0. The Problem of Inculturation

The Church as a whole and the Asian Church in particular is seized of the problem of inculturation. The official documents of the Church as well as theological writings are now all speaking of inculturation. Inculturation is "in". But what is inculturation? Most documents and discussions presuppose that we all know what is inculturation and therefore the focus on the "need of inculturation" vis à vis the task of evangelization. But if one were to insist on questioning the understanding of inculturation one would encounter only embarrassment and ignorance.

That is why I would like to commence with an insight of my late friend and colleague George Soares-Prabhu, S.J. "The more urgent need for us Indians," George used to say, "is not so much inculturation as decolonization." Though Soares-Prabhu referred to India there is a point in this bon mot that is relevant to most of Asia. We in Asia are carrying a burden which makes our task of inculturation doubly difficult. The 'Christian culture' in many of our regions is undoubtedly Western when it comes to religion, liturgy, prayer, spirituality, religious life and language, theology, thought-categories, education, etc. Our minds and hearts have been and now through the tidal wave of globalization are being colonized by a culture different from the cultures of the people we live among and work with. So it has become all the more difficult for us to communicate and speak of our faith-tradition in a way that would be meaningful to the people of the cultures which surround us. The long way to inculturation is preceded and barricaded by the heritage of our colonial history.

Furthermore, inculturation has turned out to be the bone of contention with a fare share of both protagonists and antagonists. The protagonists tend to render inculturation
esoteric, (and in their enthusiasm take it mostly in India especially in the hinduizing direction) and ultimately get stuck in the dead-end street of externals; the antagonists equally are blissfully ignorant of the real problem, and believe that the Christian experience and its hallowed expressions especially in the liturgy cannot be tampered with. The truth like in most cases will probably lie in the middle.

Inculturation, the focus of our reflections, is part of a larger complex; to attempt to speak of it alone is to try to speak of humans without their world. Humans are humans only in, through and with the world. Speaking hermeneutically therefore, inculturation is part of the larger process called understanding and takes place only in, through and with the process of understanding. Accordingly our reflections on inculturation will have to be situated within the context of the understanding-process. The way we understand the process of understanding will determine the way we understand the process of inculturation. Speaking theologically, inculturation is part of an overarching theme called Evangelization which is constituted by the trinitarian process of mission-and-proclamation, interreligious dialogue and inculturation.

1. The Challenge of Inculturation

It is stated that for inculturation it is necessary that the Gospel interact with a particular culture. The implication being that the "Gospel" is somehow free of culture and so is in a position to act interact with a culture. The documents of the Church in general and theological writings in particular tend to speak of the Christ Event or the "Good News" or the Christian message" of the Gospels. So Pope John II: "Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces people, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within." Or again Pedro Arrupe in his now famous letter on Inculturation: "Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a 'new creation'."

The truth of the matter is that the Christ Event is nowhere found, not even in the New Testament, in a form that is free of cultural conditioning. Hermeneutically speaking *language, even language, that mediates Revelation is never free and can never be free of historical conditioning*. Our Christian consciousness has been by now so conditioned by the historical dimension in the reading and understanding of the Gospels/Christian
Message that whether we like it or not our access to reality, religion and religious experience is through the door of historical consciousness. Take the expression the "Christ Event" and juxtapose it, for example, with the "Buddha Event" and it becomes clear how differently the two "Events" are historically conditioned. Though the Buddhists do not use such an expression (an expression that would be an extrapolation in their traditions) still the basic meaning because of its historical connotations in the case of the Buddha would turn out to be very different from that of the Christ Event. In the case of the Christ Event the focus would be on the historical event of Jesus the Christ while in the case of the Buddha the stress would be rather on the event of the Buddha's enlightenment than on the historicality of the event. Understandably then the encounter of the Christian Message with its historical slant is posing vis à vis the world-views of the Asian cultures a challenge that is unparalleled in history.

Whether the Gospel is read with the eyes of history or from another perspective, the fact remains that we cannot avoid bringing our cultures along with the Gospel. There is nothing we do, say or think that is free of cultural conditioning. Once this fact is recognized both the "method" and the meaning of inculturation undergo substantial change. It will be realized that inculturation has primarily to do with the phenomenon of the meeting of cultures, more accurately, with the meeting of their respective core/soul and not so much with "adapting" ourselves and our religious practices and expressions to the "local culture". Indeed inculturation has got a bad name because of the overzealous efforts of some to achieve precisely this exotic effect.

2. The Process of Evangelization and Inculturation

Inculturation, the focus of our reflections, is part of a larger complex. Speaking theologically, inculturation is a component of the overarching theme called evangelization which is constituted by the trinitarian process of mission-and-proclamation, interreligious dialogue and inculturation. Both Paul VI and John Paul II have been insisting that interreligious dialogue, important and necessary as it is, cannot be seen independently of proclamation. This is a valid position and is applicable to the dialoguing partners from all religious traditions, as we shall see. To maintain this consistency we shall have to add that mission too, important and necessary as it is, cannot be seen independently of interreligious dialogue. Finally, mission and interreligious dialogue are for all dialoguing partners part and parcel of the enterprise of evangelization (seen from the Christian perspective) or the encounter of religions (seen from Cross-
Cultural perspective).

Accordingly mission has to be understood first and foremost "centripetally", that is, as the search for and appropriation of one's own tradition. It is important that the members of the different religious traditions appropriate the "essence" of their own tradition. Mission implies therefore a search for an authentic experience of the foundational experience of one's tradition. Only such an appropriation can and must be proclaimed to the others.

We have to call to mind that our discussion of mission and proclamation has to take place in the context of inculturation, not so much in the context of a mission theology. In the context of inculturation proclamation is a necessary step that mission has to take. One's "foundational experience" has necessarily to be proclaimed so that the dialoguing partners can understand who we are, what we stand for and what we believe in. Similarly the dialoguing partners too have to appropriate their foundational experience so that we can understand who they are, what they stand for and what they believe in.

Dialogue then moves in a "centrifugal" direction and takes place when we go out and begin to share with other traditions our vision and our values in order to share in their vision and values. In an authentic dialogue (which is very different from discussion, however important this may be) we come in contact with the "core" of the religious traditions of our dialogue partners; the other way round, our dialogue partners from the other religious traditions come in contact with the "core" of our religious tradition.

In the explanation of its methodology the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has expressed the matter both succinctly and pointedly: "Dialogue is a two-way communication. It implies speaking and listening, giving and receiving, for mutual growth and enrichment. It includes witness to one's own faith as well as an openness to that of the other. It is not a betrayal of the mission of the Church, nor is it a new method of conversion to Christianity."

The pillars of this important statement of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue are the following:

a. *Dialogue is a two-way communication* where speaking and listening, giving and receiving are moments of growth and enrichment. This is a *novum* in the official documents and projects an altogether new vision for us in the "mission" countries. The danger is that the aspect that is being highlighted here may be underestimated or overlooked. That is why it is important to remember that what is being proposed is not a mere strategy but a new understanding of the process of evangelization. *For*
evangelization to take place dialogue has to be a two-way communication. What confirms this interpretation is the Pontifical Council's own way of perceiving the process of dialogue.

b. Witness to one's faith and openness to the faith of the other, guarantees two things: that dialogue is neither a betrayal of the mission of the Church nor is it a new method of conversion to Christianity.

The speaking and listening, the giving and receiving which are interpreted as moments of growth and enrichment constitute the dialogue process where each side as it were has to witness to its faith-experience (the speaking and giving aspects); at the same time it has to be open to the faith-experience of the other side (the listening and receiving aspects). More importantly, the process of listening and witnessing takes place on the level of faith-experience. This is what distinguishes authentic dialogue from discussion.

It is here that the two things guaranteed by the methodology have their place. Dialogue is not a betrayal of mission because it is in dialogue that mission best achieves its goal, namely, of authentic proclamation. Furthermore, dialogue of this nature is far from being a new method of conversion to Christianity because the essence of dialogue happens is in the context of mutual witness. The kind of dialogue that is envisaged by the Pontifical Council presupposes mission and vice versa.

That all this is not an eisegesis, a reading into the text of the Pontifical Council, is confirmed by the fact that the same Pontifical Council as well as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples speak so insightfully of four levels of dialogue:

"a. The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.

b. The dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.

c. The dialogue of experience, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.

d. The dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values."
Obviously these four levels are not to been understood as laying down a strict chronological order, though quite clearly there is inherent in this order a certain organic development. If the dialogue of life is absent, there can be little hope of any kind of dialogue of action. On the other hand, this need not be interpreted too rigidly as a sudden common need may bring people together. But the importance of the dialogue of life cannot be serious questioned. One of the aspects of the Christian charism is building communities; happily the movement towards building human communities is catching on. From it movements of common concern will without doubt start sprouting. This will show its fruit in the dialogue of spiritual exchange. Only where such dialogue flourishes will the dialogue of theological exchange be of immense value. However the last named dialogue can also help prepare people for the dialogue of life, action and spiritual experience.

Now an authentic dialogue like this which unfolds in the above-mentioned fourfold manner is built on a dual phenomenon: interculturation and inculturation.

Interculturation is the phenomenon of many cultures living together in a symbiotic relationship where through an osmotic process they mutually influence one another. For theological purposes then interculturation consists in recognizing, firstly, that one's culture and religion are part of the plurality of cultures and religions; secondly, that cultures and religions, like everything else in this world, live in a symbiotic relationship where they mutually affect each other and are affected by one another. Interculturation has always and everywhere been at work; only we have not been ready and prepared to recognize it. In our conscious behaviour we have been living like oil and water but on the ontological level - the level of reality - traditions always affect one another mutually. Interculturation then has little to do with our wanting or not wanting but with opening our eyes to what is actually taking place in spite of our wanting or not wanting.

It is here in the realm of the mutual influence of cultures and religions that we have to locate the phenomenon of inculturation. Phenomenologically speaking, the first stage in inculturation is the identification of the changes that interculturation produces in every religion and culture. Islam in Turkey is different from Islam in Turkmenistan; Catholicism in North America is different from Catholicism in South America; Buddhism in Tibet is different from Buddhism in Taiwan: their respective cultural contexts give rise to different intercultural effects.

Theologically speaking, inculturation consists, firstly, in becoming aware of the
changes brought about by the phenomenon of interculturation; secondly, in discerning whether the changes are liberating or dehumanizing; and thirdly, in intensifying the changes where they are liberating and in changing gears where they are dehumanizing.

Inculturation is a three step process that focus on the changes that interculturation introduces into one's culture and religion. The important step is that of discerning the nature of the changes. Apart from the difficulty of learning the process of discernment, there is the added problem of the prejudices of a tradition operative in its effective history. How does one or one's tradition become aware of its blind spots? There is no alternative to "openness to cross-border sharing". This means that traditions have to realize that they shelter prejudices which cannot be discovered without the help of the "outsider". The "outsider" in this view becomes an essential member of the discerning process. Furthermore, there are blind spots in all traditions which only a process of honest exchange will bring to light, like the two eyes bring about the depth vision when they are synchronized. It is not surprising then that Ecclesia in Asia states "that the Holy Spirit is the prime agent of the inculturation of the Christian faith in Asia". Again: "The Spirit's presence ensures that the dialogue unfolds in truth, honesty, humility and respect." A few glaring examples where inculturation has gone in the wrong direction might illustrate the point more persuasively.

3.1 Three Examples

I shall give three examples of inculturation: one that is part of the history of the American Catholic Church; another one that is part of our lives in India today and the last one (the most elaborate of all) which help us understand how much preparation is required for cultures to meet and understand each other.

3.11 The American Church and Slavery

Slave-holding came to be in course of time part of the social landscape in the United States. Different religious orders owned slaves before the American civil war: the Jesuits, Vicentians, Sulpicians, Ursulines, Carmelites, Sisters of Charity, sisters of Loretto, Religious of the Sacred heart, Visitation Sisters and Dominicans. At the end of his perceptive study Becket pronounces the following judgments:

Although the Society of Jesus was not the only religious community to own slaves, it was the most visible and prosperous. Jesuit ministry to the slaves was marked by a paternalism that, at best, somewhat tempered slavery's harsh
regime. At worst, it was tainted by all that was evil in American slaveholding. For
the most part, the Jesuits treated their slave much as did the other American
Catholic slaveholders. While individual Jesuits may have developed close
ministerial ties to blacks, there was no concerted effort on the part of the Society
of Jesus as a whole to respond to the needs of black Catholics in America, free or
slave. in fact, apart from inconsistently applying minimal standards of justice in
their treatment of their slaves, the Jesuits acquiesced in the peculiar institution of
American slavery. No Jesuit voiced public opposition to slavery. There were,
however nineteenth-century Jesuits who spoke in favour of slavery and against
abolition. While the abolitionist movement often allied itself with the worst form
of anti-Catholic nativism, the failure of any North American Jesuits to protest in
principle against slavery is difficult to reconcile with the example of Claver and
Sandoval in South America.

Financial expediency and an uncritical acceptance of American cultural
attitudes towards slavery and Catholic moral doctrine were factors influencing the
Maryland Jesuits and rationalizing their practice of slaveholding. The example of
the Maryland Quakers, who recognized the unchristian nature of slavery and
manumitted their slaves in the 1970s at great personal expense, was ignored,
envied, or condemned, but never imitated. The failure of the Corporation of
Roman Catholic Clergymen's policy of gradual emancipation represents one of
the great lost opportunities of American Catholicism. The sale of the slaves by the
Maryland Jesuits represents the nadir of Jesuit mission and ministry among the
slaves. In the final analysis, despite persistent anti-Catholic harassment, the
Maryland Jesuits were all too comfortable in the dominant slaveholding culture of
America. In their uncritical acceptance and practice of slavery, they can be
accused of harming the very souls they sought to help.

This is a frightening example of how easily we can be blind to the blind-spots of
our cultures. It is only when we encounter a counter-culture, a culture that has values that
are opposed to ours that we become aware of the difference in our value-systems. It is
here that we have to be open to the action of the Holy Spirit who will guide us in finding
out which values are liberating and which enslaving.
3.12 The Caste-System in the Catholic Church in India

A more glaring example of inculturation is to be found among us Christians in
India in the practice of the caste-system. This practice has percolated to all levels: laity,
priests, nuns and bishops. The tragedy is that we do not seem to see its evil-side and that
for many there is no hope of change in this matter. The Christian Dalits have no chance
of better treatment either from the Hindu side or the Christian side.

Many Dalit groups thought that they would escape the burden of
untouchability if they left Hinduism and joined other religions. Such a desire for
an improvement in their social status, rather than economic benefits, has been at
the root of many mass conversion movements in India. But they have discovered
by experience that any difference in status has been only marginal, both within
their religious group and in wider society. This is true of Dalits who became
Christians. According to study in South India, they seem to have made less progress both economically and politically than the Hindu Dalits in the area. They speak of a two-fold oppression: in Society and in the Church. In areas where people of other caste too have become Christian, as in South India, the caste system with all its discriminations has been carried on into the Church. The Dalits have not been able to profit by the educational and job opportunities offered by the institutions of the Church either because of their poverty or because of a lack of representative power at levels of decision making.

After a survey studying the conditions of the Dalit Catholics in Tamil Nadu, Antoniraj points the many discriminations that still continue in some place: separate chapels, separate places in the churches and cemeteries, discrimination with regard to the roles that the Dalits can play in the celebration of the liturgy, exclusion of the Dalit streets from the processional routes during festivals, refusal to accept their financial contributions during festivals so that they may not claim equal participation, etc.

Isn't it surprising that we are all the time talking of inculturating the liturgy, formation, theology, aspects of our life-style etc. but as far as I see nobody is talking of inculturation where the practice of the caste-system is concerned! Wouldn't this be a splendid example of inculturation if we were to discern the anti-human, anti-Christian bias and got rid of it? Wouldn't this be an excellent example of evangelization and the uniqueness of our message?

See what the Indian Bishops stated at their meeting in Tiruchirapalli in 1982.

We state categorically that case, with its consequent effects of discrimination and 'caste mentality' has no place in Christianity. It is in fact, a denial of Christianity because it is inhuman. It violates the God-given dignity and equality of the human person. God created man in his own image. Thus human dignity and equality of the human person God created man in his own image. Thus human dignity and respect are due to every person and any denial of this is a sin against God and man. It is an outright denial of the Fatherhood of God which in practice, renders meaningless the brotherhood of man.

3. **Understanding the Process of Understanding**

All this sounds pretty convincing and there is hardly anyone who would refuse to accept what has been put forward above. Where then does the problem lie? The problem lies, I submit, in accepting all this at the level of information but not at the level of understanding. There is an insurmountable gap between the world of information and the
world of understanding. The problem of our age is that it has made an option for information, not for understanding. We collect information, we have an information highway; we are overwhelmed by the floods of information that confront us from every side. We can manipulate information, we can do things with information but information, as such, does not transform us, it does not affect us. At the most, it affects the external and superficial side of life. It does not, indeed cannot, take us to the depth of our being.

3.1 Understanding with our whole Being

Understanding, not information, constitutes us as human beings. Understanding is not what we take it to be, an act of the intellect. Understanding is our very being.

The implication of this is that we are not pure consciousness; our consciousness of ourselves is a consciousness of being in a world that surrounds us always. Our consciousness and the world surrounding us always go together. We do not have one without the other. That is to say, our consciousness and our world are part of one another. As far as we are concerned, we do not have any consciousness where the world is missing and we do not have world without consciousness.

Inculturation is understanding that occurs in the world and of the world in which we find ourselves. But in order to realize the implications of this statement we need to take a few more steps.

3.2 Implications of Understanding

a. There is at work in us the operative presence of all that has shaped and formed us. Hence our first thesis: All understanding is determined by our preunderstanding.

b. When understanding really takes place, there is a dual change: (a) in our world (b) and within us, that is, in the way we look at the world. Our second thesis: To understand is to be transformed in our being and our knowing as regards our relationship to the world.

c. The degree of understanding and misunderstanding is to be gauged from the kind of change that is brought about. We know how much we have understood from the quality of the change that flows from it. Our third thesis: The depth of understanding is proportionate to the quality of change that is brought about.

d. Understanding happens. Understanding is not of our making, it is independent of our will and decision. Our fifth thesis: Understanding is the result of the interplay between reality and our preunderstanding.
4. The Encounter of the Christian and the Hindu Worlds

Roughly speaking, the version of Christianity that has spread far and wide is steeped in the world of historical consciousness. On the other hand, the Hindu traditions that we encounter today have to a great extent their roots in an a-historical world. A brief glance at their specific characteristics will be of help in studying the encounter of the two worlds.

4.1 What are the characteristics of historical consciousness?

Firstly, historical consciousness highlights the importance of historical conditioning. Secondly, to understand language from one context in another context is an extrapolation unless first the original context and its meaning is worked out and understood and then bridges are built to the context of the present reader.

Thirdly, it is possible to build to some extent at least bridges with the earlier contexts, because all understanding takes place within an historical process whose nature is that of a continuum.

Fourthly, each subsequent historical "period" is related to the earlier period.

Fifthly, each historical period has its own specific preunderstanding because of which no period is completely identical with other periods.

Sixthly, historical consciousness stresses historical reality to such an extent that the historical alone is taken as the criterion of the real.

The sixth point, I submit, is really not part of the general conditioning; it is merely another instance of what happens when a tradition takes its stance too literally and interprets its self-understanding one-sidedly.

4.2 Characteristics of A-Historical Consciousness

Firstly, a-historical consciousness highlights the importance of a dimension of reality that is beyond history.

Secondly, all understanding of this dimension takes places through the language of myth and symbol. The language of myth and symbol is more, not less, real than the language of the historical.

Thirdly, the truth of myth and symbol is to be discovered in the experience of the a-historical dimension.

Fourthly, the truth of the a-historical dimension of reality that is "symbolized" in
myth and symbol is very different from "historical truth."

Fifthly, one of the criteria for validating the experience of the a-historical dimension consists in examining whether the experience upholds the dual fact that the a-historical dimension of reality is accessible only through myth and symbol but cannot be reduced to myth and symbol.

Sixthly, the world of a-historical consciousness stresses the a-historical dimension to such an extent that the a-historical dimension alone is taken as the criterion of the real.

The sixth point, I submit, is really not a genuine characteristic of the a-historical; it is merely another instance of what happens when a tradition takes its stance too literally and interprets its self-understanding one-sidedly.

5. **Inculturation of the Christian Message in the Hindu Context**

Obviously both sides have to remain faithful to the fundamental direction of their traditions: the historical and the a-historical. But because of the symbiotic encounter (of interculturation) we are becoming aware of their specificities. We are realizing, for example, their one-sidedness. The historical world-view has been overstressing the historical and neglecting the a-historical or transhistorical dimension of reality; and the a-historical world has been overstressing the transhistorical and neglecting the historical dimension of reality. Correcting the one-sidedness will bring them not only closer to each other but open the way to understanding the "otherness" of the other.

Mission, dialogue and interculturation-and-inculturation are, to use an analogy, like the centripetal and the centrifugal forces that make possible the orbital movement of interculturation-and-inculturation. All three are indispensable, irreducible and unique. What is more they all go together. None is genuine without the other two. Mission, dialogue and interculturation-and-inculturation are a prelude to the discovery of the harmony of religions. Religion, as we have discussed above, is intimately linked with Reality and vice versa. To be realistic is to be religious and to be religious is to be realistic. Hence to discover the harmony of religions is to discover the harmony of Reality. As the Encyclical *Ecclesia in Asia* puts it insightfully, "This 'being Asian' is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful both to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul." (Nr.. 6)
1) Belief in an Avatara is belief in a Cosmotheos, "God in the world" and is as valid a religious belief as is the belief in the Incarnation which is belief in an Anthropotheos, "God becoming a human being". Interculturation tells us that Avatara is to be taken as seriously as Incarnation and that the Cosmotheos cannot be reduced to the Anthropotheos or vice versa.

2) Avatara and Incarnation are different ways of experiencing Divine presence. Avatara stresses cosmic immanence and Incarnation highlights historical presence.

3) The Cosmotheos is a specific experience of the world in God and the Anthropotheos a specific experience of the Human in God. In spite of their being specifically different experiences of the Divine they are interrelated.

6. Inculturation: A Two-way Communication

The phenomenon of interculturation makes us aware that the specific identity of an Avatara consists in the fact that it stresses Divine immanence in the world and that the specific identity of the Incarnation consists in the fact that it stresses historical presence of the Divine. On the other hand, belief in the Avatara neglects the historical presence of the Divine and belief in the Incarnation neglects Divine immanence. That is to say, in the Cosmotheos we have to discover its historical dimension, however peripheral it might be, and in the Anthropotheos we have to discover the a-historical dimension, however peripheral it might be. The two eyes when synchronized give us a depth-vision.

Without inculturation Avatara and Incarnation remain like oil and water. Through the process of inculturation we discover the relatedness of Avatara and Incarnation. They both have to do with Divine Presence being different experiences of the same Mystery. To discover relatedness is to discover a bridge that unites two different worlds; it is to discover a two-way communication road.

7. Two Be-attitudes for a Threefold Task

15 15H15e15r15e15 15I15 15d15i515s15c15r15n15 15t15h15e15 15n15e15d15 15o15f15 15a15 15t15w15o15f15o151515d15 15a15t15l15t15l15t15u15d15e15 15f15o1515r15 15a15 15t15r15i15p15l15e15 15a15n15d15 15t15h15e15 15p15n15t15i15f15c15.15 15T15h15e15 15p15n15t15i15f15c15 15(15=15 from pontifex, 15b15r15i15d15g15e15-15b15u15i15l15d15er)15 15t15a15s15k15 15c15o15n15s15i15s15t15n15 15a15t1515

These two attitudes incorporate the process of inculturation which calls for a text that recognizes and integrates:  

- exegetes and theologians in the dialoguing traditions who will work out the Story of their Revelation in its historical context.  
- Analogously we "exegetes and theologians" in the dialoguing traditions who will work out the Story of their Revelation for their contemporary communities.

Analogously need we "theologians" in the dialoguing traditions who will work out the significance of the Story of their Revelation for their contemporary communities.
Analogously we need cross-cultural "theologians" who will work out the significance of the Story of their Revelation for our contemporary cultures.

Thinkers and theologians of the dialoguing traditions.

8. Conclusion

Our reflections on "Evangelization and Inculturation" have shown that there has to be a paradigm change in our approach to evangelization, from the paradigm of
information to that of understanding. Though this paradigm may sound new it is very ancient in our Christian tradition. I am referring to the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of communion and understanding operating in the heart of all traditions. The recent Church documents have been repeatedly highlighting the work of the Spirit in personal and cosmic history. Most recently Ecclesia in Asia has made this point unambiguously:

"The Holy Spirit is present from the first moment of creation, the first manifestation of the love of the Triune God, and is always present in the world as its life-giving force. Since creation is the beginning of history, the Spirit is in a certain sense a hidden power at work in history, guiding it in the ways of truth and goodness. The revelation of the person of the Holy Spirit, the mutual love of the Father and the Son, is proper to the New Testament. In Christian thought he is seen as the wellspring of life for all creatures. Creation is God's free communication of love, a communication which, out of nothing, brings everything into being. There is nothing created that is not filled with the ceaseless exchange of love that marks the innermost life of the Trinity, filled that is with the Holy Spirit: 'the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world' (Wis 1:7). The presence of the Spirit in creation generates order, harmony and interdependence in all that exists."

Evangelization and inculturation are the steps through which we come to discover this work of the Spirit in the heart of humans and their world.