

MISSIONARY ACCOMMODATION AND ANCESTRAL RITES IN THE FAR EAST

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FOR nigh on two thousand years the history of Christianity and the history of world affairs in general have been linked together inseparably. No one can overlook the part played by Christianity in the making of Europe and in the Europeanizing of the world. Without Christianity, Europe would not be the Europe of today. And the destinies of both Americas, Africa, and the whole of the Far East, ever since they were opened to European influence, have been molded and in varying degrees determined by the truly dynamic forces inherent in Christian culture, both religious and profane. From the first Pentecost, with every forward step of civilization, in every known corner of the globe, Christianity has been the leaven that has transformed the world.

Its most lasting triumph Christianity achieved in the West, in Europe and, we may add at once, in America. Christianity has cradled our civilization and culture. This civilization, which we fittingly call European, forms in its essence and in spite of all apparent differences a homogeneous spiritual unity. It is impossible to explain this fact in purely racial, ethnological, geographical, or any other terms with which a materialistic interpretation of history abounds. The deepest spiritual root of Western unity is to be found solely in the Christian tradition, and "the progress of Western civilization is intimately related to the dynamic ethos of Western Christianity, which has gradually made Western man conscious of his moral responsibility and his duty to change the world."¹ "It was in Christ that the West found its true unity, more intimate and more subtle than all the ties of blood, stronger and more lasting than any unity imposed by common fate: the unity of the same faith and the same worship."² In the course of long centuries, by fulfilling literally Christ's missionary command,

¹ Chr. Dawson, *The Judgment of the Nations* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), p. 23.

² K. Adam, *Christ and the Western Mind*, trans. E. Bullough (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930), p. 12.

"Go . . . and teach all nations," Christianity became truly the mistress and teacher of Western society, the wellspring of its religious beliefs, social ideals, and moral unity, the main source from which, directly or indirectly, the spiritual dynamic of Western culture and civilization has been drawn.³

In the present study we are not interested in the genesis of this typically Christian culture of the West, nor do we want to trace back to their sources the constituent elements that go to make up the very stuff of this culture. We are concerned only with the fact that it is the Christian faith more than anything else that shaped European thought and institutions. The causes for this singular success were many, natural and supernatural. Theologians and historians will advance different reasons and are likely to disagree as to their relative importance. All played their specific role according to God's providence.

We wish to single out just one factor, a factor of major importance, without which Christianity in the West might have remained a merely artificial superstructure. That the Christian religion in the West sank its roots deeply into the native soil and became the vital force behind all the priceless values the West stands for, is due above all to its universal and accommodating character. This accommodation manifested itself in the recognition of, and respect for, racial and national peculiarities, which, in so far as they were not of an ethico-religious or pagan nature, were tolerated by the Church and even adopted. It was an all-welcoming spirit and a definitely affirmative attitude towards all that was "natural, genuine, and incorrupt in the pre-Christian and non-Christian world."⁴ The birth and flowering of our European Christian culture is the fruit of this spirit of accommodation that flows from the very essence of Christianity as a universal religion sent to all nations. Mindful of this world-wide mission, epitomized in St. Paul's imperative injunction to be "all things to all men" (I Cor. 9:22), the Church in her endeavor to spread the kingdom of Christ has always practiced accommodation as a most important missionary technique.

³ Cf. Chr. Dawson, *Progress and Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1931), p. 234.

⁴ K. Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. Dom Justin McCann (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 157. We refer especially to the excellent study of J. Thaurén, *Die Akkommodation im katholischen Heidenapostolat* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1927), and to J. Schmidlin, *Catholic Mission Theory* (Techny: Mission Press S. V. D., 1931), pp. 229-52.

ACCOMMODATION AN HISTORICAL FACT

To every student of Church history this all-embracing attitude of Christianity is so familiar that to repeat even the main outlines must appear superfluous. However, since the course of Christian missions was so deeply molded by this spirit of accommodation, and since especially the future development in the mission fields makes a prudent, yet liberal, use of this principle highly imperative, a few highlights of the "history of accommodation" may be briefly summarized.

Accommodation was practiced as early as the time of the apostles. St. Paul himself provided the classical example when he refused to force upon the Gentiles the unbearable yoke of the Old Law. Thanks to him and the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, the danger of a Judaizing of Christianity was averted and Christ's supranational catholic missionary designs emerged triumphant. Gentiles were admitted into the Church without circumcision. And yet, "though loudly declaring and writing that circumcision made with hands profits nothing, Paul himself, in his desire to be all things to all men, circumcised Timothy."⁶ In these words Clement of Alexandria acknowledges the sound pedagogy of Paul's accommodation.

Another remarkable instance of Pauline accommodation we find in his sermon at Athens.

Instead of uttering any invective against their Polytheism, he began a discourse upon the Unity of the Divine Nature; and then proceeded to claim the altar, consecrated in the neighbourhood to the unknown God, as the property of Him whom he preached to them, and to enforce his doctrine of the Divine Immateriality, not by miracles, but by argument, and that founded on the words of a heathen poet.⁶

This economical method, "viz. that of representing religion, for the purpose of conciliating the heathen, in the form most attractive to their prejudices,"⁷ was followed and further developed by many of the early Apologists and Church Fathers. It was from pagan philosophers that they borrowed the intellectual weapons for the defense and exposition of Catholic teaching. In the pagan philosophy

⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 7, 9.

⁶ J. H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (3rd ed.; London: Lumely, 1871), p. 67.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66; cf. Newman's profound discussion on "Economy" as practiced in the Church of Alexandria, *ibid.*, pp. 66-102.

of their time they saw elements of truth and used these to represent Christianity not as having come to destroy but to fulfill. The medieval theologians followed in their footsteps. Karl Adam briefly summarizes the results:

It is not surprising to encounter Plato or at any rate his successors, disciples and friends of the neo-Platonic school, not only in the forecourts of Christianity, but right in its mysteries, in the trinitarian and christological speculations. It was especially in the spirit of Origen and St. Augustine that Plato seemed to have a Christian rebirth.

When later at the opening of the twelfth century the mind of the West began to turn towards Aristotle, and the approaching forces of a monistically-minded Aristotelianism threatened western thought, Thomas Aquinas appeared, the gifted pupil of a great master. By combining Aristotelianism with the most essential elements of Platonic thought and adjusting it to Christian truths, he brought it into the service of the Cross of Christ. Despite all opposition he pressed the intellectual weapons of Aristotelianism so completely into Christ's service that even today the theologian can hardly move a step without keeping his eye fixed on St. Thomas and the Philosopher of Stagira.⁸

This adaptation to, and absorption of, human wisdom played an indispensable role in the development of Christian teaching. Not less conspicuous is the accommodation to popular customs and long-standing practices, and their adoption into the external forms of Christian worship. Famous in this regard is the well-known instruction of Pope Gregory the Great on the missionary methods to be used in the conversion of England. He wrote to Abbot Mellitus, a fellow missionary of Augustine of Canterbury:

Tell Augustine that he should not destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place altars and relics of the Saints therein. For if those temples are well built, there is no reason why they should not be converted from the worship of demons to the service of the true God. The people, seeing that their places of worship are not destroyed, will more readily banish error from their hearts, acknowledge and adore the true God, because they come to places familiar and dear to them.

Further, since it has been their custom to slaughter oxen in sacrifice to the demons, they should receive some solemnity in exchange. Let them, therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples

⁸ K. Adam, *Christ and the Western Mind*, p. 16.

and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting. They will sacrifice and eat the animals not any more as an offering to the devil, but for the glory of God to whom they will give thanks as the giver of all things. Thus, if they are not deprived of all the external pleasures, they will grasp more readily the interior joys of their new faith. For it is quite impossible to efface all at once everything pagan from their stubborn minds, just as it is impossible to climb a mountain by leaps and bounds instead of step by step. . . .

Mention this then to Our brother the Bishop, that he may dispose of the matter as he sees fit according to the conditions of time and place.⁹

This instruction, the *Magna Charta* of true missionary accommodation, is a practical combination of sound psychology, tolerance, and firmness. In a spirit of great condescension and gentle kindness it makes allowance for national, social, and religious peculiarities. However, this course of action as encouraged by the Pope was not an innovation, for it is well to note that "Gregory was but following the practice widely current in the days when the Roman Empire was being converted."¹⁰ Ever since the early days of Christianity, accommodation was a set policy in conformity with which many Jewish, secular, and even pagan practices were admitted into the sphere of liturgical and extra-liturgical worship. "The rulers of the Church from early times," writes Cardinal Newman, "were prepared, should the occasion arise, to adopt, or imitate, or sanction the existing rites and customs of the populace."¹¹ This they did

. . . confiding in the power of Christianity to resist the infection of evil, and to transmute the very instruments and appendages of demon-worship to an evangelical use, and feeling also that these usages had originally come from primitive revelations and from the instinct of nature, though they had been corrupted; and that they must invent what they needed, if they did not use what they found. . . .¹²

Here are a few examples which Cardinal Newman cites as a proof of his assertion:

The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on

⁹ Ven. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* etc., I, 30 (ed. Plummer, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, I, 64 ff.).

¹⁰ K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York: Harper 1938), II, 68.

¹¹ J. H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (16th. impr.; London: Longmans, 1920), p. 372.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 371 f.

recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.¹³

Instances to prove that this spirit of accommodation has been practiced at all times and in almost all missionary countries could easily be adduced. "The Church," remarks a French writer, "treated the soul of the barbarians as a wild sapling full of sap and vigor, on which it merely grafted the elements of a purer life, leaving to time and toil the completion of the work."¹⁴ The results we find today speak for themselves. Catholicism in Italy, we observe, is typically Italian. In France it is French; in Ireland, Irish; in the eastern nations of Europe, Slavic. Even to the casual observer these different national traits in European Catholicism are plainly visible, in spite of the fact that the racial and cultural differences between European nations are not too pronounced. The Church never set up a barrier against any culture, against any legitimate custom or practice that had grown up from the native soil. She was always at pains to adapt herself to the particular genius of the nation she evangelized. Not only did she not oppress national and racial characteristics, but she nursed and fostered them, convinced "that every genuine value, everything that comes from pure and uncorrupted nature, belongs to God and has citizen rights in His kingdom."¹⁵ Thus grew the Church, an all-embracing Catholicism, world-wide and yet at home in each nation.

ACCOMMODATION NOT SYNCRETISM

Accommodation as sanctioned and practiced by the Church has nothing in common with syncretism. Catholicism never fused with pagan religions. It never compromised with polytheism, never

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 373; cf. H. Pinard, S.J., "Infiltrations païennes dans le culte juif et dans le culte chrétien," *Revue apologetique* (1909), reprint, pp. 49-95.

¹⁴ G. Kurth, *Les Origines de la civilisation moderne*, II, 34, quoted by F. Mourret, *A History of the Catholic Church*, trans. N. Thompson (St. Louis: Herder, 1936), III, 194.

¹⁵ K. Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, p. 158.

surrendered any of its dogmatic and moral teachings. Nor did it assume any pagan beliefs and practices that were at variance with its deposit of faith. This tenacious adherence to her own tradition, this rigidly uncompromising attitude, has won for the Church the epithet of intolerance. The Church is proud of it, knowing that the teaching of Christ does not admit dogmatic tolerance. To explain then, as Harnack does, the rapid expansion of the Church through all the countries of Europe as the result of syncretistic tendencies is an historical misconception of what actually happened.¹⁶

The spread and development of Buddhism in India and the countries of the Far East have often been compared with the success of Christianity in Europe. The lesson we are supposed to learn is, of course, that both are syncretistic. Buddhism, it is true, did expand rapidly. It soon became the official cult of the greater part of the Far East and thus the carrier, if not to a certain extent the mother, of Oriental culture. For many centuries it assumed the role of the *alma mater* of the East, under whose instruction and guidance countries like China, Burma, Korea, and Japan attained maturity. There are, then, certain similarities with regard to the results of Buddhist and Christian missionary zeal. Both exercised a far-reaching and lasting influence on the life of the nations they converted to themselves. But there stands out, among others, one very prominent difference: Buddhism in its spread over Asia surrendered many of its specific Buddhist characteristics.

From the very beginning Buddhism lacked consistency. At times it appeared as atheism, then as pantheism, and again as theism. Its different schools and sects owe their phenomenal success primarily to their adaptability to changing exigencies and needs, an adaptability which included an accommodation not only to different cultural settings, but above all an accommodation to, and fusion with, heterogeneous philosophies, religious cults, and moral convictions. As a result, Buddhism today is no longer the Buddhism of Gautama Buddha, but rather "a syncretism of his ethics of deliverance and the medley of religious beliefs which Buddhist comprehensiveness has

¹⁶ A. Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (4th ed.; Leipzig: Hinrich, 1924), I, 324-31; *Das Wesen des Christentums* (4th ed.; Leipzig: Hinrich, 1901), pp. 123 ff.

assimilated."¹⁷ It is correct to say that Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was not a Buddhist.¹⁸

There is no trace of any such syncretistic growth in Catholicism. The Church was neither indulgent nor indifferent to pagan beliefs. She was indulgent and indifferent, at times, only to pagan rites and practices, in so far as these were merely accidental, that is, linked up not with paganism as such but with the racial and cultural traditions of a people. The admission of the truly human and natural into religion, and the endowment of religion with ceremonies that flow spontaneously from the condition of our human nature are not syncretism. Syncretism is had only in the adoption of elements taken from another cult that still retain their alien characteristics and are, so to speak, still possessed of the soul of the pagan cult.¹⁹ Such elements the Church never tolerated. She adopted only those of which she was certain that they were not (or were no longer) part of the essential make-up of a foreign religion.

The Church, we admit, incorporated a multitude of elements that were not home-grown Christianity. She grew into the setting of the surrounding cultures. These were vastly enriched. But so was the Church. Her learning, customs, and traditions were influenced and modified by the attainments and institutions of their cultural milieu. This milieu presented the exterior garb for what was to become the typically Western Christian culture. All these influences and modifications, however, did not enter into the inner sanctuary of Catholicism. They were admitted only into the precincts and remained exclusively on the periphery. The genuine character of Christ's teaching, the entire contents of God's revelation were preserved in immaculate integrity. Catholicism, in spite of all accommodation and adoption and assimilation, remained what it had always been: Catholicism pure and undiluted.²⁰

¹⁷ O. Karrer, *Religions of Mankind*, trans. E. I. Watkin (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936), p. 51.

¹⁸ Cf. K. J. Saunders, *Epochs in Buddhist History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), pp. 69, 121, 150, 167, and *passim*. Any scholarly work on Buddhism will point out these syncretistic tendencies.

¹⁹ A. Pirngruber, S.J., "Synkretismus," *Stimmen aus Maria Laach*, LXXXVII (1914), 27 f.

²⁰ Many authorities could be quoted to substantiate this paragraph. By far the best and the most recent study is that of Karl Prümmer, *Der christliche Glaube und die altheid-*

EUROPE IS NOT THE CHURCH

Present day Catholicism, however, though it first arose on Jewish soil and was born into a strictly Oriental milieu, since it accommodated itself to the cultural setting of Europe, bears as a necessary consequence of this close alliance a marked Western coloring. "Perhaps we might, with great caution, venture to say," remarks Karl Adam, "that as the historical Jesus bore the shape of a son of David, so the form of the mystical Christ is western."²¹ Hilaire Belloc goes even further when he states categorically: "The Faith is Europe. And Europe is the Faith."²²

Whether we approve of this statement or not, it apparently characterizes the *de facto* situation. Westerners are perhaps slow to realize the full significance of this unreserved equation. Many take it simply for granted, not only as a *de facto*, but even as a *de jure* situation. And outside the European and American hemisphere there are only too many who take the same point of view. It can readily be seen that it is harmful to the work of the missions, and likewise to the Church in her entirety, thus to confuse Catholicism with Westernism.

Such an identification, furthermore, is a misconception of the essence of the Church and of her mission. The Church, though today vested with the cultural garb of the West, is not inseparably linked to the West. As Jacques Maritain points out: "Our culture is Graeco-Latin, our religion is not. The Church adopted such a culture, but she did not subordinate herself to it."²³ She can never, if she wants to be faithful to her universal mission, be bound to this one particular culture, no matter how great the service this culture has rendered for the development of Christian learning and the shaping of Christian worship. She cannot be bound to any culture, "not even to culture in general and its various forms otherwise than as a transcendent and

nische Welt, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935). The systematic confrontation of early Christian thought and piety with the surrounding paganism of the Graeco-Roman world shows that while in certain obvious respects syncretism and similar theories may have a momentary plausibility, they cannot stand up in the light of thorough historical research.

²¹ K. Adam, *Christ and the Western Mind*, p. 15.

²² H. Belloc, *Europe and the Faith* (New York: The Paulist Press, 1920), p. 261.

²³ J. Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's* (New York: Scribner, 1931), p. 103.

independent vivifying force."²⁴ Maritain's qualifying remarks, therefore, regarding Belloc's thesis that Europe is the faith and the faith is Europe are quite correct. He writes:

If Mr. Hilaire Belloc means that Europe would be nothing without the Faith and that its *raison d'être* has been and remains to dispense the Faith to the world, Mr. Belloc is right in saying that Europe is the Faith. But speaking absolutely, no! Europe is not the Faith and the Faith is not Europe: Europe is not the Church and the Church is not Europe. Rome is not the capital of the Latin world. Rome is the capital of the world. *Urbs caput orbis*. The Church is universal because she is born of God, all nations are at home in her, the arms of her crucified Master are stretched above all races, above all civilisations. She does not bring nations *the benefits of civilisation*, but the Blood of Christ and supernatural Beatitude.²⁵

Catholic missionaries did not always live up fully to the obligations that flow from this solely spiritual mission of the Church. Circumstances of time and place account for that. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the golden age of modern Catholic missions, the missionaries were often accused of being the forerunners of merchants and colonists. They were suspected of being foreign agents who had come to prepare the way for military conquest.²⁶ This accusation is not altogether unfounded. We know of instances where individual missionaries and even missionary countries have had the spread of their earthly kingdom more at heart than the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ. We do not want to discuss the value of the close association between the missionary work and the colonizing efforts of Europe. The missions benefited by it. But they also suffered.

They suffered even more from the intolerant and prejudiced Europeanism which since the later Middle Ages, as a by-product of the colonial expansion, crept into and soon dominated the methods employed in the mission fields.²⁷ It is beyond any doubt that "mis-

²⁴ J. Maritain, "Religion and Culture," *Essays in Order*, ed. Chr. Dawson and J. F. Burns (New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 31.

²⁵ J. Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, pp. 94 f.

²⁶ This was, to mention just one instance, one of the main accusations against the early Christian missions in Japan and the alleged reason for the extermination of Christianity. There is abundant evidence of this fact in semi-official documents compiled in the 17th century by Japanese governmental officials; cf. G. Voss, S.J., and H. Cieslik, S.J., *Kirishitoki und Sayo-yoroku. Japanische Dokumente zur Missionsgeschichte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1940), pp. 58, 94, 189 f. and *passim*.

²⁷ O. Karrer, *Religions of Mankind*, p. 225.

sionaries proved effective instruments (along with traders and financiers) for spreading at least the externals of 'Western' civilization among a large part of those populations and thus contributed to the 'Europeanizing' of the whole world."²⁸ This method seriously retarded the progress in the missions. Today it is a burning problem that demands immediate attention.

ACCOMMODATION A MISSIOLOGICAL NECESSITY

With the awakening of more pronounced national feelings all over the world, accompanied by a realization of the intrinsic values of indigenous cultural traditions, many missionary countries resent this wholesale Europeanization. Missionaries are no longer welcome precisely because they are regarded as apostles of Western thought and civilization. Many of the intellectual elite reject Christianity outright, not so much because they object to its essential religious and moral tenets, but because they refuse its accidental Western features. To them Christ's religion is merely the religion of the Western world. Bowing to Him is submitting, if not to the conqueror's yoke, at least to the foreigner's culture, which they consider unconformable to their traditions. They oppose Christianity as an apparently "foreign religion which supplants indigenous cultures and transforms each people into a sort of spiritual colony of Europe."²⁹ Father Wieger, an authority on things Chinese, recently wrote that Christianity to many modern Chinese has become quite detestable as being the intrusion of a foreign culture. "Young China hates it from this point of view, not because of its dogmas."³⁰

The Church, consequently, is confronted with a task of immense proportions. She must make the Gospel acceptable to all peoples and nations. She must counteract the tendencies that aim to make her historical past the absolute and stereotyped norm of acting. The true nature of Christianity demands not mechanical expansion but organic development. The tactics of the "reaction," of course, are to pose as conservative and traditional and to cover up its well-

²⁸ C. J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism* (New York: Harper, 1941), pp. 150 f.; cf. also pp. 223 f.

²⁹ J. C. de Menasce, "Native Culture and the Missions," *Commonweal*, XXXV (1942), 505.

³⁰ L. Wieger, S.J., "La Chine actuelle," *Etudes*, CXCI (1927), 20.

meant narrow-mindedness by pretext of orthodoxy and "catholic" uniformity. They overlook the fact that the Christianity of tradition is a Christianity of organic growth with a God-given vitality and adaptability to the needs of mankind.

In the early days of the Church this adaptability, as we have seen, was a truly dynamic force. But then Christianity was a still undeveloped seed—the mustard seed that was to grow and become a large tree (Luke 13:19). This seed, planted in the cultural soil of the Graeco-Roman world, drew from it abundant nourishment which, by God's providence, helped to support it in life. It readily adapted itself to its surroundings and became, to all outward appearances, a home-grown Western tree. Mission work, today, is no longer sowing the mustard seed. Today it is not an undeveloped seed, but a full-grown shoot which must sink its roots into the cultural soil of the mission countries. Christianity is, as it were, being grafted upon a tree which is altogether different in type and species. Adaptation and acclimatization are, under circumstances like these, less easily accomplished. For Christianity must break the fixed and compact form into which it has grown, must sever many of the ties that bind it to its past. The pagan nations, on the other hand, have to accept in addition to the teachings of Christ a variety of human features and peculiarities, and these steeped in a Western dye.³¹ Many of these, we admit, are inseparably linked to Christianity as willed by God; but others are just accidental. They are only of particular, and not of universal, human value. To strip Christianity of these merely accidental elements seems to be of the innermost essence of all missionary efforts that are to be truly Catholic.

This is all the more necessary since the missions of today have more than ever to deal

... with peoples which are absolutely distinct from one another in race and culture, are completely separated both geographically and ethnographically, and belong to every grade of culture. Consequently, it is much more necessary for the modern missions, confronted with the pagan world with its innumerable *nuances*, varieties, and distinctions, to study all these differences and reckon with them.³²

³¹ J. A. Otto, S.J., "Kirche und Kulturen," *Stimmen der Zeit*, CXXXVII (1940), 356.

³² J. Schmidlin, *Catholic Mission Theory*, p. 231.

In this respect, the Catholic missions in the Far East, especially China and Japan, demand, as we shall see, particular consideration.

THE THEOLOGY OF ACCOMMODATION

This accommodation is not alone, as could perhaps be gathered from what has been said so far, an historical fact and a missiological necessity, but it has its own deep-rooted dogmatic foundations. It is not a mere tactical maneuver, not just expediency or compromise, but it is demanded by the very essence of Christianity.³³

Christianity is the sublime, divine answer to man's search and passionate yearning after God, that quest for God of which St. Paul once spoke so eloquently to the Athenians. God spoke to man, sending "His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John 3:16). This revelation in and through Christ is God's final answer that marks the end of all human questions. Given for all times and to all men, mankind must accept it in obedience to faith.

The task, then, of the Church is, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to translate into the manifold dialects of the various nations this answer which God first spoke intelligibly to the Jews through the mouth of Christ. The missionary is the bearer and "translator" of this answer. He must make Christ understandable to all nations, must, consequently, study and understand the "language" of the people of his mission—not only their spoken language, but even more the language of their heart and soul, the language of their religious and cultural concepts.

This demands accommodation to the cultural setting. The missionary task is not the establishment of the Church in an "empty space," but in a nation definitely molded by the impress of race and territory, history, and the instinctive craving for culture. In accordance with the creative will of God, mankind has developed into

³³ Cf. J. A. Otto, S.J., *Kirche im Wachsen. Vierhundert Jahre Jesuitenorden im Dienste der Weltmission* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1940). Otto gives on pp. 19-30 an excellent exposition of the principles of accommodation and their practical application. In the present section, as also in the next, the present writer borrows extensively from this book as also from Otto's article cited in note 31. Some paragraphs are lifted almost bodily from Otto. Since, however, the translation is not literal and the contents are often only briefly summarized, quotation marks have been omitted.

various distinct racial and national composites. These the Church must respect. She must fit the divine work of redemption unaltered into the divine work of creation, for the Redeemer did not destroy that which as Creator He called into existence. Grace is entirely of the supernatural order and thus can never lend itself to the destruction of nature as created by God. Nature and grace, mankind and Christianity, all have been created by one and the same God to complement each other in their meeting in Christ.

Mission work, therefore, is not a new creation. It is the application of redemption, the redemption of mankind as created by God, the redemption, consequently, of all that is wise and good and truly human in the various historical cultures and civilizations. Purged, when necessary, of their pagan degeneracy, all the national traits and customs can and must be assumed by the Church. Redeemed and sanctified, they are a precious gift of the nations to God. Any other attitude towards them would be a misunderstanding of the doctrine of original sin and a depreciation of nature. We might even go a step further and say that a narrow, rigid policy of non-accommodation would involve a dualistic Manichaeism of an evil creator-god and a good redeemer-god and would thus entail not only the destruction of nature, but also of grace and Christianity.

A further consideration might help fully to understand the adaptability of Christianity. In discussing accommodation we must keep in mind the important fundamental distinction between Christianity in its objective contents, the *depositum fidei*, and the assimilation and expression of this objective reality in the subjective faith. The objective faith as crystallized in Christian dogma—Trinity, creation, grace, original sin, redemption, the Church, and the like—is absolutely independent of any racial, cultural or national factors and circumstances. It is of metaphysical, universal value. The subjective faith, however—religiousness as distinct from religion—is subject to outside influences. It is definitely molded by heredity, environment, and history, and, consequently, dependent on regional peculiarities and the varying conditions of changing times. Take, for instance, the exuberant and profuse display of piety in southern Italy and contrast it with the much more quiet and restrained forms of devotion in northern Europe. It would seem obvious that this sub-

jective faith by which one people grasps and lives the objective Christianity cannot, or at best can rarely, be transplanted into a foreign soil.

This fact, often disregarded, explains the possibility and necessity of missionary accommodation. Those who have a merely one-sided view of Christianity and resolve it into a purely personal and subjective religiousness—a most dangerous tendency in Protestantism—are necessarily led to surrender the universal validity of the faith. But the danger for those who overstress the objective aspect of the faith is just as apparent. They mistake their own personal faith and devotion for the only valid and universally binding expression of Christianity and are thus opposed to all accommodation as to a surrender of vital and essential Christian elements. Both sides misconceive the true nature of the faith. Christianity as willed by God is both: static and immutable in its objective contents, but at the same time a living and dynamic reality, capable of being received and expressed by the human mind of whatever race and culture.

Accommodation is valid also with regard to non-Christian religions. It considers the pagan religions, despite their errors and distortions, as being at bottom the search of the pagan world after God. The reason is that many of them still contain and are pregnant with human and divine truths, in virtue of which alone paganism can endure. It may be hard to decide whether in all cases these finer elements in paganism are the product of the higher flight of the human mind, or whether they are remnants of a supernatural primitive revelation. But we do find such remnants, which according to God's providence have been transmitted "by sages, priests, prophets and gurus and by the doctrine and worship, the sacrifices, prayers and hymns of religious communities."⁸⁴ Paganism remained chained to God, in an eternal restlessness that bursts forth from the depths of the individual soul as well as from the reflective consciousness of the people as a whole, manifesting itself in continually new shapes and colors according to the many different racial, social, and historical forms of mankind. This fact Tertullian recognized only two hundred years after Christ when he spoke of "the soul that is naturally Christian."

⁸⁴ O. Karrer, *Religions of Mankind*, p. 240.

The Church, recognizing the positive religious values of these religions, must in dealing with them be guided by the words of the Apostle: "What you worship in ignorance, that I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23). This is not a spirit of compromise, for "so far as paganism is genuine paganism, that is to say, revolt from the living God, self-deification or the deification of nature, it has no more resolute foe than Catholicism. But there is more in paganism than revolt."³⁵ The missionary must cultivate the seeds that the divine Logos planted in the pagan soil. He will, therefore,

... seek some points in the existing superstitions as the basis of his own instructions, instead of indiscriminately condemning and discarding the whole assemblage of heathen opinions and practices. . . . And while he strenuously opposes all that is idolatrous, immoral, and profane, in their creed, he will profess to be leading them on to perfection, and to be recovering and purifying, rather than reversing the essential principles of their belief.³⁶

The missionary task, therefore, is not to superimpose upon a people a religion revealed by God, nor is it to make religion grow out of the racial and national soil of the land. It is rather to bring God in creative contact with the pagan peoples, with their culture, and even their religion. As St. Augustine expressed it: "He who has created thee without thy help will not redeem thee without thy co-operation." This meeting of God and His world takes place in His Church, or rather in Christ, in whom all things are to be re-established, both those in the heavens and those on earth (Eph. 1:10).

ADVANTAGES OF ACCOMMODATION

This seems to be the only way by which Christianity can ever come to grips with the non-Christian world. If it were sent only to the individual, it might be different. But the Church must address herself to the people as a whole, to its soul, its law, its specific character as a people. She must take into consideration the fundamental inclination and attitude of the collective religious, social, moral, and cultural life as it has gradually taken concrete form. The neglect of these principles inevitably leads to the Westernizing of missionary countries, a method "that stands condemned by the fact that *not*

³⁵ K. Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, p. 157.

³⁶ J. H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, p. 86.

a single people has corporately accepted Christianity in the present period of history."³⁷

Accommodation, however, will show its effects not only in statistics, but, we trust, in the more rapid conversion of whole nations. It will contribute not only to the enriching of the nations through Christianity, but also the enriching of Christianity through the nations (Apoc. 21:26). The creative powers of many an old and highly developed culture, once it has been baptized, will bring to maturity seeds of Christianity as yet undeveloped and make old values shine forth resplendently in new shapes and colors. Christianity has still "something to receive from non-Christian forms of thought, nay, from all the errors of the world, which hold some truth captive."³⁸ No school of thought, no philosophy has had, or has today, an exclusive right to formulate the Christian message. No single civilization may keep the Christian spirit in the bondage of its own historical past. Christianity is not committed to any one philosophy or civilization. Whatever their origin, whatever the non-Christian elements that entered into them, all are invited to take their rightful place in, and make their own special contributions to, Christianity. The Church impatiently awaits the time when the non-Western world will come and offer its gifts to Christ; for we hold, as Cardinal Newman points out, "that one special way in which Providence has imparted divine knowledge to us has been by enabling her [the Church] to draw and collect it out of the world."³⁹ Thus far the Church has drawn and collected knowledge out of the West. She now is looking towards the East.

That goal is still remote. The Church is still predominantly Western. In this we see God's providence. But as Christ, though born into the strictly limited social and historical setting of Palestine, stepped across the Jewish boundaries, so the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, must break the fixed and rigid forms of Westernism. God's becoming man in the person of Christ living on in the Church must, therefore, still be completed in God's "becoming Indian," "becoming Chinese," "becoming Japanese," . . . "becoming all peo-

³⁷ So J. Thaurén, as quoted by Karrer, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

³⁸ J. Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, p. 106.

³⁹ J. H. Newman, *Essays, Critical and Historical* (London: Pickering, 1871), II, 232.

ples"—the one Christ made flesh in the many variegated forms of peoples and nations.

Whatever the difficulties, the Church must attain to this "perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). In order to attain this goal of her earthly mission she must, according to the will of Christ, "identify" herself with all the various races and nations of the world to the same extent as she did with the West. That demands accommodation on a wide front, not by way of concession, but by fulfillment of a divinely imposed duty. It likewise calls for a native clergy and hierarchy who by birth, mentality, feelings, and inclinations are in close touch with their own people and who thus better than anyone else know the way to their heart.⁴⁰ But it will require above all ecclesiastical leadership with prudent initiative and firm determination to inspire and guide the missionaries, check extravagances, and keep accommodation in the bounds of orthodox channels.

A TURNING POINT IN MISSION HISTORY

Such far-sighted leadership the Church has always exercised, and only recently she has given a new proof of her intentions to carry on the great tradition to be "all things to all men," Christian and pagan alike. Pope Pius XII in *Summi Pontificatus*, his first Encyclical Letter to the world, speaks in unmistakable terms of the Church's unchanged attitude to foreign peoples and cultures:

The Church of Christ, the faithful depository of the teaching of divine wisdom, cannot and does not think of depreciating or disdaining the particular characteristics which each people with jealous and intelligible pride cherishes and retains as a precious heritage. Her aim is a supernatural union in all-embracing love, deeply felt and practiced, and not the unity which is exclusively external and superficial and, by that very fact, weak. . . .

She has repeatedly shown in her missionary enterprises that such a principle of action is the guiding star of her universal apostolate. Pioneer research and investigation, involving sacrifice, devotedness and love on the part of her missionaries of every age, have been undertaken in order to facilitate a deeper appreciative insight into the most varied civilizations and to put their spiritual values to account for a living and vital preaching of the Gospel of Christ. All that in such usages and customs is not inseparably bound up with religious errors will always be subject

⁴⁰ Cf. the Apostolic Letter of Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, A.A.S., XI (1919), 445.

to kindly consideration, and, when it is found possible, will be sponsored and developed.

Our immediate Predecessor of holy and venerated memory, applying such norms to a particularly delicate question, made some generous decisions which are a monument to his insight and to the intensity of his apostolic spirit. Nor need We tell you, Venerable Brethren, that We intend to proceed without hesitation along this way. Those who enter the Church, whatever be their origin or their speech, must know that they have equal rights as children in the house of the Lord, where the law of Christ and the peace of Christ prevail.⁴¹

Of special interest in this passage is the mention of "some generous decisions" of Pope Pius XI. The reference is to the settlement of one of the most burning missionary problems in the Far East: the permissibility of certain rites and ceremonies that are connected with ancestor "worship," the cult of Confucius, and State Shintoism.

The point at issue is a very delicate one, which, with its complexity and seemingly clashing principles, had for a long time baffled all attempts at an acceptable solution. As it was, the Roman decisions were not just a recognition or formal approbation of practices already firmly established and generally accepted. On the contrary, up to the very time when the Church finally spoke it was still a hotly debated question as to whether, and how far, Catholics might be allowed to participate in ceremonies of this nature. The Apostolic Constitution *Ex Quo Singulari* of Benedict XIV,⁴² which marked the end of the famous Chinese Rites controversy by strictly forbidding any participation in ceremonies of this kind, served as an effective deterrent to curb any conciliatory advance in this regard.⁴³ This restraint was fully intended and, in fact, it proved beneficial. In a matter of such prime importance the Church had to reserve to herself the right to determine the time and circumstances under which a solution of the many problems involved might be found.

⁴¹ AAS, XXXI (1939), 548 f. (Official Engl. translation).

⁴² This important document is contained in *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide* (Rome, 1907), I, 130-41.

⁴³ The dispute over the Chinese rites had the following chief aspects: (1) the question of the term for God (*T'ien* and *Shang Ti*); (2) the permission for the faithful to perform the traditional ceremonies in honor of Confucius and the ancestors. Closely allied with this ancestor worship was the question about the permissibility of certain customs practiced at pagan funerals. Cf. Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, trans. Dom Ernest Graf, O.S.B. (St. Louis: Herder, 1941), XXXIII, 393-490.

When the Church decided that the time was ripe for such a solution, she did so only in conformity with the principles of accommodation that had guided her in the past. When she now allowed her faithful to participate in certain rites which she once had rejected, she did so because she felt that an accommodation to these time-honored practices no longer endangered the purity of the faith. Time and circumstances had changed. The rites and ceremonies in question, though they were of religious origin and had had, perhaps for many centuries, a strictly pagan significance, had been stripped of their religious character. Whenever there was no fear of scandal, Catholics might now be permitted to participate in them. The new decisions issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, then, amount to nothing less than a partial reversal of the Chinese Rites question. They are a perfect illustration of valid and legitimate accommodation and will prove, we trust, a turning point in the missionary development of the Far East.⁴⁴

Before entering into a discussion of the new situation, the contents of the various important decisions, which followed each other in rapid succession, may be briefly summarized.

MANCHUKUO

In 1935, Msgr. A. Gaspais, Vicar Apostolic of Kirin, submitted to the Prefect of Propaganda a joint memorandum of the Ordinaries of Manchukuo regarding the participation of Catholics in certain ceremonies in honor of Confucius. This action was prompted by the revival of the cult of Confucius in the newly created State. On stated occasions the citizens, especially school children, soldiers, and civil officials, regardless of their religious affiliation, were expected and, at times, commanded to take part in certain civil functions which included Confucian rites. In order to meet the difficulty, the vicars and prefects apostolic worked out definite cases of conscience that were likely to arise and proposed certain directive norms as to how Catholics were to act on such occasions. Their decisions were based, in the main, on an official announcement made by the Manchukuan Minister of Education, which declared these customary rites to be

⁴⁴ Thus the *Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 18-19, 1939.

void of any religious character. Part of the governmental announcement reads as follows:

Confucius condensed the teaching of the ancient sages and proposed the royal doctrine, *wang-tao*. His teachings are the basis of our individual, family, and State morality. They are a sure guide for all those who assume the charge of governing peoples. Manchukuo has adopted this "royal doctrine" as the principle of its government. All citizens must, therefore, participate in the ceremonies in honor of Confucius and thus show that they are animated by a loyal and sincere patriotism.

The decisions of the Ordinaries were sent to Rome, and Propaganda, acting under the direct authority of Pope Pius XI, approved them.⁴⁵

In virtue of this approbation Catholics can now without scruple observe a number of customs and practices that for centuries have been part and parcel of the communal life of their ancestors. They are permitted, for instance, to display in their schools an image of Confucius, if ordered to do so. The students may bow to the image, and may even decorate it, when necessary, but may not erect an altar with candles and incense. The analogy with religious ceremonies would be too close. Schoolchildren, soldiers, and civil officials may, if absolutely necessary, participate materially in the sacrifices to Confucius, but may not sing a hymn related to the sacrifice, nor, under any circumstance, share in the victim of these sacrifices. Other decisions regard the attendance of Catholics at shrine festivals and financial contributions to the erection and repair of temples dedicated to the sage of China.

The faithful, in short, may take part in these rites to fulfill a patriotic duty, as long and in so far as these rites are not intended as religious. In case some ceremonies have preserved a certain religious significance, a proximate, but merely material, co-operation may for a grave reason be tolerated, provided there is no danger of scandal.

⁴⁵ The original French text of the memorandum containing the declaration of the government and the proposals of the local Ordinaries, as well as the official approbation of Propaganda, is given in *Periodica*, XXVI (1937), 87-97. Added are several pages of annotations by P. Charles, S.J., on the significance and the history of the new decisions, and a brief summary by him of the theological and moral principles involved, *ibid.*, pp. 97-103; cf. also J. M. Wiget, S.J., "Zur Anpassungsfrage im Fernen Osten," *Die katholischen Missionen*, LXIV (1936), 206-209.

Together with these Confucian rites, a number of customs practiced at pagan funerals have likewise been permitted. These include the inclination before the dead and other external acts of respect which *in re mixta* would correspond to the merely civil part of the ceremonies.

JAPAN

These new and significant regulations were followed, in 1936, by an instruction of Propaganda addressed to the Apostolic Delegate of Japan regarding "the duties of Catholics towards their country."⁴⁶ The situation in Japan is, in a way, similar to that in Manchukuo, with this difference that the ceremonies in question are not connected with the cult of Confucius but with State Shintoism. On certain occasions, students and civil functionaries are to attend, in a body, ceremonies which are held at State shrines in honor of the national heroes and ancestors. This attendance most Catholics considered as illicit; consequently, the faithful were, in general, not allowed to take part in any of these functions. This, of course, created difficulties for individuals and especially for mission schools.

The first move towards the disentangling of this knotty problem was made by the State authorities when they declared that in such an attendance no religious significance was involved, but that this participation was to be looked upon merely as a civic manifestation of gratitude and patriotism.⁴⁷ This public declaration, several times emphatically renewed by other State officials,⁴⁸ is to be regarded as the final outcome of a steady evolution which brought about a complete change of attitude in the minds of the Japanese. Actions which twenty years ago were still regarded as religious are regarded so no longer.

⁴⁶ *AAS*, XXVIII (1936), 406-9; *Periodica*, XXVI (1937), 103-8.

⁴⁷ This declaration was made by the Minister of Education in a letter to the Archbishop of Tokyo, Msgr. Chambon, and published in the Japanese periodical *Zasshu*, No. 140 (Sept. 30, 1932). Part of the statement reads as follows: "The visit to the national Shrines, or *Jinja*, is demanded of the students of higher schools and of the pupils of middle and primary schools for reasons which concern the program of education. In actual fact, the obeisance which is demanded has no other purpose than to manifest visibly the sentiments of loyalty to, and love for, country."

⁴⁸ Cf. the proclamation made by the Chief of the Government of Korea, cited in *The Japan Christian Yearbook* for 1936 (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1936), p. 69.

In consequence of this development, the Apostolic Delegate to Japan, in 1935, advised the superiors of the various religious institutes and congregations to allow the faithful to take part in such civic rites.⁴⁹ A year later, Propaganda in Rome gave its formal approval. The instruction it issued takes cognizance of the changed situation and embodies the core of the official pronouncement made by the Japanese government. It declares that

... there is question here of those acts which, although originating in non-Christian religious sources, are not intrinsically evil but of themselves indifferent; neither are they commanded as a profession of a religion but only as civil acts for the manifestation and encouragement of patriotism, with all intention removed of forcing either Catholics or non-Catholics to signify adhesion to religions from which these rites have sprung.

... The civil authorities and the common estimation of cultured persons attribute to the ceremonies held at the National Shrines (*Jinja*) a mere civil signification of patriotism; namely, a meaning of filial reverence toward the Imperial Family and to the heroes of the country. Therefore, since rites of this kind are endowed with a purely civil value, it is lawful for Catholics to join in them and act in accord with the other citizens after having made known their intentions, if this be necessary for the removal of any false interpretation of their acts.⁵⁰

In the same instruction further directions are given, as was also the case in Manchukuo, with regard to funerals, marriages, and other private rites in use in the social life of Japan. Catholics may join in these rites, which are now, through circumstances of place and by common opinion, mere indications of politeness and mutual affection.

It is significant that Propaganda prefaces the whole instruction by recalling to the missionaries an important document, issued as long ago as 1659 by the same Propaganda, in which it is said: "Make no effort and use no influence to make these people change their rites, habits, and customs, unless they are in evident contradiction to faith and morals."⁵¹

CHINA AND INDIA

The next step in the development was to extend the regulations laid down for Manchukuo and Japan to China. On December 8, 1939,

⁴⁹ Cf. *Periodica*, XXV (1936), 88-105; also J. M. Wiget, S.J., "Zur Frage der Anpassung in Japan," *Die katholischen Missionen*, LXIV (1936), 146-50.

⁵⁰ Cf. *supra*, note 46. ⁵¹ The document is contained in *Collectanea*, I, 42.

Propaganda issued a further "Instruction regarding Certain Ceremonies and the Oath on the Chinese Rites."⁵² On the basis of repeated declarations by the Chinese government,⁵³ the instruction points out, the cult of Confucius is at the present day to be regarded not as a religious ceremony, but rather as a mere civic manifestation of regard for Confucius and for the cultural traditions rightly dear to every Chinese.

In four limpid declarations are laid down the logical consequences of this change of ideas. It is licit for Catholics to be present at the commemorative functions held before a likeness or tablet of Confucius, to place his image in Catholic schools and to make the ceremonial bow to it. It is likewise licit for Catholic functionaries and students to assist, if ordered to do so, at public ceremonies which bear some semblance of superstition, provided that, in accordance with canon 1258, they remain passive and participate only in such outward marks of respect as may be regarded as purely civil in character. And lastly, inclinations of the head and other signs of civil respect in presence of the dead or before their images are regarded as licit and proper.

These norms are more or less identical with those established for Manchukuo, though more precise and pertinent. One last point of the instruction, however, is new. In view of the changed circumstances, the Holy See dispenses all priests whether in China or in adjacent countries from the oath on Chinese Rites which for the last two centuries had been required as an essential preliminary to the exercise of their ministry.⁵⁴ Thus closes a long chapter of Chinese mission history.

The abolition of the oath on Chinese Rites gave rise to the question whether it might not be opportune likewise to abolish the oath on Malabar Rites in India, which had been imposed in 1744 by the Apostolic Constitution of Benedict XIV, *Omnium Sollicitudinum*. Propaganda decided in the affirmative by a decree published April 9,

⁵² AAS, XXXII (1940), 24-26; *Periodica*, XXIX (1940), 130-32.

⁵³ Cf. A. Brou, S.J., "Le Point final à la question des rites chinois," *Etudes*, CCXLII (1940), 282; also T. L. Bouscaren, S.J., in some "Annotations" to the instruction of Dec. 8, 1939, *Periodica*, XXIX (1940), 134.

⁵⁴ The oath was imposed in 1742 by Benedict XIV in his Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Quo Singulari*; see *Collectanea*, I, 361.

1940.⁵⁵ The oath, it may be pointed out, had become rather meaningless, since many of the forbidden rites had never been tolerated by the missionaries, while others had disappeared or lost their significance.⁵⁶

The *Fides News Service*, a semi-official organ of Propaganda, in discussing the instruction of December 8, 1939, points out that the action taken by Propaganda is in no way to be interpreted as a reflection on the past or a new judgment on the historical question of the Chinese Rites. In fact, the prohibition to discuss this question remains in full force.⁵⁷ The instruction simply takes cognizance of the fact that customs and ideas in the Orient have undergone a change. It is not the Church, but the Orient, which has changed its attitude to those rites. In large measure, the Far East today regards the cult of Confucius and the dead and the ceremonies of State Shintoism in such a light as not to preclude any longer a reasonable conformity of Catholics with their fellow citizens in certain modes of civic expression.

LOYALTY TO RACE AND CREED

The significance of these new regulations can hardly be overestimated. They touch upon civic virtues and cherished national tradi-

⁵⁵ *AAS*, XXXII (1940), 379; *Periodica*, XXIX (1940), 375; cf. the short historical synopsis of the Malabar Rites by P. M. d'Elia, S.J., *ibid.*, 376-79. The Apostolic Constitution, *Omnium Sollicitudinum*, is contained in *Collectanea*, I, 153-73; the oath is on p. 166.

⁵⁶ J. A. Otto, "Kirche und Kulturen," *art. cit.*, p. 361.

⁵⁷ *Fides News Service*, Rome, Dec. 23, 1939, No. 713, NE 265/39. An interesting sidelight can be gained from an official communication of Propaganda to the Apostolic Delegate to China: "*Mens*" S. C. *de propaganda Fide quoad Instructionem super Ritibus Sinensibus die 8 Dec. 1939 datam*. It reads in part: "Compiling a list of those ceremonies which are permitted and those which are prohibited must be absolutely avoided. Otherwise the danger of falling back into casuistic discussions would arise, which in turn would resuscitate, under another form, the old disputes. When necessity demands, the Ordinaries can give rules and general norms. Since we are in the midst of a period of transition, they should not descend too much into details, but leave it, in particular cases, to the priests and even to the good Christian laymen to direct themselves according to their conscience."

"It should not be forgotten that the confessional offers a splendid opportunity for solving doubts. Furthermore, catechetical schools can and ought to make known the principles involved and the permissions given by the Holy See." (*Coll. S. C.*, June, 1941); cf. *Fukyo—Actio Missionaria*, IV (Tokyo, Oct., 1941), 15 f.

tions that form a most vital element in the life of the Far East. The cult of Confucius, the veneration of the dead, the filial reverence shown to the imperial family and to the heroes of the country, all are, in a way, merely different national expressions and historical developments of one fundamental trait of the Far Eastern nations—ancestor worship. Though older than Confucianism, this ancient cult gained in importance only because it received its most emphatic sanction from Confucius. Even Shintoism in Japan owes, in all probability, its ancestral rites to Confucian influence.⁵⁸

Ancestor worship, however, from the time of its close alliance with Confucianism, was not only a religious, but even more a social and cultural, factor in the development of the Orient. It gathered to itself all that is deemed most sacred in family and State and found expression in rites and ceremonies devised to inculcate filial piety and obedience to parents, teachers, and rulers, and to foster dutiful reverence for the rich inheritance of tradition. "Based upon a theory of life as an unending stream not limited to the short space between the cradle and the grave but reaching, in both directions, into infinity,"⁵⁹ it proved a stable foundation for the best there is in family and communal life. It was a source of strength and a guarantee of continuity for society and State.

Ancestor worship, thus, is the memorial of a great past, the spiritual link binding man to his home and land and to the traditions and virtues of his ancestors and national heroes. When we add to this the prominence which the observance of rites and the respect for etiquette hold in the Oriental mind, we can readily understand the vigilant tenacity and concern with which the intellectual and political leaders insist on the maintenance of the ancestral and Confucian ceremonies. They are regarded as absolutely essential to the social and cultural structure of the nation. To slight or contemn them would be tantamount to treachery in racial customs and traditions.

The problem became extremely acute for Catholics when the various governments made attendance at these functions more or less obligatory. This was bound to create a rather delicate situation. Religious in origin and perhaps still to a certain extent bound up with

⁵⁸ D. C. Holtom, *The National Faith of Japan* (London: Kegan Paul, 1938), p. 31.

⁵⁹ A. H. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942), p. 295.

superstitions, the rites presented an intricate case of conscience. Loyalty to race and nation seemed to demand their observance, while loyalty to creed and Church demanded their rejection. The Church decided that both loyalties could be safeguarded.

She based her decisions, we have seen, primarily on the official pronouncements of the civil authorities, who declared that their *sole* motives and intentions were to instill into their subjects sentiments of loyalty and devotion to country and national traditions. There is no reason to question the sincerity of these statements, nor the lawfulness of the governmental requirements in the matter of participation in these ceremonies, if and as long as they are mere civil manifestations of loyalty and patriotism. However, the question may be asked: How do these official interpretations square with the actual facts? Are these ceremonies really void of all religious significance?

The Church, in deciding to sanction the rites, answered in the affirmative. In the instructions issued for China and Japan we read that it is "a matter of common knowledge" and "the common estimation of cultured persons" that the rites have lost their original religious character. In these phrases the Church voices the opinion prevalent among missionaries and, we make bold to say, among educated Chinese and Japanese.⁶⁰

It would be wrong, however, to state that this is a universally accepted view. There are not a few scholars who even today regard the functions, though performed at the so-called patriotic shrines, as close to, if not identical with, genuine acts of worship. Moreover, certain ceremonies have doubtless retained some semblance of superstition. The instructions take explicit cognizance of this fact when they state that, whenever there is danger of scandal, Catholics must make clear their intention as to why they take part in those functions. And again, where the ceremonies should still be tainted with superstition, the faithful must remain passive and participate only in such

⁶⁰ As early as 1907, Prof. G. W. Knox had this to say about the cult of Confucius as then practiced in Japan: "At the most Confucian worship is an act of grateful remembrance and service. The bowing before the tablet of the Sage involves no more than the lifting of the hat before the tomb of a hero of the past. To call this reverence by the term which we use for the worship of the supreme being is to confound things which essentially differ" (G. W. Knox, *The Development of Religion in Japan*, New York, Putnam, 1907, p. 171).

outward signs as are purely civil in character. This norm of action is in perfect agreement with the principles of moral theology that govern *communicatio in sacris*.⁶¹

Today, there exists a more or less common agreement as to the predominantly civil character of the cult to the dead and that of Confucius. Even those who are still doubtful will admit that the complete secularization of these cults is well under way. With regard to the ancestral rites of State Shintoism, however, serious objections are being raised.

It is well to recall, first, the legal separation made by the Japanese government between sectarian (*Kyoha*) and State (*Jinja*) Shinto. The former, comprising a number of well organized sects, is definitely a religion; whereas the latter, according to official pronouncements of the Japanese government, is not to be regarded as a religion, but rather as a non-religious State cult. This separation was made to safeguard constitutional freedom of conscience and to retain at the same time the established ritual customs which were deemed necessary for the preservation of genuine Japanese tradition and for the inculcation of reverence towards the ancestors and loyalty to the State. Ever since this separation, however, the question was always alive among Japanese scholars as to whether this State cult was *de facto* void of all religious characteristics, or whether, in spite of the governmental declarations, it was not a religion after all. Dr. Masaharu Anesaki, professor emeritus of the Imperial University in Tokyo, the "father of comparative religion in Japan," after carefully weighing the reasons for both sides, comes to this conclusion:

We can safely say that the Shinto which is found in the cult of the community sanctuaries, the so-called *Jinja Shinto*, is Shinto deprived of much of its original religious character. Thus the official view . . . that *Jinja Shinto* is not a religious institution but a secular one, is not mere convention or pretence, but is more or less warranted by the actual situation. In fact, the government policy in this respect for nearly fifty years has been to do everything possible to eliminate religious features from the Shinto shrines, which accords quite well with what has already been said about the public functions held at these sanctuaries, for example, the communal meetings and the visits of school children.⁶²

⁶¹ *CIC*, c. 1258.

⁶² M. Anesaki, *Religious Life of the Japanese People* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1938), p. 23.

Other scholars, Japanese and non-Japanese alike, hold the opposite view,⁶³ and their arguments cannot easily be dismissed. Neither side is quite convincing. The difficulties arise, at least in part, from the fact that many of the shrines set apart by the government as centers of patriotism have for centuries served as centers of Shintoistic worship strictly so-called. Furthermore, many of the "deities" (*kami*) honored by sectarian Shinto are also recognized by State Shinto, and certain ceremonies at the shrines of both sectarian and State Shinto are at least partly identical. As long as the basic religious ideas and beliefs are in themselves in a state of flux, as is the case with Shintoism, no clear-cut solution can be expected.⁶⁴

In view of the rather speculative character of the controversy and the purely probable issue of the discussion, it is an overstatement to claim that the acceptance by the Church of the official definition of State Shinto "is based on practical necessities rather than on a scientifically valid recognition of what Shinto really is."⁶⁵ State Shinto originally was a religion. That is an historical fact. But that it is a religion even today remains still to be proved.

Whatever results in this regard the scientific study of Shintoism will yield, and whether or not the recent Roman decisions will represent the permanent position of the Church once a deeper insight into the real nature of the State cult has been gained, it is certain that at present a number of acts of homage now requested by the State admit a mere civil significance. These the Church can allow. They are acts of patriotism, comparable to that of the Briton who uncovers his head when the Union Jack passes by, or to our placing a wreath before the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Other ceremonies conducted at the State shrines are of a more dubious character. In these Catho-

⁶³ For instance, Holtom in the work referred to above; likewise, to mention one of the most prominent Japanese authorities, Prof. Dr. G. Kato in one of his most recent works: *Shinto no shukyo hattatsu shi-teki kenkyu*, Studies on the Historical Development of Shintoism (Tokyo: Chubunkan, 1935). In a review of this work, H. Dumoulin, S.J., remarks that the thesis of the author as to the religious nature of State Shinto is contradicted by the majority of Japanese scholars; cf. *Monumenta Nipponica*, I (1938), 577.

⁶⁴ Cf. H. Dumoulin, S.J., "Religiöse Fragen in Japan," *Stimmen der Zeit*, CXXXVII (1940), 262 f.

⁶⁵ D. C. Holtom, *op. cit.*, p. 298; cf. the same, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), pp. 95 ff., where he briefly reviews the attitude of Catholics and Protestants towards State Shinto.

lics may participate only in conformity with canon 1258, as has been pointed out above.⁶⁶

The situation in Japan before these new regulations were published was a very difficult one. The Church had the choice between accommodation and a probable standstill of her missionary endeavors. She chose accommodation and thus changed her position with regard to State Shintoism, but only after Shintoism had changed,⁶⁷ to all appearances, into a mere civil State cult. This change of position on the part of the Church was not one of mere "expediency induced by political factors."⁶⁸ These were the external cause. The change itself was dictated by the principles of accommodation which are just as valid in the twentieth century as they were at the time of St. Paul and St. Augustine of Canterbury.

Our final judgment, then, on the action of Propaganda with regard to Japan is as follows: (1) The Church relied on the official pronouncement of the Japanese government which she considered sincere. (2) This official pronouncement of the government was based upon a recognition of the evolution which these ceremonies had undergone in the popular mind. (3) The Church's action with regard to Japan is by no means an isolated case. For the Church has made similar adjustments for the whole Far East, and always proceeded on the same basis, as we have insisted above. (4) The Church hopes, and her missionaries in Japan are confident, that the continual attendance by Christians (Protestants today follow the same practice as Catholics) at the ceremonies of State Shintoism will help gradually to drain off the sediment of superstition that may have remained.

TOWARDS A HOME-GROWN FAR EASTERN CHURCH

However far-reaching in scope and effect these new decisions may be, they are only the first step towards a home-grown Far Eastern Christianity. The gates of the Church have been thrown wide open to wel-

⁶⁶ Cf. the more detailed discussion by A. Brou, "Au Japon: catholicisme et patriotisme," *Etudes*, CCXXIX (1936), 221-29.

⁶⁷ The secularization of Shintoism did not begin only with the legal separation made by the government. It was gradually prepared in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the renaissance movement of the *Kokugaku*; cf. H. Dumoulin, "Die Entwicklung der Kokugaku," *Monumenta Nipponica*, II (1939), 140-65.

⁶⁸ D. C. Holtom, "What Have Japan's Christians Surrendered?" *The Christian Century*, LIX (1942), 112.

come the various nations, but these peoples must still be made to feel at home within the Church. This is a task of almost overwhelming difficulty.

In recent years the civilizing influence of our missionary endeavors has been altogether overstressed, in missionary propaganda as also in practice. Christianity, no doubt, by its very nature will always have a decisive civilizing influence. To elevate humanity spiritually and even materially is well within the bounds of Christian missions. In this process of elevation, however, Western humanity must not be made the sole criterion of Christian civilization. The Christian West—even if it were soundly Christian—is not the sole and ultimate norm according to which the pagan nations, “the poor natives,” are to be remodeled.⁶⁹

The Far East eyes askance the prospects of being thus “civilized.” It is justly proud of its own civilization and culture. As Father Wieger remarks:

The Chinese were civilized long before the Europeans and Americans; and they know it. It was they who civilized the Japanese; and they have not forgotten it. Besides their civilization, the Chinese have their own culture peculiar to them, which likewise is very ancient and very elevated. *A priori*, therefore, the pretence of bringing to them the benefits of *civilization* and *culture* was doomed to failure and likely to infuriate them. . . . It was the fear and horror of having the *culture* of the foreigner imposed upon them against their will, of seeing their national culture replaced by an alien one, that turned the Chinese first against the Protestant schools, the American especially, which formerly were highly esteemed. They produced yellow Yankees! It is the same fear—and this is worse—which next excited them against Christianity which formerly, if not loved, was at least tolerated and even respected.⁷⁰

Today powerful reactionary forces are at work in the Orient. They are endeavoring to bring the genuine spirit of the East back into its own and to purge its cultural expressions from all the foreign trappings that have accumulated since the close interrelation with the West began. They still welcome the material achievements of our civilization. They are still eager to learn. But what they want is a synthesis

⁶⁹ Cf. the very pertinent discussion in F. Charmot, S.J., *L'Humanisme et l'humain* (Paris: Spes, 1934), pp. 57 f., 328–65.

⁷⁰ L. Wieger, S.J., “La Chine actuelle,” *Etudes*, CXCI (1927), 20.

of Western intellectual and material attainments with the sacred heritage of their own cultural past.

There can be no doubt as to the stand the Church must take. Because of the rich cultural traditions of India, China, and Japan—to mention only the more important nations—and especially because of the growing reaction against the domination of Western thought and institutions, the Church must prove that she can engraft the supernatural upon a naturally good tree and can be a profitable foster mother of any genuine culture, no matter what its origin.

The recognition of the ancestral rites as a legitimate expression of Far Eastern life is no more than the very first step in this direction. There is room and need for further accommodation. Ecclesiastical art and architecture, liturgy and asceticism, canon law, philosophy, and even dogma, all are catholic in just the same way as the Church is catholic. They can well be fitted into the Far Eastern milieu and can be made to harmonize with the cultural traditions and ambitions of the Orient.

The advisability of accommodation in art and architecture, liturgical ceremonies, chant, and the like is readily conceded. Especially in art and architecture considerable progress has been made.⁷¹ Accommodation in Church law and asceticism will be less easily accomplished. As to dogma, the opinion among missionaries is still divided. However, the difficulties seem to be more of a practical than a theoretical nature, due to the fact that Far Eastern philosophy, which would have to become the handmaid of Far Eastern theology, is as yet to most Westerners a closed book. At all events, Oriental philosophy and mysticism, the ethical teachings of Confucius, and even pagan religions are not to be considered as purely satanic creations. They are, in part, the product of the human mind and, what is more, possess positive religious value. They contain elements that will furnish one day valuable contributions to the conceptual garb and more profound understanding of God's immutable word.⁷² Only

⁷¹ Cf. the recent book of Archbishop Constantini, Secretary of the Congregation of the Propaganda, *L'Arte cristiana nelle missioni* (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotti Vaticana, 1941). This important work is discussed by J. C. de Menasse in an article "Native Cultures and the Missions," *Commonweal*, XXXV (1942), 504-7.

⁷² Several interesting attempts have been made in modern mission history that exemplify such development. Father Robert de Nobili adopted Tamil and Sanscrit terms for

... when they have consented in the East to employ the native philosophical schools for the same service which our traditional philosophies have rendered in the West, then a Christian humanity will at last have been realized on a vast scale, the visible realisation on earth of the one world-wide Kingdom of God over mankind, the *Ecclesia Sancta Catholica*, Catholic indeed in her universal comprehensiveness, the fulfillment of Christ's prayer 'that they all may be one.'⁷³

Following in the footsteps of Christ, the Church does "not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). She is in cordial agreement with the Hindu Christian

... who opened his mission to his fellow countrymen with the declaration: 'I will be careful not to wound my countrymen's self-respect by saying to them, "Your scriptures are pure nonsense. There is nothing of any value outside the Old and New Testaments." On the contrary, I will often appeal to the ancient sages, teachers and books of my heathen compatriots, placing them in the light of Christ and conversing with them in His Spirit.'⁷⁴

Relying on the divine guidance, the Church will discern and embrace the good, freeing it, where necessary, with loving hands from the dross and defilement that disfigure its beauty. Thus the contact of Catholic thought and centuries-old wisdom with the culture of the East cannot but release new forces that will enrich both the Church and the nations of the Orient.

Such far-reaching accommodation is not the work of a lifetime. It will take many centuries before an harmonious union and a legitimate synthesis can be achieved. And it will not be accomplished by the foreign missionary. He can but pave the way. The meeting of God

Christian concepts and expounded the Christian philosophy in the guise of Hindu speculation. Father Matteo Ricci exercised his widest and most lasting influence through his book, *The True Doctrine of God*. "To the testimony furnished by Christian philosophy and theology Ricci added numerous proofs from the ancient Chinese books which did much to win credit for his work" (*Cath. Encyclopedia*, XIII, 36). In more recent years, Father Johanns, S.J., and his associates in Calcutta have published the *Light of the East Series*, "in which they explain how a transition is possible, nay logically inevitable, from the Vedanta, the traditional philosophy of India, to Christianity. . . . These absolutely up-to-date apologists do not wear, as Robert de Nobili once did, the garments of the Brahmin, but they have devised instead a psychology which is as subtle as you like, absolutely Thomist and yet Bengali." Thus Vallée Poussin, the outstanding historian of Buddhism, as quoted by J. Maritain, *The Angelic Doctor*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (New York: The Dial Press, 1931), pp. 92-94.

⁷³ O. Karrer, *Religions of Mankind*, p. 228.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

and the ancient traditions of the Far East that is to take place in His Church will become a fruitful and home-grown Christianity only by the untiring efforts of a native clergy.

Accommodation, we have seen, is not the surrender of any essential element in Christianity. Neither does it imply, as might perhaps be inferred, an unconditional surrender of all the cultural and material achievements which the West in co-operation with, and often under the motherly guidance of, the Church has attained. We should never forget that the best forces of Europe and America are embodied in Christianity. They have been enlisted by divine providence to further and develop the Christian *gnosis*. To suggest that these forces should be suppressed or, what is equivalent, that Western Christianity in its God-willed Western form has no particular mission to fulfill in the Christianizing of the world, would be a serious error. As Jacques Maritain rightly points out:

Let it not be thought that she [the Church] will ever abandon the superior virtues which she herself produced out of the Hellenic and Latin culture. If she made such an extensive use of that culture, the very simple explanation still holds good; like ancient Hebraism in the order of revelation, that culture has received from Providence in the order of reason a privilege which it would be shameful to deny; it is the only culture in which human reason nearly succeeded. There was therefore nothing exceptional in its providing the supernatural life of the Church with choice human means.⁷⁵

The missionary Church cannot and will not forsake this priceless inheritance of choice human means, nor the grandeur of her historical past. In the course of nineteen hundred years, theologians and philosophers, scholars and artists, saints and mystics have produced riches that are of more than mere temporal or regional value. The East has no intention of repudiating these attainments. What Bishop Yu-Pin, Vicar Apostolic of Nanking, recently had to say with regard to China holds true likewise for the other nations of the Orient. In eulogizing Father Ricci, one of the boldest apostles of accommodation in modern times, he points out that his method of approach

... consisted not simply in appreciation and respect for Chinese culture, but also in satisfaction of the intellectual needs of the Chinese people. The latter,

⁷⁵ J. Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, pp. 103 ff.

though attached to the genuine values of their traditional culture, were and still are eager for universal truth—eager to add Western science and philosophy to their own patrimony of spiritual values. Ricci and his companions were glad to slake the thirst for natural truth, knowing full well that natural wisdom leads onward and upward to the very throne of the Lord of Heaven Himself.⁷⁶

The Christian West still has its mission to fulfill: to dispense the faith to the world—the faith not in its initial embryonic stage, but in its mature vigor, enriched and perfected, as it were, by the wisdom of two milleniums of human progress and development. Any other attitude would mean retrogression and lead to stagnation. True missionary accommodation will be mindful of this historical vocation of the West, but will be mindful, too, of the limitations inherent in not a few Western forms and expressions that are only accidental to Christianity. In as far as these cannot be fitted into the cultural setting of the East, or of any missionary country, they must be surrendered, or rather exchanged for indigenous forms and expressions that have been born and developed in the native soil. Missionary countries have a right to their own cultural expressions, in things religious as well as in things profane. The Church has the corresponding duty to sanction and sanctify these expressions and thus conform herself to God's plans as expressed in His work of creation and redemption.⁷⁷

Accommodation, then, is a further development of Christian life, and truth, and worship. We may see in it "the admirable Catholicity of Christianity, which is able to grow and develop, not indeed as regards the essential nature which Christ once and for all bestowed upon it, but in the concrete form and physiognomy which it assumes in various nations and peoples. The divine and the human blend harmoniously together in the Church of Christ, whose grace-life does not suppress or

⁷⁶ Bishop Paul Yu-Pin, "Recall to Tradition in the Chinese Missions," *America*, LXIX (1943), 341.

⁷⁷ Contrary to the views just expressed, Dr. J. Pinski wants to make the historical Western form of Christianity "binding for all men." He states that "all peoples and nations can gain living and real relations with the fulness of God only in the [Western] forms in which, since the New Testament, this fulness is alone accessible." This axiom bristles with difficulties and seems unacceptable not only from missiological but likewise theological considerations; cf. J. Pinski, *Christianity and Race*, trans. C. M. R. Bonacina (Essays in Order, New Series: No. 2; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936), pp. 58 f.

destroy natural forms, but ennobles and perfects them, putting them at the service of the Gospel for the glory of Christ.”⁷⁸

⁷⁸ H. Franke, *The Salvation of the Nations*, trans. Canon G. Smith (London: Coldwell, 1938), pp. 97 f. This excellent little book must be read and understood in the light of the situation of the Church in present-day Germany. Franke touches upon many problems dealt with in this article. K. Adam in his preface to the book thus sums up the author's thesis: “He undertakes in particular to show . . . that the vocation of Christ went forth to the ‘nations,’ and that it is through their nationality, and therefore with due regard to their specifically racial character, that the Church in her teaching and in her liturgy seeks to incorporate individuals as members of the kingdom of Christ. Thus not only the individual *ego*, but the racial *ego* also, has its place in the scheme of salvation” (*ibid.*, p. 8).