. Paul himself noted the particular character of his missionary vocation when he declared that he was not sent by Christ to baptize but to announce the Gospel (1 Co 1:17). For this reason, alongside the "apostles," the "prophets," and the "evangelists," we find those who are called to deeds for the community and for the assistance of those who suffer. There are the tasks of families, of husbands, of wives, and of children. There are the duties of masters and servants. Each person has a task of particular witness in society. The First Letter of Peter, sent to Christians living in situations of diaspora, gives indications which never cease to surprise by their relevance for today. A passage of this letter was cited by Pope John Paul II in 1979, to the Catholic community of Ankara as "the golden rule of contacts between

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<sup>155</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 15  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20opc.pdf> website accessed on 29/06/ 2010

<sup>156</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 16  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20opc.pdf> website accessed on 29/06/ 2010







The above statement reminds us that from a distinctively Catholic perspective that people of other religious traditions, or indeed of no religious tradition at all, are essentially saved through the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Paragraph twenty four of DM outlines the action of the Holy Spirit who acts in the depths of people's consciences and who works outside the confines of the mystical body. Consequently "the Spirit both anticipates and accompanies the path of the Church which, nevertheless, feels itself impelled to discern the signs of his presence, to follow him wherever he leads and to serve him as a humble and discreet collaborator".<sup>167</sup>

Equally in non-Christian religions there exist those Seeds of the Word which manifest Christ in a hidden way and contain "rays of the truth which illumine all mankind".<sup>168</sup> These values found preserved in the great religious traditions of humanity therefore as DM states "merit the attention and the esteem of Christians. Their spiritual patrimony is a genuine invitation to dialogue".<sup>169</sup>

An integral part of our mission as Christians therefore also entails different forms of interreligious dialogue, indeed according to DM those involved in interreligious dialogue should not only know the religious traditions of the other but share in the cultural and social life of the religious partner seeking in the process the revealed spiritual riches and treasures found within their particular traditions.<sup>170</sup>

Section two of *Dialogue and Mission* examines what form dialogue should take and acknowledges the multiple types of dialogue.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 24

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/ 2010

<sup>168</sup> *Declaration On the Relation of the Church to Non – Christian Religions: Nostra Aetate*: Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965; Para 2 cited by the Secretariat for Non – Christians in *Dialogue and Mission* 1984: Para 26

<sup>169</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 26

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/ 2010

<sup>170</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 27

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/ 2010

<sup>171</sup> ER 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 28

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/ 2010

As we can see interreligious dialogue is itself now viewed as one of the essential components of evangelization. In applying such dialogue we can learn from other traditions to reclaim aspects of our own tradition which have perhaps been neglected or which have been discarded. This is equally true of the other traditions who can find in Christianity a way to holiness by reclaiming forgotten or neglected elements within their own tradition. In this sense we are evangelizing through a spirit of interaction, exchange and witness. Such interreligious dialogue finds its place in the “dynamism of the church’s mission”<sup>172</sup> a mission which can of course take several forms. There is the dialogue of daily life in which one interacts with neighbours and friends of another culture or tradition at a purely human and personal level, the dialogue of works wherein issues of a humanitarian, social, economic and political nature are jointly acted upon at an international level,<sup>173</sup> the dialogue of experts which involves exchanges of ideas at the theological level with the avowed intention to “confront deepen and enrich one’s own respective religious heritage”<sup>174</sup>, a process which it is hoped might enable such dialogue to appreciate the cultural and spiritual values of the other and lead to some sort of “fellowship and communion among people,”<sup>175</sup> and finally there is (and this is important to note in the context of the present dissertation) the dialogue of religious experience where people of other religions deeply rooted in their own traditions might come together and share their experiences of prayer, contemplation and faith. In the words of the document itself “this type of dialogue can be a mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals”.<sup>176</sup>

The third chapter of DM is divided up into two parts, the first concentrating on the multiple relationships of dialogue and mission, specifically mission and conversion, and the second on dialogue for the building of God's reign.

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<sup>172</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 30

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>173</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 31 – 32

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>174</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 33

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>175</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*; 1984: Para 34

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

<sup>176</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 35

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20and%20Mission%20-%20pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/2010

Chapter three section number one of DM concentrates as already noted on mission and conversion stating clearly that proclamation does indeed have conversion as its goal, but that:

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 toward another. Thus, for example, from a particular love the heart can open itself to one that is more universal.<sup>177</sup>

Such a process of conversion as the one described must be subject to one's conscience. Indeed in this respect "the law of conscience is sovereign".<sup>178</sup>

DM quoting *Dignitatis Humanae* clearly states "No one must be constrained to act against his conscience, nor should he be impeded in acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters".<sup>179</sup>

Indeed

in the Christian view the principal agent of conversion is not man but the Holy Spirit.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 37

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/2010

<sup>178</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 38

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/2010

<sup>179</sup> E.R. 3: *Dignitatis Humanae* promulgated by Pope Paul VI on Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 1965 Para 3 cited by the Secretariat for Non – Christians in *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 38

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/ 2010

<sup>180</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 39

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/2010



And as the Apostle Paul states in (1Cor 3:9)

the Christian is but a simple instrument and co-worker of God.<sup>181</sup>

In chapter three section one paragraph forty, DM acknowledges that not only the Christian desires to share his or her particular experience of Christ with his brother from another religion, but that this desire to share would also be a natural response of the other believer.<sup>182</sup>

Finally Chapter three section two of DM concentrates on dialogue for the building of God's reign. Part of building God's reign inevitably includes collaboration in God's plan and here DM unpacks the significance of John 16: 13 and states that:

the Church relies on the promise made by Christ that the Spirit will guide it in history toward the fullness of truth (Jn 16: 13). For this reason it goes out to meet individuals, peoples, and their cultures, aware that the seeds of goodness and truth are found in every human community, 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).<sup>183</sup>

DM then goes on to outline who the Church's partners in dialogue might be and what criterion (if any) such dialogue partners must fulfil:

"We also turn our thoughts to all who acknowledge God and who ' preserve in their traditions precious elements of religion and humanity. We want

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<sup>181</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 39  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/2010

<sup>182</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non – Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 40  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 30/06/2010

<sup>183</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non - Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 41  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/ 2010

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 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).<sup>184</sup>

Dialogue therefore:

becomes a source of hope and a factor of communion in mutual transformation. The Holy Spirit directs the carrying out of God's design in the history of the individual and of all time when God's children who are dispersed by sin will be reunited as one (cf. Jn 11:52).<sup>185</sup>

God as DM highlights is patient and to him nothing is impossible, for his:

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.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non - Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 42  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/ 2010

<sup>185</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non - Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 43  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/ 2010

<sup>186</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non - Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 44  
<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/ 2010

Indeed

We live 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. Js 5:7-8; Mk 4:26-30).<sup>187\</sup>

Before analysing any inherent tension in the document outlined I should first like to explore the other major declaration issued by what had now become the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

### **Dialogue and Proclamation**

This new document issued by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue was published on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1991 and was entitled *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*.<sup>188</sup>

*Dialogue and Proclamation* follows a similar structure to *Dialogue and Mission* and like the previous document it too is also divided into three parts, adopting once again a series of short epigrammatic paragraphs.

In its introduction *Dialogue and Proclamation* (hereafter DP) outlines the preceding landmark statements we have hitherto discussed.

DP states how it intends to investigate more deeply the complexities of why and how both dialogue and proclamation might be viewed as an authentic form of one evangelising mission. The document also notes that the content was studied and approved by two dicasteries, the

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<sup>187</sup> E.R. 3: Secretariat for Non - Christians, *Dialogue and Mission*, 1984: Para 44

<http://www.msceurope.co.uk/dialogie%20%and%Mission%20%-pcidpdf> website accessed on 26/05/ 2010

<sup>188</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 210 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Title Page of Document

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.<sup>189</sup>

DP describes the problematic nature of dialogue and proclamation in the context of evangelization by clearly outlining the different attitudes and points of view that are often adopted. For example some Catholics view interreligious dialogue as more important than proselytization and other Catholics view proclamation as being fundamental to Gospel values; interestingly both views are deemed erroneous. DP acknowledges the need for pastoral guidance but admits there can be no definitive answer to “the many and complex questions which arise in this connection”.<sup>190</sup>

DP quickly outlines and defines exactly what it means when using terms such as mission, evangelisation, dialogue and proclamation. Evangelisation, we are informed, is used in its broad sense to mean proclamation, witness and dialogue rather than proclamation of the Gospel alone; both proclamation and dialogue therefore are viewed as integral to the Church’s evangelising mission.<sup>191</sup>

In relation to dialogue DP offers three forms; firstly reciprocal communication at the human level leading to deeper communion and a common goal,<sup>192</sup> secondly the spirit of dialogue viewed as an attitude of “respect and friendship which permeates or should permeate all those activities constituting the evangelising mission of the Church,”<sup>193</sup> and thirdly in the context of religious plurality

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<sup>189</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 211 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 3

<sup>190</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 212 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 4c

<sup>191</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp214-215 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 8-10

<sup>192</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 214 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 9

<sup>193</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 214 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 9

“all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment”<sup>194</sup> in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions. It is in this third sense that the present document uses the term dialogue for one of the integral elements of the Church’s evangelizing mission.<sup>195</sup>

After the general introduction already outlined; paragraphs 14-32 in *Dialogue and Proclamation* delineate Christian approaches to religious traditions, highlighting in paragraph 14 the necessity for respect on the part of Christians for other traditions and noting in paragraph 15 that the second Vatican Council gave a lead in adopting a positive assessment of these other traditions. *Dialogue and Proclamation* then proceeds to revisit some of the famous statements issued by the Second Vatican Council in relation to openness and the need for dialogue with other religious traditions quoting for instance paragraph 22 of *Gaudium et Spes*:

since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God in the Paschal mystery.<sup>196</sup>

As well as paragraph 2 of *Nostra Aetate* in which the Second Vatican Council perceived in these other traditions:

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<sup>194</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Mission* Para 3; cited in *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 214 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 9

<sup>195</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 214 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 9

<sup>196</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1965, Para 22 cited by the PCID in *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp 215-216 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City Pentecost 1991: Para 15

“a ray of that truth which enlightens all”.<sup>197</sup>

*Ad Gentes* meanwhile speaks of the “seed of the word” and “the riches which a generous God has distributed among the nations”.<sup>198</sup>

These references show according to *Dialogue and Proclamation*:

that the council has openly acknowledged the presence of positive values not only in the religious life of individual believers of other religious traditions, but also in the religious traditions to which they belong.<sup>199</sup>

This preparation for the Gospel the document notes:

Plays a providential role in the divine economy of salvation....and impels the Church to enter into dialogue and collaboration.<sup>200</sup>

DP then outlines what it perceives as the universal mission of Jesus Christ quoting Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 23) to help substantiate the view promulgated that:

Jesus is opening up a new horizon, beyond the purely local, to a universality which is both Christological and Pneumatological in character.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> *Declaration on Non – Christian Religions* promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1965, Para 2 cited by the P.C.I.D. in *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 217 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City Pentecost 1991: Para 16

<sup>198</sup> *Ad Gentes* promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1965, Para 11 cited by the PCID in *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 217 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City Pentecost 1991: Para 16

<sup>199</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 217 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 17

<sup>200</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 217 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 17

Jesus' message therefore is proved by the witness of his life and this message is not only confined to the chosen people, for he says in Mt 8: 10-11:

many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven....

DP also offers biblical support for a positive and open attitude toward the Gentiles highlighting

Paul's discourse to the *Lycaonians* (Acts 14: 8-18) as well as his *Areopagus* speech at Athens in which he praised their religious spirit and announced to them the one whom unknowingly they revered as the "unknown God (Acts 17: 22-34)".<sup>202</sup>

Like the New Testament the Sub - apostolic traditions also contain conflicting evidence. Negative judgements certainly abound but certain important early Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons and Clement of Alexandria speak of the *Logos Spermatikos* (seed of the word); for them "Jesus Christ has in an incomplete way manifested himself in these other religions".<sup>203</sup> Christ therefore is viewed as mysteriously hidden in the forms, practices, beliefs and traditions of these other philosophies and religions which effectively become pointers toward the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ.<sup>204</sup>

Following neatly from the concepts outlined as the seed of the word, *Dialogue and Proclamation* investigates what it describes as a "theology of history".<sup>205</sup> Such a history, the document states,

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<sup>201</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp218-219 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 21

<sup>202</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p220 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 23

<sup>203</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation* , pp 220-221 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 24

<sup>204</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 221 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 25

<sup>205</sup> Ibid

becomes “salvation history in as much as through it God progressively manifests himself and communicates with humankind”.<sup>206</sup> This viewpoint is said to:

culminate in Augustine who in his later works stressed the universal presence and influence of the mystery of Christ even before the incarnation. In fulfilment of his plan of salvation, God, in his Son, has reached out to the whole of humankind. Thus, in a certain sense, Christianity already exists at the beginning of the human race.<sup>207</sup>

It was this early Christian vision therefore that the Second Vatican Council re - discovered and re-appropriated. *Dialogue and Proclamation* also notes the positive input from John Paul II in the area of interreligious dialogue highlighting in particular his address to the Roman Curia after the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi in October of 1986,<sup>208</sup> noting in particular his claim that the Holy Spirit is present in the heart of every person, Christian or non – Christian.<sup>209</sup> Herein lies the mystery of the unity of all mankind, wherein DP states:

“all are called to a common destiny, the fullness of life in God. Moreover, there is but one plan of salvation for humankind, with its centre in Jesus Christ, who in his incarnation “has united himself in a certain manner to every person” (*Redemptor hominis*, 13; cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 22.2). Finally there needs to be mentioned the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the members of the other religious traditions. From all this the Pope concludes to a “mystery of unity” which was

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<sup>206</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 221 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 25

<sup>207</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 221 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 25

<sup>208</sup> Weigel, 511

<sup>209</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 222 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 27



manifested clearly at Assisi, “in spite of the differences between religious professions”.<sup>210</sup>

This is a position highlighted even further in one of *Dialogue and Proclamation*'s most important passages which states:

From this mystery of unity it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit....the mystery of salvation reaches out to them, in a way known to God, through the invisible action of the Spirit of Christ. Concretely it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their conscience that the members of other religions respond positively to God's invitation to receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their saviour.<sup>211</sup>

The members of other religions are it would seem mysteriously saved by Christ through the sincere practice of their own tradition. From a distinctively Catholic perspective people of other religious traditions or indeed of no religious tradition at all, are saved through the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic Church to paraphrase Hans Kung, might be said to be the ordinary means of grace, while other religious traditions might be described as extraordinary means of grace.<sup>212</sup>

Such elements of Grace as might be found in other religious traditions are, according to DP, not always immediately apparent, and it should not be assumed that every aspect of another tradition

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<sup>210</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 222 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City ; Para 28

Citation taken from *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. IX, 2 (1986) pp. 2019-2029 ; English text in *L'Osservatore Romano* weekly edition in English, 5 January 1987, and Bulletin n. 64 (1987/1) pp. 54-62

<sup>211</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 223 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City ; Para 29

<sup>212</sup> SOURCE KUNG ON ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE

is good.<sup>213</sup> Indeed it must be recognized that there exist fundamental differences between certain aspects of Christianity and these other religious traditions.<sup>214</sup>

The first section of DP entitled ‘On a Christian Approach to Religious Traditions’ ends with a challenging view which states that:

while entering in an open mind into dialogue with the followers of other religious traditions, Christians may also have to challenge them in a peaceful spirit with regard to the content of their belief. But Christians too must also allow themselves to be questioned. Notwithstanding the fullness of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, the way Christians understand their religion, and the way they practise it may be in need of purification.<sup>215</sup>

The second section of Dialogue and Proclamation is entitled “*the place of interreligious Dialogue in the Evangelizing Mission of the Church*”<sup>216</sup> and effectively highlights the concept of the Catholic Church as the universal sacrament “necessary for salvation”.<sup>217</sup>

The relationship between the Church and the kingdom is mysterious and complex.<sup>218</sup> Part of the Church’s role according to Dialogue and Proclamation:

Consists in recognizing that the inchoate reality of this kingdom can be found also beyond the confines of the Church, for example in the hearts of the

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<sup>213</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 223 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 30

<sup>214</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 223 in Off print of Bulletin No 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 31

<sup>215</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp 223-224 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 32

<sup>216</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, Section B) : Page 224 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City

<sup>217</sup> *Lumen Gentium* promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 21<sup>st</sup> 1964 Para 14 cited by the P.C.I.D. in *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 224 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City Pentecost 1991: Para 33

<sup>218</sup> P.C.I.D. *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 224 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 34

followers of other religious traditions, insofar as they live evangelical values and are open to the action of the Spirit.<sup>219</sup>

The Church is a pilgrim Church and although Jesus Christ is seen as the mediator and the source of truth as experienced in revelation, the tradition of the Church continually evolves through the workings of the Holy Spirit, which happens as DP informs us “through study and spiritual experience”<sup>220</sup>. In this sense the Church is “always advancing towards the plenitude of Divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her”.<sup>221</sup> Indeed paragraph 38 of DP states that:

God, in an age long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind. In faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women.<sup>222</sup>

Both Pope Paul VI (in *Ecclesiam Suam*) and Pope John Paul II have related the centrality of interreligious dialogue to the fulfilment of God’s plan as part of the Pilgrim Church for as DP states Pope John Paul II declared when addressing the 1984 Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue:

“Interreligious dialogue is fundamental to the Church, which is called to collaborate in God’s plan with her methods of presence, respect and love towards all persons”. He went on to call attention to a passage from *Ad Gentes*: “closely united to men in their life and work, Christ’s disciples hope to render to others true witness of Christ and to work for his salvation, even when they are not able to proclaim Christ fully (*ad gentes* 12)”. He prefaced this by saying: “dialogue

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<sup>219</sup> P.C.I.D. *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 225 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 35

<sup>220</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp 225-226 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 37

<sup>221</sup> *Dei Verbum* Promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 18<sup>th</sup> 1965 Para 8 cited by P.C.I.D. (1991) in *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp 225-226 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the PCID Vatican City Para 37

<sup>222</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 226 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 38

finds its place within the Church's salvific mission; for this reason it is a dialogue of salvation".<sup>223</sup>

Section C of DP recalls the four forms of dialogue first outlined in the 1984 document issued by the then Secretariat for Non – Christians *Dialogue and Mission*, namely the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of religious experience. These types of dialogue are all viewed as interdependent, for instance, the dialogue of action overlaps with the dialogue of life, and the dialogue of religious experience, naturally leads to mature reflection and overlaps with the dialogue of theological exchange. In relation to the dialogue of religious experience DP states:

Exchange at the level of religious experience can give more life to theological discussions. These in turn can enlighten experience and encourage closer contacts.<sup>224</sup>

Section D explores the dispositions for interreligious dialogue and its fruits. Such dialogue requires on the part of both Christians as well as the followers of other religious traditions a balanced and open attitude, acceptance of difference and possible contradictions as well as a readiness to allow oneself to be transformed by the encounter. One must also manifest a strong religious conviction, rooted in one's own faith tradition.<sup>225</sup>

Although Christians have the fullness of revelation this does not mean that individual Christians have grasped the truth fully.<sup>226</sup> Indeed according to DP:

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<sup>223</sup> Pope John Paul II in an Address given in 1984 to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sourced in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. VIII, 1 (1984) pp. 595-599; English text in Bulletin n. 56 (1984/2) pp. 122-125 quoted by the P.C.I.D. in *Dialogue and Proclamation* 1991: p 226 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 39

<sup>224</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 228 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I. D. Vatican City : Para 43

<sup>225</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 230 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 47

<sup>226</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 230 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 48

Christians must be prepared to learn and receive from and through others the positive values of their traditions. Through dialogue they may be moved to give up ingrained prejudices, to revise preconceived ideas, and even sometimes to allow the understanding of their faith to be purified.<sup>227</sup>

These then are what one might describe as the fruits of dialogue and far from weakening ones faith true dialogue will strengthen it....indeed such “faith will gain new dimensions as they discover the active presence of the mystery of Jesus Christ beyond the visible boundaries of the Church and of the Christian fold”.<sup>228</sup>

While the first section of *Dialogue and Proclamation* deals with interreligious dialogue, the second section deals with proclamation. Proclamation according to DP can manifest as proselytization in the form of active evangelisation as noted in (Mk. 16: 15-16). Such evangelisation is active and demands the preaching of the Gospel.<sup>229</sup> The point is also made that Jesus proclaims the good news not by word alone but also by the witness of his life.<sup>230</sup>

Those proclaiming the good news must be cognizant of the fact that the Holy Spirit is already present in the hearer of the Good News, for these hearers of the Word have already responded implicitly to the call of Jesus Christ through the sincere practise and authentic values within their own religious traditions.<sup>231</sup>

We are reminded of the importance of inculturation in the context of proclamation which is crucial in the sense that for the message to be intelligible to the hearer it must be “conceived as responding to their deepest aspirations”.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 230 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 49

<sup>228</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 231 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 50

<sup>229</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 233 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 55

<sup>230</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 234 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 56-57

<sup>231</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 240 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 68

<sup>232</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 241 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 70 f)

DP also outlines the qualities specific to the Gospel and the key obstacles to proclamation, one of the areas highlighted can be found in paragraph 73 c which states that “Christians who lack appreciation and respect for other believers and their religious traditions are ill – prepared to proclaim the Gospel to them”.<sup>233</sup>

Section 3 of DP concentrates on interreligious dialogue and proclamation and in 3 B notes:

that the Church’s mission extends to all. Also in relation to the religions to which they belong, the Church in dialogue can be seen to have a prophetic role for in bearing witness to Gospel values, she raises questions for these religions. Similarly, the Church, insofar as she bears the mark of human limitations, may find herself challenged so in promoting these values, in a spirit of emulation and of respect for the mystery of God, the members of the Church and the followers of other religions find themselves to be companions on the common path which humanity is called to tread.<sup>234</sup>

DP argues that all Christians are required to carry out both proclamation and dialogue and that dialogue “does not constitute the whole mission of the Church,”<sup>235</sup> it cannot simply replace proclamation but “remains oriented towards proclamation in so far as the dynamic process of the Church’s evangelising mission reaches in its climax and its fullness”.<sup>236</sup>

The theology of dialogue as presented in *Dialogue and Proclamation* offers in certain crucial areas a more radical and detailed analysis of the structures and reasons for dialogue than does *Nostra Aetate* or indeed *Dialogue and Mission* but this should not come as a surprise for *Dialogue and Proclamation* despite certain ambiguities of thought remains a highpoint in the

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<sup>233</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 242 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 73 c)

<sup>234</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp 245-246 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 79

<sup>235</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp 247-248 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 82

<sup>236</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, pp 247-248 in Off print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 82

Catholic Church's openness toward the religious other. However we must also be clear that *Nostra Aetate* as the watershed document, the document that opened the gateway to dialogue with the religious other, retains its unique position in the plethora of documents dedicated to the furthering of interreligious dialogue, not least since *Nostra Aetate* is a Church Council document and both *Dialogue and Mission* and *Dialogue and Proclamation* for all their insight and openness remain documents issued under the auspices of in the first instance the Secretariat for Non – Christians and in the second, jointly, by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, which means that its position in the wider hierarchy of Church documents remains rather low and less well known.

Without *Nostra Aetate* there would have been no *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no *Dialogue and Mission*, no *Redemptoris Missio* and no *Dialogue and Proclamation*. Indeed without the support of these and other documents such as *Ad Gentes*, *Redemptor Hominis* and specific statements and symbolic actions by both Paul VI and John Paul II, for instance, in the case the former the setting up the Secretariat for Non – Christians, the publication of documents such as *Ecclesiam Suam*, and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and in the case of the latter the publication of DM and DP, the Assisi prayer meeting, and the positive restructuring of official dicasteries to oversee and officiate on behalf of Catholic participants engaged in interreligious dialogue (structures such as the PCID) serious dialogue at the official level would probably never have taken place.

Both the Secretariat for non Christians and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue as officially sanctioned Dicasteries develop and enhance the root concept of evangelisation used in Catholicism for engagement in interreligious dialogue, namely the subtle interaction that exists between the seemingly opposite poles of dialogue and proclamation. These are generous and open overtures on the part of the Catholic Church and the tone of the document also mirrors and reflects the content contained within. But as we have also seen, although the document extols the virtues of dialogue, Christianity by its very nature is a missionary religion and there remains therefore an unresolved tension between the purpose of dialogue not only in its relationship to witness but more particularly in its relationship to proclamation. Since dialogue, witness and proclamation are all considered essential elements of the Catholic Church's process of evangelisation there is a tendency (human in and of itself) to offer more weight to one of the

three forms of evangelisation already outlined. *Dialogue and Mission* sets out to offer a sensitive and open pastoral response to this particular conundrum and although there is no obvious concrete prescriptive answer to the question of how one should proceed; in composing this missive the Secretariat for non Christians not only witnessed to *Nostra Aetate* and the second Vatican Council but expanded upon it in their inclusion of dialogue as a legitimate form of evangelisation.

DM for instance offers for the first time in a Catholic document, definitions for four types of dialogue that might fruitfully be pursued by different religious traditions in the course of interreligious encounters. This is a positive response from the Catholic Church who are, it would now seem, effectively offering clearly defined guidelines on how to proceed with and engage in interreligious dialogue from a Catholic perspective. Equally *Dialogue and Proclamation* for the first time in any Catholic document states unambiguously that dialogue is part of the Church's evangelising mission. Indeed in DP as Linden notes, "other religious traditions not faiths were acknowledged in their own right as social realities in which personal faith commitments were embodied".<sup>237</sup> The schematic definition of the four types of dialogue first found in DM (the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of religious experience) are taken up again and further developed and refined in *Dialogue and Proclamation*. The intention of DP has effectively been to show as Machado notes "the clear relation between dialogue and proclamation and to become a reference point for those who wish to go deeper into the argument".<sup>238</sup>

Both DM and DP view Christianity as retaining the fullness of truth with other religious traditions manifesting in their own beliefs, rituals and ethical practices to varying degrees aspects of what is true and holy. Whatever is true and holy within these other religious traditions is as a result of God's grace, and it is the purpose of the practising Christian, to dialogue with, and discern, the fruits of the Spirit within these other traditions. The Spirit as Fitzgerald notes:

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<sup>237</sup> Linden, 2009: 256

<sup>238</sup> ER 5: Mons. Felix A. Machado (2001). *Ten Years after the Publication of Dialogue and Proclamation (1991-2001)*. P. 1 - Original source taken from *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition 20<sup>th</sup> June 2001 p. 10 source accessed at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PCIDDIAL.HTM19/08/2010>



was at work in the world before the first coming of Jesus, so this same Spirit is at work outside the visible boundaries of the Church that Jesus founded, the “Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions,”<sup>239</sup> this is of extreme importance for dialogue, for it means that we cannot go to people of other religions as if we had everything and they had nothing. The Spirit has gone ahead of us, and so we can meet the Spirit in them. Everything that is good, noble and beautiful in their rites and traditions is to be welcomed with respect and gratitude. In this way dialogue becomes a journey of discovery and can provide an opportunity for mutual enrichment.<sup>240</sup>

According to Fitzgerald, interreligious dialogue is not geared toward conversion in the sense of implying a change of religious adherence; conversion in the context of interreligious dialogue is viewed as a ‘general movement toward God’.<sup>241</sup> Such dialogue “encourages the partners to open themselves up to God and in this sense can truly be considered a dialogue of salvation”.<sup>242</sup>

Conversion therefore would be a conversion toward becoming more human more like the person God wanted us to be all along, and this conversion would manifest not in any particular shift from one religious tradition to another but in a manifestation of the holy in the sense of the fruits of the Spirit as outlined by Jesus in (Matth 7: 15-20).

Equally in relation to the above Jacques Dupuis also notes:

interreligious dialogue is not merely complementary to proclamation as a means to an end but is already an end in itself because it is good in

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<sup>239</sup> Pope John Paul II , *Redemptoris Missio* Encyclical Letter on the Church’s Missionary Mandate 1990 Para 28: pp 29-30 CTS Pamphlet

<sup>240</sup> ER 6: Fitzgerald, M. *Evangelization and Interreligious Dialogue*: Address delivered at Trinity College Washington Oct 25<sup>th</sup> 2003 p 4 mhtml:file://E:\Evangelization and Interreligious Dialogue.mht source accessed on 12/04/2010

<sup>241</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 215 in Off – print of Bulletin No. 77 of the P.C.I.D. Vatican City : Para 11

<sup>242</sup> ER 7: Fitzgerald, M. p3 *The Role of Dialogue in Mission*: mhtml:file://E:\Msgr\_Michael Fitzgerald, MAfr- accessed on 12/04/2010

itself...indeed....on the Christian side the aim of dialogue is not the conversion of others to Christianity and the numerical growth of the Christian community but, rather, mutual enrichment and communion in the spirit with those who do not share our faith.<sup>243</sup>

Conversion in interreligious dialogue is therefore viewed and interpreted in a broad and generous manner; conversion in the strictly narrow sense that can be found in for instance the Pauline text to go out and preach Christ crucified to all nations is not on the agenda of interreligious dialogue, and consequently has become an area of some tension within the Catholic Church.

Nevertheless as Fitzgerald states, the Church's evangelising mission does contain:

presence and witness, liturgical life, prayer, contemplation, service, and interreligious dialogue as an imitation of God's love expressed in the patient attraction which is exerted. It can be defined as walking together toward the truth, and working together in projects of common concern; announcement and catechesis are also part of the Church's evangelising mission and take on the form of proclamation of God's love made manifest in Jesus Christ, coupled with the invitation to enter the community of those who believe in Christ.<sup>244</sup>

Proclamation and conversion therefore has its place in the wider evangelising mission of the Church but interreligious dialogue is not the place in which one should engage in attempts at proselytization or conversion. Were one to do so, the encounter would cease to be dialogical. We must learn as Catholics to embrace the tension that exists between the seemingly paradoxical poles of proclamation of the Gospel leading to conversion and salvation in Jesus Christ and dialogue with other religious traditions walking together respectfully toward truth.

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<sup>243</sup> Dupuis in Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 520

<sup>244</sup> ER 7: Fitzgerald, M. p2 *The Role of Dialogue in Mission*: mhtml:file//E:\Msgr\_Michael Fitzgerald, MAfr- accessed on 12/04/2010

The psychological demands of such dialogue require certain internal requirements for dialogue to be true and authentic for as Dupuis cogently notes:

each party must enter wholeheartedly into the religious experience of the other party to understand it from within. This effort to understand and sympathize has been termed intrareligious dialogue by Raimon Panikkar and it is an indispensable condition of true dialogue. This does not mean that we must or can, even temporarily, put our own faith to one side. On the contrary, the honesty and sincerity of dialogue requires the various partners to commit themselves to it in the integrity of their faith. Any methodological doubt, and any mental reservations, are out of the question here, as is any compromise in the terms of real faith or any reduction of its content. Authentic faith does not allow of syncretism or eclecticism.<sup>245</sup>

Interreligious dialogue, therefore according to Fitzgerald:

does not merely aim at mutual understanding and friendly relations. It reaches a much deeper level, namely that of the spirit, where exchange and sharing consist in a mutual witness to one's beliefs and a common exploration of one's respective religious convictions. In dialogue, Christians and others are invited to deepen their religious commitment, to respond with increasing sincerity to God's personal call and gracious self-gift which our faith tells us always passes through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the work of his spirit.<sup>246</sup>

One must therefore allow oneself to be open enough to be transformed by the encounter even to the point where one might conceivably convert to the position of the religious other.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Dupuis in Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 521

<sup>246</sup> ER 7: Fitzgerald, M. *The Role of Dialogue in Mission*, p3 mhtml:file://E:\Msgr\_Michael Fitzgerald, MAfr – The Role of Dialogue in Mission.mht accessed on 12/04/2010

<sup>247</sup> P.C.I.D. (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, p 227 in Off – print of Bulletin No. 77 of P.C.I.D. Vatican City: Para 41

Indeed since the Spirit is at work, interreligious dialogue requires both partners not only to give but also to receive. Because Christians have received the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ this does not excuse them from listening, and through listening their faith might become enriched by aspects of another religious tradition that more fully encapsulates certain elements of the divine mystery not so clearly emphasised by their own tradition. Equally, dialogue also challenges Christians to abandon narrow viewpoints and subterranean prejudices.<sup>248</sup>

Both DM and DP though open and clearly sympathetic toward interreligious dialogue nevertheless retain certain tensions and ambiguities particularly when it comes to explanations of exactly what the Catholic Church might mean by the term evangelisation and the particular merits of the differing concepts and practices used therein. Evangelisation in both DM and DP is perceived as an umbrella term containing three key areas of practise, proclamation, witness and dialogue. In theory all three forms of evangelisation should be viewed as equal and none should be practised to the exclusion of the others. All are theoretically viable forms of evangelisation in the eyes of the Catholic Church but as we shall see there is a definite hierarchy of roles attributed to these in practise.

The hierarchy of roles evident within the Church's evangelising mission (both at Curial, Diocesan and Parish level) are proclamation first, witness second, and dialogue third. There are a number of complex reasons as to why the Church finds dialogue difficult and even in one sense a destabilising activity. If as the Church teaches, the Holy Spirit is present within the rites and traditions of these other religions what is the role of proclamation and conversion? Is proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour no longer viable? Obviously the Church inspired by the example of Jesus Christ must follow in his footsteps and emulate his activity. Jesus Christ engaged in proclamation, witness and dialogue in the Gospel stories. It is therefore important that the Church too retains should retain all these forms of evangelisation in imitation of him. Tension arises though when one seeks to emphasise one form of evangelisation over another and this is something that has been happening more and more within the Catholic Church. Dialogue because of its open-ended nature cannot be neatly wrapped up and explained

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<sup>248</sup> Dupuis in Latourelle & Fisichella, 1994: 523

in a sound bite. It is a complex venture, one which cannot be measured by numerical participation or simple results driven statistics alone, nor indeed should it be crudely simplified and caricatured as is sometimes the case.

Despite the positive and open nature of *Dialogue and Proclamation* tensions within the document nevertheless do exist; one obvious area of tension can be gleaned from the full title of the document which is *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. Part of the tension in this otherwise excellent document lies in the fact that the P.C.I.D. had to work alongside the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. Both dicasteries emphasising I would suggest different Gospel narratives and harbouring different goals; not only did the P.C.I.D. have to contend with differences of opinion between themselves and the C.E.P. but also with sustained interference on the part of the wider Roman Curia. In this respect the PCID as Linden notes:

was expected to operate within a complex theological framework which required a constant double dialogue, the first with people of other faiths and the second behind the scenes, or implicitly, with the doctrinal police in the Vatican ever watchful lest the proclamation of the Gospel be subverted by dialogue.<sup>249</sup>

Indeed such double dialogue and constant intervention led the Jesuit theologian Jacques Dupuis as Linden informs us “to resign from the *Dialogue and Proclamation* editorial team because of what he saw as the incoherence in it created by interventions from the Vatican dicastery on missions”<sup>250</sup>.

In retrospect, one might view this as signs of a not so subtle sea-change in the Church’s response to other religious traditions. The then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was clearly perturbed by what he perceived to be the danger of relativism and syncretism within the field of interreligious dialogue. Indeed Cardinal Ratzinger

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<sup>249</sup> Linden, 2009: 255

<sup>250</sup> Footnote No. 51 cited in Linden, 2009: 320

was not particularly sympathetic toward interreligious dialogue in any shape or form. For instance, in relation to the Assisi prayer meeting as Linden explains, “he saw the event as potentially sending the wrong message and encouraging religious relativism,”<sup>251</sup> a position which was made obvious at the symbolic level, by his non-attendance at Assisi in 1986.

Cardinal Ratzinger in his position as prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and therefore doctrinal watchdog, pursued theologians whom he perceived to be non – orthodox, one such theologian was Fr Jacques Dupuis SJ who was investigated by the CDF for the views he espoused in his book *Towards a Theology of Religious Pluralism* in which he supported a parallel or complementary model of relationship with the religious other. This parallel or complementary approach to other religions essentially acknowledges a Two - way process of mutual enrichment and transformation between Christianity and the other religions.<sup>252</sup> For Dupuis who described the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ as constitutive and relational and who rejected any fulfilment theory, other religions did indeed possess valid ways of salvation, but not through the incarnate Logos but rather through the unbounded action of the Spirit. In this sense therefore Christianity is seen as no longer the only beneficiary of divine revelation.<sup>253</sup>

Monsignor Michael Fitzgerald who acted as secretary on the PCID committee under Cardinal Francis Arinze which drafted *Dialogue and Proclamation* and who praised Dupuis book *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, like Dupuis too, also fell out of favour, and was demoted from his later post as President of the P.C.I.D. in 2005 subsequent to Cardinal Ratzinger’s appointment as Pope.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Linden, 2009: 255

<sup>252</sup> ER 8: Hall, G. *Jacques Dupuis’ Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, article originally appeared in *Pacifica* 15 (February 2002): 37-50  
[http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/Issue2/Gerard\\_Hall.htm](http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/Issue2/Gerard_Hall.htm) accessed on 01/07/2010

<sup>253</sup> ER 8: Hall, G. *Jacques Dupuis’ Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, article originally appeared in *Pacifica* 15 (February 2002): 37-50 [http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/Issue2/Gerard\\_Hall.htm](http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/Issue2/Gerard_Hall.htm) accessed on 01/07/2010

<sup>254</sup> Linden, 2009: 256

The C.E.P. had been sanctioned to work alongside the P.C.I.D. because of the concerns expressed by a number of bishops about the nature of the relationship between dialogue and proclamation in the context of evangelisation within the Catholic Church. Around the same time Pope John Paul II published an encyclical entitled *Redemptoris Missio* which was the prism through which DP was to be read. Although there were still positive statements in favour of interreligious dialogue contained within *Redemptoris Missio* particularly in relation to the role of the Holy Spirit, the sea – change in the Church’s perception of interreligious dialogue was gaining momentum. As Linden cogently notes; “Relativism and the dangers thereof, was now the new Papal mantra”.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Linden, 2009: 255

## Chapter 5

### Documents of Caution: *Redemptoris Missio* and *Dominus Iesus*

#### **Redemptoris Missio**

*Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (hereafter referred to as *Redemptoris Missio* or simply RM) was an encyclical letter issued by Pope John Paul II on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1990 to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the conciliar decree *Ad Gentes*.<sup>256</sup>

The document in question is a dense and lengthy encyclical and contains eight chapters not to mention an introduction and a conclusion. The eight chapters deal in chronological order with:

Jesus Christ the Only Saviour

The Kingdom of God

The Holy Spirit: The Principal Agent of Mission

The Vast Horizons of the Mission *Ad Gentes*

The Paths of Mission

Leaders and workers in the Missionary Apostolate

Co – operation in Missionary Activity

Missionary Spirituality<sup>257</sup>

The chapter most pertinent to the current thesis is chapter five entitled Paths of Mission and although it is this chapter which I will focus on, I will nevertheless highlight statements relevant to interreligious dialogue found throughout the document as a whole. RM as Stephen Bevans notes “is the closest the Roman Magisterium has ever gotten to articulating a comprehensive and systematic reflection on mission”.<sup>258</sup> Perhaps the three most relevant aspects of RM are its

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<sup>256</sup> Pope John Paul II, (1990): Title Page of Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* in CTS Booklet

<sup>257</sup> John Paul II, (1990): Contents Page of *Redemptoris Missio: Encyclical Letter on the Church's Missionary Mandate* (Hereafter *Redemptoris Missio*) in CTS Booklet

<sup>258</sup> ER:14 Bevans, S. *Church Teaching on Mission: Ad Gentes, Evangelii Nuntiandi, Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* accessed at <http://www.maryknollvocations.com/missions.pdf> 22/05/2011



“Christocentric focus, its expansion of the understanding of mission, and its inclusion of interreligious dialogue as constitutive of the church’s mission”.<sup>259</sup>

The Pope highlights in RM the fact that the second Vatican Council “emphasized the Church's missionary nature, basing it in a dynamic way on the Trinitarian mission itself”.<sup>260</sup> Equally the Pope while stressing that “*missionary activity is a matter for all Christians,*” also acknowledges that the second Vatican Council “emphasized the Church's missionary nature, basing it in a dynamic way on the Trinitarian mission itself”.<sup>261</sup> Equally the Pope while stressing that “*missionary activity is a matter for all Christians,*” also acknowledges that missionary activity is in decline and that this clear decline in missionary activity is antipathetic to the directives of both the council and subsequent statements issued by the Magisterium. Such a decline in missionary activity is viewed as a lack of vitality and its decline is posited as a crisis of faith.<sup>262</sup>

Indeed the Pope in *Redemptoris Missio* states that missionary evangelisation is the “*primary service*”<sup>263</sup> which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world”.<sup>264</sup>

Chapter one of *Redemptoris Missio* acknowledges Christ as the only saviour for “No one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6)

Paragraph nine concentrates on the Church as sign and instrument of salvation and paragraph ten on the fact that salvation in Christ is offered to all. Such salvation in Christ is achieved in a hidden way in the rituals, beliefs and ethics of the religious other even if the member of this other religious tradition remains ignorant of Christianity and biblical revelation, salvation is

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<sup>259</sup> ER: 14 Bevens, S. *Church Teaching on Mission: Ad Gentes, Evangelii Nuntiandi, Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* accessed at <http://www.maryknollvocations.com/missions.pdf> 22/05/2011

<sup>260</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio*, p 3 of CTS Booklet Para 1

<sup>261</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio*, p 3 of CTS Booklet Para 1

<sup>262</sup> John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio*, p 4 of CTS Booklet Para 2 Cf. Paul VI, Message for World Mission Day, 1972, Insegnamenti X, (1972), 522: "How many internal tensions, which weaken and divide certain local churches and institutions, would disappear before the firm conviction that the salvation of local communities is procured through cooperation in work for the spread of the Gospel to the farthest bounds of the earth!"

<sup>263</sup> Authors own Italics

<sup>264</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 4 in CTS Booklet Para 2

achieved through the seed of the word manifest in all religions and through the Holy Spirit which is also at work in a mysterious way outside the mystical body. Since Christ died for everyone (thus affirming the centrality of the paschal mystery), and our calling from God is universal, then we as Christians should certainly accept that the Holy Spirit offers all of humankind the “possibility of sharing in this Paschal mystery”,<sup>265</sup> but “sharing in it in a manner known only to God”.<sup>266</sup>

Chapter II of RM concentrates on the kingdom of God delineating for us how Christ makes the kingdom present, highlighting in the process, the dangers of accepting a concept of salvation which is overtly reductive and lopsidedly immanent, thereby reducing the concept of the kingdom to one of liberation in terms of a social, political, and economic necessity focussed purely in terms of this world at the expense of the transcendent.<sup>267</sup>

The church it seems is called to move forward in two directions the first promoting kingdom values such as “peace, freedom, brotherhood and justice”,<sup>268</sup> while also fostering dialogue between “peoples, cultures and religions, so that through a mutual enrichment they might help the world to be renewed and to journey ever closer toward the kingdom”.<sup>269</sup>

In paragraph 17 the document is at pains to stress the connection between Christ, the Kingdom and the Church and cautions against a theocentric concept of the kingdom which undervalues both the role of the Church and the role of Christ in relation to the Kingdom.

Stating emphatically that:

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<sup>265</sup> John Paul II citing *Gaudium et Spes*, Para 22 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 13 in CTS Booklet Para 10

<sup>266</sup> John Paul II citing *Gaudium et Spes*, Para 22 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 13 in CTS Booklet Para 10

<sup>267</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 19 in CTS Booklet Para 17

<sup>268</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 19-20 CTS Booklet Para 17

<sup>269</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 19-20 CTS Booklet Para 17

The Kingdom cannot be detached from Christ or from the Church. As has already been said, Christ not only proclaimed the kingdom, but in him the kingdom itself became present and was fulfilled. This happened not only through his words and his deeds: "Above all,...the kingdom is made manifest in the very person of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who came 'to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mk 10:45)."<sup>270</sup>

RM now highlights the dangers of separating the Kingdom from the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, citing such a separation as a "distortion of the meaning of the kingdom"<sup>271</sup> such a distortion is in danger of transforming the kingdom into a purely ideological goal whilst relegating Christ so that" he is no longer identifiable as the Lord to whom everything must one day be subjected (cf. 1 Cor 15:27)"

In the same way as one must not separate the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth from the kingdom neither should one separate the kingdom from the church?

It is true that the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the kingdom of God of which she is the seed, sign and instrument. Yet, while remaining distinct from Christ and the kingdom, the Church is indissolubly united to both. Christ endowed the Church, his body, with the fullness of the benefits and means of salvation. The Holy Spirit dwells in her, enlivens her with his gifts and charisms, sanctifies, guides and constantly renews her.<sup>272</sup> The result is a unique and special relationship which, while not excluding the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church's visible boundaries, confers upon her a specific and necessary role; hence the Church's special connection with

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<sup>270</sup> Pope John Paul II citing *Lumen Gentium* Para 5 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 20 in CTS Booklet Para 18

<sup>271</sup> Pope John Paul II citing *Lumen Gentium* Para 5 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 20 in CTS Booklet Para 18

<sup>272</sup> Pope John Paul II citing *Lumen Gentium* Para 4 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 21 in CTS Booklet Para 18

the kingdom of God and of Christ, which she has "the mission of announcing and inaugurating among all peoples."<sup>273</sup>

Nevertheless RM also acknowledges

that the inchoate reality of the kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere, to the extent that they live "gospel values" and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills (cf. Jn 3:8). But it must immediately be added that this temporal dimension of the kingdom remains incomplete unless it is related to the kingdom of Christ present in the Church and straining towards eschatological fullness.<sup>274</sup>

Here we once more see a tension arising between the role of Christ, the Church and the Kingdom that is in many respects parallels the tension invoked in the Church's concept of evangelisation and the interconnectedness of dialogue, witness and proselytization.

Chapter III of RM is entitled *The Holy Spirit: The Principal Agent of Mission* and paragraph twenty one of the document states that "the Holy Spirit becomes present in the Paschal mystery".<sup>275</sup>

The Spirit therefore is seen to be:

the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission. His action is preeminent in the mission *ad gentes*, as can clearly be seen in the early Church: in the conversion of Cornelius (cf. Acts 10), in the decisions made

<sup>273</sup> Pope John Paul II citing *Lumen Gentium* Para 5 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 21 in CTS Booklet Para 18

<sup>274</sup> Pope John Paul II citing *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Para 34 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 22 in CTS Booklet Para 20

<sup>275</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 24 in CTS Booklet Para 21

about emerging problems (cf. Acts 15) and in the choice of regions and peoples to be evangelized (cf. Acts 16:6ff). The Spirit worked through the apostles, but at the same time he was also at work in those who heard them<sup>276</sup>

Paragraph twenty two of RM acknowledges the missionary mandate of the Church as emanating from the Evangelist's meeting with the risen Lord.

RM also acknowledges the different emphases adopted by the different Evangelists, for instance Mark presents mission as proclamation or Kerygma, (Mk 16: 15), while Matthew applies his missionary emphasis on the foundation of the Church and her teaching (Matt 28: 19-20; 16:18), in Luke witness is paramount (Lk 24:48; Acts 1:8).<sup>277</sup> John according to RM:

is the only Evangelist to speak explicitly of a "mandate," a word equivalent to "mission." He directly links the mission which Jesus entrusts to his disciples with the mission which he himself has received from the Father (Jn 20-21).<sup>278</sup>

There is therefore pluralism within what RM describes as "the fundamental unity of the same mission",<sup>279</sup> a pluralism borne of the spirit. This same Spirit directs the Church's mission and makes the whole Church missionary. The Spirit though is not active in the Church only but in every time and place, indeed:

The Second Vatican Council recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through the "seeds of the Word," to be found in human initiatives-including religious ones-and in mankind's efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 24 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>277</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 25 in CTS Booklet Para 23

<sup>278</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 25-26 in CTS Booklet Para 23

<sup>279</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 26 in CTS Booklet Para 23

<sup>280</sup> Pope John Paul II citing *Ad Gentes* Para 3, 11, 15; *Gaudium et Spes*, Para 10-11, 22, 26, 38, 41, 92-93 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p29 in CTS Booklet Para 28

RM in speaking of the travels of the Holy Spirit goes on to quote *Ad Gentes* acknowledging that the same Spirit:

"was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified."<sup>281</sup>

Indeed

the Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: "Respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man."<sup>282</sup> Excluding any mistaken interpretation, the interreligious meeting held in Assisi was meant to confirm my conviction that "every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart."<sup>283</sup>

RM cautions one against using the Holy Spirit outside the context of the Incarnation and the Church for the three are inextricably linked and whatever good the Holy Spirit achieves in other religions is but a preparation for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter four of RM concentrates on the vast horizons of the mission *Ad Gentes*, this mission must take account of a complex and ever changing religious picture which acknowledges the hesitancy in language relating to mission. It also highlights the role of religious relativism as well as the decline and lack of interest in mission.<sup>284</sup>

Nonetheless RM also acknowledges that

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<sup>281</sup> Pope John Paul II citing *Ad Gentes* Para 4 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 28

<sup>282</sup> Pope John Paul II Address to Representatives of Non-Christian Religions, Madras, February 5, 1986: AAS 78 (1986), 767; cf. Message to the Peoples of Asia, Manila, February 21, 1981, 2-4: AAS 73 (1981), 392f; Address to Representatives of Other Religions, Tokyo, February 24, 1981, 3-4: *Insegnamenti* IV/I (1981), 507f. Cited in *Redemptoris Missio* p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 28

<sup>283</sup> Pope John Paul II Address to Cardinals and the Roman Curia, December 22, 1986, 11: AAS 79 (1987), 1089. Cited in *Redemptoris Missio* p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 28

<sup>284</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 37 in CTS Booklet Para 36

Non-Christians are becoming numerous in traditionally Christian countries and this requires on the part of the Church hospitality, dialogue, assistance and fraternity.<sup>285</sup>

Chapter five of RM is entitled the Paths of Mission and we learn immediately that “Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways. Among these ways, some have particular importance in the present situation of the Church and the world”.<sup>286</sup>

The first form of evangelisation is witness and Christ in whose mission we participate is for us the "witness" *par excellence* (Rv 1:5; 3:14) and “the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ (cf. Jn 15:26-27).”<sup>287</sup>

But proclamation according to RM is the cornerstone and priority of all mission indeed all forms of missionary activity for it is “the mystery which lies at the heart of the Church's mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns”.<sup>288</sup>

Effectively therefore:

in the complex reality of mission, initial proclamation has a central and irreplaceable role.<sup>289</sup>

Under the subheading of Conversion and Baptism RM acknowledges the tendency among many modern Christians to either question or view conversion of non-Christians as an act of proselytization. Such Christians claim that rather than attempt to convert the religious other, whoever the other is, one should help such non-Christians become more reconciled to their own

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<sup>285</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 40 in CTS Booklet Para 37 (b)

<sup>286</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 46 in CTS Booklet Para 41

<sup>287</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 46 in CTS Booklet Para 42

<sup>288</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 47 in CTS Booklet Para 44

<sup>289</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 48 in CTS Booklet Para 44

religion and effectively to become more human, equally one should teach and help them to build communities of love and hope based on justice peace freedom and solidarity.<sup>290</sup>

After dealing with conversion and baptism in paragraphs 46 and 47 the document focuses on forming local Churches where it states that “the evangelising activity of the Christian community, first in its own locality, and then elsewhere as part of the Church’s universal mission, is the clearest sign of a mature faith”.<sup>291</sup> Thereafter RM highlights ecclesial basic communities as a force for evangelisation before concentrating on various aspects of incarnating the Gospel in people’s culture. Indeed RM recognises aspects of inculturation as part of the pilgrimage throughout the Church’s history and indeed that such inculturation of the Gospel is today particularly urgent.<sup>292</sup>

In relation to the process of inculturation RM insists that certain guidelines remain basic:

Properly applied, inculturation must be guided by two principles:

"compatibility with the gospel and communion with the universal Church.”<sup>293</sup>

RM having dealt with issues related to inculturation turns to dialogue with our Brothers and Sisters of other Religions. Interreligious dialogue we learn is a part of the Church’s evangelising mission.<sup>294</sup> Such dialogue is RM states:

Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*; indeed, it has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions. This mission, in fact, is addressed to those who do not know Christ and his Gospel, and who belong for the most part to other religions. In Christ, God calls all peoples to himself and he wishes to share with them the fullness of his revelation and

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<sup>290</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 50 in CTS Booklet Para 46

<sup>291</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 53 in CTS Booklet Para 49

<sup>292</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 56 in CTS Booklet Para 52

<sup>293</sup> Pope John Paul II citing the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, (November 22, 1981), 10: AAS 74 (1982), 91, which speaks of inculturation "in the context of marriage and the family." In *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 58 in CTS Booklet Para 54

<sup>294</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 59 in CTS Booklet Para 55



love. He does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain "gaps, insufficiencies and errors."<sup>295</sup> All of this has been given ample emphasis by the Council and the subsequent Magisterium, without detracting in any way from the fact that *salvation comes from Christ and that dialogue does not dispense from evangelization.*<sup>296</sup>

There is in the view of the Church no conflict in proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue for both are aspects of the one evangelising mission inexorably connected yet incontrovertibly distinctive, therefore, as RM cautions "they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable".<sup>297</sup>

RM then goes on to highlight that the Church is the ordinary means of grace a fact which the Pope in a letter written to the Bishops of Asia highlights, writing that:

"Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all people, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is 'the way, and the truth and the life.'...The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God

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<sup>295</sup> Pope John Paul II citing Paul VI, Address at the opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, September 29, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), 858; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 2; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 16; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 9; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 53: loc. cit. 41f. In *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 59 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>296</sup> Pope John Paul II citing Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (August 6, 1964): AAS 56 (1964), 609-659; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 11, 41; Secretariat for Non-Christians, Document *L'atteggiamento della Chiesa di fronte ai seguaci di altre religioni: Riflessioni e orientamenti su dialogo e missione* (September 4, 1984): AAS 76 (1984), 816-828 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 60 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>297</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 60 in CTS Booklet Para 55

wills for all people."<sup>298</sup> Indeed Christ himself "while expressly insisting on the need for faith and baptism, at the same time confirmed the need for the Church, into which people enter through Baptism as through a door."<sup>299</sup>

Dialogue should be conducted and implemented with the conviction that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation.<sup>300</sup>

### Equally

Dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest, but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirements and dignity. It is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills.<sup>301</sup> Through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the "seeds of the Word,"<sup>302</sup> a "ray of that truth which enlightens all men";<sup>303</sup> these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind. Dialogue is based on hope and love, and will bear fruit in the Spirit. Other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of Revelation which she has received for the good of all.

<sup>298</sup> Pope John Paul II citing a Letter to the Fifth Plenary Assembly of Asian Bishops' Conferences (June 23, 1990), 4: *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 18, 1990 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 60 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>299</sup> Pope John Paul II citing the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Para 14; cf. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, Para 7 in *Redemptoris Missio* p 60 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>300</sup> Pope John Paul II citing the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Para 3; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, Para 7 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 60 Para 55

<sup>301</sup> Pope John Paul II citing Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* Para 12: loc. cit., 279 in *Redemptoris Missio* p 61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

<sup>302</sup> Pope John Paul II citing Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 11, 15 in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

<sup>303</sup> Pope John Paul II citing Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* Para 2 in *Redemptoris Missio* p 61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

This gives rise to the spirit which must enliven dialogue in the context of mission. Those engaged in this dialogue must be consistent with their own religious traditions and convictions, and be open to understanding those of the other party without pretence or close-mindedness, but with truth, humility and frankness, knowing that dialogue can enrich each side. There must be no abandonment of principles nor false irenicism, but instead a witness given and received for mutual advancement on the road of religious inquiry and experience, and at the same time for the elimination of prejudice, intolerance and misunderstandings. Dialogue leads to inner purification and conversion which, if pursued with docility to the Holy Spirit, will be spiritually fruitful.<sup>304</sup>

RM also acknowledges the vast field that exists in dialogue noting in particular the diverse forms and expressions including “exchanges between experts in religious traditions or official representatives of those traditions to cooperation for integral development and the safeguarding of religious values; and from a sharing of their respective spiritual experiences to the so-called dialogue of life”.<sup>305</sup>

Indeed

Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way.<sup>306</sup>

For

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<sup>304</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

<sup>305</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 61 in CTS Booklet Para 57

<sup>306</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 62 in CTS Booklet Para 57

Dialogue is a path toward the kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father (cf. Acts 1:7).<sup>307</sup>

Chapter six of RM deals specifically with leaders and workers in the missionary apostolate stressing, once more that the Church by her very nature is missionary.<sup>308</sup> RM here catalogues the different forms of missionary outreach incorporating the work of religious institutes *ad gentes*, diocesan Priests for the universal mission, as well as concentrating on the missionary fruitfulness of consecrated life.<sup>309</sup>

RM then turns to the importance of the role of the laity in missionary activity emphasising that all the laity are missionaries by virtue of baptism. RM also acknowledges and outlines the important work of catechists and the variety of associated ministries before outlining the important role of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples and other structures for Missionary Activity.<sup>310</sup>

Chapter seven of RM deals with missionary activity including new forms of missionary cooperation, and emphasises the growth in numbers of political and economic migrants.

Noting that:

the presence of these brothers and sisters in traditionally Christian countries is a challenge for the ecclesial communities, and a stimulus to hospitality, dialogue, service, sharing, witness and direct proclamation.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 62 in CTS Booklet Para 57

<sup>308</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 67 in CTS Booklet Para 62

<sup>309</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 68-74 in CTS Booklet Para 63-69

<sup>310</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 75-80 in CTS Booklet Para 71-76

<sup>311</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 85 in CTS Booklet Para 82

In chapter eight RM focuses on Missionary spirituality and in paragraph 91 the Pope informs us that his:

contact with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation. Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way. He is a witness to the experience of God, and must be able to say with the apostles: "that which we have looked upon...concerning the word of life,...we proclaim also to you" (1 Jn 1:1-3)<sup>312</sup>

### *Dominus Iesus*

The second document of caution which I wish to look at is the Declaration issued on August 6<sup>th</sup> 2,000<sup>313</sup> by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*<sup>314</sup> (hereafter referred to as *Dominus Iesus* or simply DI).

The declaration consists of an introduction, six chapters and a conclusion. The introduction highlights Mark 16: 15-16 where before ascending into heaven Jesus Christ commands his disciples to “proclaim the Gospel to the whole world and to baptise all nations”.<sup>315</sup> This particular part of Jesus Christ’s ministry is often described as the great commission and is seen as the basis for the Church’s universal mission.<sup>316</sup> In a similar vein paragraph two of DI highlights the Church’s fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and notes that this mission is still far from complete,<sup>317</sup> for as Saint Paul notes in (1 Cor 9: 16) “Preaching the Gospel is not a

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<sup>312</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 93-94 in CTS Booklet Para 91

<sup>313</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2, 000) *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, (Hereafter referred to as *Dominus Iesus*) Title page in CTS Booklet

<sup>314</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2, 000) *Dominus Iesus* title page of CTS Booklet

<sup>315</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 3 in CTS Booklet Para 1

<sup>316</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 3 in CTS Booklet Para 1

<sup>317</sup> John Paul II Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 1: AAS 83 (1991), 249-340 Cited by Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Hereafter CDF) in *Dominus Iesus* (2, 000) p 4 in CTS Booklet Para 2

reason for me to boast; it is a necessity laid on me: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!”<sup>318</sup> This as DI highlights:

explains the Magisterium's particular attention to giving reasons for and supporting the evangelizing mission of the Church, above all in connection with the religious traditions of the world.<sup>319</sup>

### Equally

Continuing in this line of thought, the Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life” (*Jn* 14:6), today also makes use of the practice of inter-religious dialogue. Such dialogue certainly does not replace, but rather accompanies the *missio ad gentes*, directed toward that “mystery of unity”, from which “it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit”.<sup>320</sup> Inter-religious dialogue, which is part of the Church's evangelizing mission,<sup>321</sup> requires an attitude of understanding and a relationship of mutual knowledge and reciprocal enrichment, in obedience to the truth and with respect for freedom.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> CDF (2, 000) Citing (1 Cor 9: 16) in *Dominus Iesus* p 4 in CTS Booklet Para 2

<sup>319</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes* and Declaration *Nostra aetate*; cf also PAUL VI Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*: AAS 68 (1976), 5-76; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio* Cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 4 in CTS Booklet Para 2

<sup>320</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE and THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, Instruction *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 29: AAS 84 (1992), 424; cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 22. Cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 4 in CTS Booklet Para 2

<sup>321</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55: AAS 83 (1991), 302-304. Cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2, 000) p5 in CTS Booklet Para 2

<sup>322</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE and THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, instruction *Dialogue and Proclamation* 9: AAS 84 (1992), 417 ff. cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2, 000) p 5 in CTS Booklet Para 2

Paragraph three of DI when speaking of dialogue between the Christian faith and other religious traditions notes that the process involved in such dialogue leads inevitably to new questions being asked and of course new paths of research.<sup>323</sup> This calls for “attentive discernment”.<sup>324</sup>

Bearing this in mind therefore:

the expository language of the Declaration corresponds to its purpose, which is not to treat in a systematic manner the question of the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church, nor to propose solutions to questions that are matters of free theological debate, but rather to set forth again the doctrine of the Catholic faith in these areas, pointing out some fundamental questions that remain open to further development, and refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous. For this reason, the Declaration takes up what has been taught in previous Magisterial documents, in order to reiterate certain truths that are part of the Church's faith.<sup>325</sup>

Paragraph four of DI cautions of the current dangers in respect of the Church’s missionary proclamation, particularly in relation to what it describes as “relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de iure* (in principle)”.<sup>326</sup>

DI then lists what it perceives to be the areas wherein orthodox Catholic belief is compromised by relativist and pluralist concepts. Certain truths it claims have been superseded for instance:

the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the

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<sup>323</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 5 in CTS Booklet Para 3

<sup>324</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 5 in CTS Booklet Para 3

<sup>325</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 5 in CTS Booklet Para 3

<sup>326</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 5 in CTS Booklet Para 4

inseparability — while recognizing the distinction — of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church.<sup>327</sup>

The source of these problems can in the view of DI be traced to concepts relating to the total ineffability of God, relativistic attitudes born of post-enlightenment thought which state that truth is unknowable because of the finite nature of human reason and perception, the subjective nature of all truth claims, and

the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history; the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection, or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church.<sup>328</sup>

To counteract such views DI reasserts in no uncertain terms the substantive and definitive nature of the revelation of Jesus Christ, quoting in the process (Jn 14: 6; Mt 11:27; Jn 1:8; Col 2:9-10).<sup>329</sup>

God therefore has self-revealed in the particular historical personage of Jesus of Nazareth the complete and definitive fullness of truth consequently the

theory of the limited, incomplete, or imperfect character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which would be complementary to that found in other religions, is contrary to the Church's faith. Such a position would claim to be based on the notion that the truth about God cannot be grasped and manifested in its

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<sup>327</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* pp 5-6 in CTS Booklet Para 4

<sup>328</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p6 in CTS Booklet Para 4

<sup>329</sup> CDF (2, 000) *Dominus Iesus* p7 in CTS Booklet Para 5



globality and completeness by any historical religion, neither by Christianity nor by Jesus Christ.<sup>330</sup>

Indeed in relation to the problem of the transcendent and inexhaustible nature of God in his divine nature being “abolished or reduced because it is spoken in human language”<sup>331</sup> this is overcome according to DI because “it is unique, full, and complete, because he who speaks and acts is the incarnate son of God”.<sup>332</sup>

One therefore should according to DI respond to God’s revelation in

“*the obedience of faith (Rom 16:26; cf. Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) by which man freely entrusts his entire self to God, offering ‘the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals’ and freely assenting to the revelation given by him*”.<sup>333</sup>

Faith according to DI “implies acceptance of the truth of Christ's revelation, guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself”.<sup>334</sup>

DI then makes an important distinction between what it perceives as theological faith being identified with belief in other religions which DI interprets as “religious experience still in search of the absolute truth”.<sup>335</sup> Nevertheless DI also recognizes that at least some aspects of these other religious texts have continued to nourish and sustain large numbers of people in their relationship with God.<sup>336</sup> Indeed as DI magnanimously notes:

the second Vatican Council in considering the customs, precepts and teachings of the other religions, teaches that “although differing in many ways from her own

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<sup>330</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p8 in CTS Booklet Para 6

<sup>331</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p8 in CTS Booklet Para 6

<sup>332</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p8 in CTS Booklet Para 6

<sup>333</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei verbum*, 5 Cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 9 in CTS Booklet Para 7

<sup>334</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 144 cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2000) p9 in CTS Booklet Para 7

<sup>335</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p10 in CTS Booklet Para 7

<sup>336</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p10 in CTS Booklet Para 8

teaching, these nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men”<sup>337</sup>.

DI highlights the inspired nature of the Canonical books that make up the Old and New Testament within the Christian tradition,<sup>338</sup> then quoting from the Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation DI states:

“For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn* 20:31; *2 Tim* 3:16; *2 Pet* 1:19-21; 3:15-16), they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself”<sup>339</sup>. These books “firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures”<sup>340</sup>.

Nevertheless God who wishes to make himself present and known and to communicate himself to others:

“does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions

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<sup>337</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2; cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 9, where it speaks of the elements of good present “in the particular customs and cultures of peoples”; Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 16, where it mentions the elements of good and of truth present among non-Christians, which can be considered a preparation for the reception of the Gospel. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p10 in CTS Booklet Para 8

<sup>338</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decretum de libris sacris et de traditionibus recipiendis*: DS 1501; FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, cap. 2: DS 3006. Cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p10 in CTS Booklet Para 8

<sup>339</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei verbum*, 11 cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) pp10-11 in CTS Booklet Para 8

<sup>340</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei verbum*, 11 cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p11 in CTS Booklet Para 8

are the main and essential expression even when they contain ‘gaps, insufficiencies and errors’”<sup>341</sup>.

The other books which help nourish and sustain followers of other religious traditions receive whatever is good and holy and true in their scriptures via the mystery of Christ who exists within their scriptures in a hidden sense.<sup>342</sup>

In chapter II of *Dominus Iesus* entitled *The Incarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit in the Work of Salvation* DI highlights and cautions against a type of theology which views Jesus not as a particular finite historical figure who reveals the truth in an exclusive way but who is viewed as complementary to other revelatory or salvific figures. God who is the transcendent ultimate would manifest in a plurality of historical figures of which Jesus of Nazareth would be just one manifestation.<sup>343</sup> There would in such a theology be a plurality of incarnations, indeed Jesus would be “one of the many faces which the Logos has assumed in the course of time to communicate with humanity in a salvific way”<sup>344</sup>.

Furthermore, according to DI

to justify the universality of Christian salvation as well as the fact of religious pluralism, it has been proposed that there is an economy of the eternal Word that is valid also outside the Church and is unrelated to her, in addition to an economy of the incarnate Word. The first would have a greater universal value than the second, which is limited to Christians, though God's presence would be fuller in the second.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55; cf. 56 and PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 53. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 11 in CTS Booklet Para 8

<sup>342</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p11 in CTS Booklet Para 8

<sup>343</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p12 in CTS Booklet Para 9

<sup>344</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p12 in CTS Booklet Para 9

<sup>345</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p12 in CTS Booklet Para 9

Such views according to DI which are clearly reductive, conflict substantively with Christian expressions of faith based on the Creed promulgated by the Council of Nicaea.<sup>346</sup>

Not only is it incorrect in the estimation of DI to introduce any form of separation between the word and Jesus Christ, a separation which we must acknowledge as being contrary to the Christian faith, it is equally incorrect or at least contrary to Catholic faith as DI notes:

to introduce a separation between the salvific action of the Word as such and that of the Word made man. With the incarnation, all the salvific actions of the Word of God are always done in unity with the human nature that he has assumed for the salvation of all people. The one subject which operates in the two natures, human and divine, is the single person of the Word.<sup>347</sup>

A theory therefore according to DI:

which would attribute, after the incarnation as well, a salvific activity to the Logos as such in his divinity, exercised “in addition to” or “beyond” the humanity of Christ, is not compatible with the Catholic faith.<sup>348</sup>

Equally the doctrine affirming the unicity of

the salvific economy willed by the One and Triune God must be firmly believed, at the source and centre of which is the mystery of the incarnation of the Word, mediator of divine grace on the level of creation and redemption (cf. Col 1:15-20).<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA, *Symbolum Nicaenum*: DS 125. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p13 in CTS Booklet Para 10

<sup>347</sup> Cf. ST. LEO THE GREAT, *Tomus ad Flavianum*: DS 294. Cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 14 in CTS Booklet Para 10

<sup>348</sup> Cf. ST. LEO THE GREAT, Letter to the Emperor Leo I *Promississe me memini*: DS 318: “...in tantam unitatem ab ipso conceptu Virginis deitate et humanitate conserta, ut nec sine homine divina, nec sine Deo agerentur humana”. Cf. also *ibid.* DS 317. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 14 in CTS Booklet Para 10

<sup>349</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 14 in CTS Booklet Para 11

Once more as we see DI is at pains to reassert that Jesus Christ is indeed the one unique mediator and universal redeemer of all mankind.

DI notes that there are also theologies which argue for a broader interpretation in relation to the economy of the Holy Spirit, an interpretation which would hold at least in the estimation of DI that the Spirit is at work beyond the confines of the “Incarnate Word, crucified and risen”.<sup>350</sup> These too are of course contrary to the Catholic faith.

The Holy Spirit is according to DI Trinitarian and must be considered within that specific context. It is also intrinsically linked to the Church and should not be separated from the Church. Indeed DI also states that:

the Second Vatican Council has recalled to the consciousness of the Church's faith this fundamental truth. In presenting the Father's salvific plan for all humanity, the Council closely links the mystery of Christ from its very beginnings with that of the Spirit.<sup>351</sup> The entire work of building the Church by Jesus Christ the Head, in the course of the centuries, is seen as an action which he does in communion with his Spirit.<sup>352</sup>

Nevertheless as DI also cogently highlights “the salvific action of Jesus Christ with and through his Spirit extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Church to all humanity”.<sup>353</sup> Therefore as DI states:

All this holds true not only for Christians but also for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must

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<sup>350</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 15 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>351</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 3-4. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 15 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>352</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 7; cf. ST. IRENAEUS, who wrote that it is in the Church “that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit” (*Adversus haereses* III, 24, 1: SC 211, 472). Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 15 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>353</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 15 in CTS Booklet Para 12

hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery.<sup>354</sup>

Thus “the Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions”.<sup>355</sup> There is as DI states only a “single divine economy,”<sup>356</sup> and it is “the same Spirit who was at work in the incarnation and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and who is at work in the Church. He is therefore not an alternative to Christ nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos”.<sup>357</sup>

Chapter three of DI focusses on the *Uncity and Universality of the Salvific Mystery of Jesus Christ* in which DI argues against those who would either deny, deconstruct or reinterpret this view. Indeed in paragraph fourteen DI reiterates that it must be “firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith that the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and accomplished once and for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God”.<sup>358</sup>

Indeed DI readily acknowledges that one must reflect carefully on whatever it is that is positive in other religions that might fall within the divine plan of salvation.<sup>359</sup> DI in quoting the Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium* states that:

“the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source”.<sup>360</sup> The content of this participated mediation should be explored more deeply, but must remain always consistent with the principle of Christ's unique mediation:

“Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value *only* from Christ's own mediation,

<sup>354</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 22. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 16 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>355</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 16 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>356</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 16 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>357</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 16 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>358</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 19 in CTS Booklet Para 14

<sup>359</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 19 in CTS Booklet Para 14

<sup>360</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 62. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 19 in CTS Booklet Para 14

and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his”.<sup>361</sup> Hence, those solutions that propose a salvific action of God beyond the unique mediation of Christ would be contrary to Christian and Catholic faith.<sup>362</sup>

It is also noted in DI that many theologians would prefer to avoid the use of terms such as unicity, universality and absoluteness which possess negative and exclusivist connotations in relation to other religious traditions, albeit DI see’s no problem in using such language as one is “simply being faithful to revelation”.<sup>363</sup>

Chapter four of *Dominus Iesus* is entitled *Unicity and Unity of the Church* and deals predominantly with ecumenical issues specifically relevant to Christians; suffice to say that DI argues in favor of the salvific mystery of the Catholic Church which it sees as the body of Christ, and “just as there is one Christ so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ and a single Catholic and apostolic Church”.<sup>364</sup> Essentially DI in this particular chapter argues for a hierarchy of Churches; the Roman Catholic Church being the *Ur Sacrament* that is to say the primary Church linked with Christ and unbroken through apostolic succession via the Petrine tradition, while other Churches of a Sacramental nature who reject the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, such as the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches, inhabit a sort of middle tier while overtly reformed Churches including Anglican, Episcopalian and Lutheran which either reject Bishops and Sacraments altogether or alternatively view the Eucharist as either symbolic or as a remembrance of the Lord’s supper are relegated to a third tier of Church. These Churches are variously termed as either true particular Churches which would include Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches, or else they are seen as ecclesial communities, and those who are baptized within them are considered to be incorporated in Christ (albeit still in imperfect communion) with the One True Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 5. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 20 in CTS Booklet Para 14

<sup>362</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p20 in CTS Booklet Para 14

<sup>363</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 20 in CTS Booklet Para 15

<sup>364</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p22 in CTS Booklet Para 16

<sup>365</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 24 in CTS Booklet Para 17

Chapter five of *Dominus Iesus* is entitled *The Church: Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Christ*. In this chapter DI argues that the Church's mission is to proclaim and establish God's kingdom because she the Church as a sacrament is a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and therefore of unity of the entire human race.<sup>366</sup> DI importantly states in relation to the concept and meaning of the Kingdom that:

the expressions *kingdom of heaven*, *kingdom of God*, and *kingdom of Christ* in Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, as well as in the documents of the Magisterium, is not always exactly the same, nor is their relationship to the Church, which is a mystery that cannot be totally contained by a human concept. Therefore, there can be various theological explanations of these terms. However, none of these possible explanations can deny or empty in any way the intimate connection between Christ, the kingdom, and the Church.<sup>367</sup>

This intimate connection between Christ, the Kingdom and the Church is paramount, but should not as DI states be “identified with the Church in her visible and social reality”.<sup>368</sup>

For

the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church's visible boundaries must not be excluded.<sup>369</sup>

Chapter six of *Dominus Iesus* is entitled *The Church and the Other Religions In Relation to Salvation*. In this chapter DI states unequivocally that the Church is necessary for salvation and that

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<sup>366</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 1 Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 26 in CTS Booklet para 18

<sup>367</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 26 in CTS Booklet Para 18

<sup>368</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 27 in CTS Booklet Para 19

<sup>369</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 18. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 27 in CTS Booklet para 19



Christ as mediator is present to us in his body which is the Church.<sup>370</sup> The Church therefore as DI states (quoting *Lumen Gentium*) is the “Universal Sacrament of Salvation”.<sup>371</sup>

DI quoting first from *Redemptoris Missio* and then *Ad gentes* goes on to clarify the position of those who are not members of the Church writing:

For those who are not formally and visibly members of the Church, “salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit”;<sup>372</sup> it has a relationship with the Church, which “according to the plan of the Father, has her origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit”.<sup>373</sup>

How the salvific grace of God comes to individual non-Christians is a mystery and one which as DI notes quoting *Ad Gentes*, God bestows “in ways known only to himself”.<sup>374</sup>

Although DI encourages theologians seeking to understand the question more fully it also cautions that:

it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the

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<sup>370</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 29 in CTS Booklet Para 20

<sup>371</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 48. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 29 in CTS Booklet Para 20

<sup>372</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 10. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 29 in CTS Booklet Para 20

<sup>373</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 2. The famous formula *extra Ecclesiam nullus omnino salvatur* is to be interpreted in this sense (cf. FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL, Cap. 1. *De fide catholica*: DS 802). Cf. also the *Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston*: DS 3866-3872. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 29 in CTS Booklet Para 20

<sup>374</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 7. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.<sup>375</sup>

Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God,<sup>376</sup> and which are part of what “the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions”.<sup>377</sup> Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God.<sup>378</sup> One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments.<sup>379</sup> Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. 1 Cor 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation.<sup>380</sup>

DI continues to caution against what it describes as an indifferentism characterised by relativism, paraphrasing in the process Pius XII encyclical letter *Mystici corporis* which states that “If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have

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<sup>375</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>376</sup> These are the seeds of the divine Word (*semina Verbi*), which the Church recognizes with joy and respect (cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Ad gentes*, 11; Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2). Cited by CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 CDF Booklet Para 21

<sup>377</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 29. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>378</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 843. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>379</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decretum de sacramentis*, can. 8, *de sacramentis in genere*: DS 1608. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>380</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

the fullness of the means of salvation.<sup>381</sup> The Church therefore is duty bound to proclaim the Gospel of Christ “who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6)”.<sup>382</sup>

Equally

Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary”.<sup>383</sup> Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, as part of her evangelizing mission, is just one of the actions of the Church in her mission *ad gentes*.<sup>384</sup> *Equality*, which is a presupposition of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ — who is God himself made man — in relation to the founders of the other religions.<sup>385</sup>

Thus

the certainty of the universal salvific will of God does not diminish, but rather increases the duty and urgency of the proclamation of salvation and of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>386</sup>

The conclusion of DI states the avowed intention of the document, that is to say, it wishes to reiterate what it perceives to be certain truths relevant to an orthodox Catholic system of belief. It outlines areas of dogma and tradition that any Catholic who wishes to be perceived as orthodox must adhere to. Faced though “with certain problematic and even erroneous propositions, theological reflection is called to reconfirm the Church’s faith and to give reasons for her hope in a way that is convincing and effective”.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Cf. PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici corporis*: DS 3821. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 31 in CTS Booklet Para 22

<sup>382</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 31 in CTS Booklet Para 22

<sup>383</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 851; cf. also 849-856. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 32 in CTS Booklet Para 22

<sup>384</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55; Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 31. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* p 32 in CTS Booklet Para 22

<sup>385</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 32 in CTS Booklet Para 22

<sup>386</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 32 in CTS Booklet Para 22

<sup>387</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 33 in CTS Booklet Para 23

Indeed DI quoting from John Paul II encyclical letter *Fides et ratio* informs that:

the revelation of Christ will continue to be “the true lodestar”<sup>388</sup> in history for all humanity, for “The truth, which is Christ, imposes itself as an all-embracing authority”.<sup>389</sup>

### **Summary and Analysis**

#### ***Redemptoris Missio***

Having outlined both RM and DI, I will now try and offer an analysis of these documents.

*Redemptoris Missio* is a dense and difficult document. Its primary purpose is to outline the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate while incorporating interreligious dialogue in the wider context of evangelisation. Indeed RM in one of its more positive statements confirms that interreligious dialogue is part of the Church’s evangelising mission.<sup>390</sup> In the specifically Catholic context described we should note that evangelisation cannot be said to be mere proselytization of the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone. Indeed in Catholicism there is both a broader and narrower interpretive perspective. The Church for instance in the papal encyclical document *Redemptoris Missio* uses the term evangelization in both contexts. Since proclamation has occupied an elevated and distinctive role in evangelisation it has tended to be associated in the minds of many Catholics with proclamation alone, yet it is only one aspect of evangelisation.<sup>391</sup> The question we must therefore ask ourselves is how does RM interpret evangelisation in the context of proclamation witness and dialogue?

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<sup>388</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 15 Cited by theCDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2, 000) p 33 in CTS Booklet Para 23

<sup>389</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 92 Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p33 in CTS Booklet Para 23

<sup>390</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 59 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>391</sup> ER 6: (*Evangelization and Interreligious Dialogue: Address delivered by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald at Trinity College in Washington Oct 25 2003*) dmhtml:file//E:\Evangelization and Interreligious Dialogue.mht Website Accessed on 12/04/2010

Firstly we must acknowledge that for the hierarchy of the Catholic Church *Redemptoris Missio* is the specific lens through which the later PCID document *Dialogue and Proclamation* is to be interpreted. That the PCID document was a joint venture between two dicasteries the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples is in and of itself significant, but the significance is further highlighted by the latter encyclicals own focus on mission; indeed the document has been described as “a concise summa of the Roman Catholic Church’s thinking on mission today”.<sup>392</sup> John Paul II certainly feared that missionary activity appeared to be decreasing, a factor which undoubtedly led to the writing of *Redemptoris Missio*, a response to the negative tendency that he detected in the Church’s attitude to global mission.<sup>393</sup> Therefore when one views RM in the totality of its vision one is immediately struck by the depth of focus given over to mission and proclamation in relation to evangelisation. There can be little doubt that proclamation as interpreted in RM far outweighs any other form of evangelisation whether witness or dialogue, and indeed, according to RM, the aim of proclamation is conversion which is a Trinitarian gift of God.<sup>394</sup> So is proclamation just one aspect of evangelisation alongside dialogue and witness, the answer is by no means clear. Certainly RM stresses the use of different strategies in different contexts but ultimately we are left with the strong impression that proselytization is the preferred form of evangelisation. Equally in RM Christ is highlighted as the unique manifestation of God Incarnate and stress is placed on Jesus Christ as the unique and salvific way for all peoples. In this respect other religions are viewed as preparations for the Gospel, for “the Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and her members,” he “is at work in the heart of every person, through the ‘seeds of the word,’ to be found in human initiatives, including religious ones, and in mankind’s efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself”.<sup>395</sup>

This preferred form of proselytization is highlighted more acutely in *Dominus Iesus* which destroys all ambiguity in favour of what one can best describe as an overtly Manichean world

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<sup>392</sup> Bevans, S. B. The Biblical Basis of the Mission of the Church in *Redemptoris Missio*, in “*The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium* ed, Charles Van Engen, Dean S Gilliland and Paul Pierson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis 1993) p 37

<sup>393</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 4 in CTS Booklet Para 2

<sup>394</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 49-50 in CTS Booklet Para 46

<sup>395</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 29 in CTS Booklet Para 28

view. It is in this present encyclical, namely RM, that, I would suggest, we first begin to detect the somewhat blunt, if not yet quite adversarial approach toward the religious other that manifests more disturbingly in *Dominus Iesus*. For instance *Redemptoris Missio* states:

Interreligious dialogue is part of the Church's evangelising mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*; indeed, it has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions. This mission, in fact, is addressed to those who do not know Christ and his Gospel, and who belong for the most part to other religions. In Christ, God calls all peoples to himself and he wishes to share with them the fullness of his revelation and love. He does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain "gaps, insufficiencies and errors".<sup>396</sup> All of this has been given ample emphasis by the council and the subsequent *Magisterium*, without detracting in any way from the fact that salvation comes from Christ and that dialogue does not dispense from evangelisation.<sup>397</sup>

Here we see one of the inherent tensions which continue to exist in the Catholic Church's interpretation of evangelisation and an example of one of the inconsistencies and differences in stress that such confusion leads to. Interreligious dialogue is, it is claimed, at the beginning of the paragraph "part of the Church's evangelising mission"<sup>398</sup> yet by the end of the paragraph we are told that "dialogue does not dispense from evangelisation".<sup>399</sup> So which one is it? Put quite

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<sup>396</sup> Paul VI, Address at the opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, September 29, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), 858; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 2; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 16; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 9; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 53: loc. cit. 41f. Cited by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 59 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>397</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 59-60 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>398</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 59 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>399</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (August 6, 1964): AAS 56 (1964), 609-659; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 11, 41; Secretariat for Non-

simply is dialogue part of the Church's mission or is it not? And if it is part of the church's evangelising mission what status does it possess? What is deemed to take more priority dialogue or proselytization, and if they are meant to be equal in value why then does it seem from reading *Redemptoris Missio* that some forms of evangelisation (proselytization) are perceived to be more normative than others? The reason I would suggest is that *Redemptoris Missio* although stating that dialogue cannot be manipulated or reduced solely to a means for proclamation nevertheless fails in itself as a document to adopt a broad, generous and holistic Catholic perspective in relation to evangelisation but instead seems to adopt a rather narrow view of evangelisation, which it implicitly identifies with proclamation.<sup>400</sup>

Indeed we learn that:

dialogue should be conducted and implemented with the conviction that *the Church is the ordinary means of salvation* and that *she alone* possesses the fullness of the means of salvation.<sup>401</sup>

Here *Redemptoris Missio* is paraphrasing the position held by Hans Kung who described the Church as the ordinary means of grace and other religious traditions as extraordinary means of grace.

Despite certain discrepancies and limitations inherent in some of the arguments and conclusions reached within the text of this document we should neither ignore or fail to acknowledge the many splendid passages that also exist, passages which reflect positively on the role of Interreligious dialogue.

For instance the document boldly states:

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Christians, Document *L'atteggiamento della Chiesa di fronte ai seguaci di altre religioni: Riflessioni e orientamenti su dialogo e missione* (September 4, 1984): AAS 76 (1984), 816-828.

Cited by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 60 in CTS Booklet Para 55

<sup>400</sup> Dupuis, 1997: 365

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 7. Cited by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* p 60 in CTS Booklet Para 55

dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest, but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirements and dignity. It is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills.<sup>402</sup> Through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the "seeds of the Word,"<sup>403</sup> a "ray of that truth which enlightens all men";<sup>404</sup> these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind. Dialogue is based on hope and love, and will bear fruit in the Spirit. Other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of Revelation which she has received for the good of all.<sup>405</sup>

Indeed in *Redemptoris Missio* dialogue is as Dupuis duly notes:

“understood positively as ‘a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment’, and God ‘does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression’”.<sup>406</sup>

*Redemptoris Missio* is, as I have already intimated, a rather conflicted document perhaps due in no small part to its missionary thrust, a missionary thrust alluded to at the very beginning of the document where Pope John Paul II quoted a passage from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians “For if

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<sup>402</sup> Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 12: loc. cit., 279. Cited by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) pp60-61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

<sup>403</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 11, 15. Cited by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* p 61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

<sup>404</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 2. Cited by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) p 61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

<sup>405</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* pp 60-61 in CTS Booklet Para 56

<sup>406</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p 59 in CTS Booklet Para 55 quoted in Dupuis, 1997: 365



I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1Cor 9:16).<sup>407</sup>

Indeed according to Pope John Paul II the strong sensibility of the presence of the Holy Spirit as somehow also outside the church and inherent in other religious traditions “in every place, in every time and in every individual”<sup>408</sup> left the church with an uncomfortable ambiguity. The spirit of truth blows where it wills not where the church wills. This was undoubtedly an uncomfortable proposition for many within the institutional church and needed to be addressed.

As we have previously seen, John Paul II consistently represented dialogue with other religious traditions as an integral part of the Church’s evangelising mission, a position which created a level of tension in the Catholic response to the other that I would argue has never fully been resolved. For instance, should proclamation of the Gospel message be distinct from dialogue and if not distinct should it be viewed as somehow more worthy of Christian witness than dialogue alone? Of course the Catholic Church claims that both Dialogue and proclamation are inextricably linked but can this perspective be logically maintained? I would suggest not, for it would seem that proclamation has at times been deemed a worthier form of Christian witness than dialogue.

### ***Dominus Iesus* Summary and Analyses**

All forms of necessary ambiguity would soon come under review as the then current Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger issued what would prove to be a controversial declaration entitled *Dominus Iesus: Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*.

*Dominus Iesus* is one of the most misunderstood, contested and heated documents to emanate from the Vatican in recent years and in many respects it is akin to a modern version of *Irenaeus of Lyon’s* notorious *Adversus Haereses* (Against the Heresies). In it the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith outlines what it perceives to be heretical and unorthodox Catholic views

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<sup>407</sup> Pope John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* p3 in CTS Booklet Paral

<sup>408</sup> Pope John Paul II quoted in Linden, 2009: 254

advocated by various theologians none of whom are named. The document therefore cautions the Catholic faithful against what it loosely describes as pluralists and relativists; it also outlines what it perceives to be orthodox Catholic teaching and dogma in relation to the various other Christian Churches and the various other non-Christian religious traditions. In this respect the controversy which it generated and the ill-feeling and suspicion that it engendered can be put down I would suggest to the adversarial nature and tone of the document itself rather than to any radically new interpretations of Church teaching. Indeed as McBrien comments:

the tone is not only polemical; it is authoritarian. Where it attempts to construct an argument on behalf of the Church's teaching, it does so on the basis of what some would call a proof text approach to Sacred Scripture, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and the pronouncements of Pope John Paul II.

The declaration's appeal is almost always to authority and its demand is almost always for obedience. One has only to note the many instances in the text where words are italicized: the complete and definitive character of revelation in Christ must be *firmly believed* (n. 5); the proper response to revelation is *the obedience of faith* (n. 7); its distinction between theological faith and belief must be *firmly held* (n. 7)<sup>409</sup>

It was not only theologians such as McBrien who criticised the document and what Thomas C Fox cogently described as its “return to pre-Vatican II triumphalism”<sup>410</sup> but also a number of prominent Catholic Prelates,<sup>411</sup> among them former Australian Cardinal Edward Cassidy, former Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who according to Fox:

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<sup>409</sup> ER 9: McBrien, Richard. P. *Dominus Iesus: An Ecclesiological Critique* (A Lecture given at the *Centro Pro Unione*, Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2001) p 6 accessed at <http://www.sedos.org/english/McBrien.htm17/10/2010>

<sup>410</sup> Fox, 2002: 193

<sup>411</sup> Fox, 2002: 193

told Rome's *Corriere della Sera* newspaper that "neither the time nor the language of the document were opportune".<sup>412</sup>

Equally

Bishop Walter Kasper Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, said that while he agreed with the basic principles in the document it lacked the "necessary sensitivity".<sup>413</sup>

Cardinal Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles according to Fox:

wrote in *The Tidings*, the archdiocesan newspaper, that it "may not fully reflect the deeper understanding that has been achieved through ecumenical and interreligious dialogues over these last 30 years or more".<sup>414</sup>

The teaching contained within *Dominus Iesus* is neither innovatory nor radical; it is rather a narrow, guarded and defensive interpretation of Second Vatican Council statements and post-Vatican II Church documents. This should come as no real surprise as the document was prepared by the CDF whose remit is to conserve and protect orthodoxy. Such a remit necessarily presupposes the guardianship of tradition, a position which inevitably manifests itself in a defensive and reactionary attitude. This is certainly the case with *Dominus Iesus* and the document's main prey seems to be theologians who adopt a relativistic or pluralist interpretation of either scripture or the Incarnation.

The main thrust of the document therefore is in cataloguing what it perceives to be the folly of pluralist theologians and relativistic concepts of truth. That is to say the widely held view among many theologians that we cannot fully know truth because we are historically conditioned beings and that God as essentially ineffable is inexpressible using the normal contingencies of language. Our concepts and languages are socially, historically and culturally conditioned and therefore

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<sup>412</sup> Father Richard McBrien, "*Dominus Iesus: An Ecclesiological Critique*". Lecture given at the *Centro Pro Unione* in Rome, Jan 11, 2001 Cited in Fox, 2002: 193

<sup>413</sup> Fox, 2002: 194

<sup>414</sup> Fox, 2002: 194

incapable of expressing what is truly ultimate. Such theologians would declare that we can indeed only interpret truth concepts in a fragmentary and fractured manner. We cannot for instance adopt an overarching position or paradigm and claim to know all the answers.

To be fair to *Dominus Iesus* the CDF calls for one to trust scripture and tradition in faith and belief. However, theology and reason too must also be part of the grammar of faith; for was it not Anselm who once described theology as faith in search of understanding.

The Jesus spoken of in DI is I would suggest based on a descending Christology whereby Jesus Divinity is conferred upon him via the Father on high. As a result the Jesus promulgated in DI is in places almost docetic, with the emphasis placed on Christ's divinity rather than Jesus' humanity.

Indeed in this respect the argument offered by DI that Jesus Christ is in fact the fullness of revelation is not entirely correct, for as Gerald O'Collins explains:

God's self-revelation that was completed with the Resurrection and the coming of the Spirit, should not so emphasize the "fullness" of this revelation as to ignore "the glorious manifestation of our Lord" still to come.<sup>415</sup>

In this respect as Avery Dulles has argued:

Our present knowledge of God as revealed to us in Christ is limited and neither "absolute" nor "definitive". Those who claim otherwise ignore the

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<sup>415</sup>Pope Paul VI (1965) Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* Para 4 Cited by O'Collins in Jacques Dupuis's Contributions To Interreligious Dialogue *Theological Studies* 64, 2003: 391

way the language of revelation in the New Testament is strongly angled toward the future (e.g. Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2).<sup>416</sup>

Indeed

John Paul II in his 1998 encyclical on the relationship between faith and reason, *Fides et ratio*, where he wrote of “the fullness of truth which will appear with the final revelation of God”.<sup>417</sup> We now “see through a glass darkly” and not yet “face to face”; hence it is more accurate to call the revelation completed in Jesus Christ “decisive” rather than “definitive,” a term that would too easily suggest (wrongly) that there is nothing more to come.<sup>418</sup>

Once again we can perceive the tensions and contradictions inherent in statements issued by the CDF in DI. The hermeneutic at play is a hermeneutic of faith as opposed to one of suspicion. There has been no definitive theological shift that contradicts either Conciliar or post Conciliar views as expressed in Church documents, letters and other encyclicals. What there has been is a shift in emphasis. Language is deployed more forcefully, more bluntly and more particularly than before. The document and therefore the Church’s position are spelt out more clearly and the language employed leaves less room for ambiguity. Indeed some of the theology employed in DI leaves much to be desired.

*Dominus Iesus* gives us the position proffered by the teaching authority of the Church namely the CDF. In this respect the document at the very beginning offers us its own remit:

The expository language of the Declaration corresponds to its purpose, which is ***not to treat in a systematic manner*** the question of the ***unicity*** and ***salvific***

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<sup>416</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: orbis, 1992) 228-29, 240-42.

<sup>417</sup> Pope John Paul II (1998) Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* Para 2 Cited by O’Collins in “Jacques Dupuis’s Contributions To Interreligious Dialogue” *Theological Studies* 64, 2003: 301-302

<sup>418</sup> Gerald O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis’s Contributions To Interreligious Dialogue” *Theological Studies* 64, 2003: pp 391-392

*universality* of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church, nor to propose solutions to questions that are matters of free theological debate, but rather to *set forth again the doctrines of the Catholic faith in these areas, pointing out some fundamental questions that remain open to further development, and refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous.* For this reason, the Declaration takes up what has been taught in previous magisterial documents, in order to reiterate certain truths that are part of the Christian faith.<sup>419</sup>

DI states that those who specify an economy of the Holy Spirit with a more universalist breadth than that found in the Incarnate Word crucified and risen are in error in relation to Catholic doctrine.<sup>420</sup> The spirit of the Father, bestowed abundantly by the Son, is the animator of all. (Jn 3: 34)<sup>421</sup>

The action of the spirit therefore:

is not outside or parallel to the action of Christ. There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the son of God, actualized with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe. “No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>422</sup>

The Holy Spirit in DI is anchored to the incarnate word in its particular historical manifestation, a position of interpretation through a particular lens and a particular reading of a particular text. Who decides whether this interpretation and this reading is the correct one?

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<sup>419</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 5 in CTS Booklet Para 3

<sup>420</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 15 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>421</sup> CDF (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* p 16 in CTS Booklet Para 12

<sup>422</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28-29 Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* p 17 in CTS Booklet Para 12

DI states in relation to other religious experiences and their mediation in God's salvific plan that "although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value only from Christ's own mediation and they cannot be understood as complementary or parallel to his,"<sup>423</sup> although this statement sounds deeply reactionary and a retrograde step it is salutary to note that this statement was included in *Redemptoris Missio* the encyclical issued by John Paul II.

DI also states that:

With respect to the way in which the salvific grace of God — which is always given by means of Christ in the Spirit and has a mysterious relationship to the Church — comes to individual non-Christians, the Second Vatican Council limited itself to the statement that God bestows it "in ways known to himself".<sup>424</sup> Theologians are seeking to understand this question more fully. Their work is to be encouraged, since it is certainly useful for understanding better God's salvific plan and the ways in which it is accomplished.<sup>425</sup>

There is however a caveat for DI continues:

it is clear that it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 5. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 19 in CTS Booklet Para 14

<sup>424</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 7. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>425</sup> CDF (2, 000) *Dominus Iesus* p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>426</sup> CDF (2, 000) *Dominus Iesus* p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

Such a statement though perhaps implicit in certain other conciliar documents is now made much more explicit in DI and although still not a substantive change in the Church's attitude toward the religious other its bluntness and finality only succeeds in creating unnecessary tensions between faith communities.

Indeed in relation to this one must highlight what McBrien describes as *Dominus Iesus* most serious problem, that is to say its refusal:

to acknowledge the existence of true theological faith (as opposed to belief) in these other religions. Faith and Christian faith are not coextensive. If one truly believes in God, who is the one and only object of faith, it is because the person has somehow received the gift of faith from God, even if I should have no explicit reference to Jesus Christ. Moreover, in making this hard and fast distinction between theological faith and belief, the declaration tends to muddy its own waters. The declaration uses the words, 'belief' and 'believe', at least twenty – five times with reference to what Christians do. If belief has 'multiple meanings as Francis Clooney asks, is it possible to stipulate that faith, by contrast, has only a single meaning?'<sup>427</sup>

*Dominus Iesus* states:

Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God,<sup>428</sup> and which are part of what "the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions".<sup>429</sup> Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the

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<sup>427</sup> ER 9: McBrien, Richard. P. *Dominus Iesus: An Ecclesiological Critique* (A Lecture given at the *Centro Pro Unione*, Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2001) p 10 accessed at <http://www.sedos.org/english/McBrien.htm17/10/2010>

<sup>428</sup> These are the seeds of the divine Word (*semina Verbi*), which the Church recognizes with joy and respect (cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Ad gentes*, 11; Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2). Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>429</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 29. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21



human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God.<sup>430</sup> One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments.<sup>431</sup> Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. 1 Cor 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation.<sup>432</sup>

The passage above is a very good example of the thinking that lies behind *Dominus Iesus* which relies on a propositional interpretation of scripture which views Jesus Christ as constitutive of salvation and therefore rests firmly on a hermeneutic of faith that extolls the salvific validity of the Christian faith over other faiths traditions especially in relation to the divinity of Christ and the veracity of the Catholic Church in her unique, authoritative and sacramental manifestation as the inheritor and guardian of a tradition handed down to her via Christ and the Apostles particularly Peter. Other religious traditions are preparations for the Gospel and although helpful in opening ones heart to God they are not of divine origin, and as such they remain obstacles to ultimate salvation.

It is salutary to note the failure of the author to quote perhaps the most revolutionary statement concerning divine salvation contained in article 16 of *Lumen Gentium*, that is: “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – these too may attain eternal salvation”.<sup>433</sup> Another statement, one made by John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* concludes that the spirit “can be at work outside the visible Church and....in diverse ways....does

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<sup>430</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 843. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* p 30 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>431</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decretum de sacramentis*, can. 8, *de sacramentis in genere*: DS 1608. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* pp 30-31 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>432</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55. Cited by the CDF in *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) p31 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>433</sup> Flannery, 1987: 367

act in a hidden manner”<sup>434</sup> The fact that such statements are studiously ignored whilst other much narrower definitions are carefully sourced and plucked from obscure pre-Vatican II sources give us, I feel, an insight into the mind of whoever oversaw the drafting of this document, and it was I would suggest a mind not much in sympathy with the second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, or interreligious dialogue per-se.

*Dominus Iesus* was a warning shot from the Prefect of the CDF then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger now Pope Benedict XVI, aimed in the direction of Asian theologians and pluralistic theologies of religion as well as the world of interreligious dialogue. As Mannion cogently highlights:

The document was believed to mark a clear shift in focus from dialogue back to evangelisation as opposed to the understanding of dialogue as evangelisation that had emerged in numerous Catholic contexts following Vatican II.<sup>435</sup>

Nevertheless documents such as *Redemptoris Missio*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate* all trump this document in terms of hierarchical status. It is unfortunate indeed that this is not better known among fellow ecumenists, dialogue partners of other faith traditions and indeed the rank and file of the Catholic laity themselves.

It should be noted that theologians such as Gregory Baum perceive DI:

as a reversal not simply of the open dialogical spirit of Vatican II but also of documents such as *Dialogue and Mission* (Secretariat for non – Christian Missions, 1984) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue 1991), which along with teachings and pronouncements made by John Paul II helped indicate that dialogue is always to be respectful and sensitive, and in the case of the latter document, even

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<sup>434</sup> ER 9: McBrien, Richard. P. *Dominus Iesus: An Ecclesiological Critique* (A Lecture given at the *Centro Pro Unione*, Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2001) p 10 accessed at <http://www.sedos.org/english/McBrien.htm17/10/2010>

<sup>435</sup> Mannion, G. in Boeve & Mannion, 2010: 142

hints that in certain situations the Church must limit its mission to dialogue rather than proclamation (although both are seen to be fundamental to the Church's evangelising mission).<sup>436</sup>

Equally critical of DI according to Fox was The Institute of Missiology, *Missio* in Aachen, Germany, which follows Catholic Mission work closely,<sup>437</sup> it stated that *Dominus Iesus*:

is not doing justice to the serious theological reflection done, especially by theologians from Asia, but also from the other continents, in the fields of Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and theology of religions....The issue at stake....is whether the great plurality in the content and methodology in theological reflection, which has developed in recent years, can be considered to be a legitimate expression of the emergence of a world church since Vatican II....The document seems to refute nearly all theological advances made during the last thirty years by theologians in Asia, Africa and Latin America as incompatible with Catholic Orthodoxy.<sup>438</sup>

I would suggest that the sea change taking place in the church's response to the religious other is implicit and can be detected more clearly in the defensive tone of certain sections included within *Redemptoris Missio* and almost the whole of *Dominus Iesus*, the shift therefore taking place within the last two documents does not manifest in any obvious specific change of Vatican policy in the church's response to interreligious dialogue, but more in either a narrow and/or defensive tone of language that seems to set the agenda adopted by Benedict in particular. This agenda is an almost compulsive fear of what he and others have described as 'a creeping relativism' which he seemingly detects everywhere most notably within a religious context where he sees it as manifesting in the interface of East West Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The

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<sup>436</sup> Mannion paraphrasing Baum in Boeve & Mannion, 2010:143

<sup>437</sup> Fox, 2002: 194

<sup>438</sup> On the initiative of the Pontifical Mission Aid Society, the Institute of Missiology *Missio* e.V. (MWI) was founded in 1971 as an incorporated society. The Institute's statutes define its purpose as the promotion of philosophical and theological research and teaching in the field of Catholic mission work. The statement may be found at [www.mwi-aachen.de/Agora/ukagoradomi.html](http://www.mwi-aachen.de/Agora/ukagoradomi.html) Cited in Fox, 2002: 194

symbolism therefore of the then cardinal Ratzinger's non-presence at the side of Pope John Paul II at the Assisi prayer meeting in 1986 spoke volumes. The Cardinal Head of the CDF (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) seemingly did not approve; certainly most commentators have interpreted his absence from the conference in Assisi as pointing toward his theological unease with what was taking place.<sup>439</sup>

The church currently seems much more comfortable in dialoguing with the other Abrahamic religions than with Eastern religions. All that said there is no doubt that the current Pope and latterly the last Pope both considered proselytization of the Gospel to be more beneficial than either witness or dialogue and in a purely hierarchical sense proselytization was viewed as a more important element of evangelisation than was either witness or indeed dialogue.

This is just one more manifestation of the tension that exists within the Catholic understanding of evangelisation, a position in which the Church holds together in tension the respective merits of dialogue, proclamation and witness stressing the importance of first one and then another. There may well be a suspicion among many that the Church leans more favourably toward proclamation than to dialogue but one must also acknowledge that the Church has not in any concrete manner reneged on the statements of *Nostra Aetate* and Vatican II, although many, myself included, might well seriously question her level of enthusiasm for and commitment to the spirit of the Council's teachings.

The statements contained in the four documents analysed namely *Dialogue and Mission* (1984), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991), and *Dominus Iesus* (2,000) are important in relation to interreligious dialogue; for they highlight the tensions existing within the Catholic Church in relation to openness to the religious other and how one can remain true to one's religious belief. The questions that are asked and the conclusions that are reached in these documents are vital. They are essentially Catholics engaged in dialogue with themselves asking what might prove to be the best way to move forward as a Church in the modern era, dealing with issues related to concepts of truth, salvation, pneumatology, pluralism, and particularly

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<sup>439</sup> Mannion in Boeve & Mannion, 2010: 146

modern relativistic concepts which remain suspicious of all meta-narratives whatever shape or form they adopt. One can therefore see in the documents shifts in emphasis and interpretation depending on the view of the Dicastery involved. The Church cannot renege on the groundbreaking contents of *Nostra Aetate* therefore the subsequent battle is one based on how *Nostra Aetate* and the Second Vatican Council as a whole should be interpreted in relation to scripture, faith, belief, reason, and openness to the religious other. Such tensions will in my own view always be present in any religion that is by nature missionary, whether it is Christian, Muslim or Buddhist.

### **Interpreting Tradition: Gavin D’Costa**

The impetus for interreligious/intermonastic dialogue is unstoppable and the interest and goodwill that such dialogue has generated is global. Before highlighting the tensions inherent in such dialogue I would like to offer an overview of the work of Gavin D’Costa who in many respects is representative of theologians with a more traditional mind-set. D’Costa’s view on the question of the reception and transmission of tradition within the Catholic Church are of paramount importance and should not be ignored. How such tradition is legitimately interpreted is, as we have noted, an area of vociferous debate between both the Roman Magisterium and Catholic theologians.

There is a multiplicity of complex interpretations as to how one can and should read conciliar and other documents, particularly the *Declaration on the Church’s Relation to non-Christian religions*. This has become a point of real tension between theologians of various stripes. Although there are many different approaches for interpreting the *Declaration on non-Christian religions*, no theological or scholarly consensus exists as to what might be the correct interpretation of the council.

For a theologian like Gavin D’Costa, a normative position can only be arrived at if the documents are interpreted and read strictly through the lens of tradition<sup>440</sup>; there are in D’Costa’s

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<sup>440</sup> D’Costa, p. 496 New Blackfriars 2010: *Traditions and Reception: Interpreting Vatican II’s Declaration on the Church’s Relation to non-Christian Religions*

opinion, three key factors at work in the interpretation of the dogmatic significance of conciliar documents

First the question of biblical interpretation, second, the question of determining which elements of tradition are authoritative and which not; and third the influence of non-theological factors upon theological articulations.<sup>441</sup>

D'Costa argues in favor of an approach to council hermeneutics which includes and corrects three other approaches.<sup>442</sup> Such correct interpretations according to D'Costa: “do not lead to a closure of tradition but instead to an opening up and reformulation of tradition”.<sup>443</sup>

Essentially for D'Costa

The reception does not cease at the promulgation of the declaration but rather leads to a new cycle of reception (of the reception)<sup>444</sup>

One must, in D'Costa's view, adopt a traditional internal hierarchy of council documents reading theory;<sup>445</sup> that is to say, one must order the conciliar documents into a hierarchy with varying orders of importance and doctrinal normativity e.g. Dogmatic Constitutions must always guide our reading of lower level documents, and such a traditional internal hierarchy of council documents reading theory must state that the council and all subsequent documents should be interpreted via tradition (including previous council' Magisterial teachings).<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> D'Costa, p 484 New Blackfriars 2010: *Traditions and Reception: Interpreting Vatican II's Declaration on the church's relation to Non-Christian Religions*

<sup>442</sup> Ibid

<sup>443</sup> Ibid

<sup>444</sup> D'Costa P. 495 New Blackfriars 2010: *Traditions and Reception: Interpreting Vatican II's Declaration on the Church's relation to Non-Christian Religions*

<sup>445</sup> D'Costa pp 495-496 New Blackfriars 2010: *Traditions and Reception: Interpreting Vatican II's Declaration on Non-Christian Religions*

<sup>446</sup> D'Costa pp 495-496 New Blackfriars 2010: *Traditions and Reception: Interpreting Vatican II's Declaration on Non-Christian Religions*

For D’Costa, the major source for council hermeneutics is found in the document published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith entitled *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (circa 2000)*.

Paragraphs 20-22 of the CDF document *DI* addresses, as D’Costa notes, the intention of the council teachings<sup>447</sup> and also indicates illegitimate extrapolations from the council documents.<sup>448</sup> *DI* acknowledges that, while the religions may contain truth and goodness moved by the spirit, “it is clear that it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation along those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.”<sup>449</sup> This, therefore, counters any form of pluralism *de iure* (in principle). It also shows why the other religions cannot be understood as a ‘means of salvation’ as this is uniquely applied to the church precisely because of its Christological foundations. It is for this reason that the document is able to say, despite the many positive teachings which are unhesitatingly repeated, that the other religions per se cannot be understood as ways to salvation.<sup>450</sup> D’Costa in this context quotes section 21 of *DI*, which states

it is clear that it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as *one* way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.

Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God, and which are part of what “the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and

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<sup>447</sup> D’Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and Phenomenological Account* pp 1-33, 2011

<sup>448</sup> D’Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and Phenomenological Account* pp 1-33, 2011

<sup>450</sup> See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* pp. 30-32 in CTS Booklet Para 21-22

<sup>451</sup> D’Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and Phenomenological Account* pp 1-33, 2011 citing

religions". Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God. One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. *1 Cor* 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation.<sup>451</sup>

deducing from this that the door is thus closed on trying to establish any form of pluralism *de iure*, but it is kept open to explore how these religions might be forms of 'participated mediation' in so much as their positive elements might actually be part of God's plan to lead all people to Christ. These positive (21) elements cannot be viewed as positive in themselves, but only as some form of *praeparatio*. Such a distinction is crucial.<sup>452</sup> DI rightly suggests that this is a question that requires serious theological exploration.<sup>453</sup> However it also needs to be said that the 'positive elements' that might act in this fashion are not necessarily how those religions would interpret themselves... in some cases the positive elements might cause deep shame, learning and wonder in a Catholic-as when Catholics encounter ritual Muslim prayer and silent Buddhist meditation and non-violent practices in Judaism".<sup>454</sup> To summarize D'Costa: while other religions might be affirmed in the way outlined above, they can only be seen as part of God's plan in so much as they provide a *praeparatio* to the Gospel, but not in themselves as a means of salvation. While saying the latter, there is no implication that non-Christians are damned or that genuine holiness and wisdom is absent from non-Christian religions.<sup>455</sup> D'Costa wishes to commend the approach already outlined for the specific reason that it remains faithful to the ancient dogmatic teachings of the Christian Church...<sup>456</sup> and yet without compromising these foundational tenets, it reaches out to other religions and their adherents in the spirit of

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<sup>451</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2,000) *Dominus Iesus* pp. 30-31 in CTS Booklet Para 21

<sup>452</sup> D'Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and phenomenological Account*, pp 1-33, 2011

<sup>453</sup> D'Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and phenomenological Account*, pp 1-33, 2011

<sup>454</sup> D'Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and phenomenological Account*, pp 1-33, 2011

<sup>455</sup> D'Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and phenomenological Account*, pp 1-33, 2011

<sup>456</sup> D'Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and phenomenological Account*, pp 1-33, 2011



cooperation and (28) friendship.<sup>457</sup> In this reaching out there is a generous and joyful acknowledgement of the work of God in these religious cultures...and a patient learning from these cultures. There should also be repentance for our many failures in these areas. In this reaching out there is a concern to join together to act for the common good and to help transform society and alleviate the suffering of the poor, to herald in the kingdom of God. In this meeting the other there should be an acknowledgement that Catholic Christians can only reach out as equals, seeking to learn how to love and serve and not to dominate or denigrate. And in this dialogue, there is first and foremost a call to be witnesses to Christ, to be missionaries of the Gospel, and to call all peoples to baptism in the threefold name. Mission requires delicate sensitivity to a plethora of issues, but it cannot be ignored or downplayed.<sup>458</sup>

As we can clearly see D'Costa has adopted a rather narrow hermeneutical lens through which to interpret the *Declaration on non-Christian Religions*. The document must be read via the prism of revelation and tradition but tradition as interpreted by the Magisterium. There must be no discontinuity with tradition in the reading and theological interpretation of the Declaration. This is a circular argument which basically leads one to an acceptance of one particular narrow reading of revelation and tradition and although D'Costa insists that it does not lead to closure it is hard to argue otherwise. If one insists, as D'Costa certainly does, in adopting a presupposition of the diachronic coherence of Catholic dogma throughout history, then surely it is incumbent upon one to offer valid arguments for such a position rather than merely presuppose that such a position is in and of itself valid. I feel that the criticisms highlighted here by D'Costa, are representative of the most common criticisms issued by conservative theologians against more overtly liberal interpretations of the Declaration and subsequent documents issued by various Pontifical councils and Dicasteries. Such tensions are manifested not only at the theological level but also at ground level, and accounts, at least in part, for the vast chasm that exists between the theoretical statements issued from Rome as to how one should engage in the four forms of dialogue, and how it is in fact practised side by side and face to face. It is toward an investigation of these tensions that I should now like to focus attention.

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<sup>457</sup> D'Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and phenomenological Account*, pp 1-33, 2011

<sup>458</sup> D'Costa, G. *Catholicism and the World Religions: A Theological and phenomenological Account*, pp 1-33, 2011

## Chapter Six

### Tensions in the Four Forms of Dialogue

As we have already highlighted one of the underlying themes manifesting in the current dissertation is the apparent paradox in the views expressed by the Catholic Magisterium in relation to guidelines offered for interreligious dialogue, and the at times contradictory and even conflicting statements that have been issued by a number of Dicasteries. The contradictions and shifts in emphasis have created at times an almost impossible tension between what Knitter describes as the *lex dialogandi* and the *lex credenda* – that is to say between the practise of dialogue with other religions and the theory or theology of other religions.<sup>459</sup> The Catholic Church has tried to remain open toward the religious other particularly via the second Vatican Council documents *Dignitatis Humanae*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Nostra Aetate* and the two later PCID documents *Dialogue and Mission* and *Dialogue and Proclamation*, she has at times responded positively and openly to the spirit and ideas underlying such documents. As Paul Knitter notes:

What was left open in the council has been affirmed by John Paul II and by the council for Interreligious Dialogue, that is, that the religions themselves can “serve as ways of salvation”,<sup>460</sup> also the magisterium has proclaimed dialogue-authentic, mutually enriching and challenging dialogue-to be an essential piece of the Church’s mission to the world.<sup>461</sup>

But alongside such openness we have also detected in recent years a fear of where such religious dialogue might ultimately lead. Pope Benedict XVI, for instance, has made no secret of his preference for dialogue with the Jewish people wherein, as John Borelli notes, “he distinguishes dialogue with Jews as distinct from interreligious relations in general, and even dialogue with Muslims on theological grounds,”<sup>462</sup> indeed as Borelli also notes “a careful reading of his

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<sup>459</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 266

<sup>460</sup> Knitter, 2002: 81-82 (Introducing Theologies of Religions Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002, Part 2

<sup>461</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 262

<sup>462</sup> John Borelli article entitled *Of a Different Order* in *The Tablet* 21<sup>st</sup> August 2010: p10

statements on interreligious dialogue reveals that he redefines it as intercultural dialogue<sup>463</sup>.

Here then we perceive not only a tension but conceivably a possible stumbling block in the Catholic Church's reaction toward interreligious dialogue. However, despite the contradictory nature of many of his statements, Benedict has not as yet officially reneged on the principles underlying dialogue, principles first outlined by the Second Vatican Council in *Nostra Aetate*.

The Church in *Dialogue and Mission* and *Dialogue and Proclamation* has highlighted four types of dialogue, namely the dialogue of life the dialogue of action the dialogue of theological exchange and the Dialogue of Religious experience, and she has had little difficulty I would suggest with the first two forms of dialogue. For instance the dialogue of life possesses little in the way of theological threat for the Church and she is quite happy to accommodate and participate in the dialogue of life alongside various other religious traditions. The dialogue of life specifically involves one in getting to know one's religious neighbour as a friend and to try and break down any prejudices one might have subconsciously harboured. Such dialogue is respectful, gentle and hospitable and although it may lead to deeper questions that is not its primary objective. Equally the dialogue of action has as a primary objective to deal with issues related to racial and religious justice, the fostering of peace, harmony and understanding between religious traditions, particularly at a social and cultural level, which is not perceived by the Magisterium as in any way threatening and as such the Church is happy to participate fully in such ventures. Such interreligious dialogue is of vital importance and should not be disparaged or undervalued, particularly when one looks at the polemics that were once considered normative in relations between religions. Having defended the importance of such dialogue particularly given the current nature of society and the cultural and religious pluralism that exists, such dialogue from the point of view of the Magisterium remains conceptually safe as ideas and issues related to salvation history, religious authenticity and the unique role of Jesus Christ as Son of God and Saviour for all humankind are not on the agenda.

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<sup>463</sup> John Borelli article entitled *Of a Different Order* in *The Tablet* 21<sup>st</sup> August 2010: p10

Conversely for the Magisterium the dialogue pursued by theologians and to a lesser extent the dialogue of experience as pursued by monastics, is perceived as a threat. Such dialogue is often viewed as going beyond Orthodox Catholic understanding of scripture and tradition and therefore undermining the unicity and the universal nature of the faith of the Church instigated by Christ. Theologians bring their own agendas to the table and explore new ways of thinking and being Christian, a position adopted too by monastics engaged in interreligious dialogue. Both forms of dialogue complement one another and the dialogue of experience also contains elements of theological reflection and speculation. Such reflection whether experiential or theological can prove to be transformative for those engaged in the process and it is this transformative aspect of the dialogue that causes certain elements of the Catholic hierarchy a degree of unease.

This unease on the part of the Catholic hierarchy is evident when the experiential interpretation of many monastics highlight the unitive origin of all experience, or describe states of Buddhist meditation and practise as functionally analogous to Christian prayer and contemplation. The hierarchy is equally suspicious of monastics that adopt aspects of another tradition and incorporate it into their own tradition. For instance a contemplative monk adopting a specific Buddhist meditation technique such as Vipassana into his Christian practise of contemplation, or a contemplative nun adopting aspects of Vedanta, Madhayamika, or Zen philosophy in her interpretation of Gospel passages. The hierarchy does not view such practises (as do many contemplative monks and nuns) as complementary tools which enable a practitioner to delve deeper into their own faith tradition, but rather as philosophies and practises that undermine Christianity and which lead to syncretism.

Equally there is often a gulf between the positions of those engaging in interreligious dialogue and the various pronouncements offering guidelines for such dialogue. Of course the Church talks about respect and meeting the other as an equal but she also values proselytization and evangelisation and we have already explored the internal paradox and the tension inherent in the Church's specified position. However we have not yet looked at how such dialogue is translated into practice at a pastoral level. For many involved in the interface of dialogue the guidelines are

simple and the best are based on a lifetime of personal experience. In this context Sr Lucy Brydon, a Benedictine nun of Turvey Abbey and a longtime participant in interreligious/intermonastic dialogue, has outlined what she perceives to be the purpose of and the ground-rules for a Catholic monastic engaging in interreligious dialogue. She writes firstly of what dialogue is not:

- 1 It is not proselytising, trying to convert people to my own faith tradition.
- 2 It is not evangelisation, preaching a message with a view to convincing people of my faith as I understand it and have been called to live it.
- 3 It is not proclamation; an announcing of something as “the truth” which would then lead the other person to have to “proclaim” what they believe to be true and which would somehow make the other person feel in the wrong. (This insight comes from Rev Jonathan Gorsky, a Jewish orthodox teacher working in the Council for Christians and Jews).
- 4 It is not laying down boundaries of exclusion: *what does not fit into this cannot be “true:” those who do not believe this cannot be “saved”*.
- 5 It is not a case of one partner speaking from a superior position, being certain that they have the whole truth and are absolutely right, regarding the other partner in dialogue as somehow inferior.<sup>464</sup>

Conversely dialogue according to Sr Lucy involves:

- 1 Listening to another and learning through our shared experience and conversation.
- 2 There is no suggestion of heated or acrimonious argument or discussion to prove a point; no suggestion of an inferior and superior partner. It is an equal process.

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<sup>464</sup> ER 10: Sr Lucy Brydon OSB. *Journey Into Interreligious Dialogue: A Christian Perspective* in Lumbini Nepalese Dharma Society (UK) Journal (May 2006) accessed at [http://www.lumbini.org.uk/lumbini\\_journal\\_2006.pdf](http://www.lumbini.org.uk/lumbini_journal_2006.pdf)19/08/2010

3 It means both partners listening deeply, aware of where the other is coming from. This is particularly true in cases when Westerners have embraced Buddhism, having been born into agnostic or merely nominal Christian families, where they have never found the reality of the Christian faith, i.e. encountering the risen Christ. They are **not** ‘heretics’, ‘apostates’ or ‘lapsed’, and dialogue does not mean trying to win them back.

4 It is part of the process of my own personal conversion and metanoia to be open in dialogue to learning from the religious experience of others.

5 It means to witness with sincerity and love to my own religion, being able to give personal testimony and explain my own faith. It implies as a condition being deeply rooted in my own faith, otherwise insecurity and defensiveness will creep in. This is one of the most inimical things in dialogue, on either side. It leads to a feeling of being accused attacked or discounted.<sup>465</sup>

Reading through these guidelines one can clearly see a significant gulf developing between the practise of those engaged in interreligious dialogue at an experiential and practical level and the strained forced, paradoxical positions offered by the Catholic Magisterium.

What I would now like to explore are the three areas of controversy in the dialogue of theological exchange as outlined in *Redemptoris Missio* and *Dominus Iesus* namely the Catholic Church’s fear of a creeping relativism, particularly pluralism which it views as a reductionist philosophy/theology as well as the perceived danger of an implicit syncretism in relation to interreligious/intermonastic dialogue.

The concept of the Catholic Church as the so called *Ur Sacrament* or primary Sacrament instigated by Jesus Christ and handed down via his Apostles particularly Peter to the present

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<sup>465</sup> ER 10: Sr Lucy Brydon OSB. *Journey Into Interreligious Dialogue: A Christian Perspective* in Lumbini Nepalese Dharma Society (UK) Journal (May 2006) accessed at [http://www.lumbini.org.uk/lumbini\\_journal\\_2006.pdf](http://www.lumbini.org.uk/lumbini_journal_2006.pdf)19/08/2010

Bishop of Rome as well as the function of the Holy Spirit in the development of the Church and her tradition are viewed by many Catholics as non-negotiable areas of faith. The Church recognising the danger inherent in pursuing too open and accommodating a view of the religious other, has begun to interpret many of the statements issued by the Second Vatican Council in a narrow and mean spirited manner, a manner based on fear. The Church's evangelising mission to all intents and purposes once more advocates proselytization as the most normative form of evangelisation while in one and the same breath maintaining the interrelated nature of witness, dialogue and proselytisation, none of which of course should be sacrificed at the expense of the other. The tension here is palpable. Equally in relation to the Holy Spirit this too must remain interrelated and anchored safely to Jesus Christ and the Church. The Holy Spirit should not be split up into two economies of the Spirit, one related to Jesus Christ and the Church and the other related to the Eternal Logos. There is a conundrum here, a tension borne I would suggest of an untenable paradox. On the one hand Jesus Christ as the word Incarnate is viewed as historical and particular and on the other hand the Logos who is Christ is also perceived as Universal. (We already have here I would venture to suggest two economies of the Spirit in orthodox thought).

If Jesus Christ in the form of the Logos has existed since time began and was present in a hidden way in other religious traditions before the historical manifestation of the Church, is it not also the case that the Holy Spirit was also at work in the world before the Church had been instigated, and before Jesus Christ had been incarnated into the world? The Church it seems to me fails to deal with the ramifications of such a theology and as a result also struggles to adequately deal with questions of religious pluralism, issues of Asian inculturation, and the post modernist paradigm that views all truth claims as functionally delusional. Explained in simplistic terms, truth claims can only ever be considered as fragmentary in that the fullness of truth is beyond the functional capability of the limited human brain.

Jeannine Hill Fletcher makes plain "conversations across differences are essential".<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Fletcher, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p531

Unfortunately when the Catholic Church engages in interreligious dialogue she is not really engaging fully with the otherness of the other for her theology is forever a theology of *Preparatio Evangelica* (preparation for the Gospel) an honourable inclusivism that attempts to find in the Christian narrative a thread connecting the religious other which will then allow the religious other to be saved in a hidden way by either a universal Spirit who blows where he wills or by a Universal Christ who is the *Logos Spermatikos* and who remains active in the religion of the religious other in a hidden way. Such a theology however noble and however well intentioned, subtly but irrevocably, dissolves and erodes difference. In other words the existing difference of the religious other is not allowed to develop in its own terms using its own clearly articulated distinctive concepts and definitions, but is instead co-opted into the salvation history of another religious tradition, usually Christian, and the salvation history of its own tradition whatever that might be or however that might be expressed is neither respected or honoured. This imperialist colonizing of the religious other is not meant as an aggressive act but it does unfortunately mean that the otherness of the other is never truly recognised because of the self-introspection of Christians who arrogantly assume that their own salvation narrative is the defining one. Such a view of course results because of the Catholic Church's position vis-a-vis the historical and particular uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Every other religious tradition must be viewed through the prism of a Christian lens, it is argued, from the Christian side, because Jesus Christ is the uniquely salvific saviour figure for the whole of humankind. Essentially as Fletcher puts it, the framework for dialogue provided by inclusivist and even pluralist theologies does a disservice to Christians as it "encourages them to encounter people of other faiths primarily in the hopes of finding themselves in the other. Here the erasure of the uniqueness of the other is evident".<sup>467</sup> In the exchange "the other is not really allowed to be distinctive".<sup>468</sup>

Here then is a major tension not only for the Catholic Church but for all those committed to interreligious dialogue. The problem lies in the fact that even if one can somehow transcend the cultural linguistic level (as sometimes happens in intermonastic dialogue or the dialogue of experience) the requirement to understand the position of the other is detailed and complex and

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<sup>467</sup> Fletcher, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p534

<sup>468</sup> Ibid



probably requires a lifetime of practise and research. Herein lies another tension, for to come to know the other as other one must adopt the practices and beliefs of the other, essentially one must so to speak “Pass-Over” into the religion of the other. That is to say that after studying a religious tradition, for instance Buddhism, for a prolonged period and after sitting in meditation for a long period one must go and live in the culture and religion of the other, adopting the rituals concepts and practices of the other in detail. Such a process might well entail passing over, wherein one gets to know the religion of the other over a period of first months and then years and then one will at different stages incrementally pass over into the religion of the other, before returning transformed to one’s own tradition. Inevitably on returning to one’s own religious tradition one’s perspective has been irrefutably transformed by one’s experience of the others tradition. Such a process of course takes years of study and practise and requires that one be thoroughly rooted in the faith of one’s own religious tradition. Indeed if one is not deeply rooted in one’s own faith tradition there is a very real danger that by engaging in such practices one could easily fall into a facile form of syncretism.

Equally there is a tension here in that in co-opting the distinctive flavour of the religious other one might be tempted to either convert or might as we have already noted be led down a syncretist route, the latter route is a route that concerns the Catholic Church especially in its more cautious and formal responses to interreligious dialogue. There is within the psyche of the whole of the Roman Catholic Church a fear, perhaps legitimate, that relativistic concepts and theologies of religion might so deconstruct the current paradigmatic model of orthodox religious faith that such a model will eventually become redundant.

According to Fletcher:

words exchanged in dialogue are part of a wider web of meaning, culture, and practice; to understand my dialogue partner I need to know the many components of the language game and web of meaning her religion provides for her. Thus, to gain understanding as my dialogue partner speaks of

“Buddha Nature,” I need to have familiarity with not only the language of her sacred scripture but the culture of her religious community as well.<sup>469</sup>

To understand a specific religious outlook one needs to be steeped not only in its language but also its culture. Indeed as Knitter cogently notes “you can’t really understand one religious language by trying to translate it into another religious language”.<sup>470</sup> Therefore it is superficial and naive for one to attempt to make a comparison between for instance Mary the Virgin Mother of God with Kali (a Hindu feminine embodiment of the divine). Each of these terms as Fletcher highlights “makes sense only when embedded in their narrative based religious framework”.<sup>471</sup>

What can happen when we engage with people of other faiths is mutuality. That is to say one can engage in dialogues akin to the dialogue of life and the dialogue of action. These are forms of dialogue which as we have already seen are non-threatening to the Catholic Church for they do not challenge any of her dearly held presuppositions. What might be more of a challenge to the Church is the notion that in the hybridity of such dialogue one is led to acknowledge the depth and richness of the other religious tradition and by acknowledging its depth to come to the conclusion that God too is a mystery, that he/she is the unnameable one and incapable of being grasped by “any term, any idea, or any other conception”<sup>472</sup> Or to quote Pseudo Dionysius:

the inscrutable One is out of the reach of every rational process. Nor can any words come up to the inexpressible Good, this One, this Source of all unity, this supra-existent being. Mind beyond mind, word beyond speech, it is gathered up by no discourse, by no intuition, by no name. It is and it is as no other being is. Cause of all existence, and therefore itself transcending existence, it alone could give an authoritative account of what it really is.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Fletcher, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p 539

<sup>470</sup> Knitter, 2003: 181

<sup>471</sup> Fletcher, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p 542

<sup>472</sup> Fletcher citing Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomius*, vol. 1, 682,p.222 (18-24), as quoted in Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Grand Rapids. Mich: Eerdmans, 1995) 241 in *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p 549

<sup>473</sup> Fletcher Citing Pseudo – Dionysius, “*The Divine Names*,” chap, 1, in *Pseudo – Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist, 1987) 49-50, in *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p 550

Indeed if as Fletcher notes:

Christians have affirmed something about the mystery of God through their particular tradition, and if God's mystery is as a result of God's overabundance, then we might see other religious traditions as having other insights into this mysterious overabundance.<sup>474</sup>

Equally

In engaging with people of other faiths, Christians might be opened up to the never-ending possibilities that arise from the overabundant, incomprehensible mystery of God. Each tradition might be considered as a way of communicating something real about the mystery of existence that nonetheless does not capture the whole of this reality. The creative tension of ever new revelations of the incomprehensible mystery of God opens up infinitely to new ways of approaching and considering the mystery of our existence. But even as God's overabundance sustains diverse understandings, God's being as infinite means that all human knowledge put together cannot exhaust or fully comprehend the mystery of God.<sup>475</sup>

God being beyond all human words, concepts and affirmations is nevertheless glimpsed through the continued alterity of the other, manifest in the tradition of the religious other that in itself signifies the overabundance of a God that surpasses all that we as limited human creatures can understand.

Of course it is obvious why such concepts and paradigm shifts are perceived as threatening to the Catholic Church who wishes to claim that she possesses not a fragment of the truth but instead the fullness of truth, while at the same time trying to remain open hospitable and inclusive

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<sup>474</sup> Fletcher, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p552

<sup>475</sup> Fletcher, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): p 553

toward the religious other. Pope Benedict XVI for instance has expressed alarm at what he describes as relativistic concepts, that is to say post-modernist theologies, and distances both himself and the Catholic Church from them.

The Catholic Church promulgates that she alone has the fullness of truth and jealously guards salvation history incorporating her own meta-narrative into the fabric of the other religious traditions, thereby eroding their difference from Christianity, concentrating instead on Christianity's universalist ability to save all humankind through the willing sacrifice of the unique one, the particular saviour figure, Jesus Christ.

Another palpable area of tension within the realm of interreligious dialogue for the Catholic Church lies in the rise of pluralistic theologies of religion. Within such pluralist theologies of religion against which the Catholic Church has always reacted strongly there lies in the first instance a fear of syncretism, a possible loss of the Catholic faith and a degree of confusion on the part of whoever might be engaging in such a process whether privately in theological study or interreligiously. In the eyes of the Church a pluralist theology of religions corrosively erodes the particular nature of various religious narratives and adopts what might legitimately be described as a form of universalist reductionism. Such a reductionism undermines in the eyes of the Catholic Church the particular and unique nature of Jesus Christ's salvific efficacy for all humankind. In effect for pluralist theologies of religion Jesus Christ is not viewed as constitutive for salvation as is the case within the Catholic Church but substantive of salvation, that is to say that by looking at and imitating Jesus and all the good works that he has done we access the Father and reach salvation in that way. Here again an obvious tension exists and one can perhaps understand the reluctance of the Catholic Church to instigate or initiate theological debate on such points of faith.

Nevertheless the question we must ask ourselves is need this be so. Must the unique manifestation of Jesus Christ in his historical particularity lead inevitably to a stumbling block for Christians engaged in interreligious dialogue? The answer is both yes and no. It really depends on how one interprets Christianity and in particular the culturally conditioned

Christology that we inherited from Chalcedon. The question we must ask ourselves is the self-same question that Jesus asked of his disciples, namely, who do you say that I am? For Benedict, Christ is the unique saviour, linked directly to the Church and to the Spirit, each one viewed as interdependent and definitely not to be viewed as two economies of either the Word or the Spirit. It would seem that there is an impasse here, but not necessarily so. There are always different ways of looking at such concepts, and the two areas I would now like to investigate and offer as possible routes toward openness toward the religious other are pneumatology and dialogical Christology.

### **Pneumatology and Dialogical Christology**

As we have already seen *Nostra Aetate* was a fulfilment model, one in which the other religious traditions were perceived as viable pathways toward truth but only by way of preparation for the Gospel, the Gospel and Christian revelation alone possessed the fullness of truth which was manifested in the historical particularity of Jesus Christ.

Other religions according to the Catholic Church though possessing much that was true and holy, were in comparison to Christianity, lesser lights, and although possessing manifestations of the Holy Spirit in their rituals, ethics, customs and beliefs were nevertheless extraordinary means of grace while Christianity was deemed the ordinary means of grace.

In examining Sr Lucy Brydon's outlines for interreligious dialogue, we perceive a tension between the practise of such dialogue at a pastoral level and the theoretical subtleties, paradoxical concepts and often contradictory statements issued by various dicasteries as well as the propagation of papal encyclicals which represent the repository of truth in a guarded and conservative manner. Dialogue as Sr Lucy makes plain is not about one partner being better, superior or more in possession of the fullness of truth than the other, but is rather about mutual sharing mutual love and especially hospitality, such hospitality and mutuality requires that we be non – judgmental. Unfortunately there is a tension here between the theoretical views of the

Catholic Church and the practise of many theologians and monastics at ground level. How can we meet the religious other as an equal when we believe that his/her tradition is effectively a preparation for the Gospel? A large chasm it would seem has developed. Is there perhaps some way of bridging such a chasm? I would like to suggest that there is such a way, but even this way is the cause of some tension within the Catholic Church because it requires (at least in the eyes of some members of the Church) recourse to two economies of the Spirit and two economies of the word.

The two ways that I am suggesting involve one in not getting bogged down in classical Christological debate but instead in concentrating on pneumatology and dialogical Christology. In the 1980's Karl Rahner according to Knitter, highlighted "pneumatology as the fundamental point of departure for a [theology of religions] and that one should attempt from this point ....to gain a real and radical understanding of Christology"<sup>476</sup> Rahner had surely noted the Christological impasse namely the uniqueness of Christ or what Pope Benedict XVI has called the unicity of Christ. So for Rahner pneumatology is:

a teaching of the inmost, divinizing gift of grace for all human beings,<sup>477</sup>

which might as Knitter notes:

be a way around the Christological impasse"<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Rahner as cited by Knitter in Madges, 2005: 270

(Among those who are following Rahner's advice: Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal – Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Gavin D'Costa, *The Meetings of Religion and the Trinity* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 2000); Michael Amaladoss, Listen to the Spirit: The Father is Greater than I (John 14.28), *Vidyajyoti* 63 (1999): 687- 89; Michael Ipgrave, *Trinity and Interfaith Dialogue: Plenitude and Plurality*, Religions and Discourse Series, Vol 14;, ed. James M. M. Francis (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); Peter Hodgson, "The Spirit and Religious Pluralism," in Paul F. Knitter, ed., *The Myth of Religious Superiority* 135-49; Paul F. Knitter, A New Pentecost? A Pneumatological Theology of Religions," *Current Dialogue*, January 1991: 32-41)

<sup>477</sup>Rahner "Aspects of European Theology," 97-98 as cited by Knitter in Madges, 2005: 271

<sup>478</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005:271

Nevertheless for such a pneumatology to be effective and to be helpful it must operate as Knitter cogently notes:

using an ingredient of our traditional Trinitarian theology that can be epitomized in the patristic image of “the two hands of the Father.” Viewed *ad intra*, there are two really different processions within the Trinitarian life of God. *Ad extra*, there are two truly different, but always related, movements or missions by which the infinite parental Source of life reaches into the world to embrace and save it. The first Christians have found incarnated intimately in the person of Jesus the Christ. The other is the brooding Spirit of God who has hovered over and inspired creation from its very inception.<sup>479</sup>

Therefore as Amos Yong also highlights:

while the person of Jesus Christ is a historical symbol of God’s reality in the world, the Holy Spirit is par excellence the symbol of the divine presence and activity in the cosmic realm.<sup>480</sup>

Such a view as the one offered above would be dangerous and ill – advised particularly in the view of Pope Benedict XVI and indeed in the view of much orthodox Catholic thought. Benedict particularly in *Dominus Iesus* insists that the two economies of the Spirit cannot be separated and that to do so would be contrary to orthodox Catholic thought, indeed it would effectively be a form of modalist monarchianism.<sup>481</sup> This is all very well and good but there can be no doubt that as Genesis 1: 2 tells us “the wind or breath from God swept over the face of the waters,” hence the Spirit existed independently of the incarnate Logos, therefore when the Church refuses to differentiate between the two economies of the Spirit she too is adopting a heresy, one commonly referred to as Subordinationism.<sup>482</sup> Once again we see a manifestation of some of the

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<sup>479</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 271

<sup>480</sup> Yong, 2000: 29

<sup>481</sup> Bowker, 1997: 831

<sup>482</sup> Bowker, 1997: 923-924

tensions already highlighted in *Redemptoris Missio* and *Dominus Iesus*. If as Gavin D’Costa states, whatever is disclosed by the Spirit must “be measured and discerned by their conformity to and illumination of Christ,”<sup>483</sup> that is to say that Jesus and not the Spirit is the normative criterion of God then we must conclude along with Amos Yong that such “failure to differentiate between the two economies inevitably risks the subordination of the mission of the Spirit to that of the Son, and ultimately to an ecclesiological definition of soteriology,”<sup>484</sup> a position adopted and actively fostered as we have already seen by both Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* and the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, in *Dominus Iesus*.

Knitter highlights that the manifestation of the Spirit and the working of the Spirit in other religious traditions may be “surprisingly different from what has been revealed in the Incarnate Word. God’s revelation through the Spirit cannot therefore be reduced to what God has revealed in Jesus”.<sup>485</sup>

Nevertheless Knitter also stresses that:

Whatever is truly different in the Spirit’s activity in other religions will always be intimately related to the Incarnate Word’s revelation in Jesus. The Spirit may be saying something new, something beyond the good news of Jesus, but it will connect with the good news, so that between the two very different revelations, as between the two very different persons of the Trinity, there will be an exciting, life giving perichoresis, a dancing together and a transformative acting together. I believe that a synonym for such *perichoresis* is dialogue.<sup>486</sup>

Such a pneumatology of religions helps us to re-imagine Christology from a dialogical perspective, theologians are finding new, refreshing and creative ways of interpreting the

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<sup>483</sup> Knitter citing Gavin D’Costa in Madges, 2005: 271

<sup>484</sup> Yong, 2,000: 64

<sup>485</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 272

<sup>486</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 272



uniqueness of Jesus Christ as saviour and son of God. As John B Cobb Jr puts it “Christ is the way that is open to other ways”.<sup>487</sup> To follow Christ we must be open as Christ was open and that means as Knitter notes:

learning about other ways, exploring other truths, entering other lives.<sup>488</sup>

In this sense:

Christian discipleship is essentially, imperatively dialogical.<sup>489</sup>

Relationship with others including those who follow a different religious path to our own is vital if we wish to truly understand Christ and his message. As Knitter quoting Michael Barnes writes:

“it is impossible to be Christian ‘without the others’....Christian living....depends not on occupying a ‘place’ alongside others, but on practicing faith face to face with others....by constantly departing for another place...to be Christian is to exist in relationship....”<sup>490</sup>

Just as there are a variety of relationships within the Godhead there are also a variety of relationships between the divine and human and among the various religions, that is to say that “just as the Word cannot be what it is and realise its identity without constitutive relationship with the Spirit, so too must Christians who are trying to understand this Word in Christ be in a constitutive relationship with what the Spirit is revealing in other communities.”<sup>491</sup>

Therefore according to Jensen:

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<sup>487</sup> Knitter quoting Cobb in Madges, 2005: 272 original source John B Cobb, Jr “Beyond Pluralism” in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 91

<sup>488</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 273

<sup>489</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 273

<sup>490</sup> Barnes, *Theology & the Dialogue of Religions* pp 221-22./230 (as cited by Knitter in Madges, 2005: 273)

<sup>491</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 273

Jesus Christ is the One who embodies openness to others....He is the one who goes ahead of all who would enclose him, manifesting himself throughout time whenever openness to others is embodied in love. [Therefore] “Christomonism” – the proclamation of Jesus Christ at the expense of everything else – is a distortion of the life of discipleship and not its faithful execution. Indeed, conformity to Christ involves being claimed by others, and not claiming others as our own....In order to become more faithful disciples, Christians need the insights of persons who profess distinctly different commitments.<sup>492</sup>

In relation to the particularity of Jesus Christ, he as person puts us into contact with a universal God that transcends all our limited thoughts and concepts, indeed the Jesus of the Gospels does not wish to be considered as the fullness of God or as Knitter citing Douglas John Hall has put it “all the God of God there is”.<sup>493</sup>

If Jesus Christ is the way that is open to other ways, then there is no need to fear a loss of Jesus Christ’s uniqueness, as Pope Benedict XVI has suggested; for a dialogical Christology although open to the views of others and although it involves a process of listening and learning must also include speaking and challenging, in this sense such a dialogical Christology neither succumbs to a pluralist universal reductionism nor to a naive syncretism. \In dialogue one is also evangelising, for when one engages in dialogue one not only listens and learns but one also speaks and teaches, and in this sense at least, those who do engage in dialogue act as missionaries, missionaries who not only witness and preach to the other, but who in turn see the other both witness and preach to them. Christians involved in dialogue as Race notes “may feel that the other may already know God or truth but that doesn’t exclude the fact that they can learn more of God and truth through the process of dialogue”.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 273-274 citing David H Jensen, *In the Company of Others: A Dialogical Christology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), xi-xv, passim.

<sup>493</sup> Knitter in Madges, 2005: 274 citing Douglas John Hall, *Why Christian? For Those on the Edge of Faith* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1998), 33-34

<sup>494</sup> Knitter citing Race in Madges, 2005: 277

Christian openness to other religions will always be a confessional openness for Christians as Christians must witness to Christ first and foremost. The tension only arises when one narrow way of witnessing to Christ is projected as the normative way. Within Christianity there have been a multiplicity of Christologies and a plurality of interpretations of such Christologies. It is in relation to interpretations of such Christologies and what has been called the pluralistic thrust and relativistic content of such Christologies, that tensions within the Catholic Church have arisen. Knitter, Dupuis, Pieris, Haight, Panikkar and others have initiated a paradigm shift in how one might perceive Christ and the Holy Spirit in relation to the practises and beliefs of the religious other, such a shift has come about through the revolutionary openness of the Second Vatican Council and particularly *Nostra Aetate*; as well as further statements issued by the Secretariat for non-Christian Religions and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, not to mention some of the early statements and pronouncements issued by Pope John Paul II. Such statements in conjunction with the practise of the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of experience have created a gulf between theory at the curial or dicastery level and pastoral practise at ground level. Tensions remain and will always remain. Indeed even at the theoretical level many theologians argue that the conciliar documents are silent on the question of whether non-Christian religions are ways to salvation. Karl Rahner has said that the Council texts on close reading are silent on the point of whether or not non-Christian religions are in and of themselves a means to salvation. Nevertheless Rahner acknowledges that in the silence of the text this essential problem has been left open and that *Nostra Aetate* gives us no information about the questions.<sup>495</sup> Knitter on the other hand observes that “The majority of Catholic thinkers interpret the conciliar statements to affirm implicitly but clearly that the religions are ways of salvation”.<sup>496</sup> It seems therefore that the way one interprets nature and grace has a defining impact on how one interprets questions related to salvation for as D’Costa shrewdly notes:

For those wanting more sharply to distinguish supernatural grace in terms of the explicit Christian revelation, the silence in the conciliar documents on the

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<sup>495</sup> Karl Rahner, “On the Importance of the non-Christian religions for Salvation,” *Theological Investigations*, Darton Longman & Todd, London, Vol. 18, 1983, ch. 17, 290-291

<sup>496</sup> Paul Knitter, “Roman Catholic Approaches to Other Religions: Developments and Tensions,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1984, 50, Footnote 7, cited by D’Costa in *Meeting of the Religions & the Trinity*, 2000: 139

salvific efficacy of other religious traditions is seen as an intended restraint. For those wanting to relate nature and grace more closely, such as Rahner in his intrinsicism, the silence is seen as an open question to be answered-affirmatively.<sup>497</sup>

Here we see described in a clear, concise and simple manner one of the underlying problems contributing toward the tension in how Catholics view the religious other via their reading of revelation and tradition. Such tension will manifest more and more acutely for those who distinguish between supernatural grace in terms of the Christian revelation, particularly within the Magisterium of the Church.

There will in the future, as now, be ebbs and flows in the Church's openness toward the religious other. The model of *preparatio evangelica* will I would imagine continue to be the normative concept in relation to the Church's response to the salvific potential of the other, as will her unease with the prophetic insight of those engaged in the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of experience. Dialogue though will continue as an integral part of the Church's evangelising mission, but the revolutionary openness that we have seen in the recent past will continue to be reined in and reinterpreted in light of the Magisterium's fear of pluralist and relativistic theologies of religion. In this respect we must resign ourselves to an ongoing tension both intrareligiously and dialogically in exchanges between Catholic theologians and the Magisterium as well as in official Church responses toward the religious other. Tensions which have existed in one form or another within the Catholic Church since its inception and which have risen to the surface over the past fifty years, will I would venture to suggest, manifest ever more acutely in the future, as new insights and new perspectives initiated through the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of experience create an expanding gap between the response of the Catholic Church toward the religious other at a theoretical and curial level as opposed to the open, generous, hospitable, and nuanced response shown by those engaged at a pastoral level.

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<sup>497</sup> D'Costa, 2000: 105

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(D.T. Niles recalled that in his first meeting with Karl Barth in 1935, Barth said: 'Other religions are just unbelief.' Niles asked: 'How many Hindus, Dr Barth, have you met?' Barth answered: 'No one.' Niles said: 'How then do you know that Hinduism is unbelief?' Barth replied: 'A priori.' Niles concluded: 'I simply shook my head and smiled.') D.T. Niles, "Karl Barth - A Personal Memory", *The South East Asia Journal of Theology*, autumn 1969, pp.10-11, in Gerald H. Anderson, "Religion as a Problem for the Christian Mission", in *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World*, eds. Donald G. Dawe and John B. Carman, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1978, p.114, n.1. /

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