

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: TO DIVINIZE OR TO HUMANIZE?

In this bicentennial year the theme of the thirty-first convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America focuses upon age-old questions: the divine and the human, transcendence and immanence. Paradoxically, during a jubilee year that celebrates our past both mythic and actual, the topic of mission looks to the future. When the program committee suggested to me the specific title: *The Mission of the Church: To Divinize or to Humanize?*, frankly I felt tempted to exercise my prerogative and to re-word the topic. For lurking behind the title are at best several ambiguities, at worst a false dichotomy. Yet, I reasoned that to discuss the question in its present form could be a learning experience and could afford opportunity to redefine those much hackneyed terms: mission, church, and world.

You will recognize that the topic raises issues similar to the questions present in the Hartford Appeal,¹ the Boston Affirmations,² and the less known Chicago Declaration by a group of American Evangelicals.³ After some initial apathy to the Hartford and Boston documents, public debate has become more heated and we can profit from those exchanges. Some aspects of the theme of Christian presence in the world have already been researched by the CTSA's *Metropolis* collection.⁴ But much remains undone. In earlier eras the topic might have been formulated as the relationship of Church and State, temporal and spiritual or,

¹Hartford Appeal for Theological Affirmation was published on Jan. 26, 1975. See text in *Origins* 4 (Feb. 6, 1975), 522-3. See text and numerous commentaries in *Against the World: For the World. The Hartford Appeal and the Future of American Religion*, ed. by Peter L. Berger and Richard J. Neuhaus (New York: Seabury, 1976).

²The Boston Affirmations was published Jan. 6, 1976. See text in *Origins* 5 (Jan. 15, 1976), 483-4. Text is also reproduced with extensive reactions, pro and con, in a special issue of *Andover Newton Quarterly* 16, 4 (March 1976).

³*The Chicago Declaration*, ed. by R. J. Sider (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1974). This was prepared by the Workshop on Evangelicals and Social Concern which met in Nov. 1973. For a summary and review of the declaration see *Westminster Theological Journal* 38, 2 (1976), 218-25.

⁴Philip D. Morris, ed., *Metropolis: Christian Presence and Responsibility*. A Project of the Catholic Theological Society of America, sponsored by the Urban Task Force of the United States Catholic Conference and the Social Theology Department of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (C.A.R.A.) (Notre Dame: Fides, 1970). The current president of the CTSA has also written briefly on this theme. See Avery Dulles, "Current Trends in Mission Theology," *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits* 1, 1 (Jan. 1972), 21-37.

more recently, faith and the political. An appropriate answer to the question of our program committee will facilitate in part uniting and unifying two separate streams of thought now at work in Christian settings. I refer first to the concerns of practitioners among various theologies of liberation for orthopraxis, justice in social structures and, secondly, I refer to the interests of various basic Christian communities concerned with a more inward thrust, although not closed to outward responsibilities. This second concern is represented among charismatics, among informal groups in the Church, and various fellowships which seek to supplement the services of the institutional Church especially in worship, private and communal prayer. It is time now to take stock of theology since the controversies in the 1940's among Catholics about nature and supernature and since the emergence of the "theology of earthly realities," that new anthropology which so influenced *Gaudium et spes* and *Apostolicam actuositatem*.

Bluntly stated, though, to ask whether the mission of the Church is "to divinize or to humanize" is to obfuscate the real issue. David Hackett Fischer, a theoretician and historiographer, in his thought-provoking *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, published in 1970, warned of the dangers of such false dichotomous questions.⁵ He alerted his public to scores of books on history, most sponsored by reputable publishers, whose very titles enshrined fallacious formulations: "Napoleon III: Enlightened Statesman or Proto-Fascist?," "The Fall of the Russian Monarchy: Inherent Failure or Planned Revolution?," "The Robber Barons: Pirates or Pioneers?," etc. Although no strangers even to theological conventions, such false dichotomous questions require choice between two answers, when the choice is in fact not exhaustive or when an "excluded middle" may have been omitted. The question might be as Fischer noted: (a) either x or y, but not both (like the Latin *aut*), or (b) either x or y or both (like the Latin *vel*), or (c) either x or y or both or neither. Just as once Karl Barth wrote about the importance of theological *ets* (and)—law and gospel, faith and free will, office and charism, word and sacrament—so now we need to watch our theological *auts*, *vels*, or even *neque-neques*. My purpose will be here to argue a point not so much new as it is rather frequently forgotten: namely that divinization and humanization alternatives beg the question.

⁵(New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 9-12.

To save ourselves misunderstandings it is well to clarify first the words "the mission" and "the Church." Mission has become such an inflated, bloated concept that it has lost its usefulness. Like motherhood, nobody wants to oppose mission, but one might be hard put to define it. Even more hazardous is the expression "the Church," widely used in such a careless and haphazard way that it often reflects plain sectarian narrowmindedness. Before we can describe then Christianity's tasks in the modern world we will have to sharpen the question and to restrict the meaning of mission. We will further suggest a moratorium on using the abstract expression "the Church" in favor of individual "Christian communities" or even "the new humanity in Christ."

My presentation is scored for five movements. Primo, an explanation of today's rapid escalation of the word "mission." Secundo, the search to replace the generalization "the Church." Tertio, reasons for Christianity's new perception of the "world." Quarto, Christianity's tasks in the world. And, quinto, the coda, a brief conclusion about the unity of salvation and humanizing.

I. ESCALATING USAGES OF MISSION

Within the last thirty years especially among theologians who write in English and French the expression "mission" has sprung up wildly in most church gardens.⁶ Usage has been influenced by parallel secular references to diplomatic, political, military, cultural and personal "missions." Theologians have so stretched the analogy between trinitarian missions and church missions that it is hard to recognize the original shape. Mission now includes such a mammoth number of tasks and responsibilities that to fulfill them all would be the mission impossible. Writers such as Werner Bieder are wise in urging us to recognize the slogan character of these usages and to apply razor sharp distinctions.⁷

Originally "mission" or "missions" was a restricted metaphor inspired largely by St. John's Gospel to express how God's love reached out toward the created universe, especially the universe of mankind. In John's Gospel, Jesus speaks with reverence about his Father, "the Father who sent me."⁸ Jesus also

⁶On this question see the excellent treatment in Aylward Shorter, W.F., *Theology of Mission*, Theology Today, No. 37 (Cork: Mercier, 1972).

⁷Werner Bieder, *Das Mysterium Christi und die Mission* (Zürich: EVZ, 1964), p. 86.

⁸For the NT theology of mission see Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 47 (Naperville: Allenson, 1965), espe-

speaks about a second mission or sending of the Paraclete who would continue and perfect his work in times to come. Mission described in pictorial language God's redemptive concern for the human community: the pre-existing Word of God was perceived as sent to put on humanity and to fulfill a salvific mission that would be complemented by the Holy Spirit. These missions, so the medieval scholastics would reason, were the expressions of inner-trinitarian processions when contemplated in their outward thrust toward humanity. Missionary theology was strictly speaking theology about the work of the three persons of the Trinity as they communicated grace to mankind.⁹ The transcendent character of these missions was guarded because they were entirely dependent on the hidden activity of God within the world. In recent times, among others, J. G. Davies in his *Worship and Mission* has reminded us that mission is basically a theocentric concept rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity rather than in the doctrine of the Church.¹⁰ If retain we must the word mission for what the Church does, Davies would prefer to speak about the Church's participating in a mission rather than its performing a mission. For him mission is better understood by its origin rather than by its objective.

The patristic period normally employed the word mission for the divine missions.¹¹ The Fathers might distinguish between invisible and visible missions (the latter—visible missions—being various theophanies, visions, apparitions in which mission was externalized, as the sight of a dove at Jesus' baptism, the fire in the burning bush, a voice from heaven). But these missions were divine missions. By taking advantage of the newly published Aquinas concordance, one can readily verify that this ancient usage still applied for the works of Thomas Aquinas. Mission for him is something divine; one looks in vain to find in Aquinas an expression parallel to *missio ecclesiae*. In Western theology espe-

cially the section on John's Gospel, pp. 153-63. See also, Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962).

⁹L.-M. Dewailly, *Envoyés du Père. Mission et Apostolicité* (Paris: L'Orante, 1960), pp. 26-45.

¹⁰J. G. Davies, *Worship and Mission* (New York: Association, 1967), especially chap. 2, "The Meaning of Mission," and in particular pp. 31-7. See also Georg F. Vicedom, *Mission Dei. Einführung in eine Theologie der Mission* (Munich: Kaiser, 1958).

¹¹See P. Gervais Aebly, *Les Missions Divines de saint Justin à Origène* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Ed. Univ., 1958).

cially as influenced by the canonists there is a gradual introduction of the idea of a *missio canonica* to describe the Church's authoritative commission to clerics to preach the gospel. But not until the sixteenth century did writers such as the Jesuits popularize the use of *missio* in the sense of overseas, foreign evangelization. Even later appeared the idea of "popular missions" as sort of revivalist meetings aimed at personal reform of life and return to Bible or sacramental piety.

For anyone fascinated with recent inflationary usage of the word "mission," might I suggest a study, out of historical curiosity, of the standard classics of ecclesiology, especially Latin manuals from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1950's. After blowing off the dust on such Catholic ecclesiology books as those produced by Passaglia and Franzelin (major architects of Vatican I) and Dorsch, d'Herbigny, Dieckmann and Salaverri, one would find interestingly there is no discussion of the mission of the Church. What is treated rather is a classical analysis of the causes of the Church, especially the "final cause" or *finis ecclesiae*. Much of what would later be introduced into theology under the rubric of mission was treated by Passaglia (1854) as the theological, juridical, ethical, social and eudaemonic ends of the Church. In all these he stressed theological, theanthropic and anthropologic dimensions. Eventually Passaglia's nuanced discussions were simplified by followers; influential textbooks speak of the ultimate *finis ecclesiae* as "gloria Christi" and its proximate *finis* as making available to mankind Christ's redemptive graces. This latter finality is what was taken over in the decree of Vatican I on the Church *Pastor aeternus* (1870) which describes the Church's finality "ut salutiferum redemptionis opus perenne redderet" (that Christ might render the saving work of redemption lasting [DS 3050]).

Today the language of final causes seems foreign to us. The functions of the Church are viewed as more inclusive than mediating in a representational way Christ's objective redemption of mankind. We speak of many activities of the Church. There is then a decided inconvenience in identifying all the tasks of the Church as coextensive with its mission. As Stephen Neill noted in his 1958 Duff Lectures: "If everything is mission, nothing is mission."¹²

It is true that the Gospel which best describes missions as trinitarian, John's Gospel, twice cites sayings of Jesus to members

¹²*Creative Tension*. The Duff Lectures 1958 (London: Edinburgh House, 1959), p. 81.

of the Church about sending. In the post-resurrection period, Jesus is said to "send" disciples who are gathered in the upper room: "As you [Father] have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18). These two logia have been connected in "As you [Father] have sent me in to the world, so I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18). These two logia have been connected in Christian thought with the various "go" commands of Jesus ("Go into the whole world . . .") as found in Mk 16:15 and Mt 28:19. Still too much weight has been attached to these statements, it seems to me, to explain the mission of the Church. Prescinding from the difficulties whether indeed these are dominical sayings, one would further have to ask whether these statements addressed to the Eleven are intended to imply complete transfer value to the whole Church. Can these texts be a solid biblical basis for all the responsibilities entrusted to the Church in the world today? Frazier has expressed this caveat in the following terms: "The mission of the church is not co-extensive with the mission of God; rather the mission of God is the all-embracing power of salvation at work always and everywhere, whereas the mission of the church has its own special role to play within the broader process."¹³

The growing uneasiness about the use of "mission" to explain the Church's activities can be seen in the conscious expansion of vocabulary in the last thirty years. We now read about the Church's possessing a task, role, concern, function, presence, a need to witness, challenge, mediation, responsibility, terms that are linked to mission. Or, more abstractly, the Church is described as charged with a purpose, an objective, aim, end, mandate, calling or vocation. Most of these terms are also used in the plural. What does this opening up of the vocabulary express? It can be argued that the origin of the Church's various tasks lies not in a particular mandate from Christ but is rooted in the human vocation itself.

As is well known, it was decided at Vatican II to talk about the Church from a double perspective: the Church's internal life (*ad intra*) and its role in the world (*ad extra*). The framers of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* introduced a distinction which was helpful, though unfortunately they failed to apply the distinction consistently. Rather than appealing to a *missio* they spoke of the Church's *munus*, "de munere ecclesiae in mundo

¹³William B. Frazier, "Guidelines for a New Theology of Mission," in *Mission Trends No. 1. Crucial Issues in Mission Today*, ed. by G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky (New York: Paulist, 1974), p. 29. See also Ferdinand Klostermann, *Gemeinde—Kirche der Zukunft*, Bd. I (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), pp. 209-11.

hujus temporis." The word "task" (or even more accurately the plural form "tasks") better describes what the Church is about. It also has the advantage of removing an exaggerated parallel between the trinitarian missions and ecclesial missions. The more neutral term "tasks" can better include the various church responsibilities as such. This argument that the tasks of the Church are broader than its responsibility to evangelize will explain why we have not felt obliged to analyze here the texts of the Fourth Bishops' Synod or the recent Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI on evangelization.¹⁴ One will also note in the Boston Affirmations a similar, probably unconscious, effort to avoid the term "mission" to describe the many ways that Christians collaborate in the building up of the city of God and the city of man. The Hartford Appeal, though couched in more traditional theological language, also strains after a new vocabulary to express the Church's agenda (though it does use "mission" twice).

My first proposal then is that we abstain from speaking of mission in the Church and that we reflect more on the multiple *munera* or tasks intrinsic to the Church's activity.

II. WHERE IS "THE" CHURCH?

Writers are so habituated to rolling off phrases about "the Church" (the Church should do this, the Church should not do that) that they fail to recognize the presumptuousness or unreality of such statements. Talk about the Church takes place at a level of abstraction that is quite unfocused. All the more exacerbating is the habit among some authors (especially churchmen) within one confession of appropriating the term church, for all practical purposes, to their own family of believers. If statements are to delineate the role of the Church accurately and meaningfully, they would have to be equally applicable to the Roman Catholic community in Vietnam, the Episcopal Church in Liberia, the Lutheran Church in Sweden, and every part of the Church. Writers tend to

¹⁴For the Fourth International Bishops' Synod (1974), see its brief declaration on evangelization dated October 25, 1974. Text in *Synod of Bishops - 1974* (Washington: USCC, 1975), pp. 15-20. The best overview of the Fourth Synod is given in *L'Eglise des cinq continents: Bilan et perspectives de l'Evangelisation* (Paris: Centurion, 1975). For the pope's Apostolic Exhortation, see Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation, On Evangelization in the Modern World*, December 8, 1975 (Washington: USCC, 1976). The most detailed commentary, to my knowledge, is that of Ph. Delhay, "L'Evangelisation chrétienne aujourd'hui," *Esprit et Vie* 86 (1976), 65-71, 97-107, 113-20.

practice a sort of psychological excommunication by describing as "intrinsic" elements that are not present in some Christian communities. Representatives of various liberation movements have taught us about the penchant we all have for expressing our own prejudices and then elevating them to the level of principle. When we ourselves speak of the Church, don't we actually mean our particular communion, principally of European and North American lineage, personified in the hierarchy and including some representatives of academia, those who are mostly male, white, and currently at work in the 1970's?

In what must be hailed as one of the most thought-provoking articles of the past year, the Asian Christian theologian Parig Digan, reflecting theologically about the emergence of the New China (at least one-fifth of all humanity), an event he describes as mankind's most titanic attempt to secure a collective salvation, argues that this accomplishment is somehow a work of God, a work of Christ, even a work of the Church. But in his special meaning for the Church he refers to the Church as seen by God in his eternity which is far more than the sum of all the churches of which a fraction of the earth has had experience during a fraction of mankind's infancy.¹⁵

Our statements about church refer to the Church as seen by men. Every statement published about the Church's role is formulated by a small segment of believers however prominent that segment might be. We might hail certain documents as prophetic: the U.S. Catholic Bishops' letter about injustice in Appalachia, the Canadian Catholic Conference's Labor Day Message on Northern Development, or the Medellin documents of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM), pastoral letters by individual leaders from Francis Mugavero to Paul VI, some of which may be the fruit of broad consultation. But in these documents it is hardly the Church that speaks, writes, or judges. Even pastoral theological statements that are the distillation of international and ecumenical consultations such as the declarations of the World Assembly of the World Council of Churches or the Pan-Orthodox Synods are scarcely "church" documents in a strict sense. Vatican II's text on the Church in the Modern World, the product of some 2,500

¹⁵"China and the Churches in the Making of One World," *Cross Currents* 25, 3 (1975), 225-68, especially 261. Digan's article raises a number of critical questions to our theme which cannot be dealt with here. Central to his view is that God must always raise would-be atheists to do much that is neglected and even resisted by those who proclaim themselves his witnesses (p. 262).

bishops and consultant theologians meeting in an international synod (though not exactly what is called tendentiously and somewhat carelessly an "ecumenical" council), despite its usefulness is not really an expression of the Church. No published statement, no dramatic protest action, no interconfessional doctrinal agreement can be identified simply with the Church. This appreciation has gradually been recognized in theological statements such as a recent publication of the French Roman Catholic bishops about faith's contribution to political engagement which uses instead of the Church's mission the more nuanced expression: "the tasks of the Christian communities."¹⁶ The various institutional mediations by Christianity about which Lonergan has penetratingly written¹⁷ will always be mediations partial and limited. Every "church" mission is undertaken by one spiritual tradition of Christianity. Leaders within those traditions can legitimately speak as spokespersons but they are obviously not giving voice to the Church as such, only at the very most to an individual, particular church.

Too much stress on the Church in its world-wide dimensions which has been characteristic of the strongly centralized character of Latin Christianity cannot do justice to today's emphasis (across confessional lines) on the local eucharistic community or on the local pulpit as the focal point for understanding church. Such emphasis on the general Church leads to a neglect of the diverse charisms that are found in the various national, theological and confessional aspects of the Church. The responsibilities of the Church then will be expressed collegially in that the episcopacy, the clergy, the laity in one country or confession will be seen as parts of a larger orchestration.

In light of these remarks would it not be better to abstain from using the category "the Church" when speaking of ecclesial tasks and to speak rather of Christianity or Christian communities? Perhaps the term favored by M. M. Thomas, a lay Indian theologian of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, would be helpful: the new humanity in Christ. Even individual Christians whose faith commitment might be weak, shaky, culturally but not existentially informed, can be part of this new humanity in Christ and actually

¹⁶For the text of the French Episcopal Conference, see *Politique, Eglise et Foi. Rapports et Etudes présentés à l'assemblée plénière de l'Episcopat français, Lourdes, 1972*, ed. by G. Matagrín (Paris: Centurion, 1972), pp. 75-110.

¹⁷Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), pp. 233-4.

contribute to the specific tasks of believers. The term "new humanity in Christ" also shifts attention away from power groups in the community. Such a shift is strongly advocated by writers such as Marcel Légaut and Leslie Newbigin who think we have been too mesmerized by the work of the Church as an organization or institution to the neglect of the multiple contributions of the whole believing community. To this point Newbigin has remarked trenchantly:

I do not believe that the role of the Church in a secular society is primarily exercised in the corporate actions of the churches as organized bodies in the political or cultural fields—even when these actions are cleansed of ontocratic pretensions and bear the genuine marks of suffering and witness. On the contrary, I believe that it is exercised through the action of Christians as lay people . . . not wearing the label "Christian" but deeply involved in the secular world, in the faith that God is at work there in a way which is not that of the "Christendom" pattern.¹⁸

Légaut, the venerable French mathematician turned theologian, plays down the importance of the institutional Church or what he calls the "church of Christendom" in favor of Christian associations of witnessing believers. He focuses not on the religious collectivity but on the smaller communities of believers who radiate a spiritual light, radiating a conviction about discipleship of Christ rather than relying on institutional forms often marked by spiritual mediocrity.¹⁹ The Hartford Appeal argues against the ninth false theme that "human community inescapably requires institutions and traditions." No one will argue with this observation except to note that identifying institutions with centralized, international agencies is dangerous. Any contributions of this new humanity in Christ will grow like the seeds of the parable (Mk 4:26ff.), in silence and hiddenness. The tasks of Christian communities are not fulfilled merely or even principally by manifestoes, press conferences, or international get-togethers. The modest, hopeful exercise of faith and charity as nurtured in a smaller support system is at the heart of Christian contributions to the world.

¹⁸Leslie Newbigin and M. M. Thomas, "Salvation and Humanization," in *Mission Trends No. 1*, p. 224. See also T. Steeman, "Political Relevance of the Christian Community between Integralism and Critical Commitment," *Concilium* 84 (1973), 40-7.

¹⁹Marcel Légaut, *Mutation de l'église et Conversion personnelle* (Paris: Aubier, 1975); and *Questions à-réponses de . . . Marcel Légaut. Un Chrétien de notre temps* (Paris: Aubier, 1974).

So rather than questioning what is the mission of the Church we must ask what are the roles of the new humanity in Christ exercised in the "world" apart from explicit evangelization. Before answering that question we still need to explore from a theological perspective what we mean by "world."

III. A NEW CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD

Reflection about believers' responsibilities in the world has in recent years been closely linked to a deeper appreciation of Christianity's human context, indeed its world context. Theologians have stressed the dangers of an excessive otherworldliness among Christians and the inconveniences of distinguishing too sharply between the secular and the sacred. In our century an undeniable shift in Christianity's appreciation for the world occurred despite (or perhaps because of) the horrors of world wars and human suffering on unparalleled scales. Increased ease in travel and in communication among peoples has led to awakening interest in other religious and cultural traditions. Whether this phenomenon be referred to as a new redemptive immanence, a Blondelian shift or what have you, the fact is that secular realities are now seen as God-intended and God-given. Three theological elements have been reappropriated in this perspective on the world: the doctrine of the salvific will of God, the doctrine of creation, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Modern reflection on the mystery of divine providence has found in the idea of God's universal salvific will a key to understanding the sacredness of the seemingly mundane and ordinary. What is stressed is the belief that God is not only the Father who sent Jesus but the one who is "Savior of all men" (1 Tim 4:10). Theology influenced by this conviction will see Christianity as in a sense the extraordinary means of salvation, the unusual way for God's entering into communion with mankind. For the believer, Christianity remains the privileged meeting place for understanding the mystery of God's relationship with the world, but Christianity is not the only meeting place. Here too the appreciation of the sanctifying role of non-Christian religions plays an important part.

Secondly, the doctrine of creation is reexamined in light of a new appreciation of the biblical description of the "world."²⁰ The

²⁰Karl Rahner, "Church and World," *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. I (New York: Herder, 1968), pp. 346-57. See also, *Politique et foi, 3e colloque du Cerdic, Strasbourg, 4-6 mai 1972*, ed. by R. Metz and J. Schlick (Strasbourg: CERDIC, 1972), pp. 146-57.

world is viewed as a sacred reality encompassing the whole of creation in a unity, man within his total ecological setting. The world which God looked upon and pronounced good. Even "this world," the present eon, the world which in John's Gospel becomes a symbolic referent including the totality of principalities and powers hostile to God, is seen as good, at least in the sense that God loves the world even in its sinfulness. This world is capable of redemption and is already being saved in hope through the work of Christ. In this perspective the world is regarded from the viewpoint of God's creative love. Creation is perceived as having an intrinsic value in itself; in other words, the world achieves meaning and order, even prior to its becoming church. The world which might be identified as "non-Christ-confessing-humanity" and its milieu is seen as having intrinsic worth and value. It is this world that Christians relate to, especially by serving and interpreting it from an eschatological vantage point.

This understanding of the doctrine of creation implies a more profound appreciation for the unity between God's design and man's vocation.²¹ Between the world understood as humanity and the ecclesial community there exists a fundamental unity which rests on the Creator's plan to allow ultimately all persons to participate in God's life. From this vision there exists no contradiction between the specifically human vocation and the Christian calling. The Indian theologian R. Panikkar has expressed this unity of the world's finality and the Church's finality in terms of the unity of creation and redemption:

If God the creator is not different from God the redeemer, if the Christian is not to be a split personality, if his Christian calling is not to ruin his human vocation, he cannot indulge in two fidelities, as it were, one to God and another to the world; he cannot be truly a citizen of two realms, that of God and that of men; he cannot have two ultimate ideals, one natural and one supernatural, as he does not have in fact two goals or two final destinations.²²

Thirdly, in this new shift of emphasis the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is interpreted more broadly. The mission of the Spirit is seen not as restricted to making present the memory of the Risen Christ or even to sanctifying those who enter a sacramental relationship with Christ through baptism. The Spirit is confessed as illuminator

²¹Gabriel Matagrín, "Politique, Eglise et foi," in *Politique, Eglise et foi*, pp. 45-8.

²²Raymond Panikkar, "Christians and So-called 'non-Christians,'" *Cross Currents* (1972), 281-308.

and sanctifier of the human race. The new temple of the Spirit is not identified with the Church; the temple becomes humanity gradually being transformed into a new creation. Christians are persons conscientized to the Christic dimension of reality; this grace of Christ, distributed through his Spirit, is seen as diffused throughout the whole of humanity. One might even speak of a "cosmic epiclesis" whereby the Holy Spirit is sanctifying the non-Christ-confessing persons of creation. The gift of the Spirit can be everywhere at once. The specific task of Christian communities is by word and gesture to communicate belief that God is incarnate, recognizing all along that our articulation of this incarnation event remains truncated.

Why did this particular understanding of the world and creation which has such importance for understanding Christianity's mission evolve so slowly in Christian theology? Partly, I would argue, from an overly Johannine understanding of "world," partly from a literalist belief in salvation through Christian faith and baptism alone. Most fundamentally, however, the reason lies in the fact that classicist theology focused upon the temporal and spiritual principally in terms of the relationship of church and state.²³ Earthly society was identified for too long with the category of the political. The state was seen as an adequate category for describing the "non-church." And here the relationship between church and state was worked out in terms of two perfect societies, each endowed with full powers and authority to exercise those powers. Growing out of the Middle Ages, the theory envisaged two authorities: *sacerdotium* and *imperium*. The goal of the classical theory was to delimit the proper competences of these two realities so as to avoid harmful conflicts between the powers meant to collaborate harmoniously.²⁴

Among the disadvantages of this particular church-state relationship was its preoccupation with the organs of these two societies (such as the Roman pontiff and the political rulers or princes). The broader relationship between two classes of persons pursuing salvation but via different modalities did not receive attention. Our present viewpoint about the world replaces a juridi-

²³Yves Congar, "Le Rôle de l'Eglise dans le monde de ce temps," *L'Eglise dans le monde de ce temps*, Tome II, Unam Sanctam 65B (Paris: Cerf, 1967), pp. 305-28.

²⁴R. Remond, "Typologies, Politiques et Ecclésiologies," in *Les Eglises comme Institutions Politiques*, ed. by Léo Moulin (Brussels: Institut Belge de Science Politique, 1971), Vol. I, pp. 11-43.

cal, political perspective with one that is more anthropological and inter-communitarian.

To recognize how lasting the juridical view has persisted in Roman Catholicism one has only to consult the initial draft on the Constitution of the Church which was prepared for Vatican II by its Preparatory Theological Commission. At the thirty-first general congregation of the Council (on Dec. 1, 1962) a schema *de Ecclesia* was offered for general discussion. Chapter 9, instead of discussing church and world, proposed treating "de relationibus inter ecclesiam et statum" (nos. 40-44).²⁵ The proposed chapter, largely a potpourri of papal pronouncements ranging from Benedict XIV to Pius XII, simply repeated the classicist doctrine inherited from the Middle Ages. The framers of the proposed text had obviously not kept abreast of the theological developments in the 1940's and 1950's. This chapter, as indeed the whole schema, was roundly rejected by the Council Fathers. The new formulation which takes shape in *Gaudium et spes* is not the relationship of one authority or power to another, but rather the relationship between the ecclesial community professing Christian faith and the family of mankind.

The shift in theological perspective was made possible within Roman Catholicism by the theological research on the so-called "theology of earthly realities" associated with the name of the Belgian Gustave Thils,²⁶ the "theology of work" and a host of other studies on the value of secular culture and anonymous Christianity associated with the names of Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner, and reflected in non-Catholic sources in Bonhoeffer, Cox, Robinson and others.

The final chapter in this theological shift obviously remains to be written because of serious unresolved tensions connected with the scope of evangelization. The problem is how to harmonize Christianity's uniqueness with the sanctifying process of non-Christ-conscious humanization. This humanization which is independent of conscious faith in Christ has serious ramifications in the theology of mission, especially mission understood as "foreign mission." If the non-Christian world is seen as a "normal" locus of God's saving power what one might ask is the purpose of

²⁵*Acta Vaticani Secundi*, Vol. I, Pars IV, pp. 65-74.

²⁶Gustave Thils, *Transcendence ou Incarnation? Essai sur la conception du Christianisme* (Paris: Ed. Universitaires, 1950); *Théologie des Réalités Terrestres*. I. *Préludes* (Paris: Desclée, 1946), II. *Théologie de l'Histoire* (Paris: Desclée, 1949).

mission?²⁷ This crisis coincides with a widespread avowal that evangelization in foreign countries has been associated all too often with harmful forms of cultural imperialism if not with outright colonialism. Robert McAfee Brown rightly describes the uneasiness, even embarrassment of Christians in exercising mission today as a result of uneasiness about institutional Christianity, an uneasiness about the exclusivistic claims of traditional Christianity and a hesitancy to offend the rights of religious liberty and the rights of conscience. Brown's arguments that Christianity offers a sense of meaning in a world capricious if not malevolent, offers a sense of joy in a world of fear, offers reconciliation in a world estranged, and celebrates a sense of mystery in a world we do not understand even after we have explained it, provide the nucleus of our next section: Christian responsibility in the world.²⁸

IV. THE AGENDA FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Among its own family the Christian community celebrates a common vision of God through its preaching and sacramental worship. Beyond this inner family life the community is drawn to share this vision with the wider family of man, precisely because it knows that every person's destiny is one and the same. This outreach is the task of evangelization expressed in different styles and approaches but still respectful of the intrinsic value of other religions and man's freedom of conscience. What concerns us here in our exploration of the new humanity's tasks is the specific role played toward the world apart from direct evangelization. These tasks can be isolated conceptually but obviously they have an antecedent, lived dimension which is richer than the theoretical categories.

Describing these tasks requires healthy doses of realism for all too often the rhetoric of Christians resounds with religious *hubris* and an exaggerated sense of self-importance. The self-congratulatory mood of Christians sounds ridiculous when it implies that they are the avant garde of committed, conscientized humanity. As a point of fact, Christians all too frequently lag behind other persons and groups in commitment and zeal for justice and peace. But our *status quaestionis* reflects what Chris-

²⁷Frazier, pp. 23-36.

²⁸Robert McAfee Brown, *Frontiers for the Church Today* (New York: Oxford, 1973), pp. 15-24. See also, Eugene Hillman, *The Church as Mission* (New York: Herder, 1965).

tian faith by its nature should perform in the world, not whether individuals or groups of Christians consistently perform these tasks with zest and creativity. Another consideration which bears on our theme is that these tasks even when strikingly performed by Christians remain ambiguous signs to the non-Christ-confessing community. To identify the ultimate reasons for these tasks, one would have to be a member of the Christian family.

In its relationship to the world the Christian communities should exercise functions which could be described as integrational, prophetic and eschatological. These adjectives overlap since they are different aspects of one overarching task.

Integrational: Christian communities have the ability to exercise an integrational role by asserting the basic unity of the order of creation and the order of redemption.²⁹ Full humanization and full sanctification have a common finality in that the gospel satisfies the aspirations and profoundest needs of mankind. Christians can be conscious collaborators with God in the functions of creating, redeeming, and glorifying the world through Christ. The important word here is "conscious." To restate this insight in the language of Juan Luis Segundo, the Church is the community of those who "know."³⁰ What they know is the fact that mankind has been raised to a new level of dignity through God's personal communication with the world through Christ. The Hartford Appeal points to this knowledge when it argues, in discussing a sixth inadequate theme, that although salvation does indeed contain a promise of human fulfillment, still to identify salvation with that fulfillment understood too narrowly can trivialize the promise.

Prophetic: Christian communities have the ability to exercise a prophetic role in the world (even though concretely its prophecy may be absent or lacking in courage or spontaneity). The communities inspired by faith in Christ are called upon to express a certain critical distance and judgment about forms of evil, injustice and distribution of power.³¹ Obviously this critical function does

²⁹A. Auer, "Kirche und Welt," in *Mysterium Kirche in der Sicht der theologischen Disziplinen*, ed. by F. Holböck & T. Sartory (Salzburg: Müller, 1962), Vol. II, pp. 479-570. See also, Samuel Rayan, "Evangelization and Development," in *Mission Trends No. 2. Evangelization*, ed. by G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky (New York: Paulist, 1975), pp. 87-105; *Witnessing to the Kingdom in a Dehumanizing World*, "Donum Dei," No. 22 (Ottawa: Canadian Religious Conference, 1975).

³⁰Juan Luis Segundo, *The Community Called Church*, Vol. I, *A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity*, trans. by J. Drury (New York: Maryknoll, 1973), p. 111.

³¹René Coste, *La responsabilité politique de l'Eglise* (Paris: Ouvrières, 1973),

not imply that the Christians have special insights into the concrete proposals that must be made to correct social evils. Christians' specific suggestions will be only as good as the expertise and competence of individuals skilled in political, economic or psychological domains. Prophetic should not be interpreted as purely denunciatory. Ecclesial communities can also mobilize energy behind positive and beneficial initiatives begun in other communities. By acting as a leaven in the world, in family, professional, social, cultural and political life, the Christian communities can mobilize forces which are creative besides simply denouncing in words the injustices on the national and international level.

Eschatological: The ecclesial communities when faithful to their nature can see humanity in an Exodus. The full gaining of that goal is now beyond attainment. Since redemption itself remains an ongoing, unfinished process dependent upon God's grace and man's response, a response weakened by malice, Christianity's function can be pre-eminently eschatological. The Christian communities could stress that man's true home is in God, that man is called to a "beatific vision." This perception will provide what J. B. Metz has called an "eschatological proviso" in all Christian descriptions of hope. In a similar fashion Moltmann has described Christianity's function as one carried out not within the horizon of expectation provided by the social roles which society concedes to the Church but within its own peculiar horizon of eschatological expectation of the coming Kingdom of God, of the coming righteousness and the coming peace, of freedom and dignity of man.³²

This eschatological perspective emphasizes that the social aims of Christian communities are not merely progress, movement toward affluence and elimination of struggle. But because of its understanding of the necessarily transitional character of this world, Christianity can stress the radical ambiguity of human activity. The centrality of the cross, the paradox of life emerging from death, which marks the Christian vision of life as well as its paschal dimension can prevent the new humanity in Christ from a political reductionism of the gospel. This seems to be the point

pp. 41-7. See also his *Les dimensions politiques de la foi* (Paris: Ouvrières, 1972), and Philippe Roqueplo, *Expérience du Monde: Expérience de Dieu*, Cogitatio Fidei 32 (Paris: Cerf, 1968).

³²Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 327. See also, A. Dulles, "The Church as Eschatological Community," in *The Eschaton: A Community of Love*, ed. by J. Papin, Villanova University Theology Institute, vol. 5 (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Abbey Press, 1971), pp. 69-103.

behind the Hartford Appeal's criticism of the view that the world should set the agenda for the Church or the view that "social, political and economic programs to improve the quality of life are ultimately normative for the church's mission in the world." It is this same eschatological vision which led the Brazilian theologian Kloppenburg to warn Christians about the temptation (not necessarily the sin) of "giving priority to situation over Gospel." For as he argues: "prior to the situation and, as it were standing over it in order to shed light upon it, there are the permanently valid (or 'transcendent') truths and values of the Gospel."³³ The salvation that Christians believe in does not by its nature include a promise for earthly achievements of mankind.

V. CONCLUDING CODA

If we watch our language and avoid using slogans and over-weighted words (even though the words may have religious connotations) we should refuse to answer the question, "Is the mission of the Church to divinize or to humanize?" We would insist that the problem be formulated in other words such as: "How do Christian communities (parts of the new humanity in Christ) from an eschatological perspective meet their various responsibilities in the world?" The answer lies between total disincarnationalism and a monopolizing preoccupation with the social and political realities of the human condition. Rahner has shown that there is a radical correlation between the horizontal and vertical moments in the self-transcendence of man.³⁴ From another perspective the Boston Affirmations reason that the danger is that "we try to ignore or transcend the source and end of life; or we try to place God in a transcendent realm divorced from life." The Hartford statement is quite justified in criticizing those who would argue that "an emphasis on God's transcendence is at least a hindrance to, and perhaps incompatible with, Christian social concern and action." Divinization, despite its venerable tradition in Greek patristic thought, is a poor word to describe man's vocation to growth in holiness, participation in worship and prayer, faithful response to the promptings of God's grace. Humanization is man's gradual self-fulfillment in all the many dimensions of personal

³³Bonaventure Kloppenburg, *Temptations for the Theology of Liberation*, trans. by M. J. O'Connell (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1975), pp. 9-13. See also the work of the Brazilian theologian, François Lepargneur, "Théologie de la libération et théologie tout court," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 98 (1976), pp. 126-69.

³⁴"The Mission [Heilsauftrag] of the Church and the Humanizing of the world," *Doctrine and Life* 21 (1971), pp. 171-8, 231-42. German text, *Schriften*, Bd. X, pp. 547-67.

growth, intersubjective relations, integration into the human family, and dedication to the struggle for peace and justice. The tasks of Christian communities can be to illustrate that becoming godlike and becoming human are one and the same goal, but a goal essentially unrealizable before total union with God.

MICHAEL FAHEY, S.J.
Concordia University
Montreal

The dominant intellectual...

Richardson also notes "that Christian faith has not appeared but has accepted, the various cultural ideologies. But it has accepted them only by qualifying them. That is, Christian faith has developed an appropriate conception of faith with each of these ideologies in order to reflect them from their anti-human tendencies."¹⁴ The kind of faith exemplified with the defect of the relativistic intellectualism of today is "faith in the power of reasonless God which works to unite the many hostile perspectives and to thwart ideological conflict."¹⁵ (*Quest for Christian Intellectualism*)

Toward An American Theology (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961), p. 36. He outlines four methods in the history of Christian mystical theology, scientific research, dialectical criticism, and reduction. The different cultural ideologies propose different types of logical methods, and the Christian's duty is to relate each type with an appropriate type of faith. The four methodological types of faith are: 1. faith as a method of logical analysis; 2. faith as a method of logical synthesis; 3. faith as a method of logical reduction; 4. faith as a method of logical dialectic. (ibid., pp. 15-16) Our present interest is with the first two.

... (ibid., p. 40) In distinction to reduction, Richardson gives the following formula for the same thing: "A scientific intellectual plus a specific form of faith plus a Christian or religious method." This can be developed as follows:
1. scientific intellectualism + scientific method -> scientific methodism
2. scientific intellectualism + belief -> Christian methodism
3. scientific intellectualism + logic of the heart -> Christian methodism
4. scientific intellectualism + the faithfulness of the cross -> Christian methodism
5. scientific intellectualism + universal responsibility -> Christian methodism.

... (ibid., p. 41) He explains the first two in the same place. "In our time, scientific faith offers two alternatives in contrast to the relativistic intellectualism of today. It is possible, in intellectual analysis, with aspects agreed upon and not open to dispute, to use that aspects and work to reveal, to understand, to bring to light, for the common good, in the working together of the Christian, a common, universal method. In all these ways, it is obvious that the intellectualism of scientific methodism, i.e., the power of it has been reduced to its proper limits. The first two aspects are the same as the second two, i.e., the power of it has been reduced to its proper limits. The first two aspects are the same as the second two, i.e., the power of it has been reduced to its proper limits.