

# On the Art of Being Man

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Catholics identify Christ's Church with the Catholic Church. As a result, they find it difficult to admit that a non-Catholic can be a true Christian. Christians at large identify Christ's Church with the Christian world. This prevents them from acknowledging that a non-Christian can be a true believer. From the moment Christ's Church is understood in terms of manhood, walls crumble, a new light is thrown on Christianity and Catholicism. In this article, there is from the beginning till the end the question of man. In the first part, on the basis of an understanding of man, I bring out the nature of faith and, consequently, that of the Church and of priesthood. In the second part, I study what is *within the Church*—that is, within the integral human community—the meaning of Christianity, the relation between the 'Christian faith' and the 'Hindu faith', the meaning of Catholicism. I point out the requirements of authentic catholicism and some main directions in which the reform of the existing Catholic Church must be carried out in order that in her those requirements may be met.

## I. THE CHURCH

### **Man<sup>1</sup>**

As a man, I am a subjective life—a jiva—expressing itself in a world from a given centre and directing itself in a more or less self-determined manner towards its full realization. In other words, I am a world which, from a centre, tends towards its ultimate personalization.

As a man, I am a jiva who, through the modalities of his expressive field, communicates in an existential way with other jivas. The end towards which each jiva progresses is his own fulfilment as intimately related to the fulfilment of his 'fellow-jivas'.

I am not the source of my existence. I am a jiva receiving himself from a transcendent Living Presence who is all at once Alpha and Omega. This Presence is God eternally expressing his own fulness in the Logos. As Alpha, God is the transcendent Principle of all existences, the One who gives life and leads all life towards its consummation, he is the supreme Ātman, he is Father. As Omega, God is the transcendent End of all existences, the One who moves all jivas by drawing them and uniting them to him, he is Brahman, he is Son. I receive myself from the Father as an existence directing itself personally

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<sup>1</sup> I have developed the anthropology sketched out here in my work, *The World of Persons*, London: Burns & Oates, 1967. A French revised edition, *L'univers des personnes*, has been published in the Collection *Museum Lessianum* by Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges, in 1969.

towards its fulfilment in the Son—that is, as freedom. Each of my strivings, while it is a personal endeavour, is all at once relation to the Father and relation to the Son.

In all this, there is question of myself *as man*. Only in the Logos can man become fully himself; only in the Logos can the human reality—that is, the human world, the community of human persons—attain its perfection.

The directedness of the whole human reality towards its fulfilment in the Logos expresses itself in each human existence in a manner which is both unique and intimately related to the manner in which it expresses itself in the other human existences. In my individual being, I am a particularization of the *towards-which* of the whole intimately related to other such particularizations. I must realize my particular calling within the community through a definite commitment to the building of the human world—that is, through a definite *temporal involvement*—ordered towards the coming into being of the eschatological Kingdom.

## Faith

The act by which I realize my calling is *faith*.

Through faith, obeying the Father's prompting, I betake myself to the Son who attracts me, open myself to the Son who comes to me. Through faith, I unite myself in Brahman to the supreme Ātman, I actuate my relation to God, I win eternal life (Jn 3:16).

Faith is my answer to the call of God expressing itself in my personal inclinations and aspirations, in the particular demands of the situation in which I find myself.

Faith is my existence personalizing itself, tending towards its end in a self-determined and enlightened way. Faith is my freedom exercising itself authentically.

Through faith, I commit myself to a definite task to be performed within the Community, I put myself in a definite way at the service of the Community.

Through faith, I order my activities towards an end which is beyond all earthly achievements; I refuse to consider any earthly realization or fulfilment as truly satisfactory, as final. Faith implies a continual transcending.

Through faith, I make myself, I tend towards the fulness of manhood (Ep 4:13).

Faith is truthfulness, the disposition through which, conforming myself to God's creative intention, I 'live by the truth and come out into the light' (Jn 3:21). Faith begins in the most humble expressions of human sincerity; it reaches its perfection among those who, for the Kingdom, commit themselves most thoroughly to the service of men and who realize in the most enlightened manner the implications of their commitment.

Faith arises and develops within a community. Each individual faith is *generated* by the faith-community; each individual faith *builds* the faith-community.

Faith unites: it gathers men into one, it unites them to the Logos and, through him, to the Father.

Faith is priesthood. Through faith, I become an instrument for the regeneration and salvation of all, for the building of the eschatological Kingdom. Through faith, my existence becomes a priestly existence, the community becomes a priestly community.

From all this it appears that faith and priesthood are not something coming *in addition to manhood*. Faith is man's existence tending towards its fulfilment; priesthood is a certain perfection of manhood. As the Perfect Man, the Logos incarnate is also the High Priest. All human priesthood is a participation in his Priesthood. Only in him and through him can I become a priest, can I become truly *man*.

### The Church as Faith

The Church is the assembly of those who believe. She is therefore the community of those in whom and through whom the world *humanizes* itself in the most authentic way. This community is broader than any particular group or institution, it includes all those who in some way contribute to the building of the eschatological Kingdom: it includes therefore men of all nations, of all settings, of all 'faiths'. Every person or group of persons who in some specific manner strives in order to make the world *more truly human* belongs to the Church. The Church is present most intensely among those whose commitment is the most authentic—that is, the most dynamic and the most enlightened.

It is through faith, not through the mere undergoing of rites, that men become members of the Church. Baptism has a sacramental value not as a rite having this particular 'matter and form' but as a concretion of faith. It is by being faith expressing and confirming itself that baptism is also Christ's saving action.

### The Church as Priesthood

As faith, the Church is also priesthood. Through his personal commitment, through his membership in the faith-community, the 'royal priesthood', each believer is a priest. He is a priest because he is authentically a man. We perceive here the universal character of priesthood. There is not first of all a Catholic priesthood, and an Orthodox priesthood, and an Anglican priesthood, and a Buddhist priesthood, and a Hindu priesthood . . . , each one having its particular attributions; there is first of all a human priesthood, fruit of the personal relation which man, through faith, establishes with the Lord. *Outside* this universal priesthood, there is no particular priesthood which can be considered as authentic. Priesthood, therefore, is not a state in which man, in the context of a particular religious institution, is enabled, through the performing of definite actions and the uttering of prescribed formulas, to produce sacred things—that is, things endowed with a spiritual power. This notion of priesthood leads to a deformation of the sacramental economy and of the Church, to a divorce between religious practice and faith commitment. The authentic priest is in no way a magician; he is a man of faith acting through the power of faith in order to express and confirm faith.

A distinction must be maintained between priesthood and ministership. Ministership is a function or a service to be fulfilled within the faith-community, in answer to a call of the community. No doubt, each ministership is necessarily priestly, but priesthood is a reality broader than any particular function. Every man is called to it to the extent that he is called to faith. To the extent that he is called to a particular service of his fellowmen, he is called to give to his priesthood a definite expression. Each particular calling, *while* it emanates from the faith-community, comes from God (in the same way as each human being, *while* he proceeds from men through generation, is created by God).

## II. CHRISTIANITY AND CATHOLICISM

The Church is the human community directing itself personally towards its fulfilment. As such, she is a totality broader than any particular Church, broader than all the Christian Churches together. What is within this totality the place of Christianity and what is its relation to the other 'faiths'?

### The Nature of Christianity

The New Testament message centred in the person of Christ, the Logos incarnate, has for mankind a unique value. It is therefore necessary that there should be in the world men referring themselves to it personally and communally. Christianity is the community of those who explicitly make of the person of Christ as revealed in the New Testament writings the centre of their existence. The baptismal rite is a ratifying sign. Through the receiving of baptism, the believer expresses publicly his adhesion to Christ in the Christian community; through the conferring of baptism, the Christian community acknowledges and ratifies this adhesion.

### The Christian Faith as Commitment to Christ

Let us try to understand more clearly the meaning of the Christian faith as commitment to Christ.

Christ presents himself as the Son of God made man, as the incarnate Logos, God's revelation to men and men's salvation and fulfilment. I consider first the historical fact in reference to one of its witnesses.

Peter follows Christ, watches him and listens to him. *As experienced by Peter, Christ is entirely immanent in Peter*, he is a modification of Peter's jiva. However, Christ as expressed in terms of Peter's existence is not *the whole Christ*. In the fulness of his being, Christ is and remains transcendent to Peter, infinitely greater than him. Peter is conscious of this fact, he knows that he has continually to broaden and deepen his realization of Christ. Through his faith, Peter, uniting himself existentially to Christ, perfects his knowledge of Christ—Peter's existence perfects itself as a Christ-existence—that is, as a particular revelation of the whole Christ.

The Christ-event as reported in the Gospel cannot be purely and simply identified with the transcendent reality of the Son. The Christ

of the Gospel is the translation of the latter in terms of the existence of the first Christian community, especially in terms of Mark's existence, of Matthew's existence, etc. As such, he is a *particular revelation* of the transcendent Logos incarnate. In himself, the Logos incarnate is infinitely more than what appears of him in any particular manifestation.

However, the transcendent Logos incarnate is in a certain way relative to men. In his 'worldhood', he is the Perfect Man, beyond any particular man; he is the End and Fulfilment of the community of men. It is from him that every particular person receives his human perfection. But the reciprocal is to a certain extent true also. It is in relation to men that the manhood, or worldhood, of the Logos is what it is concretely. Indeed what the Logos incarnate is as Head of the human race depends to some extent on what the body which he crowns is. There is a growth in the Head corresponding to the growth in the body. 'The Church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere' (Ep 1:23).

The Christ-event as depicted in the Gospel no longer takes place today *as it took place two thousand years ago*. This event is realized in the human world—Head and body—of today. However, the Gospel keeps an actual value. How has this value to be understood?

As Revelation, the Gospel is not simply that book which lies there motionless on my table, it is the word which God speaks to me through Christ in the present. I open myself to this word not first by reading the written text, but through faith—that is, *by actually uniting myself to the living Christ and to those through whom Christ comes to me*. The function of the written text is to light up my faith. Without my actual commitment to Christ through the service of men, the Gospel text would remain a dead letter—no revelation at all; but, without the text, my faith could not become an intelligent and fully personal endeavour. As God's word, the Gospel is the text as vivified by my actual involvement in the world for the Kingdom, it is my actual involvement as illuminated by the text. Existential commitment comes first. Outside it, there is no word of God actually spoken to me, no actual revelation. *My faith makes the text Gospel.* The implication of this is that he who, without any explicit knowledge of the text, believes listens to God's word, realizes the Gospel, much more authentically than the one who, without really committing himself, refers himself to the Gospel text.

## **The Hindu Faith in Relation to the Christian Faith**

Let us consider now the Hindu situation.

The transcendent End of human existence is termed *Brahman*. As a cosmic and supracosmic Power, he lies beyond the sphere and reach of man's consciousness; yet he is that through which man lives and acts. To come to Brahman and remain in him, to be one with him, to live out of him, to become divine while still on earth, have, throughout the ages, been the permanent objects of man's spiritual quest in India.

Hindus worship a considerable number of deities. They consider them not as independent entities but as manifestations of the Supreme

in his various attributes, or as emanations from him. These deities have a function to fulfil with regard to man's fundamental pursuit.

The various gods cannot be purely and simply identified with the transcendent (*nirguna*) Brahman. As mythical figures, they exist within that particular human world which we called the Hindu world. The Hindu believer shapes them out of his own subjectivity, he makes them exist as concretions of his jiva.

This does not mean that the Hindu gods do not refer to anything beyond man. It is in his quest for the Absolute that the Hindu believer gives them existence. Therefore, *while they draw their substance from the Hindu's jiva, they have a transcendental character.* The Beyond to which they point is two-fold:

- (1) It is a sphere of transearthly subjective *cosmic* existence. (St Paul alludes to it in his own way when he speaks of authorities, thrones, dominations, sovereignties, powers, 'elements, spirits' of the universe, which are either allied or hostile to God and to men.)
- (2) It is the transcendent Brahman, the incarnate Logos.

The first relationship is a complex reality. It gives to the Hindu deities their ambivalent character. Much should be said about it. However, we shall not study it now. The second relationship is the fundamental one. It is due to it that the Hindu deities are truly religious entities. Let us consider it carefully.

To the extent to which the gods refer to the transcendent Brahman, they are in some way manifestations or embodiments of him. This does not mean that in them Brahman makes himself relative to the Hindu believer; it means that to some extent through them the jiva of the believer reveals himself in his relation to the transcendent Brahman, actuates the bond which unites him to him. The deities are revelations of Brahman in terms of Hindu existence to the extent that they are manners in which Hindu existence discovers itself in Brahman. The imperfections which appear in them are not imperfections inherent in Brahman, they are essentially human imperfections.

Let us parallel the Christian view and the Hindu view. Brahman and the Logos may be identified in so far as both manifest themselves as a transcendent *Presence* which is the absolute fulfilment of man's existence. No doubt, as *concepts*, Brahman and the Logos are distinct, but, as such, they are not transcendent realities. They are manners in which human existence illuminates itself in relation to its transcendent End, they are therefore manifestations of the Eternal in *human existence*.

Brahman and the Logos may be identified in so far as both manifest themselves as a Presence which is all at once *supracosmic* and *cosmic*. St Paul expresses in these terms the cosmicity of the incarnate Logos: 'He is the visible likeness of the unseen God and the first-born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible, Thrones, Dominations, Sovereignties, Powers—all things were created through him and for him. Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things

in unity' (Col. 1:15-17). This text acknowledges that before appearing in human flesh Christ was already the head and the immanent support of the whole cosmos. Thus the existence of Christ as word is anterior to his existence as man, it is the background against which his coming down on earth takes place. In so far as all things subsist in them, Brahman and the Logos are the supreme humano-cosmic Reality—the Perfect Man—the Fulfilment of history, of cosmic becoming, of every particular existence. As *concepts*, the cosmic Brahman and the cosmic Logos are not identical; but, as such, they are not Omega *in himself*, they are ways in which human existence reveals itself in relation to the supreme One who polarizes it and is beyond any concept.

The factualness of the Christ-event is often opposed to the non-factualness of the Hindu deities. In this respect, however, an important remark must be made. The Christ-event cannot be treated as an 'objective' historical fact which was in itself no more than what it appeared to be. The Christ-event as witnessed by Christ's followers, as reported in the Gospel, is *the process by which particular subjectivities reveal themselves to themselves* (in the same way as John-perceived-by-me is a manner in which my jiva expresses itself to itself, an illumination of my subjectivity, a modification of my consciousness). No doubt, this illuminating takes place in essential relation to a transcendent happening which it expresses (in the same way as John-in-me expresses John-in-himself), but this happening—the self-manifestation and action of the Logos as they take place in themselves—can never be reduced to its phenomenal modalities (in the same way as John-in-himself can never be reduced to John-as-perceived-by-me), it is infinitely beyond them, inexhaustible. This seems to imply that the cosmic existence, self-manifestation and action of the Logos, while expressing themselves truly in the Christ-event as witnessed by Christ's contemporaries, may assume various forms in different human settings.

The Hindu gods are also manners in which a number of human subjectivities express themselves to themselves. In so far as they come to existence within the movement of these subjectivities towards their transcendent End—movement which is an answer to an attraction—they do, in some way, express the cosmic Logos. However, the Logos can never be equated with any of them; it is infinitely beyond them.

These considerations show that the Christ-event and the Hindu deities (in their mythical context) cannot be opposed as truth and non-truth. A parallelism can be established between them, a fundamental unity of reference can be made out in them. There is, however, between the Christ-event and the Hindu gods a difference of function and of value: the *truth* of the one and the *truth* of the others are not of the same type.

The way in which the Christ-event as reported in the Gospel phenomenalizes the transcendent cosmic existence and action of the Logos is such that the more, in the act of our faith, we study this event in its 'objective' modalities—that is, the more we study that aspect of our jiva-world which we call the Christ-event—the more we reflect upon it in the light of our integral experience, the more also our existence—

and, in it, the whole community of persons, the whole created reality—illuminates itself, in the Spirit, in its relation to the transcendent Logos and to the Father. Therefore the value and ‘function’ of the Christ-event as an aspect of our worldhood consists in the fact that through it, in the act of our faith, our jiva may realize himself in a fully reflective and personal manner in the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The Christ-event is in us *at the highest level of our personal structure* the phenomenality of the transcendent cosmic Logos; as such, it is also the phenomenality of the Father (‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father . . . I am in the Father and the Father is in me.’ Jn 14:9-10); therefore it is the phenomenality of the Spirit in whom the blissful oneness of the Father and the Son, the Ātman and Brahman, is eternally realised. In this resides the *factualness* of the Christ-event, a factualness which is, as we can see, much more than ‘objective’ historicity.

Very different is the way in which the Hindu deities phenomenalize the transcendent cosmic existence and action of the Logos. While they have a transcendental character and are, therefore, true religious objects, the Hindu gods are mythical entities. They unfold at the level of imaginative consciousness the world view of the Indian people, they express the various aspects of its psyche—its aspirations, its feelings, its manifold preoccupations, its delights, its anguishes, its frights, its hopes; they reflect the manner in which the Indian soul experiences nature. They are not a phenomenal field through the study of which man may discover the way in which he is actually related to the cosmic Logos, they are a moment of man’s growth, a stage in his religious, spiritual—human—development, a development whose term is his full realization in Brahman, the cosmic Logos. In this resides their value and ‘function’, their *truth*. We have not, therefore, to oppose the ‘truth’ of the Gospel report to the ‘non-truth’ of Hindu mythology; we have first to understand what they both mean in the movement and set up of human existence, in relation to the transcendent Logos and to the Father, to Brahman and Ātman. As just stated, the difference between the two resides in the fact that, in relation to the Logos, it is at the level of reflective consciousness that, through the Gospel, human existence illuminates itself, whereas it is at the imaginative level that, through the Hindu myths, this illumination takes place. The Christ-event has not to be *transcended* but to be realized more and more deeply, more and more personally; the Hindu myths must at a certain moment be transcended so that a higher level may be reached: the level of authentic personalization, of freedom—the Christ-level. We understand in what consists both the non-factualness of the Hindu deities and their directedness towards the Christ-realization. Their non-factualness is—paradoxically—something positive, something much more meaningful than mere lack of historicity.

There is in Hindu worship a diversity corresponding to the different manners in which the believer represents God. The puja ceremonies, performed either in temples or in private houses, are addressed to specific deities. There is often much formalism and a lack of internal devotion in the way in which these ceremonies are carried out. Many texts, however, stress the need for an interiorization of the puja. In

the Tantric puja a sort of physical correspondence must be established between the body of the sadhaka and the image, an absorption must be achieved leading to the point where the image and its adjuncts—with all their symbolism—become an experience. A deep personal piety often appears in the way in which Hindu believers behave and pray at wayside shrines.

In some *upásanas* performed in private houses the attention of the participants is directed no longer to this or that particular deity but to the Supreme Lord symbolised by the sign OM. This sign designates both the supreme Brahman, the supracosmic Logos, and the cosmic Iṣvara, the cosmic Logos; it represents also Ātman, the Self, both as a transcendent and an immanent Presence; it represents the peaceful and blissful Oneness of Ātman and Brahman. Next to the sign OM a few copper plates with flowers and food (pieces of fruit, sweetmeat) are laid. A *tilak* of sandal paste is imposed on the foreheads of all present. Under the leadership of an elder one or two hymns are chanted; then comes the reading of a few texts—usually spiritual exhortations from the *Gurudeva* of the participants. This reading is followed by other hymns. Between the hymns, a time of silence is observed. Towards the end all stand, receive a few flowers in their hands and sing repeatedly *Om Śānti, Om Śānti, Om Śānti*. One by one they go and prostrate themselves before the symbol OM; they lay down before it the flowers which they hold in their right palms. In conclusion the *praśāda* is distributed among the *upásakas* and consumed. This act constitutes a communion rite.

### Catholicism

Let us now, in the perspective brought out, study the meaning of Catholicism.

The authentic believer is a man who in a personal and enlightened manner answers the call which Christ addresses him in the present, through the people among whom he lives. He is a man who unites himself to Christ by uniting himself in a concrete way to his fellowmen. The Christian believer tries continually to perceive what the Gospel means in the terms of his actual involvement, he tries to perceive what the situation in which he finds himself, the times in which he lives, mean in terms of the Gospel. The Christian believer identifies himself with his human environment; he sees its present situation as a moment of its growth in Christ, of the growth of Christ in the world; he does not reject or despise anything, he opens himself to everyone and studies the way in which the fulfilment of all in the incarnate Logos may be brought about. In one word, catholicity is the characteristic of the authentic Christian believer.

Each individual believer lives this catholicity in union with other Christian believers. Together these fellowbelievers form a ‘catholic’ community—that is, a community of men trying to realize together the broad implications of their Christian faith. Such men pray together, try together to receive and understand God’s Word, celebrate together the Eucharist. The different ‘catholic’ groups live in close communion; they try continually to open themselves to all men.

Within the various groups there are men appointed to witness and promote in a special manner the faith of each and the faith of all. Coming from the heart of the communities to which they minister, these 'pastors' incarnate the 'catholicity' of these communities—that is, their inner unity, their openness to the world, their directedness towards ultimate unity in God-Omega—the incarnate Logos, Brahman. This catholicity is embodied in an eminent way in the person of a supreme pastor whose function is to unite all men in Christ. He fulfils this mission by identifying himself with all and expressing the progressive character of faith—that is, the directedness of all men towards a fulfilment which is beyond all earthly achievements.

The 'catholic' community never considers itself as a self-contained entity which has to build itself by opposing itself to other Christian groups or to the 'non-Christian' world (the opposition 'Catholics'—'non-Catholics' is the very negation of catholicity). Catholicity cannot be achieved within the limits of a restricted group; it implies a continual effort to break down the walls which separate men and to commune with all men, a continual outgoing movement.

Catholicism cannot be identified with an institution, a doctrine, a discipline; it is not something established. It is a world to be built, a spirit driving the believer beyond the limits of any organization towards the fulness of the Kingdom. Catholicism dies when it reduces itself to a system, to a set of dogmas and regulations. Wherever orthodoxy becomes a value-in-itself independent of faith-commitment and of charity, catholicism gives way to sectarianism—it is no longer a spirit which vivifies, it is a letter which kills.

Catholicism is mankind growing in freedom and self-awareness, coming to itself in Christ. The 'catholic' community does not accept as pertaining to its essence any element not conducive to the true liberation of man. It refuses to live outside history, to isolate itself from the human community at large. It refuses to consider its authentic tradition as a factor binding it to the structures of the past, condemning it to be in the world a living anachronism. Out of fidelity to the Gospel, it continually adapts and reforms itself. It leads history towards the future, towards its fulfilment in the incarnate Logos.

If such are the orientations of catholicism, what about the existing Catholic Church?

It must be acknowledged that there are in the Church elements which militate against authentic catholicity. I point out a few of them:

(1) For several centuries the tendency in the Church has been to define Catholicism in reference to a merely noetic understanding of truth and of faith. Faith is defined as being essentially an assent of the mind to a teaching. This teaching is embodied in the person of the Pope and in the college of Catholic bishops. The first duty of the Catholic 'faithful' is to adhere to the true faith by listening to their pastors and following their directives. In this perspective, the Catholic Church as a hierarchical institution having its centre in the Roman see is considered to be the full embodiment of the Gospel; she is considered as perfect. This Church is a self-contained entity which has nothing

to receive from the other Christian groups, from any secular organization or movement. Her catholicity resides in the fact that, being the embodiment of truth, she is, as she stands, meant for all men.

(2) In keeping with this outlook, catholicism is considered as being first of all an institution; the Church of Christ is equated with the established Catholic Church. A good many churchmen think it possible to set up a 'fundamental law' distinct from the living Gospel which would for ever delimit Catholicism and Christianity. The Church is seen as the unique depository of authentic Christian Tradition; any trend developing outside the Church is looked at with suspicion.

(3) There is among Catholics a tendency to identify the Church with the hierarchy and to present the Catholic institution as an object of faith. It is considered that the pastors of the Church, because they are God's elected, cannot be chosen by the faithful. 'Coming from God' is equated with 'coming from the Pope' and opposed to 'coming from below'. Love and service of the hierarchical Church are presented as qualities distinct from and superior to love and service of men.

(4) In the Catholic Church, priesthood having its source in the existence of a chain of valid ordination rites through which it links itself linearly to the apostles (succession according to the rite, filiation according to the flesh) supersedes universal priesthood based on faith-commitment (spiritual filiation). The economy of salvation—as an economy of grace—is considered as an economy of efficacious rites rather than an economy of faith. As a mediator, the priest is a man qualified to perform such rites. Both the ability which he possesses—as priest—and the specific efficacy which the rites he performs possess are distinct from the power of faith. As the instrument of salvation, the Catholic Church is the place where valid priesthood and, therefore, valid sacraments are found.

(5) A valid 'Catholic Mass' is first of all a celebration in which a valid consecration rite is performed. A valid consecration rite is first of all a rite performed by a validly ordained priest. At the level of validity, which is the fundamental level, faith does not come into play. The celebrations performed among other Christian groups are on the whole 'invalid'. Catholics are therefore cautioned against joining in them; in any case, they are forbidden to commune with non-Catholic believers. Any sacramental or eucharistic value is denied to communion rites performed among non-Christians.

It must be acknowledged that these various elements which are inherent in a catholicism based on a purely noetic understanding of faith are irreconcilable with a catholicism rooted in an existential understanding of faith. It must be acknowledged also that authentic catholicity lies with the latter whereas the former is a disfigurement of the Gospel.

But in the present era, is authentic catholicity a possibility?

The world in which we live is essentially imperfect and disunited. True mankind—full catholicity—is not an established fact but a remote horizon. As long as the Kingdom—the perfect union of all in the

incarnate Logos—has not become a reality, catholicity—mankind—is bound to remain something problematic. However, it must remain a hope, an end to be striven for.

This hope is actually exercised in those movements and assemblies where men, transcending the limits of the various organizations to which they belong, overcoming their differences, come together in freedom, mutual respect and brotherhood. In the Christian world, it is exercised in the ecumenical movement through which various Christian groups try to strengthen what unites them and to develop a common understanding. In India, it is exercised in the establishment of the Church of North India and of the Church of South India.

If the Catholic Church has any meaning it is in reference to this hope. There is in the Church a deep concern for unity. She is the only world-wide religious body where unity is incarnated in the person of a supreme pastor. This is a strength, it is also a danger. In herself, the Church institutionalizes unity; she canonizes the institution. Thereby, she denies herself as a spirit, she assimilates unity to uniformity, she falls into sectarianism, formalism, legalism, pharisaism, triumphalism, etc. . . In order that the concern of the Church for unity may be exercised in a way which is authentically catholic, a thorough transformation must take place in the structure of the Church, a *metanoia* must be effected in the mentality of her members. Let us indicate briefly some main directions in which the renewal must take place. There is nothing in the following which is not deeply felt by many Catholics today.

(1) *Renewal in the understanding of the Church.* Fundamentally, Truth is not a doctrine or a teaching, it is the transcendent mystery of God and of Christ. Man opens himself to this mystery not through a mere intellectual assent but through an existential commitment. Man *does* the truth before he knows it; he cannot gain any authentic understanding of it unless he first lives it—that is, unless, through faith, hope and love, he first makes of his *existence* an expression of the transcendent mystery. As pointed out above, this existential commitment by which man ‘comes out into the light’ (Jn 3:21) is by no means the exclusive appanage of Catholics, it is present to some degree in every believer. Every believer—every sincere man—belongs to the people of the covenant, to Christ’s true Church. Instead of isolating herself and reduplicating in herself whatever is done by others, the Catholic Church must open herself to the truth present among other Christian groups, among non-Christians, and commune with them in that truth. In words and deeds, she must acknowledge the presence among them of true priesthood, of meaningful sacramental rites, of celebrations having an authentic eucharistic value. Catholics must take part in those movements, meetings and celebrations in which men assert their deeper unity: their faith, their directedness towards a common Fulfilment. Without delay, the Catholic Church should join the ecumenical movement and give it her wholehearted support. In India, she should become a humble member of the Church of North India and of the Church of South India. Accepting to lose herself, the Catholic Church will find herself by enabling true catholicity to become a reality.

(2) *Renewal in the understanding of authority.* As embodiments of unity, the pastors of the Church are not primarily the defenders of an established order, the custodians of orthodoxy; they are men whom the community of believers selects in order to represent them, to express and confirm their faith. The pastors fulfil their function not by making their authority felt in an arbitrary way, but by putting themselves at the service of the believers, by identifying themselves with the faith of each and the faith of all. Far from imposing uniformity in thought and practice, they promote each one's authentic freedom and foster the union of all in the work of service for the building of the body of Christ (Ep. 4:12). As embodiments of catholicity, the pastors go out to the people, bring about encounters, join in ecumenical ventures, commune with all in everything that is good and truthful. As witness and promoter of the unity of all men, the supreme pastor, far from being a man turned towards the past, the curator of a museum, the representative of a system, incarnates the aspirations of his contemporaries, the progressive character of faith, the directedness of all men towards their fulfilment in the Kingdom.

Many elements present in the set up of the Church as the result of historical circumstances are not, in the actual conjuncture, at the service of catholicity—that is, conducive to the authentic liberation of man. Such elements must be rejected as contrary to the Gospel. At every moment the Church must have the freedom required to question her teaching, her institutions, her discipline, and to reform herself according to the will of Christ as expressed in the demands of history.

(3) *Renewal in the understanding of priesthood.* In so far as it is faith, the people of the covenant is a priestly people. As a believer, each of its members, in union with the other believers, with the whole faith-community, is a priest. The ordained ministers are not men to whom is conferred the 'power' of performing efficacious rites and of producing things having a spiritual virtue. They are believers selected to express and further the unity of the fellowship and its openness to all men—that is, its faith. They fulfil their function first of all through their personal faith. The rites which they perform are meaningful not as this or that particular matter-and-form but in so far as they are faith—their own faith, the faith of the recipients, of the whole community—expressing and confirming itself. It is by receiving from the faith-community—the 'royal priesthood'—their particular attributions that the ordained ministers are also established in them by Christ.

(4) *Renewal in the understanding of grace.* Grace is not a principle which is infused in our 'nature', a medium through which our 'natural' activities are 'supernaturalized'—that is, ordered towards a 'supernatural' end distinct from our 'natural' end. As a transcendent reality, Grace is God himself creating us and directing us towards the eschatological Kingdom, it is the incarnate Logos attracting us and uniting us to him. As a reality present in us, grace is *ourselves* receiving ourselves from the Father and directing ourselves *personally* towards our fulfilment in Christ. Therefore grace must never be reified; it must never be conceived as a sort of intermediary between God and us, something which, though combining with our freedom, remains essentially distinct

from it, distinct from 'our own actions'. 'All that the Father gives me will come to me' (Jn. 6:37). This means that our personal commitment to Christ is identically the act by which the Father gives us to his Son. We must come personally to him. Our freedom—our faith—is grace, grace is in us *freedom*—faith.

(5) *Renewal in the understanding of the sacraments and of the sacramental practice.* The sacramental rites are not things which produce grace (magical conception), they are signs which express and confirm faith—personal faith and communitarian faith. As the sanctification of a 'subject', they are this subject sanctifying himself through his personal surrender to Christ within the faith-community. The minister acts as a representative of the faith-community. Sacramental practice in the Church should bring out the faith dimension and the communitarian dimension of the sacraments.

These two dimensions should be especially manifest in the eucharistic celebration. This celebration is the act of the community. The minister who conducts it performs a priestly action essentially related to the action of the whole eucharistic assembly. *Through his faith*, each participant makes of the eucharistic bread the bread of his salvation, *the body of Christ given to him*. Through the faith of all the participants, the presiding minister makes of the bread he gives them the bread of their eternal life, *the body of Christ given to them*. *He is generated by those whom he serves in the priesthood which he possesses for them.*

Catholics should desist from opposing the validity of the 'Catholic Mass' to the non-validity of the celebrations performed among non-Catholics. Wherever men meet in order to express and strengthen their faith, in order to open themselves together to God's gift, the food they eat as a concretion of the bonds which unite them is in a true way the food of their salvation, the body of Christ given to them. Far from depreciating such celebrations and shunning them, Catholics should as far as possible join in them and commune with the believers who perform them. Through their faith and gratitude, they should contribute towards giving to these celebrations their full eucharistic dimension.

These various points are vitally interconnected. The sincere acceptance of one of them implies the acceptance of the others. The fact is, however, that many members of the Roman Church consider them as opposed to the traditional 'Catholic Faith'. On the other hand, there is an increasing number of Catholics who feel that there is a great discrepancy between the actual set up of the Church and the demands of authentic catholicism. In the presence of such a situation, three courses of action are possible:

(1) The Roman Church tries to eliminate or, at least, to silence those of her members who do not accept her as she is. By doing so, she diminishes further her catholicity and credibility; she cuts herself from men.

(2) The 'progressive elements' leave the Church and carry on their action 'outside her'. This attitude sidetracks their efforts; it does not contribute to the authentic catholicization of men.

(3) The 'progressists' remain in the Church and work within her for the advent of true catholicism in the world. On the one hand, they

distance themselves in some respect from the 'establishment'; on the other hand, they remain in communion with the Catholic family. They know that the existential bonds which unite them to the members of this family are deeper than those created by the institutionalization of the Catholic Faith; they know that these bonds are forces which carry the Catholic believers beyond the imperfections of the existing Church. They accept the present limitations as an expression of the fact that true catholicity is in the world much more a hope than a reality; however, they refuse to be tied, and work so that the Church, by opening herself to all and losing herself in all, may finally, in a transformed world, discover her true dimension.