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30. Brown, "The Contribution," 28–29.

31. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (New York: Seabury/Crossroad 1980), 212.

32. *Ibid.*, 213.

33. See Hans W. Frei, Preface, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), vi–xviii; also Frei's earlier work, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974).

34. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 119.

35. *Ibid.*, 117.

36. *Ibid.*, 122.

37. Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1985), 83.

38. *Ibid.*, 84.

39. PHEME PERKINS, "Crisis in Jerusalem? Narrative Criticism in New Testament Studies," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 296–313, quotation from 312–13.

40. Lindbeck himself concedes this in *The Nature of Doctrine*, 117.

41. Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), 110.

42. An excellent example is Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1986). For a helpful survey of the various trends see Phyllis Trible, "Five Loaves and Two Fishes: Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 279–95.

43. Gregory Baum, "The Theological Method of Segundo's *The Liberation of Theology*," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 32 (1977): 120–24.

44. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" *Origins* 14 (September 13, 1984): 193–204.

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7

John Paul II and the New Evangelization

December 4–5, 1991

Avery Cardinal Dulles

The majority of Catholics are not strongly inclined toward evangelization. The very term has for them a Protestant ring. The Catholic Church is highly dogmatic, sacramental, and hierarchical in character. Its activities are primarily directed toward the instruction and pastoral care of its own members, whose needs and demands tax the institution to its limits. Absorbed in the inner problems of the Church, and occasionally in issues of peace and justice, contemporary Catholics feel relatively little responsibility for spreading the faith.

EVANGELIZATION IN HISTORY

The Catholic Church has, of course, a long history of missionary involvement. In the early Middle Ages the Benedictine monks evangelized much of Europe. Since the sixteenth century the extension of Christianity beyond Europe was considered to be the special vocation of missionary orders and societies rather than the responsibility of all members of the Church. Even in these restricted circles Catholics before Vatican II spoke rarely of evangelization. They used terms such as missionary activity, the propagation of the faith, and the planting or extension of the Church.

In predominantly Christian territories Catholics showed no lack of interest in convert making, but again the thrust was not evangelical; the gospel was hardly at the center. This apostolate was mainly directed to

showing, against Protestants, that Christ had founded a hierarchical Church, which was to be accepted as the organ of divine revelation. The focus was more on authority than on content. Catholics were instructed to believe whatever the Church taught precisely because it was Church teaching.

The terminology of evangelization came into Catholic literature toward the middle of the present century, partly through the influence of Protestant theologians such as Karl Barth. In the face of dechristianization, many pastoral theologians and religious educators in Western Europe became convinced that the best remedy was a confident proclamation of the basic message of salvation through Jesus Christ.¹ The kerygmatic sermons of Peter and Paul, as reported in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, were studied as models.

Some religious educators and missiologists of this period distinguished three stages of initiation into the faith.² The first, called pre-evangelization, was concerned with arousing interest in religious questions and disposing people to hear the Christian message. Then came the stage of evangelization, the proclamation of the basic Christian message. After faith in this message had been elicited came the stage of catechesis, or elementary doctrinal instruction, which in principle should precede the reception of the sacraments.

Building on the kerygmatic theology of the preceding decade, Vatican Council II made use of evangelical terminology. A comparison with Vatican Council I, which reflected the nineteenth-century mentality, is instructive. Vatican I used the term "gospel" (*evangelium*) only once, and then only to mean one of the four Gospels. It never used the terms "evangelize" or "evangelization." Vatican II, by contrast, mentioned the "gospel" 157 times, "evangelize" 18 times, and "evangelization" 31 times. When it spoke of evangelizing, Vatican II seems generally to have meant what the kerygmatic theologians meant by the term: the proclamation of the basic Christian message to those who did not yet believe in Christ.

In the very first sentence of its Constitution on the Church, Vatican II affirmed that Christ had sent the Church to preach the gospel to every creature (*LG* 1; cf. *Mk* 16:15). Because the Church is missionary by its very nature, evangelization, according to the council, is a duty of every Christian (*LG* 16–17; cf. *AG* 23, 35). The bishops, in union with the pope, are charged with leading in the process (*LG* 23; *CD* 6; *AG* 29, 30); priests are to stir up zeal for the evangelization of the world (*PO* 4; *AG* 39); and all

the laity are expected to cooperate in the work of evangelization, especially in the environment of their work and family life (*LG* 35; *AA* 2–3, 6; *AG* 41). Without slighting the ministries of sacramental worship and pastoral leadership, Vatican II gave clear primacy to the preaching of the word among the responsibilities of bishops (*LG* 25) and priests (*PO* 4).

PAUL VI

Following the lead of the council, Paul VI (1963–78) gave even greater emphasis to evangelization. In choosing the name of Paul he signified his intention to take the Apostle of the Gentiles as the model for his papal ministry. In 1967, when he reorganized the Roman curia, he renamed the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. He was the first pope in history to make apostolic journeys to other continents—first to the Holy Land (1964), then to India (1964), then to New York (1965), then to Portugal, Istanbul, and Ephesus (1967), then to Colombia (1968), then to Geneva and Uganda (1969), and finally (1970) a long journey including Tehran, East Pakistan, the Philippines, West Samoa, Australia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Sri Lanka. For good reason he was often called the "pilgrim pope." At his burial an open book of the Gospels was fittingly laid on his coffin, a sign of the evangelical quality of his ministry.

Wishing to orient the Church more toward the dissemination of the gospel, Paul VI chose as the theme for the synod of bishops in 1974 the evangelization of the modern world. From materials provided by that synod he composed in 1975 his great apostolic exhortation on evangelization, *Evangelii nuntiandi*.³ That document proposed a comprehensive concept:

Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious Resurrection. (14)

Paul VI's notion of evangelization is more inclusive than that of the kerygmatic theologians. In his view proclamation and catechesis, while occupying an important place in evangelization, are only one aspect of it (22).

Evangelization, moreover, should be directed not simply at individuals but also at cultures, which need to be regenerated by contact with the gospel (20). The tasks of human development and liberation, according to the apostolic exhortation, are profoundly linked with evangelization. But they are not the same thing. Against all secularizing tendencies, Paul VI warned that evangelization can never be reduced to a merely temporal project (30–34). It must always include a clear and unequivocal proclamation of Jesus as Lord (22). It must be directed to eternal life in God (26, 35).

JOHN PAUL II

John Paul II at the opening of his pontificate attended the general conference of the Latin American bishops at Puebla, near Mexico City, in January 1979. The theme of that conference was “Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America.”⁴ While accepting Paul VI’s identification of evangelization with the very mission of the Church (4), Puebla emphasized that through evangelization the Church intends to “contribute to the construction of a new society that is more fraternal and just” (12).

In his opening address at Puebla John Paul II quoted extensively from *Evangelii nuntiandi*.⁵ Like Paul VI, he warned against acceptance of secular ideologies and sociological reductionism, but at the same time he declared that the Church “does not need to have recourse to ideological systems in order to love, defend, and collaborate in the liberation of the human being” (3:2). An indispensable part of the Church’s evangelizing mission, he said, “is made up of works on behalf of justice and human promotion” (ibid.). “We cry out once more: Respect the human being, who is the image of God! Evangelize so that this may become a reality, so that the Lord may transform hearts and humanize political and economic systems, with the responsible commitment of human beings as the starting point” (3:5). In March 1979 the pope sent the Latin American bishops a letter with a ringing endorsement of the conclusions of the Puebla conference.⁶

Beginning with the Puebla conference, John Paul II has made himself the principal evangelizer in the Catholic Church. In his arduous apostolic journeys, in his annual messages for World Mission Sundays, and on

many other occasions, he has continued to build on the themes articulated by Paul VI. He speaks of the evangelization of cultures and a “synthesis between faith and culture.”⁷ While insisting on the priority of eternal salvation, he maintains that human promotion is integral to the process of evangelization.

On March 9, 1983, John Paul II first mentioned the “new evangelization.”⁸ Speaking at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to the bishops’ council of the Latin American churches, he observed that the year 1992, when the Latin American bishops were to hold their next general conference, would mark the half millennium of the first evangelization of the Americas. This anniversary, he added, would gain its full meaning with the commitment of the Church in this hemisphere to a new evangelization—“new in ardor, methods, and expression.”⁹

A year and a half later, in a speech at the Olympic Stadium at Santo Domingo, the pope expanded on this theme.¹⁰ The very day, October 12, 1984, he recalled, was the anniversary of the landing of Columbus at San Salvador, which initiated “the encounter between two worlds.” The jubilee of 1992, he said, would be an occasion to recall the first evangelization of the Americas without triumphalism and without false modesty. That evangelization, he observed, had essentially marked the historical and cultural identity of Latin America. But today, in the face of secularization, corruption, and grinding poverty, the Church was called to redouble its efforts to lead the faithful to “the word of Christ and the founts of grace which are the sacraments.” The new evangelization should generate hope in the future “civilization of love” which Paul VI had proclaimed.

Since 1984 John Paul II, in addressing audiences in North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, has frequently referred to the need of a new evangelization. In several of his addresses since 1987 the pope has linked the new evangelization with the preparation for the jubilee celebration of the Incarnation in the year 2000.

In his apostolic exhortation on the laity *Christifideles laici* (December 30, 1988), he summarized many of his ideas regarding the new evangelization.¹¹ At a time when whole countries were falling into religious indifference, he declared, the laity had a special responsibility to demonstrate how Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society. Participating as they did in the prophetic mission of Christ, lay men and women should

make their daily conduct a shining and convincing testimony to the gospel. He exhorted the laity to narrow the gap between faith and culture and to make use of new media of communication to proclaim the gospel that brings salvation.

The theme of the new evangelization is spelled out in greater detail in two major papal documents of 1990. In the first of these, a letter of June 29 to the religious of Latin America, the pope connects this effort with the novena of years that he had announced in 1983 to prepare for the anniversary of 1992.¹² Cordially inviting the religious of our day to emulate the generosity and commitment of the pioneers of evangelization, he called attention to the special needs of the present time. The new evangelization, he said, must deepen the faith of Christians, forge a new culture open to the gospel message, and promote the social transformation of the continent.

Then, at the end of 1990, John Paul II issued his encyclical on the Church's missionary activity, *Redemptoris missio*.¹³ He distinguished more clearly than before between situations requiring pastoral care and others requiring evangelization. In some places, he said, the Church is adequately equipped with ecclesial structures and is able to devote itself to the pastoral care of the faithful, but in other regions the people are still in need of being evangelized. The situations of evangelization, he observed, are two. Primary evangelization is called for in regions where Christ and the gospel are not yet known. A second evangelization, or re-evangelization, is required in areas where large groups of Christians have lost a living sense of the faith and no longer consider themselves members of the Church.

In this encyclical the "new evangelization" seems to be identified especially with the re-evangelization of formerly Christian areas. But the compartmentalization is not rigid. When the pope speaks of the new audiences requiring first evangelization he mentions not only new geographical areas but also new cultural sectors such as the inner cities, migrants, refugees, young people, and the "new humanity" whose formation depends greatly on the mass media of communication (37).

MEANING OF THE "NEW EVANGELIZATION"

Drawing on scattered statements in different documents one may attempt a synoptic overview of what the pope seems to have in mind by the

"new evangelization."¹⁴ It is new, in part, because it is occasioned by the forthcoming commemoration of Christopher Columbus and, eight years later, the jubilee of the Incarnation. Grateful for the achievements of the past, the new evangelization must avoid denigrating the work of the early missionaries or judging them by the behavioral standards of our own day. No matter how well others did for their own age, the new evangelization cannot be a mere return to the missionary tactics of a former era. The persuasive heralding of the gospel message today requires a new quality of evangelization and methods attuned to the sensibility of our times. This adaptation is clearly implied in the idea of "new evangelization."

John Paul II sees the new evangelization as having a deeply theological motivation. It rests on a recognition that the living Christ is, through the Holy Spirit, the chief agent. To be effective bearers of the gospel, ministers of the Church must have a close personal relationship to the Lord. "Missionary dynamism," according to John Paul II, "is not born of the will of those who decide to become propagators of their faith. It is born of the Spirit, who moves the Church to expand, and it progresses through faith in God's love."¹⁵ The new evangelization, he says, "is not a matter of merely passing on doctrine but rather of a personal and profound meeting with the Savior."¹⁶ Although the name of Jesus Christ must be explicitly proclaimed (*RMis* 44), evangelization can never be a matter of words alone. "The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission" (*RMis* 42). Before we can pass on the gospel to others, it must first have permeated our own lives. "It is important to recall that evangelization involves *conversion*, that is, interior change."¹⁷ It must emanate from a deep experience of God.

Animated by Christ and the Holy Spirit, the new evangelization is for that very reason a work of the Church. It "is the witness which the Son of Man bears to himself, perpetuated in the mission of the Church," which is sent by Christ to evangelize.¹⁸ Looking on the Church as the corporate evangelizing subject, John Paul II insists that the effort must be borne by the entire membership, clerical, religious, and lay. Members of the Church act not as isolated individuals but in communion with the whole Church (at Puebla; also *RMis* 45) and in subordination to the bishops and the Holy See.

As a task of the universal Church, evangelization is also the primary responsibility of each local church, under its own diocesan bishop. Parish priests must see themselves as charged with the evangelization of fellow

citizens who do not yet belong to the flock of Christ (*RMis* 67). Basic ecclesial communities can be important centers of evangelization, provided that they live in harmony with the Church (*RMis* 51). The family, as a kind of “domestic church,” can be a powerful instrument of evangelization (*CL* 62). Since the family is the primary cell of the Christian community, it follows that families should evangelize families.¹⁹

Our times offer special challenges and special opportunities. Because of current demographic trends, the non-Christian population of the world is becoming proportionally greater every year. Yet, as the Catholic Church has explicitly recognized, seeds of the Word and rays of divine truth are present in the nonbiblical religious traditions (*RMis* 55). In the Day of Prayer at Assisi (October 27, 1986) and on other occasions, John Paul II has sought to bring the religions into a more cordial and cooperative relationship. He repeatedly insists that in proclamation and dialogue Christians should respect the freedom of their hearers (*RMis* 8, 39). Dialogue, however, should not limit or impede evangelization; rather, it should be seen as a component in the Church’s evangelizing mission (*RMis* 55). The Christian in dialogue will have no reason for minimizing the conviction that all grace and salvation come from God through Jesus Christ (*ibid.*).

John Paul II frequently refers to disunity among Christians as an obstacle to evangelization. Christ prayed that his disciples might be one in order that the world might believe (Jn 17:21; *RMis* 1). The effort to bring the gospel to all nations can serve as “a motivation and stimulus for a renewed commitment to ecumenism” (*RMis* 50). The real but imperfect communion already existing among Christians permits a significant degree of common witness and collaboration in social and religious matters.

Among the other challenges of our time, the pope mentions the spread of secularism, religious indifference, and atheism (*CL* 34). In some countries there is a scarcity of qualified ministers; in others, efforts at evangelization are hampered by legislation that forbids the free profession of faith. Additional difficulties arise from the prevalence of political ideologies and from a culture of violence, drugs, and pornography. In many cities the teeming masses experience degrading poverty and paralyzing anonymity (*RMis* 37). The faithful are influenced by systems of communication that glorify the affluent life, instilling hedonism and consumerism. This new cultural world constitutes the kind of challenge that Paul encountered when he addressed the Athenians at the Areopagus (*RMis* 37).

The challenges themselves, according to the pope, may be seen as opportunities. While on the one hand people seem to be sinking more deeply into materialism and despair, we are witnessing, on the other hand, an anxious search for meaning, the craving for an inner life, and a desire to experience the presence of God in prayer (*RMis* 38). Evangelization must cultivate the seeds of the Word wherever they are present and interpret them as manifestations of an imperative need for salvation in Jesus Christ. In answer to people’s anxious questioning and unsatisfied hopes, “the Church has an immense spiritual patrimony to offer mankind, a heritage in Christ, who called himself ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (Jn 14:6)” (*RMis* 38). Evangelization, says the pope, “is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world” (*RMis* 2).

Within the immense field of evangelization the evangelization of culture occupies a position of special preeminence. Faith cannot take root, express itself, and grow unless it incarnates itself in cultural forms (*CT* 53). In every culture, the pope remarks, there are seeds of the Word that tend to bear fruit in harmony with the gospel. Whoever seeks to evangelize must be able to understand the mentality and attitude of the modern world, to illuminate them from the perspective of the gospel, and purify and elevate the sound elements in the light of Christian revelation (*CL* 44). The missionaries of the past, the pope reminds us, did much to raise the level of the arts, including dance, music, and the theater. They rightly saw this as falling within their evangelizing mission.

John Paul II consistently teaches that Catholic social doctrine, because it is rooted in the revealed concept of the human, is a valid means of evangelization (*CA* 54). “Teaching and spreading her social doctrine are part of the Church’s evangelizing mission” (*SRS* 41). Authentic human development must be grounded in an ever-deeper evangelization (*RMis* 58). By exposing the roots of unjust political and economic systems, evangelization goes to the very heart of social imbalances. It includes a dynamic commitment to the common good of society and to the ways of peace and justice. Just as some missionaries of former centuries raised their voices prophetically against the violation of the rights of indigenous peoples, so those who evangelize in our own day, by insisting on human dignity and integral development (*CA* 55), help to build a new civilization of love (*RMis* 51).

John Paul II is quite aware of the problems inherent in the modern means of communication and of the incapacity of mass media to take the place of direct encounter between persons. But notwithstanding their limitations, the new media may be responsibly used in the service of truth, solidarity, and peace, and may thereby contribute to evangelization.²⁰ "The communications media," he says, "have a wonderful power to bring the people of the world together. . . . The power of the communications media is undoubtedly very great, and it depends on us to guarantee that they will always be instruments at the service of truth, justice, and moral decency."²¹ Because of its rapid development and deep formative influence, the world of the media requires the attention of the Church (CL 44). The gospel and its values must be made more present in the world of public communication, which may be seen as a new frontier for the evangelizing mission of the Church (CL 44). To integrate the Christian message into the new culture created by the mass media is a highly complex task, involving new languages, new techniques, and a new psychology (RMis 37).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVANGELICAL TURN

In my judgment the evangelical turn in the ecclesial vision of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II is one of the most surprising and important developments in the Catholic Church since Vatican II. This development, as I have indicated, did not take place without a degree of preparation in Vatican II and preconiliar kerygmatic theology. But Paul VI went beyond the Council in identifying evangelization with the total mission of the Church. John Paul II, with his unique familiarity with world Catholicism, assigned the highest priority to evangelization in the mission of the Church.

While both popes notably broadened the concept of evangelization, they have retained the main emphasis of the earlier kerygmatic concept. For them, as for the kerygmatic theologians, the heart and center of evangelization is the proclamation of God's saving love as shown forth in Jesus Christ. Where the name of Jesus is not spoken, there can be no evangelization in the true sense (EN 22, 27; RMis 44). But it is not enough to speak the name. Christian initiation is incomplete without catechesis,

which is a moment in the whole process of evangelization (CT 18). Evangelization must take account of the full implications of the gospel for individual and social existence.

All of this constitutes a remarkable shift in the Catholic tradition. For centuries evangelization had been a poor stepchild. Even when the term was used, evangelization was treated as a secondary matter, the special vocation of a few priests and religious. And even these specialists were more concerned with gaining new adherents for the Church than with proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Today we seem to be witnessing the birth of a new Catholicism that, without loss of its institutional, sacramental, and social dimensions, is authentically evangelical.

Will the shift toward the evangelical model meet with general acceptance and successful implementation? In many parts of the Church the response has been clearly positive. Already in April 1974 the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, preparing for the Synod of Bishops of 1974, issued a ringing declaration on "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia."²² The Latin American Bishops at Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) gave a clear priority to evangelization. Their Fourth General Conference at Santo Domingo in 1992 will have as its theme "New Evangelization, Human Advancement, and Christian Culture."²³

In 1986 an international organization known as Evangelization 2000 was founded with a headquarters in Rome, having as its principal purpose to promote a Decade of Evangelization that will end on December 25, 2000. This organization has already sponsored worldwide retreats for thousands of priests in Rome in 1984 and 1990. It is establishing networks of schools of evangelization and prayer groups to promote the success of the evangelization program. In our own country the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which has long possessed a Committee on the Missions, has set up a Committee on Evangelization. Originally formed as an ad hoc committee in response to Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi*, it has since been made a standing committee. Another ad hoc committee has been formed to make preparations for the Observance of the Fifth Centenary of the Evangelization of the Americas. In 1986 the U.S. bishops published a pastoral statement on World Mission, "To the Ends of the Earth,"²⁴ and on November 15, 1990, they approved a pastoral letter, "Heritage and Hope," looking forward to the anniversary of 1992.²⁵ A national plan for evangelization is being formed.²⁶ The bishops of the United States have responded to statements on evangelization issued by

Hispanic-American Catholics²⁷ and by Black Catholics.²⁸ In 1989 the episcopal conference of Texas issued an important pastoral letter urging parishes to establish evangelization committees and to become welcoming communities celebrating vital and inspiring Sunday liturgies.²⁹

Quite evidently the new evangelization will encounter inertia and resistance. As I mentioned already, the Catholic Church, especially in modern times, has been principally oriented toward the pastoral care of its own members. American Catholics are wary of evangelization for a variety of reasons. They see it as the chosen trademark of revivalist and fundamentalist sects, some of them virulently anti-Catholic. They distrust the biblicism, the individualism, the emotionalism, and the aggressive proselytism of certain Protestant evangelistic preachers. Many are repelled by recent revelations about the financial dealings and private lives of several prominent televangelists. In addition, Vatican II put many Catholics on guard against anything smacking of triumphalism. Attempting to be modest and self-critical, they often fail to proclaim their faith with confidence. Some have been going through a process of doubt and reappraisal, and are groping for ways of making better sense of their own heritage. Influenced by the conviction that the assent of faith must be a free and personal response to grace, and by American tradition that religion is a purely private matter, they do not wish to bring pressure on anyone to undergo a deep conversion of mind and heart.

IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Notwithstanding all these difficulties, I submit that the popes of our time have correctly identified God's call to the Church in our day and have hit on an effective remedy for the Church's present ills. The Church has become too introverted. If Catholics today are sometimes weak in their faith, this is partly because of their reluctance to share it. Unless the gospel message were a truth to be communicated to others, it would not be of great value for believers themselves. Once we grasp the universal validity of the message, and its significance for the whole of human life, we gain a new appreciation of the privilege of being its bearers and a new eagerness to share it. As John Paul II asserts, "Faith is strengthened when it is given to others" (*RMis* 2).

Evangelization, by concentrating on the basic Christian message, helps us to see what is supremely worthwhile in our religion. If we believe

simply on the authority of the Church, without caring what the contents are, we can hardly be enthusiastic about our faith. But if we focus on the God of Jesus Christ, as disclosed in the gospel, our faith becomes a loving assent to an extraordinary piece of good news, intended by God for all the world. It is a message that we have no right to monopolize, to keep to ourselves (*RMis* II; cf. 44).

Catholic spirituality at its best has always promoted a deep personal relationship with Christ. In evangelizing we are required to raise our eyes to him and to transcend excessive ecclesiocentrism. The Church is of crucial importance but is not self-enclosed. It is a means of drawing the whole world into union with God through Jesus Christ.

Too many Catholics of our day seem never to have encountered Christ. They know a certain amount about him from the teaching of the Church, but they lack direct personal familiarity. The hearing of the gospel, personal prayer, and the reception of the sacraments should establish and deepen that saving relationship. When Catholics regard religious worship as a mere matter of duty or routine, they become an easy prey for sectarian preachers who, notwithstanding their faulty understanding of the Christian message, give witness to a joyful encounter with the Lord.

The evangelical turn in Catholicism can make Catholics less vulnerable to the sects. It also has considerable ecumenical possibilities. One of the most vigorous branches of Protestantism in the United States today is Evangelicalism, the faith of many conservative Christians, especially in the Southern states. Until recently conservative Evangelicals have not been greatly interested in dialogue or collaboration with Catholics. Some, indeed, are anti-Catholic, partly because they have had so little contact with Catholicism. Yet there is increasing recognition that Catholics and conservative Evangelicals share many things in common, including a reverence for the canonical Scriptures and adherence to the central doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the atoning death and bodily resurrection of Jesus. In the realm of moral teaching, conservative Evangelicals, like Catholics, tend to be opposed to abortion and to defend traditional family values.

A number of authors have begun to call for a new ecumenism between Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants.³⁰ Kenneth Craycraft, in a recent article, writes:

The new ecumenism can be successful because of the peculiar qualities that each tradition brings with it. Catholics have an ancient and rich moral

vocabulary; it formed the great philosophical and theological traditions of the (pre-modern) West. The institutional memory and current organization of Catholicism make it effective at organizing and implementing its agenda. Evangelicals bring a sense of urgency and fervor to the project. They are converts and children of converts, with all the energetic zeal that that entails. Their emphasis on active personal discipleship and commitment to Sacred Scripture make evangelicals the yeast in the dough. Even committed Catholics have become complacent in recent years. Evangelicals will call us to a more energetic expression of our faith.³¹

In the dialogue here envisaged, Protestant Evangelicals can help Catholics overcome their excessive preoccupation with inner-Church issues, while Catholics can help Protestants overcome their own imbalances. Many of them have focused too narrowly on God's word in Scripture, and some have fallen into fundamentalistic literalism. Catholics can help Evangelicals to achieve a deeper grounding in tradition, a richer sacramental life, a more lively sense of worldwide community, and a keener appreciation of sociopolitical responsibility. These values, which are praised in the recent writings of certain Evangelicals, are prominent in the evangelization programs of Paul VI and John Paul II.

In recent years several authors have written about "the Catholic moment" in the life of our nation. This moment is often described in terms of the Church's potential contribution to a religiously informed public philosophy. Without denying the importance of this project, I would recall that the Catholic moment was originally, and rightly, described as one "in which the Roman Catholic Church in the world can and should be the lead church in proclaiming and exemplifying the Gospel."³² The first and highest priority is for the Church to proclaim the good news concerning Jesus Christ as a joyful message to all the world. Only if the Church is faithful to its evangelical mission can it hope to make its distinctive contribution in the social, political, and cultural spheres.

NOTES

1. The Catholic kerygmatic movement began in Innsbruck with Joseph A. Jungmann and others. It then spread to other countries where it was taken up by writers such as Paul Hitz, André Rétif, Pierre André Liégé, and Domenico Grasso.

2. See, for example, Alfonso M. Nebreda, *Kerygma in Crisis?* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1965).

3. Paul VI, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1975). Numbers in parentheses refer to paragraphs.

4. *Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Puebla: Conclusions*. Washington, D.C.: NCCB, 1979. Numbers in parentheses refer to paragraphs in this edition.

5. *Ibid.*, 1–15; printed also in *Origins* 8 (February 8, 1979): 529–38.

6. *Ibid.*, iii.

7. John Paul II, letter to Cardinal Casaroli establishing the Pontifical Council for Culture (May 20, 1982), quoted from *L'Osservatore Romano* (Ital. ed.), May 21–22, 1982, 3. Already earlier, in his apostolic exhortation *Catechesi tradendae* (October 16, 1979), John Paul II had spoken of the need for the gospel to "take flesh" in various cultures. See no. 53; text in *Origins* 9 (November 8, 1979): 329–48, at 342.

8. John Paul II, "The Task of the Latin American Bishop," *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659–62.

9. *Ibid.*, 661.

10. John Paul II, "Building a New Latin America," *Origins* 14 (November 1, 1984): 305–10. Numbers in parentheses refer to pages in this edition.

11. John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, *Origins* 18 (February 9, 1989): 561–95. Numbers in parentheses refer to paragraphs.

12. John Paul II, "Toward the Fifth Centenary of New World Evangelization," *Origins* 20 (September 6, 1990): 208–16.

13. John Paul II, encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, *Origins* 20 (January 31, 1991): 541–68. Numbers in parentheses refer to paragraphs.

14. In the remainder of this chapter, apostolic exhortations (*Catechesi tradendae*, *Christifideles laici*) and encyclicals (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, *Centesimus annus*, *Redemptoris missio*) will be cited by the initials of the Latin title followed by paragraph number.

15. John Paul II, address of February 12, 1988, to Italian bishops on Liturgical Course, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), March 14, 1988, 5; cf. *RMis* 21–30.

16. John Paul II, "Commissioning of Families of the Neo-Catechumenal Way," January 3, 1991, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), January 14, 1991, 12.

17. John Paul II, "Address to Bishops of Malawi on Their *Ad Limina* Visit," August 23, 1988, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), September 5, 1988, 3.

18. John Paul II, "Address to the Bishops of Brazil on Their *Ad Limina* Visit to Rome," February 24, 1990, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), March 26, 1990, 8–9.

19. John Paul II, "Commissioning of Families of the Neo-Catechumenal Way," 12.

20. John Paul II, "Letter to Meeting of African Bishops," June 9, 1990, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), August 6, 1990, 8.

21. John Paul II, "Message to Plenary Assembly of Pontifical Commission for Social Communications," March 3, 1988, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), March 14, 1988, 9.

22. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, vol. 1: Texts and Documents (Manila: IMC Publications, 1984), 25–38.
23. Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM), *Documento de Consulta: Nueva Evangelización, Promoción Humana, Cultura Cristiana* (Bogota, Colombia: CELAM, 1991).
24. U. S. Bishops, "To the Ends of the Earth," *Origins* 16 (December 4, 1986): 457–66.
25. U. S. Bishops, "Heritage and Hope," *Origins* 20 (December 6, 1990): 413–26.
26. Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, "A New Orientation Toward Evangelization," *Origins* 20 (October 11, 1990): 295. A draft of a national plan for evangelization was circulated under the title "A Time to Share: Shaping a Catholic Evangelizing People" (draft of February 24, 1991). The final text, approved by the U. S. Bishops' Conference, was published with the title "Go and Make Disciples," *Origins* 22 (December 3, 1992): 423–32.
27. *U. S. National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1987) and U.S. Bishops' Response to this in *Origins* 17 (December 10, 1987): 449–63.
28. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Here I Am, Send Me: A Conference Response to the Evangelization of American Catholics and the National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1989) and U.S. Bishops' Response to this in *Origins* 19 (December 28, 1989): 485–92.
29. Catholic Bishops of Texas, "A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization," *Origins* 18 (April 27, 1989): 777–84.
30. I myself alluded to this desideratum in my article "Ecumenism Without Illusions: A Catholic Perspective," *First Things* 4 (June–July 1990): 20–25.
31. Kenneth R. Craycraft, "Our Kind of Ecumenism: Why Catholics Need to Be More Evangelical and Vice Versa," *Crisis* 9 (October 1991): 30–33, at 32.
32. Richard John Neuhaus, *The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 283.

8

Historical Method and the Reality of Christ

April 2, 1992

THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND HISTORY

After a period of relative quiescence the quest of the historical Jesus has again become a center of controversy. Two major contributions to the theme—John P. Meier's *A Marginal Jew*¹ and John Dominic Crossan's *The Historical Jesus*²—appeared just before Christmas 1991 and were widely reviewed. They have provoked criticisms and counter criticisms, focusing primarily on issues of method.

The quest of the historical Jesus is not an idle pastime. It began in the eighteenth century as a fierce attack on the Christ of faith. Throughout the nineteenth century its aim was to establish another Christ to replace the Christ of dogma. In the words of Albert Schweitzer, who wrote the classic history of the early quest, "The dogma had first to be shattered before men could once more go out in quest of the historical Jesus, before they could even grasp the thought of his existence."³ The assault on orthodox belief has not died out. Many historians of the present day share the same animus.

Can believers be indifferent to the historical quest? Can they keep their faith intact while letting historians do what they will with the Jesus of flesh and blood? Can they let go of the historical grounds that have heretofore sustained Christians in their belief? These questions raise difficult and fundamental issues about what faith is, what history is, and how the two are related.