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Church and Culture: A Fresh Dialogue

by

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Introduction

On May 3, 1983 the Catholic bishops of the United States issued a pastoral letter on the morality of nuclear war. Never before in this country did a church document provoke such interest and controversy. The White House intervened between drafts in an attempt to influence the wording of the text, editorial writers of every political persuasion argued for and against the bishops' earlier drafts, and, after publication, a vigorous debate swept the country's policy circles.

Why did a church document become a media bombshell and attract such widespread, high-level attention? After all, bishops had often written pastoral letters before, evoking but little response from the general public. Two reasons explain the impact produced by the pastoral letter entitled The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response. First, the document was expressly addressed to the larger U.S. community, not merely to Catholic believers. A second, more important, reason is that the bishops tackled head-on highly controversial issues affecting this nation's nuclear policy. This they did, not in abstract generalities or lofty moral pronouncements, but with precise analytical and prescriptive judgments about first strikes, the targeting of missiles on civilian populations, and alternative scenarios for using tactical battlefield weapons. By speaking concretely, directly, and practically, the bishops stepped on many toes. It was a risk deliberately taken: through its Conference of Bishops, the Catholic Church was now ready to engage a new kind of dialogue with America's political culture. That they succeeded is amply attested to by major policy experts.

Writing in The New York Times before the bishops issued their final draft of the letter, George Kennan praised the document as "the most profound

and searching inquiry yet conducted by any responsible collective body into the relations of nuclear weaponry, and indeed of modern war in general, to moral philosophy, to politics and to the conscience of the national state."[1]

For Albert Wohlstetter, a veteran strategic scholar, the letter offers "a unique opportunity to examine the moral, political, and military issues together"....and to send "a message to strategists in Western foreign-policy establishments -- and to strategists in Western anti-nuclear counter-establishments."[2]

And McGeorge Bundy thinks "The pastoral letter fully deserves the wide audience it seeks. It is a thoughtful and comprehensive effort to bring religious and moral principles to bear on nuclear weapons."[3]

Not by accident or happenstance did the Catholic bishops address the nation's political conscience in such direct and concrete fashion. On the contrary, the letter's language and substance typify the new posture adopted by the Catholic Church world-wide as it dialogues over issues of vital concern to the cultures in which it lives. In this instance the problem was a burning strategic issue of national defense; soon, however, (November, 1984) the U.S. bishops will issue a letter on the U.S. economy. By debating crucial questions in this practical policy-relevant fashion, the Church is carrying out the new mandate it gave itself at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) when the Church committed itself to a new mode of outreach to the modern world. Pope John XXIII had long pleaded for <u>aggiornamento</u> -- bringing the Church up to the 20th century. What was needed, however, as Belgium's Cardinal Suenens declared at the Council, was a central vision which would answer the question posed by the modern world, "Church, what do you say about yourself? What is your identity and how do you view the world?" The search for the answer led to a Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World, called <u>Gaudium et Spes</u> (Joy and Hope, from the first Latin words of the text).[4]

Twenty years later, in January of 1983, Pope John Paul II instituted a new formal instrument to be used by the Church in its dialogue with the modern world: the Pontifical Council for Culture. The origins, the mission, and the significance of this new Council are analyzed in this volume.

A dramatic series of moves by the Catholic Church to reconcile itself with the contemporary world began with John XXIII, whose encyclical letter Mater et Magistra (1961) set a fresh style in papal documents. Convinced that dialogue between religious believers and Communists is both necessary and useful, John XXIII invited Christians to distinguish between error and those who hold the error. His successor, John Paul II, has lifted the condemnation placed on Galileo in 1616, hoping thereby to prove the good will of the Church toward the world's scientific communities. Still more recently, that same pontiff made remarkable gestures of reconciliation toward the Lutheran Church, going so far as to preach a sermon in their temple in Rome. Now why, one is entitled to ask, is the Catholic Church redefining its own stance toward surrounding cultures and other religions? It is worth inquiring into the reasons for this new posture. The inquiry is doubly important because, as sociologist Daniel Bell puts it, "Historically, therefore, culture has been fused with religion."[5]

I. A NEW POSTURE

Church officials employ two terms to describe the new activities they now deem essential: to "evangelize" and to "defend" cultures. Truth compels one to acknowledge that the history of past Church relations with diverse cultures is not a wholly glorious one. Too frequently did a heavily Europeanized Church serve as a willing partner to the expansionist political or commercial ambitions of Spanish, Portuguese or French monarchs. The cross eagerly followed after the sword as Christian nations raced to "colonize" pagan civilizations, not only militarily, politically and commercially, but religiously as well. During many centuries Catholic

missionaries were taught to show little respect for "pagan" religions, or even for the great social and architectural monuments painstakingly erected by non-Christian cultures. Thus did Spanish priests find it easy to destroy, in good conscience, the Aztec temples of central Mexico. Fernando Benitez explains that

> As soon as the Spaniards succeeded in entering Tenochtitlan, the heart of the Aztec empire, they saw the Indians as beings who were in the power of the devil, not of some indeterminate devil, but precisely of the devil of the Spaniards,...A society, and men thus subordinated to infernal powers, should be conquered and destroyed.[6]

Conquerors were convinced they were doing God's work by combatting devils; hence they proceeded to wipe out native civilizations, destroying their structures stone by stone, and banning native speech, dress, dance, and music. For Spaniards of the 16th century, this was their "civilizing" mission.

A similar spirit, albeit somewhat more moderation in their practice of physical vandalism, animated European evangelizers who sought to impose upon Chinese, Indian, and, at a later period, upon African candidates for baptism the renunciation of cherished cultural practices -- ancestor worship, fertility rites, polygamy. In the 20th century, however, the Church has grown more humble: it accepts other cultures in their differences, nay, it views these very differences as a positive good. That dramatic lesson which the American Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel taught Pope Paul VI seems finally to have taken hold. Heschel tried to persuade the Pope that the idea of a mission to the Jews must be abandoned if Christians were to enter into inter-faith dialogue with Jews. To make his point Heschel, who had narrowly escaped Nazi capture in 1938 (he referred to himself as "a brand plucked from the fire"), informed the Pope that he would rather go to Auschwitz than give up his faith.[7] Paul VI made a partial concession by ordering the removal of the "prayer for the conversion of the Jews" from the Good Friday liturgy. If, however, the old model of "evangelizing cultures"

must be discarded, what can take its place?

A. EVANGELIZING CULTURES

To evangelize cultures can no longer mean to impose upon them the trappings of a Europeanized "Christian" civilization. If the Gospel is, by definition, the Good News of God's creative and redemptive love, it needs to be received freely and willingly. But men and women who give their allegiance to specific communities of culture, cannot receive the Gospel freely unless the Church proposes it to them respectfully, and refrains from seeking to impose it triumphantly. The Catholic Church of the 1980's is now reconciled to not being able to dictate terms to the world; hence its official commitment to present its Gospel in ways which respect other cultures, and which do not judge or comdemn them on terms extrinsic to them. Doubtless there have always existed a few far-sighted missionaries like Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) in China and Robert de Nobili (1577-1656) in India who pleaded with authorities in Rome to allow a high degree of "missionary adaptation" to non-European cultures. Overwhelmingly, however, Church authorities responded fearfully and suspiciously, when not threateningly, to value differences rooted in "non-Christian cultures." These authorities were far more conscious of their duty to "preserve" intact the deposit of faith than to open its riches to others in terms they could find congenial. Other cultures, particularly in their religious manifestations, were habitually viewed as deficient entities needing to be redeemed or corrected, rather than as treasures to be discovered or appreciated. Until recent times, Church officials made little effort to discern God's handiwork, or even legitimate human creations, in other cultures. Now, however, the Roman Catholic Church, which has always prided itself on its "universal" mission, is historically prepared to reach out to the entire world in other than triumphalist or reductionist terms. When one group takes a "triumphalist" approach to another, it seeks victory, not mutual exchange. "A" must prove

"B" wrong and impose its view on "B". A "reductionist" posture means interpreting and judging another according to one's own values or standards, thereby "reducing" the other to one's own categories. Both stances impede true dialogue, which implies respect, reciprocity, and acceptance of the other precisely as other.

One can no longer imagine a Christian historian writing in good faith, as did the Englishman Christopher Dawson, that Christianity is synonymous with Europe.

Christianity is not Europe, nor is it European culture transplanted to Asia, Africa, or Polynesia. By declaring cultural provincialism no longer admissible, the Catholic Church, belatedly but emphatically, now says "Welcome" to the plurality of cultures, religions, meaning systems, and symbols. The existence of pluralism is not taken as some aberration in the providential order of things; rather, pluralism is itself constitutive of reality. Indeed it is part of God's plan for human history that there should still exist, even in the 1980's, hundreds of millions of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and adepts of nature religions on our common planet. And in some mysterious way, God's salvific work operates through and in these religions, as also through that modern substitute for religion known as secularism. Father Raimundo Panikkar, the noted scholarly authority on inter-religious dialogue, has written a highly suggestive book entitled The Unknown Christ of Hinduism,[8] whose theme is that Christians should not seek to triumph over Hinduism by proving that it is wrong, as ancient apologists attempted to do. Instead of "converting" Hindus, Christians should strive to discover Christ performing His hidden work of salvation in and through Hinduism. This is not the place to undertake to justify, in theological terms, how this is to be done, something which Panikkar does with great detail and rigor in numerous other works.[9] He uses two main conceptual categories, what he calls "diatopical hermeneutics" and

"homeomorphic equivalents." These forbidding technical terms simply mean that one must understand any religion,philosophy, Weltanschauung or culture from within that religion and culture, in the deepest symbolic and expressive terms it gives itself to signify mystery and meaning. Moreover, one must resist the temptation to find prematurely in other cultures "equivalents" to what is familiar to us; instead one must analyze the roles played in other cultures by what appears as analogous. Panikkar radically questions the traditional basis for Christianity's claim to universality. He argues that, whatever may be God's universal design on the human race, this design is not adequately expressed in a Christian triumphalism which negates the properly religious values of other faiths, and negates as well the deeply human (and God-Willed) values of other cultures.

To "evangelize" cultures, therefore, cannot mean, normatively speaking, to destroy or to strip these cultures of their specific identity. On the contrary, it must signify to enter into their living practice with a view to discovering how those cultures -- at least latently or potentially -- themselves fulfill the essential Christian vocation of building history while witnessing to transcendence.[10] One must learn to see where, and how, perhaps in some partial hidden form, the Good News (the Gospel) is already present in that practice, however alien it may initially appear to conventional Christian practice. Indeed, Christians who dialogue with living communities should offer a witness of love that takes them beyond law, of faith which transcends doctrine or any formulation thereof, of hope which shatters the boundaries of every calculus of possibility ("To God all things are possible").

Paradoxically -- and Christianity is replete with paradoxes[11] -- it is by giving up its triumphalist approach to other religions and cultures that the Catholic Church can itself become more fully "evangelized," that is, imbued with Gospel attitudes. Christ did not judge sinners, but He loved

them and in so doing healed them. If the Church is to resemble Christ, it need not judge error but reveal the Gospel truth (or kernel of truth) embedded in what appears to be error. If the Church acts thus, error where it truly exists, manifests itself as incompatible with truth. Nevertheless, although the Church should welcome cultures on their own terms, it should not give them uncritical or unqualified acceptance. At times it must criticize these cultures, precisely because it takes them seriously. Evil is to be denounced so that good may be announced. The French writer Maurice Bellet argues that we must exhibit

> "immense respect for every human habitation, its rites, its beliefs, its stories, its customs. But the respect we show is ardent and hard: it has nothing in common with mere tolerance, or with that insidious imperialism of those who are always ready to understand everything."[12]

Once we recognize that the Gospel is meant to achieve multiple cultural incarnations, we catch a glimpse of the riches latently present in the world's variety. One has only to compare the diverse musical beauties of a Missa Luba (Zaire) with the Mariachi Mass (Mexico) or the stately sweep of the Latin Gregorian Chant. Indeed, in the world at large, Christians have not yet begun to imagine what multitudinous cultural facets that diamond or "pearl of great price" known as the Gospel can exhibit.

"Evangelizing" cultures, however, is but one of the two missions facing the Church in the modern world: it must also use its spiritual power to "defend" cultures. Christ ordered His Church to serve humankind and in the 20th century this means to minister to cultures, to "defend" them against all those forces which would dehumanize their members. Cardinal Léon Duval gave an exceptional example of such service in 1962, after Algeria had won its political independence from the French and most Christians had left the country, because they were French citizens and did not wish to remain in an independent Arab, Muslim nation. Duval himself adopted Algerian citizenship and placed the resources of the Church at the service of the nation even

though most of the "Catholic sheep in his flock" had left the country. For Duval, the task of the Church was to "serve the people in the spirit of Christ, thus bearing witness to the power of grace." One of the most valuable services the Church can render to living communities of culture in the world at large is to "defend" them from their own internal counter-values and from external forces which would undermine their authentic values.

B. DEFENDING CULTURES

When he addressed the Pontifical Council for Culture on January 18, 1983, Pope John Paul II emphasized "two principle and complementary aspects which correspond to the two areas in which the Church is active: that of the evangelization of cultures and that of the defense of man of his cultural advancement. Both of these tasks demand that new pathways of dialogue between the Church and the cultures of our period be elaborated."[13] Earlier pages have outlined the new demands of evangelization. It now remains to be asked what it means to defend human cultures. To the question whether such defense is a Gospel imperative, the Pope replies that "our faith inspires us to love man himself. And, man, today, more than ever before, needs to be defended against the threats which weigh upon his development.[14] Because human individuals and groups do not truly understand each other, they enter into conflicts which "run the risk of being fatal for the future of human civilization."[15] Not only is the survival of the human race in jeopardy, the Pope adds, "but also his biological being, menaced by the deteriorating environment, the risk of genetic manipulations, attacks against unborn life, and by the widespread practice of political torture. Furthermore, the moral being of human persons is violated by "hedonistic currents which exacerbate his instincts and fascinate him with illusions of consumption without discrimination." What is more, economic systems exploit entire collectivities, and ideological regimes "imprison the soul of the people." Therefore, the Pope concludes, "As Christians, we cannot

keep silent and we must denounce this cultural oppression which prevents people and ethnic groups from being themselves in conformity with their profound vocation."[16]

The ultimate justification or warrant for the active defense of the human person by the Catholic Church rests in its belief in the essential goodness of nature. All of nature, including the human species, was created by a God "who saw that it was good." (Genesis 1:25) Adam's sin, which brought evil into the world, did not radically destroy the goodness of the nature God had created, nor did it invalidate the worth of the tasks performed by human intelligence, artistic imagination, political, technological, and economic inventiveness. This is the reason why, in the Pope's words to UNESCO, "it is essential to affirm man for himself....because of the particular dignity that he possesses."[17] The Christian religion, therefore, not only brings grace to souls, it likewise reaffirms nature in the goodness it harbors and consecrates natural human accomplishments in all domains -- politics, economics, art, knowledge.

Catholic tradition and theology have always rejected as heresies those historically recurring interpretations of grace which treat human effort, the "building up of history," as mere means or stepping stones to heaven. God's mandate to human beings, Archbishop Helder Camara tells us in his poetic Symphony for the Two Worlds is to be co-creators with God of a more just, more fraternal, and more human world. The Creator accepted the risk of endowing the human creature with power for evil and for good. Yet God hesitated not, Helder writes as he addresses the Lord, to make

> "man and woman in Your guise,[18]
> all creators like Yourself....
> Your artisan, Your chosen heir."

Consequently, Christians have a properly religious duty to respect, to nurture, to protect, and to adorn nature. "Piety toward nature" is a virtue which "pagan" religions have always acknowledged because they considered

nature to be sacred. Contemporary Christians now face the task of resacralizing the profane, hallowing the modern world precisely in what is modern about it. They must re-sacralize the world because ancient sacralizations ignored boundary lines between the divinely holy and the naturally sacred. Nevertheless, these boundary lines need to be respected inasmuch as God is utterly transcendent, although His creatures are made of His hands and speak to us of Him. The English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) put it beautifully: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." Nature and human effort need to be legitimized and protected because, in God's eyes, nature and human effort are ends, valuable and precious for their own sakes.

Teilhard de Chardin, in a letter to a friend, insisted that religion must be faithful to transcendence while simultaneously taking the "human" at full value. He urges

> "the reconciliation of progress and detachment -- of passionate and legitimate love of the greater Earth and the unique quest for the Kingdom of Heaven. How to be as Christian as any, while being human more than any? It is all very well to carry on with science, philosophy, and sociology in order to please God and to accomplish the mission assigned to us. But this is not enough; so long as, in my studies or labors, I do not see the need for dedication, so that it will be by means of the work I accomplish (and not solely because of the moral value of my endeavors) that I shall make progress and get myself moving toward the Absolute; so long as the world appears to me as an opportunity for gaining merit, and not a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί to build up and bring to perfection -- I shall be but one of the lukewarm, and judging me by my religion, men will regard me as below standard, and a turncoat. And who would dare to say that they were utterly wrong."[19]

When human creations are valued as ends, and not merely as means to salvation, time, matter, the world, and our own short lives are not seen as mere doormats or testing grounds for us to earn heaven: they are the arenas in which we build up creation as God meant it to be, into a Kingdom of fraternity, freedom, and justice. This Kingdom restores nature to the pristine goodness it enjoyed before being soiled by sin, yet the Kingdom transcends nature without, however, violating or destroying it. Human

beings are true co-creators with God of history. The late philosopher Jacques Maritain called earthly activities "infra-valent"ends. Such values as a better economic system, a more humanepolitical order, an improved education system, and a high quality of material and psychological life are clearly not the absolute or final ends of human endeavor. That final end is loving union with God in communion with all God's creatures in a thrilling, ecstatic eternity of joy and creativity.

> "the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." (I Cor. 2:9)

Nevertheless, the endless human struggle to make this world a better place, the joy one takes in friendship, the worth one assigns to human accomplishments, all are valid ends in their own right. Although lower in dignity than the absolute end, they are intrinsically related to that absolute end as infra-valent, or subordinate ends.

Our present age poses dire threats to human dignity. Not surprisingly, therefore, in Latin America as in the Philippines, Korea, and South Africa, Christian churches loudly defend human rights, the inviolability of the person, the worth of the poor, the obligation of governments to bow down to a higher law. Religions can never allow states, governments, or political ideologies to become "idols" claiming absolute allegiance from their subjects. This demystifying role of churches is but one of their three functions in temporal affairs. A first function is to "raise banners on high," to proclaim that values like peace, justice, freedom, the inviolability of human persons, and the relativity of all human institutions, take precedence over any political calculus, and over the demands of economic efficiency or technological imperatives. A second role of religious institutions is to carry out a local ministry which tends to the concrete needs of people's bodies, as well as to those of their spirit. Before preaching to people

Christ fed them, and He made the practice of compassionate acts the touchstone of discipleship. He enjoined His followers to treat every other human being as neighbors, that is, as children of His own father. Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Abraham Heschel, Mother Teresa, Helder Camara, and other religious social activists have always acknowledged that one cannot serve God if one ignores God's children. To minister locally means to struggle for decent wages, fair prices, and respect for the dignity of the powerless. A third mission of churches, besides raising banners aloft and providing local care to communities of need, is to practice effective solidarity. During Christianity's early years the apostles took up collections for "needy brethren" in Jerusalem or Cappadocia. Now that technology has transformed foreign affairs into local news, the requirements of solidarity are universal. Hence it is right for the U.S. Church to lend a helping hand to victims of rights violations in Chile, Kampuchea, Palestine's West Bank, Iran, or the Philippines. Effective solidarity cannot dispense with publicity (which in turn presupposes research and fact-finding), money, legal support, political pressure. Not only is it legitimate for U.S. churches to care about what happens to peasants in El Salvador, political dissidents in the Philippines, and to would-be Jewish immigrants inside the Soviet Union, it is their obligation to do so. For the Church, there are no boundaries to the question posed to Christ by the Pharissee, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29)

In inescapable simple fact, the Church IS a political actor. Yet, if it is to be true to itself the Church, while testifying and laboring in political arenas, must never pay spiritual tribute to slogans or ideologies.

Thomas Merton explains that

> "The basic problem is not political, it is a-political and human. One of the most important things to do is to keep cutting deliberately through political lines and barriers and emphasizing the fact that these are largely fabrications and that there is another dimension, a genuine reality, totally opposed to the fictions of politics: the human dimension."[20]

Precisely because the claims of the political world are so often fraudulent, prophetic institutions must summon the world to a higher reality -- that "human dimension" evoked by Merton. The mission is doubly difficult because one of the great idolatries of the modern age is to reduce human questions to political issues.[21] Religion's several mandates may also be described in different terms. The first mandate is to speak truth to power,[22] thereby raising banners and witnessing to transcendence. Another of religion's duties is to incarnate redemption in the concrete conditions of people's lives, thus making societal as well as personal history. A third, and final mandate, is to give form and substance to solidarity by helping humanity become effectively a single mystical body of brothers and sisters under God. Any Church or individual Christian attempting to carry out this triple mission in the 20th century necessarily risks becoming unpopular, incurring opposition and often repression. Thus the Church, by objecting to violations of human rights, clashes with Chilean dictators who consider themselves the stewards of Christian civilization. And the Church alienates Israel when it insists on humane treatment for Palestinians living in the West Bank while, simultaneously, arousing the ire of Arab governments if it contemplates diplomatic relations with Jerusalem. My point is that it is no political calculus which lies at the heart of the Church's activity in political arenas. Indeed, some political calculus is obviously present, as when the Pope visits Poland. Nevertheless, the defense of human values, part of its mission from God, often obliges the Church to speak out when it is not politically expedient to do so. It cannot choose the course of silence, however; like St. Paul it is compelled to preach the Gospel of human dignity.

With the creation of a Pontifical Council for Culture in January of 1983, the Roman Catholic Church publicly acknowledges its duty to perform all three tasks, a public commitment with far-reaching implications for

Christianity's dealings with religious and political bodies throughout the world. To speak more specifically, it has enormous bearings on the relationship between the Catholic Church and American culture in the United States.

II. CHRISTIANITY AND AMERICAN CULTURE

The U.S. Catholic Church, in the person of its bishops, priests, scholars, and laypersons in public life, has always dialogued with mainstream American culture. Early in the nation's life dialogue was needed because Catholics differed conspicuously from mainstream Protestants who shaped U.S. culture along a value axis of privatized religion, the cult of economic success, individual expression and superior social status. Catholicism was more doctrinal than Protestantism, it was rooted to an institution and an experience which were largely Europeanized and less egalitarian, individualistic and exploratory than the culture which set the tone for this nation. Eighteenth-century Catholics like Charles Carroll (1737-1832) and Charles Calvert (1620-1715) struggled to win legitimacy from fellow Americans and gain acceptance for the Catholic way of life. Champions of Catholicism in a later century, Orestes Brownson (1803-1876), Issac Hecker (1819-1888), and James Cardinal Gibbons (1834-1921) devoted their energies to convincing majority Americans that the Catholic "minority" culture was more compatible with this nation's deeply cherished values than was the WASP culture. These values were personal dignity, freedom, the aspiration after community, a sense that God had given this country a "mission" in history.

During this century, however, the dialogue of U.S. Catholics with the national culture has consisted mainly of trying to demonstrate that Catholics are just as American as everyone else. Cardinal Spellman preaches uncritical patriotism during the Vietnam War and John Kennedy insists there is no difference between him and non-Catholics (after all, he too went to Harvard, and he is a secular man who is loyal to the Constitution), priest-

writers like Andrew Greeley plunge gleefully into the mainstream of commercial intellectualism so characteristic of post-World War II United States culture. Those few critics -- Dorothy Day, James Forest, and Thomas Merton -- who dialogued with Americans in the voice of prophetic criticism, summoning this nation to its best self, were usually dismissed or marginalized.

With the publication of the pastoral letter on nuclear morality, however, the Church, at least in its most visible and official members, seems ready at last for a new critical dialogue with American culture. This dialogue centers on the fundamental values and assumptions of this society, its economic institutions, its images of the good life and of national destiny. Now at last the U.S. Church ceases being a mere consumer of Latin America's theology of liberation. That theology called the Latin Church to break with its traditional allegiance to a social status quo now judged to be repressive, structurally unjust and, in Biblical terms, idolatrous. Liberation theologians goaded their Church into opposing its own economic vested interests by denouncing the private property ideology which legitimizes scandalously inequitable land tenure systems. Its aspirations after political influence were likewise jeopardized by daring to criticize repressive policies of its "natural" allies -- the elite ruling classes of their societies. Culturally, as well, the Church was challenged to strip itself of its accustomed bourgeois life-style and attitudes by taking an effective, concretely-lived "option for the poor." Upper-class Chilean Jesuits responded to the summons by abandoning their comfortable community residences and moving to slums in Santiago's working-class quarters, Brazilian priests risked torture, imprisonment and exile to defend the rights of peasants to remain on the land they farm for their subsistence. Liberation theology, in a word, weans the Latin Church away from its comfortable alliance -- not to say dalliance! --

with a privileged status quo. It is a theology of revolution, or at the very least, of radical reform. And though North American Christians in large numbers rallied to the support of liberation theology, it imposed no drastic changes in their own national lives, priorities, or policies. This is the sense in which the U.S. was a "consumer" of theology of liberation: North Americans welcomed and applauded it, repeated its formulas, published its writings, and gave themselves vicarious self-satisfaction over being on the "progressive" side of the socio-theological fence.

Only a few voices, notably Sister Marie Augusta Neal[23] pointed out that what this country needs is a "theology of relinquishment," of "letting go." Letting go is the reverse side of the coin of Third World liberation: if the U.S. is part of the problem and if Americans are unwitting and unwilling accomplices of impersonal systems of oppression, the "liberation" of their Third World neighbors requires that they "let go" or "relinquish" certain economic and political attachments.

Now that a normative dialogue between Church and the U.S. public life has been engaged over nuclear policy, however, this country's Catholics face a moral challenge which parallels that experienced by their counterparts south of the border during the last two decades. U.S. Christians must now choose whether or not to break with conventional interpretations of patriotism, national security, and the American dream of the good life. Just as liberation theology did for Latin Americans, so too does nuclear theology force North Americans to make a basic reassessment of their nation's policy assumptions.

This qualitatively new dialogue between Church and society over basic values comes at a time when many secular scholars and social critics explicitly question the validity of this nation's values, assumptions, and symbolic images. Christopher Lasch decries our "culture of narcissism " while Louise Bernikow laments the pervasive spread of loneliness as a

national epidemic,[24] and sociologist Daniel Bell bemoans the split in American life which sends the economy off in one direction and following one set of principles, the political sphere of life into another, and the cultural life into still a third.[25] Hazel Henderson[26] pleads for a new economics, Willis Harman[27] for a new ecologically responsible stewardship, Lester Thurow[28] for a new realism in our consumer aspirations. On all sides analysts and problem solvers concur that the U.S. has been tinkering with palliatives in attempts to solve its social problems, to formulate an adequate foreign policy, to provide its own citizens convincing reasons for living. This country, in short, experiences the emptiness of modernity while remaining hypnotized, when not addicted, by the visible signs of progress -- technology's latest baubles, media hype, and infatuation with an endless chorus of "new celebrities." To the question "Why is this so?" I answer: "Because this nation has no wisdom to match its sciences."

Wisdom is the simplicity of vision and meaning conquered after complexity, diversity, and contradiction have been confronted. Hence wisdom differs from naiveté, which is simplicity before it faces complexity or grapples with contradiction. What wisdom adds to mere understanding is knowledge of the synthesizing pattern which makes sense of the whole or the totality of things. There is no wisdom in American culture -- although wisdom may reside in the hearts of individual Americans -- because this nation has shown no interest in pursuing it. Wisdom is not something given or natural, nor is it something which is won painlessly. Collectively, as individually, it can only be gained by those who seek it and accept to suffer or make sacrifices for it.

At a Colloquium held in Rheinfelden (Switzerland) in the late 1950's, the Swiss philosopher Jeanne Hersch debated the content of "the good life" with George Kennan. Hersch, insisting on the inescapably tragic dimension of human life, rejected the view that happiness or the good life consists simply in ever more freedom to make satisfying choices of what to consume,

to watch, or to do during one's increasingly abundant leisure time. For her,

> "the picture of humanity utilizing its worthy leisure watching high-class shows is more than I can bear. I submit that if this leisure is to mean anything, people will have to believe in something to begin with. And they will have to believe in or care about this thing, not something else. In other words, over and above the choices available there has to be an inner necessity, which is more important than the choice. And when you believe in something, you are vulnerable; you must be prepared to suffer for whatever you cherish. I have just spent six months in the United States, and I have the impression that what is most lacking in America is the willingness to believe deeply in something to suffer for it."[29]

A full decade after the Vietnam War has ended, the psychological climate now reigning in the U.S. may finally render wisdom possible. Although this nation lost that war, for a long time it could not bring itself to acknowledge defeat. The refusal usually took the form of society turning its back on its returned war veterans. Unlike soldiers from other wars, Vietnam veterans were not heroes but objects of recrimination. Yet where was the Church -- where were the religious voices -- to speak the truth about Vietnam, to help Americans understand what had happened, and why? Those voices remained conspicuously silent. And why? Because it is part of the cultural tradition of the United States to avoid dialogue over troubling matters -- or to confine disclosure to the psychiatrist's couch. Our political arguments tend to be superficial, with adversaries seemingly more intent on scoring political or media points after an opponent's gaffe, than on debating the merits of competing value choices or visions of human life. This is why to "dialogue with American" culture at the level of society's deeper values will be no easy task for the Church in this country, which is neither a culture of silence (to use Paulo Freire's term), nor a culture of dialogue, but one of parallel monologues. Everyone in the United States has something to say -- and a limited time in which to say it, but precious few have anything to hear -- except professionals who are paid to listen!

Therefore, in order to dialogue meaningfully with America's culture, the Church must discover a new way of speaking about the Good News of its Gospel message. No longer does it suffice, as it did in earlier times when immigrant Catholic working masses came to this nation's industrial cities, to preach a religiosity of "cultural refuge" from the sad reality of being lower class (because one was Catholic) in an America nourished on dreams of wealth and prosperity -- "the pot-o-gold at the end of Finian's rainbow." Nor is it enough for the Church to repeat its later discourse of uncritical adaptation to dominant values of the U.S. -- triumphalism in dealings with the world at large, ethnocentric self-satisfaction in its own narrow cultural world which ignores non-Western history, philosophy, literature, and religion or which views these largely as consumer adornments to one's stock of knowledge. Genuine dialogue with American culture calls for a searching look by the Church, at the values undergirding this nation's dream of the good life, its assumptions about the just society, the criteria it invokes to define a proper relationship to nature and nature's surrogate, technology. The good life, the just society, and the stance toward nature and nature's substitutes -- here precisely are the three values which constitute the essence of what "development is." Consequently, a dialogue with U.S. culture requires of the Church a new discourse on what "development" ought to mean for the U.S.

A. DEVELOPMENT REVISITED

Development experts now confess the failure of earlier models prescribing self-sustained economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, and competitive entry into world market arenas.[30] Numberless theories vie to "explain" the failure, but one common explanation offered is that the growth model of mass consumption, or abundance for everybody,[31] failed because the cultural "soil" or "climate" to which it was transplanted was not suited to receive it. McClelland's "achievement motivation"[32] could not plant roots

in societies where individual entrepreneurship or initiative is not honored, or where what Albert Hirschman calls a "group focused" image of change runs counter to the more individualistic "ego-focused image" in America.[33] Few critics have ever asked whether the image of the good life exported to foreign shores under the banner of "development" is not itself vitiated in radice, flawed at its roots in its society of origin.

Signs are beginning to abound to show that the pattern of human development which has been disseminated by the U.S. throughout the world is not satisfactory even back home. Whereas development writers speak of anti, counter, or mal-development,[34] U.S. social critics decry the loss of community, the "epidemic" of loneliness. Their complaints provide symptomatic evidence of this society's ills at the subjective level, but they say little regarding objective external conditions. But a vast array of enornous problems in the objective arena exist, all relating to the sustainability of American consumption. Quite apart from questions of unjust exploitation of Third World suppliers of minerals, raw materials, cheap labor, etc.,[35] Americans are troubled over the depletion of non-renewable resources (ranging from drinking water to unpolluted air, from fossil fuels to shady forests, from minerals to physical space), the disposal of wastes (especially radioactive materials), the quality of urban life, equity in job opportunities. This large-scale industrial society now suffers acutely from a multitude of diseconomies of scale.[36] Heretofore economists spoke euphorically of the "economies" of scale. Now they are being forced to consider the diseconomies of scale. Cities have grown too sprawling, universities have become too large, bureaucracies are gigantically impersonal, and prisons assume gargantuan proportions. It is no longer far-fetched to suggest that much apparent "development" turns out, upon closer critical examination, to be "anti-development".[37] Moreover, this litany of social woes, itself partial, says nothing of America's spiritual needs, this people's unquenched thirst

for meaning and significance. Precisely because there exists no culturally satisfying ways to meet these spiritual needs, Americans flock to private gurus and saviors as no other people before them. Their vulnerability in what the late Bishop James Pike used to call "the meaning market" confers upon them a special frenzy to discover transcendence in meditation, Arica, EST, or even permanent psychoanalysis. Almost always, however, what seekers find is not transcendence but emptiness, and very expensive emptiness at that. An army of commercial exploiters -- many of them sincere-minded, and not charlatans in the conventional sense of scoundrels or fakes -- are quick to appear, all geared to provide people with what they think they need. But as Chogyam Trungpa, an exiled Tibetan monk turned American spiritual entrepreneur, so brilliantly observes, spiritual search in the U.S. has usually made people substitute self-worship for the worship of things. In a bitingly satirical work, Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism, Trungpa analyzes the shallow complacency with which American seekers after spiritual enlightenment merely shift the locus of their satisfactions from the material possessions they own to the intellectual or spiritual qualities they cultivate. In the process they never become detached from self, but merely alter their alienation from attachment to material materialism to dependency on spiritual materialism. This Tibetan monk made millions of dollars in the U.S. peddling salvation, until he "caught on" to the process at work.[38]

What has gone wrong? The late psychologist Erich Fromm offers a valuable clue when he warns that "affluent alienation" is as dehumanizing as "impoverished alienation."[39] Fromm's later book, To Have or To Be?[40] draws a sharp distinction between the genuine humanism of BEING rich, that is richly human, and the pseudo-fulfillment of HAVING riches. Americans have become prisoners -- often enthusiastically willing slaves -- of things. Long ago August Hecksher noted that:

> "All around today's citizen there exists in overt or subtle forms the pressure to buy and to consume . It is as if the machine had made its bargain: 'I will give you free time in abundance, but in return you must promise to absorb my output.' The output of the machine cannot be absorbed during working hours -- except in so far as one machine devours another; therefore it is the task of the consumer to make his leisure constantly busier and more active. He must go places; he must equip himself; he must invest in gadgets. The result is that leisure becomes expensive; and the more time men have, the more money they spend. They must therefore work more, and the life of leisure becomes a constant drive to make additional money in order to be able to enjoy more adequately one's free time. The logical result -- which in fact occurs often in practice -- is a household full of paraphernalia of leisure without the time or the energy to make use of them."[41]

Christ declared, not without a tinge of sarcasm, that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. It is likewise with material goods: they were meant to serve human needs, not to stifle them.

Will U.S. churches, however, muster up the courage to address the problem of alienation in spurious material development which is so central a component of American culture? Thus far, they have avoided the issue, although their counterpart churches in Third World lands, on the other hand, have denounced the inhumanity and injustices of the development model chosen by their national societies. Meanwhile, churches in the First World remain uncritically submissive to the alienating development model which prevails in their own backyard. They need to learn, not only the lesson taught by Fromm and Hecksher -- that blind consumerism is dehumanizing -- but also what numerous Third World observers know, that transcendence is a constitutive dimension of development itself.

Godfrey Gunatilleke, Director of Sri Lanka's Marga Centre for Development Studies, urges a broader conception of development in which "the wholeness of experience which a society can offer and structure that the non-material dimension, the spiritual and religio-cultural component in development and change, assumes central importance. The current approaches to development are seldom societal in this comprehensive sense." He further laments that "the political and religio-cultural components are not kept in the field

of vision as independent objectives to be achieved simultaneously with the desired socio-economic change."[42]

The inclusion of transcendence as a component of genuine development is asserted still more explicitly by the Canadian political scientist David Pollock, a long-time international civil servant with the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America. Pollock contends that any definition of genuine development must comprise four dimensions: economic growth, equity in distribution, participation, and "transcendental values." To his own question, "Does man live by GNP alone?" Pollock replies:

> "Should we not take advantage our longer-term vision and ask what kind of person Latin America may wish to evolve by the end of this century? What are the transcendental values -- cultural, ethical, artistic, religious, moral -- that extend beyond the current workings of the purely economic and social system? How to appeal to youth, who so often seek nourishment in dreams, as well as in bread? What, in short, should be the new face of the Latin American society in the future, and what human values should lie behind that new countenance?"[43]

The time may finally be ripe for the U.S. Catholic Church to launch a similar critical dialogue over this nation's view of human development. By doing so, it need not fear being ignored or misunderstood by a "secular" world, for that very secular world looks to the Church to provide deeper meanings beyond the shallow values of here and now.

When commenting on the conclave that elected Pope John Paul I in August of 1978, London's The Economist evoked the hunger, within advanced industrial countries, for something more than purely material happiness. This journal's worldly-wise and politically hard-headed editorial writers urged the Church to stand up "as a Christian beacon in a secular world which may be starting to re-examine its wish to be secular."[44] Three weeks later the same editorialists added that the

> "late-twentieth century world, with its urge to openness and equality, is also a world which is starting to think that its recent preoccupation with the material aspects of life may be incomplete. It therefore needs a church, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant or whatever, prepared to carry the banner for the

> non-material aspects and to insist that some kinds of truth -- the non-political kinds -- are objective and permanent." [45]

Indeed secularists in growing numbers have quaffed deeply of their philosophy's cup of promise and have found the dregs bitter. It is time for religionists to plunge into the riches of their own mysteries to discover therein what they can say to secular men and women -- including their own believers.

Here, however, an important distinction must be drawn: secularism is not secularization. Secularization is the process by which autonomy of decision is progressively transferred from realms of authority, mystery, and revelation to domains of reason, critique, evidence, and practical necessity. Once secularization sets in, scientific questions like evolution can no longer be decided by appealing to a Bible text or religious authority, social conflicts cannot be settled by invoking God's will but the law of the land, economic policies cannot postulate celestial rewards but material gains. On the other hand, secularism is a philosophical stance, an ideology which holds that only what is secular -- that is, temporal or this-worldly -- can be true, valuable, or important. Secularism is itself a faith which claims that nothing exists or matters unless it is physically observable or falls within the purview of the senses; it entails a rejection of mystery, transcendence, and ultimately, of religion. Thanks to its belief in the essential goodness of the natural order and the ontological reality of matter and time -- ephemeral creations, it is true, but valuable nonetheless -- Catholic Christianity endorses secularization as a process. Indeed, throughout history Christianity has promoted secularization as the process by which humanity grows up.[46] Nevertheless, it condemns secularism as a reductionist posture which takes what is legitimately human and decrees it to be everything.

In adapting to secularization, however, American religion has come perilously close to embracing secularism. One wonders how many U.S. Christians worship the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob and not the God of America's civil religion.[47] Consequently, any true dialogue over development and between

the Christian Church and U.S. culture faces enormous obstacles.

Analogous difficulties will be encountered if the Church accepts its responsibility to discourse on this country's ethnocentrism, its psychologically and politically arrogant dismissal of other cultures.

B. ETHNOCENTRISM, OR UNIVERSALITY?

President Jimmy Carter's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies delivered its report to the nation in October of 1979. James Perkins, former president of Cornell University and chairman of the Commission, deplored weaknesses in understanding the larger world which "pose threats to America's security and economic viability." And the Commission declared itself

> "profoundly alarmed by what we have found: a serious deterioration in this country's language and research capacity, at a time when an increasingly hazardous international military, political, and economic environment is making unprecedented demands on America's resources, intellectual capacity, and public sensitivity.
>
> The problem extends from our elementary schools, where instruction in foreign languages and cultures has virtually disappeared, to the threatened imminent loss of some of the world's leading centers for advanced training and research on foreign areas. Such specific educational neglect, moreover, is reflected in public uncertainty about the relationship between American interests and goals and those of other peoples and other cultures.
>
> Nothing less is at issue than the nation's security.....A nation's welfare depends in large measure on the intellectual and psychological strengths that are derived from perceptive visions of the world beyond its own boundaries. On a planet shrunken by the technology of instant communication, there is little safety behind a Maginot Line of scientific and scholarly isolationism."[48]

One Commission member, Illinois' Democratic Representative Paul Simon, later complained that "The United States continues to be the only country where you can graduate from college without having had one year of a foreign language." There can be no doubt of it: this nation's government, business, and educational leaders are notoriously "ignorant" of the major cultures, histories, philosophies, languages, and religions of the world. Ronald Reagan, in particular, seems to place a special premium on selecting top foreign policy officials who are sublimely uninformed of other countries' political systems, social structure, or historical heritage.

More alarming than the ignorance displayed by this nation's leaders is their complacency, their apparent belief that they need not know anything more. The dangerous and monumental ethnocentrism of the U.S. is a national failing which the Catholic Church has a special duty to combat because by name, definition, and mandate the Church is universal: it must embrace all cultures respectfully. But clearly there can be no respect without knowledge. And here is the problem, for in its efforts to assimilate American mainstream cultures the U.S. Catholic Church, has uncritically adopted the same parochial, provincial narrowly complacent attitude towards other societies which so characterizes this country's culture. This attitude stands as a counter-value which negates Catholicism itself. Accordingly, the dialogue on U.S. ethnocentrism which the Church must engage with the nation will require of the Church that it abandon its own intellectual and cultural ghettoes and discover -- or re-discover -- the universality which is its true heritage. To do so, it must first debunk a myth which has pervaded the consciousness of U.S. citizens for over two centuries; namely, the belief that this country has a special divine destiny to serve as a beacon to humankind. Writing in the 1870's, Samuel Harris confidently asserted that "God has always acted by chosen peoples. To the English-speaking people more than to any other the world is now indebted for the propagation of Christian ideas and Christian civilization."[49]

The theme of U.S. "exceptionalism"[50] (i.e., the view that the American political experiment and economic prosperity represent new chapters in God's love affair with His "chosen people") has long served as the ideological foundation justifying complacency, arrogant self-righteousness and imperialistic moralizing as the nation puruses its narrow self interests abroad. This stance co-exists alongside a massively ingenuous inability on the part of Americans to understand why other peoples don't "love us." Eighty years ago the imagery of the U.S. as God's chosen instrument for the salvation

of the human race led Theodore Roosevelt to plead moral superiority as he pursued "manifest destiny," even if this meant fighting wars with Spain in order to win colonies and commercial advantages. Since World War II the image has convinced thousands of U.S. social change agents in thinking they were "doing good to mankind" by exporting this country's development model to Third World societies, always in the full assurance that they truly knew "what was good for those people." At present the same illusion leads President Reagan to imagine that our adversaries constitute a satanic "empire of evil" whereas this land is the repository of all that is good, humane and decent. This simplistic reading of history still has a powerful hold on the American psyche. It needs to be exorcised.

No one is better equipped to conduct the exorcism than a Catholic Church which is itself thoroughly and securely Americanized. Such a Church can rediscover its universal character and instill in America's citizens new allegiances and identities permitting them to transcend the provincial boundaries of this single country. As a nation the U.S. is neither better nor worse than any other powerful nation having wielded great power and exercised global influence. There is no "special" divine providence assuring that the pursuit of U.S. interests will prove to be any more virtuous, beneficient, or enduring than that of other great powers. Neither is the fact of American prosperity proof of God's blessing upon this land. Even survival as a great power is no more divinely guaranteed than it was for Catholic Isabella's Spain or for the British Empire. To institute a critical dialogue with the United States' dangerously parochial national culture, is a monumental task for the Church precisely because the nation naively regards its outreach on the world as so benign. In order to be true to its mission, however, the U.S. Church will need to detach itself from its desire to be "popular." The Church has hard truths

to speak to power-wielders and to the people at large, but first it has hard truths to speak to itself. Indeed the U.S. Catholic Church must radically redefine its mission of evangelization within national borders if it is to correct this nation's alienating conception of its own "evangelizing" political and cultural missions in the world at large.

Here then is but a dim outline of the enormous scope of the dialogue with U.S. culture incumbent upon the Church. That dialogue must perforce launch a critical and creative discourse not only on patriotism (the Nuclear pastoral has already begun doing so), but also on the value content and policy implications of the "American dream" (something the forthcoming pastoral on the economy plans to address), and on prevailing standards of success operative in this land (usually based on the overevaluation of competition and material rewards). There exists a Biblical vision of shalom (peace, righteousness, proper order, and justice). There also exists a Christian conception of vocation which may radically contest the culturally dominant notions of career success. By and large, the U.S. Catholic Church has "bought into" the dominant criteria of success fostered in this society, and in the process, it has muted its own tradition and preaching regarding the higher demands of building God's kingdom in the world. Third World churches long consoled the poor with an "opium of the people" type of religion. The U.S. Church, in turn, has contented itself smugly with providing good conscience to people whose cultural values place a priority on Mammon, conventional status and success symbols, and a form of social conscience which emphasizes "charity" or almsgiving to the detriment of a concern for structural justice in the basic institutions of society. The late sociologist C. Wright Mills eloquently denounced the idolatry Americans practice toward power and success.[51] Churches in this land have been guilty of "jumping on the bandwagon" of such idolatry. Nor have Catholic educational institutions been exempt from serving primarily as sociological

springboards permitting the children of poor Catholic immigrants to climb into America's privileged classes. In general, these institutions preached a privatistic religion to their students, one that had no impact on their broader lives qua professionals or citizens. Whether in the practice of professions, business, or government, the "working ethics" of Christians exhibits no difference from those followed by secularists or atheists.[52] Christians have usually tried to justify their position by arguing that the operative norm in each of these realms is "natural law" morality which, by definition, is a morality shared (at least potentially) by all persons of good will on the basis of dictates of reason and decency. This explanation is hardly convincing, however, since the whole point of the Gospel, and the Prophetic books of the Old Testament, is that religion addresses the institutions and structures of civil society, not merely individual consciences. After it began taking seriously its own obligation to speak the language of the Gospel, the Latin American Church found itself obliged to revise its earlier conceptions of obedience to legitimate authority, its defense of patterns of private property then prevailing. In the process it developed, or embraced, new ideologies which better incarnate, not merely evangelical, but natural human, values as well. Only now has the U.S. Church begun, and this in a single issue arena, viz., nuclear morality, to redefine its "dialogue with the national culture" in terms that take it back to its identity as a divinely instituted Church having a prophetic message of "good news" to announce. At least in this domain, the earlier form of "dialogue" as "going along" with prevailing ideas of what is morally right or wrong has been repudiated. Individual Christians have doubtless always performed a prophetic mission -- Thomas Merton by his written words, Dorothy Day and Daniel Berrigan by their gestures. And individual Christian writers continue to scrutinize America's social values, structures, ideological options, and policies in the light

of a specifically religious view. The most visible contemporary writer of this type is Michael Novak,[53] who argues that Christians need to formulate a properly theological rationale for giving their allegiance to this nation's political ideologies, economic systems, and societal structures. One need not agree with Novak's conclusion that capitalism merits that justification. Yet his definition of the intellectual enterprise to be conducted is correct. Indeed, for a Christian, the ultimate defense of the nation's system must rest on the judgment that that system is somehow warranted, or at least tolerated, in the light of Gospel values. Other individual Christians have, of course, [54]reached different conclusions. Nevertheless, the Church as an institution -- in its preaching, teaching, and public declarations, has thus far NOT situated its dialogue with the basic institutions of U.S. society at the theological level. It has dealt with U.S. culture simply in its quality of a sociological entity, itself eager to win acceptance as being "like everyone else."

Given the extent and seriousness of its new mandate to evangelize and defend cultures, the American Church can no longer afford the luxury of this omission: its good conscience has been taken away. Other "national" churches, too, no less than the U.S. Church, face the duty of engaging in critical dialogue with their surrounding societal cultures. This problem is one facing the entire Church, world-wide. The present book constitutes, in effect, an invitation to United States Catholics to launch the process at home.

III. THE PRESENT BOOK, A FIRST STEP

The present book introduces American readers to the new dialogue between the Catholic Church and contemporary cultures instituted by John Paul II. It assembles the basic documents leading up to the creation of the Vatican's Council for Culture, together with major addresses delivered by the Pope on Church and Culture.

A. THE NOTRE DAME ESSAYS

The centerpiece of the book, however, is a collection of six papers originally presented at the Conference on the Pontifical Council held at the University of Notre Dame, November 21-23, 1983. These essays provide specimens of how the Church, at large, and several national Church bodies, have already begun to understand, and carry out, the mandate to evangelize cultures originally formulated in Gaudium et Spes and given a new impetus by the Council for Culture.

The first piece, authored by Hervé Carrier, S.J., Secretary to the Pontifical Council for Culture, argues that cultural issues constitute the most fundamental challenge facing the Church in the modern age. The task of understanding contemporary cultures, and ancient cultures now confronting modernity, will oblige the Church to articulate a new understanding of its own mission to men and women living in time and space. Carrier raises the key question "How does God work in history?" An ancient Portuguese proverb saw God's providential wisdom as His unique ability "to write straight with crooked lines." Contemporary Christians are acutely alert to the complexities, contradictions, and multiple unpredictabilities of their world. Thus they have no difficulty finding "the crooked lines." But the Church has only recently begun its search to discover how God's providential incursions into their history here and now render those lines "straight." A second essay, by Bernard Lambert, O.P. surveys the historical ground covered by the Catholic Church since it formally engaged itself at the Second Vatican Council to dialogue with the modern world on its own terms. Lambert emphasizes the dialectical tension which exists between the perennial dream of Christians to institute a temporal order inspired by the Gospel in arenas of politics, social organizations, and culture, on the one hand, and the vast mutations which mark life in the world today. These mutations center on rapid technological change, massive

transformations in psychic images shaping human aspirations, and the perplexing sense modern humanity has of holding enormous power over the universe while feeling impotent in the face of large, impersonal forces which affects its destiny. Christians who would meet global challenges of building community and constructing peace clearly need new models of Evangelization. They need persuasive images of how God's Good News at work in humanity's efforts to build history while it witnesses to transcendence.[55]

These two essays by Carrier and Lambert describe the value arenas in which concrete efforts at dialogue between Church and cultures need to be understood. The merit of the following essays in the present collection is to enter into these arenas in concrete fashion. Marc McGrath, C.S.C., Archbishop of Panama, writes from a frankly pastoral vantage point in describing what has been the impact of Vatican Council's Gaudium et Spes (Joy and Hope) charter for dealing with contemporary problems. McGrath poses the question specifically to the Church in Latin America and provides illuminating answers. The Church in Latin America has responded to the summons to authenticate popular culture of the poor masses by accepting responsibility for the concrete social conditions of the continent. The historical collective declarations of Latin America's bishops at Medellin, Colombia (in 1968) and Puebla, Mexico (in 1978) were the direct fruit of the groundwork laid earlier at the Vatican Council. The distinctive contribution of the Latin American Church, McGrath adds, lies in spelling out the Christian values which responsible Christians in the world must build into their ideologies and into their politics for "the elaboration of historical models that conform to the necessities of each moment and of each culture."

A fourth contribution to the Notre Dame Symposium comes from the pen of the Argentine theologian Juan Carlos Scannone, S.J. Scannone explores the theological implications of options taken by the Latin Church and aimed

at infusing ideological debates, political discussions, and social programs with a newly incarnational reading of the Gosepl. Scannone detects important shifts in emphasis since the Vatican Council not only in pastoral practice, but in the conception theologians have of the nature of their intellectual mission. It is now recognized as never before that theory needs to be rooted in the living practice of communities, and that the concept of culture which animates Church thinking and practice must be broadened to deal with the wider socio-political problems of society. These problems include issues of structural justice, the legitimacy of established authority, criteria for a strategy of social change, the exigencies of prophetic liberation of oppressed masses from the twin thraldom of an alienating conception of religious salvation, on the one hand, and socio-economic conditions which keep then in sub-human conditions of life. The main challenge facing the Church in evangelizing Latin American cultures, says Scannone, is to build "a new socio-cultural synthesis."

U.S. readers will be especially interested in the next two essays comprising the body of the book. The first of these, authored by Bryan Hehir, traces the recent pastoral letter on nuclear morality issued by the American bishops to the new style of dialogue with the contemporary world advocated in Gaudium et Spes twenty years ago. This Hehir does in the specific context of debates over U.S. nuclear policy, making the point that U.S. bishops could not have written the nuclear letter as they did, and conducted the broad process of consultation leading to it, unless the terrain had been prepared earlier by Gaudium et Spes. The pastoral letter, he argues, is both a product of, and a response to, the Pastoral Constitution of the Vatican Council. As a product, it stands on the theological foundations laid by the conciliar text; and as a response it develops moral arguments beyond the point reached by the Council. The teaching style of the pastoral letter is noteworthy: bishops display a willingness to learn

from the world and to submit their moral views to the citizenry at large as raw materials for further debate. The substance of their teaching on nuclear war moves beyond the Council's doctrine, however, by entering into concrete judgments about first strikes, deterrence, counter-force targeting, and other practical domains of interest to policy-makers and citizens. Ultimately, "The Challenge to Peace" invites the U.S. public to judge this nation's nuclear policy in the light of Gospel values and Church traditions on moral conditions for limiting violence and war. Very specific challenges are posed, taking the form of difficult choices to be made by politicians, military commanders and troops, workers in war industries, technical researchers, university scholars, tax-payers, and citizens at large. In Hehir's concluding words, "The Council called us to be present in the world. The pastoral has given us a very visible presence. The quality of our presence is now going to be tested."

Such testing has already taken place across the northern border, in the wake of a letter by Canadian bishops on the crisis of Canada's economy. This letter, and the response to it, are the theme of the sixth paper presented at the Notre Dame Symposium and authored by Remi de Roo, Bishop of Victoria, British Columbia, and secretary to the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, which issued the document. De Roo tells the story of how that Commission thought it urgent to distribute its "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis," on January 1, 1983. Throughout Canada a vigorous dialogue was quickly generated by the text. De Roo describes how "Personally, the experience caused me to clarify my own role and personal mission as bishop. It led me to a clearer understanding of ecclesiology, namely the nature of the Church in its role of sacramentality, of mediation and of communion." More significantly, his many discussions with Canadians of all walks of life around issues of vital concern to them -- jobs, economic security, safety at work, personal

control over policies affecting their future, the economic role of Canada in the world at large -- led De Roo to discover at greater depth what it means for the Church to proclaim the Good News. As he puts it, "I have never been told by so many people, many of them professed atheists, alienated Catholics, humanists, and members of other world faiths that Ethical Reflections revealed to them a different Church than the one they knew so far: a church of compassion and hope." Like the U.S. nuclear letter, the Canadian document likewise deals with particular, conflict-laden issues, thereby providing an example of the "new dialogue" the Church is to have with living communities of culture. Both texts arouse not only the faithful but all members of society to undertake a joint learning experience as to what the Gospel may have to say about "nitty gritty" issues that truly matter in people's daily lives. There is no more moral pontificating from abstract heights, no more condemnation of personal sins, but instead a searching probe into the ethics of the institutions, structures, policies, and social forces which shape Canadians and U.S. societies.

B. JUSTICE, CULTURE, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Throughout all these discourses, justice holds a primary place in Church doctrine. This point needs to be stressed, lest it appear that the Church's new emphasis on culture represents a departure from its earlier insistence on peace and justice. At first glance, "culture" admittedly seems to be a relatively conflict-free domain, whereas social justice and peace-making are realms fraught with disagreements. Nevertheless, as the McGrath and Scannone papers clearly show, Church dialogue with Latin American culture has produced a critical new position on structures of justice and injustice in those societies. One does well to recall the words of a U.S. sociologist, Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J., who writes that:

> "we generally think of justice in terms of economics: how much food does a person have; can one clothe oneself and one's family; does a person have a decent place to live? But the critical question about

> these practical issues is not the economic activity or the economic arrangement. The critical question is: what do they mean in terms of human interests, in terms of human destiny, in terms of what human life means? This aspect of 'meaning' is what constitutes cultures; and that is where the heart of the problem lives."[56]

A human community's most basic need is to have a meaningful existence. For this to be possible its system of cultural values, which embody meaning, must be respected and must enjoy conditions which allow it to survive and flourish. Accordingly, an essential dimension of justice is precisely to protect cultural identity and integrity.[57]

Multi-cultural dialogue is a choice arena where synthesis and analysis meet because cultures are the locus of competing social visions regarding what is human and what is of universal value. Therefore, as Carrier suggests, the ultimate challenge the Church faces is to dialogue with cultures on their own terms, a task which must nonetheless be performed in the context of plural cultures in an interdependent world.

Most Third World leaders perceive their national cultures as being assaulted by modernity, technology and, it must be added, the earlier model of Christian evangelization. Industrialized nations, in turn, see their own cultures as decisively shaped by technology and media images. Technology is not culture, however, though it readily insinuates itself as a substitute for culture. This is why we do well to recall the eloquent lesson from past history reported by Arnold Toynbee. When Napoleon conquered Egypt in 1798 Toynbee writes, the Muslim historian Al-Gabarti displayed no interest in the Frenchman's technology or material wares. "Al-Gabarti showed a nicer discrimination, French technology hit him in the eye, but he persisted in waiting for a sign. For him, the touchstone of Western civilization, as of his own, was not technology but justice. Their Cairene scholar has apprehended the heart of the matter, the issue which the West has still to fight within itself."[58]

Within the bowels of Western society, no institution stands in greater

need of fighting the issue of justice "within itself" than the Christian Church. It cannot do so except through a new dialogue with all the world's cultures. As practiced by the Church in times past, "evangelization" of cultures used cultural values as mere doormats to heavenly considerations. The new commitment to evangelize now promoted by the Pope reverses this approach, at least on principle. Only experience will reveal whether a qualitatively different practice will ensue from the revised principle. As for the second duty enumerated by John Paul II, that of "defending" culture, it consists in critically discerning where technology and justice conflict. The Church must no doubt lend its resources to help weak cultures, especially non-Western ones, authenticate their own history. At the same time, however, it must also demystify the erroneous claims made by all contemporary cultures. Religious voices will need courage in order to insist on the duty of economic systems to satisfy the needs of all over the wants of a few, of political systems to obey a higher law than mere national interest, of social structures to admit the need for radical change at times, and of intellectual systems to create multiple incarnations.

Human societies need the Church to thrust them beyond a mere utilitarian calculus of their social and historical possibilities. Cultural policies practiced by most governments concentrate heavily either on "overcoming" alleged cultural obstacles to development or on meeting the requirements of modern growth. Yet, as the Indonesian scholar Soedjatmoko, presently Rector of the United States University in Tokyo, correctly warns:

> "It is the flowering of these intangible but essential assets that needs the deliberate creation of the political space and the underlying social structures that together constitute the human and cultural conditions within which societal growth takes place, that constantly need to be monitored and addressed. And this takes us beyond the conventional social and cultural indicators that we associate with the so-called 'quality of life'."[59]

Who is better prepared than a Church which bears a message of trans-

cendence to take humanity "beyond mere quality of life indicators"? Christ wanted his disciples to be in the world but not of it. Clearly then the "quality of life" for a Christian requires openness to transcendence. And although it is tragically true that much evangelization in past ages has preached transcendence largely in images of alienation from history, thanks largely to liberation theology a needed corrective is now on hand. Yet authentic Christian transcendence is no mere immersion or submersion in history. Integral "quality of life" as promised by Christ -- "I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly" -- is fully incarnate in the world but is not confined to the boundaries of the world. Unless the Church were in the world it could not evangelize the world's cultures. Conversely, unless the Church transcended the world, it would be of the world and could not defend cultures from the multiple assaults originating in their own limitations or from outside aggressors. By creating a new Pontifical Council for Culture Pope John Paul II has launched the Church on the path of dialogue with contemporary cultures. Not only the world's cultures, but the Church as well, will be the richer from the new mutual dialogue now begun.

THE END

FOOTNOTES

1. George F. Kennan, "The Bishops' Letter," The New York Times, May 1, 1983, p. E-23.

2. Albert Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists On the Bombing of Innocents," Commentary, Vol. 75, No. 6, June, 1983, p. 15.

3. McGeorge Bundy, "The Bishops and the Bomb," New York Review of Books, Vol. XXX, No. 10, June 16, 1983, p. 3.

4. For more background on this, see Donald R. Campion, S.J., "The Church Today," in Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., The Documents of Vatican II, New York: America Press, 1966, p. 184.

5. Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976, p. 12.

6. Fernando Benitez, Los Indios de Mexico, Mexico City: Biblioteca ERA, 1967, p. 13.

7. A Conversation with Doctor Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Eternal Light," NBC-TV, Sunday, February 4, 1973, p. 13.

8. Raimundo Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1981.

9. Special Issue "Panikkar at Santa Barbara," Cross Currents, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, Summer 1979; Raimundo Panikkar, The Intra-Religious Dialogue, New York: Paulist Press, 1978; Raimundo Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, New York: Orbis Books, 1973.

10. For more on the two-fold vocation of Christians, see Denis Goulet, A New Moral Order, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974, Chapter V "Makers of History or Witnesses to Transcendence?", pp. 109-139.

11. A point made with particular brilliance and wit by Gilbert Keith Chesterton in Orthodoxy, NY: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1946, Chapter VI "The Paradoxes of Christianity."

12. Cited, without source, by Christian Aurenche in SADEC LETTRE, No. 2 Octobre, 1983, p. 5. SADEC (Santé, Développement, Cultures) is a Paris-based non-governmental organization engaged in grass-roots development activities and public education.

13. "Address of His Holiness John-Paul III to the Pontifical Council for Culture," unpublished manuscript dated Tuesday, January 18, 1983, p. 2. (Italics are the Pope's.)

14. Ibid., p. 5.

15. Ibid., p. 5

16. Ibid., p. 6

17. Pope John Paul's Address to UNESCO, L'osservatore Romano, June 23, 1980.

18. Symphony for the Two Worlds, Music by Pierre Kaelin, Text by Dom Helder Camara, English translation, 1983, National Association of Pastoral Musicians, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

19. Letter of 15 March, 1961, quoted by Henro de Lubac, La Pensée religieuse due Père Teilhard de Chardin, Paris: Aibier, 1962, p. 349. The phrase κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί signifies "an enduring monument" or "a definitive, final, work."

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