

India and Religious Pluralism: A Challenge to the Teaching Office of the Church

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Abstract: The deposit of faith is the sacrosanct memory of the Church. When the magisterium interprets the deposit of faith extraordinarily or in an ordinary manner, no person lower than the supreme legislator is justified to digress from the truth of the faith and its authoritative interpretations. This is why the magisterium seeks to ensure that the deposit of faith is benefitted by all, not only in its entirety or beauty, but also in its purity. In a religious pluralist society like India, truth can only be served by a willing submission of mind to the heritage that has been commonly adhered by the faithful, and interpreted and taught by the magisterium, through the centuries.

Keywords: Deposit of faith, Pluralism, Teaching Office, Magisterium, Meditation

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Introduction

The deposit of faith¹ also described as the “storehouse of God’s hidden counsels”² or “depositary of the Good News to be proclaimed”³ is ‘the supreme rule of faith.’⁴ It has been entrusted to the ecclesiastical magisterium (cc. 747, §1; 749, 750, *CCEO*, cc. 595, §1, 597, 598).⁵ It comprises of divine revelation, the apostolic tradition and magisterial teachings. Consequently, the deposit of faith has to be protected reverently, firmly embraced and retained and accepted with a religious submission of mind. In this context, the topic of relativism is relevant. Relativism is what people value and believe, is right for them, that is, truth can be “historically and culturally conditioned; bound to the

¹ The term appears only two times in the Code, in cc. 747, §1, 750, §1. *Code of Canon Law. Latin-English Edition, New English Translation*, prepared under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America, Washington DC, CLSA, 2012 (hereafter *CIC*). This translation is used for all subsequent citations of the canons of the 1983 Code. *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Latin-English Edition, New English Translation*, prepared under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America, Washington DC, CLSA, 2011 (*CCEO*). This translation is used for all subsequent citations of the canons of the 1990 Code. M.A. Rostkowski, “Twenty-Five Years of the Code of Canon Law, Missionary Canon Law. Bibliography, 1983-2008,” in *Bibliographia Missionaria*, 73 (2009), 449-489.

² Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6 August, 1964, no. 9, in AAS, 56 (1964), 609-659, English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 9 (1964), 255.

³ Idem, apostolic exhortation, *Evangelization in the Modern World, Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 15, in AAS, 68 (1976), 5-76, English translation in A. Flannery (gen. ed.), Vol. II, *More Post-Conciliar Documents*, New Delhi, St. Paul Publications, 2012, 741 (hereafter *Flannery II*).

⁴ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 18 November, 1965, no. 21, in AAS, 58 (1966), 817-836, English translation in A. Flannery (gen. ed.), Vol. 1, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, New Delhi, St. Paul Publications, 2010, 673 (hereafter *Dei Verbum*).

⁵ For the definitions of ecclesiastical magisterium and theologians, International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology. A Commentary on the Theses of the International Theological Commission on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*, O. Semmel Roth and K. Lehmann (eds.), Publications Office, United States Catholic Conference, Washington D.C., 1977, 1, 11-12. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, instruction on the ecclesial vocation of the theologian, *Donum veritatis*, 24 May 1990, no. 16, English translation in *Origins*, 20 (1990), 121: “By its nature, the task of religiously guarding and loyally expounding the deposit of divine Revelation (in all its integrity and purity), implies that the Magisterium can make a pronouncement ‘in a definitive way’ on propositions which, even if not contained among the truths of faith, are nonetheless intimately connected with them, in such a way, that the definitive character of such affirmations derives in the final analysis from revelation itself” (hereafter *CDF, Donum veritatis*). M. Mosconi, “La santa custodia e la fedele esposizione del deposito della fede (can. 750 §2),” in *Quaderni di diritto ecclesiale*, 15 (2002), 184: “In sostanza, il testo definitivo del can. 749 fa uso, in riferimento a tutti i tre casi possibili di insegnamento infallibile descritti (del Papa, del concilio, del magistero ordinario dei vescovi dispersi per il mondo), della sola richiesta che le dottrine siano «da tenersi», verbo già utilizzato dal Vaticano I (costituzione *Pastor aeternus*, ca IV) e dal Vaticano II (LG 25b), per lasciare aperta la possibilità di un magistero infallibile che non riguardi soltanto le verità rivelate.”

limits of language and is dialogical.”⁶ Relativism denies, diminishes and corrupts the substance of magisterial teachings, even leading to a ‘dictatorship of relativism.’⁷ In the Catholic Church, there are certain faith fundamentals as mentioned in *Dominus Iesus*, which cannot be compromised and therefore must be “firmly believed,” for the mystery of Jesus Christ, who contains the fullness of divine revelation. Jesus Christ alone “is the Son and the Word of the Father” the Lord and only Savior, who through the event of his incarnation, death and resurrection has brought the history of salvation to fulfilment.⁸

With this in perspective, this article seeks to briefly but precisely outline the challenges to the deposit of faith and the liturgy in a religious pluralistic society in India.⁹ The leanings of the text are doctrinal than canonical. The article implies the four levels of teaching.¹⁰ At the outset, the nature and responsibility of the teaching office of the Church will be surmised. With this background, the text will then present three areas that have been challenged by theologians and other Christian faithful in the context of evangelization. These are: Christology, Liturgy, and Meditation.

⁶ V. Ramachandra, *The Recovery of Mission. Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm*, Cumbria, Paternoster Press, 1996, 18.

⁷ J. Ratzinger, Homily at the Mass for the Election of the Roman Pontiff,” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 16 (2005), 3. Idem, “Current situation of faith and theology,” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 45 (1996), 4-7.

⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, no. 14, 2000, in AAS, 92 (2000), 742-765, English translation in *Origins*, 30 (2000), 215 (hereafter CDF, *Dominus Iesus*); A. Dulles, *Magisterium. Teacher and Guardian of the Faith*, Naples, FL., Sapientia Press, 2007, 170-173 (hereafter A. Dulles, *Magisterium. Teacher and Guardian of the Faith*).

⁹ The 1987 Synod of Bishops closing propositions speaks of four principles that govern evangelisation and inculturation. These are: Christological, liturgical, anthropological and socio-political. Synod of Bishops, “On the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World,” Proposition no. 34, in *Origins*, 17 (1987), 506; M. Zago, “Inculturation in the Addresses of John Paul II on Asia,” in *Omnis Terra*, 121 (1981), 375-389.

¹⁰ Canons 750, 752, 753, 754 to wit: Four Levels of Teaching: 1. That which is found in the scriptures or in tradition and is taught by the magisterium as divinely revealed (c. 750); 2. That which is taught authoritatively, but not definitively by the magisterium on faith or morals (pertaining to teachings of Pope and the College) (c. 752). They exercise solemn authentic magisterium or teaching office even if not definitively proposed, enjoys a great presumption of correctness. Christ’s faithful, conscious of their own responsibility, are bound to show Christian obedience to what the sacred Pastors, who represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith and prescribe as rulers of the Church.” (c. 212, §1); 3. That which is taught by bishops, individually or in conference or particular council, for the faithful entrusted to their care (pertaining to bishops alone) c. 753; c. 212, §1 c. 386, §1: “The diocesan bishop is bound to teach and illustrate to the faithful the truths of faith which are to be believed and applied to behaviour. He is himself to preach frequently. He is also to ensure that the provisions of the canons on the ministry of the word, especially on the homily and catechetical instruction, are faithfully observed so that the whole of Christian teaching is transmitted to all” c. 756, §2: “For the particular Churches entrusted to them, that office is exercised by the individual bishops, who are the moderators of the entire ministry of the word in their Churches. 4. Constitutions and decrees which authorities issue to propound doctrine or proscribe errors” (c. 754) e.g. Vatican Documents.

The Teaching Office

The ‘one deposit of faith’ manifested by the “common adherence of the faithful,” is the ‘*sensus fidelium*,’ or a kind of “supernatural instinct,” whose worth and value is considered as the *infallibilitas in credendo* of the faithful.¹¹ Consequently, ‘all, *omnes*’¹² are bound - as the Code teaches - to safeguard this truth once they have come to know it (c. 748, §1; CCEO, c. 586). As servants to the truth, in the service of true doctrine, the task of the magisterium is to protect “God’s people from the danger of deviations and confusion, guaranteeing them the objective possibility of professing the authentic faith, free from error, at all times and in diverse situations”

¹¹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, 21 November, 1964, no. 12, in AAS, 57 (1965), 5-71, English translation in Flannery 1, 331 (hereafter *Lumen gentium*). Even if the expression ‘*sensus fidelium*’ as such is not used in *Lumen gentium*, no. 12 (*supernaturalis sensus fidei totius populi*), yet it is what is generally referred to as ‘*sensus fidelium*’. “Pope Francis’ Interview with Jesuit Magazines,” in *Origins*, 43 (2013), 299: “The people itself constitute a subject, and the church is the people of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows. Thinking with the church, therefore, is my way of being a part of this people. And all the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief, and the people display this *infallibilitas in credendo*, this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together.” Benedict XVI, Address to International Theological Commission, in *Origins*, 42 (2013), 502: “Today, however, it is particularly important to explain the criteria that make it possible to distinguish the authentic *sensus fidelium* from its counterfeit. It is certainly not a kind of public ecclesial opinion and invoking it in order to contest the teachings of the magisterium would be unthinkable, since the *sensus fidei* cannot be authentically developed in believers, except to the extent in which they fully participate in the life of the church, and this demands responsible adherence to the magisterium, to the deposit of faith.” H. Legrand, “Reception, *Sensus fidelium*, and the Synodal Life: An Effort at Articulation,” in *The Jurist*, 57 (1997), 405-431; O. Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church’s Reception of Revelation*, Washington DC, The Catholic University of America, 2009, 2-10; A. Ekpo, “Canon Law and the Agents of the *Sensus Fidelium*. A Theological and Canonical Exploration,” in *The Canonist*, 4 (2013), 65-86.

¹² This implies that the law explicitly subjects even bishops to the precept “with whom apostolic doctrine resides.” *Dei Verbum*, no. 25, 675; CDF, *Donum veritatis*, no. 11, 120. John Paul II, allocution to the Roman Rota, 21 January, 2000, no. 8 in AAS, 92 (2000), 350-355, English translation in W.H. Woestman (ed.), *Papal Allocutions to the Roman Rota, 1939-2011*, Ottawa, Faculty of Canon Law, St. Paul University, 2011, 258: “The Roman Pontiff in fact has the *sacra potestas* to teach the truth of the Gospel, administer the sacraments and pastorally govern the Church in the name and with the authority of Christ, but this power does not include *per se* any power over the divine law, natural or positive.” Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration in Defence of Catholic Doctrine on the Church Against Some Present Day Errors *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 24 June, 1973, no. 3, in AAS, 65 (1973), 396-408, English translation in Flannery II, 456: “this charism does not come from new revelations enjoyed by the Successor of Peter and the College of Bishops, it does not dispense them from studying with appropriate means the treasure of Divine Revelation contained both in Sacred Scripture which teaches us intact the truth that God willed to be written down for our salvation and in the living Tradition that comes from the Apostles” (hereafter *Mysterium Ecclesiae*). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Bangalore, Theological Publications of India, 1999, no. 86, 23: “Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it” (hereafter CCC).

(c. 750 §1).¹³ This task has been delegated by the Supreme Pontiff to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.¹⁴

Concerning theological activity, the research and exploratory work of a theologian is a necessity for the magisterium. Their findings are important to provide new and fuller meaning to divine revelation.¹⁵ This is why, the relationship between theologians and the magisterium concerning the proper interpretation of the divine revelation within ecclesiastically approved parameters - without harming the doctrine of faith and ecclesial communion (c. 96; cf. c. 205; CCEO, c. 8) - is an integral part of the theological development of magisterial teachings.¹⁶ To enable this, the Code mandates the bishops to protect the deposit of faith from any contrary doctrine, without suppressing or negating the rights of the faithful.¹⁷ In the context of a religious pluralistic society, such an understanding of the vocation of a theologian

¹³ CDF, *Donum veritatis*, no. 14, 121; cf. no. 20, 122. John Paul II, apostolic letter *motu proprio Ad Tuendam Fidem*, 18 May 1998, Introduction, in AAS, 90 (1998), 457-461, English translation in *L'Osservatore romano*, 28 (1998), 1; G. Girotti, "Magisterial Authority as Discernment," in *L'Osservatore romano*, 7 (1999), 9-10.

¹⁴ John Paul II, apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus*, 28 June 1988, no. 48, in AAS, 80 (1988), 841-934, 1867, English translation in *CIC*, 708-709: "The proper function of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals throughout the Catholic world." *Donum veritatis* no. 18, 122: "The Roman Pontiff fulfils his universal mission with the help of the various bodies of the Roman Curia and in particular with that of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in what regards the doctrine of faith and morals. Consequently, the documents issued by this Congregation expressly approved by the Pope participate in the ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter." This particular feature, unique among the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, puts the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in a particular relationship with all the other dicasteries in so far as the latter touch on questions of faith. The other dicasteries must refer to it and abide by its judgment whenever these matters are at issue (cf. *Pastor Bonus*, arts. 48, 54, 58, 2, 62, 120, 73, 94, 161, 137). *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, in Flannery II, 453.

¹⁵ John Paul II, Homily at the Proclamation of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus as a Doctor of the Church, in *L'Osservatore romano*, 43 (1997), 1: "Indeed, when the magisterium proclaims persons as doctors in the Church, it intends to point out to all the faithful, particularly those who perform in the Church the fundamental service of preaching or who undertake the delicate task of theological teaching and research, that the proclamation by a certain person can be a reference point not only because it conforms to revealed truth but also because it sheds new light on the mysteries of faith and a deeper understanding of Christ's mystery." CDF, *Donum veritatis*, no. 12, 121.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, nos. 21-31, 122-123; *Dei Verbum*, nos. 21-26, 673-675. Erdo, "Il cattolico, il battezzato e il fedele in piena comunione con la Chiesa cattolica. Osservazioni circa la nozione di cattolico nel CIC (a proposito dei cc. 1 e 96)," in *Periodica*, 86 (1997), 213-240. International Theological Commission, "Unity of the Faith and Theological Pluralism," no. 7, in *Texts and Documents, 1965-1985*, M. Sharkey, (ed.), San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 90; Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Errors concerning the Mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity, *Mysterium filii Dei*, 21 February, 1972, in AAS, 64 (1972), 237-241, English translation in Flannery II, 451.

¹⁷ Among the functions of a Bishop is the '*ius et officium*,' (c. 823, §2; cf. cc. 375, 381; CCEO, cc. 178; 196) to ensure that the deposit of the faith is preserved in its integrity and entirety, and to conversely also enable the faithful to maintain their own respective '*ius et officium*' (cc. 211, 212, §3, cf. 229; CCEO, cc. 14, 15; cf. c. 404).

is vital for evangelization (c. 748; *CCEO*, c. 586). Furthermore, it is also the right of the faithful, the catechumens and those who may come into contact with the Gospel message to receive it in its purity and entirety. To this end, the quality of the contribution of the theologian is important. In the words of the theologian G. Cottier, the research of the theologian

depends primarily on his knowledge of what he is researching, or how keenly he perceives the problems, on the rigour of his reasoning, on the mastery of methodology, on his ability to grasp the needs of our time, and on the depth of his learned insights [...]. In wishing to express doctrine in another way, it is necessary to avoid the risk of actually formulating a different doctrine.¹⁸

In other words, the divinely revealed dogmas of the faith that have been infallibly declared, demand obligations from all the faithful. These are: intellectual and willful assent and the avoidance of any teaching contrary to them.¹⁹ This is also true for the secondary object of infallibility, that is, those definitive magisterial teachings concerning truths that are connected to divine revelation even if not divinely revealed themselves c. 750 §2 (*CCEO*, c. 598 §2).²⁰ This includes the assent

¹⁸ G. Cottier, “Theological observations on the new ‘Regulations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith,’” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 39 (1997), 4. Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “Regulations for Doctrinal Examinations,” 30 May, 1997 in *AAS*, 89 (1997) 830-835, English translation in *Canon Law Digest*, vol. 14, 786-796 (CDF, “Regulations for Doctrinal Examinations”).

¹⁹ Five conditions must be verified before it can be concluded that a doctrine has been taught infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium: (1) the bishops are dispersed throughout world instead of gathered in an ecumenical council; (2) they maintain communion among themselves and with the bishop of Rome; (3) the object of their teaching is a matter of faith or morals; (4) they intend to propose the doctrine definitively, or at least concur that it is definitive; (5) they act in concert with the pope. G. Nedungatt, commentary in idem (ed.), *A Guide to the Eastern Code: A Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, Kanonika 10, Rome, Pontifical Oriental Institute, 2002, 452; F.A. Sullivan, “The Magisterium in the New Millennium,” in *America*, 185 (27 August 2001), 15. *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 456-457: “[t]he faithful are in no way permitted to see in the Church merely a fundamental permanence in truth which, as some assert, could be reconciled with errors contained here and there in the propositions that the Church’s Magisterium teaches to be held irrevocably, as also in the unhesitating assent of the People of God concerning matters of faith and morals;” L. Blyskal, “Obsequium: A Case Study,” in *The Jurist*, 48 (1988), 559-589; J.H. Huels, “The Responses Owed by the Faithful to the Authentic Magisterium,” in *Studies in Church Law*, 7 (2011), 113-138. T. Bertone, “Magisterial Documents and Public Dissent,” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 5 (1997), 5: “it should not be forgotten that this *consent* cannot be understood only *synchronically* but also *diachronically* (emphasis in the original text).”

²⁰ “There are truths which are necessarily connected with revelation by virtue of a *historical relationship*; while other truths evince a *logical connection* that expresses a stage in the maturation of understanding of revelation which the Church is called on to undertake.” Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Inde ab ipsis primordiis*, no. 7, English translation in *Origins*, 28 (1998), 117; idem, “Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Profession of Faith,” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 28 (1998), 3-4; idem, Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity, 25 February 1989, in *Communicationes*, 21 (1989), 32-34, English translation in *Origins*, 18 (1988-1989), 661-663. Benedict XVI, apostolic letter

of mind and will to the teachings of the bishops in particular councils or episcopal conferences (cc. 752-753; *CCEO*, cc. 599-600), and even to individual bishops in matters of faith and morals in the spirit of the twofold principle of “unity of truth” (*unitas veritatis*) and the “unity of charity” (*unitas caritatis*).²¹ Subsequently, theologians possess lawful freedom concerning their opinions and writings, as long as they adhere to extraordinary and ordinary magisterial teachings. It is logical that the Code prescribes penal measures (c. 1317; *CCEO*, c. 1636) after due process (c. 1341; *CCEO*, c. 1654). The seriousness of the mind of the legislator is demonstrated by the ‘notifications’ or ‘declarations’ by the CDF on the errant Christian faithful.²²

Religious Pluralism²³

At the root of all religions is the transcendent movement of humankind in search of God. Each human is a naturally religious person whose turning towards the Absolute is inscribed in his or her deepest being. This is also evident in a religious pluralist society with adherents to Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism and other religions which present themselves as soteriological in character with interpretations of the Absolute, the universe, the human person, evil, sin and the means of liberation and salvation. Their teachings are based and supported by their proper scriptures and traditions, liturgical rites and ritual prayers, methods and styles of contemplation and the practice of virtue. Knowledge of one’s faith is implied in the scrupulous observance and memorization of the ritual and

Porta fidei, no. 10 in *AAS*, 103 (2011), 723-734, English translation in *Origins*, 27 (2011), 329: “The giving of assent implies that, when we believe, we freely accept the whole mystery of faith, because the guarantor of its truth is God who reveals himself and allows us to know his mystery of love.” John Paul II, Address to the Plenary Assembly of the CDF, in *L’Osservatore romano*, 44 (1997), 1: “The hierarchy of degrees should not be considered an impediment but a stimulus to theology.”

²¹ CDF, *Donum veritatis*, no. 26, 123. John Paul II, Address to the Italian Episcopal Conference,” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 23 (1989), no. 7, 16: “how could there be a legitimate place for ‘open and stealthy forms’ of a ‘parallel and alternative magisterium.’”

²² CDF, “Regulations for Doctrinal Examinations,” art. 28, 791. For magisterial interventions on errant faithful in matters concerning the teaching office of the Church R.R. Gaillardetz, (ed.), *When the Magisterium Intervenes: The Magisterium and Theologians in Today’s Church*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 2012, i-39; V. de Paolis, “Canonical Observations on the new ‘Regulations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith,’” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 43 (1997), 9-10.

²³ Catholic Bishops Conference of India, “Paths of Mission in India Today,” in *Indian Theological Studies*, 31 (1994), 75: “About 66% of the clergy and 74% of religious sisters maintain that all religions are paths of salvation for their sincere followers. In contrast 16% of the clergy and sisters and 58% of the lay people subscribe to the view, widely prevalent earlier, that there is no salvation outside the boundaries of the visible Church. Also, a vast majority of priests and sisters (84%) are gradually moving away from the ecclesio-centric approach to mission. The national survey has helped us to critically examine our mission theology and methods. A search for new paths of mission becomes urgent and legitimate.”

recitation of prayers. Pope Paul VI, the first Pontiff to visit India in 1964, noted this religious fact:

This visit to India is the fulfilment of a long-cherished desire. Yours is a land of ancient culture, the cradle of great religions, the home of a nation that has sought God with a relentless desire, in deep meditation and silence, and in hymns of fervent prayer. Rarely has this longing for God been expressed with words so full of the spirit of Advent as in the words written in your sacred books many centuries before Christ: "From the unreal lead me to the real; from darkness lead me to light; from death lead me to immortality" (*Br.* 1, 3, 28).²⁴

Secondly, non-religions religions consider themselves as salvific. They believe that their gods and Christ are only different manifestations or *avatars* of the one God. Logically, even if they demonstrate much 'devotion' to Christ, they do not see the necessity to embrace the Christian religion or the Church. In some cases, they are prepared to accept Jesus Christ as a prophet, but not as the *only* Savior or refrain from seeking baptism, for other reasons.²⁵ To meet this challenge, the academic and practical efforts of theologians and liturgists are one of creativity through inculturation, that is, to present Christ - 'who took flesh as an Asian'²⁶ - by adapting doctrine, liturgy, prayer styles and even religious dress, in order to make relevant than relative, the salvific mission of the Church. In other words, by inculturation, the Church seeks to continually build upon the religious base prevalent in the non-Christian religions whose beliefs are already a preparation to accept the Gospel. The Synod for Asia grasped this issue as real and relevant. It sought to exhort, counsel and encourage theologians to continue their explorations in the "delicate work of developing an inculturated theology, especially in the area of Christology [...]" in

²⁴ Paul VI, Address to leaders of non-Christian religions, in *The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1964), 152-153. Benedict XVI, "Homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of Our Lord," in *L'Osservatore romano*, 2 (2013), 6: "[h]uman beings have an innate restlessness for God, but this restlessness is a participation in God's own restlessness for us."

²⁵ John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation On Jesus Christ the Saviour and His Mission of Love and service in Asia, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 6 November, 1999, no. 20, in AAS, 92 (2000), 449-528, English translation in *Origins*, 29 (1999), 368 (= *Ecclesia in Asia*); Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante-disceptationem*, in *L'Osservatore romano*, 17 (1998), 9: "In the Asian context, religious experience is a far more compelling force for acceptance of a message than doctrinal formulations, valuable as they are." International Theological Commission, "Select Questions on the Theology of God the Redeemer, nos. 17-22, in *Communio*, 24 (1997), 165-166; Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* 7 December, 1965, no. 1, in AAS, 58 (1966), 1025-1120, English translation in Flannery 1, 902 (hereafter *Gaudium et Spes*); H.S. Sakarias, *Belonging to the Church without Baptism of water. An Attempt at facing the problem of conversion to Christianity against the background of Anti-Conversion Bills in India*, Delhi, Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), 2009, 31-49.

²⁶ *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 1, 358.

faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the church's tradition, in sincere adherence to the magisterium and with an awareness of pastoral realities."²⁷

Thirdly, inculturation for effective evangelization is always humanly speaking, susceptible to digressions from authentic magisterial teachings or those of individual bishops. This challenge is real and difficult, and it raises pastorally legitimate questions: how does one best harmonize the religious and cultural expressions of non-Christians, with Catholic teaching? What best liturgical practices should be adopted in a cultural and religious milieu that is pre-dominantly non-Christian? How should Churches - born from sincere but western missionary efforts in the last few centuries - reconcile Christian faith and forms of worship in a totally different political, cultural history and religious environment? In academic terms: how does one adjust or authentically reformulate the content of the heritage of faith in a pluralistic religious environment, where every religion has its own 'word of god,' and its own rituals; elements which constitute the memory of the community?²⁸ How does one convincingly proclaim that Jesus Christ is the universal Saviour given that "solutions that propose a salvific action of God without teaching the unique mediation of Christ, would be contrary to Christian and Catholic faith?"²⁹ The importance and relevance of these issues have even made it to the text of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.³⁰ The response to these questions by theologians and others, such as liturgists, have not all been satisfactory

²⁷ R. Darmaatmadja, "Closing Remarks at the Special Assembly for Asia," in *L'Osservatore romano*, 24 (1998), 11. John Paul II, encyclical on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate *Redemptoris missio*, 7 December 1990, no. 54, in AAS, 83 (1991), 240-340, English translation in *L'Osservatore romano*, 4 (1991), 13 (hereafter *Redemptoris missio*).

²⁸ "Report of the General Body of CBCI, 1974," in J. Kuttianimattathil, "Challenges Facing Christian Theology," in *Vidyajyoti*, 76 (2012), 516; G. de Rosa, "Una teologia cristiana delle religioni," in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1 (1992), 364-375 (= G. de Rosa, "Una teologia cristiana delle religioni").

²⁹ CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 14, 2000, in *L'Osservatore romano*, 36 (2000), iv. John Paul II, encyclical letter on the relationship between Faith and Reason *Fides et ratio*, 14 September, 1998, no. 38, in AAS, 91 (1999), 5-88, English translation in *Origins*, 28 (1999), 333: "There are many paths which lead to truth, but since Christian truth has a salvific value, any one of these paths may be taken, as long as it leads to the final goal, that is to the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (hereafter *Fides et ratio*); Poonoly, "Unique and Universal Saviour? Christology in a Religiously Plural World," in *Indian Theological Studies*, 45 (2008), 159-172. The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, "Lineamenta for the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia," no. 23, in *L'Osservatore romano*, 39 (1996), 10 "the mediation of salvation by Jesus Christ does not exclude other forms of mediation share, in different ways and degrees, in his and only mediation [...] they are not a mediation parallel or complementary to his" (hereafter *Lineamenta*).

³⁰ *Fides et ratio*, no. 72, 336-337. J. Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures," in Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference papers, 78 (1997), 1-19; idem, "Relativism, the Central Problem of Faith Today." "It also seems necessary to the Christian theology in India to set aside the image of Christ from its exclusive position - which is considered typically Western - in order to place it on the same level as the Indian saving myths," in http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/668/relativism_the_centralproblem_cardinal_joseph_rattinger.html. Relativism the Central Problem-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (9 October 2013); idem, "Current Situation of Faith and Theology," in *L'Osservatore romano*, 45 (1996), 4-7.

for magisterial appreciation. This was evident for example, by the doctrinally harmful responses of R.M. Pannikar³¹ and A. de Mello, who received a warning about the grave harm contained in his writings since they were incompatible with the Christian faith.³² On the liturgical side, the efforts of liturgists have met with mixed success. The efforts of lay and clerical leaders to adapt the prayer patterns of non-Christian religions into a Christian spiritual meditative style have met with criticism and vigilance from the hierarchy.

Christology

The reality of different saviour figures presented by non-Christian religions is a theological challenge. The challenge consists in presenting the Christian faith as appealing, convincing, and approachable for the non-believer. Consequently, in the recent history of the Church in India, three approaches for evangelization were developed. These were:

- i. the mystical approach advanced by an European Benedictine monk, B. Griffiths³³ who took the name of Swami Dayananda, and his confrère Benedictine monk H. Le Saux, who called himself Swami Abishiktananda.³⁴ They portrayed Jesus as the 'Illumined One' and the

³¹ J. Prabhu, "Trinity: Unity and Pluralism in the Thought of Raimon Pannikar and Bede Griffiths," in *Vidyajyoti*, 75 (2011), 137-152. For related christologies that deviate from catholic teachings, R. John "Catholic Christology and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism," in *Vidyajyoti*, 76 (2012), 939-960; N. Falcao, Christology in the writings of Narayan Vanvan Tilak, in *Jeevadahara*, 38 (2008), 223-231; G.J. Assariparambil, *Jesus Christ, the Unique Saviour, Towards a Christology of Joseph Neuner and M.M. Thomas in the Pluralistic Context of India*, STD dissertation, Rome, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 2008.

³² Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, "Notification Concerning the Writings of Father Anthony de Mello, S.J.," in *L'Osservatore romano*, 34 (1998), 5-6. For similar indigenous attempts such as the philosophical-theological approach which aimed at articulating a theology that resonates the philosophical and religious insights of India; a socio-political approach which aimed at liberating the downtrodden tribal folk," F. Wilfrid, "Christological Pluralism: Some Reflections," in *Concilium*, 3 (2008), 88-89.

³³ B. Griffiths, *Christ in India. Essays towards a Hindi-Christian Dialogue*, New York, Charles Scribner and Sons, 1966; idem, *Return to the Centre*, London, Collins, 1976; idem, *A New Vision of Reality. Western Science, Eastern Mysticism and Christian Faith*, London, Collins, 1989. J. Kavunkal, "Indian views on the significance of Jesus Christ," in *What does Jesus Christ mean? Meaningfulness of Jesus Christ amid Religious Pluralism in India*, E. D'Lima and M. Gonsalves (eds.), Bangalore, Dharmaram Publications, 1999, 44-51. F. Vineeth, "Theology of Religions from the Perspective of Inter-religious Dialogue," in *Religious Pluralism. An Indian Christian Perspective*, K. Pathil (ed.), Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 243-244; S. Karotemprel, "Asian Christologies and their implications for Mission in Asia," in G. Colzani, Giglioni and S. Karotemprel (eds.), *Cristologia e Missioni oggi*, Rome, Urbaniana University Press, 2001.

³⁴ H. Le Saux, *The Further Shore. Three Essays by Abhishiktananda*, Delhi, ISPCK, 1984; J. Stuart, *Swami Abhishiktananda: His life told through his letters*, Delhi, ISPCK, 1989. However, the pioneer in this field was the Jesuit Robert de Nobili who came to India with the missionaries in 1605. T.A.

‘Ultimate Reality.’ While the former was successful in his missionary endeavours even with the hierarchy; the writings of the latter were the focus for magisterial scrutiny.

- ii. the ‘dialogical approach’ of R. Pannikar, who had worked on the declaration of *Nostra Aetate*. According to him “Jesus is the Christ, yet Christ is not only Jesus, that is to say, that one cannot say that Christ is *only* Jesus, because philosophically the ‘is’ does not need to mean ‘is-only;’ and theologically, the Risen Jesus is more than the Jesus of Nazareth. By de-linking Jesus from the Christ, he taught that the Christic mystery or Christic salvific element was sufficient for believers from other non-Christian faith traditions to be saved.³⁵ Like Pannikar, the writings of Fr. A. de Mello about God - which ignored his personal nature if not explicitly denying it - resulted in reducing God to a vague and omnipresent cosmic reality.
- iii. the liberation approach advanced by the Jesuit, Soares-Prabhu. This was an approach which focused on the humanity of Jesus - without denying the divinity of Jesus - where the wholly sacred becomes the wholly secular.³⁶ Another proponent is F. D’sa who makes a distinction between faith, faith-experience and belief,³⁷ by placing stress on the humanity of Jesus and seldom speaking of his divinity, though not denying it.

Swamy “R. de Nobili. The Pioneer of Indian Christian spirit,” in *Indian Theological Studies*, 40 (2004), 54-71; F.X. Clooney, “Christ as the Divine Guru in the Theology of R. de Nobili,” in R.O. Costa (ed.), *One Faith. Many Cultures*, New York, Orbis Books, 1978, 25-40.

³⁵ The main thesis of R.M. Pannikar “The Unknown Christ of Hinduism,” was presented as a doctoral thesis to the Lateran University in Rome in 1961, based as it was on a close textual comparison between Thomas Aquinas and Sankara’s interpretation of a canonical Hindu scripture, the *Brahma-Sutras*. <http://www.raimon-panikkar.org/english/gloss-ecumenical.html>. (7 October 2013); idem, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*. London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981, 14; R.M. Pannikar and A. Koothottil, “Man and Religion: A Dialogue with Pannikar,” in *Jeevadhara*, 11 (1981), 5-32; G. Colzani, “Oltre ogni frontiera. Raimon Pannikar: Filosofo, Teologo e Mistico,” in *Euntes Docete*, 64 (2011), 153-158. N. Ciola, “Disagi contemporanei di fronte al paradosso cristiano dell’incarnazione,” in *Cristologia tra questioni e prospettive*, Pontificia Academia Theologica (PATH), (ed.), Vatican City, Vatican Press, 2003, 443-471; J. Chethimattam, “Indian Approaches to Christology. R. Pannikar’s Approach to Christology,” in *The Indian Journal of Theology*, 23 (1974), 220-221; C.G. MacPherson, *A Critical Reading of the Development of the Thought of R. Pannikar on the Trinity*, STD, dissertation, Ottawa, St. Paul University, 1992, 254-260. G. de Rosa, “Una teologia cristiana delle religioni,” 369-371.

³⁶ G.M. Soares-Prabhu, “The Sacred in the Secular. Reflections on the Johannine Sutra: The ‘Word made Flesh and dwelt among us’ (Jn 1:14),” in *Jeevadhara*, 17 (1987), 125-140; idem, “The Indian Church Challenged by Pluralism and Dialogue,” in *Sedos*, 26 (1994), 183-193.

³⁷ F. D’Sa, “The Dharma of Religion. Towards an Indian Theology of Religion,” in *Quest for an Indian Church. An Exploration of the Possibilities opened up by Vatican II*, K. Kunnumpuram and L. Fernando (eds), Anand, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1993, 43: “Faith is the religious dimension of humankind opening up to the Divine; faith experience is the activation of faith, and belief is the expression of this faith experience.”

Linked to these teachings were the theological interpretations about the nature of the expressions ‘Kingdom of Heaven,’ ‘Kingdom of God,’ and ‘Kingdom of Christ,’³⁸ and what they really connoted since there are various theological explanations of these terms. This issue received a response from the Supreme Pontiff, first in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, and then in an address to staff and students of the Pontifical Urban Missionary College in Rome:

the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not a concept, a doctrine or a programme subject to free interpretation but is before all else a Person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth [...]. A theo-centrism which would not acknowledge Christ in his full identity would be unacceptable to the Catholic faith and practices.³⁹

Secondly, in keeping with the theological challenge of proclaiming the faith to non-Christians, the call to submission of intellect and will concerning the truth of the divine revelation and those connected with it has not been easy.⁴⁰ The magisterium has had to ensure that the proclamation of the faith is principally Christocentric, in a theocentric pluralistic religious and cultural environment so that the character of the revelation of Jesus Christ did not end up being limited, incomplete, and imperfect,⁴¹ caused by a “separation between the Word and Jesus Christ [...] or Jesus from the Christ or “Jesus of history” from the “Christ of faith.”⁴² Furthermore, the hierarchy has also been keen to avoid any harm to the deposit of faith from writings emanating from the faithful who are obliged to make of the profession of faith (c. 833; CCEO, c. 187, §2).⁴³ This has been evident by pastoral letters and individual timely warnings

³⁸ CCC, nos. 541-556, 107-111; M. Figura, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” in *Communio*, 34 (2007), 83-91; CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 18, 217.

³⁹ JOHN PAUL II, “Address to the Pontifical Urban University,” in *Omnis Terra*, 21 (1991), 218; *Redemptoris missio*, nos 17-18, 6; idem, Address to the Plenary assembly of the CDF, in *L’Osservatore romano*, 19 (1991), 3: There are ideas of salvation and mission which can be called ‘anthropocentric’ in the reductive sense of the word [...]. The Kingdom tends to become something completely human and secularized.” International Theological Commission, “Christianity and World Religions,” no. 49 in *Origins*, 27 (1997), 157: “one must rule out the existence of different economies of salvation for those who believe in Jesus and those who do not believe in him” (= ITC, “Christianity and World Religions”).

⁴⁰ The response of the Church in India has been swift. The criticism and warnings by the CBCI, resulted in Pannikar abandoning the Church (and getting married); Swami Abishiktananda stopped writing, while the others recanted and withdrew contumacy. CBCI, “Cultural Challenges for Christian Mission in India,” in *Cultures and Faith*, 16 (2008), 164-170.

⁴¹ CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 6, 213. “*Lineamenta*, no. 23, 10: “It is no secret that radical questions have been raised about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the history of salvation and the so-called ‘myth of Christian uniqueness. Adapting the Christian faith to the cultures of Asia is not to mean proclaiming a partial Jesus Christ or a Jesus Christ reduced to human and cultural requirements.”

⁴² *Redemptoris missio*, no. 6, 6.

⁴³ c. 823, §1; cc. 749, 756; CCEO, cc. 652, §2; 597. M. Mosconi, “La presunzione di non infallibilità (can. 749 §3),” in *Quaderni di diritto ecclesiale*, 10 (1997), 83-97; Congregation for the

to the concerned subjects. Pro-actively, the bishops have introduced at all seminary and religious formation levels, programs that focus on the need, as well as the limits of inculturation.⁴⁴ In this manner, the Church has been able to move towards a doctrinally faithful proclamation consequently opening up even new avenues for conversion (c. 787; CCEO c. 1070).⁴⁵ In brief, the magisterium has had to safeguard the deposit of the faith from relativistic theories which sought “to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de jure* (or in principle).”⁴⁶ Religious pluralism is the acceptance and coexistence of multiple religious beliefs and practices within a society or community. It acknowledges that diverse religious traditions can exist simultaneously and encourages mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation among adherents of different faiths.

Liturgy

In the Code, liturgical laws are called to regulate the public and official worship of the Church and other devotional practices closely related with the Liturgy,⁴⁷ the source and summit of all Christian life and mission.⁴⁸ The call of the Council Fathers

Doctrine of Faith, Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity, 25 February 1989, in *Communicationes*, 21 (1989), 32-34, English translation in *Origins*, 18 (1989), 661-663.

⁴⁴ John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day *Pastores dabo vobis*, 25 March, 1992, nos. 55-56, in AAS, 84 (1992), 658-804, English translation in *L'Osservatore romano* 14 (1992), xv (special insert).

⁴⁵ *Redemptoris missio*, no. 42, 11: “People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission.” *EA*, no. 22, 369-370.

⁴⁶ CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 10, 214; ITC, “Christianity and World Religions,” nos. 20-21, 154: “To break the link between Christ and God deprives Christianity of any universalist claim about salvation (and thus authentic dialogue with other religions would be made possible), but by implication one would then have to confront the Church’s faith and specifically the dogma of Chalcedon [...] The most important consequence of this conception is that Jesus Christ cannot be considered to be the unique, exclusive mediator. Only for Christians is he the human form of God, who makes possible in an adequate way man’s encounter with God, although without any claim to exclusivity. He is *totus Deus* because he is the active love of God on this earth, but he is not *totum Dei* since he does not exhaust in himself the love of God. We could also say: *Totum Verbum, sed non totum Verbi*. The Logos, being greater than Jesus, can be incarnate also in the founders of other religions.”

⁴⁷ The authority of the bishop in liturgical matters pertains to: (i) all that refers to the validity of the sacraments (c. 841); (ii) the edition of liturgical books (c. 838, §2); (iii) recognition of versions of liturgical books in the vernacular (c. 838, §2); and (iv) vigilance over the fulfillment of the universal liturgical norms (c. 838, §2). It also pertains to the diocesan bishop in the church entrusted to him, within the limits of his competence, to issue liturgical norms by which all are bound (c. 838, §4). The diocesan bishop who is the principal authority for the oversight and regulation of the liturgy in his diocese (cc. 381; 391; 392; 835, §1; 838, §4) has the authority over the public exercise of the liturgy, including members of pontifical religious institutes (c. 678, §1). He can enact liturgical laws provided that they are not contrary to universal laws (cc. 87; 135, §2). He can also regulate non-liturgical prayers and devotions (c. 839, §2).

⁴⁸ Second Vatican Council, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December, 1963, no. 10, in AAS, 56 (1964), 97-138, English translation in Flannery 1, 26 (hereafter SC).

for a reform and promotion of the liturgy in accordance with the norms for adapting the liturgy to the language, culture and traditions of peoples, “with legitimate variations and adaptations,”⁴⁹ was welcomed as a step towards bringing Christ closer to the non-Christians and therefore the non-Christians closer to Christ.

1. *Twelve Points of Adaptation*⁵⁰

In 1968, the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) through the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, began to focus on those mutable liturgical elements within the substantial unity of the Roman rite. To attain this goal, the first post-conciliar All-India Liturgical Meeting sought to relate the liturgy to the Indian cultural and religious tradition, and actual life situation. Subsequently, a “Twelve Point” schema of adaptations was submitted by the CBCI in March 1969 to the Apostolic See. A month later, the Vatican officially gave the *recognitio*.⁵¹ The “Twelve Points of Adaptation” as it is now called, has been included in the second typical edition of the Roman Missal in India. Consequently, gestures, postures, dance, and indigenous worship elements were introduced in the liturgy. The letter from the Sacred Congregation of Rites approving the ‘Twelve Points’ for the Indian liturgy also encouraged for a composition of a new Indian *Anaphora*. Accordingly, the All-India

⁴⁹ SC, no. 1 21. G. DE NAPOLI, “Inculturation as Communication,” in *Inculturation*, 9 (1987), 721-738; N.L. VALLE, *From Adaptation to Inculturation: The Development of the Concept of Liturgical Inculturation*, JCD thesis, Rome, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1999, 26: “The term ‘adaptation’ is the official term employed in the sixteen documents of the Second Vatican Council to describe the program of liturgical renewal and reform in the Church. It is localised in SC, nos. 37-40.”

⁵⁰ SC, no. 38, 96. However, in this context, the place of custom as a force of law is significant (cc. 23-28; CCEO, cc. 1506-1509). W.L. Daniel, “The Principle of Legality in Canon Law,” in *The Jurist*, 70 (2010), 48; J.H. Huels, *Liturgy and Law. Liturgical Law in the System of Roman Catholic Canon Law*, Wilson & LaFleur, Montréal, 2006, 141-143. In the context of two papal visitations – Paul VI in 1964 and John Paul II in 1999 – the liturgical element of touching the feet of the celebrant during the offertory procession, first begun in 1964, - an element that does not appear in the ‘Twelve Point’ list - was continued in village areas and mission stations after that, and repeated in 1999. Even if this adaptation is unauthorized and the people have had no intention of introducing a norm (*ius*), (c. 25), yet this custom being apart from the law, has made the celebration effective and culturally relevant, to the people.

⁵¹ Appendix. The letter Prot. n. 802/69 was dated 25 April, 1969, from the *Consilium ad Exsequendam Constitutionem De Sacra Liturgia*. The translation of the Roman missal into the vernacular received the *recognitio* of the second typical edition in 1981. F.A. Machado, “Celebration of the Eucharist and Inculturation in India,” in *Vidyajyoti*, 66 (2001), 86-88 (= Machado, *Celebration of the Eucharist and Inculturation in India*). The General Instruction of the Roman Missal no. 31, which states that “The pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be heightened if the text of readings, prayers and songs correspond as closely as possible to the needs, religious dispositions, and aptitude of the participants, in *The Liturgy Documents, Volume One*, Fifth Edition, Chicago, Liturgy Training Publications, 2012, 105; *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 63, 767: “Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life.”

Liturgical Meeting in April 1969 set up a sub-commission to compose the *Anaphora* in the light of the guidelines furnished by the CBCI Liturgical Commission. The *anaphora* aimed to “maintain continuity with the essential elements of a genuine Judeo-Christian tradition of liturgy with thought-patterns harmonious with the Indian culture and drawing from the religious traditions of our country.”⁵² The *Anaphora* was submitted to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 1992. To date the *recognitio* is still pending. In 1981, the CBCI, established in its own proper liturgical calendar offering new liturgical texts to commemorate the saints associated to the history of the Church in India; and also establishing five special days in the Proper; days when Masses would be celebrated with their own liturgical texts. These special days were linked to two days in the political history of India; two to the principal Hindu feast days, namely, of lights and of thanksgiving; and one to the Day of Harvests. These are:

- i. the Indian Republic Day on 26th January;
- ii. the Assumption of Our Lady and Indian Independence Day, 15 August;
- iii. Christ, the Light of the World, with the Hindu Feast of *Deepavali* in October;
- iv. Christ, the Wisdom of God to the Hindu Feast *Saraswathi Puja*, in November;
- v. the Harvest Festival on different dates in September, according to regions.

2. *Non-Christian Scriptures*

With regard to the worth and value of non-Christian scriptures, theological opinion is divided between those who embrace and retain Church teaching and those who consider the scriptures of other religions as inspired at least analogically, in the sense that they see continuity in God’s self-manifestation in history.⁵³ For example, in 1972, the first effort of the CBCI commission for liturgy, to compose an order of the Mass with Eucharistic prayers drawn from expressions in the Hindu Scriptures

⁵² Machado, “Celebration of the Eucharist and Inculturation in India,” 91-93: “The *anaphora* was composed of seven elements: i) introductory dialogue; ii) proclamation of God’s deeds in creation and in the history of salvation; iii) pre-institutional epiclesis; iv) institution-narrative and *anamnesis*, v) post-institutional epiclesis; vi) intercessions and commemorations, and vi) doxology.”

⁵³ G.M. Soares Prabhu, “The Inspiration of the Old Testament as seen by the New and its Implication for the Possible Inspiration of non-Christian Scriptures,” in D.S. Amalorpavadas (ed.), *Research Seminar on non-Biblical Scriptures*, Bangalore, National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1975, 105-110. D. AMALADOSS, “Creation of New Liturgical Texts,” in *Indian Theological Studies*, 47 (2010), 153, fn. 21: “Cardinal J. Knox, prefect of SCDW (1974-1975) counseled CBCI to put an end to all experimental practices in the liturgy.”

did not obtain a *recognitio*.⁵⁴ The rationale of the mind of the legislator is clear and has been codified in c. 837 §1 and re-iterated in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: “Liturgy is never anyone’s private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated.”⁵⁵ The ecclesial community who celebrates the liturgy is the same assembly which is also governed by liturgical laws which regulate the public and official worship of the Church and other devotional practices closely related with the Liturgy. The teaching of the magisterium concerning inspired writings is clear in *Dei Verbum* no. 11, namely, the qualification of ‘inspired’ is reserved to the books of the canon. This is further emphasized by the International Theological Commission:

The expression ‘*the Word of God*’ has been reserved in the tradition for the writings of the two Testaments. The distinction is clearly included in the ancient ecclesiastical writers who have recognized seeds of the Word in philosophical and religious writings. The sacred books of the different religions even when they can form part of an evangelic preparation cannot be considered equivalent to the Old Testament, which is the immediate preparation for the coming of Christ to the world.⁵⁶

Meditation

A clear understanding of the legislator’s mind concerning the primacy of Christian prayer are reflected in the words of Pope John Paul II who taught that prayer that is always to be completely inspired by Christ is valid, even in our day, [as] against some methods of prayer which are not inspired by the Gospel and which in practice tend to set Christ aside in preference for a mental void which makes no sense in Christianity. Any method of prayer is valid insofar as it is inspired by Christ and leads to Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6).⁵⁷

In a pluralistic religious environment, the efforts of the local churches to adapt non-Christian prayer forms into personal or communitarian prayer styles, have

⁵⁴ The zeal to persist in this ideology was made at the Special Assembly for Asian Bishops to the extent that their ideas did enter the ‘*relatio post-disceptionem*’ the documents which subsequently went *sub secreto*. S.A Prabhu, “Dialogue with Peoples of other Faiths,” in *Indian Theological Studies*, 47 (2009), 26; “Summary of the ‘*Relatio post-disceptionem*,’” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 22 (1998), 17-18.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, encyclical letter on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17 April, 2003 no. 52, in AAS, 95 (2003), 433-475, English translation in *L’Osservatore romano*, 17 (2003), ix (special insert); EN no. 60, 765: “When an unknown preacher, catechist or Pastor, preaches the Gospel, gathers the little community together, administers a Sacrament, even alone, he is carrying out an ecclesial act. He acts not in virtue of a mission which he attributes to himself or by a personal inspiration, but in union with the mission of the Church and in her name.”

⁵⁶ ITC, “Christianity and World Religions,” no. 92, 162; CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 8, 213.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, Homily at the Mass in honour of St. Teresa of Avila, 11 November 1982, no. 9, in *L’Osservatore romano*, 48 (1982), 3.

been the object of vigilance from local Bishops and the Holy See. This is because even if the Church teaches that non-Christian prayer are spiritual gifts and a preparation for the acceptance of the Gospel, yet “one cannot attribute to these, a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments.”⁵⁸ In practical terms, the Holy See has voiced its opinion on the forms of a yoga style of prayer which focuses on body shapes and *mantras*. This is seen in the document “On Some Aspects of Christian Meditation” which speaks of “dangers and errors” in the effort to fuse Christian meditation with non-Christian styles:

it can degenerate into a cult of the body and can lead surreptitiously to considering all bodily sensations as spiritual experiences [...] On the contrary, one can take from them what is useful so long as the Christian conception of prayer, its logic and requirements are never obscured. Some physical exercises automatically produce a feeling of quiet and relaxation, pleasing sensations, perhaps even phenomena of light and of warmth, which resemble spiritual well-being. To take such feelings for the authentic consolations of the Holy Spirit would be a totally erroneous way of conceiving the spiritual life. This would represent a kind of mental schizophrenia which could also lead to psychic disturbance and at times to moral deviations.⁵⁹

The place and position of Christian prayer has also been tarnished by the prayer styles of converts who have continued their pre-conversion religious meditative patterns and spreading it to the community.⁶⁰ To combat this, the magisterium has been firm in forbidding non-Christian prayer styles or promotion of related literature at catholic ashrams or prayer centers (cc. 839, §2; 826, §3). On a positive note, as a strategy for effective evangelization, the bishops have promoted mental prayer (c. 276, §2) with devotion to the Blessed Sacrament at churches (c. 937); all-night vigils before particular feasts which attract non-Christians; the gospel approach of ‘fast and pray,’ and a work and prayer format, aimed at assisting the needy.⁶¹

⁵⁸ CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 21, 218; *Redemptoris missio*, no. 29, 9; CCC, no. 843, 172.

⁵⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “On Some Aspects of Christian Meditation,” 15 October, 1989, no. 26, in AAS, 82 (1990), 362-379; English translation in *L'Osservatore romano*, 1 (1990), 10 (hereafter CDF, “On Some Aspects of Christian Meditation”); M. Dhavamony, “To Meditate as Christians,” in *L'Osservatore romano*, 22 (1990), 8; D.S. Amalorpavadass, “Integration and Interiorization,” in *Studies in Spirituality*, 1 (1991), 243-267; T.K. John, “Spirituality. An Indian Perspective,” in *Jnanadeepa*, 11 (2008), 83-106.

⁶⁰ For example, B. Upadhyaya, a leading Indian catholic theologian and a convert from Hinduism, promotes a “modality of prayer with the spirit of Hinduism. One can believe as a Catholic and behave and think as a Hindu. We are Hindu Catholic.” J. Lipner and G. Girpert-Sauch (eds.), *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, Vol. 1, United Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 1991, 24-25. J. Lobo, A Critical Appraisal of *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's* Vision of Being Hindu by Culture and Catholic by Faith and its Implications for Inter-faith Dialogue Today,” in *Christianity Journal*, 24 (2008), 52-60.

⁶¹ CDF, “On Some Aspects of Christian Meditation,” no. 28, 10.

1. *Prayers for Healing*

Prayers for physical and spiritual healing have been part of the Catholic religious experience.⁶² The Catholic charismatic movement has also been very active in the field. At several retreat centres, a number of physical and spiritual healing prayer services are held most of which are transmitted around the world.⁶³ The legitimacy of these prayers for healing is recognised due to the presence of “specific person or persons” who are “determinative for the efficacy of the prayer.”⁶⁴ However, it has been acknowledged that despite the appeal of such retreat centres in a religious pluralistic society, merely physical healings have not necessarily led to an interest in the faith. A source of magisterial concern has also been the use of non-liturgical prayers for healing by clerical and lay leaders without the approval of the local Ordinary (cc. 839, §2; 1172), in defiance of the directives of the Apostolic See. These persons have been engaged in prayers on non-Christian attendees, also without ascertaining with moral certainty the medical state of the person.⁶⁵

Conclusion

The deposit of faith is the sacrosanct memory of the Church. The magisterium has the task of discerning what is to be received and what is to be warned and rejected,

⁶² See for example, Bede’s method of contemplative prayer draws from the Benedictine and yogic traditions and consists of a relaxing comfortable posture, the silent repetition of sacred mantra, a reliance on the grace of God and the support of a spiritual guide or community. He emphasises the necessity of using a sacred mantra, like the name of ‘Jesus’ or ‘God,’ because when we meditate, we enter into then unconscious part of ourselves where we encounter our shadow, the repressed emotions and desires, and the collective unconscious, the suffering and joys of humanity. These act mantra acts as a lifeline to the Risen Christ, the one who has already descended into the depths of the unconscious and has overcome the forces of darkness. B. Griffiths, “The Divine Office as a Method of Prayer,” in *Theological Digest*, 1 (1952), 42-44. In September 1996, the CBCI officially granted recognition to the National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (NCCRS) and the national office with the objective of service and promotion of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of India and to serve as a centre of unity, communication, and cooperation. http://kcbcsite.com/kcbc_commission_charismatic_movement.htm (21 October 2013).

⁶³ <http://www.drcm.org/divine-tv-ministry> (21 October 2013).

⁶⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “Instruction on Prayers for Healing,” in *L’Osservatore romano*, 49 (2000), 9.

⁶⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, letter too Ordinaries regarding norms on exorcism, 29 September, 1985, in AAS, 77 (1985), 1169-1170; Congregation for Divine worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, decree, preface and *praenotanda* for the rite of exorcism, 22 November, 1998, in *Notitiae*, 35 (1999), 137-150; idem, notification on the rite of exorcism, 27 January, 1999, Prot.1280/98/L, in *Notitiae* 35 (1999), 156. Archbishop Henry D’Souza, who worked closely with Mother Teresa and was the postulator of the cause for her beatification, has publicized the exorcism performed on Mother Teresa in 1997. After undergoing heart surgery, the archbishop recalled, Mother Teresa began to recover well, but then became agitated at night, interfering with her sleep and endangering her recovery. When doctors notified him of the problem, the archbishop called in a priest to say prayers of exorcism. The archbishop concluded: “The devil is real and has his own tricks to disturb the holy ones particularly in moments of bodily weakness” <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=11636> (October 23, 2013).

and even to anticipate and demand assent. When the magisterium interprets the deposit of faith extraordinarily or in an ordinary manner, no person lower than the supreme legislator is justified to digress from the truth of the faith and its authoritative interpretations. This is why the magisterium seeks to ensure that the deposit of faith is benefitted by all, not only in its entirety or beauty, but also in its purity.⁶⁶ The creative inventiveness of the faithful to proclaim a teaching that is in variation with the teachings of the Church either at the universal or local level; or to refuse to willingly submit to the teachings of the bishops is in violation of canonical norms. In an Indian religious pluralist society truth is only served by a willing submission of mind, to the heritage that has been commonly adhered by the faithful, and interpreted and taught by the magisterium, through the centuries. For future study, it is imperative that experiences from other Asian countries and even other continents take into account the indigenous peoples in those areas. These could be: spiritual growth and transformation, inter-spirituality and interfaith dialogue, contemplative tradition and mysticism. Furthermore, social justice and collaboration, promotion of unity in diversity, ethics and morality, peace promotion and reconciliation, mindfulness and mental health, ecological consciousness, healing and wholeness. This is because the Church approaches religious pluralism through its doctrine of inclusivity while maintaining its belief in the uniqueness of Christ and the Church. It acknowledges the presence of truth and goodness in other religions but emphasizes the fullness of truth found in Catholicism. However, there remains a challenge to engage in theological reflection on the implications of religious pluralism for Catholic doctrine and practice such as the relationship between Christianity and other religions, the uniqueness of Christ and the nature of salvation in a pluralistic world.**PS**

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⁶⁶ Benedict XVI, post-synodal apostolic exhortation the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church *Verbum Domini*, 30 September, 2010, no. 98, in AAS, 102 (2010), 682-787, English translation in *Origins*, 40 (2010), 325: "There is no true evangelization unless the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are proclaimed;" Y. Congar, "Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality," in *Concilium*, 77 (1972), 43-78.

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