

ECCLESIOLOGY

Topic: The Church's Mission and Ecumenical Dialogue
 Convener: Susan K. Wood, St. John's University, Collegeville
 Moderator: Catherine E. Clifford, St. Michael's College, Toronto
 Presenter: John Borelli, NCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical
 and Interreligious Affairs

John Borelli's paper, "Continuing Questions on Interreligious Dialogue and Mission," explored the relationship between mission and interreligious dialogue in the teaching of the magisterium since the Second Vatican Council. In the first part of his presentation, he noted the key role played by Pope Paul VI's programmatic encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), which develops the concept of dialogue within the context of the church's mission as a community in pilgrimage with all humanity toward the fulfillment of God's kingdom. Paul VI's opening address at the second session of the Second Vatican Council challenged the bishops to look beyond the confines of the church, to respect the spiritual and moral values of other religious traditions, and to enter into dialogue with a view to promoting and defending common ideals. Paul VI spoke of the positive value of other religious traditions, even while acknowledging that the church "perceives gaps, disparities and errors" in them. His interventions had a significant impact on the elaboration of *Lumen Gentium*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Nostrae Aetate*, and *Ad Gentes*, where the general mission of the church as the sacrament of the unity of humankind serves as the framework for interreligious dialogue. From that time forward missionary activity was rethought under the broader category of evangelization, with the result that traditional missionary activity now stands in creative tension with the activity of interreligious dialogue. Borelli suggested that, to a great extent, the church's views on mission and dialogue define one another.

The second part of Borelli's paper considered the extent to which the vision of Paul VI and Vatican II have taken hold in the life of the church. The establishment of formal interreligious dialogues, significant interreligious events (World Day of Prayer at Assisi, papal visits to a synagogue and mosque, greetings on the occasion of significant religious feasts), and theological reflection on religious pluralism are positive signs of a new context. Nonetheless, tension and controversy continue to accompany our understanding of the rapport between dialogue and mission. The negative responses to the recent declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, in particular the affirmation that other religions are "objectively speaking, in a gravely deficient situation" (par. 22) are indicative of this fact. *Dominus Iesus* must be appreciated in connection with the investigation of Jacques Dupuis's attempt to make sense of religious pluralism in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. Significantly, Dupuis draws an analogy between ecumenical and inter-

religious activities as both relate to the mission of the church. He invites us to address the dilemma between the contradicting paradigms of Christocentric exclusivism and theocentric inclusivism.

Borelli suggested, in a third section, the need to further explore the rapport between interchurch dialogue and the mission of the church, and to work toward a common understanding of the relationship of the church to other religions. The roots of the ecumenical movement go back to the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh (1910). Yet the question of salvation outside the church remains seriously divisive. Borelli cited the examples of two conversations, the fourth round of Roman-Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue on "Evangelism, Proselytism, and Common Witness" (1990-1997), and the study of the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, "The Challenge of Proselytism and the Call to Common Witness" (1995), which highlight significant divergence regarding the possibility of salvation for people of other religious traditions. Agreement on proselytism extends to relations with other Christians, but not to people of other faiths. This points to different understandings of mission. In contrast, the recent statement from the Mississauga meeting of Anglican and Catholic leaders, "Communion and Mission" (2000), speaks not only of a new era of friendship and collaboration, but of a new stage of "evangelical koinonia," of commitment to common mission in the world (8). The search for visible communion must include a commitment to common missionary witness.

Part four of Borelli's paper considers more recent magisterial teaching on dialogue and mission. Pope John Paul II's letter, *Redemptoris Missio* grants a "permanent" priority to proclamation of the Gospel (44), and sees "no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue" (55). *Dialogue and Proclamation*, jointly issued by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, insists that dialogue is an integral element of proclamation. *Nuovo Millennio Inuente* affirms that dialogue remains "oriented toward proclamation," yet involves "an attitude of profound willingness to listen" (56). Jacques Dupuis suggests that a certain tension derives from the eschatological nature of the church: to the extent that the "not yet" of the church binds it together with others in history on a pilgrimage toward the fullness of God's kingdom, it is engaged in dialogue; to the extent that the "already" of the church makes it a sacrament of the kingdom here and now, it is called to proclaim Jesus Christ. The aim of dialogue must be understood as growing together towards the kingdom of God, an aspect of the church's mission to all peoples of the earth. The postsynodal document, *Ecclesia in America*, offers a new perspective that merits further reflection when it locates interreligious relations and interreligious dialogue under the common heading of "Paths to Communion."

Cardinal Walter Kasper recently reiterated the church's understanding of interreligious dialogue as a process that can "open us more deeply to a given aspect of the mystery of Christ," and upon which we embark as "learners and

receivers." The judgment of *Dominus Iesus*'s that the mission of the church *ad gentes* goes "primarily to those of other religions," whose members are "in a gravely deficient situation" (22), appears inconsistent with the positive assessment and dialogical approach established from *Ecclesiam Suam* and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council onwards.

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THEOLOGY AND THE NATURAL SCIENCES

Topic: God after Darwin: Doing Theology in the Light of Evolution
 Convener: William R. Stoeger. Vatican Observatory Research Group
 Presenter: John F. Haught, Georgetown University
 Respondents: Michael H. Barnes, University of Dayton
 Anne M. Clifford, Duquesne University
 Anthony M. Godzieba, Villanova University
 Stephen P. Happel, The Catholic University of America

In his presentation—"Evolution and Divine Providence"—Haught first summarized the evolutionary recipe in terms of contingency (chance), impersonal laws of nature such as natural selection and the immensity of available time. He emphasized that, unlike scientific creationists, who identify providence with design, usually leaving out consideration of chance and deep time, and also unlike those who argue that no new theology is needed to respond to the conclusions of evolutionary biology, we should see our increasing knowledge of evolution and of genetics as an unparalleled opportunity for constructive theology. We can find some guidance for doing this from luminaries such as Whitehead and Teilhard. There is no need, therefore, to edit out any of the important aspects of biology's story, as long as we conceive of creation as unfinished and moving forward towards a promised but only hazily perceived fulfillment. From a theological perspective, the key is the love of God, who endows creation with order, yes, but also with autonomy, freedom, and indeterminacy, and who also descends into creation, expressing that love in divine self-emptying to reveal its possibilities and its destiny, and to persuade it to pursue their realization. Providence then is much better conceived as persuasion than as design. Providence foresees what is promised and the fulfilment of that promise.

This deeply connects with the universe's capacity for self-transcendence, as well as with the meaning of the Cross and the Resurrection. The laws of nature at all levels are expressions of God's fidelity and of God's concern that creation be independent as well as fruitful.

One of the underlying themes which emerged in the responses and in the brief discussion afterwards was the need to explore the metaphysical implications