



Jean Daniélou, Theological Method And Non-Christian Religions

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Introduction

The work of Jean Daniélou, S.J. (1905-1974) provides key insights into the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions and articulates principles of the theological method that can adequately address this relationship. The goal of this article is a brief, yet comprehensive presentation of Daniélou's thought on these methodological principles¹. The first three sections take an analytical approach to the question; the last three apply Daniélou's theological method to the historical problem of religions.

1. Daniélou's Concept of Theology

Jean Daniélou's *Carnets spirituels* (1993) provides us with a very personal look into his understanding of theology. Four points stand out. First, Daniélou understands the ecclesial nature of theology and

¹ This article is a summary and translation of M. BRAVO, *Las religiones no-cristianas a la luz de la revelación. Estudio analítico de la propuesta metodológica de Jean Daniélou en vistas a la comprensión del problema histórico de las religiones*, Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, Roma 2010. Translated by Jason A. Mitchell, L.C.

his goal is to teach what the Church teaches². Theology is a “work of charity” toward the Church that seeks the spiritual well-being of the faithful and that enriches the faithful with the treasure of the Church’s Tradition³. As a “man of the Church”⁴, Daniélou’s fidelity is not marked by servility or rigid traditionalism, or neo-scholastic repetition. Rather, he seeks to provide the Church with theological instruments for authentic renewal. Ultimately, theological method needs to be “relativized” since it is subordinate to Revelation and the object of faith⁵. Second, Daniélou was a Jesuit and understands the apostolic and missionary dimension of his theological vocation. His study and contemplation of the mysteries of the Faith are ordered to missionary action, to building up the Church, to the true welfare of the faithful, to dialogue with non-believers, and to the evangelization of peoples. Third, the “soul” of a theologian should be marked by prayer and a life of holiness: theology should be object of meditation, guided by the Holy Spirit and by the teachings of Jesus Christ⁶. Finally, Daniélou’s work is marked by adhesion to the truth and a profound understanding of reality that subordinates material things and their accidents to God and his action in the world⁷.

Concerning the more objective aspects of theology, it is helpful to look at Daniélou’s thought on the role of faith, philosophy and the sciences in theology. First, theology – as a scientific reflection on faith – has to be conducted with faith and be enlightened by faith. Living or having faith means allowing oneself to be taught by Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to act within us and guide our thoughts and actions⁸. Theological faith concerns the religious meaning of history and knowledge of its directive goal. Regarding the role of philosophy, Daniélou’s *La culture trahie par le siens* (1972) argues against Christians who reject metaphysics. Philosophy seeks to ex-

² See J. DANIELOU, *Carnets spirituels*, Cerf, Paris 1993, 346.

³ See J. DANIELOU, *Carnets spirituels*, 105 and 344.

⁴ J. DANIELOU, *Et qui est mon prochain? Mémoires*, Stock, Paris 1974, 185.

⁵ See J. DANIELOU, “La participation active des séminaristes à la recherche théologique”, *Seminarium* 2 (1968), 254.

⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Carnets spirituels*, 78 and 93.

⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *L’Avenir de la religion*, Arthème Fayard, Paris 1968, 42.

⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Carnets spirituels*, 93.

press the “laws of being”⁹; it establishes a hierarchy in the scale of beings; it expresses the value of human intelligence, which is able to know the truth about both the material world and spiritual realities. Philosophy allows us to inquire about the existence and nature of man’s religious dimension before we address theological questions about faith and Revelation.

Throughout his career, Daniélou reflected phenomenologically on the crisis of reason and understanding. The crisis of faith shares in the crisis of the capacity of the human mind to know the truth. In the latter, truth is substituted for the criteria of efficacy; the accent falls on the results obtained rather than on the principles for action. Daniélou holds that action should stem from truth and praxis should follow upon theory. Faced with this crisis of reason, the Church needs to present its vision of man, founded on a metaphysical analysis that starts with the concrete reality of man’s existence so as to ascend to the consideration of God. Philosophy aids faith insofar as the philosophical demand is a demand for intelligibility and insofar as theology is the understanding of the revealed *datum* welcomed in faith. The human sciences considered by Daniélou as important for theological comprehension are hermeneutics, historical exegesis, sociology, and the phenomenological history of religions. For example, based on M. Eliade’s concept of “hierophany”, Daniélou affirms that what is proper to religions is the perception of the divine by means of its manifestations¹⁰.

The phenomenological analysis of religion is useful since it allows one to discern within Christianity itself what belongs to the sphere of Revelation and what belongs instead to religious adherence. Historical and social sciences allow us to appreciate the value of different cultures and discover what is universal in them and able to be communicated to other cultures. To this knowledge of historical contexts one can also add the importance of understanding the history and development of theology itself.

⁹ See J. DANIELOU, L’Osservatore Romano, 23 May 1974.

¹⁰ See J. DANIELOU, “Christianisme et religions non chrétiennes”, *Études* 321 (1964), 324.

2. Daniélou's Theological Method

Daniélou considers theology as the exercise of reason about the history of salvation, which, in turn, is the content of Christian faith¹¹. Theology has Revelation as its object and elaborates the revealed *datum* according to the demands of Revelation itself¹². Theology, then, is a reflection (speculative aspect) about singular historical events, the interventions of God in history (concrete aspect), in order to discover the divine *mores* that will introduce us later into the mystery of his intimacy. These historical events are not primarily those of profane history, but rather the divine actions presented by Sacred Scripture¹³.

The principles that guide Aquinas' theology will also guide Daniélou's: adhesion of the mind to truth; Revelation as ultimate criteria of verification; striving to penetrate the divine mysteries with the every means that can help achieve this objective¹⁴. However, the Scholastic theologians that followed Aquinas' death and the Neo-Scholastic theologians at the beginning of the Twentieth Century are severely criticized by Daniélou as creating a division between theology and life, between exegesis and theology, and as being ignorant of history and human subjectivity¹⁵. Daniélou proposes a Thomism that is open to the concrete historical subject who is the interlocutor of Revelation; since Thomism is historically conditioned it needs to be seen in relation to the theological history of the Church, beginning with the Church Fathers and continuing with the theology that followed¹⁶.

Faith and reason are the point of departure in Daniélou's theological work. Faith is the accepting of Revelation; it is "the act by which one affirms the reality of divine events through reliance on the evidence of Jesus Christ"¹⁷. Christian faith is not merely a manifestation

¹¹ J. DANIELOU, *Approches du Christ*, B. Grasset, Paris 1960, 121.

¹² J. DANIELOU, *Approches du Christ*, 122.

¹³ J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, B. Grasset, Paris 1956, 147.

¹⁴ J. DANIELOU, "Unité et pluralité de la pensée chrétienne", *Études*, 1 (1962), 11.

¹⁵ J. DANIELOU, "Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse", *Études* 249 (1946), 8 and 14.

¹⁶ J. DANIELOU, "La théologie et ses sources"..., 394. See also "Unité et pluralité...", 13.

¹⁷ D. VELIATH, *Theological Approach and Evaluation of Religions. A Study in Contrast of the Positions of Jean Daniélou and Raimundo Panikkar*, PUG, Roma 1986, 20.

of the human search for the divine; it is the response to the initiative of God who reveals himself. Daniélou notes that the self-communication of God and of his mystery does not concern directly *what* he is, but rather reveals to us what he does and how he acts¹⁸. The Resurrection of Christ, as the decisive action of God in history, is the point of departure for Christian faith¹⁹. The essence of faith is an assent to the divinity of Christ, an assent to the truth that God acts in history, and faith in what Jesus Christ, the culmination of this divine action, tells us about himself, the mystery of God and our eternal destiny. Our Christian faith is founded on the testimony of Jesus Christ, insofar as he is the Son who speaks of what he has seen. In synthesis, faith differs from religion and philosophy on three levels: by its object (the manifestation of God by means of the plan of salvation), by its mode (adhesion to the testimony of the Word of God) and by its content²⁰. Faith presupposes reason, which is able to know the existence of God yet cannot penetrate on its own into the interior intimacy of God. Faith enlarges the horizon of reason's action.

The objectivity of theological conclusions gives them a universal value. The object of study in theology is the mystery of God himself in the light of his Revelation to us. Theology is a methodical reflection in faith and on the faith. Faith does not refer first to archaic doctrines, arch-typical symbols, religious experiences, etc., but rather to the history of salvation, the history of the *mirabilia Dei* (creation, liberation, covenant, the dwelling of God among men, judgment)²¹. Theology reflects on salvific deeds and events, on the history contained and narrated in Sacred Scripture and transmitted in Tradition. The pluralism of languages used in theology, the pluralism of philosophical systems, the progress in our knowledge of the world, and the plurality of theological methods, in no way should lead to heterogeneous theological visions. This theological pluralism does not compromise the certainty of faith, since theology does not add anything to Revelation that is not already implicitly contained in it. No theologian or theological school can affirm that they have said the last word on a particular mystery of

¹⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, Arthpeme Fayard, Paris 1966, 76.

¹⁹ J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère de l'histoire*, Éd. Du Seuil, Paris 1953, 108.

²⁰ J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 107.

²¹ J. Daniélou, "Les religions non chrétiens et le salut", *Spiritus* (December 1969), 382.

faith. Theology is subordinate to the faith without faith compromising theology's scientific rigor.

Having established these points about theology, its object and its relation to other sciences, we can now look at Daniélou's own theological method, which contains four stages or moments:

- [1] *Metaphysics: The Affirmation of Reality*. Taken in the broad sense, "metaphysics" refers to the affirmation of reality and the capacity of the human mind to know it. Analogy permits us to speak about God and his interventions in history²². Metaphysics goes beyond mere phenomenological appearances and arrives to the truth about reality and is able to establish true historical conclusions²³.
- [2] *Typology: Reading Sacred Scripture*. The study of the typological exegesis of the Church Fathers and their reading of the Bible analyzes the correspondence between the Old and New Testaments²⁴. Typology expresses the intelligibility proper to history²⁵; it is the method of the theology of history²⁶. Daniélou explains that Patristic exegesis continues the messianic typology of the prophets; that apostolic preaching shows that the figures of the Old Testament reach their full meaning in Jesus of Nazareth; and that historical events can be the figure of other historical events (Mattean or historical aspect) and the events of the Old Testament point to spiritual and sacramental realities in the New (Johannine or spiritual aspect)²⁷. "The ordinary law of biblical typology is that the realities of the Old Testament are *d'abord* the figure of the mystery of Christ and find in him their fulfillment"²⁸. The

²² See J. DANIELOU, *L'Avenir de la religion*, 62.

²³ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 96.

²⁴ J. DANIELOU, *Bible et liturgie. La théologie biblique des sacrements et des fêtes d'après les Pères de l'Église*, Cerf, Paris 1958².

²⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 14.

²⁶ See D. VALENTINI, *La teologia della storia nel pensiero di Jean Daniélou*, PUL, Roma 1970, CXXII.

²⁷ See J. DANIELOU, "Les divers sens de l'Écriture dans la Tradition Chrétienne primitive", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 24 (1948), 121-123.

²⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 248.

mystery of Christ – the center of the history of salvation – is prefigured in the institutions, events, and men of the Old Testament; it is realized in the life and in the earthly history of Christ; is later continued within the Church, in its sacraments, which are essentially acts of Christ; it is revitalized in each one of us and, finally, completed and brought to consummation in eternal life²⁹.

- [3] *History: The Historical Dimension of the Faith*. The third moment of Daniélou's theological method considers the mysteries of the faith from a historical perspective. On the one hand, this implies consciousness of the historical dimension of Christianity;³⁰ on the other, it implies the need to turn to the history of theology so as to understand better the value of the faith in each moment of its history. Progress in dogmatic expressions is seen as a divine action³¹.
- [4] *Hermeneutics: The Current Expression of the Faith*. The theologian belongs to a particular epoch and cultural context and this influences his investigation. Hermeneutics does not mean a re-interpretation of the contents of the faith, but rather the way of transmitting them.

In synthesis, there is the metaphysical moment which is an affirmation of ontological and historical objective reality; the historical moment which listens to those who have gone before us and who have spoken to us about the way to grasp revealed truth; the typological moment which sees in Sacred Scripture the divine *mores*, the way God intervenes in the life of men; and the hermeneutical moment which tries to actualize truth to the concrete historical situation of the theological method.

3. Two Examples of Daniélou's Theological Method

This third section examines two of Daniélou's works and the concrete application of Daniélou's fourfold theological method to the

²⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Dialogues*, Le Portulan, Paris 1948, 170; *IBID.*, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 211.

³⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *La cultura trahie par les siens*, EPI, Paris 1972, 53.

³¹ See J. DANIELOU, *La cultura trahie...*, 56; *IBID.*, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 20.

problem of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions.

3.1 Le mystère du salut des nations (1946)

The Mystery of the Salvation of the Nations concerns the problem of mission and the foundations for a missionary spirituality. Chapter One starts with what can be characterized as a hermeneutical moment: there have been diverse historical-cultural contexts in the reflection on mission, a perennial reality in the Church. In 1946, the concrete situation included the problem of syncretism (the religious tradition of India and its European promoters), the advance of communism (with its secular eschatological proposal), and the ecumenical problem within the Christian tradition.

Chapter Two presents the divine mission of the Word, the foundation of the Church's missionary activity. The typological moment appears as Daniélou reflects – in the light of Scripture and Tradition – on how God acts to draw humanity to himself. The metaphysical moment is present as well in Daniélou's reflection on the universality of the religious fact. For Daniélou, the reason for religious sentiment – a philosophical question – is not due to a primitive revelation; instead all men are religious because the divine Logos has made himself known³². In this way, philosophy is used at the service of the Faith and the Faith is not framed within a determined philosophy.

Daniélou then considers theologically and phenomenologically the Covenant between the Word and the Jewish people. The Revelation of God to Israel is unique, presenting a living God who is one and, above all, holy. Holiness, for Daniélou, is a qualitatively different element in comparison to the vision of natural religion. The Revelation of the Old Testament is only a preparation, according to divine pedagogy, for the fullness of the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ: the revelation of the Trinitarian life of God and our participation in this life as sons in the only Son of God³³.

Chapter Three discerns what should remain and what should pass away when traditional religions enter into contact with Christian Rev-

³² J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 37. English translation: *The Salvation of the Nations*, Sheed & Ward, New York 1950.

³³ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 45-46.

elation. This can be considered what we have called the “historical moment” of Daniélou’s theological method. His approach does not consider religions as obstacles that need to be overcome nor does it optimistically think that each religion, if lived deeply, encounters Christ. A middle way contemplates religions from the perspective of the Paschal Mystery: the conversion of religions is a mystery of incarnation and redemption, of death and life. One needs to discern between what is accidental and what is essential. The question is asked: “What should be retained in a religion or culture and what should die to bring about the fullness of Jesus Christ?”

Applied to Islam, what should remain is the sense of the transcendence of God, the presence of God in the earthly city, the centrality of prayer, the sense of adoration³⁴. What should pass away is everything contrary to Christianity, everything demonic that opposes Christ³⁵. Daniélou presents two such elements in Islam: first, a type of materialization of religion that leads to the identification of the religious with the political; second, its mix of strict religious practice with a tendency to lax morality³⁶. Applied to Hinduism, what should remain is the sense of the unique reality of the invisible world, the striving for contemplation. However, many elements should pass away: for example, the illusoriness of the visible world.

Chapter Four, “Incarnation and Transfiguration”, affirms that the incarnation of Christianity in cultures is not an end in itself. Incarnation without transfiguration – deification – is incomplete. Christ became like us in all things except sin, meaning that he was subject to the consequences of our fallen human nature – pain, tiredness, death, etc³⁷. Christ assumed the limits of human nature in order to free it of these same limits. With regard to mission, just as Christ became incarnate, so also must Christianity become incarnate in the civilizations it encounters³⁸. The consideration of Christ’s Incarnation means for the Church that it should have sympathy for the human values in a non-Christian culture and be aware that incarnation implies renuncia-

³⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 56-57.

³⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 62.

³⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 64-65.

³⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 76.

³⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 80.

tion and limitation. The Church belongs to the humanity glorified by Christ, and this glorified humanity transcends cultural borders.

Chapter Five, on mission and *parousia*, asks the question why the *parousia* has not yet come. Daniélou responds that this is due to the historical fact that the Christian message has not yet arrived to the ends of the earth. From a methodological standpoint, Daniélou is proposing a theological hypothesis, a hypothesis which can be perfected, questioned or even left aside. What Daniélou has done is situate the missionary problem in an historical perspective³⁹. Human history has reached its culmination in Jesus Christ and the mystery of his Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection and Ascension⁴⁰. Daniélou concentrates on the mystery of the ascension, because, thanks to this mystery, humanity is introduced, once and for all, into the sphere of God. On the one hand, salvation in this case is not just a hope, but actually real; on the other, we daily experience human misery. In brief, we have been raised with Christ, yet what we will be has not yet been manifested. Why then does the bridegroom tarry (Matthew 25:5)? The tarrying of Christ, then, should motivate the Christian to preach and announce the Gospel and yet learn patience.

The first five chapters are centered on the mystery of Christ and his mission. Chapter Six considers the mission of the Holy Spirit. The mystery of Pentecost – the restoration of the unity of the human race – begins the universal economy of the evangelization of all nations, gathering them in the unity of the Church, and reveals the presence of the Holy Spirit. The reception of the Holy Spirit in the Church has a sanctifying and a missionary finality: the Holy Spirit vivifies the spiritual organism (virtues, gifts, etc.) and habilitates us (charisms) to give witness for evangelization⁴¹. Our time is the time of the Holy Spirit, both because he acts in the Church and because this is the time of Revelation of the Spirit. Daniélou holds that we will come to full knowledge of the Spirit when all nations are evangelized; in particular, one nation, India, could possibly have as its mission helping Christianity to understand this “profound mystery”⁴².

³⁹ J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 89.

⁴⁰ J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 97.

⁴¹ J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 130.

⁴² J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 133.

The last chapter – “The Glory of God” outlines missionary spirituality and sees it as bringing Christ to souls and souls to Christ. The second movement is fruit of the super-abundance of love ordered to the glory of God, making him known to a great number of people⁴³. In this case, Daniélou’s theology is not marked by abstract considerations, but ordered to the formation of missionary apostles. The missionary vocation is a vocation to glorify God just as Christ sought the glory of the Father⁴⁴.

In synthesis, the metaphysical moment is found in the foundation of his theology: the revealed *datum*, which presents the truths of the faith, is certain and sure, while the phenomenology of religion provides facts and historical elements. The typological moment is present in the approach to the historical problem of the incarnation of the Christian faith in cultures. The examination of the Old and New Testaments shows the divine *mores* present in humanity which has fallen away from God. The historical moment considers the incarnation of Christianity in cultures throughout history and discerns what is essential to the faith and what is accidental and mutable. Finally, the hermeneutical moment looks at how Christianity should incarnate itself in Muslim and Hindu cultures.

3.2 Les saints païens de l’Ancien Testament (1956)

The Holy Pagans of the Old Testament, published ten years after *The Salvation of the Nations*, asks the question: “To what religion did the ‘pagan saints’ of the Old Testament (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, etc.) belong?”. Daniélou answers that the term “cosmic religion” is preferable to that of “natural religion”. In his study, Daniélou is concerned with the foundations of missionary theology. By understanding God’s action and pedagogy in the past, we can establish the ways of this divine pedagogy in the present. Rather than being an encyclopedia with dogmatic definitions and formulations, Scripture is the description and narration, through the history of salvation, of divine *mores* – *mores* discerned by means of the typological method. Daniélou is interested in God and his ways of acting and less in what Scripture says about religions in general.

⁴³ J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 139.

⁴⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 144.

Daniélou's book begins with a syllogism containing a *datum* of the faith: there is no salvation or holiness except in Christ; Christ is one with his Church, his body; therefore, there is no salvation or holiness except in the Church. Theological reflection concerns the comprehension, scope and consequences of this truth of the faith and how one should understand that, as attested to by Scripture, holiness and grace exist outside the visible confines of the Church. This theological truth must be reconciled with the fact that men, who did not know Christ or his Church, have been saved. What is more, they are presented by Scripture as holy men. The reconciliation concludes that if they were holy, if they were saved, it was not thanks to their own religion, but rather was in view of the plenitude of salvation in Christ and in his Church⁴⁵. The reign of Christ and its prolongation in his Mystical Body, extend beyond the limits of positive Revelation and the visible expansion of the Church⁴⁶.

While *The Salvation of the Nations* begins with an hermeneutical problem (How is mission possible today?), this work begins with a *datum* of faith and the problem of holiness and salvation existing out the visible confines of the Church. In its reflection on pagan peoples, Sacred Scripture provides first aspect of God's revelation: that he is the Creator of all things. Furthermore, the marvels of creation are a hierophany that manifest God's power⁴⁷. Second, God is also revealed as the One who enters into covenants with mankind. His covenant with Noah is a "cosmic covenant". God's fidelity to the cosmic covenant is a guarantee for the People of Israel of God's fidelity to the historical covenant⁴⁸. Thirdly, God is ultimately the Judge (the episode of the Great Flood), for sin is incompatible with holiness. Consequently, pagans are not exempt from law of God, who rewards good and punishes evil.

The New Testament goes beyond the narration of the two covenants (cosmic and historical), and relates them to the universality of the Christian message. The question is asked: If God prepared the

⁴⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens de l'Ancien Testament*, Le Seuil, Paris 1956, 16. English translation: *The Holy Pagans of the Old Testament*, Helicon, Baltimore 1957.

⁴⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 16.

⁴⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 18.

⁴⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 20.

Jewish people for the plenitude of Revelation in Jesus Christ, what was the situation of the pagan peoples who only had the cosmic covenant? According to Daniélou, the Pauline theology of religions affirms: 1) the existence of a cosmic, external revelation, by means of hierophanies, directed to all men⁴⁹; 2) the existence of an interior revelation of the conscience; 3) the difficulty of following this twofold revelation; 4) the existence of saintly pagans who were faithful to the “cosmic covenant”; 5) the nature of the faith of pagan saints (Hebrews 11:3): believing that God exists and that he will reward those who seek him. Among these people are the holy ones, represented by Enoch, who believed in God and his justice yet did not belong to the people of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Moving from Scripture to the Church Fathers, Daniélou presents Saint Justin’s vision of Christian truth as the plenitude of a truth that philosophers understood in a fragmentary way. This is due to the action of the Word present from the beginning in the human soul⁵⁰. The action of the Word is not a mere exercise of natural reason, but rather an action of supernatural grace of enlightenment⁵¹. Daniélou’s conclusion is extraordinary: “Historically, in effect, man belongs to a supernatural order. Cosmic religion is not natural religion, in the sense that it would remain outside the effective and concrete supernatural order”⁵². Saint Justin is not superimposing the natural and supernatural orders since his consideration is not about man in the abstract, but rather man in his historical and concrete reality, man who lives in a world of grace and sin. Cosmic religion is natural in the sense that God is manifested by means of the natural world, but not in the sense of opposition to the supernatural. Building on Saint Justin, Clement of Alexandria sees a twofold preparation for the Gospel, one for the Jewish People and one for the Gentiles.

According to Daniélou, Saint Thomas Aquinas offers a solid formulation of the doctrine concerning the salvation of the pagans. In his analysis of the meaning and extension of the act of faith, Aquinas holds that the substance of the faith has always been the same and that

⁴⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 22.

⁵⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 27.

⁵¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 28.

⁵² See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 28.

it is faith in Christ. This substance, however, was progressively made clear throughout history⁵³. Faith in Jesus Christ is implicitly contained in the faith of those who believe firmly in the existence of a God who intervenes with his providence in human history. The mysteries of the Incarnate Word are the culmination of the historical interventions of God, and, consequently, the one who accepts divine providence, accepts implicitly the Incarnation. This implicit faith – faith in God who is Creator and Provident – is accessible to all men.

The rationalism that followed in the centuries after Aquinas sees in Christianity and religions a mere manifestation of reason; orthodox Protestantism, on the other hand, reacts strongly to the exaltation of “natural religion”. This is a “rupture” in the history of theological thought that brings about a serious misunderstanding of the historical problem of religions and their relationship to Christianity. Against these radical interpretations, Daniélou reaffirms the supernatural character of the faith at the basis of the cosmic covenant. Faith in God’s existence and his providence is not purely natural; rather, it is a manifestation and revelation of God to his creatures. Daniélou does not intend to respond to the question, “How many men and women in the pagan world adhered to this revelation?”; his concern is only to present the fact that there were some who did adhere to this firmly. This fact is testified to in the Scriptures, for figures like Abel, Enoch, Daniel, Noah, Job, Melchizedek, Lot and the Queen of Sheba are saintly pagans⁵⁴.

Abel. The offering of an immaculate lamb by Abel is a prefiguration and *typos* of the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world⁵⁵. Cain is of the race of sinners⁵⁶. Cain and Abel manifest the drama of the human history, a history of holiness and sin; it is a history that reveals to us a fundamental trait of God – his absolute freedom. God’s election of Abel, a pagan saint, is thus associated by Daniélou with one of the divine *mores*: God’s freedom in relation to his creatures⁵⁷. The typological reading of the figure of Abel is based on an attentive

⁵³ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 32.

⁵⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 37.

⁵⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 46.

⁵⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 50.

⁵⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 53.

reading of Sacred Scripture. Daniélou does not describe how the pagans are saved, but rather seeks out a characteristic trait of God in this History of Salvation, which includes those who have not been enlightened by positive Revelation. The hermeneutical moment seeks to understand how this fundamental freedom of God is manifested today in relation to the salvation of non-Christians.

Enoch. Hebrews 11:5-6 argues that: “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him”. Daniélou analyzes other texts on Enoch and his ascension and discerns the missionary nature of this heavenly rapture. This is ascent, contemplation of the mysteries of God, that has the goal of witnessing to those mysteries and communicating them to mankind⁵⁸. In this way, Enoch becomes the “prophet” of cosmic religion⁵⁹. God is seen to bestow his grace on those who believe sincerely in him and his providence, even though they do not have the fullness of the truth about God.

Noah. Daniélou sees in story of Noah the contrast between faith and unbelief. The historical function of Noah is not to witness to belief in God’s judgment, but to announce it to the pagans and invite them to penance. Noah, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is a prophet of penance⁶⁰. This is a new stage in cosmic revelation: God is not just the Creator and Provident Governor of the world; he is holy and holiness is incompatible with human sin. This sin of man has cosmic consequences: the flood is like the cosmic echo of sin⁶¹. The story of Noah shows not only how sin and impiety ruin the cosmic order, but also how the world, destroyed by sin, will be saved by justice⁶². Once again, we are shown one of the divine *mores*: God chooses a remnant, taken from the world of sin, to be the beginning of a new people. Like Jesus Christ, Noah is the beginning of a new humanity, a *typos* of a

⁵⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 64.

⁵⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 65.

⁶⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 93-94.

⁶¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 96.

⁶² See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 97.

man saved, with whom God makes a covenant. This covenant with Noah corresponds to cosmic religion. God is faithful to the created order; and this fidelity is considered by Saint Paul in the *Letter to the Romans* in relation to all nations. The Noahic covenant is irreversible, unilateral and surpasses the first economy based on the correspondence between terrestrial retribution and justice⁶³. It is a covenant based more on love than on justice and introduces a rift between sin and punishment. It shows something more about God: the previous covenant manifests his *creative* love; this one, with Noah, manifests his *redemptive* love.

The holy pagans, then, are the ancient witnesses to God's provident care in guiding peoples closer to the fullness of Revelation. They are saints who reveal to us the divine *mores*: God is a living God who speaks through the cosmos and in our conscience; God enters into covenants with man; God is absolutely free, God is provident and chooses men and women for mission; faith in God is necessary for salvation. In these reflections, we see once again the four constitutive moments of Daniélou's theological method:

- [1] Metaphysical moment: certain affirmation of the content of faith –salvation through the Church and the universal saving will of God;
- [2] Typological moment: the divine *mores* just mentioned;
- [3] Historical moment: the analysis of how Judaism and Christianity have considered the pagan saints;
- [4] Hermeneutical moment: guides the entire reflection which aims to offer guidelines for a theology of mission in the present age of the Church.

4. Theological Meaning of the Historical Problem of Religions

The first three sections in this article have outlined the fundamental elements of Daniélou's theological method. Now we need to see how this methodological framework provides a solid point of departure for theological reflection on non-Christian religions. Although Daniélou concentrates on Christianity and its mission *ad gentes*, he al-

⁶³ See J. DANIELOU, *Les saints païens...*, 103.

so invites us to reflect on the nature of non-Christian religions and their relationship to Christian Revelation. Daniélou's approach considers the theological meaning of the historical problem of religions. He considers, from an historical perspective, the theological value of the "survival" and "co-existence" of religions, once the Christian event has been realized. Daniélou's approach is not first about doctrines, but about facts, namely God's progressive interventions in history. The question is asked: If religions are precursors of this event and lead to it, then how it is possible that after this plenitude has been realized, non-Christian religions still subsist? The response to the question will be taken up in the next two sections. First, how should religions be understood in the context of Revelation (4.1) and how should Christianity understand itself in relation to the plurality of religious experiences (4.2)? Second, what is the place of pagan religions in theological discourse (5).

4.1 Understanding Religions

The 1960s – the historical context of Daniélou's presentation of "religion" – was characterized by secularism, which achieved its climax in the theological world with "Death-of-God Theology". Consequently, Daniélou had to address the question of the value of religion as such in a secularized society and the value of religion in the history of salvation.

The first problem considered by Daniélou is the temptation of syncretism. Christianity encounters a multiplicity of religious proposals, some of which resist passing away, others which try to co-exist with Christianity and enrich it; still others attempt to corrupt Christianity. For Daniélou, the syncretistic approach is as old as Christianity itself, as witnessed by the conciliatory attempts of Gnostic heresy. Certain theologies of religious pluralism resemble primitive Gnosticism; this is because they posit a superior level of knowledge above religions and Christianity and hold that religions are nothing more than historical concretions of this superior level of truth. It is as if these theologians have been initiated in this superior knowledge⁶⁴.

The cause of the syncretistic temptation is twofold. On the one hand, because every religion possesses elements of truth and holiness,

⁶⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 19.

the syncretistic ideal is to identify those elements and partake of a type of superior religion that embraces all other religions⁶⁵. The temptation is basically to assimilate Christianity into religion in general and considering it as one more religion among many⁶⁶. On the other hand, the dialectical theology of K. Barth advances the thesis that Christianity cannot be considered as a religion, but is rather the judgment (*krisis*) of religions. Some even go so far as to posit that Christianity has nothing to do with religion⁶⁷. Both of these positions render Christianity as religious phenomenon incomprehensible.

The response to syncretism is respect for the “mystery” of Christianity. As a religion, Christianity implies a human effort to reach God, yet, at the same time, it transcends the purely human effort insofar as it has its origin in God himself and he alone corresponds to the desire implanted in man⁶⁸.

Certain types of phenomenology of religion relegate religion to the sphere of sentiment. Daniélou, on the contrary, is faithful to the first principle of theological investigation: he recognizes the natural adherence of the mind to truth and the capacity to apply reason to religion. Man’s religiosity, then, is not merely a result of an impulse of the heart, but rather it is something that can withstand the critique of reason⁶⁹. What is more, the use of reason in religion is necessary. There are scientific and metaphysical truths that transcend cultural conditions and that are universally accepted⁷⁰. These truths are, in some way, a guarantee of the validity of our religious experience.

These preambles allow us to analyze Daniélou’s thought on religion and consider the theological meaning of the historical problem of religions. Religions exist and are historical expressions of the religious fact. Non-Christian religions are essentially diverse and secondary structures of a primary fact, namely, the constitutive religious dimension of man⁷¹. The existence of these expressions throughout history

⁶⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 16.

⁶⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *L’oraison, problème politique*, Arthème Fayard, Paris 1965, 83.

⁶⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *La culture trahie...*, 67.

⁶⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 19.

⁶⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère...*, 42.

⁷⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 44.

⁷¹ See J. DANIELOU, “Les religions non chrétiennes et le salut”, *Spiritus*, Décembre 1969, 379.

and in all peoples is a demonstration of the spiritual unity of the human race and points to a dimension of human nature⁷². As expressions of the religious fact, religions have a series of common elements that make them analogous to each other and that open them up to dialogue and mutual understanding⁷³.

For Daniélou, religion manifests the fact that man is in relation to God and is ordered to God⁷⁴. Daniélou sees in religions the first expression of man's encounter with God, the natural foundation upon which positive Revelation takes place. Religion is the highest expression of a civilization that manifests both the unity of the religious tendency and the diversity proper to each culture.

1. *Religions and the theology of history.* Before outlining his thought on non-Christian religions, Daniélou establishes some solid theological foundations, which are summarized in the chapter "Paul and the Pagans" from his book, *L'Eglise des Apôtres* (1970). The first principle is that man is made for God. Man's end is in God and in participating in God's divine life. Second, man is incapable of achieving this on his own powers; his end is beyond his natural possibilities. Even though man, moved by grace, can know and adore God, he is always faced with the abyss of divine transcendence. Man, immersed in a history of grace and sin and journeying without the light of Revelation and the interior aid of sanctifying grace, would undoubtedly meet with error and deviate from the path that leads to God. Religions, as expressions of man's fundamental search for God, will always contain elements of error. This is because they are fundamentally ignorant of who God really is. God, however, does not abandon man to his ignorance, and instead sends his only Son to reveal his true face to man. In brief, the impossibility of man arriving to God on his own powers is structural and independent of the good will of followers of religion. Salvation is not attained by a purely human impulse, but by God's saving Will.

With regard to the universality of religion, Daniélou rejects the hypothesis of a primitive revelation and seeks a theological cause for this phenomenon: he holds that man is religious because the *Logos*,

⁷² See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème...*, 84.

⁷³ See J. DANIELOU, *Et qui est mon prochain? Mémoires*, Stock, Paris 1974, 165.

⁷⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *La culture trahie...*, 68.

the Word of God, has made himself known to man⁷⁵ and speaks interiorly to the conscience of every man. Man is not far from God's grace and the action of the Word. Even though this action is not to be confused with the sanctifying grace communicated at Baptism, it is still a real action, a prevenient actual grace. Through this grace, man opens up to God who brings man close to him and acts within the depths of his heart. This interior manifestation follows the exterior manifestation of the Word in the world. The world is a book of signs by means of which God himself speaks to us. The visible world constitutes a revelation of God's presence⁷⁶. The origin of religion, then, is not a purely human initiative, meaning that religions are not exclusively the result of human effort, but also the fruit of the prevenient grace by which the Word manifests himself to every man, unveiling his "presence" to man and drawing man to himself.

Natural religions correspond to the Noahic Covenant, with the cycles of nature constituting hierophanies that manifest divine providence to man. This revelation, however, appears to have been structurally corrupted in pagan religions as they have not been enlightened by God – in the sense that they seek God through the cosmos and man's conscience and not through the Incarnate Word⁷⁷. The initiative is from God, but the way to God is mediated by natural-cosmic realities or subjective conscience. This gives rise to the ambivalent character of pagan religions: their divine origin is in the manifestation of the Word, yet historically considered, religions do not reach their objective and show that they are powerless and prone to error. They are simultaneously stepping stones to Christianity and obstacles to its expansion⁷⁸.

The structural "corruption" of pagan religion is complemented by their "outdated" character. This is due to the fact that they belong to the temporal interval between the Resurrection of Christ – thanks to which we have received supernatural being and life – and the Parousia, in which all old things will definitively disappear. Religions, consequently, are of this world and for this world; they are the vestige of

⁷⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 37.

⁷⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 39.

⁷⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 41.

⁷⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 24-25.

an age in the history of salvation which is no longer ours⁷⁹. With Christ, a new, supernatural order is manifested that leads to the abolition of the ancient order⁸⁰. The “fault” of pagan religion historically consists in not knowing how to give way to the Revelation of the Gospel of God. This is the drama of the precursor who, unlike John the Baptist, resists decreasing so that Jesus Christ increases (John 3:30). This resistance is a rejection of history, an attempt to delay the realization of the plan of God and the progress toward fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Even though they are structurally corrupted and outdated, pagan religions are not annihilated, but rather are brought to fulfillment in Revelation. Just as the Old Testament finds plenitude in the New, religion should have found plenitude in Christianity. This dynamic is proper to divine pedagogy. Moreover, from the perspective of the theology of history, religions are not a mere succession of cultures or a mere evolution of human thought, but rather are an advancing sequence that follows a definite plan under the creative action of the Holy Spirit⁸¹. God’s revelation is a progressive revelation: he is known initially through his manifestation in the cosmos; then he is revealed through successive interventions in history. The successive revelations do not destroy or annul the previous ones. In surpassing them, the successive revelations continue the preceding ones and assimilate them⁸². Religions attain their plenitude in Christianity. This “ordering” of religions to the unity of the Church is not achieved in a homogenous way. The unity willed by God for humanity is diversified and ultimately progressive. The fact that religions remain, in spite of Christian plenitude, is part of a plan within divine pedagogy. If religions are the highest expression of the civilization of a people, of its “genius”, then these are called to contribute this genius to Christian faith. This requires time and patience. The Church will truly be catholic when it can speak all languages and can understand the mystery of God from every cultural and religious context.

⁷⁹ J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 23.

⁸⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 57.

⁸¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 26.

⁸² See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 140.

2. *The first expression of the encounter with God.* Christianity brings religions to plenitude. Conversion is not an absolute denial, since religion forms part of the natural realities that have to be assumed by Christianity. For this reason, conversion does not mean completely reneging one's religion. Conversion is a promotion, a passage from the imperfect to the perfect, from aspiration to possession. What was sought in the shadows is now contemplated under the light of divine illumination. Christianity does not destroy religion, but is founded upon it; Christian faith presupposes religion. This is because pagan religions are the first expression of man's encounter with God. The essential structure of this encounter is not annulled with the advent of Christianity; rather, it continues "transfigured" and empowered.

Daniélou explains religion as the first expression of the encounter of man with God, with Saint Paul's conception of religion as a search for God (Acts 17:27). This search corresponds to the very nature of man. As a universal *datum*, Daniélou considers religion as the historical expression of a first, cosmic revelation⁸³. This primacy is not only temporal, but also existential. Based on man's ontological capacity to perceive God, one establishes the object of religion that consists, for Daniélou, in the knowledge of God by means of his action in the world and in the individual conscience. Both in cosmic religion and biblical religion, God is known through his manifestations. The difference *de facto* is in that the latter – biblical Revelation – is known through the singular and unique interventions of God in human history, by means of the series of covenants that God establishes with man⁸⁴. In addition to the knowledge of God by means of the world, this first expression of the encounter with God gives rise to a fundamental attitude of humility that predisposes man interiorly to welcome the newness of historical Revelation. The essence of the religious attitude is the recognition that man is not self-sufficient and depends for his being on another⁸⁵. This relation with God is constitutive of the human being, to the point that a man who does not pray, who does not enter into some type of relationship with God, is not a man in the full sense

⁸³ See J. DANIELOU, "Les religions non chrétiennes et le salut", 383.

⁸⁴ J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 100.

⁸⁵ J. DANIELOU, *L'avenir de la religion*, 50.

of the word. A man without adoration is a mutilated man, and is not fully human. The problem is that religions have not always fostered this attitude of radical humility.

3. *Religion: one and diverse.* Daniélou distinguishes between religion as the fundamental religiosity of man and religions as partial and historical expressions of this religiosity. This allows him to affirm that religions are both “one and diverse”. They are one because they make reference to a fundamental, analogous experience: religions, to a greater or lesser degree, make us perceive how men have found and recognized God through nature and through their conscience. They are diverse since religions are the diversified expression of the religious genius of each people. Religion, then, forms part of the cultural inheritance of a nation⁸⁶. This makes changing from one religion to another as difficult as moving from one culture to another. The constitutive religious dimension of man is based on the consciousness of creaturehood, of the one who has received everything from God. Religion is the ratification of this original relation that penetrates the totality of existence⁸⁷.

4. *Religion in the context of civilization.* Religions are squared within the context of civilizations and never as realities isolated from their cultural contexts. Religions are, for Daniélou, the mature fruit of a civilization. Religion – like the culture of every people – is part of creation; it belongs to things of this world and shares, with these, an intramundane finality; religion thus is an element of civilization. This brings with it a series of conclusions that Daniélou develops in his book *L'oraison problème politique*. Religion does not only seek ultramundane salvation, but, on the contrary, its primary finality is intramundane⁸⁸. Religion belongs to the dimensions of human life that has to do with everything that promotes the good and development of a civilization. If the goal of the “terrestrial city” is to create the conditions for the full human development of citizens, then religion is an essential “natural” element for this development⁸⁹. For Daniélou, the

⁸⁶ J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 87.

⁸⁷ See J. DANIELOU, “Religion et civilisation, réponse à quelques objections”, *Études* 326 (1967), 425.

⁸⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 18.

⁸⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 111-113.

ancient civilizations were the sacral civilizations insofar as its fundamental structures are immersed in religion⁹⁰. On the contrary, one of the greater temptations is the desacralization of the cosmos and society. A society “without adoration” is an incomplete society and thus inhumane. Religion is, thus, an element of integral humanism that belongs to the good and the common temporal patrimony of man⁹¹. This conception sheds a new light on the relationship between State and religion. The former cannot understand its autonomy in temporal matters as separation and indifference, much less as hostility or tolerance. If religion is a dimension of the “terrestrial city”, together with the distribution of material goods and the promotion of social relations, this means that the State should have a positive relation of defense and promotion of this human dimension⁹². Daniélou sees the importance of religious dialogue and of deepening in the mystery of mission, in the light of the present situation.

5. *Religions as means of salvation.* If religions are the historical realizations of the fundamental desire of man for God, under the impulse of grace, and of the search for salvation inserts in the heart of humanity, and if the pagan will be judged in accord with his conscience, then, are religions “means of salvation”? A fundamental theological principle holds that religions cannot be ways of salvation simply because what is human is incapable of attaining what is divine and not because Christianity considers itself culturally or religiously superior to the other religions⁹³. As human creations, religions are incapable of leading to salvation since salvation comes from above. This is true as well for Christianity insofar as its human-religious aspect is not able to save. Man is saved by grace and the sacraments; namely, by the action of God in his Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and as the prolongation of the action of the Incarnate Word in history⁹⁴. It is methodologically erroneous to say that religions are ordinary ways of salvation and that Christianity is an extraordinary way of salvation. This is because the point of departure is that to which the New Testa-

⁹⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 33.

⁹¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Chiesa: popolo di Dio o setta di spirituali?*, Borla, Torino-Leuman 1968, 24.

⁹² See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 33.

⁹³ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 205.

⁹⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 37.

ment gives witness: salvation is given ordinarily through faith and baptism. This does not mean closing the door of salvation to those who do not enter by the ordinary way. The position of the Church, reaffirmed by Daniélou, is that salvation and participation in the spiritual life can exist without baptism and without visible adherence to the Church.

6. *The God of religions.* Daniélou does not seek to uncover doctrinal analogies between the Christian and the non-Christian conception of God, but rather how religions come to the knowledge of God and how Revelation considers this knowledge. This is why Daniélou affirms that the first trait of cosmic religion is the fact that God is known by means of visible things. The basis for this affirmation is both philosophical and biblical (Wisdom 13:5; Romans 1:20)⁹⁵. The cosmos in its harmony and variety entails, for the religious man, a symbolic dimension: all of the observable phenomena are able to be “hierophanies” for man, sensible manifestations that point to God. The book of nature is the means that humanity had at its disposal both before and in absence of the positive Revelation of God.

The cosmic “path” has its beginning in God himself who communicates himself to the religious man by means of the cosmos and man’s conscience⁹⁶. Nevertheless, by the fact that religion is a search for God through creatures that only reflect God partially by means of imperfection and contingency, this vision of God will always be incomplete. It is incomplete above all because it does not penetrate into his intimate life, into what God really is. The “God” that the religious man discovers will be, in the best of cases, the true God, but known in an equivocal and approximative way⁹⁷. Historically, revelation by means of the cosmos has been insufficient to reach knowledge of God. Hence, in spite of the internal action of grace that draws people to the truth, religions have fallen almost unfailingly into one of three fundamental deformations of the true God: polytheism, pantheism, or dualism⁹⁸. Daniélou speaks of these three deformations when he considers

⁹⁵ J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 22.

⁹⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 41.

⁹⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *L’oraison, problème politique*, 101-102.

⁹⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 41.

the question of the crisis of myths in his book *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*.

Added to this difficulty of reaching God by means of analogy is the poverty of modern Western man with respect to metaphysics and the notion of being. The knowledge of the ontological depth of divine Being has been lost because the notion of being that characterizes realist metaphysics has been lost. In this way, God – the God of religions – has become a ghost that floats in an ethereal heaven. Men have lost, as well, the recognition of their creaturely state, proper to the most elementary religious consciousness⁹⁹. These losses have obscured what Daniélou calls “the points of insertion of the sacred” in contemporary society.

Notwithstanding what has been said, the God that religions reach or try to reach is a living Being who allows us to glimpse his presence¹⁰⁰. Before the presence of the divine mystery, the mysterious and fundamental sentiments of adoration and praise are awakened in man¹⁰¹. Here is found the crisis of meaning of God: in the impoverishment of man’s capacity to discover the living God by means of his manifestations. There is continuity between the God known through the cosmos and human conscience and the God of Revelation. This is because it is the one God that, before manifesting himself historically, speaks in many ways in the heart of man. Without this sense of God, without this “natural” or “cosmic” basis, supernatural faith is simply incomprehensible.

4.2 Christianity in relation to non-Christian religions

A condition for dialogue and understanding of religions is a firm grasp of one’s own religious “tradition”. Knowing one’s identity is the first step towards understanding, from a theological perspective, the identity of another, the similarities and dissimilarities, their values, etc. What is more, the understanding of Christian identity stimulates the theologian to establish bridges for dialogue with other religions and to understand them from a theological point of view. One of the goals of understanding the faith and the essence of Christianity is to

⁹⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 154.

¹⁰⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 40.

¹⁰¹ See J. DANIELOU, *L’avenir de la religion*, 45.

discover what not essential or merely cultural¹⁰². In this way, it becomes clear what should remain and what should pass away in our western Christianity so as to facilitate the incarnation of the faith in all cultures.

4.2.1 *What is specifically Christian*

Christianity is characterized by faith in an event, faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the decisive event in which God enters into history to radically change human existence. The confession of faith in the Resurrection is unique to Christianity in comparison to other religions, including Judaism. Although religions can affirm the existence of an eternal world beyond time, they – excluding Judaism – are ignorant of the entry of eternity in history¹⁰³. This entry of the eternal one in time brings with it three affirmations: first, the true face of God, of the mystery of the Trinity, is revealed to man; second, history leads to the recapitulation of all things in Christ; third, man is elevated to supernatural life by means of grace.

1. *The Trinitarian Mystery*. For Daniélou, divine pedagogy – that starts with the presence of the Word in man's conscience and in the cosmos and with God's action in the history of Israel – comes to fullness in the Christian mystery of the Incarnation. The Revelation of Christ consists in the Incarnate Word introducing us into the intimate life of God and giving to us what belongs by right as adopted children of God.

The essence of the Revelation of the New Testament is the manifestation of the Trinitarian mystery¹⁰⁴. This is more a witness to an event than a formulation of arcane doctrines¹⁰⁵. This means that, first of all, the confrontation with religions at the level of ideas is not what is most important nor is it the principal thing. This is because Christian faith does not spring from the same source as other religions. It means, in the second place, that the dogma of the Trinity is not the conclusion of a demonstration, the symbolic formulation of an ineffable religious intuition or a cultural expression. It is, on the contrary,

¹⁰² See especially J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 105-119.

¹⁰³ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 9.

fruit of divine pedagogy; God prepares humanity for what it will receive in the fullness of time. The mystery of the Trinity arises in the consideration of the history of salvation. The teachings of religions about God can be integrated within Christian reflection on God, without renouncing what is original to the Christian message. Daniélou affirms categorically that the Christian mystery of the Holy Trinity does not belong to this order of truths. It does not stem from reflection on nature. It arises, instead, from a theological reflection on the history of salvation. Christian Revelation speaks fundamentally of events, works of God in history¹⁰⁶. We enter into knowledge of the Trinitarian dogma not by an intellectual consideration of ideas, but through contemplation of the mystery of Jesus, the mystery of God made man. It is a mystery that presents, in a historical way, the distinction of Persons in the unity of the divine essence¹⁰⁷. The divinity of the Word and the Trinity of persons is the cornerstone of Christian existence and has origin the dynamic nature of divine interventions¹⁰⁸. In *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, we learn that we enter into contact with the Holy Trinity starting with the history of salvation; namely, starting from God's action in the world¹⁰⁹. Scripture is the document of this history of salvation. It is the point of departure for reflection on the Trinity. Although Scripture does not speak explicitly to us about the Trinity, it does put us into contact with "data" (*donées d'expérience*) that speak of the three divine persons¹¹⁰. Faith begins with something real; theological elaboration follows upon this and allows one to discover the mystery of the Holy Trinity within this reality and correctly formulates the revealed *datum*.

2. *The meaning of history.* Religions are, in their essence, the expression of a movement of man toward God; supernatural Revelation, on the contrary, is essentially a movement of God toward man¹¹¹. This coming of God to man, this entry of the divine in history has a name: Jesus Christ. On the one hand, Christianity is immersed in history and

¹⁰⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 109.

¹⁰⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *Approches du Christ*, 34.

¹⁰⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 156.

¹⁰⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 87.

¹¹⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 99-100.

¹¹¹ See J. DANIELOU, *La foi de toujours et l'homme d'aujourd'hui*, S.E.P.A.L., Paris 1968, 78.

participates in its joys and hopes; on the other, history is immersed in Christianity, the history of the *mirabilia Dei* and of the action of God among men¹¹². Christianity holds the interpretive key to all history: the Christian conception of history is eschatological. Cosmic religions do not see history leading to an end that transcends the world¹¹³. Religions see a regularity in the cycles of nature and this leads them to the idea of an eternal return of ages without a final consummation. Christianity, on the contrary, is eschatological: history has a direction, a meaning and a temporal end. Christianity itself is the goal of history; this is because it is the definitive world that Christ has established through the mysteries of his Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven. Daniélou sees in the mystery of the Ascension the consummation of the history in which Christ has already achieved for us the definitive reality; nevertheless, before his full manifestation in the Parousia, there is an interval that will be filled by mission, in such a way that the benefits of this “new world” is brought to the ends of the “old world”¹¹⁴.

3. *The elevation of man to supernatural life.* A third element is the elevation of man to the supernatural order by means of grace. Christianity constitutes an existential change. The elevation to the supernatural order brings about a birth into Trinitarian Life, a participation in the intimate life of God. This “new creation” does not begin with man’s decision, but rather is an act of God, who, in Christ, descends from heaven and comes to meet man¹¹⁵. Through the Incarnation, the love of God seeks out man so as to draw man to himself¹¹⁶.

4.2.2 *The God of Revelation*

The knowledge of the mystery of the intimate Trinitarian life of God is not fruit of human speculation. Rather, our contact with this mystery is related to the essence of Christian faith as a Revelation of the *mirabilia Dei*. The history of salvation, then, is considered by

¹¹² J. DANIELOU, “Christianisme et histoire”, *Études* 254 (1947), 175-176.

¹¹³ J. DANIELOU, “Christianisme et religions non chrétiennes”, *Études* 321 (1964), 327.

¹¹⁴ J. DANIELOU, “La pensée chrétienne”, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 1947, 937.

¹¹⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Approches du Christ*, 58.

¹¹⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *L’avenir de la religion*, 54.

Daniélou like a progressive unveiling of the Trinity¹¹⁷. This unveiling of the divine face comes to its fullness in Jesus Christ. Thus, the object of Christian Revelation is the Trinity of persons¹¹⁸. The manifestation of the Trinity is an essential element of the self-comprehension of Christianity with respect to other religious traditions¹¹⁹. As its fundamental mission, Christianity has that of introducing humanity into intimate contact with God, into the Revelation of the Most Holy Trinity¹²⁰. We know God intimately because he himself comes to us in order to introduce us into his divine life. Scripture, for Daniélou, is the narration of the great works of God and unveils for us, in accord with divine pedagogy, his intimate life. The God of the Bible is a living God who enters into our history, coming close to man¹²¹. The method of coming close to the Bible will be that of “prophecy”, the typological reading to discover in the sacred text, the “divine *mores*” (the “typological moment”).

4.2.3 *Christianity as Religion and as Revelation*

Another element in Christianity’s self-comprehension in relation to non-Christian religions is precisely its status as a religion. There is a sort of tension not only between Christianity and pagan religions, but also within Christianity between religion and Revelation¹²². The question is whether or not Christianity is a religion? Following Daniélou, the conclusion is that Christianity is essentially a saving action of God, a divine action that elevates man above the natural order that permits him to share in eternal life even in this earthly life. Nevertheless, Christianity is also a religion, for it shares with other religions at least two characteristics proper to all religions: the search for God and dependence on him. At the same time, Christianity is mixed with religious elements that do not pertain directly to the sphere of Revelation, even though we cannot consider them foreign to Revelation.

¹¹⁷ See J. Daniélou, *Dieu et nous*, 148.

¹¹⁸ See J. Daniélou, *Dieu et nous*, 145.

¹¹⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 117.

¹²⁰ J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 45.

¹²¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 185.

¹²² See J. DANIELOU, *L’oraison, problème politique*, 101; see also “Christianisme et religions...”, 334.

Thus, Christianity does not seek solely to bring man to heaven, but also to permit him – like other religions – to achieve human fullness on this earth¹²³.

Christianity is fully a religion. As a religion it is the indispensable condition for a profound living of Christianity as Revelation¹²⁴. One cannot attain “supernatural” plenitude if one is not founded in the “natural”. Christianity is not accessible to the masses of people as Revelation unless it is present in the people as religion¹²⁵. For a “personal” Christianity there needs to be a “social” Christianity¹²⁶. There are two levels of Christian life: one in which the religious aspects of Christianity prevail – the liturgical year with its feasts, processions and veneration of images of the saints; and another, deeper assimilation of the novelty of the Christian faith. These are not opposed, but rather co-exist harmoniously. To move from sociological Christianity to interiorized Christianity, we can use the episode of the vocation of Abraham, which is the “official” beginning of the intervention of God in history. God speaks to Abraham and makes him a promise even as he asks him to uproot himself from his religious universe; God asks him to move from traditional religion to the newness of a Revelation. Abraham, desiring to respond in some way to God who speaks to him, does not find any better way than building an altar and offering a sacrifice; namely, an act taken from his religious universe.

This continuation of religion in Christianity falls within the plan of God. Nevertheless, just as a religion, which seeks God in the shadows, tends to corrupt, so also in Christianity, the religious element is susceptible to degradation¹²⁷. The temptation will be then that of freeing Christianity from its religious elements. This solution, however, will be unfavorable for the very comprehension of Christianity. On the contrary, Daniélou proposes not purifying Christianity of the religious element, but purifying the religious element itself¹²⁸.

¹²³ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 102.

¹²⁴ See J. DANIELOU, “Religion et civilisation...”, 419.

¹²⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 14.

¹²⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 30; 100-101.

¹²⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 102.

¹²⁸ J. DANIELOU, “Christianisme et religions...”, 334.

4.2.4 *Christian Notion of Salvation*

The second great truth of Christianity that Daniélou considers is that only Christ saves. This affirmation of faith is a firm point in the theology of religions. Salvation is a gesture of God's love that seeks man out in order to introduce him into his divine life. God grants salvation to the humanity that deeply longs for him. The desire for salvation is inserted into the core of human nature and religion testifies to this aspiration. Biblical Revelation does not speak to us so much about the need for salvation – even though it describes the precarious condition of man – but rather of the fact that God effectively grants salvation to us thanks to the Incarnation of the Word¹²⁹. Thus, for Daniélou, the problem of the salvation of non-Christians is not on the theoretical plane, but rather on the level of reality of the history of salvation: this need inserted in the heart of man has been filled by the coming of the Savior. From a natural perspective, one could find analogous notions of salvation in non-Christian religions. The need for salvation is found in man's conscience and many religions have tried to understand the meaning of salvation, offering very different responses. Christian, though, effectively offers salvation to man in Jesus Christ.

Christianity affirms clearly that salvation is not attained by human efforts alone. Daniélou offers us two reasons: one subjective and the other objective. The subjective reason concerns man's condition of spiritual misery due to the reality of original sin that separates man from God. The objective reason is of a theological order and the ontological distance between Creator and creature is such that the efforts of man to overcome this distance are destined to fail. Only God can introduce man into the mystery of his intimacy¹³⁰. A Christian has the conviction that God has overcome this abyss and has drawn closer to man in the Person of Christ the Redeemer.

In Christianity there is a correlation between the desire for natural salvation and the knowledge that God has already responded to this need in a superabundant way. Daniélou writes that God draws near to a humanity waiting for salvation. In this way, Christianity brings to fulfillment the search of the encounter with God present in every man

¹²⁹ See J. DANIELOU, "Les religions non chrétiennes...", 381.

¹³⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 111-112.

and that is made concrete in prayer. Religion is a prayer in the midst of the shadows directed to a transcendent and unreachable God. Christ, for his part, is prayer that is heard. It is the gift that God makes of himself to humanity¹³¹; the gift that humanity never would have been able to suspect or achieve.

Only Christ saves. This is the great conviction of the Christian. To place this truth within parentheses would wound the very heart of the revelation of the mystery of the universal salvation in Christ. This conviction, nevertheless, would definitively close the door to every other salvific mediation. Religions cannot be positive paths of salvation. Daniélou considers that this affirmation – this dogma of faith of the universal salvation in Christ – should be preceded by one that reintroduces the problem of religions within theological reflection: religion does not save, but forms part of what is saved¹³². No person is excluded *a priori* from salvation. However, the problem is knowing what the requirements for attaining salvation are. Following Saint Paul (Romans 2:14-15), Daniélou affirms that the pagan will be judged according to his conscience, namely, according to the knowledge of God that they have acquired. If every man can encounter God, the requirements for this encounter to be salvific are twofold:

- [1] The first requirement for salvation is faith. To the affirmation that only “Christ save”, one needs to add that “only faith saves”. This affirmation of the need of faith for salvation is opposed to the pretension of believing that what saves is the ascetic effort or mystical effort.
- [2] The second requirement is humility – the capacity of recognizing sin and opening oneself to the grace of God. Pride is the greatest obstacle to salvation. On the contrary, the attitude of humility is the recognition of the sovereign freedom of God. Salvation is not the result of human initiative; rather, it is the result of God’s freedom.

¹³¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 26.

¹³² See J. Daniélou, “Les religions non chrétiennes...”, 382.

4.2.5 *The persistence of religion in Christianity*

The initial question of this section (4.2) was: “How does Christianity see itself in comparison to non-Christian religions?”. So far our response has been that Christianity considers itself to be a unique reality, that is not comparable to other religions; it is the *eschatos* present in a passing world. It is the religion of the living and true God who intervenes in human history. Christianity is also a complex reality: it is a religion, yet it is more than a religion; it is the saving action of God, yet contains many other elements that make it similar to other religions. It is eschatological and temporal. It is the only religion that saves, in the strict sense of the word, precisely because it is more than a religion. At this point, we need to analyze another characteristic of Christianity: In Christianity, religions find their fulfillment, without completely disappearing. The two elements that constitute a religion – religious sense and religious traditions – subsist or persist in Christianity.

1. *Purification and promotion of religious sense.* “Religion does not saved, but rather forms part of what is saved”¹³³. Jesus Christ is the recapitulation of all created things. Religions, in their essential structure, belong to those dimensions of existence that have to be recapitulated in Christ. The phenomenon of the persistence of religion is found in the Church that is marked by the variety of gifts of creation and human civilization. The fact that Christianity brings to fulfillment the elements of truth and grace in religions, is not simply a recognition of these elements, as if the positive elements of the other religions were only those that are already in Christianity, as some detractors of the theology of fulfillment have written. The persistence of religions in Christianity means an enrichment of the latter. Daniélou has said that the Church is called to enrich itself with the gifts of every people in order to present herself before her divine Spouse as the recapitulation of every tradition and religion. As an example of this persistence, Daniélou argues that the symbols of cosmic religion form part of positive Revelation – persisting in it – and are integrated in a historical perspective¹³⁴. What occurs then is not a destruction of the cosmic religious universe, but a promotion. This promotion is indispensable,

¹³³ J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 45.

¹³⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 137.

since cosmic religious symbols, without their ultimate historical meaning, are insufficient in expressing the divine mystery, which is the ultimate objective. Revelation is directed to religious men and women, who feel the need to enter into relationship with God, the need to be saved from ignorance and sin, to men and women who are disposed to give God the praise and honor that is his due. An irreligious person cannot understand divine Revelation, the mystery of a God who intervenes in history, simply because they do not know *why* he would have to intervene. The persistence of the cosmic religious sense in Christianity is possible precisely because there is not a relation of equality between Christianity and non-Christian religions. There are not at the same level. When Christianity – understood as Revelation – enters into a pagan religious universe, it does not substitute religion. Conversion to the faith is not moving from one religion to another, but rather moving from religion to Revelation. These are not opposed to one another, but rather complementary. The man who has been introduced into the intimate life of God by Revelation is the same man who seeks God by means of cosmic signs and symbols, that is, by means of religion¹³⁵.

2. *Religions continue in Christianity.* Christianity also assumes the riches of the wisdom and religiosity of religions themselves. Christianity needs this so as to understand and explain the mystery that has been entrusted to it. This process of assimilation and persistence occurs within Biblical Revelation itself. This happened with “Mosaic religion” in which the sacrifice Christ becomes the continuation, not just of the sacrifice of Abraham, but also that of Melchizedek; namely, not just of historical Revelation, but also that of “cosmic revelation”¹³⁶. The assimilation of religions by Revelation is a fact that is verified already in Sacred Scripture. It belongs to the internal dynamic of Revelation. In fact, Israel, which lived in the midst of peoples with varied religious expressions, rich in myths and ways of worship, did not cease to assume some of their elements, obviously rejecting errors and deficiencies¹³⁷.

¹³⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *L’oraison, problème politique*, 102.

¹³⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Test*, Beauchesne, Paris 1968, 60.

¹³⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 117.

In the same way, Christian authors have assumed the symbols of cosmic religion. Christian faith is founded on the unrepeatable historical event of the resurrection of Christ. This event has nothing to do with the Greek mysteries of gods who die and rise again in a way analogous to the succession of cosmic seasons. Nevertheless, Christianity has assumed some themes of pagan religions to give them afterwards an original meaning. This was the case with the Church Fathers who took advantage of the religious symbols to explain the value of the Christian mysteries¹³⁸. This assimilation does not necessarily mean dependence. Daniélou affirms categorically that Biblical Revelation does not owe anything to the religious myths with regard to their nucleus. The Christian mysteries do not depend on the religious structure that is at the basis of the myths. Biblical Revelation refers to singular divine actions and not to the permanent religious basis of human existence. If cosmic religion is founded on the cycle of the seasons; Biblical Revelation makes reference to a series of singular actions and historical events that have the living God as their protagonist¹³⁹.

The Gospel truth, which announces the singular fact of the mysteries of the Incarnate Word, was later expressed by taking elements from myths¹⁴⁰. For example, the shape of the Cross acquires the cosmic meaning of salvation that extends to the ends of the world (four cardinal points)¹⁴¹. Cosmic symbols and archetypes help the Christian better understand the value of the mysteries of the faith; every people has to enrich this comprehension with elements proper to their religious world. The Church seeks to promote, purify and transform “the pagan soul” and its religious expressions, so as to bring them to fullness in Christianity¹⁴².

Daniélou also uses the “sign of the temple” to illustrate how fundamental elements of human religiosity attain plenitude in Christianity¹⁴³. The Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and sign and sacrament

¹³⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 33.

¹³⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 32.

¹⁴⁰ See H. RAHNER, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, Biblo and Tannen, New York 1963.

¹⁴¹ See J. DANIELOU, “Le symbolisme cosmique de la croix”, *La Maison-Dieu* 75 (1963), 23-36.

¹⁴² J. DANIELOU, “Christianisme et religions...”, 326.

¹⁴³ See J. DANIELOU, *Le signe du Temple*, Gallimard, Paris 1942, 32-37.

of the action of the Lord in history, is also the prolongation of the temple in Jerusalem and of the cosmic temple and heavenly dome. The creation of the Church is the creation of a new cosmos. The mass, as the supreme liturgical act of Christian faith, contains all the dimensions of sacred time and space. Here we see the primary religious gesture of humanity. The three seasonal feasts of the cosmic temple are given a new meaning in the Mosaic Law (Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles). Ecclesial time is inserted into the continuity of a history of salvation. Christian faith orders these feasts of cosmic origin – and of historical “re-signification” thanks to Judaism – to their definitive, real and eschatological meaning: they become symbols of what is to come. The Passover becomes liberation from sin by redemptive sacrifice of Christ; Pentecost the effusion of the Holy Spirit; Tabernacles, the time after Pentecost leading to the Promised Land and heavenly Jerusalem. The same can be said of the Christian Sacraments.

To summarize what has been said, Daniélou uses the notion of recapitulation: signs, expressions of cosmic religion, become expressions of Hebrew religion and later of Christian religion. In this way, Christianity is the fulfillment and crown of all the religious history of humanity¹⁴⁴.

4.2.6 Differences between Religions and Christianity

Christian assumes the elements present in the liturgy and symbolism of religions, adapting them and elevating them within the history of salvation. Along with the similarities and continuity between Christianity and the religious world, there are also intrinsic differences at the level of doctrine, origin and spiritual experience. It would be methodologically erroneous to place these fundamental differences within parentheses. Christianity is not simply man’s search for God, nor is it merely hearing the divine word by means of the natural “grammar” of creation and human conscience. The “advent” of God and his manifestation in Christianity is something unique and has no comparison in other religions.

¹⁴⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 25.

Religions are a gesture of man¹⁴⁵, while Revelation is a witness to the gesture of God¹⁴⁶. This brings with it a series of consequences. For example, religions see time as an indefinite succession of eras; Christianity starts from singular and unrepeatable actions of God in the history of humanity. In Christianity, history has a meaning and a positive value. Faith, unlike religious belief, consists in accepting the reality of the unique event of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

The opposition between religion and Revelation is not that between two realities of the same order. This is why Daniélou distinguishes between Christianity as Revelation and as religion. As Revelation, Christianity does not exclude religion, but rather the religious values are assumed, purified and transfigured by Christian faith¹⁴⁷.

4.2.7 Faith and Religious Experience

Spiritual experience is one of the major problems for interreligious dialogue. We should recall here the distinction between theological faith and religious experience. What saves us is faith in the word of God and not religious experience¹⁴⁸. It is true, however, that personal experience has a universal value: piety is common to pagan religions and to biblical religion. Nevertheless, religious sentiment is not the most important thing; sentiments are not salvific. Proper to the Bible is the Revelation of an event of salvation. Thus, the fundamental act becomes faith¹⁴⁹. The act of faith – understood in its theological sense – concerns an historical event known through testimony, first the testimony of Christ, then that of the disciples, of the Church. One can have faith yet not experience an intense religious sentiment; one can have strong religious sentiments yet lack supernatural faith. Now, the person that adheres by faith to Revelation is the same person who seeks God through spiritual experience¹⁵⁰. Thanks to this complementarity between faith and experience, the signs, which have their origin in cosmic religion, begin to signify realities of faith.

¹⁴⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 89-91.

¹⁴⁶ J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 21-22.

¹⁴⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 91.

¹⁴⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 15.

¹⁴⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 37-38.

¹⁵⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 95.

4.2.8 *The Place of the Church*

After studying the convergences and divergences between Christianity and non-Christian religions, we now turn to the “place” that Daniélou assigns to the Church in this discussion. A first point is that Daniélou sees the Church in relation to the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Trinity revealed by Christ¹⁵¹. All other considerations concerning the Church are secondary to this theological truth. For Daniélou, the Church as society or people of God is always subordinated to the Church as Body of Christ: the Church is more than a particular community, for it is an “official organ” of God, through which God proclaims the Gospel to the world¹⁵².

The Church is intimately linked to Christ and has its primary origin in Christ. Contrary to the thesis of R. Bultmann, the Gospel presents Jesus as dedicating the greater part of his public life to the formation of this structure, which will be the instrument for the communication of the Holy Spirit¹⁵³. The disciples who lived with Jesus are gathered together as the first believers after Pentecost¹⁵⁴. At the same time, the Church is a reality that belongs to the History of Salvation. This means that there is a continuity and progression in divine action. The living God, who did marvelous things for the people of Israel and during the life of his Son, Jesus Christ, continues to act in history through his “official organ”. The Church, after Christ’s Ascension, is the place of the *magnalia Dei*. This is why we find the characteristics of divine action in the Church, and this in two ways: in the internal action of the Word in souls and in the visible actions (sacramental and liturgical) of the Church¹⁵⁵. The Church has as its principal mission the distribution to all humanity of the grace contained in the glorious humanity of Christ. The Church is the place of the encounter of the risen Christ with the human soul. The sacraments are the *milieu* of this re-encounter. The sacraments are, for these reasons, the continuation of divine actions¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 22.

¹⁵² See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 275.

¹⁵³ See J. DANIELOU, *Chiesa: popolo di Dio...*, 88; see also his *Approches du Christ*, 151.

¹⁵⁴ See J. DANIELOU, “Histoire de l’Église et vie théologique”, *Seminarium* 4 (1968), 641.

¹⁵⁵ J. DANIELOU, *Approches du Christ*, 183-184.

¹⁵⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 201.

In the history of salvation, the “time” of Jesus Christ becomes the time of the Church, which mediates between Jesus’ Ascension and Parousia. The time of the Church is the present form of the great works of the Trinity and the continuation of the Incarnate Word. The time of the Church is the time in which the Incarnate Word builds up his Mystical Body. There is continuity, then, between the glorious humanity of Christ and the pilgrim Church that lives thanks to the life-giving action of Jesus Christ. The work of the Trinity in the present time is the building up of the Mystical Body. For this reason, there is no grace of Christ that is not ecclesial in some way. If there is grace outside the visible confines of the Church, this does not mean that the Church is foreign to the effusion of the same¹⁵⁷.

A second point is that the Church has collected the witness to Jesus Christ and is the “official” depositary of God’s Revelation¹⁵⁸. Jesus entrusted to his apostles and, through them, to the Church, the treasure of his words and deeds. The mission of the Church stems from this uninterrupted line from the apostles to the Church. And so, with respect to the content of God’s Revelation, the Church has the same authority to explain Revelation as the Apostles did to promulgate it insofar as both – Revelation and official interpretation – have a divine origin¹⁵⁹. Both are actions of God in history.

A third and final point is that the Church has the universal mission to gather all peoples. The Church is the expression of the gift of divine life that the Trinity has given to all humanity through Jesus Christ¹⁶⁰. Thus, beneath the appearance of the visible Church, there is the Mystical Body, the unity of all humanity¹⁶¹.

The Church is one because God is one; there is only one baptism and one Christ. This unity does not mean homogeneity. The unity of the Church is *catholic*. Ecclesial unity is achieved while maintaining and promoting diversity, since this is something that enriches the Bride of Christ. The unity of the Church does not imply uniformity,

¹⁵⁷ See J. Daniélou, “Le Concile a-t-il trouvé sa voie?”, *Études* 1 (1963), 12.

¹⁵⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *L’oraison, problème politique*, 148.

¹⁵⁹ See J. Daniélou, “Le Concile a-t-il...”, 12.

¹⁶⁰ J. DANIELOU, *Approches du Christ*, 185.

¹⁶¹ J. DANIELOU, *Le signe du Temple*, 54.

but catholicity. The Church, imitating Jesus Christ, incarnates herself in every nation so as to bring them to their fullness in Jesus Christ.

In this regard there are two tendencies which run counter to this universal vocation. The first tendency considers the Church as a small, elite group of authentic Christians. Daniélou does not deny the need to evangelize the elite, since through them the Church can influence culture and society. At the same time, the Church is for the masses, and not just the elite of society. Some theologians¹⁶² oppose this position and envision the large mass of men being saved through non-Christian religions with Christianity as a path of salvation for the few – for an elite group of “perfect” men and women – and sign for the nations. Baptism, in this view, would no longer be necessary for salvation and would be replaced by religious sentiment. Daniélou’s response is that it belongs to the essence of the Church to be an immense people of baptized faithful. Participation in spiritual life can exist outside of baptism; in fact there is the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit, who speaks interiorly to the hearts of men and women so as to bring them to the Church. Nevertheless, baptism is still the ordinary door of salvation and participation in divine life. In *Le signe du Temple*, Daniélou affirms that God enters into relation not with isolated persons, but with a community and only with the persons that form part of the community¹⁶³. This means that the human subject in the “dialogue of salvation” is not the isolated individual, nor the indistinct mass, but a community of persons¹⁶⁴. The second tendency considers the human nature as the ordinary means of salvation, while the Church is nothing more than an extra-ordinary way¹⁶⁵. Since the masses of mankind constitute anonymous or implicit Christians, missionary work is a vain and unnecessary enterprise. Daniélou categorically rejects this thesis as it would mean the disappearance of Christian peoples. Moreover, it would mean denying the obligation to announce and confess Christ and undercut the missionary mandate given by Christ.

The Church is the work of God, even in its institutional structure. This is clear already in the Acts of the Apostles that presents the or-

¹⁶² See J. DANIELOU, *Iglesia y secularización*, BAC, Madrid 1971, 29.

¹⁶³ J. DANIELOU, *Le signe du Temple*, 29.

¹⁶⁴ J. DANIELOU, “Défense du pratiquant”, *Études* 296 (1958), 8.

¹⁶⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *L’avenir de la religion*, 96.

ganization of the local Church with the Eucharist at the center. The Church appears as the infallible means of communication of Revelation and of grace¹⁶⁶: infallible because it is God who works through human means, continuing in the today of the Church the mystery of the Covenant¹⁶⁷. The Church is, moreover, the community will unite all the saved. It is the one end (*eschatos*) of humanity in the plan of God. All men are called to form part of the Church, the only economy of salvation.

5. “Place” of Religions in Theological Discourse

After looking at Daniélou’s understanding of religion and Christianity, the question now concerns the place non-Christian religions have in theological reflection. Some theologians of religious pluralism hold that non-Christian traditions are not only preparations for Christianity and the fruit of the Spirit’s action of spreading the seeds of the Word outside the visible confines of the Church, but that they also complete what Christ, due to his kenotic condition, was incapable of revealing to us of the hidden mystery of God. Daniélou would disagree with this position, yet would not reject it without careful consideration. The goal of what follows is not to develop a complete Catholic theology of religions, but rather to illustrate the problems that Daniélou considers in the context of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions and the *locus* of these considerations in theology.

5.1 Perennial elements of religions and their passing away

If the religious dimension belongs to man’s nature, then this enters into God’s salvific plan. Daniélou considers that one of the great Christian affirmations – that the Word of God came to saved what he created – should be applied to the religious phenomenon. Since the religious dimension is a constitutive element of creation, it is not foreign to salvation¹⁶⁸. Religions will be saved – assumed and transfigured in Christianity – insofar as they express the religiosity of human nature.

¹⁶⁶ J. DANIELOU, “Défense du pratiquant...”, 8.

¹⁶⁷ See J. DANIELOU, *L’avenir de la religion*, 96-100.

¹⁶⁸ See J. DANIELOU, “Les religions non chrétiennes...”, 382.

Religion, Daniélou affirms, does not save, but rather is part of what is saved¹⁶⁹. When the Church considers religions as having “expired”, there is still an appreciation of the values found in them. The historical existence of religions manifests God’s care for men and women. Religions are stepping stones. And it is the task of theology to analyze the nature of this divine assistance in religions. Although this is a pending task, one can say from the theological point of view that, at its basis, there is the action of the Word, who, in the Incarnation, assumes what has been created¹⁷⁰. Pagan religions belong to the moment of the history of salvation that corresponds to the cosmic covenant. For this reason they offer witness to the truth about God¹⁷¹. Although this witness is not comparable to Revelation, it does offer valid instruments for the understanding of the divine mystery.

The myths, rites and spiritual experiences of religions contain perennial elements since they stem from a humanity that seeks to understand the mystery of God. The search is itself perennial. Christianity is the definitive answer to this search and does not annul the natural impulse toward religious understanding. Myths, as the symbolic transmission of truths and religious experiences, continue in Christianity. This is because myth is the experience of a cosmic manifestation of God¹⁷². Christian theology and spirituality use mythic symbols due to their expressive power. Something similar happens with religious rites: if myths are ways of expressing the relation between God and man, rites “are the way of concretely realizing the union of men with God”¹⁷³. Rites are means to enter into communion with God; they are symbolic actions that are mysteriously efficacious. They are efficacious since they express belief in the sovereign intervention of God, who is Lord of the cosmos and of man. This conviction of being under the dominion of supernatural Providence is what Christianity assumes and makes perennial, giving the ritual symbols new meaning. The third aspect is that of inner experience, encapsulated in the fundamental act of prayer¹⁷⁴. There is a profound analogy between the mysti-

¹⁶⁹ See J. DANIELOU, “Les religions non chrétiennes...”, 382.

¹⁷⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Test*, 57.

¹⁷¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Dieu et nous*, 52.

¹⁷² See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 10.

¹⁷³ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 19.

¹⁷⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 27.

cism of different religions¹⁷⁵ and all of this belongs to the religious patrimony of humanity. Christianity is called to give this spiritual reality its true meaning and fulfillment¹⁷⁶. Christianity strives to understand the essence of natural mysticism¹⁷⁷.

In synthesis, Christianity assumes, purifies and transforms the perennial elements found in religions. This threefold process implies leaving aside everything that presents an obstacle to the essence of the faith.

5.2 Inculturation and Incarnation

In the light of these reflections, it is necessary to underscore another aspect regarding the inculturation of Christian faith in pagan peoples¹⁷⁸. We start with a theological principle: Christianity does not depend on any particular civilization; it has a universal (catholic), “trans-cultural” value. The fact that historically the Christian faith has been linked to Western civilization does not mean that the two are identical¹⁷⁹. Christian culture is not Western Christian culture. For this reason, Daniélou preferred to speak of “Christian cultures” rather than “Christian culture”¹⁸⁰.

Daniélou prefers the term “incarnation” to “inculturation” when speaking about Christianity’s contact with cultures. He clarifies the term in Chapter Four of *Mystère du salut des nations*. Christianity needs to incarnate itself in the Western and non-Western world. Nevertheless, this is not enough. Incarnation is only the first step towards transfiguration. The goal of incarnation is transfiguration: the incarnation of the Gospel message in cultures is not complete if incarnation does not become a way toward the transfiguration and deification of men and women of every culture and religion¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 25.

¹⁷⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien*, 27.

¹⁷⁷ An example of this is Christianity’s encounter with Neo-platonism.

¹⁷⁸ See F.-M. BALDE, “Inculturation et dégageement de l’Église parmi les nations”, in J. FONTAINE (ed.), *Actualité de Jean Daniélou*, Cerf, Paris 2006, 197-201.

¹⁷⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 41.

¹⁸⁰ I. ÁLVA RODRÍGUEZ, *Cristianismo y religiones en el pensamiento de Jean Daniélou (1905-1974)*, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona 2007, 328.

¹⁸¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 85.

Missionary spirituality is a spirituality of incarnation and redemption. For this reason, with the insertion of the Gospel, something needs to pass away in religions¹⁸². From this perspective, incarnation is not an end in itself but rather a means through which the work of deification and redemption can be accomplished¹⁸³. In this way, the history of the Church coincides with its different incarnations: Judeo-Christian in the first community in Jerusalem, Greek Christianity, the Constantine Church, feudal, rural, etc... are all examples of the incarnation of the Christian mystery in cultures. Seen from without, the history of the Church is influenced by the culture in which it lives. Judeo-Christianity was an incarnation and had its moment and its function in the divine plan. The theology of religions shows us what are the principles that allow for an incarnation of Christianity in the current religious context. Christianity has to incarnate itself in all the dimensions of civilizations that have not yet received the influence of the faith. Since religion is the highest expression of a civilization, Christianity should not displace religion, but should incarnate itself in this. This is possible because, for Daniélou, religion and Revelation are not at the same level. This incarnation does not mean assuming in an indiscriminate way everything that a non-Christian civilization can offer. No culture or civilization can ever encase the entire richness of Christianity, its forms of expression, or its conceptual structures.

The incarnation of the Gospel is a historical reality; the history of the Church is the history of the successive incarnations of Christianity in civilizations. Second, the incarnation of the message in cultures is only the first aspect within the divine plan; the goal of incarnation is deification. Third, if, for Christianity, it is a need to incarnate itself in civilizations, religion is, in the thought of Daniélou, the apex of culture. Christianity cannot regard religion, but should assume it, purify it and transform it. Fourth, incarnation is possible because it has a basis in the nature of man; beyond the differences of cultures there is a common human nature¹⁸⁴. Finally, two errors should be avoided: indiscriminate assumption of religious traditions and a type of rigidity which seeks to detain the history of salvation.

¹⁸² See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 51.

¹⁸³ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 83.

¹⁸⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *L'oraison, problème politique*, 149.

5.3 “Waiting for an Indian Saint Thomas Aquinas”

Daniélou was aware of the need for a synthesis that better harmonizes Hinduist thought with the demands of Christian faith. Hinduism is fundamentally a natural mysticism, analogous to neo-platonic mysticism, and, thus, able to be integrated – dully corrected – with Christian mysticism¹⁸⁵. If neo-platonic mysticism was a preparation for the newness of Christian mysticism and offered to it a conceptual “apparatus”, this was because God prepared both the Jewish people and the Greco-roman world for the fullness of times. This synthesis and enrichment falls within God’s plan and is not syncretism. There are essential differences between Hinduism and Christianity.

Hinduism	Christianity
The world is illusory	The world is good and created by God
The person is a limitation	The person is an “image of God” and called to eternal communion with him
The cause of pain and suffering in our ignorance of the world’s illusory nature	The redemptive action of Jesus Christ is the solution to the problem of pain and suffering
Mysticism seeks to flee the illusory world and to find refuge in inner experience	Mysticism is an anticipation of the life of the resurrection and is a beginning of the definitive transfiguration

The world is to be saved in Christianity and not merely something from which to flee¹⁸⁶.

6. Interreligious Dialogue and Mission

The theology of the religions of Daniélou is ordered to mission¹⁸⁷. Mission is the meaning of time that precedes the parousia and

¹⁸⁵ See J. DANIELOU, “Le yogui et le saint”, *Études* 259 (1948), 298.

¹⁸⁶ See J. DANIELOU, “Le yogui et le saint”, 300.

¹⁸⁷ See I. ALVA RODRÍGUEZ, *Cristianismo y religiones...*, 323.

is, thus, essential to the time of the Church. The delay in the second coming of Christ is a mysterious fact and its comprehension is not easy. Nevertheless, this interval of time has been filled by mission.

In his *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique*, Daniélou analyzes how the Apostolic Fathers “dialogued” with the culture and the religion of their age. Their cultural situation was different from the Jewish world. In the case of the Jewish people, the *kerygma* had the goal of awakening faith in Jesus Christ; in the case of the pagans, it also strives to provoke a renunciation of idolatry¹⁸⁸.

The Christian Apologists understood the truth of Christianity as well as the fundamental truth contained in Greek thought. They were the beginners of the process of “inculturation” of the faith. In every stage of history, Christian thinkers have had to rediscover the perennial value of faith and discern what should pass away and what should remain in cultures in the incarnation of Christianity.

6.1 Western culture and religions

Daniélou establishes a clear distinction between Christianity as such and its Western form of living the mystery of Christ. It would be a serious error to consider Christianity as the religion of the West¹⁸⁹, based solely on the fact that the West has been its principal agent of evangelization. He invites Western Christian to ask themselves what is it that should “live and die” in the West. The West needs, first of all, to renounce its hegemony¹⁹⁰. Second, Daniélou was convinced that his time saw not the end of Christianity, but rather the end of one of its historical incarnations¹⁹¹. The theologian is called to discover the criteria which can distinguish between Western culture and Christian Faith, without compromising or harming the latter. The values that have made the West great are universal.

It is a fact that Christianity was incarnated in Western society. It has been a source of enrichment; it has given rise to a civilization

¹⁸⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique*, Desclée, Tournai 1961, 11.

¹⁸⁹ See J. DANIELOU, *L’oraison, problème politique*, 87-88.

¹⁹⁰ J. DANIELOU, “L’Occident chrétien a-t-il un rôle missionnaire?”, *Études* 285 (1955), 181.

¹⁹¹ See J. DANIELOU, *La risposta dei teologi*, Queriniana, Brescia 1969, 45-46.

what has produced lasting fruit. Western Christianity, however, is only one incarnation of Christianity¹⁹². This incarnation is part of God's plan, and not merely a contingent historical fact. At the same time, Christianity transcends every culture and every civilization. The Word of God is destined for all cultures, for all nations, and should be pronounced in every language. When this is not understood, "Western" Christianity will be seen by the other cultures as something foreign and incapable of incarnating itself in every culture¹⁹³.

Even though the great religions possess positive elements, they also are a key obstacle to conversion. If religions are to continue, they need to die in order to achieve life within Revelation. Civilizations bring with themselves the stain of sin and ignorance. They contain elements of idolatry that are contrary to Christianity and these need to be purified¹⁹⁴.

6.2 Theological Concept of Mission

Interreligious dialogue means having a clear understanding of the meaning of mission. Mission is a key term in Daniélou's theological production; it is the official proclamation of the Gospel. It is the mandate that the disciples received on the day of the Ascension of the Lord, announcing the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ to the entire world.

1. *The Holy Trinity: theological foundation of mission.* The first mission is the mission of the Word. All missionary action is the prolongation of the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the world¹⁹⁵. Mission is in the heart of Christian doctrine – in the mystery of the Trinity. The mystery of Christ is missionary in its content. To understand the theological meaning of mission it is necessary to start from Christology before pastoral theology or the theology of religions. This means that mission is essentially a divine work¹⁹⁶. It is the continuation in the Church of sacred History. To believe in the mission is to

¹⁹² See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 47.

¹⁹³ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 47.

¹⁹⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Essai sur le mystère...*, 41.

¹⁹⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 31.

¹⁹⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Approches du Christ*, 226.

believe in the action of the Word and the Spirit among humanity¹⁹⁷. This action is ordered, not to the creation of an indefinite community of men united by deep desires for universal peace and brotherhood. Mission, on the contrary, has a meaning and a strong theological value: it is the hidden mystery of drawing all nations into the unity of the Mystical Body¹⁹⁸. Thus, the Church is missionary because it is situated in the prolongation of the mission of the Word and of the Spirit¹⁹⁹, by which humanities receives the divine life acquired by the mysteries of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.

Scripture, as a typological description of the modes of divine action throughout the History of Salvation, speaks of a mystery that follows a plan, an economy that moves from the vocation and formation of the Jewish people to the consummation of the Parousia. Between the two extremes there is the substantial realization of this plan in the mission of the Word – who, with his Ascension, introduces human nature into the Trinitarian sphere – and its extension to all peoples with the effusion of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost²⁰⁰. This action of the Word has as point of departure his presence among the nations, a presence manifested in the religious sense proper to all men and all peoples. This fundamental religious sense exists because the *Logos* has made himself present²⁰¹. Daniélou considers that these experiences are actual graces that act in the depths of the heart of man, who discovers God as person through the consideration of nature.

2. *The twofold end of mission: the glory of God and the divinization of man.* If the mission of the Church is founded on the action of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the goals of mission have to be the same as those of the Incarnation and Redemption. The first goal is the glory of God. From this consideration emanates the apostolic zeal to see God known and loved. The second goal is the divinization of man by grace. Man is liberated from spiritual misery and introduced into divine life. In addition to these two goals, mission has the goal of restoring the unity of the human race, destroyed by sin. Mission looks to realize the

¹⁹⁷ See J. DANIELOU, “Nature missionnaire de l’Eglise”, *Le Christ au Monde* 4 (1967), 358.

¹⁹⁸ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 11.

¹⁹⁹ See J. DANIELOU, “Nature missionnaire de l’Eglise”, 357.

²⁰⁰ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 11.

²⁰¹ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 37.

mystery of the congregation of all peoples in the unity of Mystical Body²⁰². This unity, nevertheless, will be complete only with the profession of a common faith²⁰³.

3. *Mission is the content proper to the present history of the Church.* The content proper to the current history of the Church is mission. This is a point of encounter between his theology of history and missionary theology. "Mission, namely the evangelization of all nations, is the current mission of the Church"²⁰⁴. For Daniélou, the delay of the Parousia is the time of mission, in which the Church ought to bring the Gospel message to all nations in accord with the mandate of Christ (*Matt 28:19-20*).

4. *The interior aspect and exterior aspect of mission.* The goal of the interior aspect of mission is for every man to be evangelized, as all are called to transformation in Christ, to holiness. This implies that the Church cannot disregard the mission *ad intra*. The exterior aspect of mission is participation in divine life of an ever-growing number of persons. The missionary cannot be content with forming small communities; this is only the first step. The missionary needs to word to bring persons to fullness and evangelize the culture itself. This occurred in Western Christianity. In this, the mission follows the example of Christ who redeemed all men and also all religions to bring them to the full realization of what is virtually contained in them²⁰⁵. When civilizations open themselves to Christ, this means bearing fruit²⁰⁶.

6.3 Value and meaning of dialogue

Dialogue in the contemporary world is a fact. Dialogue presupposes a solid theology of the relation of Revelation and religions, of the Church and non-Christians. Dialogue needs both sides to listen and speak with respect and frankness to the other. In this dialogue, the Church cannot renounce its condition of being the definitive response of God to the cry of religious man. It cannot place itself at the same

²⁰² See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 11.

²⁰³ See J. DANIELOU, *La Chiesa: popolo di Dio...*, 26.

²⁰⁴ See J. DANIELOU, *Le mystère du salut...*, 115.

²⁰⁵ See J. DANIELOU, *Mythes païens, mystère...*, 40.

²⁰⁶ See J. DANIELOU, *Trilogía de la salvación...*, 117.

level of other religious groups. Christianity and the Church are in the world but not of the world (John 17:14). They are realities that belong to another order and cannot the fact that they possess the truth. In an article entitled “Le dialogue de l’Église et du monde”²⁰⁷, Daniélou follows *Ecclesiam suam* of Paul VI and considers two characteristics of dialogue: relation and freedom. Ultimately dialogue centers on the truth and should not fall prey to relativism..

The last point we have to deal with, in order to close the framework of mission and of the theology of religions, it is the choice between mission and dialogue. For Daniélou, missionary spirituality is nothing other than Christian spirituality. The dialogue between the Church and the world is located within the Dialogue of salvation that God has established with humanity. Theology teaches that the goal of the Incarnation of the Word is the glory of God and the divinization of man. Consequently, the mission of the Church will continue in history this twofold end, to which is added the reunification of the entire human race in the great family of salvation.

In dialogue, the Church seeks to gather man and introduce them into the Dialogue of salvation. The Christian interlocutor will not fulfill his mission if he does not establish channels so that men of other religions can come to know and accept the salvation that Christ offers all men for the glory of God. Mission seeks conversion. Mission is also a fruit of love. Consequently, dialogue starts with respect and love for the other. It is a love that seeks to give the best of what one possesses: faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Redeemer. Mission is both a drama and a mystery.

In answer to the question about mission and dialogue, Daniélou argues that dialogue is subordinated to mission, which has the goal of salvation. Interreligious dialogue is one of the principal means to reach the ends of mission: the glory of God and the divinization of man. Interreligious dialogue enters into the great missionary effort of the Church, a mission given to the Church by Christ himself. It is a dialogue of salvation that seeks to offer to all peoples the unfathomable riches of the mystery of Jesus Christ.

²⁰⁷ Published in *Études* 325 (1966), 11-21.

Summary: The theology of Jean Daniélou follows an itinerary that leads from existential experience to theological speculation. While carrying out his ministry in France, he had always a missionary soul that led him to leave the university and reach the outskirts of existence. This holds true for all areas of his research: dialogue with the contemporary world, dialogue with non-Christian religions, the renewal of theological method, the return to the Fathers. The present article—a summary of doctoral research presented in 2010—analyzes the theological method of Jean Daniélou with the purpose of understanding the reach of his theology of fulfillment and of mission. His method is varied and realistic, and belongs to the long tradition which sinks its roots into biblical typology, passing through the Fathers, and in fidelity to the spirit of St. Thomas Aquinas. The article closes with a mention of the theology of mission, a key component of the French theologian's entire reflection.

Key words: Religions, theological method, revelation, Jean Daniélou, salvation

Sommario: La teologia di Jean Daniélou segue un percorso che va dal vissuto esistenziale alla speculazione teologica. Pur esercitando il suo ministero in Francia, ebbe sempre un'anima missionaria che lo portò a uscire dall'Università e raggiungere le periferie esistenziali. Ciò vale per tutti gli ambiti della sua ricerca: il dialogo con il mondo contemporaneo, le religioni non cristiane, il rinnovamento del metodo teologico, il ritorno ai Padri. Nel presente lavoro, sintesi di un dottorato di ricerca discusso nel 2010, si analizza il metodo teologico di Jean Daniélou con lo scopo di capire la portata della sua teologia del compimento e della missione. Il suo metodo è vario e realista, e si colloca nella lunga tradizione che ha le sue radici nella tipologia biblica, passando per i padri e in fedeltà allo spirito di San Tommaso d'Aquino. L'articolo si chiude con un accenno alla teologia della missione, elemento cardine di tutta la riflessione del teologo francese.

Parole chiave: Religioni, metodo teologico, rivelazione, Jean Daniélou, salvezza